

The trammels of caste are unquestionably a bondage of the human mind, and break down every motive of honest ambition to attain excellence. Emulation is the mainspring to effort, and consequently to improvement ; but this is *almost* totally extirpated **from** the Ryot's nature :-born the son of a petty cultivator, no exertion, no industry, could raise him in the scale of society ; the most to which he could attain, would be the **grubbing** of a few more **biggahs** of land than had ever been grubbed in one year by his parent.

The effect is proclaimed with a trumpet-tongue by the fact, that the description given by **Arrian** of the Hindoos in the days of Alexander is a faithful description of them now, after a lapse of more than two thousand years.

If, **from** the obstacles introduced by the **theology** of Hindostan, we turn to inquire what has been done for it by its political rulers, we shall find that these have also inflicted their full measure of evil.

Under whatever form it may appear, the greatest possible check to improvement and exertion is a want of security that the object upon which **mind** and **labour** have been expended will continue to be enjoyed by the improver. Such uncertainty may arise **from** many causes,-as war, despotic government, imperfect police, and uncertainty of tenure. The agriculture of Hindostan has unfortunately been checked by the combined influence of all these causes.

War has been devastating some district of Hindostan ever since the county has been known to us; and during war, the progress of a native army, whether friendly or hostile, is almost equally fatal to the district through which it passes ; its depredations extend to the poorest and most sequestered Ryots, and the same universality of liability to robbery obtains in the frequent incursions of Dacoits (banded robbers), which are almost unchecked by the **inefficient** police. The despotic exaction of rent, or revenue, involves at the same time uncertainty of tenure ; if arrears occur, ejection soon follows, for the poor Ryot has only to oppose, even to unjust exaction, the obscure clauses of his Pottah (or lease), and is too destitute of money to uphold this by legal proceedings.+

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Indian possessions ; but by Regulation VII. of 1820, the **offence** of Dhuma is **punishable** with **imprisonment** for one year and fine of 1000 **rupees**. Sitting **Dhurna**, is sitting before the door of a debtor or an oppressor until restitution is obtained.

† Few **Ryots** are holders of Pottahs for more than a very small portion of their lands,- the giving such a document being evaded as **much** as possible by the **Zemindar**, or great landed proprietor of the district.

For some time after the British became masters of Bengal and Behar, the raising of the revenue was left in the hands of the native Zemindars, These met on an appointed day annually, for the purpose of settling the *Bundabest*, or rents and leases, for the following year, The *Zemindaries* (topographical divisions of the land so called) were exposed to public auction, and let to the highest bidder. Such competition, at first sight, appears equitable, and certainly *favourable* to the government treasury ; but it was soon found to insure *ruin* to the *Ryots* as well as to the Zemindars themselves, and, consequently, eventually to diminish, or almost annihilate, the revenue.

I shall not follow the Zemindary system through its innumerable shades of variation, for it is in principle the same from Cape *Comorin* to the *Himalayah* ; but I will merely touch, in outline, the system pursued in one district.

Let the neighbourhood of *Benares* be the example. There each Zemindary is subjected to the following officers :—

The *Zemindar*, who, in addition to the rent he exacts, is entitled to perquisites and privileges too numerous to *particularise* ;—for instance, every *artizan* works for him at a less price than for the tenants of the land within the Zemindary, and he extorts involuntary *benevolences* from the cultivators at certain seasons.

The person next in rank is the Putwari, the factor, or keeper of accounts between the proprietor and tenants : he collects the rents, whether paid in grain or money ; measures the ground ; and, in the absence of the Zemindar, presides as a *judicator* of the petty differences among the tenants. The farmer, or Ryot, pays this officer's salary, his due being a seer and a half of grain for every hundred seers paid to the *Zemindar*.\* For sugar, cotton, &c., not consumed on the estate, a certain portion of their price is paid to the Zemindar ; and for each rupee † paid to him, the Putwari receives half an *anna*, or about one-thirtieth.

Next to the Putwari is the *Byak*, or grain-weigher, who divides the grain between the Zemindar and the tenant by weight. He is paid by both parties, at the rate of twelve seers for every hundred *maunds* weighed.:

Where there are such officers, all able to *favour* or to oppress the cultivator, and all natives of a country where morality is at the lowest possible ebb, it is needless to observe that bribery is rife. *But*, ad-

\* A *seer* is equal to two *lbs.* English.

† A *rupee* is two shillings English.

‡ A *maund* is forty seers.

mitting that by the assistance of such petty corruption the Ryot is able to pay a few maunds of grain less than are the Zemindar's legal right, yet still the heavy exaction which they thus pay, and the contributions they have to make annually to the smith, carpenter, and other artizans of the Zemindary, independent of paying for each job, accumulate into such a large aggregate, that little more is left than suffices for the bare support of the cultivator.

A system better contrived strenuously to depress the farmer, and consequently to prevent the improvement of agriculture, the ingenuity of man could not well devise.

The village **Brahminical** priest is another of the drains upon the Hindoo cultivator. As each crop is collected in, this functionary is sent for to bless the heap, for which he receives, as his part, one measure of the grain in the fan, or implement employed in winnowing it.\*

• (Ind. Rec. ii. 200.) In **Mysore**, Dr. Buchanan found that the farmer had to pay the following contributions from his crop :—

His heap of grain is usually about 3000 seers. Of this is first set **apart**—

For the gods, or rather for the priests . . . . .	5	seers.
For charity, to the <b>Brahmins</b> and other mendicants	5	” JJ
For the Astrologer . . . . .	1	” JJ
” hereditary Brahmin of the village . . . . .	1	” JJ
” Barber . . . . .	2	” JJ
” Potter . . . . .	2	” JJ
” Carpenter and Blacksmith . . . . .	2	” JJ
” <b>Washerman</b> . . . . .	2	” JJ
” Measurer . . . . .	4	” JJ
” Beadle . . . . .	7	” JJ
” Chief of the village . . . . .	53	” JJ
” Accountant (at various times) . . . . .	200	” JJ
” Watchman . . . . .	10	” JJ
” Conductor of the water . . . . .	20	” JJ

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This leaves a remainder of 2686 seers. Of this, Government takes 10 per cent. and then half of the residue; so that when all these drains have been satisfied, the grower remains in possession of 1200 seers of rice, and from these he has to satisfy the **Zemindar** and his officers. Upon his other crops the exactions are different, but quite as heavy in proportion to their value (Buchanan's **Mysore**, i. 265).

It may be remarked, that the Ryots are liable to another inconvenience if their Zemindar be in **arrear** to Government ; for they are not allowed to touch the produce of their lands until the Government is satisfied with the security given by the Zemindar—and this, when cotton is cultivated, is a **very serious** injury.

There can be no doubt now felt by any unprejudiced mind, that the Marquis Cornwallis, acting with the advice of Lord Teignmouth, was in error when he invested the Zemindars with an hereditary title to property in **their respective** districts,\* He was wrong in his conclusion, that such property belonged to them, under the Native Princes ; and he was wrong in expecting that it would be beneficial to the revenues of the country. Whether the arrangement would benefit the Ryots, or improve the agriculture of Hindostan, probably was never considered ; but, **if it** were, and the measure was for such purposes considered good, the Governor-general was also wrong there. It is true that there are grants existing, creating *Talooks*, or districts, which the holder, or Talookdar, obtained by purchase, or as a reward, and empowering him to pay at once to the treasury ; others, conveying the lands to be held as *Altumgha*, hereditary, and esempt from contribution to the revenue ; and a third, in which the revenues were devoted to religious purposes (Asiatic Researches, ii.) ; but these are so rare, that they deserve no more than this transient notice.

The system almost universally obtaining, was that which allotted the **possessory** right of lands, **varying** in extent from ten to thirty English acres, to the Ryots, or terre-tenants. These they held under a lease, or Pottah, conditioned to pay a certain rent, generally in grain, and varying in amount from one-fourth to one-half of the annual produce. Such rent, constituting the revenue of every sovereign, was collected by means of Zemindars, who were neither more nor less than local revenue officers, appointed by an official writing minutely detailing their duties. But in all, the Zemindars collected the revenue arising from the land, with the duty superadded of being judges of the disputes and **offences** accruing within their districts.

It does not alter the character of the appointment, or the interest taken by the Zemindar, that it was usually renewed to his heir, because such heir could not enter upon his office or perform its duties until he had received the Zemindary *Sunnud*, or official appointment ; and this was in general not obtained without heavy payments to superior officers,

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• It would **be** misplaced to examine into this point here. Those who feel an interest in the subject may consult Sir C. B. Rouse's "Dissertation on the Nature of Landed Property in Bengal," and Mr. Grant's "Enquiry into the Nature of Zemindary Tenures." They take opposite views, yet the reader must conclude that the statements of the first-named writer confirm rather than refute those of the latter, which go to establish the fact, that the Native Princes were absolute **proprietors** of the soil, and the Zemindars merely revenue officials under them.

which will be-viewed as legitimate fees by some, but by others as bribes to be re-extorted **from** the miserable Ryots.

If by giving the fee-simple of the soil to the Zemindars of the time being, our Government hoped that they would be rendered more tender of the interests of those who cultivated the soil, that hope must have been based upon considerations foreign to the nature of the ignorant, thoughtless natives of Hindostan. It is true that the “**Institutes of Timour,**” the founder of the Mogul empire, direct the cultivators of the soil to be protected, wisely assigning as a reason, “that the ruin of the subject causes the imperial revenues to diminish ;” and the same sound policy is recommended in the more modern royal dictates of the *Ayeen Acbery* : but these were only the theoretical views and visions of the palace. They were directions wise and excellent ; but there was no trace of their spirit in the practice, in the actual political regime. The Zemindar was directed to be checked by the **Canongo** and Tharkar, other officials attached to his **Zemindary** ; but in practice they colluded with him, and only increased the number of those who preyed upon the Ryots.

By giving the perpetual proprietary to the Zemindar, the power, the uncontrolled and hereditary power, to continue his oppressions has been conferred. It is true that the Ryot has also the hereditary right of occupancy; but there is no sufficient security to him that the Zemindar shall not impoverish, or even force him to abandon his land, by increased exactions, whenever pique or necessity shall suggest the oppression. This is not what was intended by Marquis Cornwallis, for he replied to an objection of Mr. Shore (afterwards Lord **Teignmouth**),—“ If you mean that after having declared the Zemindar proprietor of the soil, in order to be consistent, we have no right to prevent his imposing new *Aboobabs*, or taxes, on the lands in cultivation, I must **differ from** you in opinion ;-unless we suppose the Ryots to be the absolute slaves of the Zemindars, every biggah of land possessed by them must have been cultivated under an express or implied agreement, that a certain sum should be paid for each biggah, of produce, and no more. Every *Aboobab*, or tax, imposed by a Zemindar above that sum is not only a breach of that- agreement, but a **direct** violation of the established laws of the country. The cultivator, therefore, has in such case an undoubted right to apply to Government for the protection of his property, and the Government is at all times bound to **afford** him redress.”

The intention to protect the Ryot is therefore manifest ; but that the intention has been ineffective, that the legal institutions have not been

sufficiently protective, and that agriculture and the revenue have consequently declined, are notorious facts. Government, in later years, confess this by their attempt to retrace their steps, by the remedy, at best of doubtful justice—the *resumption of Zemindaries*.

The above cursory statements are sufficient to point out that, than the Zemindary system, one more effectual to ruin the tenantry, and consequently the agriculture of a country, perhaps could not be devised.

The levying of rents, observes Dr. Tennant, has in general been a continued scene of fraud and evasion on one part, counteracted by plunder and oppression on the other. The nature and variety of the different tenures have been intricate, almost beyond conception ; and the consequence has been that hardly any lease has been specific or secure. In India **the** revenue of the state being the land-rent, the management of finances has a more immediate influence on agriculture than any other **part** of the administration.

The tenant, having nothing to protect him against the myrmidons who collect the revenue but the doubtful clauses of an obscure lease, was perfectly **defenceless**, and often plundered. No spirited agriculture can be sustained under such **circumstances**.—(Ind. Rec. ii. 20.)

The system binds the Ryot to hopeless poverty, and the effects of the consequent want of capital require but little illustration to enforce the perception of their tendency.

The poverty of the native Ryot is so extreme that he cannot afford, in most instances, to fatten even poultry for the market, much less sheep or oxen. The money to be advanced for their food is beyond his means ; and even supposing he has the industry and foresight to **suggest** and sustain the attempt, in the far greater majority of instances he must be checked by being unable to purchase the grain necessary for the animal, or to risk what would sustain his family for months, on the distant promise of receiving it again with an increase—a promise so liable to be frustrated by the rapacity of his landlord, and the uncertainty of his tenure.

It would not be difficult to demonstrate that all the obstacles to improvement which have been enumerated—even the want of **capital**—arise immediately or remotely from one source—national ignorance ; and the late Lord **W. Bentinck** was never more correct than when he said, that for all the evils of the Indian system—the poverty, inferiority, and degradation to which it gives rise—“ knowledge, knowledge, knowledge is the universal cure.”

To assist in the dissemination of this better knowledge is the duty of

every one who proceeds to India to profit by its produce. To remove the obstacles and the prejudices which are opposing improvement will require the exertion of our best efforts during many years.

Let no one be disheartened by the slowness of the onward progress, for it is **the** nature of the husbandman's solitary occupation to render him ignorantly attached to old practices, and excessively limited in his mental powers.

The stultifying influence of his occupation upon the unlearned cultivator was remarked more than two thousand years ago, for the Son of Sirach thus exclaims :—"How can he get wisdom that holdeth the **plough**, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their **labours**, and whose talk is of bullocks ? He giveth his mind to make furrows, and is diligent to give the kine **fodder**."—(Eccles. xxxviii. v. 25.)

If any become impatient because the improvement is not rapid, let them remember that even up to the commencement of the last century, the Irish farmer fastened his horses to the plough by their tails, and that it required a penalty, **affixed** by special statute (11 and 12 Car. II. cap. 15, Irish **Parl.**), to extirpate the practice. Let us then be patient with the somewhat more ignorant, but not more bigoted cultivators of Hindostan, and we shall find that **the** harvest of improvement will gradually increase, and reward those who have striven to benefit those by whom they benefit. Even a selfish motive to this exertion is not wanting, for, like all other good works, it will return a measure of benefit, and **the** improvement of agriculture will minister to the increase of the wealth and comfort of those who have wrought the improvement.

By thus striving for the benefit of India, we shall remove **from** the British character the stigma that there attaches, and which did not escape the notice of one of the most intelligent of Native authors, Gholam Hossein Khan. Men, he observes, who leave their native country, almost solely with the purpose to enlarge their wealth with the least practicable delay, and then to return, can have little inducement to confer permanent improvements upon the land of their temporary sojourn. The meritorious occupation of planting **topes**,\* digging wells, constructing roads, and other employments worthy of the wealthy and patriotic, will rarely be attempted in a country by those who are longing to leave its shores.

The chief object of every government ought to be the improvement

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• *A top* is a grove to yield **shade**, firewood, or fruit.

of the condition of the people for whose benefit that government exists ; and I think it would be well if that of India demonstrated, by establishing experimental farms in various districts, and showing upon them to the eyes of the natives the advantages to be derived from a better system of cultivation, and by the employment of better implements. The farming must not be of that description which is stated to have **characterised** a farm held by Tippto Saib near **Fatah-petta**, where, with every local advantage, the agriculture was far more slovenly than that on private farms.

Lord William Bentinck has recorded his opinion in favour of this plan, of establishing small farms throughout the provinces of India, as seminaries, or rather as examples of improved modes of cultivation : they would afford not only illustrations of what can be effected by an improved system of **farming**, but also be the nurseries **from** whence the seeds and plants of better varieties might be diffused.

The Indian Government, like that of all other countries, has been tardy in exerting its powers directly in attempting agrarian improvement ; but individual exertion has done much to compensate for the Government deficiency, and the exertions of individuals combined in the *Agricultural* and *Horticultural Society of India* has done still more.

The year 1820, in which this Society was instituted at **Calcutta**, ought ever to be held as a year auspicious to the welfare of India. It is true that it lingered during the first years of its existence ; but, under later and more vigorous management, it has become one of the most useful and prosperous of associations, and its usefulness is annually increasing, because its power is augmented by the increase of wealth attendant upon its popularity. This, as was justly observed in one of its reports, is only what might have been expected, when the public attention was once properly directed to the many objects of utility which it is the business of the Society to promote ;—that business is to strive for the prosperity of the nation, by ameliorating the condition of the people, through the improvement of the agricultural wealth of the land.

A society having this object in view, if its efforts are properly directed and sustained, cannot fail of being largely beneficial. Its means for making experiments (said the **original** prospectus), and conducting necessary operations, must be more **effectual** than those of insulated individuals. . A body of men engaged in the same pursuits form a joint-stock of their information and experience, and put every

individual in possession of the total acquired by them all. Even the mistakes and miscarriages of its members, when recorded, prove a source of advantage to the body; whilst the **labours** of each communicate new **energy** to his associates, and thus produce exertions which would never have been made had they continued in their individual capacity, instead of uniting as a body. (Trans. Agri-Hort. Soc. of India, i. 211. )

To demonstrate that the Society has fulfilled the promises and **realised** the prospects held out in its prospectus, the **sceptical** may confidently be referred to the volumes of its Transactions : they will there find collected the agricultural practices of **different** districts, **affording** the best means of detecting errors and of obtaining better knowledge. There are accumulated the suggestions of science, as well as the results of experience ; there they will find a record of ably-directed and persevering efforts, under adverse circumstances, to improve the staple products of India ; there they will see research extended to every quarter of the globe, to obtain new or improved objects for cultivation ; they will find prizes awarded to the diligent, and others offered to stimulate to renewed exertion ; they will find branch societies formed, and others forming, nearly twenty in number, in various districts of India, all communicating with the parent Society, and all acting as centres from which improvement is diverging.

The Society's power to benefit would be still further increased if the Government empowered it to establish small nursery-farms in **different** districts ; and a benefit not less important would be accomplished by a similar co-operation in the general formation of roads. It is not advancing an untenable axiom to assert, that no county can become eminently commercial or agricultural which is unprovided with these essentials to internal communication. Now, no country is more **des- titute** of roads than Hindostan ; and the consequence to be drawn is, that neither its commerce nor its agriculture can be extensively increased **until** this deficiency is removed.

If the roads were improved, wheel carriages might be employed by the Ryot, more generally, not only in the transport of his field produce, hut in the other operations attendant upon culture ; whereas at present infinite time and **labour** are lost in manual transport.

At present a fatal impediment to the introduction of mineral and **other** manures, even if Native prejudice were overcome, exists in the absence of roads ; for to transport chalk, or other heavy material, in baskets upon men's heads to any considerable distance, is out of the question. Where navigable rivers occur, the transmission by them is

easy and sufficiently cheap. If goods have to be transmitted an hundred miles, the cost is about three rupees per hundred maunds if a boat be hired ; but the expense is said to be much less if the merchant employs his own boat. The average rate of travelling with and against the stream is twenty-five miles per day.

Land carriage is effected by means of small oxen, four of which can be managed' by one driver. Sometimes small horses and buffaloes are employed. A maund of goods can be thus transmitted at the rate of about half **an anna** per diem.\* This cheapness arises in part from the ease with which the beasts are sustained. They never have any grain, and rarely even straw, but pick up their subsistence from the road-sides. Buffaloes require better provision.

It appears to me that it would not be very difficult for Government to compel every **Zemindary** to farm certain desirable roads, and to keep them in thorough repair by rendering the head of each **Zemindary** liable to a penalty if the roads within its bounds were suffered to be in defective condition.

The local roads of England are kept in most excellent order by compelling each parish to attend to the repairs of the portions within its limits. The effect of a somewhat similar provision is not unknown in India, for the funds collected by farming the ferries are professedly for the purpose of making roads &c., and in Tirhoot, **Shahabad**, and some other parts, a sort of half-voluntary, half-compulsory tax is levied regularly for that purpose, and the good effect is shown by the roads thereabouts being in superior condition.

After these preliminary and general observations as an introduction, I will proceed in my next communication to a more particular detail of the Native practice of agriculture, suggesting such improvements as may appear to be practicable as I proceed.

(To be continued.)

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\* *An anna* is about three-halfpence English.