CHAPTER IX.

MAHARAJA NUBKISSEN9 IN SOCIETY.

The social position of Maharaja Nubkissen was unique. It arose not from his wealth or his status and importance in public life. Position in Hindu society does not depend on wealth or official rank or intellectual eminence or public services. It depends on caste and on behaviour in social life. Caste does not mean in modern Indian life the pursuit of any particular trade or calling. It is an inheritance of ages. The four leading castes or divisions of society, ahman, Kshetriya, Vaisya, and Sudra, are of ancient, indeed of immemorial origin. Sub-division of these classes, especially of the last, has brought into existence a multiplicity of castes in Bengal, and that is a step attributed to the Hindu king, Bullal Sen. The caste system, so far as it is a modern creation, is founded upon a distinction, not only of occupations, but of character and capacity, such as they existed in the days of its origin. The original division, that into the four castes, rests more clearly upon a distinction of moral temperament than upon a distinction of pursuits. Classification by calling is indeed recognised, is, in fact, apparent on the face of the division, but it arises out of and is dependent on the former principle, namely, that of classification by temperament and character. The castes constitute a hierarchy, and their dividing lines are rigidly fixed. The caste of an individual is the caste of his fathers. Whatever might have happened in ancient times, when Hindu kings reigned and vishis made and applied the law, it is certain that to-day no one can be transferred or can transfer himself from one caste to another. He can neither be promoted to a higher caste for his virtuous acts or qualities, nor degraded for his sins. The caste of a man is supposed to be a necessary consequence of his acts in a
previous existence; and the life that he now lives, will, it is believed, determine his caste in his next birth. The penalty for un-Hindu behaviour is not degradation from one caste to another, but repudiation by society, that is, excommunication. A man who violates essential rules of religion or society will not be relegated to any inferior caste, but will be put out of society altogether as having ceased to be a Hindu. It is impossible to enumerate all the essential rules, all the restrictions of caste as they are sometimes called. One or two may be mentioned as illustrations. It is considered improper for the higher castes to dine with men of lower castes or to eat food cooked by them. The Brahman, in particular, has to observe special purity in this respect. Then, again, no marriage is permissible between one caste and another. As regards social practices, it is certain that the performance of the sacraments in a non-Hindu way, or the omission to perform some of them, will not be tolerated. Amongst the sacraments may be mentioned marriage, Sraddha (oblation to the dead), and, in the case of Brahmins, Upamayana (investiture with the sacred thread). The highest caste is that of the Brahmins, of whom, of course, as of the other castes, there are ranks and grades. The next in order is the Kshetriya caste, in which the Kayasthas are included.

Maharaja Nubkissén was a Kayastha by caste. The Kayasthas are divided, in point of rank, primarily into Kulins and Mouliks, the former being the higher; and, in point of local distribution, into the Uttar Rahri class and the Dakshina Rahri class. The Kulins consist of only three families, classes or clans, namely, the Ghoses, the Boses, and the Mitters. Nubkissén was a Moulik, and a member of the Dakshina Rahri Somaj. He came, however, to be the head of the Kayastha community of Calcutta, that is, of the Dakshin Rahri section of it, and that is a fact worth explaining in view of the acknowledged ascendency of the Kulins. The fact of his leadership is not disputed. A writer, who
will not be suspected of blind admiration of Nubkissen and his family, has observed:

Navakrishna's social importance was perhaps greater even than his political All his other glories were outshone by the glory which attached to the chief of the Hindu community of Calcutta. In the theatre of public affairs, he had many equals and a few superiors Omichand, Whwaja Wajid, Runjeeet Roy, Rajballab, and others we could name were scarcely behind him in diplomacy. Nundecoomar was a bolder and all along, except in his last fatal move, a successful intriguer. Mahomed Reza Khan had been Premier, and so had Nundecoomar in reality during the nominal administration of his son. But in the social kingdom of his city he was the very monarch. As he owed his fortune to his own enterprise, sagacity and genius, so his social pre-eminence was purely of his own acquiring.

This is a frank acknowledgement of Nubkissen's social position, but the writer's explanation of it ignores facts and runs counter to reason. It is only a cynical sort of speculation. Where everybody was upstart, an upstart head was no scandal Navakrishna had no trouble to back him, but none else was better situated. On the other hand Navakrishna possessed one important advantage above others. He possessed substantial power in Hindu society in Calcutta. He was the Judge of the Caste tribunal. The post implied in being in the eye of Government the most respectable. The official citizen chief of the Hindu community, he easily became its leader.

All founders of families, all archetypes of fortunes are upstarts. Nobility has always its origin in some individual. And in Hindu society the mere age of a family or its wealth or official distinction will not give it a leading position. Brahmins are leaders over Kavasthas, Kuhns are leaders over Mundas. It is not true that the Kavastha community of Calcutta consisted only of upstarts, and if it was so constituted, what then? It certainly included a number of the highest Kuhns; and how came it that a Mundal came to be the head of a body so constituted? The official position as Judge of the Caste-tribunal or Jutimatu Cutcherry will
explain nothing. As has been observed already more than once, social position in this country does not depend upon official rank. And the Judge of a caste-tribunal will no more become the social head of the Hindu community than an English Judge who has to decide mercantile cases will become the head of the mercantile community. The functions of the caste-cutcherry are thus described by Mr. Verelst:—

“All nations have their courts of ecclesiastical jurisdiction distinct from the administration of civil justice, in some with a more limited, in others with more extensive authority. The followers of Brahma in Bengal have their caste-cutcheries or courts to take cognisance of all matters relative to the several castes, or tribes of the Hindu religion. Their religious purity depends on the constant observance of such numberless precepts, that the authority of these courts enters into the concerns of common life, and is, consequently, very extensive. A degradation from the caste by their sentence is a species of excommunication attended with the most dreadful effects, rendering the offender an outcast from society. But as the weight of the punishment depends merely upon the opinion of the people, it is unnecessary to say that it cannot be inflicted by the English Governor (as Mr. Bolts asserts, p. 83) unless the mandate of a Governor could instantly change the religious sentiments of a nation. Neither can a man once degraded be restored, but by the general suffrage of his own tribe, the sanction of the Bramins (who are the head tribe) and the superadded concurrence of the Supreme Civil power.”

It is easy to see from this description that Maharajah Nubkissen’s functions as President of the Caste-cutcherry were of a judicial character. His social position must have been the cause of his office, not the effect of it. The Caste-cutcherry, it may be presumed, was analogous to the Panchayet. Authority in such an office could not invest one with leadership, the explanation of which is to be sought in wholly other circumstances. The inquiry is worth pursuing if only to ascertain the calibre of Nubkissen’s mind. In

---

social life, as in political, he exhibited his thorough grasp of the situation, his insight into realities, he felt the necessity of evoking order out of chaos, of organising loose elements into a consistent whole, and he say with unfailing certainty the means that were best adapted to the end. His method may be simply described: Not to fight against the laws of nature or society, not to attempt to stem the irresistible tide of events, but to watch and utilise the available forces that make for order, to reject effete and jarring elements, to waste no power, to submit to the inevitable, but with a single-minded aim to march with steady steps and slow,—that was his method. The Kulins were the natural leaders of the Kayastha community. Nubkissen did not work against them, but with them. He did not seek to bear them down by the weight of his wealth and official position or to snatch from them the authority which was rightfully theirs. But he put himself into co-operation with them. He invited and encouraged high-class Kulins to settle in the town; he helped them with funds; he showed them every respect; he united his family with theirs by bonds of matrimony. They soon came to look upon him as a patron, as one of their nearest kith and kin. Through him also they came to feel a power they had never known before. They had never been organised for social purposes. He gave them an organisation and secured for them a general recognition of their status. With the aid of the Ghatakhe he had a compilation made, called the Kulagrantha (কুলগ্রন্থ) or a systematic social record, of the Kulins in particular. The Ghatakhe are the men who keep registers of pedigrees, of marriages, of important social events, even of important incidents in the history of families, and they declare the social status of men. They are thus something more than heralds. They are no more chroniclers of pedigrees, but as they are authorities on some of the social practices, like marriage, and on the way in which families are affected by them, they come to be in effect the makers of the position of men. It is
for them to declare, for instance, the degeneration a family may have undergone by a marriage or some other social act. If they are mischievously inclined they can do mischief by raking up everything untoward in the antecedents of a man. If they are propitious they can render a service by bringing into prominence points of superiority. They had, as men, their weaknesses, especially as they had to depend for a living on private generosity. But it is unquestionable they rendered a very useful service to society. They maintained social discipline and kept men straight in the path of customary social practices. It will be an evil day for Hindu society when they shall have become extinct, for there will be none to register the social lapses of men or fix with definiteness the position of men in society. Nubkissen was a patron of the Ghataks and by the aid they gave in the compilation of the Kulagrantha they made him appear in the eyes of the Kulins as their benefactor. Nubkissen’s position was improved by his known earnestness in religion, his intense piety as a Hindu. He lived according to Hindu rules, believed in the Shastras (religious and social works) and was zealous in securing a proper interpretation of them and their application to life. These circumstances tended to raise Nubkissen in the estimation of men, Kulins included, and marked him out as entitled to social leadership by his virtues and services to society. His office in the Caste-cutcherry had made him fully acquainted with social practices and the rules governing them. Added to that qualification there were his religious disposition, his knowledge of works on religion and life, his services to the Kulins, his union with them, his cheerful acceptance of their supremacy and of the authority of Brahmans as interpreters of social and religious duty. His crowning claim was the Ekjai (একজাই) he held.

This was a gathering of the caste people, to which Nubkissen invited Kulins of all ranks. The concourse was a grand one, especially as most of the Kulins were present
in person and not by Ghatak. They were received with fitting honours and paid the fees due to their rank and station (ওলমদিবা). Brahmans were present, Ghatak in particular. All social claims were considered, pedigrees examined, family history ransacked, and ultimately by universal consent Maharaja Nubkissen was recognised as the Gosthipati (গোষ্টিপতি) or head of the Dakshin Rahri section of the Kayastha community. It is said that even the former Gosthipati of the Singha family of Gopinagar recognised his leadership by a distinct act, by marrying, that is to say, a daughter of the family to his grandson Sir Raja Radha Kanta Deb, contrary to the rule observed by the Gosthipati of never marrying a daughter of the family to a Mouluk. The recognition of Nubkissen as the head of the Kayastha community of Calcutta need cause no surprise. He had brought the community into existence. The scattered units, whatever their individual importance, had been welded into a society by him. He paid them due honour; he formed alliances with them; he maintained the purity of social practices and Hindu worship; he was in touch with the Pundits and the Ghatak and was their most munificent and illustrious patron. Before he was formally invested with the rights of a social leader, the responsibilities of leadership had fallen on him. Not only had he made large religious endowments, but his private charity and his gifts for public purposes were liberal and catholic. Religious and social ceremonies were celebrated by him on a grand scale, and the entertainments which accompanied them were for the benefit of rich and poor alike. Learning and religion had in him the most enthusiastic and liberal supporter, and society its most enlightened and illustrious representative. We hear a great deal to-day of "bridging the gulf" between the races. The idea had occurred to Nubkissen in those early days and he reduced it to practice. Many were the parties in his house to which he invited the elite of the European and the
Native community. He was at home in both communities, knew the ways of both, and was popular with both. He was so much loved and respected by the Mahomedan community as by his own. He was the first "interpreter" of British rule and rulers to the people. In every way he had become the unchallenged king of Hindu society before the accession of the Kullus and the declaration of the Ghataks formally conferred on him the sovereignty.

All the works of Maharaja Nubkissen's charity cannot now be traced. But it is well known that he constructed a road thirty-two miles long from Behala to Kulpi, on the north of Calcutta. He excavated several tanks in different parts of his seminaries and made many improvements in them. In Ganga Mandal he excavated a large canal more than twelve miles long. He erected two bathing ghats on the banks of the Ganges and constructed a house for the free accommodation of those who long to die on the banks of that sacred river, and are taken there in their last moments. His charity was not confined within the limits of his religion or race. In December 1783 he presented, in addition to the old Burying Ground, six bigahs and ten biswaes of the adjoining land in Mowzah Dhee Calcutta. This was the spot on which the old magazine stood, and which, with the old Burying Ground, forms the present cemetery of St. John's. The ground given by Maharaja Nubkissen was then valued at above 30,000

It is the authority of Warren Hastings for the statement that Nubkissen gave him the sum of Rs. 3,00,000 for the establishment of a Madrasa for the encouragement of learning in Persian and Arabic.

This is cosmopolitan charity. And it was inspired by the true spirit of charity and not by any motives of personal
advantage. The charity of our times is very often a species of investment, a bid for titles or some other sort of recognition by Government. If roads are constructed, tanks and canals excavated, or colleges endowed, the inspirer of those works of beneficence is generally the Government in its concrete manifestation as a District Magistrate. Charity that springs from either sympathy or a sense of duty has become almost extinct. A people constitutionally charitable, charitable by instinct, by tradition, by the impulses of religion and the standards of society, has somehow or other come to be demoralised, and in most cases it is either a dread of official penalties or a hope of official rewards that is the spur to munificence. The meanest of gifts must be advertised or the donor will not be satisfied. In Nubkissen's time the demoralisation had not begun; the Hindu conscience had not been deadened, and Nubkissen mixed with the greatest of Englishmen as a friend. His charity sprang from the heart.

As might be expected, Nubkissen's expenses on religious ceremonies were on a princely scale. The Durga Puja was celebrated in a style which made it a public rather than a private ceremony. It was for the whole town. And the genuinely religious character of the performance was not lost in mere grandeur, in a display of the vanities of the world. So attentive was the Maharaja to worship in proper form and so apprehensive was he that the priests might be ignorant or careless, that he had the whole ritual carefully compiled by competent men, with translations in Bengalee of the mantras. He performed his own part in the ceremonies with scrupulous accuracy, submitting to privations and going through the forms with perfect cheerfulness. And the Durga Puja was only one of several Pujas celebrated by him. Every one of them was performed with eclat, in complete conformity to the directions of the authoritative religious books, and with a due regard to the expectations and demands of Hindu society.

Sri Basanti Ballav Sen
Citicd by
On a visit to the shrine at Kalighat in Calcutta he expended not less than one hundred thousand rupees on the worship of the Goddess. Amongst the offerings were a gold necklace valued at Rs. 10,000, and besides other ornaments, a rich bed, silver plates, dishes and básons, sweetmeats and other food sufficient for the entertainment of a thousand persons, and trifling presents of money to near two thousand of the poor.\(^1\) He endowed the temple of Radha Ballabhá at Ballabhapore, about 12 miles north of Calcutta, with lands, houses, &c., to the annual amount of Rs. 3,000 which is divided among sixteen families of Brahmins.\(^2\) Religion was with him not a thing of show, not a fitful gleam, not a periodical performance dependent upon regulation, but the ruling principle of his heart. A good and devout Hindu, he never omitted the daily religious ceremonies, and it was not simply in the peace of his quiet home, but in the busiest moments of his eventful life, when his mind was agitated by issues of grave public moment, religion was the abiding sentiment and impulse. It was the ever burning flame. It will be remembered he went to the North-West and was employed—he was the only native so employed—in the several negotiations with the Emperor Shah Alum, the Vizier of Oudh, the Maharaja of Benares and others when the grant of the Dewanny was made to the East India Company. It was at such a time that Nubkissen visited temples at Benares, performed ceremonies, made offerings and presents. Benares is one of the chief shrines in India, one of the oldest and holiest cities. To die in Benares is one of the aspirations of the pious Hindu. To live there in retirement is the highest bliss on earth. To make some endowment for worship, to repair or adorn a temple, to establish a charity in that sacred city, is one of the best uses of wealth. The temple of Bishweshwvar in Benares is the holy of holies, and

2. *Id., Vol. II., p. 9.
Nubkissen longed to do good to his soul by the establishment, in his own name, of a special worship of Siva in witness of his faith. Much was the jealousy excited by his proposal. But Nubkissen’s ardour and faith, and, it may be added, his tact and humility, conquered all opposition. The gods were propitious to the good Hindu. The Hindu public and the Pándás (ministers of worship) came to support his idea; and under the auspices of the then almost independent Maharaja of Benares, was established within the temple a symbol of Siva under the name of Sri Sri Navakrishneshwar. This was an unprecedented act, and it has not been allowed to form a precedent itself. The Maharaja spent a large sum on the occasion and made an endowment for the permanent Sheba or service of the idol he had established. Great was the sensation in Benares and among almost the entire Hindu population, for the act was unique. To this day the Puja of Sri Sri Navakrishneshwar is regularly performed every day within the temple of Sri Sri Bishweshwarji. The Maharaja’s piety turned his political visit into a pilgrimage. The circumstances under which he established the family idol Sri Sri Gopinathji are worthy of record. It is said that on the occasion of his mother’s sraddha he spent a large sum of money in bringing established idols (बिग्रह) which were best known and most largely worshipped. From Agradwipa within the possessions of Maharaja Krishna Chundra of Nuddea he brought the idol (बिग्रह) Sri Sri Gopinathji. He returned the other idols after the ceremony, and endowed their shrines with lands, &c., but retained the last. The family tradition is that Maharaja Nubkissen dreamt a dream which determined him to keep the idol in his family at any cost. He was prepared to give up for the sake of this idol a sum of three lakhs of rupees which he had lent to Maharaja Krishna Chundra. A friendly dispute developed into a regular quarrel and Maharaja Krishna Chundra brought a suit in a court of law for the restoration of the idol.
Nubkissen was not to be baffled however. He had an image made exactly resembling the idol from Agradwipa; he sent this copy and retained the original. Such a substitution would be unpardonable if it was a piece of furniture or any other article of property that was in dispute. But in retaining the original idol he felt that he was obeying a divine command communicated to him in a dream, that the spirit that was represented by the idol had elected to be with him, and he would be offending God and conscience by a literal submission to the legal rights of Maharaja Krishna Chundra. The fact is noticed in Ward’s *History of the Hindoos* in the following way:—

“Raja Nabakrishna of Calcutta once seized this image (Gopee Nath of Agradwipa) for a debt of three lakhs of rupees, due to him from the owner Raja Krishna Chandra Rai (of Krishnagore). The latter afterwards regained the image by a suit at law; but not till Nabakrishna had made another Gopee Nath exactly like it.”

It is no great certificate to such a man to say of him that he was kind and generous to his relations. He erected for them *pucca* [brick-built] buildings; he awarded them maintenance. In his native village, Punchagram, he gave lands extending about three miles, to his distant kinsmen, free of rent for their habitation and other uses. He was invariably kind to his dependents, and courteous, generous and even reverential to his poor kinsfolk. He looked up to his elder brother with the respect due to a father. To his *guru* (spiritual preceptor) and his *purohit* (priest) he gave lands free of rent.

Popular tradition credits Maharaja Nubkissen with having spent nine lakhs of rupees on his mother’s *Sraddha*. According to another account, however, “Gunga Govinda Singh, a person of the writer caste, head servant to Mr. Hastings, expended, it is said, 1,200,000 rupees at his mother’s

---

shraddha; and Raja Nobokissen of Calcutta nearly as much in the shraddha for his mother. His expense was principally incurred in presents to the Brahmins, such as bedsteads, at two or three hundred rupees each; waterpitchers of silver and gold, some worth a thousand, and others two thousand rupees, dishes of silver and gold at five hundred, two hundred and one hundred; silver and gold cups and lamp-steads, at two hundred, one hundred, &c.; covered bowls for betel-nuts, and gold and silver waterjugs at from five hundred down to one hundred, and cloths at ten or fifteen rupees a piece."

It is impossible to know with definiteness the expenditure of a private person on a private ceremony unless he chooses to declare it or to place adequate materials: for the public. The different estimates that have been made of Nubkissen's expenditure on his mother's shraddha are all in the nature of reckless speculation. The only thing which is definitely known is that the celebration was on an imperial scale. For, the distribution of alms and entertainment of guests the districts were divided into a number of thanas with superintendents placed over them. They were called Darogas and were provided with stores and funds. The almsgiving and the entertainments continued for a number of days and passed off to the satisfaction of all. Men on all sides were heard to say: "This is more than a shraddha ceremony, it is like the marut yajna of the kali yuga." Marut yajna was the sacrifice which had been celebrated in the satya yuga by the class of Vedic gods called Maruts, on which as a prototype the raj-suya yajna of king yudhisthira was solemnised in the next age, the dwapara yuga. The following is a good account of the popular reminiscences of the celebration as they have come filtered down to the present generation:

"There were full thirty days between the death and the shraddh day, and Navakrishna's countrymen made good this advantage. At first

1 Ward's History of Hindoos. Vol II., p. 145,
the professional beggars, Bhabas and Pariahs, undertook the journey. Next those whose condition oscillated between decency and beggary, who hitherto wavered between going and not going, decided in the affirmative. Lastly men even in competent circumstances, tempted by large expectations, and urged by greedy wives, coupled with the small chance of being distinguished in the crowd, followed. Those who had to come from great distances, necessarily carried their homes about with them like the Bedouins. As presents are given per head, the very babies were brought, and when many of them died of suffocation, their parents preserved them for the occasion and exhibiting them as if they were alive, added to their income,—the distributors of the presents, bewildered with the crowd and attacked by the army of beggars, each demanding and endeavouring to wring his share out before the others, had not the time nor the wits left to examine the recipients, and even dolls immersed in a heap of rags were passed upon them for infants. It was as if it were an exodus of the moffusil to the metropolis. The very bazars of the zillahs, rendered unnecessary for the time by the depopulation in the villages, were transplanted into Calcutta and the Suburban Districts.

"All the Pundits of Bengal and many even of Benares were invited, and came. Navakrishna with all his wealth could ill afford accommodation for this host. But in all cases where he failed, the Hindoo inhabitants of the city and of the surrounding villages opened their hospitable doors. The beggars slept in the fields, under trees and on the roadside. The dietetic resources and the confectioneries of the whole country were invoked to feed the motley mass of humanity. The entire pottery of the country was exhausted. All the plantain trees of the land were laid under contribution for plates for the eatables. The confectioners had begun their labours the day following 'the last of danger and distress,' and the result in time well indicated that a nation was to be fed for days. Piles of spices, the produce of all the betel-topes of Bengal disposed of in heaps, pottery that rivalled Fabel, Himalayas of brass vessels and Alps of gold and silver things, all the shawls and broadsheet and other cloth of Burra-Bazar, vast pyramids of sweetmeats and lakes of liquid sweets, keer, dohee and milk, wore an imposing aspect. Everything bespoke barbaric profusion. The arrangements were as perfect as human foresight and wisdom could make, but the contest was unequal. A nation besieging Navakrishna was too much for him, even though the military were called to his assistance. Navakrishna, with the soldiers trying to preserve order among that swarm of locusts, was like Dame
Partington with her mop repelling the Atlantic. The presents to the Great Uninvited were unequally distributed. Some who had travelled a fortnight or twenty days received nothing at all; others who were plundered of all they possessed to boot heavily retraced their steps homewards, or, for want of the where withal to do so, settled near Calcutta; while the presents and plunders reaped by a third number amounted to the annual income of many a big keranee. Rather better fared the invited Pundits and relations of Navakrishna. But the Amlah literally made fortunes. A fabulous sum was spent in this Sradh. Popular estimation reckons that sum at nine lacs of rupees."

This was of course a unique celebration in the history not only of Nubkissen but of the country. But the festive gatherings held in his house on ordinary occasions were many and varied. Apart from the Puja entertainments, parties were especially held for bringing together representatives of the European and Native communities. Those held in commemoration of the battle of Plassey were generally honoured by the presence of Clive so long as he was here, of the Governor-General of the time, of members of Council and of other leading Englishmen, official and non-official. That Nubkissen was in touch with the English community and mixed on familiar terms with it, appears from an account in Hickey’s Bengal Gazette, of a party held in his house in celebration of the birthday of a Miss Wrangham, Mr. H. E. B. Busteed in his Echoes from old Calcutta devotes a chapter to that journal which he calls the first Indian Newspaper. Miss Emma Wrangham was, according to this writer, probably sister of one John Wrangham who entered the Indian Civil Service, Madras, in 1783. "She was the social star who came in for the most prominent notice from the contributors to Hickey’s paper." Mr. Livius, who is mentioned in the report of the entertainment, was a protégé of Francis who had got him made Military storekeeper. The Gazette had an existence of only about three years, and

---

1 Mookerjee’s Magazine, April 1861, pp. 166—169.
its editor and itself had an unfortunate fate. The report runs:

_From Hickey's Bengal Gazette, from Saturday, August 18th, to Saturday, August 25th, 1781._

On Monday night Rajah Nubkissen gave a nautch and magnificent entertainment to several persons of distinction in commemoration of Miss Wrangham's birthday. As the ladies arrived, they were conducted by the Rajah through a grand suite of apartments into the Zenana, where they were amused until the singing began, which was so mellifluous as to give every face a smile of approbation. The surprising agility of one of the male dancers occasioned loud acclamations of applause. The principal female singers called the nymphs and swains to celebrate the festivity of the day and spoke a few complimentary lines suitable to the occasion. After supper there was a ball, which was opened by Mr. Livius and Miss Wrangham, who were dressed in the characters of Apollo and Daphne. When the minuets were ended, country dances struck up and continued till past three in the morning, when the company departed highly pleased with the elegant festival. And when the Rajah was attending Miss Wrangham to her carriage, he thanked her in very polite terms for having illuminated his house with her bright appearance.

Maharaja Nubkissen was the Maecenas of Bengal. There never was in this province a more munificent or more enthusiastic patron of letters and the fine arts. His home was the favourite resort of men of learning. His Sabha (Association) of Pundits was pre-eminently the first in the land. It has been popularly compared to the famous Council of Vikramaditya. It included men like Jagannatha Tarkapanchanan, Vanessur Vidyalankar, Radhakanta Tarhabagish, Sreekantha, Kamalakanta, Balaram and Shankar. The pundits of his Sabha more than once saved the honour of Bengal by the triumph they achieved in disputations with champion pundits from north and south. A pundit of those times, named Ramnath Tarkasiddhanta, was distinguished as much for his learning as for his cynical pride and independence of character. It is said of him that when Raja Ishwara Chandra of Nuddea paid a visit to him in his humble dwelling, he spoke to that nobleman, in response to a kind enquiry about the pundit's
wants, with the lofty dignity and stubborn pride of Diogenes answering Alexander. But this same pundit, hewn from the block out of which the best of Greeks were made, accepted an invitation of Nubkissen’s and entered into an intellectual combat with a southern pundit whom he easily laid prostrate. He declined, however, everything in the nature of a present that Nubkissen offered to him.

The Maharaja gave large and frequent presents to learned pundits. To Pundit Jagannath Tarkapanchanan he gave a taluk yielding a decent income and also the cost of erecting his house. The Maharaja had made to the pundit a very rich offer, namely, of a zemindary yielding a lakh of rupees a year, but the pundit declined it on the sound that riches were demoralising and his descendants, if they were wealthy, would not care for learning and would give themselves up to luxury. A smaller gift he accepted. It was through the Maharaja’s influence that he was appointed by Government as the Court Pundit and Compiler of Hindu Law. He gave to Pundit Radhakanta Tarkabagish 1,200 bighas of revenue-free land and obtained for him the title of Pundit Pradhan from the Emperor of Delhi. He built for Pundit Vaneshwar Vidyalankar a house in Sobha-Bazar. Learned moulvies also received handsome encouragement from him. He was himself a great Persian scholar and was well versed in the history and literature of the Mussulmans. In his own family he encouraged the reading of English and Persian. His collection of books and manuscripts, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, was large and valuable. It included many rare and original works, and the Sanskrit and Persian manuscripts in particular appear to have been compiled at great cost and with the most laborious and discriminative research. They bear evidence of the universality of his tastes and of his general appreciation of learning. No private person’s library in this country could be compared to Nubkissen’s in respect of the value of ancient
manuscripts. His appreciation of the fine arts, of music in particular, was in every way worthy of himself. Haru Thakur and Nitai Dass, well known as composers of songs, were his protégés; and he introduced into Calcutta society and popularised the nautch which Englishmen believe to be the chief of our public amusements. It is Bai Nautch. The songs of Kabis (কবি) were a favourite entertainment of Hindoo society. They were a curious illustration of the blended powers of metrical composition and of controversy. Songs composed by one person or party and sung before an assembly were then and there answered by another. The answer brought a reply and so the song-duel went on till one side was fairly exploded. The full name of Haru Thakur was Hurray Kristo Dirghangi. He was called a Thakur because he was a Brahmin among kabis. It was in Nubkissen’s house that this species of entertainment had its origin, its first exhibition. Haru Thakur was so attached to Nubkissen, that after the Maharaja’s death he gave up his profession. Of another kind of musical entertainment known as Akhráí, the Maharaja was a distinguished, probably the first patron. Kului Chandra Sen, who was not only competent in Akhráí, but probably its founder, received great encouragement. A cousin of Kului,—Ram Nidhi Gupta,—popularly known as ‘Nidhoo Babu, made great improvements in the art. Distinguished musicians—singers and players on instruments—came to him, attracted by his fame as a votary of the Muses, and none went disappointed. All had their due appreciation and reward. The writer who has been already quoted more than once thus delivers himself on Nubkissen’s encouragement of letters:—

"Navakrishna’s abilities, Persian scholarship, public spirit and liberality rendered him greatly respected in the English community. His vices were the vices of the age, of both Natives and Europeans, of whatever rank; but none of his contemporaries, except Clive, approached him in the better parts of his nature . . . . . Nundcoomar, a better Persian scholar than Navakrishna, at the height of
his power merely lived in royal state. The name of Gunga Gobind Singh is preserved in tradition by a single act of magnificent expenditure; and of Canto Baboo, a boor, by only his unexpected good fortune. Navakrishna, on the contrary, was an able official, an accomplished gentleman and a munificent nobleman. A warm patron of letters, his palace was the centre of association of all the learned of the surrounding districts, and the resort of those of distant parts of India who chanced to come to Calcutta. In accordance with a hoary-headed but most unexceptionable custom of this country, great men are attended by a number of pundits who give them the benefit of their opinion on all occasions and often discuss logical and metaphysical topics before them. Navakrishna's council of the learned was splendid, as the names of two of its distinguished ornaments, Jagannath Tarkapanchanana and Vanesarwar Vidyalankara, will indicate, and discussions in it were always encouraged by large presents to the wranglers. His wealth and influence procured him many rare Persian and Sanskrit manuscripts. Nor did music receive from him a less hearty welcome. Whosoever, player on instrument or songster, came from Delhi, Gwalior, Lucknow, Benares or other seats of the art, as far down as Moorshedabad, was sure to be attracted by the fame of Raja Navakrishna's fostering care of whatever was good or beautiful. The letters of retired civilians to him from home show the great confidence they repose in him. Most young civilians desirous of attaining a knowledge of the Persian tongue were referred by their elders to him. The couple of dwelling houses he has left to his descendants are living monuments of the grandeur of his taste. They are, in Oriental estimation, perhaps the only two specimens of palatial buildings in a city styled the City of Palaces; and the nautch-room in one of them is the best in Calcutta."

As the pundits have been so often referred to, it may be necessary to say a few words in regard to their character, functions and place in society. The pundits are Brahmans learned in the lore treasured up in Sanskrit works. They are, most of them adhyapaks or teachers. The institutions in which they impart learning are called tols in the vernacular of Bengal. They take no fees from pupils, but, on the contrary, offer them free board and lodging. They are maintained by gifts from the community, or, rather, from the higher castes thereof. In the days of Hindu kings they could count on being
maintained by the king also. Though their work of teaching is wholly honorary, wholly a self-assumed labour of love, they may be in a certain sense called professional teachers. They have no other occupation than learning and teaching. They have no other ambition. If ever the ideal of plain living and high thinking has been realised it is in their case. They form a class or community by themselves. Very often pundits enter into family connections with pundits alone, and the succeeding generation has pundits for ancestors, both on the father’s and the mother’s side. The world has not seen another class like them. Plato and Aristotle, Abelard, Averroes and Avicenna, Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, Usher and Selden, Grotius, Puffendorf and Erasmus, Bopp and Bentley have been great as scholars, as devotees of learning, but which of their ancestors and descendants have lived the same life as they? The race of scholars is kept up in other parts of the world, not by a succession of them in the same families, but by fresh recruits from families never previously distinguished for learning. In India fresh recruits are not of course excluded, but many are the families that have furnished pundits for generations extending over centuries. There has been, so to say, a caste of pundits, and a caste that has justified its existence not by a mere name but the successful pursuit of its own special calling. And the wonder is that the calling which has secured such steady votaries is so little remunerative. Next to the Sanyasis and Sadhus the pundits are the most notable class in India. Ancient works have not till recently existed in the form of published books, and they are written in a style so condensed and elliptical as to be scarcely intelligible without the aid of well instructed or rather duly initiated teachers. Hence the value of oral teaching in India, and the works would have been of little value as instruments of education if the class of pundits had disappeared or collapsed. The intellectual development of the country came to be arrested under Mahomedan rule, but
there was one class that in the midst of poverty and persecution contrived through the dark centuries to keep burning a modest flame of ancient Aryan knowledge. It was the pundits. Progress was out of the question. But these pundits rendered the only service that was possible, the saving from utter extinction the learning of ancient India. A fragment of it only remains, and for that we are indebted to the pundits. It is not merely that they have preserved the works, but they have kept up the cultivation of the subjects by the reading and interpretation of the works and the teaching of them to their sons and pupils. Owing to various reasons, however, they are now an ill-nourished, declining class.

Several of the pundits, especially those who cultivate the Snyritis, or the books dealing with law and custom, are recognised as authorities on social practice and as the authoritative interpreters of those books. Society changes, and law and custom must change with it. The Rishis, who in ancient times had the power to make and declare the law and custom, had also the power to change them. After the era of the Rishis, Hindu kings entrusted to the most learned pundits (âchârîyas) or to associations of them the task of interpreting the law and custom as they existed in books or in practice, and of compiling codes of them from time to time. The Hindu régime has now passed away. In the early days of British rule, judges in administering Hindu law took the opinions or vyavasthas of competent pundits; and those opinions are still recognised as good law. Judicial administration has now become independent of the opinions of pundits. In matters of religious or social usage, however, no authority exists for interpretation except the pundits. They cannot very well be vested with official authority, for Government is pledged to a policy of non-interference in social and religious matters. Society, however, by a tacit and universal consent recognises that authority as existing in the pundits. It is obvious that the authority must exist somewhere, for
neither on the one hand can essential social practices, bound up with religion, be left to be determined by the caprice of individual opinion, nor on the other can an old, unchanging code be left to govern absolutely an ever-changing society. Expansion or modification of the law is possible only by legislation or by interpretation. We have no Hindu legislature now, and recourse is possible only to interpretation. The laws of ancient Rome were interpreted by judges and jurisconsults; the common law of England is made up of judicial decisions, of custom, long-standing and prevalent, and of the opinions of great commentators, like Granville, Bracton or Britton; ecclesiastical law and practice are interpreted by courts of ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and reason, tradition, analogy and expediency would alike suggest that in the present social and political condition of India, the interpreters, the adapters, the improvers of the social law and custom of the Hindus—always more or less mixed up with religion—are the pundits versed in the learning of those subjects. There is no other class competent for the purpose, nor can the task of authoritative interpretation be avoided. Hindu social questions do not mean questions of dress and fashion, but questions which affect the very framework of society, its existence or its integrity.

Maharaja Nubkissen, not so much with the prudence of a social philosopher as with the instincts of a Hindu, patronised the pundits and submitted to their patronage. If there are any social legislators to-day amongst the Hindus it is the pundits. And as Nubkissen was the patron of his illustrious Sabha of Pundits, people felt that he was their rightful head. His relations to the pundits were exactly analogous to those of a Kshetriya king of old times and his council of social legislators, relations at once of supremacy and subordination, of political supremacy and social subordination. From this among other things arose the social ascendency of Nubkissen. 'If the Kayasthas of Bengal have a
higher social position, a more clearly recognised status than that of the Kayasthas of any other part of India, it is because Nubkissen gave them strength and coherence in Calcutta, which soon came to be imparted to the same community in the mofussil, that is, the interior of the province. Calcutta, which in those days was a city of mere traders and shopkeepers, came under the influence of Nubkissen’s magic, social wand to be the home and nursery of a powerful, well organised Kayastha community. Whatever of dignity or social power it has now, is traceable to the impulse that he communicated to it. Even now Calcutta is the only place in Bengal where organised social divisions (ঢল) exist, having recognised leaders (ঢলপতি). Nubkissen’s division was the largest and most influential. And it is worthy of note, as a proof at once of Nubkissen’s position and popularity, that even Brahmins cheerfully ranged themselves under his banners in his division. To this day many a Brahmin acknowledges membership of that division. And time has not wrested from the hands of Nubkissen’s descendants the social sceptre that he wielded. Their leadership is universally acknowledged. They receive like him their marks of honour—the wreath round their necks and the sandalwood paste on their foreheads—in the true order of precedence. They will undoubtedly retain that position if they have the suavity and humility of Nubkissen, his ardent religious temperament, his readiness to bear the social burdens, his sympathy with society, his submission to the shastras, his respect for the Brahmins, pundits in particular, and for the Kulin Kayasthas. And the same is true of Hindu Society in general. Its existence will depend upon its coherence, its submission to discipline, its recognition of leaders, its respect for tradition.
CHAPTER X.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

The style in which Nubkissen celebrated his mother’s sraddha was much discussed at the time. The question, whence did he get so much money, exercised men’s minds at least as much then as it does now. His contemporaries, who were staggered by the display, began to speculate, and several of them in their speculations treated him with little charity. It was reported to Mr. Vereist by some influential men that the Maharaja, having spent all his money on the celebration of his mother’s funeral rites, distributed in alms many lakhs of rupees belonging to the Hon’ble Company’s Treasury in his charge. After the completion of the sraddha, when the Maharaja went to visit Mr. Vereist he told him in jest: “I am informed that you lost your sense and expended the whole of your wealth, as well as several lakhs of rupees belonging to the Company’s Treasury, in the performance of your mother’s obsequies.” Nubkissen, as soon as he heard this, locked up the Treasury (then called the Money Godown) and left the key on the table of Mr. Vereist, soliciting him to remove his doubts by sending for the person who had accused him and for one of the members of the Council, and desiring them to examine and receive the cash in balance at the Treasury. Mr. Vereist sought to pacify him, spoke to him in the gentlest manner, and assured him of his unshaken confidence. The Governor said he had no doubt the cash was all right in the Treasury. The Maharaja, however, remained inflexible. He said his honour had been assailed, and he begged and insisted that, for his own sake, as well as the Governor’s, the cash in the Treasury might be examined. Mr. Vereist yielded. He sent a member
of the Council to the Treasury, who examined the cash and found a surplus of seven lakhs of rupees belonging to the Maharaja. Mr. Verelst, on receiving the information, offered apologies, and pressed the Maharaja to take back the key. The Maharaja thanked him for his kindness and for the confidence reposed in him, but refused to take back the key. If he had been slandered once he might be slandered again, and he did not think it proper to retain any longer any public office. He resigned all the high and important posts he held under the Company and removed to the house of the Governor; the offices which had so long been held in his own. Thus persisted a scandal of the times. A positive and definite charge of misappropriation had been made against the Maharaja, and he found it easy to disprove it. A charge of a vague, hypothetical character is not easily resisted. That Nabkissen had made his fortune by looting the State treasury of the Nawab is a charge which cannot, in the very nature of things, be demonstrated to be false, for such a demonstration would mean the proof of a negative which would be impossible by a simple experimental process of examination of cash in a Treasury. In judging of the honesty of a man what are the canons to be followed? Must we call upon him to account for every pice he made, and, in default, pass judgment against him? If such a trial was to be held, few would come unscathed out of it. No man publishes his account books, and the speculations of others about his gains and savings are generally worthless. The rational principle of judgment would seem to be not to hold a man dishonest till something could be proved against him. And taking the world as we find it, it is not always possible to draw the line which divides honesty from its opposite. It is not easy to say how much of the gains even of a lawyer or a doctor is honest, and how much is not. The world's standards are not the moralist's. All rising to great fortune, like "all rising to great place," "is by a
winding stair," and nothing can be more inconsistent than to wear in worldly success and yet to be fastidious about the means of obtaining it. Nubkissen had, in addition to his wealth, access to many undefined and elastic sources of inland trade traffic. And if he left property worth only about a score of rupees there is no use tarring the imagination to discover possible analogies of that wealth. Lawyers, doctors, and tradesmen, even in this poor country, and in these days of exhaustion, have not approached up to that figure.

The story of the substitution of one idol for another, as given in the last chapter upon the authority of Ward and some other writers, does not seem to be accurate in all its details. It is extremely unlikely that Raja Krishna Chundra would have been satisfied with an image which was professedly and notoriously a copy and not the original. A Hindu values the idol he worships not in so much property. Where it is made of a precious metal and is artistically constructed, it has of course a money value. But it has also a higher value not expressible in terms of money of any denomination. It is a spiritual treasure, the sacred abode of the Divine Spirit. It is possible. Nubkissen gave the substitute and not the original, but Krishna Chundra could hardly have consented to take an idol that he knew to be a substitute. If he was ready to accept a substitute he would be equally content to take its material value in money or bullion, and that can hardly be believed. It is consecration that gives its specific value to an idol. If the general public were aware of the substitution made—and the historical character of the accounts seems to show that they were—then the Raja must also have been aware of it. And as the Raja's knowledge is extremely improbable, the historical accounts themselves should be received cum grano. What appears most likely is that Nubkissen had a copy of the idol made and offered both the original and the copy to Krishna Chundra to make his choice out of; and the latter, depending
wholly upon chance, chose, unfortunately for himself, the wrong idol. There have been similar instances of choice or mischoice in analogous cases, and that seems to be the practice generally followed in that class of cases. There is a reason for it. It has an aspect of fairness about it, and it is believed that the Divinity that is immanent in the idol really rules the choice. In the present case, for instance, the fact of Raja Krishna Chundra making a wrong choice would be regarded by Hindus as a proof that Gopinath elected to reside with Maharaja Nubkissen. When the wrong choice had in fact been made and the fact published to the world, it is likely that Englishmen who came to hear of it, or read of it, presumed that only the substitute had been offered and had been accepted by the Raja with the full knowledge of its supposititious character. Hence the error or the unlikely element in the historical accounts.

A biography of Nubkissen would not be complete without a reference to Burke’s impeachment of Warren Hastings and the charge brought against him of receiving a bribe from Nubkissen. To satisfy the curious, all that Burke said is here reproduced. He opened the charge in the following terms:

"We shall remove any degree of uneasiness from your lordships’ minds and from our own, when we show you, in the charge which we shall bring before you this day, that one bribe only received by Mr. Hastings, the smallest of his bribes or nearly the smallest, the bribe received from Rajah Nobkissen, is alone more than equal to have paid all the charges Mr. Hastings is stated to have incurred."

The speech on the charge runs as follows:

"Mr. Hastings has told you that he wanted to borrow money for his own use, and that he applied to Rajah Nobkissen, who generously pressed it upon him as a gift. Rajah Nobkissen is a banyan; you will be astonished to hear of generosity in a banyan; there never was a banyan and generosity united together; but Nobkissen loses his banyan qualities at once the moment the light of Mr. Hastings’s face beams upon him. Here,’ says Mr. Hastings, I have prepared

1 Burke at the trial of Warren Hastings. Tuesday, 21st April, 1789.
bonds for you! Astonishing! How can you think of the meanness of bonds: you call upon me to lend you £34,000 and propose bonds! No; you shall have it; you are the Governor-General who have a large and ample salary; but I know you are a generous man, and I emulate your generosity. I give you all this money. Nobkissen was quite shocked at Mr. Hastings's offering him a bond. My lords, a Gentoo banyan is a person little lower, a little more penurious, a little more exacting, a little more cunning, a little more money-making than a Jew. There is not a Jew in the meanest corner of Duke's Place in London that is so crafty, so much a usurer, so skilful how to turn money to profit and so resolved not to give any money, but for profit, as a Gentoo broker of the class I have mentioned. But this man, however, at once grows generous, and will not suffer a bond to be given to him; and Mr. Hastings, accordingly, is thrown into very great distress."

"In every transaction of Mr. Hastings, where we have got a name there we have got a crime. Nobkissen gave him the money, and did not take his bond. I believe, for it; but Nobkissen, we find, immediately afterwards enters upon the stewardship or management of one of the most considerable districts in Bengal. We know very well, and shall prove to your lordships, in what manner such men rack such districts, and exact from the inhabitants the money to repay themselves for the bribes which had been taken from them . . . And we shall prove that Nobkissen, within a year from the time when he gave this bribe, had fallen into arrears to the Company, as their steward, to the amount of a sum, the very interest of which, according to the rate of interest in that country, amounted to more than this bribe, taken, as was pretended, for the Company's service." 1

After the defence had been made, the speech in reply was as follows:—

"In the settlement of his public account before he left India, he takes credit for a bond which he had received from Nobkissen upon some account or other. He then returns to England, and what does he do? Pay off? No. Give up the bond to the Company? No. He says, I will account to the Company for this money; and when he comes to give this account of the expenditure of this money, your lordships will not be a little astonished at the items of it. One is for founding a Mahomedan college. It is a very strange thing that Raja Nobkissen, who is a Gentoo, should be employed by Mr. Hastings to .

1 Burke's speech on the sixth charge. Tuesday, 5th May, 1789.
found a Mahomedan college. We will allow Mr. Hastings, who is a Christian, or would be thought a Christian, to grow pious at last; and as many others have done who have spent their lives in fraud, rapacity and peculation, to seek amends, and to expiate his crimes by charitable foundations. Nay, we will suppose Mr. Hastings to have taken it into his head to turn Mahomedan (Gentoo he could not), and to have designed by a Mahomedan foundation to expiate his offences. Be it so; but why should Nobkissen pay for it?" 1

In answer to the accusation Warren Hastings stated as follows in his written defence:—

"The last part of the charge states that in my letter to the Court of Directors of the 21st February 1784 I have confessed to have received another sum of money, the amount of which is not declared but which from the application of it could not be less than £34,000 sterling, etc. In the year 1783, when I was actually in want of a sum of money for my private expenses, owing to the Company not having at that time sufficient cash in their treasury to pay my salary, I borrowed three lakhs of rupees of Raja Nobkissen, an inhabitant of Calcutta, whom I desired to call upon me with a bond properly filled up; he did so, but at the time I was going to execute it he entreated I would rather accept the money than execute the bond. I neither accepted the offer, nor refused it; and my determination upon it remained suspended between the alternative of keeping the money as a loan to be repaid and of taking it and applying it, as I had done other sums, to the Company’s use; and there the matter rested till I undertook my journey to Lucknow, when I determined to accept the money for the Company’s use; and these were my motives:—Having made disbursements from my own cash for services which though required to enable me to execute the duties of my station, I had hitherto omitted to enter into my public account, I resolved to reimburse myself in a mode most suitable to the situation of the Company’s affairs, by charging these disbursements in my Durbar accounts of the present year and crediting them by a sum privately received, which was this of Nobkissen’s. If my claim on the Company were not founded in justice and a bonâ fide one, my acceptance of three lakhs of rupees from Nobkissen by no means precludes them from recovering that sum from me. No member of this honorable House suspects me, I hope, of the meanness and guilt of presenting false accounts.

1 Burke. Eighth day of reply. Saturday, 14th June, 1794.
In regard to this accusation, implicating both Warren Hastings and Nubkissen, it has to be observed that no proof was given in support of it; that it rested wholly on suspicion, and that eventually it fell through. The assumptions of fact made in support of the charge are wholly erroneous and unfounded. The argument for the prosecution was briefly as follows. All banyans are usurers: Nubkissen was a banyan; therefore, Nubkissen was a usurer. No usurer would lend money without a bond and without interest: Nubkissen was a usurer; therefore Nubkissen would not lend money without interest. Therefore the money he gave was a bribe. The conclusions are all logically drawn, but every one of the premises is wrong in fact. All banyans were not usurers, and Nubkissen was not "a banyan," but the Political Banyan. Banyans were Head Assistants, Head Clerks, Private Secretaries, or "Head Baboos" of Governors or other highly placed Englishmen. A man was never a banyan out of relation to others, and by himself. One could be a banyan only of somebody else. In a later time men carrying on particular trading or mercantile operations were called banyans, but the banyans of Nubkissen's time were only personal Assistants of this or that Sahib. They may have lent money, but their business was not money-lending. And Nubkissen was never a banyan of any Sahib. He was the Company's Political Banyan. His functions were public and political, not private and personal. The Political Banyan no more resembled the ordinary personal banyan than the Indian "Civil Service" resembles the "Home Civil Service," of which two the former means a body of rulers and judges, and the latter a body of clerks. But whatever banyans might have been or might have done, it is certain that Nubkissen was never a professional money-lender. His worst enemies have never charged him with possessing that character. From all that is known of his public life, or even of his private life, usury would seem to be
incompatible with his character. A man of imperial ambition and statesmanlike gifts, who lived in princely style, made princely donations and patronised learning and the arts, who was religious and reverential to the core of his heart, would not be likely to deal in bonds, in interest, in penalties and forfeitures. The usurer is made of far other stuff. The lion does not crawl on the earth or burrow under ground; the eagle does not hop from grass to grass.

This loan of three lakhs of rupees does not degrade Hastings, but it exalts Nubkissen. It shows the generosity of which a Hindu is capable. Probably Burke’s astonishment would have been less if he had known that by the tenets of at least one oriental religion, that of Islam, the taking of interest is prohibited. Nubkissen did what was specially befitting in a Hindu of his wealth and position. Burke could not understand why a Gentoo should care to found a Mahomedan college. Here was, however, a Gentoo of a very extraordinary type. How was Burke to explain his gift of land for the erection of a Christian Church? Catholicity like Nubkissen’s is rare, and it is no wonder that it elicited warm praise from the Christian community at the time. The following records are a proof:

The 8th January 1789.

To the Printer of the Calcutta Gazette.

Sir,—As the following conveys an instance of liberality and public spirit in a native of this country, which in Europe would have done honour to His Grace of Northumberland, I beg your public insertion of it as a tribute to truth and justice, and for the right information of the settlement.

I am, Sir,
Your constant reader and a subscriber,
(Signed) W. W.

---

Letter of thanks from the gentlemen of the Church Committee to
Maharaja Nobkissen Bahadur of Calcutta.

Sir,

The Committee of gentlemen appointed by the Subscribers, for
erecting a church to carry into effect the purposes of their subscription,
have received from the Hon'ble the Governor-General and Council
a copy of your durkhast, in which you give and make over to the Hon'ble
Warren Hastings, Esquire, Governor-General, in order that a church
may be erected thereon, six beegahs and ten biswas of land purchased
by you for your own use in Calcutta.

This gift is a most liberal instance of your generosity, and has
afforded to the English settlement in general a great and most season-
able aid towards giving effect to their wishes for building a place of
public worship, and I am desired, Sir, to render you the thanks of the
Committee for it.

I am also to acquaint you that the Hon'ble the Governor-General
and Council entertain the same sense of your liberality, and have particu-
larly marked it in a letter which they have lately written to the
Hon'ble the Court of Directors.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

(Signed) By the Secretary to the Committee.

Nobkussen had more reason to be in sympathy with the
intellectual and spiritual advancement of the Mahomedans
than with that of Christians. There was no necessity in
those days for founding a college for Europeans in India.
The Mahomedans were backward in education and would be
benefited by a college. Nobkissen was intimate with the
highest Mahomedans in the land, was familiar with their
court life, was in touch with their society, and, above all,
was learned in their court language, Persian. Nothing so
much develops sympathy with a people as knowledge of
their language. The European scholar who is learned in
Sanskrit or Arabic has never been known to have had any
but the most kindly feelings towards the people whose classics
they are. And Nobkissen as a Persian scholar might be
presumed to be naturally appreciative of Mahomedan learning.
The most wonderful part of the bribe-theory is, that shortly after his advance of the three lakhs Nubkissen was appointed Sezawul of Burdwan. The story of that appointment has already been told. The appointment was no jobbery. It had become necessary in the interests of the state. There was difficulty in collecting the revenues; arrears had accumulated, and Nubkissen was universally believed to be the fittest person for the office. His success justified the choice. It was an irksome and embarrassing task that he had to perform, but he did it to the complete satisfaction of the authorities, and he ultimately resigned the office of his own free will. Probably Burke’s only authority for the charge of oppression and exaction by Nubkissen as Sezawul was a statement by Mr. Peter Moore at the trial. That gentleman said: “His conduct is said to be very irregular, and his exactions very great, and it clearly appears so, from his payments being so much greater in amount the second year than they were in the first.” There could not be evidence more flimsy than this. The first portion of it is only hearsay, and the rest is only a presumption arising from increased payment. Collections, however, may be made without exaction, and the only case that came to court of alleged oppression, completely broke down from want of evidence. Nubkissen had been legally armed with some powers of a coercive character for the realisation of dues, and he never appears to have exceeded those powers. The accounts that he submitted have never had their veracity questioned, and there never was any circumstance that could even raise a presumption that he had made any illicit gains by his sezawulship. Burke flung charges broadcast of which he could give no proof. No one will question or under-value his sense of justice, his love of liberty, or his sympathy with the Indian people. It is precisely those very feelings which made him so earnest in his impeachment of Hastings, and as Hastings was in his eyes a great criminal, he suspected
everybody who had done a service to that "Captain-General of Iniquity," or received a service from him. Nubkissen was tainted by an unholy association.

Nubkissen had six wives—Heramoni, Bhowani, Kunjanc, Shankari, Sukce and Bilasi. They could read and write Bengalee,—a rare accomplishment of Hindu ladies in those days. Polygamy is an institution so repugnant to the Western mind, indeed so hateful to the Western taste, in itself it is an institution so little defensible, that a word in explanation of Nubkissen's multiplicity of wives will not probably be wasted. The Hindu marriage is not a contract, but a sacrament; and the tie is indissoluble. Divorce or judicial separation is unknown. If therefore becomes necessary, on any ground, for a man to take a second wife, while the first is alive, he has to take her in addition to the first. One of the grounds on which it may become necessary to take a second wife is the absence of a male child by the first. According to the injunctions of religion, the normal period of a Hindu's life is divided into several stages or āsramas as they are called. One of these is that of married life and housetaking. It is grihastha āsrama. The last is the stage of retirement and religious meditation. The real, that is, the religious purpose of marriage is the birth of sons. It is the son that confers spiritual benefit on the manes of the deceased parent. It is the son that performs the śraddha and offers pitru to the departed soul. The son is the spiritual saviour of the parents, and torments are reserved in the next world for the sonless. One son at least is wanted for spiritual functions, and marriage is necessary for getting a son. All the Hindu's duties in life are regulated by religion, and a man's duty to marry arises from the necessity of having a son. If the already married wife or wives are barren or bear only female, a fresh marriage is held, on religious grounds, to be justifiable. Nubkissen treated all his wives well and gave them liberal allowances,
but up to a rather advanced age he had not the good fortune —for such the Hindu deems it—to be blest with a son. His last marriage, that with Srimati Bilasi Dassee, took place in 1775. Up to that year he had only a female child born (in 1772) unto Ranee Heramoni Dassee. It is true he had adopted a son, Gopi Mohan Deb, in 1768. That at any rate was stated by some witnesses before the Supreme Court of Calcutta in the suit of Gopi Mohun Deb vs. Raja Rajkrishna Deb Bahadur. But he had not at the date of his last marriage a son sprung from his loins. After that marriage he had two more daughters by two Ranges, and in August 1781 he had the supreme satisfaction of having a son born to him—Raja Rajkissen.

Nubkissen had a piece of ground at Ghyretty, near Chandernagore, which, though small, deserves notice for the manner in which it had come into his possession. It was contiguous to the house and gardens of Nabob Cossim Ally Khan, who had made a grant of it to Sir Eyre Coote, who commanded the Army in Bengal in 1762. That General disposed it off to Nubkissen, who had for a time some difficulty in obtaining quiet possession of the property.

Nubkissen’s social leadership has been already referred to. It may be noted as a matter of detail that the Kayastha community of Calcutta had at first two divisions (दल), one led by Madan Datt and the other by Nubkissen. The division led by Nubkissen seems to have been formerly led by Kristo Churn Mitter. It rapidly grew in numbers and influence under him.

In Calcutta Nubkissen had more than once to change his residence as he advanced in life, as his family” (in the Hindu sense of the word) expanded, and as his circumstances improved. Calcutta consisted originally of three villages—Sutanati, Kalikata and Govindpur. The chief of these was known as Sutanati Hat, literally “Cotton Thread Mart.” It grew up on the eastern bank of
the river for the sale of country-made yarns and cloths.¹

"Sobhabazar was then a jungle, though when Nobokissen, Clive's Munshi, settled there after the battle of Plassey, it rose rapidly in buildings and population. Mention is made of it in 1780 as frequented by sailors and of a great fire having occurred there when Jack was very active in rescuing the natives' property from the flames."² It was Nubkissen that made Sobhabazar. A word may be said about the name Sobhabazar. There have been learned discussions about its origin. It has been said by some that it means literally a bazar of beauty and is derived from the Bengalee words শোভা and বাজার. By others it has been traced to the words সভা and বাজার and has been taken to mean the locality where the great gathering or সভা on the occasion of the sraddha of Nubkissen's mother was held. It is easy to see from several records that have been quoted that both these etymologies are wrong, that the name was originally written as Soubah Bazar which explains itself. Sham Bazar appears to have been Charles's Bazar. Some of the localities known as "bazars" appear to have been called by the names of particular Englishmen. "The house generally known by the name of Sankar Ghosh's is the paitric or family inheritance which on the death of their mother devolved on the three brothers, the said Raja Navakrishna, Ram Soonder and Manik Chunder; and that people do generally call the house Chota Buree and Puratan Buree. That the western wing or range of apartments of that house was formerly occupied by Maharaja Navakissen before he had built and removed to another house on the Seat's ground called Burra Buree."³ "The families of Ramsoonder Bewarta,

¹ See History of British India by Sir W. W. Hunter, I, page 225.
³ Deposition of Radhamohan Ghose in Gopimohan Deb vs. Raja Rajkrishna Deb Bahadur.
Manick Chañdra Bewarta and Raja Nubkissen all dined or messed together until the year 1180 (B.S.) when in consequence of the increase of members in each family they found it inconvenient to continue this practice any longer and accordingly agreed to dine separately, each in his own apartments. That Raja Nubkissen also lived in apartments allotted to him in the paitric, or family house which he had enlarged by purchasing ground adjoining to it and erecting other buildings and joining them to his side of the apartments in the paitric house.\(^1\) “The house in which Ramsoonder Bewarta and his family lived was built by Raja Nubkissen; but the ground on which it was built was purchased by the mother of Nubkissen.\(^2\)” Nubkissen began to build a Thakoorbaree, but death prevented him from completing it. After his death Raja Raj Kissen pulled down some parts of the structure and rebuilt it on a different plan. It was intended to be dedicated to the service of Gopinathji and Govindji. It was the wish of Maharaja Nubkissen that the sum of Rs. 50,000 should be spent on the building. In 1789 the Maharaja with his wife Sukee Dasse and his son Rajkissen retired from the old family house to the new house, taking with him the greatest part of his moveable property. The other members of his family and the remaining wives of the Maharaja remained with Gopimohun Deb in the old family house. Nubkissen made his last will on the 13th May 1791 and died on the 22nd November 1797, corresponding with the 10th of Agrahayan, 1204 (B.S.)

A brief reference to some of the most conspicuous men that lived in or about the time of Nubkissen will not be out of place. Maharaja Doorlub Roy enjoyed the highest distinction and power at the Court of Seraj-ud-Dowlah before Lord Clive had set foot in Bengal. He was the first lord of the Treasury and maintained no inconsiderable army

---

\(^1\) Deposition of Kristo Mohun, Deb.
\(^2\) Deposition of Mohon’ Lall Bose.
of his own to support his dignity and to shield himself from danger. He commanded the troops which were sent to the encampment at Plassey though he does not appear to have been engaged in that battle. Under Meer Jaffer, he still continued to preside over the exchequer; and so great was his wealth, that the Nabob and his execrable son, Meeran, employed every engine of Government for more than a twelve-month to pillage and destroy him; and this they would have inevitably effected but for the active interference of Clive.¹

Maharaja Shetab Roy was one of the Ministers at the Court of Moorshedabad, where he appears to have held a command in the army. He was the only Hindoo of Bengal who in that stirring period exhibited the faintest spark of military courage. We find him commanding a body of native troops in the battle which Knox fought under the walls of Patna in 1759; and the English commander bore the most honorable testimony to his boldness and skill. The author of the Seer Mutakhoreen, who witnessed the battle from the walls of the city, says: "Knox came in the evening, with Shetab Roy in his company. They were both covered with dust—and sweat. The Captain passed the greatest encomiums on Shetab Roy's zeal, activity and valour. He exclaimed several times, 'This is a real Nabob. I never saw such a Nabob in all my life.'" After the acquisition of the Dewanny by the English, he was associated with Mahomed Reza Khan in the management of the finances.²

The Setts of Moorshedabad are too well known to need any detailed notice. They were the imperial bankers for the three provinces;—second in importance only to the Soobadar himself. No political event transpired during the fifty years preceding the downfall of the Mahomedans in which they did not bear a prominent share. It was of them that Burke said in the House of Commons that their

¹ *The Friend of India.* 1858.
² *Ditto.*
transactions were as extensive as those of the Bank of England. It was in consequence of the vast power which their subscriptions gave them, that they received from Delhi, under the "Privy Seals" or the Bankers of the world, Osman Ali put two of the brothers to death in his flight to Agra, and the fracas of the Exchange from Mooresbad led to Calcutta completed their decay. 1

Raaj Bullub was selected for his talents as the Naib of Deputy Governor of the province of Dacca by Aly Verdy, twenty years before the journey of Lord Clive to the Upper Provinces. A few months before the death of Aly Verdy, Raj Bullub's master, the Governor of Dacca, paid the debt of nature. Aly Verdy, then eighty years of age, was lying on the couch from which he never rose, and Seraj-ud-Dowlah, his profligate grandson, seized the helm before he had breathed his last, and proceeded forthwith to imprison Raj Bullub, who happened to be at Moorsedabadd, that he might press out of the sponge some portion of the wealth which had been absorbed in the long administration of a wealthy province. Kissen Dass, Raj Bullub's son, on hearing of his father's confinement, immediately embarked with his family and the immense wealth which his father had accumulated, and, under pretence of going on a pilgrimage to Juggernath, stopped at Calcutta, where he obtained refuge. It was charge of the escape of so much wealth from his hands, that Kissen Suraj-ud-Dowlah, as soon as he had ascended the throne, to march down and attack Calcutta in 1765. But what is the caprice of power, that the young Soobadar had no sooner entered Fort William than he ordered his palanquin to be set down in the square, and commanding Kissen Dass to be brought before him, bestowed an honorary dress on him! Within three hours after this event commenced the tragedy of the Black Hole. 2

1 The Friend of India. 1836.
2 Ditto.
Nubkissen's career, as has been shown, was unique. Navakrishna was a representative man. In himself he holds up to us the mirror of his age. He lived in one of the most important and critical periods of our history—to some extent he acted that history. He was one of the leaders of our revolution, a revolution little less glorious and momentous in its results than the English Revolution of 1688, and his never-failing fidelity to the English shows that he was immeasurably above his age in political sagacity and perhaps too that he was warmed by a degree of patriotism. But he possesses a greater historical interest. With him passed away the generation of natives who held the highest posts under the English in India and exercised power and influence little inferior to the Governor-General."
CHAPTER XI.

Nubkissen and the English Conquest.

Scarcely any nation in the world has followed, as closely or as consistently as the English, the principles which were laid down by a great English philosopher and man of the world, in regard to the use that rulers have to make of their counsellors and the degree of public recognition that is to be given to them. Bacon wrote:—"The ancient times do set forth in figure both the incorporation and inseparable conjunction of Counsel with Kings, and the wise and politic use of Counsel by Kings: the one, in that they say Jupiter did marry Metis, which signifieth Counsel; whereby they intend that sovereignty is married to Counsel; the other, in that which followeth, which was thus: they say, after Jupiter was married to Metis, she conceived by him and was with child; but Jupiter suffered not to stay till she brought forth, but ate her up: whereby he became himself with child, and was delivered of Pallas armed, out of his head. Which monstrous fable containeth a secret of empire, how Kings are to make use of their council of state; that first, they ought to refer matters unto them (which is the first begetting or impregnation); but when they are elaborate, moulded, and shaped in the womb of their Council, and grow ripe and ready to be brought forth, that then they suffer not their Council to go through with the resolution and direction, as if it depended on them, but take the matter back into their own hands, and make it appear to the world that the decrees and final directions (which, because they come forth with prudence and power are resembled to Pallas armed) proceeded from themselves, and not only from their authority, but (the more to add reputation to themselves) from their head and device."

In this respect Englishmen have been Baconians before Bacon. They have always known how to refer matters unto
counsellors, and, when they have been "elaborate, moulded and shaped," to take the matter back into their own hands and make it appear to the world that the decrees and final directions proceeded from themselves, "and not only from their authority but from their head and device." And whether formally initiated in these principles or not, they have invariably acted according to them by a sort of instinct in administering the affairs of this country. They have observed those principles most systematically in dealing with native Counsellors. The native of India is indispensable to the ruler. Often he is his best adviser, his only informant. He not only carries his master's messages or obeys his orders, but warns him, instructs him, fights his battles, saves his life or honour, and even governs for him. But the native, whatever his services, receives as little recognition in any history of India as the American in a history of English literature. The country is studded with memorials of Englishmen who in civil or military life have in any way aided in the establishment or maintenance of British rule, but material monuments or historical notices of native helpers of the English cause are hard to find. Need we wonder at the omission of native names from works by Englishmen, when there is scarcely a history of India or even a biography of Clive or Hastings that mentions even Maharaja Nubkissen who was the friend, philosopher and guide of the hero of Plassey, and to whom the English are indebted for services which can scarcely be repaid? The English habit is never to recognise the individuality of the native, but always to merge him in some Englishman or other. The Englishman by virtue of his position in India is always the superior officer. Some subordinate may not only be his right hand but his brain, but authority takes precedence of ability, the subordinate is sunk in the superior, and though a resolution in a gazette may bestow compliments on a few fortunate natives, the writers of the more elaborate official documents or books of history do not seem to think it worth their while
to disfigure their pages by native names. The history of India, as written by Englishmen—and no others care to write it—is a history of English soldiers and English rulers. Which history of India during the Mutinies mentions Hurrish Chunder Mookerjea, and yet who could be more fitly called the right hand of Lord Canning at the time?

"The most wonderful things," says Burke, "are brought about in many instances by means the most absurd and ridiculous; in the most ridiculous modes; and, apparently, by the most contemptible instruments." Again: "It is often impossible, in these political enquiries, to find any proportion between the apparent force of any moral causes we may assign, and their known operation......A common soldier, a child, a girl at the door of an inn, have changed the face of fortune, and almost of Nature." Nubkissen rendered services to the founders of the English Empire in the East which certainly make him out to be an "instrument." He was no "contemptible instrument" however, for his services were not merely of the mechanical, accidental sort. They were not confined to any special, single occasion. They are not to be compared to the guarding of a gate or the defence of a bridge. They were systematic, long-continued and deliberate, giving evidence of various intellectual and moral qualities. He was an instrument in the same sense in which Clive was himself an instrument. Both were founders of the empire, the one by his sword, the other by his diplomacy. As has been observed in a previous chapter, the inspiration of empire came into the soldier’s mind from the diplomat. Both were alike instruments, for neither was, by his birth, education or surroundings, drawn in any necessary way to imperial tactics. Neither had received any training for his work, yet each was fittest, among the men of the time, for the purpose he accomplished.

The English acquisition of India is one of the most marvellous facts of history. The circumstances that led to
the establishment of the English power and the character of the revolution that was accomplished, have been described with remarkable accuracy and soundness of judgment by Professor Seeley. "Our acquisition of India," writes the learned historian, "was made blindly. Nothing great that has ever been done by Englishmen was done so unintentionally, so accidentally as the conquest of India. There has indeed been little enough of calculation or contrivance in our colonisation. When our first settlers went out to Virginia and New England, it was not intended to lay the foundations of a mighty republican state. But here the event has differed from the design only in degree. We did intend to establish a new community, and we even knew it would be republican in its tendency; what was hidden from us was only its immense magnitude. But in India we meant one thing, and did quite another. Our object was trade, and in this we were not particularly successful.\* War with the native states we did not think of at all till a hundred years after our first settlement, and then we thought only of such war as might support our trade; after this time again more than half a century passed before we thought of any considerable territorial acquisitions; the nineteenth century had almost begun before the policy of acquiring an ascendancy over the native states was entered upon; and our present supreme position cannot be said to have been attained before the Governor-Generalship of Lord Dalhousie, little more than a quarter of a century ago. All along we have been looking one way and moving another."

What was the condition of the country at the time the English came into power? Let the historian answer: "When we began to take possession of the country, it was already in a state of wild anarchy, such as Europe perhaps has never known. What government it had was pretty invariably despotic, and was generally in the hands of military adventurers, depending on a 'soldiery composed of bandits
whose whole vocation was plunder. The Mahratta Power covered the greater part of India and threatened at once Delhi and Calcutta, while it had its head-quarters at Poonah, and yet this power was but an organisation of pillage. Meanwhile in the North Nadir Shah rivalled Attila or Tamerlane in his devastating expeditions. It may be said this was only a passing anarchy produced by the dissolution of the Mogul Empire. Even so, it would show that India is not a country which can endure the withdrawal of Government. But have we not a somewhat exaggerated idea of the Mogul Empire? Its greatness was extremely short-lived, and in the Deccan it seems never really to have established itself. The anarchy which Clive and Hastingsfour in India was not so exceptional a state of things as it might seem. Probably it was much more intense at that moment than ever before, but a condition of anarchy seems almost to have been chronic in India since Mahmoud, and to have been but suspended for a while in the Northern half by Akber and Shah Jehan: 

India, Professor Seeley goes on to say, was never conquered by the English. The word "conquest" refers to some action done to one state by another. There is war between two states; the army of the one state invades the other and overturns the government of it, or, at least, forces the government to such humiliating terms, that it is practically deprived of its independence. Nothing of this sort happened between England and India. India had no nationality, the people had no national feeling, and Indian powers were overthrown by the aid of the Indians themselves. "Now this is not a foreign conquest, but rather an internal revolution. In any country when government breaks down and anarchy sets in, the general law is that a struggle follows between such organised powers as remain in the country, and that the most powerful of these sets up a government. In France, for instance, after the fall of the House of Bourbon in 1792 a new
government was set up chiefly through the influence of the Municipality of Paris; this Government having fallen into discredit a few years later was superseded by a military Government wielded by Bonaparte. Now India about 1750 was in a condition of anarchy caused by a decay in the Mogul Empire which had begun at the death of Aurungzebe in 1707. The imperial authority having everywhere lost its force over so vast a territory, the general law began to operate. Everywhere the minor organised powers began to make themselves supreme. These powers, after the fashion of India, were most commonly mercenary bands of soldiers, commanded either by some provincial governor of the falling empire, or by some adventurer who seized an opportunity of rising to the command of them, or, lastly, by some local power which had existed before the establishment of the Mogul supremacy and had never completely yielded to it. To give an example of each kind of power, the state of Hyderabad was founded by the satrap of the great Mogul called the Nizam, the state of Mysore was founded by the Mussulman adventurer Hyder Ali, who rose from the ranks by mere military ability, the great Mahratta confederacy of chieftains headed by the Peishwa, a Brahminical not a Mussulman Power, represented the older India of the time before the Mogul. But all these powers alike subsisted by means of mercenary armies, they lived in a state of chronic war and mutual plunder such as, I suppose, has hardly been witnessed in Europe except perhaps in the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire.

Macaulay, who belongs to a very different school, comes to the same conclusion as Professor Seeley in regard to the political situation in India at the time that Nubkissen lived and worked. He writes: “The history of the successors of Theodosius bears no small analogy to that of the successors of Aurungzebe. But perhaps the fall of the Carolingians furnishes the nearest parallel to the fall of the Moguls...
A succession of nominal sovereigns, sunk in indolence and debauchery, sauntered away life in secluded palaces, chewing bang, fondling concubines, and listening to buffoons. A succession of ferocious invaders descended through the Western passes to prey on the defenceless wealth of Hindostan... Wherever the Viceroy's of the Mogul retained authority they became sovereigns. They might still acknowledge in words the superiority of the house of Tamerlane; as a Count of Flanders or a Duke of Burgundy might have acknowledged the superiority of the most helpless drivel over among the later Carloviversians. They might occasionally send to their titular sovereign a complimentary present, or solicit from him a title of honour. In truth, however, they were no longer Lieutenants removable at pleasure, but independent hereditary princes. In this way originated those great Mussulman houses which formerly ruled Bengal and the Carnatic, and those which still, though in a state of vassalage, exercise some of the powers of royalty at Lucknow and Hyderabad. In what was this confusion to end? Was the strife to continue during centuries? Was it to terminate in the rise of another great monarchy? Was the Mussulman or the Mahratta to be the Lord of India? Was another Baber to descend from the mountains and to lead the hardy tribes of Cabul and Chorasan against a wealthier and less warlike race? None of these events seemed improbable."

What learned historians have been able to observe after a long and careful observation Nubkissen saw at once with the shrewd eye of a practical statesman. His attachment to the English was formed, as has been seen, not after the Company had acquired power and importance, but in the days of their helplessness and depression. Persecuted, expelled from the town, and driven to take secret refuge on the banks of the river at Fulta, they received information, provisions and other assistance from none but Nubkissen. At unspeakable risk to himself he came to their aid. As
his relations with the Company became more intimate and his insight into English character deeper, the sentimental attachment ripened into a genuine esteem. He came to be convinced of the strength, the talents, the righteousness of the small band of foreigners. When false charges were brought against him they were inquired into with scrupulous care and pronounced to be false. When by an error of the authorities, rights to certain lands were conferred on him which legally belonged to another, and a complaint was made by that person, the grant was revoked after a due inquiry and compensation made. In spite of their feelings of kindness towards him and their appreciation of his services, they administered strict justice between him and a stranger. The recorded examples of English firmness, courage and justice are as nothing compared to the many experiences which Nubkissen must have had in his daily relations with them. The edifice of Mahomedan supremacy was crumbling and it was hopeless to buttress it up. It was suffering not from the violence of a sudden shock, but from the dry rot which nothing could cure, and the inevitable consequences of which were decay and ruin. The soul had departed from the rule with the justice of Akber. Righteousness exalteth a nation. It alone sanctifies a rule. Aurungzebe substituted force for justice, and though the strength of his military arm kept up a good show as long as he lived, the handwriting on the wall had already manifested itself. The tottering frame lingered on through a few more reigns, but its doom had been sealed by the policy of reaction which had commenced. The Hindu power was extinct beyond the hope of a revival. The scattered forces were not strong enough, and they wanted coherence and a leader. There were no materials in the country out of which a new order could be evoked. The deliverance was provided from a foreign source. Nubkissen, so far as he helped the consummation, did so out of the same necessity which compelled Englishmen to
invite William of Orange to occupy the throne rendered vacant by the constructive abdication of James II. An independent, patriotic, homogeneous nation like the English had in the circumstances of that epoch no alternative but to look to a foreign source for relief from the threatening anarchy. The necessity was clearer in India in the circumstances of the times in which Nubkissen lived.

The hand of Providence is no mere metaphor. The more closely we look into the lives of individuals and nations and into the way in which epoch-making events occur, the more are we liable to be convinced that a force not ourselves rules the affairs of men. It is not a blind force, but a Will. And it is a Will that is not capricious, but that operates through, if it is not identified with, a Law which is the very standard and type of Righteousness. There have been some times palpable manifestations of the Will. What was that fairy-like female figure that stimulated to heroic exertion the Greek seamen whose arms were faltering at the commencement of the battle of Salamis? It seems easy for a certain class of thinkers to dispose of, on à priori grounds, all such incidents or reports as fiction. If properly examined they cannot be lightly dismissed; and their number is not insignificant. What theory of natural causation or necessary law will explain the visions that Joan of Arc saw, the capacities she suddenly acquired, the results she achieved? How did the simple village girl come to be a commander of armies and the winner of battles against veterans? It is worthy of note that several of the most remarkable men of history, men whom the world is content to credit with extraordinary merits as the real cause of their achievements, felt themselves to be nothing more than the instruments of a Divine Purpose. The English commanders who put the Spanish Armada to flight deserve credit no doubt for their courage and strategy; but several of them were conscious of the help they received from the elements, and the Sovereigns
concerned saw and felt deeper. Philip II. said that he had never counted on being called upon to fight God and man, and Queen Elizabeth, neither imbecile in intellect, nor unwilling to claim credit for her officers, expressed her conviction in the memorable words of her medal.

Of Cromwell's faith the evidence is overwhelming. In his despatch addressed to the speaker of the House of Commons after the battle of Naseby he writes:—"This is none other but the hand of God, and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with him." Again: "Thus I have given you a true, but not a full account of this great business; wherein he that runs may read, that all this is none other than the work of God. He must be a very Atheist who does not acknowledge it." "Sir," he wrote on the battle field of Preston, "this is nothing but the hand of God." Writing to Colonel Hammond in November 1648 he notices his own victories in the following terms:—"We have not been without our share of beholding some remarkable providences and appearances of the Lord." "My dear friend," he goes on, "let us look into providences; surely they mean somewhat. They hang so together; have been so constant, so clear, unclouded." Referring to the 3rd September 1651 he says in a despatch:—"This day twelvemonth was glorious at Dunbar, this day hath been glorious at Worcester. The word then was 'The Lord of Hosts' and so it was now; and indeed the Lord of Hosts was wonderfully with us." Are assertions like these to be taken in a conventional sense, as the expression of a mere ceremonial humility? Most emphatically no. They represent his deepest convictions. They were the result of his inspirations and experiences. His contemporary, Milton, whose lot was cast in another sphere of life, felt like him that he was working ever under the Taskmaster's eye, and was conscious, from an early period, of his being destined to leave some work that posterity would not willingly let die. Napoleon's faith in the occult arts or, rather,
in the occult forces of nature has become proverbial. He said on a certain occasion, “My presentiments have never deceived me.” Presentiments are inspirations and not the results of experience. But experience has often tended to confirm antecedent faith. The circumstances under which William III. landed in England convinced him that Providence had directed his movements for the deliverance of the English people.

As God is the one Cause of the universe, His is the one Purpose which rules in life. The Divine Will does not destroy human freedom, but directs it. Some of the greatest of men have felt this guidance and have regarded themselves as favoured and glorified by it. When three successive attempts to commit suicide failed, Clive is said to have observed that he must be reserved for something great. He may have had no direct inspiration, but in nearly every military operation in which he was engaged he was helped by “accidents.” The so-called accidents play a great part in life, but what the vulgar judgment regards as an accident is often only a special dispensation of Providence. The world is not ruled by accidents, nor by physical force, nor by law if it means mechanical necessity or arbitrary sequence. “Through the ages an increasing purpose runs.” And if at times falsehood seems to triumph over truth, or right to give way to might, the fact is to be regarded in no other light than the sufferings, in private life, of a righteous man or the prosperity of a rogue. Unseen conditions are at work which interfere with a proper reading of the facts, and it has to be remembered that for the settlement of accounts there is all eternity at the disposal of the Most High. “The Moral Law is written on the tablets of eternity.” In accordance with that law great men (or women) arise for the deliverance—political, intellectual or religious—of mankind or a section of it. These persons, whether political rulers or not, are possessed of a true Divine Right. They are instruments of the Divine Will. Their ability gives them only fitness as
instruments. The circumstances which conduce to the success of their mission are moulded by an unseen hand. And there is a Divinity that shapes their ends.

The English conquest of India, if conquest it can be called, is, more than any other event of equal importance, a Divine dispensation. There was a manifest disproportion between means and results. The unexpected happened every day during the period of transition. The old régime passed away like the baseless fabric of a vision. Armies and empires seemed to melt into thin air before the very eyes of men. The English came into the country as traders; they found themselves rulers. Clive's triumphs have a magical character about them, almost as marked as those of La Pucelle. They read like fable. The English did not fight their way to the musnad, but were wafted to it as by a propitious breeze, of which none can say whence came it or how blew it.

Nubkissen was carried along the tide; at the same time he was one of the chief forces that contributed to the consummation. Posterity has no reason to regret his policy or his actions; on the contrary, it should be grateful for his services. Experience had shown that not only no indigenous power was fitted to restore peace, order and good government to the country, but that no western power except the English was equal to the task. It was not superior strength so much as superior wisdom and justice which placed the country in the hands of the English. Strength would have been displayed in conquest, but the English obtained their power not so much by conquest as by cession and agreement. English management of possessions was often welcomed by powers and peoples.

The empire which was acquired by wisdom and justice will be retained by the same qualities and by them alone. Justice even more than wisdom is the strength of a Government, and when it fails, the powers of righteousness make it go. The heavens themselves "arm against perjured kings." There
comes a time when the load of iniquity is too heavy to be borne and the empire sinks under the weight. It is difficult to conceive even the possibility of English rulers abandoning justice or lowering the standard of it. The Proclamation made by Her late Majesty Queen Victoria in November 1858, on assuming the direct sovereignty of India, is a remarkable document for its pronounced and emphatic affirmation of principles of justice, equal rights, religious toleration, a fair field to intelligence and character. That Proclamation cannot fail to be a perpetual guide to Indian rulers. At any rate, it will always remain as an ideal which Governments, in spite of occasional lapses, will generally strive to realise.

There is no fear of any honest-minded ruler doing wrong if he remembers the principles of that charter, and if in carrying out innovations he follows the method which in England has proved so successful, the method not of Revolutions but of Evolution. About the worst evil of foreign rule is its tendency to arrest the natural and spontaneous development of a people. Not all the imported blessings that a conquering race can offer, can compensate for the loss of a healthy natural growth. Art never supplies the want of Life. England cannot be charged with any conscious attempt to interfere with the free development of the intelligence, the character and the institutions of the Indian people; on the contrary, she deserves their gratitude for her endeavours to aid that development. Some deterioration may arise, however, in consequence of the inevitable conditions of the new life. At least one such instance was discovered long ago. A remarkable passage occurs in a minute by Philip Francis recorded in the proceedings (Public Department) of the 4th November 1776, and said to be "in consequence of the Governor-General's minute of the 28th April last on the subject of the trade to Suez." It runs:

"The consumption of foreign commodities by the natives of Bengal is very inconsiderable. Cotton, the chief article of import, is
the material of manufacture for exportation. But the productions of Bengal have been in request in almost every part of the world. The returns were received in specie. The parsimonious industry of a simple unenlightened people imposed a natural tribute on the indolence or luxury of the most powerful and polished nations. In these circumstances the growing balance of trade accumulated and the country flourished under a despotic Government.

"It is material to the present inquiry to observe that there is no period of time at which the foreign trade has been conducted by any but foreigners; consequently its continuing to be so is not an assignable cause of the decline of the country. The Hindu is attached to the soil which gave him birth, by the plan and principle of his religion. Nothing but external violence can remove him from it. Nature has encouraged him by every prospect of advantage to be a husbandman or a manufacturer. It is no more compatible with his interest than with his genius, constitution and habits of life to be a mariner, or an adventurer, in the retail of commerce. The foreigner must come home to him and purchase at his door. In this sense, if selling be the essential property of commerce, Bengal was a commercial nation of the first order; other nations were but the agents of her fundamental industry and the retailers of her original produce. Before the introduction of the British dominion, these were truths unquestionable. The wonderful mass of wealth we found here proves without argument the actual lenity of the ancient Government and the simple unerring wisdom of its institutors. Bengal has changed its masters: does this single change, or any consequences attending it, imply a necessity of altering the whole political and economical system under which it formerly prospered? . . . The happiness of a nation—connected, perhaps, with prejudices and indifferent to the Governing Power—their long-established constitution, is a dangerous subject for political experiments. The object wastes under the attempt to improve." . . .

The evil referred to is serious. There are reasons to fear that similar other evils may have arisen in spite of the intention of the Government and the people to avert them. It is not easy, to prevent, by conscious effort the operation of social and economic laws. It is enough if Development—and Progress has no better meaning than as the development of Order—is steadily kept in view as the end. Education is
another name for development, and if England's mission to the East is to be described in one word, it is education. The education which the country expects at the hands of Government is twofold. It is, first, an intellectual training, such as is given and received in academies of various kinds, literary, or technical, and, secondly, it is political and civic education, which can be given and received only through political institutions by the exercise of rights and the discharge of duties. Self-Government and Trial by Jury are institutions which have their value in this country, not so much as satisfying popular demands as tending to educate the people.

India has been learning much from her western rulers and has still a great deal to learn. She has to acquire the treasures of western science and the methods of science. She has to learn the value of order and system, of classification and analysis, of criticism and questioning. She has to acquire the scientific spirit. She has to acquire the western arts of political life, the arts of organisation, the western notions of individual right, of public duty, of the responsibilities of power and wealth, of legal and political equality. She has to acquire the western virtues of industry and self-reliance. But she has not only to receive, but to give, and there is a great deal that she is very well fitted to give. The East has always been the spiritual instructor of the West, and her occupation is not yet gone.

The East is the land not of mere asceticism, but of every form and variety of spiritual thought. "Thought" is probably not the correct word. This land of the sun is pre-eminently the land of Vision, Revelation, Ecstasy. It is the land of seers and saints. In contrasting the European and Asiatic temperaments Mr. Meredith Townsend observes:—"The truth is the European is essentially secular—that is, intent on securing objects he can see; and the Asiatic essentially religious—that is, intent on obedience to powers which he cannot see, but can imagine." He is essentially right, but
the Asiatic claims that the powers he obeys can not only be imagined by him, but are, as he thinks, often seen by him. The visions of the forms in which the Deity is believed to have manifested Himself, are, very largely at any rate, the origin of the idolatry which prevails. It is no information to the Hindu that God is one, but he believes that this one God is not only present in everything but has manifested Himself in many forms, and he therefore thinks it fitting to worship Him in one or other of these forms. Hinduism does not mean idolatry, ritual and polygamy, any more than Christianity means courtship, divorce, re-marriage of divorced wives, frauds in diplomacy and brutality in war. No religion ought to be judged by the behaviour in private or social life of its latter-day votaries. The purest metals are covered with dross or rust in course of time; and actual life seldom illustrates ideals.

The prospect of the Hindu race is uncertain, even gloomy. It will receive no recruits from other religions, but can lose members to them. It will be extinct by the disintegration of its society. Union by marriage with any other race will also tend to extinguish it. Instead of acquiring greater coherence every day and tending to national unity, it is splitting up into more and more classes and sects. The breeze of materialism has been unsettling the minds of men and disturbing their faith through western learning and contact with western life. In the absence of a Hindu régime there are no agencies possessed either of moral or civic power for effecting the needful reforms, re-adjusting society, evoking order out of chaos and breathing new life into the Hindu people. Regeneration appears to be impossible, dissolution pretty certain. What then is the hope of the Hindu? Scarce-ly anything but this, that the creed which dies with the Hindu may live on in the European. If the Hindus, before they pass away, can communicate to some at least of the sons of the West all that is best in their religion, their philosophy and their
ideals of life, they may die content. The principles, the ideas, the habits will remain; their possessors alone will be changed. The new possessors will probably cherish them with more earnestness, defend them with greater zeal and energy, develop and propagate them in a more effective way. The hope of the devout Hindu is in the European. He may well fear that he will leave no other heir in the spiritual sphere.

There is little in the way of moral principles that the Hindu has to teach to the European. But Hinduism is not only a code of morals, but an interpretation of the unseen. It has something very distinctive to tell us about man's origin and destiny; it points out to us the means of getting at spiritual realities, and of placing ourselves in contact with the world beyond this. The Hindu's faith is based not so much on the scriptures as on experience—on inspiration, on vision, on positive proofs of the Divine will. The Hindu Yogi or Sannyasi is the mainstay of the Hindu religion. It is he that accounts for the wonderful vitality of the Hindu creed. For, quite independently of the scriptures, it is he that has given proofs, from generation to generation, of direct relations between God and man. He is a living proof himself, of the possibility, by the Hindu method, of knowing God, of ascertaining His will and receiving His favours. Daily proofs are given in this land, of the reality of the Hindu faith, of the efficacy of Hindu worship, prayer and devotion. The Hindu, therefore, does not very much care to discuss his faith with others, for he does not rest his faith merely on authority or logic. He may lose many a battle on the logical arena and yet his faith is unshaken, for he cannot get rid of the personal experiences of himself or of others that he comes in contact with. His sheet anchor is not a single ancient Revelation, but daily and hourly revelations on many an occasion of danger, difficulty and doubt. His scriptures are a guide for the solution of difficulties of a metaphysical or theological kind, but his
chief resource and consolation is in the exploration of the occult.

He does not claim a monopoly of Divine favour or of the capacity of holding communion with the Divine. If others share the advantages he will not be jealous. It is enough for him as a member of a dependent, despised, and materially backward race to vindicate his own position as a seeker of spiritual truth. And he can only regret the course of thought by which, in other countries than his own, the spiritual adept, the open-eyed seer, the recipient of inspiration, should have come to be called a mystic.

Hinduism as a religion is not so much a creed as a capacity, not so much a doctrine as a discipline. Hence is bound up with it a system for the regulation of life. If the discipline and the capacity could be communicated to the sons of the West, the Hindus would be glad to hand down to them their country and their traditions. While they themselves would be advancing in objectivity and industrialism, the balance of the world’s forces would be maintained by the communication of their inwardness and delicacy of spiritual fibre to the Aryans of another clime. Already the Eastern light has penetrated and illumined a few select minds in England, on the western continent, and even in the New World, and if over-crowded England should ever establish a colony in this land, the exchange of services between the East and the West would receive signal facilities. A colony is not essential, however, for the communication of influences. Even under existing conditions the forces of Europe and Asia would act on each other. The Asiatic would be secularised, the European would be spiritualised. The education of both would be complete, for the truest culture is that which does not over-weight the existing capacities, but supplies their defects. And not till that education has come about, can the mission of the English Conquest be taken as realised. The Hindu may be pardoned if he flatters himself that it was
a providential regard for Hindu interests that made Britain’s banners float on Indian soil. He would have been swept away under the old rule; he was saved under the new. God had listened to his prayers. And if he was coming to be feeble and his society effete, the same benign Destiny also provided that all that was best and highest in his creed, his constitution and his life, would pass, before his extinction, to a new, more healthy and more vigorous race, better fitted to keep it alive. His creed and his country had been saved, and he might well be persuaded that the political revolution that he had lived to witness was one more triumph of his religion.
## APPENDIX I.

### Genealogical Table of the Sovabazar Raj Family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ram Charan Deb.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maharaja Nalchisen Bahadur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raja Gopen Mohun Deb Bahadur (adopted).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raja Raj Krishna Bahadur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raja Sir Radha Kant Deb Bahadur, K.C.S.I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharani Nalchisen Bahadur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharaja Kamal Krishna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharaja Bahadur Sir Narendra Krishna, K.C.I.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharaja Jatindra Krishna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharaja Shanker Krishna, K.C.I.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharaja Dharam Krishna.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ram krishna.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bishweshwar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil Krishna.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raja Bahadur Prasanna Nand Deb.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ujendra.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mohendra Nand Deb.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raja Bahadur Rajaendra Nand Deb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debendra Nand Deb.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raja Bhaskar.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jagat Krishna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amarendra.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bishweshwar.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jagat Krishna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amarendra.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jagat Krishna.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil Krishna.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jagat Krishna.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil Krishna.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II.

NABOBS OF BENGAH
(1740-1798).

1756. Seraj-ud-dowlah, grandson, by daughter, of the preceding.
1757. Meer Jaffer.
1763. Meer Jaffer.
1765. Nudjum-ud-dowlah, son of the preceding.
1798. Nazir-ul-Mulk, son of the preceding.