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The History Of Hindostan; From The Earliest Account Of Time, To The Death Of Akbar; Translated From The Persian Of Mahummud Casim Ferishta Of Delhi

Together With A Dissertation Concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmins ; With An Appendix, Containing the History of the Mogul Empire, from its Decline in the Reign of Mahummud Shaw, to the present Times ; In Two Volumes

Dow, Alexander

London, 1772

To The King, This Volume Is Most Humbly Inscribed, By His Majesty's Most dutiful Most Humble And Most Devoted Subject And Servant,
Alexander Dow.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-2198

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TO THE
KING
A
D I S S E R T A T I O N
THIS VOLUME
CONCERNING THE

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF DESPOTISM

HINDOSTAN
MOST DUTIFUL

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A
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ORIGIN AND NATURE OF DESPOTISM
IN
HINDOSTAN.

GOVERNMENT derives its form from accident; its spirit and genius from the inherent manners of the people. The languor occasioned by the hot climate of India, inclines the native to indolence and ease; and he thinks the evils of despotism less severe than the labour of being free. Tranquillity is the chief object of his desires. His happiness consists in a mere absence of misery; and oppression must degenerate into a folly, which defeats its own ends before he calls it by the name of injustice. These phlegmatic sentiments the Indian carries

The climate
and soil of
India,



carries into his future state. He thinks it a mode of being, in which passion is lost, and every faculty of the soul suspended, except the consciousness of existence.

favourable to
despotism.

Other motives of passive obedience join issue with the love of ease. The sun, which enervates his body, produces for him, in a manner spontaneously, the various fruits of the earth. He finds subsistence without much toil; he requires little covering but the shade. The chill blast of winter is unknown; the seasons are only marked by an arbitrary number of nights and days. Property being in some measure unnecessary, becomes of little value; and men submit, without resistance, to violations of right, which may hurt but cannot destroy them. Their religious institutions incline them to peace and submission. The vulgar live with the austerity of philosophers, as well as with the abstinence of devotees. Averse themselves to the commission of crimes, they resent no injuries from others; and their low diet cools their temper to a degree which passion cannot inflame.

Encourage
conquest.

The fertility of the soil, which in other kingdoms constitutes the great prosperity of the natives, was a source of misfortune to the Indians. Notwithstanding their abstinence and indolence, they were in some degree industrious, and, in want of but few things themselves,
their



their own arts, and the natural productions of their country, rendered them opulent. Wealth accumulated, in the progress of time, upon their hands; and they became objects of depredation to the fierce nations of the northern Asia. The facility of incursion, among a peaceable and harmless race of men, encouraged conquest. The victors, instead of carrying the spoil into their native country, sat down where it had been found; and added the ministration of the conquered to the other enjoyments of wealth.

Asia, the seat of the greatest empires, has been always the nurse of the most abject slaves. The mountains of Persia have not been able to stop the progress of the tide of despotism; neither has it been frozen in its course through the plains of the northern Tartary, by the chill air of the North. But though despotism governs Asia, it appears in different countries under various forms. The Arabs of the desert alone possess liberty, on account of the sterility of their soil. Independent of revolution and change, they see, with unconcern, empires falling and rising around. They remain unconquered by arms, by luxury, by corruption; they alter not their language, they adhere to their customs and manners, they retain their dress. Their whole property consists of flocks and herds, of their

Asia always
the seat of
slavery.



tents and arms. They annually make a small and voluntary present to the chief of their blood. They revolt against oppression; and they are free by necessity, which they mistake for choice. When men are obliged to wander for subsistence, despotism knows not where to find its slaves.

Nature of the
Tartar

The Tartar, though a wanderer like the Arab, was never equally free. A violent aristocracy always prevailed in the country of the former, except in a few short periods, when the fortune of one established a transient despotism over the whole. There man is armed against man, chief against chief, and tribe against tribe. War is no longer a particular profession, but the constant occupation of all. Men are more afraid of men in the solitudes of Tartary, than of beasts of prey. The traveller moves with great circumspection, and hears an enemy in every blast of wind. When he sees a tract in the sand, he crosses it, and begins to draw his sword. Though the barrenness of the country has prevented the growth or introduction of luxury, avarice prevails, and he that has the least to lose is the most independent, where life is invariably risked for a trifling spoil. Robbery acquires the more honourable name of Conquest; and the assassin is dignified with the title of Warrior.

In



In the mountains which separate Persia from India, the nature and face of the country have formed a different species of society. Every valley contains a community subject to a prince, whose despotism is tempered, by an idea established among his people, that he is the chief of their blood, as well as their sovereign. They obey him without reluctance, as they derive credit to their family from his greatness. They attend him in his wars, with the attachment which children have for a parent; and his government, though severe, partakes more of the rigid discipline of a general, than of the caprice of a despot. Rude as the face of their country, and fierce and wild as the storms which cover their mountains, they love incursion and depredation; and delight in plunder and in battle. United firmly to their friends in war, to their enemies faithless and cruel. They place justice in force, and conceal treachery under the name of address. Such are the Afgans or Patans, who conquered India and held it for ages.

and Afgan
aristocracies.

The despotism which the Patans established in their conquests, partook of the violence of their national character at home. Their government was oppressive through pride, and tyrannical from passion rather than from avarice. Reinforced by successive migrations from the mountains of Afganiſtân, they retained their native

Despotism of
the Patans
different



spirit in the midst of the luxuries of India. When the monarch became voluptuous and degenerate, they supplied his place with some hardy chieftain from the north, who communicated his own vigour to the great machine of the state. The empire was supported by a succession of abilities, rather than by an hereditary succession of princes; and it was the countrymen, and not the posterity of the first conquerors, who continued the dominion of the Patâns over India.

from that of
the Moguls.

The conquest of India by the family of Timur, proceeded from the abilities of one man, and not from the effort of a nation. Baber himself was a stranger in the country in which he reigned, before he penetrated beyond the Indus. His troops consisted of soldiers of fortune, from various countries; his officers were men who owed their rank to merit, not to succession. The religion of Mahommed, which they in common professed, and their obedience to one leader, were the only ties which united the conquerors upon their arrival; and they were soon dissipated in the extensive dominions which their arms subdued. The character of the prince went down on the current of government; and the mild disposition of his successors contributed to confirm the humane despotism which he had introduced into his conquests.

A continued



A continued influx of strangers from the northern Asia, became necessary for the support of princes who professed a different faith with their subjects, in the vast empire of India. The army was recruited with soldiers from different nations; the court was occupied by nobles from various kingdoms. The latter were followers of the Mahomedan religion. In the regulations and spirit of the Coran, they lost their primary and characteristical ideas upon government; and the whole system was formed and enlivened by the limited principles which Mahommed promulgated in the deserts of Arabia.

Cause of that
difference,

The faith of Mahommed is peculiarly calculated for despotism; and it is one of the greatest causes which must fix for ever the duration of that species of government in the East. The legislator furnishes a proof of this position in his own conduct. He derived his success from the sword, more than from his eloquence and address. The tyranny which he established was of the most extensive kind. He enslaved the mind as well as the body. The abrupt argument of the sword brought conviction, when persuasion and delusion failed. He effected a revolution and change in the human mind, as well as in states and empires; and the ambitious will continue to support a system which lays its foundation

from their
religion.

on.



on the passive obedience of those whom Fortune has once placed beneath their power.

Despotism

The unlimited power which Mahomedanism gives to every man in his own family, habituates mankind to slavery. Every child is taught, from his infancy, to look upon his father as the absolute disposer of life and death. The number of wives and concubines which the more wealthy and powerful entertain, is a cause of animosity and quarrel, which nothing but a severe and unaccountable power in the master of a family can repress. This private species of despotism is, in miniature, the counterpart of what prevails in the state; and it has the same effect, in reducing all the passions under the dominion of fear. Jealousy itself, that most violent of the feelings of the soul, is curbed within the walls of the haram. The women may pine in secret, but they must clothe their features with cheerfulness when their lord appears. Contumacy is productive of immediate punishment. They are degraded, divorced, chastised, and even sometimes put to death, according to the degree of their crime or obstinacy, or the wrath of the offended husband. No enquiry is made concerning their fate. Their friends may murmur; but the laws provide no redress; for no appeals to public justice issue forth from the haram.

Young



ORIGIN *of* DESPOTISM *in* HINDOSTAN.

xv

Young men, with their minds moulded to subjection, become themselves masters of families in the course of time. Their power being confined within their own walls, they exercise in private, that despotism which they in public dread. But though they are freed from domestic tyranny, they still continue slaves. Governors, magistrates, and inferior officers, invested with the power of the principal despot, whose will is law to the empire, exercise their authority with rigour. The idea of passive obedience is carried through every vein of the state. The machine connected in all its parts, by arbitrary sway, is moved by the active spirit of the prince; and the lenity or oppressiveness of government, in all its departments depends upon the natural disposition of his mind.

of the masters
of families.

The law of compensation for murder, authorized by the Coran, is attended with pernicious effects. It depresses the spirit of the poor; and encourages the rich in the unmanly passion of revenge. The price of blood in India is not the third part of the value of a horse. The innate principles of justice and humanity are weakened, by these means; security is taken from society, as rage may frequently get the better of the love of money. A religion which indulges individuals in a crime, at which the rest of mankind shudder, leaves ample room for the

Law of com-
pensation for
murder.



cruelty of a prince. Accustomed to sit in judgment on criminals, he becomes habituated to death. He mistakes passion for justice. His nod is condemnation; men are dragged to execution, with an abruptness which prevents fear. The incident has no consequence, but to impress terror on the guilty or suspected; and the spectators scarcely heed a circumstance, which its frequency has made them to expect.

Bathing.

The frequent bathing inculcated by the Coran, has, by debilitating the body, a great effect on the mind. Habit makes the warm bath a luxury of a bewitching kind. The women spend whole days in water; and hasten by it the approach of age. The indolence of the men, which induces them to follow every mode of placid pleasure, recommends to them a practice which Mahommed has made a tenet of religion. The prohibition of wine is also favourable to despotism. It prevents that free communication of sentiment which awakens mankind from a torpid indifference to their natural rights. They become cold, timid, cautious, reserved and interested; strangers to those warm passions, and that cheerful elevation of mind, which render men in some measure honest and sincere. In the East, there are no public places of meeting, no communications of sentiments, no introduction to private friendship. A fullness, and
a love

a love of retirement prevail, which disunite mankind; and as all associations among men are prevented, the hands of government are strengthened by the very virtue of temperance.

The doctrine of a rigid fate, or absolute predestination, which forms one of the principal tenets of the Mahomedan religion, has a great influence on the character and manners of men. When this opinion is adopted as an article of faith, the necessity of precaution is inculcated in vain. The fatalist begins an action because human nature is incapable of absolute idleness; but when a love of repose invites him, when an obstacle arises before him to thwart his designs, he has no motive for perseverance. He waits for another day, perhaps for another month: he at last trusts the whole to Providence, and makes God the agent in his very crimes. Miscarriage can be no disgrace where success depends not on abilities; and the general who loses a battle through his own pusillanimity, lays the blame upon Providence.

Predestination.

The extensive polygamy permitted by the law of Mahomed, has a fatal effect on the minds of his followers; but it has its advantages as well as its defects. The peculiar nature of the climate subjects women to diseases,

Polygamy.



eases, and hurries them forward in a few years to age. One man retains his vigour beyond the common succession of three women through their prime; and the law for a multiplicity of wives is necessary for the support of the human race. But the custom weakens paternal affection; for as a husband cannot equally divide his regard among many women, the children of the favourite will be preferred. Even these will not be much beloved. The loss of a child is no misfortune; and the care of preserving it is lessened, by the opportunity which the number of his women furnishes to the father for begetting more. The child himself is no stranger to this indifference; and he fails in proportion in his duty. Besides, the jealousy between mothers in the haram grows into hatred among their sons. The affection between brothers is annihilated at home; and when they issue forth into the world, they carry their animosities into all the various transactions of life.

Concealment
of women.

These religious tenets, which are so favourable to despotism, are accompanied with singular opinions and customs, which are absolute enemies to freedom and independence. The concealment of their women is sacred among the Mahomedans. Brothers cannot visit them in private; strangers must never see them. This excessive jealousy is derived from various causes. It proceeds



proceeds from religion, which inculcates female modesty; it arises partly from the policy of government; it is derived from the nature of the climate, where continence is a more arduous virtue than in the bleak regions of the north. Honour consists in that which men are most solicitous to secure. The chastity of his wives is a point, without which the Asiatic must not live. The despot encourages the opinion; as the possession of the women of his most powerful subjects is a sufficient pledge for their faith, when absent in expedition and war.

When the governor of a province falls under the suspicion of disaffection for his prince, the first step taken against him, is an order issued for sending his women to court. Even one of his wives, and she too not the best beloved, will bind him to his allegiance. His obedience to this mandate is the true test of his designs. If he instantly obeys, all suspicions vanish; if he hesitates a moment, he is declared a rebel. His affection for the woman is not the pledge of his fidelity; but his honour is, in her person, in the custody of his sovereign. Women are so sacred in India, that even the common soldiery leave them unmolested in the midst of slaughter and devastation. The haram is a sanctuary against all the licentiousness of victory; and ruf-



fians, covered with the blood of a husband, shrink back with confusion from the secret apartments of his wives.

on their manners.

In the silence which attends despotism, every thing is dark and solemn. Justice itself is executed with privacy; and sometimes a solitary gun, fired at midnight from the palace of the despot, proclaims the work of death. Men indulge themselves under the veil of secrecy; and rejoice in their good fortune, when their pleasures can escape the eye of their prince. Voluptuousness is, therefore, preferred to luxury. The enjoyment of the company of women is the chief object of life among the great; and when they retire into the sanctuary of the haram, they forget, in a variety of charms, their precarious situation in the state. The necessary privacy enhances the indulgence; and the extreme sensibility, perhaps, peculiar to the natives of a hot climate, carries pleasure to an excess which unmans the mind. Men are possessed of something which they are afraid to lose; and despotism, which is founded on the principles of fear and indolence, derives stability and permanency from the defects and vices of its slaves.

Reflections

The seeds of despotism, which the nature of the climate and fertility of the soil had sown in India, were,



as has been observed, reared to perfect growth by the Mahomedan faith. When a people have been long subjected to arbitrary power, their return to liberty is arduous and almost impossible. Slavery, by the strength of custom, is blended with human nature; and that undefined something, called Public Virtue, exists no more. The subject never thinks of reformation; and the prince, who only has it in his power, will introduce no innovations to abridge his own authority. Were even the despot possessed of the enthusiasm of public spirit, the people would revolt against the introduction of freedom; and revert to that form of government, which takes the trouble of regulation from their hands.

The simplicity of despotism recommends it to an indolent and ignorant race of men. Its obvious impartiality, its prompt justice, its immediate severity against crimes, dazzle the eyes of the superficial, and raise in their minds a veneration little short of idolatry for their prince. When he is active and determined in his measures, the great machine moves with a velocity which throws vigour into the very extremities of the empire. His violence, and even his caprices, are virtues, where the waters must be always agitated to preserve their freshness; and indolence and irresolution can be his only

on the nature



only ruinous vices. The first indeed may injure the state; but by the latter it must be undone. A severe prince, by his jealousy of his own authority, prevents the tyranny of others; and, though fierce and arbitrary in himself, the subject derives a benefit from his being the sole despot. His rage falls heavy on the dignified slaves of his presence; but the people escape his fury in their distance from his hand.

of despotism.

The despotic form of government is not, however, so terrible in its nature, as men born in free countries are apt to imagine. Though no civil regulation can bind the prince, there is one great law, the ideas of mankind with regard to right and wrong, by which he is bound. When he becomes an assassin, he teaches others to use the dagger against himself; and wanton acts of injustice, often repeated, destroy by degrees that opinion which is the sole foundation of his power. In the indifference of his subjects for his person and government, he becomes liable to the conspiracies of courtiers, and the ambitious schemes of his relations. He may have many slaves, but he can have no friends. His person is exposed to injury. A certainty of impunity may arm even cowards against him; and thus, by his excessive ardour for power, he with his authority loses his life.

Despotism



Despotism appears in its most engaging form, under the Imperial house of Timur. The uncommon abilities of most of the princes, with the mild and humane character of all, rendered Hindostan the most flourishing empire in the world during two complete centuries. The manly and generous temper of Baber permitted not oppression to attend the victories of his sword. He came with an intention to govern the nations whom he subdued; and selfish motives joined issue with humanity in not only sparing, but protecting the vanquished. His invasion was no abrupt incursion for plunder; and he thought the usual income of the crown a sufficient reward for his toil. His nobles were gratified with the emoluments of government; and, from disposition, an enemy to useless pomp and grandeur, he chose that his treasury should be gradually filled with the surplus of the revenue, than with the property of individuals, whom the fortune of war had placed beneath his power. Awed by his high character, the companions of his victories carried his mildness and strict equity through all the departments of government. The tyranny of the family of Lodi was forgotten; and the arts, which had been suppressed by a violent despotism, began to rear their heads, under the temperate dominion of Baber.

Mild under
Baber.

Humaion,

Despotism



Humaioon.

Humaioon, though not equal in abilities to his father, carried all his mild virtues into the throne. He was vigilant and active in the administration of justice, he secured property by his edicts; and, an enemy to rapacity himself, he punished the oppressive avarice of his deputies in the provinces. The troubles which disturbed his reign were the effect of the ambition of others; and his expulsion from the throne was less a misfortune to him than to his subjects. When he returned with victory, he left the mean passion of revenge behind. He punished not his people for his own disasters; he seemed to forget the past, in the prospect of doing future good. The nations of India felt, by the benefit received from his presence, how much they had lost by his absence. Though worn out under a succession of tyrants, during his exile, Hindostan began to revive when he re-mounted the throne. His sudden and unexpected death portended a storm, which was dissipated by the splendid abilities and virtues of his son.

Akbar.

Akbar was possessed of Baber's intrepidity in war, of Humaioon's mildness in peace. Bold, manly, and enterprising, he was an enemy to oppression; and he hated cruelty, as he was a stranger to fear. In the more splendid business of the field, he forgot not the arts of peace.

He

He established, by edict, the right of the subject to transfer his property without the consent of the crown, and by ordering a register of the fixed rents of the lands to be kept in the courts of justice in every district, he took from his officers the power of oppressing the people. Severe in his justice, he never forgave extortion. He promoted just complaints against the servants of the crown, by various proclamations. He encouraged trade, by an exemption of duties through the interior provinces; and by the invariable protection given to merchants of all nations. He regarded neither the religious opinions nor the countries of men: all who entered his dominions were his subjects, and they had a right to his justice. He issued an edict which was afterwards revived by Aurungzêbe, that the rents should not be increased upon those who improved their lands, which wise regulation encouraged industry, and became a source of wealth to the state.

Jehangire, though unfit for the field, trod in his father's path in regulating the civil affairs of the state. Impressed with a high sense of the abilities of Akbar, he continued all his edicts in force; and he was the invariable protector of the people against the rapacity and tyranny of his own officers. In his administration of justice, he was scrupulous, severe, and exact; and if he



at any time gave a wrong decision, it proceeded from a weakness rather than from a vice of the mind.

Shaw Jehân.

His son, Shaw Jehân, was possessed of better parts, and was more attentive than Jehangire to the business of the subject. He was minutely acquainted with the state of the empire, and being free from that caprice and whim which threw a kind of disgrace on the authority of his father, he rendered his people happy by the gravity, justice, and solemnity of his decisions. The empire flourished under his upright and able administration. Oppression was unknown from the officers of the crown, on account of the vigilance of the emperor; and the strict impartiality which he established in the courts of justice, diminished injuries between man and man.

Aurangzêbe.

Aurangzêbe, to whom business was amusement, added the most extensive knowledge of the affairs of the empire, to an unremitting application. He made himself minutely acquainted with the revenue paid by every district, with the mode of proceeding in the inferior courts, and even with the character and disposition of the several judges. He ordered the register of the rents to be left open for the inspection of all, that the people might distinguish extortion from the just demands of the crown. He commanded, that men versed in the usages of

of the several courts, in the precepts of the Coran, and in the regulations established by edicts, should attend at the public expence, and give their opinion to the poor in matters of litigation. He established a mode of appeal beyond certain sums; and he disgraced judges for an error in judgment, and punished them severely for corruption and partiality. His activity kept the great machine of government in motion through all its members: his penetrating eye followed oppression to its most secret retreats, and his stern justice established tranquillity, and secured property over all his extensive dominions.

When Baber, at the head of his army, took possession of the dominions of the Imperial family of Lodi, he continued to the crown the property of all the lands. These being annually rented out to the subject, furnished those immense revenues which supported the unequalled splendor of his successors in the throne. The property of individuals consisted, at first, of moveables and money only; and the officers of the crown could not even dispose of these by will, without the written consent of the prince. Time, however, wrought a change in things. The posterity of Baber alienated, for particular services, estates from the crown in perpetuity; and these descended in succession by will, or if the pro-

State of land-
ed



prietor died intestate, by an equal division to his children, according to the law of the Coran. This kind of property was also transferable by sale; and it has been judged, that one third part of the empire was given away by this species of grants from the crown.

property.

These grants, however, were not always a sufficient security against the violence of the crown. Some of the emperors found themselves obliged to resume many estates by an edict; and it must be confessed, that political necessity justified the measure. Princes who contended for the empire were lavish in their donations; and, had not an act of resumption sometimes taken place, the revenue of the crown would, in process of time, have been annihilated. There was, however, a kind of equivalent given to the proprietors; a pension was settled upon themselves, and their children were received into the service of the government. The wealth of the officers of the crown is, after their death, considered as Imperial property; but unless it is immense, it is never appropriated by the prince; and even in that case a proper provision is made for the children, and they have, by an established custom, a right to be employed in some of the departments of the state. The women of the deceased receive annual pensions according
ing



ing to their rank; and they may either live in widowhood, or make new alliances by marriage.

The Mogul system of government admits of no hereditary honours. Every man must owe his preferment and rank to himself, and to the favour of his prince. High birth, however, was respected; and, to a person of abilities, it was a great recommendation at the court of princes proud of their own noble origin. The ranks and degrees of nobility were for the most part official, excepting those of the military kind. Judges, men of letters, and eminent merchants, have been frequently dignified with titles, and admitted into the circle of the principal nobles in the Imperial presence. The nobles consisted of three orders. The EMIRS, who were the first officers of state, and the viceroys of provinces; the CHANS, who held high posts in the army; and the BAHADURS, who may in some measure be compared to our knights. The number of which these three orders consisted was arbitrary, and each of them had peculiar privileges in the empire, and a demand on the respect of the undignified part of the subjects.

Of titles of honour.

The course of justice ran through the same gradations, which the general reason of mankind seems to have established in all countries subject to regular governments.

Form of



ments. The provinces were divided into districts; in each of which a judge, appointed by the emperor, decided in criminal as well as civil affairs. He pronounced judgment on capital offences, but his sentence was never put in execution without the consent and warrant of the governor of the province. In disputes concerning property, there lay an appeal to the supreme court, in which the viceroy presided in person. Every province was, in miniature, a copy of the empire. Three principal judges, with high titles of dignity, sat, with many assessors, in the capital. They not only decided upon appeals, but suits might originate before them. The emperor himself, in the presence of his nobles, presided almost every day in this court, which generally sat for two hours in the hall of public justice.

justice.

When the matter appeared clear, the prince, without much hesitation, pronounced judgment; when it was doubtful, witnesses were examined, and the opinion of the judges asked on the point of law. Should the suit appear intricate, it was referred to the judgment of the court in their own common hall; but the subject might appeal from their decision to the emperor and his assessors in the chamber of audience. These courts, both when the monarch was present and when he was absent, were left open to the people. No judgment was ever pronounced



nounced secretly, except when the power of the delinquent rendered a public trial dangerous to the state.

The great officers of state, by a kind of prescription, formed a council which answers to our cabinet. The emperor asked their advice upon affairs of moment; he heard their sentiments, but nothing came ever to a vote. They were his advisers, but they had no controul on his power. He frequently called to this council men in inferior departments; and when the deliberation concerned any particular province, the nobles best acquainted with that part of the empire, were admitted into the cabinet. The offences of the first rank of nobility came under the cognizance of this council, as well as other matters of state. They were a kind of jury, who found the matters of fact, and the sovereign pronounced the sentence. He might, by his despotic power, issue out a warrant of death without their advice; but the known opinions of mankind on that subject bound him like a law.

Council of
state.

To these great lines of the government of the Moguls, some reflections may be joined. Conquests made by incursion, rather than by war, must be retained by violence. The sword, which obtained the empire, supported it under the house of Timur. Their subjects obeyed them

Reflections



them from necessity more than from choice; and the lenity of their administration arose more from the mildness of their disposition, than from the spirit of their regulations. The despotic principles of the Tartars, ingrafted upon the Mahomedan tenets of religion, led to force; and seemed to recognize no obedience but that which proceeded from fear. This circumstance obliged the despot to invest his deputies in the provinces with a great part of his power; and when they left his capital, they only did not absolutely rise from subjects into princes.

on the communication

This communication of power, though in some measure necessary to command the people, became dangerous to the prince. The Imperial deputies began to lose their allegiance in proportion to their distance from the throne. The governors became, in some measure, independent, though they professed obedience to the Imperial edicts. A certain portion of the revenue was remitted to court; and the deputy, in a venal court, found frequently means to retain the favour of his prince, when he disobeyed his commands. Every idea of loyalty was, towards the decline of the empire, destroyed among the people of the distant provinces. They heard of an emperor, as the superstitious hear of a guardian angel, whom they never behold. An indifference for his fate succeeded to his want of power. A peasant, at the end of many months, was informed of a revolution
at



at Delhi. He stopt not his oxen, nor converted the plow-share into a sword. He whistled unconcerned along his field; and enquired not, perhaps, concerning the name of the new prince.

Notwithstanding this indifference in the inferior sort, of power. the emperor every day extended symptoms of his superior power to the very extremities of his empire. His edicts were transmitted to every district; they were publicly read, and registered in the courts of justice. They became a security to the people against the impositions of the governor. An appeal lay from his decisions, by a petition to the emperor in the hall of audience. This doctrine was inculcated by the edicts; and some of the oppressed took advantage of the promise of justice which they contained. Their petitions, whenever they found access to the throne, were heard with the attention which a jealous prince pays to his own power; and there are many instances in which the governors of provinces have been severely punished for an act of injustice to a poor peasant. Never to forgive oppressions against the helpless and low, was an established maxim among all the princes of the house of Timur.

The power of disposing of the succession naturally belongs to a despot. On the rules of During his life, his pleasure is the of law.



law. When he dies his authority ceases, but the strength of custom has made his will, in favour of any of his sons, a superior title to primogeniture. The power is, in some measure, necessary. A prince having an independent right of succession to the throne, might be very troublesome to his father in an empire established on the principles which we have described. The weight which he might derive from his hopes, would clog the wheels of government, which, under a system of despotism, can admit of no delays, no obstructions, no divided or limited power. Personal abilities, under such a system, are more necessary than under established laws. A weak prince brings more calamities than a civil war. A minority is dreadful; and it can scarce exist, where the voice of the prince is the living law, which moves the whole machine of the state.

Succession to
the throne.

Necessity frequently excuses, in the eyes of mankind, the worst of crimes. A prince of abilities, who mounts a throne in the East by the exclusion of an elder brother, escapes the detestation of his subjects from the good which they hope to derive from his superior parts. Even fratricide loses its name in self-preservation, combined with the public good. The greatness of the crime is eclipsed by the greatness of the object. Success is a divine decision; and the state gives up the lives of the un-
happy

happy sufferers, as a sacrifice to its own repose. To be born a prince, is therefore a misfortune of the worst and most embarrassing kind. He must die by clemency, or wade through the blood of his family to safety and empire.

The Hindoos, or the followers of the Brahmin faith, are in number far superior to the Mahommedans in Hindostan. The system of religion which they profess, is only perfectly known in the effect which it has upon the manners of the people. Mild, humane, obedient, and industrious, they are of all nations on earth the most easily conquered and governed. Their government, like that of all the inhabitants of Asia, is despotic; it is, in such a manner, tempered by the virtuous principles inculcated by their religion, that it seems milder than the most limited monarchy in Europe. Some of the reigning princes trace their families, with clearness, above four thousand years; many of them, in a dubious manner, from the dark period which we place beyond the flood. Revolution and change are things unknown; and assassinations and conspiracies never exist.

Penal laws are scarce known among the Hindoos; for their motives to bad actions are few. Temperate in



their living, and delicate in their constitutions, their passions are calm, and they have no object but that of living with comfort and ease. Timid and submissive, from the coldness of a vegetable diet, they have a natural abhorrence to blood. Industrious and frugal, they possess wealth which they never use. Those countries, governed by native princes, which lay beyond the devastations of the Mahomedans, are rich, and cultivated to the highest degree. Their governors encourage industry and commerce; and it is to the ingenuity of the Hindoos, we owe all the fine manufactures in the East. During the empire of the Moguls, the trade of India was carried on by the followers of Brahma. The bankers, scribes, and managers of finance were native Hindoos, and the wisest princes of the family of Timur protected and encouraged such peaceable and useful subjects.

Hindoo government.

The nation of the Mahrattors, though chiefly composed of Rajaputs, or that tribe of Indians whose chief business is war, retain the mildness of their countrymen in their domestic government. When their armies carry destruction and death into the territories of Mahomedans, all is quiet, happy, and regular at home. No robbery is to be dreaded, no imposition or obstruction from the officers of government, no protection necessary but the shade. To be a stranger is a sufficient security.



rity. Provisions are furnished by hospitality; and when a peasant is asked for water, he runs with great alacrity, and fetches milk. This is no ideal picture of happiness. The Author of the Dissertation, who travelled lately into the country of the Mahrattors, avers, from experience, the truth of his observations. But the Mahrattors, who have been represented as barbarians, are a great and rising people, subject to a regular government, the principles of which are founded on virtue.



AN ENQUIRY
 INTO THE
 STATE OF BENGAL:
 WITH A
 Plan for restoring that Province to its former
 Prosperity and Splendor.

STATE OF BENGAL UNDER THE MOGULS.

Preliminary Observations.

THE affairs of India, though long of great im-
 portance to this kingdom, have only very lately
 become objects of public attention. Facts coming
 from afar made little impression: their novelty could
 not rouse, nor their variety amuse the mind. With a
 self-denial uncommon in a spirited nation, we heard
 without emotion, of the great actions of some of our
 countrymen; and, if we listened to any detail of opor-

