CHAPTER XVII

RACES—LANGUAGES—CASTES—RELIGIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS

Races—Aryans—Dravidians—Languages of India—Distribution of population among various Religions—The Hindus—Animism—Religion of the Hindus—Illustrations of the Religion of an Indian province—Brahmanism—Caste—Reverence for Brahmans—Caste not confined to Hindus—The Mohammedans in India—Their distribution—Animosity between Hindus and Mohammedans—Causes of political anxiety—Increase of Mohammedanism in Bengal—Buddhists—Christianity in India—Jains—Sikhs—Parsis.

I DO not propose to say more than a few words regarding the ethnographical history of India. Knowledge of the subject is still in its infancy. There can, however, be no doubt that some, at least, of the conclusions drawn from modern philological and physiological research, and from the ancient literature of India, must contain a considerable amount of truth.

It appears that in times of which we have no historical record, there came into North-Western India from Central Asia a race of men called Arya. Their language was Sanskritic, closely allied to the languages of Greeks, Romans, Celts, and Germans. Gradually they spread themselves over Northern India, expelling or enslaving the races with whom they came into contact. These were dark-coloured people, inferior in all the arts of civilised life to the Aryan immigrants.

In the North, under Aryan domination, the Hindu polity and religion grew up as they are described in ancient Sanskrit literature. Many vestiges of the lower races still remain, especially in the wilder and more inaccessible tracts, but throughout the Indo-Gangetic plain their subjugation was complete. In the southern parts of India the Aryans never established themselves in general possession, but the Brahmans succeeded in obtaining recognition for their claim to universal veneration, and in including the local religions within the pale of Hinduism. The so-called Dravidian races of Southern India differ greatly in physical characteristics from the peoples of the North.

Throughout almost the whole of the countries of Northern and North-Western India, containing a population of some one hundred and sixty millions, Aryan supremacy, although not necessarily Aryan origin, for language is no test of race, is shown by the languages of the people. Although these differ greatly among themselves, the vocabulary of all of them is mainly Sanskritic. The most widely spoken of these, and of all the languages of India, although its dialects are very numerous, is Hindi. It is spoken, in various forms, by some ninety millions of people. Eighteen millions speak Punjábi, eleven millions Gujaráthi, nineteen millions Maráthi, and more than forty millions Bengáli.

The Dravidian languages of Southern India have no affinity to those of the Aryan group. They are spoken by more than fifty millions of people. The chief of them are Támil, Telugu, Kanarese, and Malayálam, but there are many dialects.

Other distinct classes of languages are those known as Kolarian, spoken by various tribes, of which the Santháls, in Bengal, are the most numerous; the

languages allied to Tibetan; and Burmese. The last-named language is spoken by about six millions of people.

Altogether, seventy languages are enumerated in the census returns of 1891 as spoken in India, but many of these are dialects rather than distinct languages. Europe does not present, in this respect, greater diversity than India.

According to the census of 1901, the two hundred and ninety-four millions of people, for whom returns were furnished, were distributed among the principal religions as follows:—

Hindu	207,146,000
Animistic	8,711,000
Sikh	2,195,000
Jain	1,334,000
Parsi	94,000
Buddhist	9,477,000
Jew	18,000
Christian	2,923,000
Mohammedan	62,458,000

In regard to the religion of the Hindus in ancient times, or as it is described in ancient Sanskrit literature, and in regard to the forms in which it is professed by the less ignorant classes, who constitute a comparatively very small proportion of the population, I shall say nothing. The subject is one on which it is easy to find information. I propose now to refer only to the religion of the masses of the people, which, until not very long ago, had hardly been noticed in books professing to describe the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindus.

The religion of the masses of the agricultural population, which includes the great majority of the in-

habitants of the Indian continent, has little resemblance to the more orthodox forms of Hinduism. I have laid much stress on the fact, which lies at the very root of all knowledge about India, that neither India as a whole nor any Indian country possesses, according to European ideas, any sort of unity. This is especially true of religion. There are more than two hundred millions of people that we call Hindus, but the term Hindu is one of which no definition is possible.

Excepting the wild tribes which have not yet been engulfed in the ocean of Brahmanism, every one in India is called a Hindu who is not a Mohammedan or a Christian, or a professor of some other recognised creed. "The faith of the masses," as Mr. Baines says, "is purely local," and "saturated with Animistic conceptions."

Before going farther, this term "Animistic," which was adopted in the census of 1891, and in that of 1901, must be noticed. I quote, from the report of Mr. Baines, Dr. Tiele's interpretation of the word :—

"Animism is the belief in the existence of souls or spirits, of which only the powerful—those on which man feels himself dependent, and before which he stands in awe—acquire the rank of divine beings, and become objects of worship. These spirits are conceived as moving freely through earth and air, and, either of their own accord, or because conjured by some spell, and thus under compulsion, appearing to men (*Spiritism*). But they may also take up their abode, either permanently or temporarily, in some object, whether lifeless or living it matters not; and this object, as endowed with higher power, is then worshipped or employed to protect individuals or communities (*Fetishism*). Spiritism, essentially the same as what is now called Spiritualism, must be carefully distinguished from Fetishism, but can only rarely be separated from it."

"In the stage of development (Mr. Baines continues) in which we find Animism in India, it has passed from its archaic and indeterminate shape into a collection of polydaimonistic tribal

religions, in which spells, magic, and exorcism are all prominent. In this stage the malevolent spirits are considered the more important, and little notice is taken of the good. The main object, in the first place, is to get power over the spirits by magic, and, in a higher stage of belief, by gifts or homage. These notions are to be found in every stage of evolution in different parts of India, but the term Animistic has been restricted, in the census tables, to a certain class of the community. As in the case of several other forms of creed in that country, it is necessary to define the scope of the title negatively, or by explaining what is not included under it, rather than what is. In anticipation, therefore, of an explanation of the term Hindu, it may be stated that it was the intention of the framers of the rules for enumeration, that under the head of Animistic should come all members of the forest tribes who were not locally acknowledged to be Hindu, Musalman, Christian, or Buddhist by religion. . . . The distinction between the tribal form of faith and that of the lower grades of Bráhmanic community is very elastic. . . . But the distinction is really of little moment, because every stratum of Indian society is more or less saturated with Animistic conceptions, but little raised above those which predominate in the early stages of religious development."[1]

Sir Alfred Lyall has given, in his *Asiatic Studies*, an interesting account of modern Hinduism.

"The term 'Hindu' is not," he writes, "a national, or even a geographical denomination, but signifies vaguely a fortuitous conglomeration of sects, tribes, hereditary professions and castes." The Hindu religion is "a religious chaos." . . . "I doubt whether any one who has not lived among Hindus can adequately realise the astonishing variety of their ordinary religious beliefs, the constant changes of shape and colour which these beliefs undergo, the extraordinary fecundity of the superstitious sentiment." Hinduism is "a tangled jungle of disorderly superstitions, ghosts, and demons, demi-gods, and deified saints, household gods, tribal gods, local gods, universal gods, with their countless shrines and temples, and the din of their discordant rites—deities who abhor a fly's death, and those who delight still in human victims."[2]

[1] *General Report on the Census of India*, 1891, p. 157. [2] *Asiatic Studies*, p. 2.

If a religion be a creed with certain distinctive tenets, the Hinduism of the mass of the people is not a religion at all. Their religion is in no way represented by the sacred books of Sanskrit literature. The sanctity of the Vedas is an accepted article of faith among Hindus who have heard of their existence, but they have nothing to do with the existing popular beliefs. The Puránas, and other comparatively late works, which Elphinstone says may be called the scriptures of modern Hinduism, have no practical connection with the religion of the great majority of the population. Some of their gods and goddesses and heroes, indeed, have almost everywhere, in one form or another, places among the recognised deities. Millions of pilgrims flock to the shrines of Vishnu and Siva, for, as Mr. Baines says, "pilgrimages are the substitutes for most other religious observances, always excepting those connected with the propitiation of local spirits, whether family or attached to the house or village." Krishna and Ráma are loved from one end of India to the other, and the popularity of Hanumán is universal, but the everyday life of the ordinary Indian peasant is usually very little affected by thoughts of Hindu mythology. I am now speaking of the rural population. In the larger towns there is much more of the Hinduism that we read about in books.

Sir Alfred Lyall, in his first chapter, has described the religion of an Indian province, taking his illustrations mostly from Berár, in Central India. I will not refer to them because they are easily accessible, but I will quote some passages from a very instructive and valuable report by Sir Denzil Ibbetson, of the Civil Service, on the census of 1881 in the Punjab. It follows closely on the lines of Sir Alfred Lyall's

work, and its facts are applicable in their general character, although not in all their details, to a very great part of India.

Hinduism—or, to give it its more appropriate name, Brahmanism—is, as Sir Denzil Ibbetson says, a sacerdotalism rather than a religion.

"The veneration for Brahmans runs through the whole social as well as religious life of a Hindu peasant, and takes the practical form of either offerings or food. No child is born, named, betrothed, or married; nobody dies or is burnt; no journey is undertaken, or auspicious day selected; no house is built, no agricultural operation of importance begun, or harvest gathered in, without the Brahmans being feed and fed; a portion of all the produce of the field is set apart for their use; they are consulted in sickness and in health, they are feasted in sorrow and in joy. But with the spiritual life of the people, so far as such things exist, they have no concern. Their business as Brahmans is to eat and not to teach. . . . The sacerdotal despotism has altogether overshadowed the religious element, and the caste system has thrust its roots so deep into the whole social fabric that its sanction is social rather than religious. A man may disbelieve in the Hindu trinity; he may invent new gods of his own, however foul and impure; he may worship them with the most revolting orgies; he may even abandon all belief in supernatural powers, and yet remain a Hindu; but he must reverence and feed the Brahmans, he must abide by caste rules and restrictions, he must preserve himself from ceremonial pollution, and from contact and communion with the unclean, on pain of becoming Anathema Maranatha."

This general veneration of Brahmans, and the recognition of their divine right to be fed by the rest of the community, is the main link between the countless shapes of Hinduism; this, to the great majority of Hindus, constitutes in practice the chief part of their religion. But there is another bond of union which must not be forgotten—the universal belief in the holiness of the cow. The Hindu is by no means remarkable

for humanity in the treatment of his cattle, but their lives are sacred. Kine-killing has often been a capital offence in Native States. In Kashmir it was, until not long ago, punished either with death or with imprisonment for life.

Sir Alfred Lyall was the first to explain clearly the process which has been going on, and which, wherever opportunity offers, goes on still, by which Brahmanism brings within its pale almost all the forms of worship with which it comes into contact, and adopts without objection all sorts of strange gods and demons. There has been, in his words, "a gradual Brahmanising of the aboriginal, non-Aryan, or casteless tribes," and nothing in Hinduism is more remarkable than the manner in which it has gone on, and still goes on, increasing the number of its adherents.

Mr. Risley, of the Indian Civil Service, has given from his own observation, in his work on *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, a work that is the most important contribution hitherto made to Indian ethnography, illustrations of the processes by which these conversions to Hinduism are accomplished. Sometimes, as he shows, the leading men of an aboriginal tribe, desirous of increased dignity, manage to enrol themselves in one of the recognised castes.

"They usually set up as Rajputs, their first step being to start a Brahman priest, who invents for them a mythical ancestor, supplies them with a family miracle connected with the locality where their tribes are settled, and discovers that they belong to some hitherto unheard-of clan of the great Rajput community. In the earlier stages of their advancement they generally find great difficulty in getting their daughters married, as they will not marry within their own tribe, and Rajputs of their adopted caste will of course not intermarry with them. But after a generation or two their persistency obtains its reward, and they

intermarry, if not with pure Rajputs, at least with a superior order of manufactured Rajputs, whose promotion into the Brahmanical system dates far enough back for the steps by which it was gained to have been forgotten. Thus a real change of blood may take place; while in any caste the tribal name is completely lost, and with it all possibility of accurately separating this class of people from the Hindus of purer blood, and of assigning them to any particular non-Aryan tribe. They have been absorbed in the fullest sense of the word, and henceforth pose, and are locally accepted as high-caste Hindus. All stages of the process, family miracle and all, can be illustrated by actual instances taken from the leading families in Chota Nagpur.

"In other cases whole tribes or sections of tribes (Mr. Risley tells us) may become enrolled in the ranks of Hinduism as members of a caste claiming an origin of remote antiquity, or they may become gradually converted without abandoning their tribal designation." He gives an illustration of the latter case in the Bhumij tribe of Western Bengal. "Here a pure Dravidian race have lost their original language, and now speak only Bengali; they worship Hindu gods in addition to their own (the tendency being to delegate the tribal gods to the women), and the more advanced among them employ Brahmans as family priests. They still retain a set of totemistic subdivisions, but they are beginning to forget the totems which the names of the subdivisions denote, and th names themselves will probably soon be abandoned in favour c more aristocratic designations. The tribe will then have becom a caste, and will go on stripping itself of all customs likely t betray its true descent. The physical characteristics of i members will alone survive."[1]

By these and by similar processes which have certainly been in operation for many centuries, the non-Aryans of India have gone on being absorbed into Hinduism. To become a Hindu by any of the methods of conversion by which other religions are recruited is impossible. Every orthodox Hindu will tell us that no one can become a Hindu who was not born one. There can be no proselytism, and no one becomes a Hindu by

[1] *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Introduction, pp. xvi. xvii.

religious conviction. It is not the less true that there is no religion that obtains from outside its borders a larger number of fresh votaries. It works, as Mr. Risley says, in a different and more subtle fashion.

"It leaves existing aggregates very much as they were, and so far from welding them together, after the manner of Islam, with larger cohesive aggregates, tends rather to create an indefinite number of fresh groups; but every tribe that passes within the charmed circle of Hinduism inclines sooner or later to abandon its more primitive usages or to clothe them in some Brahmanical disguise. One by one the ancient totems drop off, or are converted by a variety of ingenious devices into respectable personages of the standard mythology; the fetish gets a new name, and is promoted to the Hindu Pantheon in the guise of a special incarnation of one of the greatest gods; the tribal chief sets up a family priest, starts a more or less romantic family legend, and in course of time blossoms forth as a new variety of Rajput. His people follow his lead, and make haste to sacrifice their women at the shrine of social distinction. Infant-marriage, with all its attendant horrors, is introduced; widows are forbidden to marry again; and divorce, which plays a great and, on the whole, a useful part in tribal society, is summarily abolished. Throughout all these changes, which strike deep into the domestic life of the people, the fiction is maintained that no real change has taken place, and every one believes, or affects to believe, that things are with them as they have been since the beginning of time."[1]

Mr. Risley adds that it is curious to observe that the operation of these tendencies has been quickened, and the sphere of their action enlarged, by the extension in India of railway communication. Pilgrimages become easier and more pleasant, and "Siva and Krishna drive out the tribal gods as surely as grey shirtings displace the more durable hand-woven cloth."

With regard to the worship of the gods, the important matter to the Hindu peasant is the propitiation of the

[1] *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Introduction, p. xxviii.

tribal or other deity who attends to the affairs of his own particular caste or occupation, and of the local gods and ghosts and saints and demons who haunt every hill and grove and village. Their names are often unknown, or little cared for, outside the limits of their personal or territorial authority, and their numbers are countless. These powers, for the most part malevolent, go on multiplying or perishing; they are maintained or degraded according to their deserts; frequent miracles, the stream of which in India is never-ending, support the faith of their devotees or transfer it to some new object; and all of them are readily accepted as worthy of veneration or fear by the Brahmans; the gates of the Hindu Pantheon are never shut. These local gods and evil powers are at all times on the alert to resent and punish neglect and disrespect. Little is to be hoped from them, but everything is to be feared. Every disease and every misfortune is more or less dependent on their influence, and the life of the Indian peasant is bound up with the observances required to give a certain amount of security against this ever-present danger. In Southern India, and in Lower Bengal, the number and power of local deities and malevolent spirits are even greater than in the north. "It almost seems (Mr. Baines observes) that the weaker the race the more numerous and bloodthirsty are its gods, and the greater the influence of the sacerdotal system of caste."

In the Indian superstitions there is almost always a grotesque element. I will give a few examples of them; they will not be applicable to any one extensive tract, for custom in regard to these matters is infinitely various, but they will not on this account be less characteristic.[1]

[1] I have taken these illustrations of local superstitions from Sir Denzil Ibbetson's "Report on the Census of the Punjab," from Sir Henry Elliot's *Races*

The most dreaded of the minor deities in Northern India are those who cause special diseases. The smallpox goddess, Sítala, is the eldest and most formidable of seven fatal sisters. She is worshipped by women and children only, and enormous numbers of them attend her shrines. She usually rides on a donkey, and therefore it is proper to give a feed of grain at her shrine to the donkey of the village potter, first waving the grain and white cocks over the head of the child to be protected. At the same time black dogs are fed, fowls, pigs, goats, and cocoa-nuts are offered. An adult who has had smallpox must let a pig loose for Sítala, or he will be attacked again. If an epidemic of smallpox appears in the village the goddess is punished by the cessation of all worship and offerings, but so long as the disease is absent nothing is too good for her. She is easily frightened or deceived, and when a woman has lost a son by smallpox, and fears that another may be attacked, it is desirable to let the goddess understand that the second son is of no value, and, as evidence of this, to send him round the village in a dust-pan, or to dress him in old rags borrowed from the neighbours.

Everything is to be feared from the malevolent dead. A man who has died a violent death, or without sons, is dangerous, and it is prudent to erect a shrine to him. One of these ghosts of great fame in the Delhi territory is Teja. He was taking milk to his aged mother when a snake bit him on the nose. He begged to be allowed to take the milk to her, and then came back to be again

of the North-Western Provinces, and from the *Report on the Settlement of Bareilly*, by Mr. Moens. I have often given the words of the original authors, but so much has been omitted or altered that I have not marked all my borrowings as quotations, and it has therefore to be explained that nearly all that is said on this subject is due to the authorities that I have named, and especially to Sir Denzil Ibbetson's interesting Report.

bitten and killed. These evil ghosts are especially dangerous to women and children after eating sweetmeats, and a pinch of salt should be taken as a precaution. They are fond of going down your throat when you yawn. They cannot set foot on the ground, so it is wise in haunted places to sleep on the ground and not on a bed. Very often they take up their abode in animals dangerous to human life.

The Evil eye is more common and dangerous than the jettatura of Naples. Malignant influence is often exercised by inanimate objects. I have myself been officially obliged, in one of the Hill districts, to interfere on behalf of a considerable population, to give protection against a small white house newly built in a conspicuous situation, the owner of which sorrowfully admitted that, through no fault of his own, it was undoubtedly bringing ruin on his neighbours. Sir Alfred Lyall has given examples of the worship of inanimate objects of strange appearance. I knew a case in which the sight of a distant mountain peak of peculiar form had caused for many years the complete abandonment of a village and of a rich tract of cultivated land. Good and bad omens are innumerable. Two water-pots, one on the top of the other, are especially fortunate if they be left to the right in passing; and the same rule is applicable to cows and antelopes; a snake, on the other hand, should be passed on the left.

I will give, merely as illustrations, a few examples of local superstitions :—

"If," writes Sir Denzil Ibbetson, referring to the Punjab, "a boy be born, a net is hung over the doorway, a chain stuck on to the wall, and a fire lighted on the threshold, which is kept up night and day to prevent evil spirits from passing. The swaddling-clothes should be borrowed from another person's house. On the

night of the sixth day the whole household sits up and watches over the child, for on that day his destiny is determined, especially as to immunity from smallpox. If he go hungry on that day he will be stingy all his life. None of these precautions are taken on the birth of a girl."

No agricultural operations can be carried on without the performance of certain ceremonies, and the superstitions connected with them are endless. I will give one or two illustrations taken from the Agra Province and the Punjab. This is the manner in which the planting of sugar-cane is commenced in parts of Rohilkhand. When the ground is ready the plough is worshipped and decorated. This goes first, and is followed in the same furrow by a second. Behind this comes the sower, wearing silver ornaments, a necklace of flowers, a red mark on his forehead, and lamp-black on his eyelids. Before beginning his work he is regaled with ghee and sweetmeats. He strews the bits of sugar-cane into the furrow at intervals of about a foot. He is called the elephant. Behind him comes a second man, called the crow, who picks up any bits which have not fallen into the furrow. A third man, called the donkey, supplies the elephant with sugar-cane from a basket tied to his waist. It is a fortunate omen if a man on horseback comes into the field while this is going on. When the work is done, all who have been engaged in it go to the house of the cultivator of the field and have a dinner, composed of pulse, milk and spices, rice, and cakes of unleavened bread. In some districts the wife of the elephant follows with a ball of cotton. At some unexpected moment he turns on her, and after a sham contest bears her to the ground. The cotton, being forced out of her hand, spreads upon the ground, and

the parties present exclaim, "May our sugar-cane grow and spread like this cotton." Not the least essential part of this and all other proceedings is that the Brahmans must be fed and proper offerings given to them.

Sir Denzil Ibbetson gives some examples of superstitions in the Punjab regarding cattle. Nothing connected with them, such as butter or leather, must be bought or sold on Saturday or Sunday. The manner in which, when cattle-plague first appears in a village, it can be cast out, and transferred to the next village in the East, is curious. All field work, grinding, and cooking are stopped on Saturday morning, and on Sunday night a procession takes a buffalo skull, a lamb, sticks of the *siras* tree, butter-milk, fire, and sacred grass to the boundary, over which they are thrown, while a gun is fired three times to frighten away the disease. "Last year a man was killed in an affray resulting from an attempt to transfer the plague in this manner. A villager in Gurgáon once captured the cattle-plague in its material shape, and would not let it go till it promised never to remain where he or his descendants were present; and his progeny are still sent for when murrain has fastened on a village, to walk round it and call on the plague to fulfil its contract."

Great power over milch-cattle is exercised by the Singhs, or snake-gods, and the milk of the eleventh day after calving is sacred to them. These Singhs have a widespread reputation among the villagers of Northern India. Those best known are the black, green, and grey Singhs; but dead men have a way of becoming snakes, so their numbers multiply, and shrines must be erected to them. If a peasant sees a snake he will salute it, and if it bites him he or his heirs will build a shrine to prevent similar occurrences in future.

Among the conditions in which India differs from every other country in the world there is nothing more prominent and remarkable than the institution of caste. The Hindu population of India is extraordinarily diverse, but it has almost everywhere this common characteristic, that it is divided into castes, each of which is governed in all the relations of social life by its own customs. The number of these castes is almost infinite. Many of them may often be included under the same or a similar designation, but even the highest castes are constantly divided into sections, the members of which are separated by wide differences of custom, who cannot intermarry and cannot eat together without pollution. The one thing in which they all agree is in the reverence due to Brahmans.

It is one of the delusions about modern India that although there have been many changes in the system of caste, it remains true that the Hindu population is divided into the four great classes described by Manu : Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras. In India itself this notion is often fostered by the more learned among the Brahmans, who love to make themselves and others believe in the continuous existence of a divinely constituted organisation. To what extent the religious and social systems shadowed forth in the ancient Brahmanical literature of India had an actual existence it is difficult to say, but it is certain that little remains of them now. The Brahmans, indeed, maintain their exceptional position.

The interesting but most difficult and complicated question of the origin of caste in India is one into which I cannot attempt, even in the most cursory manner, to enter. To the ordinary observer caste appears at the present time to mean for the most part hereditary

occupation. India, in the words of Sir Henry Maine, is seen to be divided into a vast number of independent, self-acting, organised social groups—trading, manufacturing, cultivating—and in the majority of instances caste is only the name for a number of practices which are followed by each one of a multitude of groups of men. "As a rule, every trade, every profession, every guild, every tribe, every class, is also a caste; and the members of a caste not only have their special objects of worship, selected from the Hindu Pantheon, or adopted into it, but they exclusively eat together, and exclusively intermarry." This, however, represents only a portion of the facts. Occupation is far from being necessarily a sign of caste. There is no caste, not even the highest, that of Brahmans, members of which are not to be found in almost every occupation, provided only that it involves no personal or ceremonial pollution. Although very often an indication of caste, occupation cannot have been its origin. Mr. Risley, whose work I have already quoted in speaking of the closely connected subject of religion, has thrown by his researches much new light upon this question. Starting with the well-established fact that although religion, language, and custom may give, in the words of Professor Flower, valuable indications, they are no true tests of race, and that these can only be found in physical characteristics; and observing that obvious and persistent physical differences can often be seen between the various castes of India, Mr. Risley applied to the castes and tribes of Bengal, and of other provinces, those scientific methods of comparing and recording typical physical characteristics, which in other countries have added so greatly to ethnographic knowledge. Elaborate anthropometric investigations led him to the conclusion that the true origin

of caste is to be found in race. His researches have shown that "the race sentiment of the Aryans, which runs through the whole course of Indian tradition, and survives in scarcely abated strength at the present day . . . so far from being a figment of the intolerant pride of the Brahmans, rests upon a fact, which scientific methods confirm, that it has shaped the intricate groupings of the caste system, and has preserved the Aryan type in comparative purity in Northern India."[1]

Among the almost innumerable castes there is none that has so many members as that of the Brahmans. According to the census of 1891 they numbered 14,800,000. Besides these there were only three castes each of which had more than 10,000,000 members: Rájput, Kunbi (agriculturists), and Chamár (workers in leather). About 16 per cent of the inhabitants of India were included in these four castes. There were between forty and fifty others, each of which had more than a million members.

The distinctions and subdivisions of all these castes are innumerable, and even the Brahmans are as much divided among themselves as the rest. They are usually said to consist of two great divisions, but according to Mr. Sherring, in his work on *Hindu Tribes and Castes*, there are more than 1800 Brahmanical subdivisions; and it constantly happens that to a Brahman of some particular class or district the pollution of eating with other Brahmans would be ruinous. They are numerous almost everywhere; Oudh is one of their

[1] *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Introduction, p. i. To those who desire to study this difficult question of caste in India, Mr. Risley's important work cannot be too strongly recommended. A very interesting book on the same subject, whether or not all the conclusions of its author be accepted, is M. Émile Senart's *Les Castes dans l'Inde*, published in the *Annales du Musée Guimet Bibliothèque de Vulgarisation*.

especial strongholds. In that province in 1881 they constituted one-seventh of the Hindu population.

"Every one of them," writes Mr. Benett, "is invested with a reverence which no extreme of abject poverty, no infamy of private conduct, can impair, and which is beyond anything which a mind not immediately conversant with the facts can conceive. They are invariably addressed with the titles of divinity or highest earthly honour. The oldest and highest of the members of other castes implore the blessing of the youngest and poorest of theirs; they are the chosen recipients of all charity, and are allowed a licence in their private relations with the inferior castes which would be resented as a deadly injury in any but themselves."

The Brahmans have become so numerous that only a small proportion can be employed in sacerdotal functions, and the charity which it is a duty to bestow upon them could not, however profuse, be sufficient for their support. They are found in almost every occupation. They are soldiers, cultivators, traders, and servants; they were very numerous in the old Sepoy army, and the name of one of their subdivisions, "Pánde," became the generic term by which the mutineers of 1857 were commonly known by the English in India. The number of Brahmans in the public service is very large. "Their number"—I am quoting from the Report of the Public Service Commission—"is sixfold that of any other Hindu caste, except the Kayasths—who, however, are only half as numerous as the Brahmans—and it represents a proportion of about 35 per cent on the total number of persons employed in the executive and judicial branches of the public service. This is especially noteworthy when it is remembered that the number of males of the Brahman caste bears a proportion of only between 7 and 8 per cent to the total male Hindu population of British India."

It is remarkable that the Brahmans, with rare exceptions, have never aspired to actual sovereignty.

The ordinary assumption that caste in India is an institution entirely peculiar to Hindus is erroneous.

Sir Denzil Ibbetson, in his Report on the census in the Punjab, shows how completely it is true that caste is now a social and not a religious institution. Conversion to Mohammedanism, for instance, has often no effect on the caste of the convert. The same is sometimes true of converts to Christianity. Mr. Baines tells us, for example, of a Christian apothecary in Madras who asked that a wall might be built round the yard of the dispensary of which he had official charge, in order that the women of his family might take exercise in the seclusion due to their caste.

There has often been much misapprehension about the Indian Mohammedans, of whom there are more than 62,000,000. Among all the countries of India there are only two in which the Mohammedans are very numerous, and many of them are so ignorant of the religion to which they nominally belong, and so little devoted to its tenets, that they might almost as properly be counted among the innumerable classes of Hindus.

Throughout the long strip of country, for the most part scantily peopled, in the valley of the Indus, below the mountains of Afghanistán and Baluchistán, that form the western frontier of India, the great majority of the population has been for many centuries Mohammedan. This tract, varying in breadth to a maximum of about 400 miles, extends for some 800 miles, from beyond Peshâwar on the north, through the plains of the Western Punjab and Sind to the sea. Although within the geographical limits of India it is very

distinct from any other Indian country. The dominant races of Pathâns and Baluchis are of foreign origin, but the majority of the population consists of the descendants of Hindu or aboriginal tribes, who long ago accepted, more or less, the religion of their conquerors. The North-West Frontier Province contained, according to the census of 1901, nearly 2,000,000 Mohammedans and only 134,000 Hindus.

In the eastern and richer and more populous parts of the Punjab, Mohammedans, real or nominal, descended mostly from converts from Hinduism, are also very numerous. There are altogether more than 12,000,000 Mohammedans in the Punjab and its subordinate States, and they constitute about one-half of the whole population. More than 70 per cent of the people of Kashmir are Mohammedans.

Excepting these countries, on the northern and western frontiers of India, the only great Indian province in which a very large proportion of the populationed has embraced Mohammedanism is Bengal. Out of a total population of 74,700,000 there were, in 1901, 25,250,000 Mohammedans and 46,700,000 Hindus. In the eastern districts of the delta of the Ganges, and beyond the Bráhmaputra to the eastern limits of India, they constitute the great bulk of the agricultural population. Nothing is known historically of the time or manner in which this religious conversion occurred. But the conversion was in a great measure nominal rather than real.

Thus, out of a total Mohammedan population of 62,500,000, some 40,000,000, or nearly two-thirds of the whole number, are found on the western and eastern borders, and principally in the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, and Bengal. In the rest of India,

containing about 232,000,000 people, there are only about 22,000,000 Mohammedans. The progress of the Mohammedan religion in India generally has therefore been smaller than might be supposed from the bare statement of the numbers that profess it, and that progress will seem still smaller when the true character of a large section of Indian Mohammedanism is understood.

A large proportion of the Mohammedans of India hardly deserve that name. They differ little from their Hindu neighbours in their customs, and often not very much in their religion, and they maintain similar distinctions of caste. The following description is given by Sir Denzil Ibbetson of the Mohammedans of the Eastern Punjab, and a similar story might be told for Bengal and other parts of India :—

"The Musulman Rájput, Gujar, or Ját is, for all social, tribal, political, and administrative purposes, exactly as much a Rájput, Gujar, or Ját as his Hindu brother. His social customs are unaltered, his tribal restrictions are unrelaxed, his rules of marriage and inheritance unchanged; and almost all the difference is that he shaves his scalp-lock and the upper edge of his moustache, repeats the Mohammedan creed in a mosque, and adds the Musulman to the Hindu wedding-ceremony. . . . The local saints and deities still have their shrines, even in villages held wholly by Musulmans, and are still regularly worshipped by the majority, though the practice is gradually declining. The women especially are offenders in this way, and a Musulman mother who had not sacrificed to the smallpox goddess would feel that she had wantonly endangered the life of her child. The Hindu family priests are still kept up and consulted as of old, and Brahmans are still fed on the usual occasions, and in many cases still officiate at weddings side by side with the Mohammedan priests. As for superstitions, as distinct from actual worship, they are wholly untouched by the change of faith, and are common to Hindu and Musulman. A brother officer tells us that he once entered the rest-house of a Mohammedan village in Hissar, and found the headmen refreshing an

idol with a new coat of oil, while a Brahman read holy texts alongside. They seemed somewhat ashamed of being caught in the act, but, on being pressed, explained that their Mulla had lately visited them, had been extremely angry in seeing the idol, and had made them bury it in the sand. But now that the Mulla had gone they were afraid of the possible consequences, and were endeavouring to console the god for his rough treatment. The story is at any rate typical of the state of the Mohammedan religion in the villages of the Delhi territory."[1]

In these matters the Hindus are ready to meet the Mohammedans more than half-way. The Brahmans have no sort of scruple in accepting Mohammedan saints as proper objects of veneration, and nothing is commoner than to see Hindus taking an active part in Mohammedan ceremonies, and beating their breasts at the Moharram like good Musalmans. This is true of the lower classes only, but centuries of Mohammedan supremacy have also left their mark on the higher classes of Hindus. The general seclusion of their women is one of the instances in which they still follow Mohammedan custom.

The great majority of the Musalmans of India are the descendants of Hindu converts. The Mohammedan sovereigns usually treated their subjects, in matters of religion, with great tolerance; but more or less pressure was from time to time brought upon Hindus to induce them to embrace the faith of the ruling power. This was especially the case in the time of Aurangzíb, the most bigoted of the Mohammedan emperors. The change of faith was often little more than nominal, and took place to an extent just sufficient to save the joint property of the village community from molestation. One section of the brotherhood would become Mohammedan, while the rest remained Hindu. The change of

[1] *Report on the Census of 1881 in the Punjab*, p. 143.

religion had little practical result, nor did it affect the rules of caste or the social life of the community.

There is, of course, in India a large and very important body of Mohammedans of a different type, descended, with little or no admixture of the Hindu element, from the servants and soldiers of the Mohammedan rulers, and from former invaders or immigrants, who hold with more or less orthodoxy the tenets of their faith. They are especially to be found in Northern India. The Mohammedan population of the towns is usually far less Hinduised than that of the country villages. In the Agra Province only 7 per cent of the Hindu population live in the towns, while 25 per cent of the Mohammedans are found there. In the agricultural districts about 10 per cent of the people are Mohammedan, but in the towns the Mohammedans constitute more than one-third of the inhabitants. This fact tends to make their political importance greater than it would otherwise be. In many of the towns much religious animosity prevails between Mohammedans and Hindus, and this often leads to serious and sanguinary affrays. Among the agricultural population the members of the several creeds usually live together more peaceably. This, however, is not always the case, nor does it by any means follow that Mohammedans who know little or nothing of the tenets of the religion they profess are on that account less fanatical in their hatred of Hindus. When a Mohammedan rises in the world he becomes more orthodox, and begins to assume foreign titles to respect. He calls himself Khán, or Shaikh, or even Saiyad, a descendant of the Prophet.

"In the Punjab," writes Mr. Beames, "where the process of conversion has been carried out on a very large scale, there used

to be a proverbial couplet to this effect, supposed to be spoken by a convert—

> Last year I was a weaver, this year I am a Shaikh,
> Next year, if grain is dear, I shall be a Saiyad—

meaning that if he sold his crops well he should be wealthy enough to assume this latter title." [1]

The chief classes of Mohammedans claiming foreign descent are the Saiyad, Moghal, Pathán, and Shaikh. Among these the Shaikhs are the most numerous, but the great majority of them are the descendants of Hindu converts. Politically, the Patháns of Afghán origin are the most important. During the Mohammedan dynasties, and especially while the empire was breaking up, they poured into India as adventurers and soldiers of fortune, ready to sell their swords to the highest bidder. Their unscrupulous violence and courage gave them great influence, and they were the only Mohammedan foreigners who permanently established themselves in the plains of India in large numbers. These were the people who, under their Indian name of Rohillas, fought against us in the time of Warren Hastings. The story of their cruel extermination has, I fear, become an accepted fact of history; but, as I have shown, it is purely fabulous.

Recollections of their old dominion, and the splendid monuments which testify to the magnificence of their former sovereigns, have exercised a powerful influence in keeping alive among the higher classes of Mohammedans in Northern India feelings of pride in their religion and race; but their social and political importance was seriously diminished by the mutinies of 1857, when many of their chief families became implicated in rebellion and suffered in consequence. They

[1] Elliot's *Races of the North-Western Provinces*, vol. i. p. 185.

still, however, hold a more influential position in the country than their mere numbers would give them; they are more generally energetic than Hindus, and possess greater independence of character. In perfection of manner and courtesy a Mohammedan gentleman of Northern India has often no superior.

It is not possible to say what proportion of the 62,500,000 Mohammedans may be held to represent the classes once dominant in India. Sir George Campbell, whose knowledge entitled him to speak with unusual authority, thought that on an outside estimate we might assume them to be 5,000,000. Whatever be the actual number, it is comparatively small. It doubtless includes many who feel for us and our Government a deep and fanatical dislike, but it also includes a large number of men who deserve our confidence and respect. It is a mistake to suppose that the better classes of Mohammedans are as a rule disloyal. English education, which not unfrequently seems to develop and bring into prominence the least admirable qualities of the feebler races, often tends to make Mohammedans more manly and self-reliant, and more loyal citizens.

The fears that have sometimes been expressed that we may see in India a general outburst of Mohammedan fanaticism, and a simultaneous rising of millions of Mohammedans against our Government, are altogether groundless. If Mohammedanism contains any elements of political danger, they are nullified by the fact that the feelings of true Mohammedans towards idolatrous Hindus are more hostile than towards Christians, and that Hindus will never desire the restoration of Musalman supremacy. Nothing could be more opposed to the policy and universal practice of our Government in India than the old maxim of divide and rule; the

maintenance of peace among all classes has always been recognised as one of the most essential duties of our "belligerent civilisation"; but this need not blind us to the fact that the existence side by side of these hostile creeds is one of the strong points in our political position in India. The better classes of Mohammedans are a source to us of strength and not of weakness. They constitute a comparatively small but energetic minority of the population, whose political interests are identical with ours, and who, under no conceivable circumstances, would prefer Hindu dominion to our own.

I have laid much stress on the fact that the majority of Indian Mohammedans differ in some respects little from Hindus; but there has undoubtedly been a growing tendency during the last half-century towards the purification of their faith. We must hope that with the increase of knowledge and civilisation this progress will continue, but it is not likely, within any time that we can foresee, to bring with it increased harmony of feeling between Mohammedans and Hindus. The more orthodox a Mohammedan becomes, the wider becomes the gulf that separates him from every form of idolatrous worship.

Although there is no danger to our Government from Mohammedan disaffection, the animosity, which is so easily aroused between Mohammedans and Hindus, is often a cause of serious anxiety. In past times it has frequently led to violent conflicts, and in late years it has shown itself with much virulence. Outbreaks of religious exasperation, attended with destructive rioting and bloodshed, have often occurred; in some instances they have assumed large proportions, nor have they been confined to the towns where the population is, as a rule, more disposed to be fanatical and turbulent. In

1893, for example, widespread disturbances of a most serious character, affecting a considerable tract of country and a large population, occurred in the district of Azimgarh, in the Agra Province. They were traced to the influence of cow-protecting societies which had, for some years, been carrying on their propaganda. In the same year, the great city of Bombay, containing more than 800,000 people, was for three days the scene of furious conflict. Eighty persons were killed and some hundred were wounded, and mosques and temples were desecrated and ruined. Order was not restored until a large force of troops, including British Cavalry and Infantry and Artillery, had been called out. In this, as in almost all similar cases elsewhere, the chronic hostility between Hindus and Mohammedans had been stimulated by the agitation against cow-killing. There was, the Bombay Government reported as the result of its inquiries, "an uneasy feeling among Mohammedans that they and their faith were suffering at the hands of the Hindus, that they were being gradually but surely edged out of the position they have hitherto held, and that their religion needed some special protection." This question of cow-killing has been a cause of frequent trouble throughout a great part of India, and while Hindu agitation has been primarily directed against Mohammedans, it has obviously a serious significance for ourselves. Indian statesmen ought not to forget that this is a subject—and it is almost the only one that exists—which forms a bond of union among the 230 millions of the countless castes and classes of Hindus throughout the whole continent of India, on which they all hold the same belief and have the same sympathies.

In some parts of India, and especially in Bengal

Proper, there has been a large increase of Mohammedanism during the last thirty years. In 1872 in that province the Hindus outnumbered the Mohammedans by half a million; in 1901, these proportions were reversed, the Mohammedans being more numerous by half a million than the Hindus. On this subject Mr. O'Donnell, who superintended the census of 1891 in Bengal, wrote as follows:—"It is known that a powerful Mohammedan propaganda is at work, and that the preaching of the ubiquitous Mullahs and Mirs is directed not only to instil the precepts of a higher life, according to the doctrines of the Kurán, on Musalmans, but to gain over followers for its teachings. That converts should result seems natural, but, however this may be, it is certain that the great growth of Musalmanism in Bengal Proper is connected with physical rather than doctrinal forces. The Musalman with his more varied and nutritious dietary is probably a more vigorous man than the Hindu. Moreover, the universal practice of widow marriage, which the Bengali Hindu holds in abhorrence, adds very largely to the reproductive class amongst Mohammedan women. On the other hand, ill-assorted marriages are far more common amongst Hindus, men well advanced in years being united to girl-wives, who in the natural course of human life are left widows, debarred from further maternity, at a comparatively early age."

Nearly all of the 9,500,000 Buddhists of the census are found in Burma. Buddhism no longer exists as one of the religions of the peoples of the Indian continent. Even in Burma, Mr. Baines writes, "the popular belief is little but Animism, and the attachment to the higher creed is largely due to the educational influence of the religious orders, because every boy has to be sent, if only for a short period, to one of the monasteries as a novice

or lay brother. Like the Neo-Brahmanism, too, it is gradually absorbing within its sphere the forest tribes who are professedly Animistic in their belief, and like its former rival, it places no embargo on their tutelary gods, whilst through the monastic system it tends to raise them in the social scale. Considerably more than half the males in Burma can read and write, a feature in which the difference between the two systems is very clearly denoted."

Out of 2,900,000 Christians, in 1901, in British India and the Native States, 170,000 were Europeans, of whom a little more than one half were in or connected with the Army. The other half included the civil employés of the Government and their families, the railway servants, and the whole of the non-official European community. There were about 89,000 Eurasians. The Christians of Indian origin numbered 2,660,000. Of these nearly two millions are found in Madras and in the Native States of Malabar, the great majority of them belonging to the Church of Rome, descendants of the converts made in the sixteenth century by St. Francis Xavier and by his followers. The Native members of the various Protestant sects throughout India numbered 970,000, those of the Roman Catholic Church 1,123,000, and those of the Syrian Church 571,000. These figures are exclusive of the French and Portuguese possessions, where the Christian population is almost entirely Roman Catholic. The total increase of the Christian population in the ten years between 1891 and 1901 in British India and the Native States, was about 639,000. The number of Native members of the Roman and Syrian Churches increased by 250,000, and that of the various Protestant sects by 378,000. The greater part of the increase was in Southern India, but there was no province in which the

number of Christians was not larger in 1901 than ten years before. Although the Christians in India constitute only one per cent of the whole population, these figures are remarkable.

Judged by even a low standard, the religion of the great majority of the Native Christians, especially those of Southern India, is Christianity in little more than name. There are many noble exceptions, but it cannot be professed that Indian Christians have gained for themselves, as a rule, an exceptional measure of respect either among their own countrymen or among Europeans. There has been no apparent connection between the increase in the number of Christians and the progress of education. The effect of higher English education on the religious beliefs of educated Hindus has doubtless been very great, but it has had little tendency to make them Christian. Converts from Mohammedanism to Christianity are very few. The large majority of converts are drawn from the lowest castes of Hindus and from the Animistic tribes, and this goes far to explain the fact, stated in the Report on the Census of 1901 in the United Provinces, that "to the great mass of converts the change in religion causes little change in outward relations; it was reported from one district that families had been converted without the rest of the villagers knowing it. What change is made is on the whole for the better."

The only other Indian religions that need be noticed are those of the Jains and the Sikhs. Jainism is, in its doctrines, very similar to the more orthodox forms of Buddhism. There is, Mr. Baines tells us, in parts of India, a tendency for it to become virtually a sect of Brahmanism. "In the north and west of India the Jains are still a cultivated class, mostly

engaged in commerce, whilst in the south they are, as a rule, agriculturists."

The Sikhs are politically important, but in matters of religion there is no great difference between them and Hindus. "In the present day," writes Mr. Baines, "peace has relaxed the bonds of discipline, and the distinction between Sikhs and the rest of the Brahmanic community is mainly ritualistic. For example, it was found by experience that at the census, the only trustworthy method of distinguishing this creed was to ask if the person in question repudiated the services of the barber and the tobacconist, for the precepts most strictly enforced nowadays are that the hair of the head and face must never be cut, and that smoking is a habit to be absolutely avoided."[1]

The Parsis form a very small but highly respectable community, devoted for the most part to mercantile pursuits. Their enterprise as traders, and their freedom from prejudices of caste, take them into all parts of India, but the great majority of them are found in Bombay. They have gained for themselves by their character, their superior education, and their wealth, a somewhat exceptional position, but they have so little in common with anything Indian, and their numbers are so small, that they can only be mentioned as an interesting group of foreigners, who for many centuries have retained their ancient creed, and have kept themselves apart from the people of all Indian countries.

[1] *General Report on the Census of India*, 1891, p. 164.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN INDIAN PROVINCE

The United Provinces of Agra and Oudh—Area, population, language, and history—Aspect of the country—The agricultural population—Cities—Manufactures—Architectural monuments—Erroneous beliefs regarding food of the people—The agricultural year—The rainy season—Summer, autumnal, and winter crops—Irrigation—Methods of agriculture.

If any one were to propose to give in a single volume a description of all the countries of Europe—their geography, their climates, their governments, and systems of administration, the character and customs and languages and religions of their inhabitants—his undertaking would not be more impossible than that of giving within the same limits an adequate description of India; nor, however much those limits might be exceeded, do I believe that any one possesses the necessary knowledge. I think that if I endeavour to give some account of one of the great provinces, noting, as I go on, points which in other Indian countries differ or correspond, I may be able to convey more accurate information than by any other plan that I could follow. This will be especially true in regard to the public administration; for notwithstanding my frequent warnings about the danger of generalisations, the main structure of the government throughout British India has been built up on not very various lines.

I propose to take as my example of an Indian pro-

vince the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. I choose them because I know them best. A large part of my Indian service was spent in them, and I have been, as Lieutenant-Governor and Chief Commissioner, at the head of their administration.

The Agra Province, known until 1901 as the North-Western Provinces, lies within the great Indo-Gangetic plain, the main features of which have been already described in the second chapter of this work. It comprises nearly all the upper portion of the basin of the Ganges and Jumna, from their sources in the Himálaya to the borders of Bengal. It is one of the most homogeneous of the great provinces of India, in the aspect of the country and in the condition and character of its inhabitants. It includes two small Native States, Tehri, as distinguished from British Garhwál, a purely Himálayan district, and Rámpur, in Rohilkhand. The latter, by far the more important of the two, has a special interest to Englishmen in being, as it has been since the time of Warren Hastings, to whom it owed its preservation, a flourishing Rohilla State—a standing comment on the totally fictitious stories to which I have already referred, and which I fear most of us still believe, told by Burke and James Mill and Macaulay, of the cruel extermination of the brave Rohillas.

Including these Native States, the Agra Province covers about 88,000 square miles, and contains 35,700,000 people.

Oudh, excepting on the north, where its boundary is the Himálayan State of Nepál, is surrounded by districts of the Agra Province. It contains 24,000 square miles, and 12,800,000 people.

Physically, there are no important differences between the two provinces, the whole, excepting the

districts bordering on the tableland of Central India, and the Himálayan districts of Kumáon and Garhwál, forming one continuous alluvial plain, broken only by the rivers which intersect it; but politically, they have been, until some years ago, under separate administrations. Oudh became British territory in 1856; it was partially amalgamated with the North-Western Provinces in 1877. Although there are still many differences in the revenue and judicial systems of the two provinces, they are now virtually a single province under a Lieutenant-Governor, whose headquarters are at Allahabad. In 1901, in consequence of the formation of the North-West Frontier Province, and to avoid confusion from the similarity of names, the North-Western Provinces became the Province of Agra, and, with Oudh, they are now known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. They cover 112,000 square miles, with a population of 48,500,000. Their area is not much smaller, and their population is much larger than that of Great Britain and Ireland. There are no countries in Europe, excepting Belgium and England, in which the population is so dense. No other Indian province, with the exception of Bengal, is so thickly peopled.

It must be remembered, however, that comparisons between the density of population in India and in countries like England are apt to be very misleading, unless we bear in mind the great differences that exist in the distribution of the people. In England more than half of the whole population is congregated in large towns, while in India the corresponding population is extremely small. According to the census of 1901, the total urban population of India was only 29,200,000 out of a total of 294,300,000, or about ten per cent of the whole.[1]

[1] It may usefully be borne in mind that people generally are too much in

Throughout the United Provinces, although there are many and great differences of dialect, the general language of the people is, in one form or another, Hindi. The mixed language called Urdu, or Hindustani, which has become a *lingua franca*, very generally understood, especially by Mohammedans, throughout a great part of India, grew up in the Northern Provinces in the time of the Mohammedan sovereigns. Its grammar is mainly Hindi, while in its vocabulary there is a large admixture of Persian and Arabic, the languages of the Musalman invaders. Urdu is the literary and official language of the United Provinces; it is commonly spoken in the towns and by the upper and more educated classes.

This has been for ages the most famous part of India. In prehistoric times it was the Central or Middle land, the Madhya-desha of the sacred books of the Hindus and of the ancient poets, the abode of the solar and lunar races, and of the gods and heroes of the Máhábhárata and Rámáyana. To say nothing of the more or less mythical cities of which little but the names remain, this tract contains the most holy places of India—Benares, Ajodhya, Kanauj, Muttra, and many others. It was here that Buddha was born and preached and died, and it was from this centre that his creed

the habit of assuming that average or mean results have necessarily a real signification, and represent facts. Very often this is far from being the case. An average or mean is strictly an abstract arithmetical idea, and in that sense every such mean, properly calculated, is correct, but when this abstract idea is applied to facts, it may often have no useful meaning whatever. Thus, if we had before us a hundred objects, one of which was 1001 feet high, while the remaining ninety-nine were each 1 foot high, we should say correctly, in one sense, that the average height of the whole was 11 feet. But, in fact, the height of none of the objects would be at all near to 11 feet; the arithmetical idea would have no useful significance, but would confuse and lead us wrong. This is constantly true in dealing with statistics of population, and a multitude of other matters.

spread over a great part of the Eastern world. In more modern times Hindustan, the name, properly speaking, of these provinces only, and not of the whole of India, was the chief seat of the Mohammedan power. Delhi and Agra became the capitals of the Afghán and Moghal sovereigns, and although the great majority of the population always remained Hindu, there was for many centuries no part of India in which Musalman authority and organisation were so complete. In our own times Northern India has been politically the most important portion of our Indian Empire. "To the native imagination," as Mr. Keene has observed, "Hindustan is still the centre of India, and Delhi is still the metropolis."[1]

The North-Western Provinces came into our possession between 1775 and 1803. Until 1833 they were governed from Calcutta as a part of the so-called Bengal Presidency. By an Act passed in that year (3 and 4 Will. IV. c. 85), Bengal was divided into the two Presidencies of Bengal and Agra, and a separate Governor was to be appointed for the latter. The Agra Presidency was, however, not constituted, but by an amending Act passed in 1835 (5 and 6 Will. IV. c. 52) its territories became the North-Western Provinces, under a Lieutenant-Governor without a Council. These provinces and Oudh were the principal scene of the mutinies of 1857. Before that year the seat of the Government of the North-Western Provinces was at Agra; it was then transferred to Allahabad, and has remained there. Delhi, which until 1857 had belonged to the North-Western Provinces, has been since that time under the Government of the Punjab.

Sir Henry Maine, referring to Northern India, has spoken of the monotony of life and ennui "caused by

[1] Keene's *Moghul Empire*.

its ungenial climate and the featureless distances of its plains," and he quotes the words of the Emperor Baber, the founder of the Moghal dynasty, on closing the history of his conquest :—

"Hindustan is a country that has few pleasures to recommend it. The country and towns are extremely ugly. The people are not handsome. The chief excellency of Hindustan is that it is a very large country, and that it has abundance of gold and silver."

It cannot be denied that great tracts in Northern India, and precisely those of which English travellers see the most, deserve, for a portion of the year, the epithets of monotonous and featureless and ugly. There is, for the most part, no luxuriance of vegetation; during the hot dry months, when the crops have been cut, everything is burnt up by the fiery winds; the ground is almost everywhere highly cultivated, but all is brown and arid. At other seasons, although a country so absolutely flat can hardly escape being monotonous, there is, the towns apart, as much to admire in the plains of Northern India as in those of Northern France, and more than in those of Northern Germany.

I referred in my first and second chapters to the great physical differences between this part of India and Bengal, and to the causes to which these differences are due. In the rainy season and winter, travelling along the railway through the central parts of these Provinces, a distance of more than 500 miles, the whole country through which we pass is a continuous sheet of cultivation, studded with groves of mango, the most valuable of the fruit-bearing trees of India, a constant succession of villages, many towns, and not a few great and famous cities. If, judging by a European standard, the traveller sees few signs of wealth, he sees few

of extreme poverty. Nearly the whole of the agricultural population is collected in villages, between which stretch the wide unbroken fields. There are few of those scattered homesteads which are so often seen in Europe. This feature of rural life, a consequence of the universal insecurity which until the last century had prevailed from time immemorial, is common throughout India.

In 1901, out of 48,500,000 people in the United Provinces, 41,300,000 were Hindu and nearly 7,000,000 were Mohammedan.

As everywhere else in India, the mass of the population is agricultural, and the number of non-agriculturists is smaller than would be supposed from the figures of the census. A large proportion of the people returned as engaged in trades and employments are village servants and village shopkeepers who belong in fact to the agricultural community. It is probable that 90 per cent of the whole population are so closely connected with the land that they may properly be called agricultural.

There is, however, no part of India in which large cities and towns are so numerous. In the Agra Province, Benares has 209,000 inhabitants; Cawnpoor, 197,000; Agra, 188,000; Allahabad, 172,000; Meerut, 118,000; and eight other towns have populations of from 50,000 to 100,000. Oudh is more entirely agricultural. It has only two large towns: Lucknow with 264,000, and Fyzabad with 75,000 inhabitants. Trade is active. The exports consist almost entirely of agricultural produce, wheat and other food-grains, ghee, oil-seeds, sugar, and (but this is the product of a dying industry) indigo; the imports are chiefly European manufactured articles, cotton-goods, metals, drugs, petroleum, and salt. Manufactures of general commercial importance

there are none, excepting in some instances, as at Cawnpoor, in which they have been established by Europeans, but large numbers of people throughout the country are employed in domestic handicrafts. The coarser cotton cloths which form the ordinary clothing of the poorer classes are chiefly of home manufacture. Some of the textile fabrics, as the kinkhábs, or gold brocades and embroideries of Benares and of Agra, are costly and beautiful.

I cannot speak at any length of the splendid works of architectural and decorative art which are found in these provinces. They are unequalled in India, and are not surpassed in any country in the world. Except in Athens, nothing has ever been built more beautiful than the Táj, erected at Agra by Shah Jehan as a mausoleum for his wife, and in which he himself is buried.

"Perhaps in the whole world," says Mr. Fergusson, "there is not a scene where nature and art so successfully combine to produce a perfect work of art as within the precincts of this far-famed mausoleum. . . . No words can express the chastened beauty of that central chamber, seen in the soft gloom of the subdued light that reaches it through the distant and half-closed openings that surround it. Used as a Barah Durrie, or pleasure-palace, it must always have been the coolest and the loveliest of garden retreats; and now that it is sacred to the dead it is the most graceful and the most impressive of the sepulchres of the world."[1]

I doubt whether any European palace can show anything equal in beauty to the audience-halls of the Moghal emperors in their capitals of Delhi and Agra. No portals approach in magnificence those of Fatehpur Sikri and Delhi. The tower of Giotto at Florence is not a more perfect work than the noble minaret of the Kutb.

[1] Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, pp. 575, 598.

In this part of India the most splendid architectural monuments are those left by the Mohammedan sovereigns. Simple and admirable in general design, they are still more remarkable for the faultless taste of their decoration. Nothing has ever surpassed the surface ornamentation of stone-carving with which some of the buildings of the Afghán dynasties are covered, or the later and still more beautiful inlaid work of the Moghals. There seems no doubt that the art of pietra-dura decoration was introduced into India by Italians, but the masters were surpassed by their pupils. The process was applied in a new and independent style, and there is nothing in Italy in this sort of decoration that can be compared, in beauty of design, or colour, or effect, with the work found in the palaces and tombs of India. The Oriental artists of the Mohammedan sovereigns had at their disposal unbounded wealth, unlimited labour, and the most lavish profusion of precious materials, but nothing is more remarkable in their finest works than the sobriety and refinement of their taste.

I will not dwell on the stories of British vandalism which has ruined or suffered to perish some of the most admirable works of Oriental architecture, or on the general decadence in which European influences have helped, and still help, to involve the beautiful arts of India. I trust that we have seen the worst. Our English governors have become generally alive to the disgrace which, in past times, our countrymen have too well and too often deserved for their barbarous destruction or ignorant neglect of admirable works of artistic or historic value. Whatever may once have been the case, no such reproach now attaches to these or, I hope, to any other provinces. I may perhaps be pardoned if

I add that when I look back upon my long career in India there are few things that I remember with more personal satisfaction than the fact that I was able to do something towards preserving for future generations some priceless works, such as the Táj, the Agra Palace, and the tomb of Akbar.

Among Lord Curzon's titles to honour one that ought not to be forgotten has been his constant and practical recognition of the fact that there is no country the antiquities and arts and monuments of which are more precious than those of India.

During the winter a large part of Northern India has a climate as cold as that of spring in the South of Europe, and the time between October and April is sufficiently long to bring to maturity many of the chief agricultural products of the temperate zone. During the summer months, on the other hand, the crops are those of the tropics, or of a kind that do not suffer from excessive heat. There is thus in the productions and processes of agriculture a variety of which we have no example in Europe.

I am afraid that the belief that the people throughout India live generally upon rice is almost as prevalent in England as ever. There could be no more complete delusion. Rice, in the greater part of India, is a luxury of the comparatively rich. It is grown where the climate is hot and damp, and where there are ample means of irrigation; it is a valuable crop in the greater part of India, but it is only in Lower Bengal, in parts of Madras and Bombay, in Burma, and in districts where the conditions of soil and climate are suitable to its abundant production, that it forms the ordinary food of the people, or enters to an important extent into the consumption of the poorer classes. Out of the whole

population of India, it is probable that not more than a fourth part live upon rice.

The mistaken notions that prevail on this subject doubtless had their origin, as Sir Henry Maine has observed, in the fact that the English in a great measure obtained their first ideas about India from what they saw or heard on its coasts. Because the ordinary food of the people in Lower Bengal is rice it was assumed that it was the ordinary food throughout India. Sir Henry Maine has drawn from this an instructive illustration of the danger of over-bold generalisations — a danger, as I have more than once remarked, which cannot be too carefully guarded against in regard to a multitude of Indian questions. "Mr. Buckle," he says, "in the general introduction to his *History of Civilisation*, has derived all the distinctive institutions of India, and the peculiarities of its people, from their consumption of rice. From the fact, he tells us, that the exclusive food of the natives of India is of an oxygenous rather than a carbonaceous character, it follows by an inevitable law that caste prevails, that oppression is rife, that rents are high, and that customs and laws are stereotyped." This is as if an Indian traveller, landing on the west coast of Ireland, and finding that the people lived on potatoes, were to assume that potatoes were the ordinary food throughout Europe, and were to base upon the imaginary fact conclusions regarding the conditions of society in Germany and Spain.

Excepting in the rice-consuming countries that have been named, millets form the chief food of the population throughout almost the whole of India, and they furnish also the most important of the crops used as fodder for cattle. Pulses of various kinds are largely

consumed. Little or no meat is eaten by the poorer classes, and the pulses supply the nitrogenous element which is required. Meat, however, is commonly eaten by Mohammedans when they can afford it, and many of the Hindus who abstain from it do so because it is an expensive luxury, rather than from religious scruples.

The millets and pulses which form the chief food-supply of the people flourish throughout the greater part of India. In the damper and more tropical regions they are cultivated in the drier months of the warm winter; in the drier countries where the winter is comparatively cold, they are the principal crops of the summer.

In Northern India the agricultural year begins with the periodical rains which, as I explained in my second chapter, are established towards the end of June or the beginning of July. The crops of the cold season are cut in March and April, after which comes a period of about two months, when, owing to the intense heat and drought, agricultural operations are almost at a stand-still. Towards the middle or end of June the heat reaches its extremest point. Midnight is hardly less oppressive than mid-day, except that during the day a fiery wind blows strongly from the west. Vegetation is burnt up; hardly a sound of animal life is heard. All day and all night, except for a short time about sunrise, when the temperature is at its lowest, you will, if you are wise, keep every door and window closely shut to bar out the raging heat. Sometimes at this season, but less frequently in these Provinces than in the Punjab, there sweeps up one of those remarkable atmospheric disturbances known as dust-storms, when the day becomes as dark as the darkest night, with

violent winds which occasionally bring with them destructive hail or torrents of rain.[1]

Among all the phenomena of nature, there are few more impressive than those which usher in the rainy season in Northern India. It is not only of heat and discomfort that one has to think. Until rain falls the fields cannot be ploughed for another harvest, and the danger of drought and famine, if the coming of relief should be too long delayed, cannot be forgotten. The telegrams with news of the progress of the monsoon from the sea are every day eagerly expected, as in time of war news of the progress of a campaign.

In India, and in regions of the earth lying under similar geographical conditions, within the tropics or in their neighbourhood, the changes of the seasons recur with a regularity and an intensity unknown in Europe, and, if their normal course be seriously interrupted, the consequences have a significance which in temperate climates it is not easy to appreciate. The vital importance for good or evil of the variations of the seasons is, of course, obvious in other countries, but in India it is brought home to every one with extraordinary strength and vividness. Not a year passes in which it is not clear to almost the whole population that the very existence of the country as a dwelling-place for man depends on the regular sequence of the seasons. In Europe drought or floods may cause misery and loss, but they can hardly lead to absolute ruin over thousands

[1] "Non altrimenti fatto che d' un vento
Impetuoso per gli avversi ardori,
Che fier la selva senza alcun rattento ;
Li rami schianta, abbatte, e porta fuori :
Dinanzi polveroso va superbo,
E fa fuggir le fiere e li pastori."
DANTE, *Inf.* ix. 67.

of square miles, and to many millions of people, such as that which has not unfrequently happened in India from failure of the periodical rains.

In favourable years the rains have usually set in about the middle of June on the Bombay coast and in Bengal; they travel up gradually towards Northern India, where they arrive about a fortnight later, and their advance may often be traced from one day to another. At last, when the heat has become greater than ever, the clouds begin to collect, and there comes down a deluge, almost always accompanied by thunder and lightning. When the rain is plentiful and all goes well, nothing can be more wonderful than the change which comes almost instantaneously over the whole face of nature. Under the influence of the tropical heat and abundant moisture, within a time that may be measured by hours rather than days, the country that was like a desert begins to look like a garden. The rapidity of the progress of vegetation is astonishing, and the manner in which animal life suddenly reappears is not less wonderful. We are reminded of the description of Aaron and the magicians stretching forth their hands over the streams and over the ponds and bringing up frogs which covered the land of Egypt.

As soon as the rain has sufficiently moistened the ground, the fields are ploughed and the summer and autumnal crops are sown. All these are included under the general name of *kharíf*. The most widely cultivated, and the most important to the poorer classes, since they furnish to them and to their cattle the principal means of subsistence, are the millets called *jwár* and *bájra* (*Sorghum vulgare*, and *Pennisetum typhoideum*). In districts where the climate is damp and irrigation easy, rice is extensively grown at this season. Sugar-cane is

another crop of much importance; in no other part of India is it so valuable as in these provinces; it may be classed among the hot-weather crops, since it remains on the ground nearly throughout the year, and its growth mainly depends on the heat and moisture of the summer. Some of the pulses, maize, and cotton are also largely cultivated at this season of the year. In some of the provinces indigo is still an important crop, but as I have already noticed, the future of this product has become very doubtful.

The rains are over in Northern India towards the end of September, and in the following month the autumn crops are for the most part cut.

In October and November, when the excessive heat and moisture have passed away and the cold season has begun, the soil and climate become suitable for the agricultural products of temperate latitudes, and the winter crops, known under the general name of *rabi*, are sown. Between November and March it would be difficult to find a more delightful climate for Englishmen than that of Northern India. The nights and mornings are cold and even at times frosty, and the days pleasantly warm. After Christmas there is almost always a short season of moderate rain, which is of much importance to the growing spring crops.

The chief agricultural staples of Northern India at this period of the year are wheat and barley. They occupy nearly 60 per cent of the whole food-producing area in the United Provinces. Wheat from Northern India has been, in some years, an important source of supply to England, and, as the means of communication are extended and cheapened, it may become more important hereafter. Whether, to any great extent, it is possible that Indian wheat may hereafter compete in

the English market with wheat from America is a question on which I will not speculate, but there is no doubt that India is capable, under favourable conditions of price, of providing a very large and increasing supply. Wheat in the Punjab is a still more important crop than in the United Provinces. It is also extensively grown in parts of Central India, Bombay, and the Northern Deccan, and in those countries, as well as in Northern India, it forms the chief article of food among the richer classes. Barley is largely consumed by those who cannot afford to eat wheat. Various kinds of pulses, tobacco, opium, linseed, and mustard are widely cultivated at this season. Oil-seeds are one of the chief articles of export from India to Europe. The principal winter crops are harvested in March and April.

Although, as furnishing the chief means of subsistence to the mass of the population, the first importance must be assigned in this part of India to the summer crops, which are dependent on the periodical rains, the more valuable products, on which the people have mainly to rely for increase of wealth and prosperity, and for the means of paying their revenue and rent, are those grown in the winter. Even in favourable seasons artificial irrigation is necessary for their successful cultivation. The rental of irrigated land in Northern India is usually double that of land dependent on the season alone.

I have already given some account of the magnificent irrigation canals constructed by the British Government, surpassing in magnitude and usefulness all other works of the kind in the world, and I have especially noticed those of the United Provinces.[1] In Northern India it is for the crops of the cold season that they are especially valuable. Important as they are, the wells constructed

[1] Chapter XIV.

by the villagers themselves are more important still. In the great alluvial plain, water can almost everywhere be found from ten to forty feet from the surface of the ground. If the soil be solid, a well can often be dug for a few shillings; if sandy strata have to be passed through, the well must be lined with masonry, and costs much more. Very often, when water is not far from the surface, the wells are only intended to last for a single season. In the United Provinces, a large proportion of the cultivated area is constantly irrigated from wells during the winter months, and the number of wells is usually a good index to the condition of the agricultural population. Unfortunately, although the value of well-irrigation, in ordinary circumstances, cannot be over-estimated, the supply of water in extremely dry seasons often fails, and wells cannot give the complete protection against drought and famine which is afforded by canals drawn from the great rivers.

Little need be said about Indian methods of agriculture. The implements are simple, but the persevering industry of the people is great. Wheat and barley, under good cultivation, yield a produce equal in quality and quantity to that usually obtained without artificial manure in Europe or America, although the result is of course inferior if the comparison be made with the produce of land to which costly and scientific methods have been applied.

As Dr. Voelcker, speaking with high authority and personal knowledge, has observed, "there can be no question that the ideas generally entertained in England, and often given expression to in India, that Indian agriculture is, as a whole, primitive and backward, are altogether erroneous. . . . Taking everything together, and especially considering the conditions under which

Indian crops are grown, they are wonderfully good." The Indian cultivator, Dr. Voelcker assures us, is at his best quite as good as the average British farmer, and in some respects superior to him. "Taking," he says, "the ordinary arts of husbandry, nowhere would one find better instances of keeping land scrupulously clear from weeds, of ingenuity in device of water-raising appliances, of knowledge of soils and their capabilities, as well as of the exact time to sow and to reap, as one would in Indian agriculture, and this not at its best alone, but at its ordinary level. It is wonderful, too, how much is known of rotation, the system of mixed crops, and of fallowing. I have never seen a more perfect picture of careful cultivation, combined with hard labour, perseverance, and fertility of resource, than I have seen at many of the halting-places in my tour."[1]

The system of rotation of crops in Northern India is simple. In the richer and better-manured lands two crops are often raised from the same land within the year. On the greater part of the land the usual plan is to raise one crop only. In the first year millets are grown in the rainy season, and after the crop has been cut the land will be left fallow for nearly a year, until the following October, when it is ready for sowing wheat or barley. This will be cut in March or April, and when the rains begin in June or July it will be followed by another crop of millets. To another product of Northern India, tea, I have referred in a former chapter.[2]

[1] *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture*, by J. A. Voelcker, Ph.D., etc. etc., Consulting Chemist to the Royal Agricultural Society of England.

Dr. Voelcker was appointed, at the request of the Government of India in 1889, to investigate the whole subject of Indian Agriculture and to report on the measures that might be taken for its improvement. He spent thirteen months in India, the whole of which time was devoted to practical and scientific inquiries in the various provinces.

[2] Chapter XIII.

CHAPTER XIX

AN INDIAN PROVINCE (*continued*)

The land revenue — Tenures — Settlements — Village communities — Classes of cultivators—Settlements in Northern India—Surveys—Principles of assessment—The settlement officer—Record of rights —Village accountants — Recent reforms — Settlement reports — Settlements in Oudh—The Tálukdárs—Lord Canning's Proclamation — Measures of Lord Lawrence — Recent improvements — Condition of Oudh — Agricultural departments — The Government of India on the principles of administering the land revenue.

EXCEPT where the State has alienated its rights in favour of individuals, or of religious or charitable institutions, or otherwise, private rights in land have always been subject in India to the superior rights of the sovereign.

A description has been given in a former chapter[1] of the nature of the land revenue. It has been shown that it must not be looked upon as taxation properly so called, but as the share of the produce to which, from time immemorial, the State, as the chief proprietor of the land, has been entitled; that no Government in India has ever taken so small a share as that which we demand; and that the rate at which the land revenue falls has gone on constantly diminishing. It has been the policy of our Government to encourage, by the limitation of its demand, the growth of private property

[1] Chapter IX.

in land; to create such property where no private rights of ownership could be found; to define for a term of years or in perpetuity the shares of the produce or rent which the private landholder and the State shall respectively receive, and to give security to the former that improvements made by him on the land shall not lead to an increased demand by the Government. The interests connected with the land possess an altogether paramount importance. The variety of tenures and agricultural customs is infinite, but there is no part of India in which the condition of the people and the success or failure of the administration are not intimately affected by the manner in which the rights and responsibilities of the State and of individuals in the land are regulated.

One warning in connection with these subjects must be borne in mind. Such terms as "property in land," "proprietor," and "tenant" have to be used in default of others more appropriate; but since private proprietorship in land has hardly existed in India in the form in which it exists in England, misconception easily arises. It has happened not unfrequently that English ideas of property, derived from a different condition of things, have exercised a pernicious influence on the interests of the actual occupants of the land.

What is technically called a "Settlement of the land revenue" consists in the determination of the share of the produce or rental to which the State is entitled, and in the record of all private rights and interests in the land.

The systems for the assessment of land revenue may, speaking generally, be said to fall into two great divisions, one being in force in Southern and the other in Northern India.

In the Madras and Bombay provinces, the land is for the most part in the possession of peasant proprietors, with every one of whom the Government enters into a separate engagement. The tenure is called *ryotwári*.[1]

"The tenure of the ryot in Southern India (I am quoting from the Report of the Indian Famine Commissioners of 1880) is as secure and simple as can well be conceived. He holds his land in proprietary right, subject to the payment of the assessed revenue, which is fixed for a period of thirty years. He has the option of resigning his entire holding, or any individual field, at the end of the agricultural year. His improvements cannot be made a ground for increasing his assessment at the time of the periodical settlement. He can sell, mortgage, or let his land to any one without requiring the consent of the Government, and at his death the land descends to his children according to the rules of inheritance."

The land is marked off by the Survey department into fields or blocks, on each of which the Government demand is assessed. In Bombay a valuation is made of every field, under a minute system of investigation, in regard to soil, produce, situation, markets, prices, past history, selling and letting value, and other particulars, and the average demand of the Government is fixed at a rate estimated to fall at about 7·6 per cent of the gross produce.[2] The assessments are made for thirty years.

In Madras, by an elaborate system of classification,

[1] The meaning of the term *ryot* in Southern India is different from that which it bears in the North. In the former case it means the private owner of the land; in the latter case it means a cultivating tenant who has often no permanent rights at all.

[2] No estimates of the proportion which the Government demand bears to the gross produce of the land can pretend, in this or other cases, to be anything but rough approximations to the truth, and this is one of the numerous instances in which arithmetical averages often mean little and are altogether misleading.

experiment, and inquiry, an estimate is made of the average annual value of the produce of the plot to be assessed. After deducting the cost of cultivation and making large allowances for vicissitudes of season, distance from markets, and other considerations, one half of the net profit is assumed to be the share or revenue of the Government—an amount held to be equivalent to an average rate of about 6·3 per cent of the gross produce. The share actually taken is usually less. The settlements are made for thirty years.

In Northern India the system is different. The Government revenue is assessed, not on each field or block, but on the whole of the land included within the boundaries of the village. The village is the unit of assessment.[1] The Government has usually no dealings with individual cultivators. There is often a class of landholders intermediate between the Government and the cultivator; they receive rent in cash, or in a share of the produce, and they pay a portion of this rent as land revenue to the Government. These proprietors, especially in Oudh, under the name of Zemindars, or Tálukdárs, often hold very large estates.

In a large part of the Agra Province, and still more

[1] The term "village" has, in the official language of Northern India, a technical meaning. By "village," as Mr. Baden Powell explains in his *Land Systems of British India*, "we do not mean a small collection of houses, with a green, a few shops, and a church-spire rising above the immemorial elms; we mean always a group of landholdings aggregated in one place; there is generally one, or more than one, group of dwellings situated somewhere in the area, and the 'village' has a common tank, graveyard, and cattle-stand, and probably an area of scrub jungle and grazing ground attached to it." Wishing to avoid, as far as possible, the use of unfamiliar Indian words, I have said that the village is the unit of assessment, but this is not technically accurate. The actual unit is the "mahál," a word usually translated "estate," but which has really no English equivalent. It signifies "a local area held under a separate engagement for the payment of the land revenue, and for which a separate record of rights has been made." There may be several villages in a "mahál," and there may be more than one "mahál" in a village.

commonly in the Punjab, the land is held by small proprietors, cultivating their own land wholly or in part, and associated together in village communities.

"These communities are represented by an elected or hereditary head, and are jointly responsible for the payment of the Government revenue due from the entire village. Sometimes all the land is held in common, and the proceeds are thrown together and divided among the sharers by village custom. Sometimes the proprietors all have their separate holdings in the estate, each paying the quota of revenue due from his plot, and enjoying the surplus profits of it."[1] Although I speak of village communities, it must be understood that communities of the ancient type, interesting descriptions of which have been given by Sir Henry Maine and others, can hardly or never be found at the present time.

It has been already explained that the share of the rental to which the State, as chief proprietor of the land, is held to be entitled, was formerly much larger than it is now. At the beginning of the last century, in the North-Western Provinces, it was 90 per cent; it was afterwards 66 per cent; and since 1854 it has been nominally 50 per cent. This is considered equivalent to about 7·8 of the gross produce. The amount actually taken by the Government is almost always less.

The manner in which the Government revenue, assessed on the village as a whole, is to be distributed among the shareholders is usually settled by themselves. Any proprietor may demand the separation of his property from the rest of the village, but so long as the village estate remains undivided, the ultimate responsibility for the payment of the Government revenue rests jointly on the whole community. The present

[1] *Report of Indian Famine Commission of 1880*, Part II. p. 110.

tendency, as Mr. Baden Powell says, "is to divide, and for each man to bear his own burdens, and take the benefit of his own industry and exertion. The advantages of the system of union and exclusion of strangers were more felt in times of war and trouble, when defence against a raid had to be continually prepared for, and when common exertion was necessary to bear up against a heavy assessment, than they are now. The happy pictures of self-governing communities, careless of the world outside, that our books draw are more visionary than real."[1] In the Punjab the village proprietors themselves cultivate the greater part of the land. In the United Provinces a larger proportion of it is cultivated through tenants paying rent. It is a consequence of this fact that the average standard of comfort among the agricultural classes is lower than in the Punjab.

Whatever be the tenure of land, the system of agriculture throughout India is one of *petite culture*. In the words of Sir Edward Buck, we may consider that almost the whole country is split up into millions of five-acre farms. The holders of these farms are small proprietors or tenants, either paying revenue directly to the State or rent to an intermediate landlord.

Tenants, technically so called, but who, it must be remembered, hold a very different position from tenants in England, are almost everywhere divided into two classes. A large proportion of them possess, according to immemorial custom, a right of permanent and hereditary occupancy in the land so long as they pay the rent that is due. The amount of their rent mainly depends on local custom, not on competition. In some cases they are entitled to hold at permanently fixed

[1] *Land Systems of British India*, vol. ii. p. 153.

rates, and their right is heritable and transferable. In other cases the rent can only be enhanced on certain grounds specified by law. Such tenants can only be ousted by decree of Court, on proof of non-payment of rent, and without a decree of Court the landlord cannot obtain a higher rent. The principal ground of allowable enhancement is that the tenant is paying at a lower rate than that usually paid by neighbouring tenants of the same class for land of equal value. Cultivators of this description are, in fact, co-sharers in the land, possessing limited rights of property. They often derive their present position from the fact that they or their ancestors were once proprietors; a man who loses his proprietary right is still, according to ancient custom, allowed to retain his occupancy as cultivator. Similar rights may, under certain conditions, accrue by mere lapse of time. A tenant who, by himself or his ancestors, has held during twelve years uninterrupted occupation of the same land acquires a permanent right of occupancy.

Cultivators of this class are usually far better off than those who have no such privileges. "Wherever," say the Indian Famine Commissioners of 1880, "inquiry has been made, it has been found that in all matters relating to material prosperity, such as the possession of more cattle, better houses, and better clothes, the superiority lies on the side of the occupancy tenant, and as a rule they hold larger areas of land. About 70 per cent of the cultivated land in the Agra Province is tilled either by the proprietors themselves, or by tenants with these rights."

Below this class come the tenants-at-will. They constitute a very large class, but they are less numerous in the Agra Province than the tenants with occupancy rights. The tenant-at-will can be evicted at the close

of any agricultural year, and the amount of his rent depends on the bargain he can make with his landlord. Whenever a tenant is evicted, a claim may arise for compensation for improvements which he has made. Below the tenants come the agricultural labourers, the poorest section of the community, depending on wages usually paid in kind. Although they constitute a large class, they are happily far less numerous than the tenants.

The land revenue in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh amounted in 1901 to £4,200,000.[1]

The first step towards a settlement of the land revenue is an accurate survey. The great Trigonometrical survey was commenced early in the last century, and has now extended its network of triangles over the whole of India. Its operations, in the measurement of an arc of the meridian, and in affording data for determining the figure of the earth, have possessed the highest scientific value, and have served as the basis of innumerable useful undertakings. On it has been founded the Topographical survey, which delineates the geographical features of the country, and the Revenue or Cadastral survey, which provides maps of villages and estates, and demarcates them with permanent boundary marks. This is the basis of every settlement of the land revenue. Each village has its maps, showing its boundaries and principal features and every field. These are made sometimes by professional surveyors, but more often by men belonging to the village, who have been trained to the work. There are, it is said, more than 30,000,000 fields and plots in the Agra Province, all of which have been measured and mapped.

[1] The average incidence of the land revenue per cultivated acre is about 2s. in the Agra Province, and a little more in Oudh.

The settlement of the amount to be paid annually as land revenue in the United Provinces, and in the greater part of British India, excepting Bengal, is usually made for a term of thirty years, during which time there can be no increase, under any circumstances, in the Government demand. Of the permanent settlement in Bengal, made more than a century ago, I shall have to speak again. It was also applied in 1795 to Benares and to three other districts of the North-Western Provinces, bordering on Bengal, and it is still in force. In the rest of Northern India this misfortune has been escaped. In this case, however, the loss in the permanently settled districts has been that of the State alone. It does not obtain the full amount of land revenue which it would otherwise have been receiving, but the people have not suffered, as in the greater part of Bengal, from the absence of a Cadastral survey and record of rights. There is no difference in this respect between the permanently and temporarily settled districts of the Agra Province.

The thirty years' assessment was formerly made on the assumption that the amount payable to the State was a fair average sum which, taking one year with another, could be paid without difficulty during the term of the settlement, the profits of good years covering the losses of bad; but the assessments are now made on a principle more favourable to the owner of the land. Their basis is the actual rental or assets at the time when the settlement is made, so that the owner enjoys the full benefit of any future advantage which may accrue either from his own exertions or from any other cause until the term of the settlement expires. In practice, when unusual calamities of season occur, the Government is never backward in allowing

the temporary suspension or permanent remission of its demand.

The responsibility for the proper supervision of all arrangements connected with the periodical assessments of the land revenue rests, in the first instance, on the settlement officer. His duty is both fiscal and judicial; he has to determine the amount of the Government demand, and to make a record of all existing rights and responsibilities in the land. He has a staff of experienced subordinates, almost all of whom are natives of the country, and the settlement of the district assigned to him is a work which formerly required several years of constant work. The establishment of agricultural departments and other reforms have, however, led to much simplification of the settlement officer's proceedings, and to much greater rapidity in the completion of the settlements. All the work of the settlement officer is liable to the supervision of superior officers; the assessments proposed by him require the sanction of the Government before they become finally binding; and his judicial decisions may be reviewed by the civil courts.

It is the duty of the settlement officer to make a record of every right which may form the subject of future dispute, whether affecting the interests of the State or of the people. The intention is to alter nothing, but to maintain and place on record that which exists.

One of the necessary results of these proceedings is the prevention of litigation and of crime. In the words of Mr. Thomason, the settlement officer

"comes among the people as their friend and peacemaker rather than as their judge. He does not ordinarily interpose between two parties when their passions are inflamed by the animosity of