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**GOVINDA SAMANTA.**

VOL. II.

# GOVINDA SÁMANTA,

OR

## THE HISTORY OF A BENGAL RÁIYAT.

BY

THE REV. LÁL BEHÁRI DAY,

*CHINSURAH, BENGAL.*

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;  
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor. - *Gray.*

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# GOVINDA SAMANTA.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE NECTAR-MOUTHED MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Hir mouth was sweete as bragat or meth,  
Or hoord of apples, layd in hay or heth.

*The Milleres Tale.*

BOSWELL tells us that Dr. Johnson, who was a great admirer of the novels of Richardson, gave the following reply to Thomas Erskine, who had remarked that that novelist was tedious. "Why, sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted, that you would hang yourself; but you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment." I should be very sorry, indeed, gentle reader, and should never forgive myself, if my clumsy management of the story of Govinda's life should

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lead you to make an end of your existence. I would therefore humbly beseech you, on my knees, to try me a little longer before putting the halter round your neck. But if, after reading some ten or twelve chapters more, you do not find the story increasing in interest, you will be at perfect liberty either to put a rope, or to tie a *kalasi* round your neck, just according to your liking for an airy or a watery death; only in that case you will not lay the blame at my door, for it would then be proved that I had not the faculty to please, and therefore am not responsible for what I have not: I have thought it proper to premise thus much, at the commencement of a new volume, in order to wash my hands clean in this matter.

It would, however, be doing simple justice to myself, were I briefly to state the reasons why the story has not as yet become interesting. In the first place, the reader will please remember that nothing very striking *does*, in point of fact, ever occur in the history of a boy in his *teens*, and especially of a Bengali peasant boy. I could have, if I had pleased, concentrated into this biography the col-

lected striking incidents in the lives of a thousand Bengali peasants; but in that case I should have been writing the life of a *possible*, or at best of a *probable*, ráiyat, whereas my object in this book is to write the history of an *actual* ráiyat—a ráiyat that may be found at any hour of any day in any district of Bengal. If, therefore, there be any dearth of interest in the annals of the boyhood of Govinda, the defect is not mine, but that of NATURE, whom I follow. In the second place, the reader is to bear in mind that the primary object of this book is to draw a picture of the “social and domestic life of the rural population and working classes of Bengal,” and that the story, to use the words of Johnson, “only gives occasion” to the drawing of that picture. At the same time I should be sorry if anybody thought that I had no story to tell. I could not, in all conscience, say with the Knife-grinder, “Story? God bless you, I have none to tell, sir!” I have a story to tell, as the reader will see, if he will have only the patience to wait a bit.

We have not met Málati since her marriage,

which took place some years ago, excepting once for a single second in her father's house, when Áduri had an attack of hysteria: I shall therefore give the reader some account of what she had been doing all this time. The reader will recollect that two days after Málati's marriage she went away with her husband to his house at Durgánagar, where she was received with great kindness by her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and other relations of her husband. There was great rejoicing in Keśava Sen's house; relations and friends were every day feasted, and the newly married couple often went out to dinner in the houses of Mádhava's relatives. The small village of Durgánagar, about thirty miles east of Kánchanpur, was close upon the river Bhá-girathi, the Hooghly of English maps, being not far from the large village Dakshinpalli, the seat of a wealthy zamindár family on the one hand, and from Nildángá, an indigo factory, on the other. The inhabitants for the most part were engaged in agricultural pursuits, being chiefly of the Sadgopa and Águri castes, though there were a few Bráhman families and the usual complement of the other

castes. It formed part of the zamindári of the wealthy Bandyopádhyáyas, or Bándyues, as they were commonly called, of Dakshinpalli. There was nothing remarkable about the little village of Durgánagar ; there were the usual mango groves, the eternal paddy fields, the thick clumps of bamboos, the lofty *asvatha* and *vafa* trees of all Bengal villages. Two trees, however, were more common here than in Badan's village, namely, the date-palm and the jack-tree, the former yielding a large quantity of sugar, and the latter giving the poor people a richly nutritious fruit, though somewhat disagreeable to the taste. But in this village there was one sort of cultivation which was unknown at Kánchanpur, and that was indigo. The blue dye was manufactured at the indigo factory of Nilđángá, under the superintendence of a European planter, of whom the reader will hear more afterwards. Such was the village where the lot of Málati was cast, and where she remained only one week on her first visit, and then returned to her father's house.

The English reader, accustomed to the sweets of the honeymoon, will think it strange that Málati

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should leave the company of her husband only a few days after her marriage. But then it is to be borne in mind that she was but a girl of eleven, and as such was unqualified to discharge the duties of the married state. Hence it is customary with a Bengali girl, after stopping only a few days in her father-in-law's house—for we can hardly call it her own house—to return to her father's, where she remains at least one year, and sometimes two or three years, according to circumstances, though occasionally she pays flying visits to her husband. The poor girl, however, always looks upon those visits as great trials; nor can it be wondered at, that a girl of so tender an age should prefer her father's thatch to that of one who is a perfect stranger, albeit her wedded lord. Besides, she enjoys greater liberties at her father's house than she possibly can at her father-in-law's. She is *bou* (bride) at the latter place, and must therefore go about covered with a veil, whereas, in the former place, where she was born, she puts on no veil, not only in the house, not even in the streets. Málati, however, after her marriage, while she remained in her father's house, was not

allowed, as formerly, to go out to the fields, either with the cows or with her father's dinner, as she was now considered to be another man's property. But she did a great deal of work in the house; and Alanga, who was a first-rate housekeeper in her small way, initiated her into the mysteries of cooking, of husking paddy, of making *mudī*, of frying *khadi*, of washing clothes, of manufacturing cow-dung cakes, and the like.

When the first year of her marriage was over, an envoy arrived from Durgánagar bearing a verbal message to the effect that the father and mother of Mádhava were anxious that Málati should go to their house for good. Alanga and Sundari were very unwilling that she should be sent so soon, and Badan, who shared the same feeling, dismissed the messenger with the reply that he would send her in a short time. But that short time became very long. At last a second messenger, a woman, arrived from Durgánagar, with a *ḍuli* (a litter) and two bearers, for carrying Málati. Badan saw that there was nothing for it but to send her. The village astrologer was accordingly consulted for an auspicious day, and due prepara-

tions were made for her departure. The day fixed by the astrologer soon came; the *ḍuli* was at the door; Málati put on her best clothes and all her ornaments. Alanga, Sundari, and Áduri set up a loud cry, as if somebody had died in the house; and Málati cried the loudest. The scene was quite affecting. It was a Bochim. But go she must. Two stout bearers lifted the *ḍuli* on their shoulders with Málati in it, the women of Durgánagar standing beside it. Málati rent the air with her cries—"O father! O mother! O mother! O father! where are they taking me?" The streets through which the latter passed resounded with the same cries; and men, women, and children ran into the street, and said one to another—"There, look, the daughter of Badan Sámanta is going to her father-in-law's house!" Nor did Málati's cries cease when the litter had passed the village and gone into the paddy fields. Her cries, it is true, became less and less loud, but she wept and sobbed, and sighed and groaned. She refused to eat anything when at noon the bearers halted in the outskirts of a village for chewing some *mudī*, and swallowing country spirits, which, thanks to the considerate and

Christian kindness of the British Government, are now available in almost every village, though in the rude and uncivilised days of our forefathers they could hardly be had anywhere, either for love or for money. Thus fasting, sighing, and groaning, Málati reached Durgánagar and the house of her husband's father. Mádhava's father and mother received her with demonstrations of joy, though Mádhava himself did not speak a word to her at the time, as it is reckoned indecent and disreputable for a young husband to speak to his young wife in the presence of even the dearest of relatives.

It may be easily supposed from the state of mind in which Málati reached her husband's house, that she took a long time to get reconciled to her new abode. The fact is, that for a month or two, she used every night, when alone with her husband in his room, to sob and weep for being away from her parents; and it was only on account of the affection and tenderness shown by Mádhava, that she gradually got reconciled to her present condition in life.

A few words concerning Keśava, his family and his occupation, will not be deemed unseasonable

here. He was a somewhat respectable husbandman, or rather farmer, as he had ten *bighás* of rent-free land, which one of his ancestors obtained from the Mahomedan Government, for having been the *manḍal* or headman of the village; and he had besides other twenty *bigáhs*, for which he paid rent to the zamindár. Thus he was in better circumstances than Badan, who had not a rood of rent-free land. Keśava, however, was very infirm in health, partly through old age, and partly through an old fever, which every now and then troubled him; he was, therefore, compelled to hire labourers for tilling fields, as Mádhava alone—and he was but a lad—was not able to do all the work. This was a large drawback, and neutralized, in a large measure, the advantage of possessing rent-free land.

As to his family, he had a wife, his only son, Mádhava, and a daughter, who had married early, but had soon after lost her husband, and was therefore living in her father's house. The daughter's name was Kádambini (a cluster of clouds); and, though, true to her name, her complexion was dark, she was an exceedingly well-behaved and affectionate

girl. She loved her parents and brother dearly; she was very useful in the house, and was liked by everybody in the neighbourhood, for her gentle and amiable disposition.

The mistress of the house, Keśava's wife, and Mádhaba's mother, demands a somewhat longer notice. She was a thin stick of a woman, her head was nearly bald—a rather unusual phenomenon amongst Bengali women, who generally rejoice in magnificent heads of hair; she was squint-eyed and snub-nosed. Her *morale* was in unison with her *physique*. She was by no means an indolent woman; on the contrary, she bustled about all day, and did heaps of work. But she had a most insufferable temper.

Her only fault (and that is faults enough)  
Is—that she is intolerably curst,  
And shrewd, and forward; so beyond all measure,  
That, were my state far worsen than it is,  
I would not wed her for a mine of gold.

She used periodically to quarrel with all the women living in that part of the village where she lived, to rebuke Mádhaba sharply for little or nothing, often to

bandy words with her husband in the presence of people; and as to curtain lectures, they were so frequent and so vinegar-like in their savour that Mrs. Caudle might well have sat at her feet. Nearly half the month she went without her dinner, at least in the day; for after quarrelling with her husband over-night, she would refuse in anger to eat her rice the following day, though I am not positive as to the fact whether she took her dinner at night when no one noticed it. Some people of the village used to call her *ráyabághini*, or the termagant; and a tigress she certainly was. But the boys of the village insisted on calling her, among themselves, *khenki*, as, like a certain animal of the canine species which it is indecorous to name, she used always to snarl, and eternally make *khenk*, *khenk*, *khenk*. Why the name Sudhámukhi (literally the nectar-mouthed) should have been given her at *annaprásana*, is more than I can tell; it must have been suggested in bitter irony by some astrologer who had found out that the malignant influences of sun, moon, stars, and planets had been shed upon the inauspicious hour of her birth.

This nectar-mouthed lady was a source of great trial to poor Málati. For some time she seemed to be very kind to her, but the infirmities of her temper soon discovered themselves and made Málati quite wretched. Whatever she did seemed to displease her mother-in-law. She does not sweep the floor well; her cow-dung cakes are badly made; the curries which she cooks are execrable; she is very ill-bred; she walks more like a boy than a girl; her voice is scarcely audible—it is like the hissing of a serpent: she has a nasty, sneering, sarcastic smile on her lips whenever anything is said to her. Such were the criticisms pronounced by Sudhámukhi on Málati. The young wife's situation would have been truly deplorable if she had not had a sweet sister-in-law in the person of Kádambini. In her Málati found a wise counsellor, a true comforter, and a sympathising friend. It was thought time would mend matters. Not a bit of it. Keśava had a return of his old fever, which ended his earthly career. This circumstance made Sudhámukhi worse than ever. Constitutionally ill-natured, she became more ill-natured on the death of her husband, and the blighting of all hopes of woman-

hood. She became a greater *khenki* than ever, indeed, a perfect tigress, as the villagers called her. But Málati bore on like a martyr with the aid of her never-failing consoler, her husband's sister. Mád hava, though, like all good sons—and Hindus, as Bishop Heber remarked long ago, have greater filial piety than most natives—he highly respected his mother, the infirmities of her temper notwithstanding, yet he deeply sympathised with his wife, whom he loved tenderly. But there was no helping it; and what could not be cured must be endured. He would as soon think of committing murder as of separating from his mother. The thing was impossible. What would the people of the village say? What would the *ugra-kshatriyas* of the whole of the district of Vardhamána say? Would they not say, “Look there at Mád hava, that unworthy son! He is truly a *kuputra* (bad son). He has separated himself from his mother, who is to him more than God, at the bidding of his wife. He has preferred his wife to that goddess who gave him birth. Atrocious! Shocking!” Such a process of

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reasoning, which is congenial to the Hindu mind, induced Mádhava to give up all ideas of ever separating from his mother; and he tried his best to persuade his wife to put up with circumstances over which he had no control.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### EVENTS AT DURGÁNAGAR.

And with that word she struck me on the head.

*Taming of the Shrew.*

“WHAT is the matter, dearest? Why are you weeping?” asked Mádhava, as one night on entering his bed-room and shutting the door, he found his wife sitting by the bedside and weeping. As Málati did not speak but went on sobbing and weeping, Mádhava again said—“Do tell me dearest, what is troubling you. Do speak, O my life! and break your mind to me. Am I not the lord of your life? In your present state, it is not good for you to cry; some evil thing may happen. Do speak and tell me what it is.”

“O lord of my life!” gasped out Málati, her utterance half choked with sighs, “I have no wish to live. My life has become a burden to me. I shall

be happy if I die now. The winds will enter into my bones when I die, and I shall have rest. O gods! take me! take me!" and she went on sobbing and weeping more vehemently than ever. Mádhava sat near her, stroked her on the head and shoulders, raised her head, which was resting on her knees, kissed her and said—"Do tell me every thing, dearest; don't be afraid of telling me the worst. You must not weep in your present state; they say it is a bad omen."

"I wish the gods had not brought me into this state. I am weary of mine own life, how then shall I take delight in my child? O gods! take me."

"But why are you not telling me the cause of your distress? Do tell me, O thou garland of my neck!"

"What shall I tell you, my head? My bones are being fried! Mother-in-law slapped me on the cheeks to-day in the afternoon when you were out in the fields."

"Mother slapped you on the face! Is that possible? O Vidhátá! what hast thou written on my forehead? Am I fated to bear all this misery? Why did she beat you?"

“Why? You know to-day is *ekádasi* (the eleventh day of the moon, when every widow is required to fast), and as mother-in-law does not eat rice to-day, I had to boil some milk for her. Well, in the act of boiling milk, I had to go to the store-room for something, and before I could come back the milk had boiled up and overflowed the can. Mother-in-law, who was in the yard, saw this, and rebuked me sharply, giving me all sorts of *gálágáli* (abuse). I only said, “Mother-in-law! why do you abuse me? I did not willingly do it.” On this she became furious, came up to me into the kitchen and struck me on the face, saying, “You have learned, wicked girl, to give an answer? Do you not know that your mother-in-law is a goddess to you?”

“O, what misery! what more misery is written on my forehead? But, really, it is a great shame that mother should beat you. I must speak to her.”

“But what will speaking do? Do you think she will change her nature on account of your speaking to her? She will no more leave off her bad temper, than the charcoal will leave off its black colour by being washed. It is incurable. It is in her bones.”

“What do you propose, then?”

“I propose? You will never do what I tell you. If I were you, I would have sent her away from the house, and provided for her in some other house.”

“Fie! fie! Don’t bring that word into your mouth. Shall I send away from my house that mother who has brought me into the world, and who is to be obeyed more than the gods? Shall I prefer my wife to my mother? O, wicked thought! A man may forsake his wife without sin; but for a man to forsake his mother, is the greatest of all sins.”

“But how is it that *Sáheb loks* (Europeans), whenever they get married, live apart from their parents? I heard that fact from some Bráhmáni women the other day, when I was bathing in the tank; they said they had heard it from somebody who was employed in the indigo factory. I think that is a good custom. It prevents quarrels between young wives and their mothers-in-law.”

“O fate! what misery! The custom of *Sáheb loks*! What have we to do with their custom? I have become a *Sáheb*, I suppose, and you have be-

come a *Bibi* (European lady)! Have you become mad? Who put this idea into your head?"

"But there are some people of our own caste who have separated from their mothers. There is that Chhidám Pál of the southern division of the village. He does not starve his mother; he supports her, but has given her a separate hut to live in, apart from him and his wife. Why can't you do the same?"

"And pray what glory has that wretched rascal Chhidám Pál got by separating himself from his mother? Does not everybody in the village abuse him? Don't they say he is a *kuputra*—an unworthy son? The thing is impossible. Don't again speak of separating from mother—it is a great sin even to speak of it. A son who separates himself from his mother in order to live with his wife, does not deserve to live; and when he dies the *durva* grass will sprout in his bones, and his soul will go to hell. No, no; separation is impossible. I will speak to mother; and you must just try and get on with her. It is neither your doing nor mother's doing; it is written on the forehead. We cannot escape the decree of fate."

The last argument of Mádhava was irresistible; it was written on the forehead, and there was nothing for it but to submit to that writing. Málati yielded in despair. What else could she do, poor thing? Next day Mádhava took an early opportunity to speak to his mother on the subject, gently telling her that it did not look well to beat *bou*, especially as she was in a peculiar state. The nectar-mouthed lady broke out in a deluge of ambrosia and said:—“And so that wicked girl has been telling you everything? Did I not tell you that you should not marry in that wicked village of Kánchanpur, and into the wicked family of the Sámantas? That fool, your father, concluded the match against my consent. Does *bou* want you to drive me away from the house? And you, unworthy son, you slave of your wife, you that are kicked by your wife every night, you come to rebuke your mother! Forehead-burnt girl! daughter of perdition! a woman in form but a Rákshasi in mind! A broomstick on her face! And you, O unworthy son, have come, at the bidding of your wife, who has bought and sold you, to rebuke your mother who bore you for ten long months,

and suffered intolerable agony on your account! Let that daughter of perdition return to her father's house. I will get for you a better and a more thankful wife. Beat her with a broomstick, and send her away."

From this inundation of nectar and whirlwind of ambrosia Mád hava saw no safety except in flight. Without opening his mouth he left the house and went to the fields to breathe the free air of heaven. Kádambini, who heard the whole conversation from the kitchen, tried her best to comfort Málati, dwelling on the duty of submission and on the irreversible decrees of fate. But Sudhámukhi, after venting her rage in the thunderstorm of abuse described above, was not pacified. For a long time she kept muttering something between her teeth, cracked the knuckles of her fingers on the ground, walked to and fro in excitement, banged the doors with great force, dashed brass pots to the ground, and seemed to be beside herself. But Málati and Kádambini were not at all surprised, as they were accustomed to such displays. During the remainder of the day she did not exchange a single word with Málati, and looked

sullenly even on her own daughter, who, she thought, took the daughter-in-law's part. The following day her brow was less frowning, and matters went on pretty much as before.

Meanwhile in due time Málati presented Mádhava with a fine little boy. As Mádhava had become a staunch Vaishnava, he did not allow his wife to be confined for a month, as is customary with the bulk of the Hindu population, but adopted the system of what is called *Harir-luṭ*, or Hari's, that is, Krishna's *plunder*. According to this system of Vaishnava midwifery a woman, when delivered of a child, gets up from bed either the same day or the next day, in case the occurrence takes place at night, bathes, gives *Harir-luṭ*, and then engages in domestic work as if nothing had happened. This system is pronounced dangerous by the *Kavirájes* or physicians, but it is alleged by the Vaishnavas that it is dangerous only to the unbelieving. A woman who has faith in Hari is protected by that god from all danger, if she only gives *Harir-luṭ*. The news spread through Durgánagar that *Harir-luṭ* was to take place in Mádhava's house. At the appointed

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time, which is generally in the evening, scores of boys were assembled in the open yard of Mádhava's house. He took a basket of sweetmeats and threw them by handfuls among the juvenile crowd. The boys shouted out *Hari bol! Hari bol!* scrambled for the sweetmeats, ate them, and made a loud noise. This is the whole of the ceremony. Strange to say, Málati did not suffer from this summary treatment.

In due time the child was named Yádava, the son of Mádhava, who was the son of Kesava—the Hindus delighting in euphonious names.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### ALL ABOUT PADDY.

But Nature's chiefest bounties fall  
To thy productive fields, Bengal.

*H. H. Wilson.*

THE English reader need not fear that we are about to discuss the grievances of Paddy and the expediency or otherwise of "Home Rule" in Ireland—the paddy of which we speak here is a much more manageable subject. In Ireland Paddy makes riots, in Bengal ráiyats make paddy; and in this lies the difference between the paddy of green Bengal and Paddy of the Emerald Isle. But punning apart, whence really have we got the outlandish term paddy? It is certain it is not Bengali, nor Hindi, nor Urdu, nor Sanskrit, nor Persian, nor Arabic, nor Támal; nor does it belong to any of the other languages or

dialects spoken in India. We believe there is not a single Bengali ráiyat who has ever heard the word in question; and he invariably calls it *dhán* from the Sanskrit *dhánya*. Paddy is said to be a Malayan word; and Mr. Crawford, in his dictionary of that language, puts it as *pádi*. The Portuguese in all probability imported it from the islands into the Indian continent. But "what's in a name?" We have to do with the object which it designates; and as in this authentic history of a Bengal peasant we have a great deal to do with paddy, we deem it proper at this stage of our narrative to tell the reader all about it.

The important fact that paddy grows in India was known in ancient times to other nations. Some of the Greek writers, like Theophrastus, call it *ὄρυζον*, and the Roman Pliny says that "in India rice (*oryza*) is the most favourite of all." The English word *rice* evidently comes from the Latin *oryza*, through the French, and the Latin name from the Greek; but I am not sure whether attention has been drawn to the fact that the Greek word was in all probability borrowed from the Támal *arisi*, and that the Sanskrit

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has no word for rice similar to the Greek in sound. May we not be justified in drawing from this fact the inference that rice used to be grown in India before its conquest by the Aryans? But, as the Bengali proverb has it, "What has the petty trader in ginger to do with the news of ships?" Leaving philology therefore to learned men, let me speak of paddy as it grows on the plains of Bengal.

Viewed from the stand-point of the seasons in which it is sown and reaped, paddy may be said to be of three kinds—*áus*, *áman*, and *boro*. The *áus*, or more correctly, *ásu* (from the Sanskrit *ásuvrihi*, that is, quick-growing) is sown about the end of March or the beginning of April, and is cut in August, or at the latest in September. This rice is somewhat coarse, and is eaten not by the higher and middle classes, but only by the peasantry, of whose food, however, it forms but a small part, as the crop is limited in its quantity. It grows only on high lands, which are not inundated during the rains. The *áman*, or the winter crop (so called, perhaps, from the Sanskrit *hemanta*, winter), is the most important of the three. It is sown about the middle of May or the beginning

of June, and reaped in November or December. This is by far the most important crop, and furnishes people of all classes with food throughout the year. The *boro dhán* is paddy grown in low swamps or marshy grounds. It is sown about January or February, and cut in April or May. At Kánchanpur, and in the district of Vardhamána generally, there is not much *boro dhán*, as the lands are, for the most part, high and dry.

Though there are three sorts of paddy, so far as the seasons of cultivation are concerned, there is an almost infinite variety of the *áman* itself. A learned countryman of ours, the late Rájá Rádhákánta Deva Bahádur, published some years ago a paper in the Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, in which he gives a list containing no less than one hundred and nineteen varieties of paddy cultivated in the twenty-four Parganas alone; and it is said that in the island of Ceylon there are one hundred and sixty varieties. Every district in Bengal does not produce the same kinds of rice—the inhabitants of one district paying more attention to the cultivation of some particular varieties than to that of

others. *Búlám* rice, for instance, is the staple produce of Bákharanja (Backergunge), and the finer sorts of rice are chiefly cultivated in the districts of Dinajpur and Rangapur. Round about Kánchanpur, and in the district of Vardhamána generally, the following varieties are usually cultivated: (1) Noná; (2) Bangotá; (3) Káliá; (4) Benáphuli; (5) Rámsáli; (6) Chini-sarkara; (7) Surjya-mukhi; (8) Dádkháni; (9) Álam-Bádsáhi; and (10) Rándhuni-Págál; and the last one (Rándhuni-Págál, that is, cook-maddening) is so fine and fragrant that, while boiling it, the cook becomes mad with joy.

There is nothing peculiar in the process of cultivating paddy. The ground is ploughed and harrowed, and then the seed is sown by the hand. In the course of a few days the seed germinates and sprouts. Before the setting in of the rains, about the middle of June, great attention is paid to irrigation, the cares of which cease only when beneficent heaven sends down rain in copious showers. But the Bengal husbandman is not without anxiety. If there be a drought, the paddy is parched up; if there be too much rain, the plant is drowned and rots. If the

rains set in before the plant is well up and rooted firmly, the crop suffers. The great thing for paddy is to get a fair start of the rainy season. As the rains pour in heavily, the paddy stalks rise rapidly. In the swampy districts of Bákharanja and Jasahar (Jessore) the paddy stalk rises sometimes to the height of ten or twelve feet; though in the high lands of Vardhamána and Birbhum it seldom attains a greater height than six or eight feet. At the end of the rains the paddy stalks droop down, and in that posture they lie during the dewy month of November, till in December they yield to the sickle of the reaper.

When the *dhán* is separated from its husk by the homely pedal, it is called *chául*, or rice. But rice of every variety is of two sorts, *siddha* and *átapa*—parboiled and sun-dried. If paddy is at first parboiled and then dried and husked, it is called *siddha*; but if paddy, without being parboiled, is only dried in the sun, and then husked, it is called *átapa*. Ninety-nine Bengalis in a hundred eat *siddha* rice in preference to *átapa* for two reasons: *firstly*, it is cheaper, and *secondly*, it is less heating. The *átapa* rice is

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offered to the gods, and is eaten by rigid Bráhmans and by Europeans living in India. Gods and Bráhmans eat it, because, not being parboiled, it is deemed ceremonially purer than the other sort; and Anglo-Indians eat it because it has a whiter and cleaner look, and contains more nutriment. Such, in a few words, are the mysteries of paddy.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE NAVÁNNA.

How often have I blest the coming day,  
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,  
And all the village train from labour free,  
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,  
While many a pastime circled in the shade,  
The young contending as the old surveyed ;  
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,  
And sleights of hand and feats of strength went round.

*The Deserted Village.*

It was on a bright, sunny morn of the pleasant month of November—so different from the “chill November” and its “surly blast” of which the Scottish poet speaks—that the joyous festival of the Navánna, or the *new rice*, took place. This festival, in which the first-fruits of the paddy-field are offered to the gods before they are used by human beings, must not be confounded with the general

harvest, which does not take place till a month after. The paddy that is now cut is from early sowings, intended purposely for this festival. While the bulk of the paddy is still standing erect on the field loaded with golden grain, but not yet quite ripe for the sickle, the Navánna *dhán* is cut and husked and made ready for the festival. It is a merry day all over Bengal, especially with the peasantry. Govinda is not to go out to-day with the cows; neither his father nor his uncle is to work. All agricultural operations are suspended for twenty-four hours throughout the country. Early in the morning the peasants are lounging about in their houses and in the streets, talking and laughing and smoking a great deal. They bathe earlier than usual, for the astrologers have declared that after one *prahara* and half (that is, about half-past ten o'clock in the morning) is the most auspicious moment for offering and eating the *new rice*, and no one may eat that rice unbathed. Alanga and Sundari and Áduri have made all the necessary preparations. There is in that basket in the corner of the big room a large quantity of the new rice,

untasted yet by man or beast; that large *hándi* is filled with milk; in another basket are contained all the fruits and esculent roots of the season, cut into small pieces. Rám Dhan Chakravartti, the family priest, has just come into the house, as the propitious hour is drawing near. In a large vessel he mixes the new rice (unboiled) with the milk and the fruit and the edible roots, repeats a lot of Sanskrit prayers, blows the conch-shell with his mouth—which means, I suppose, a proclamation to the gods to the effect that the feast is ready, and that they should come and partake of it—and offers the agreeable viands to the invisible deities, who have doubtless come in crowds. The five elements, the great progenitors of mankind, the *Munis* and *Rishis* of the golden age, and Badan's own forefathers, next come in for their share. But there are other guests to be attended to before Badan and his family can partake of the new rice. The cows and bullocks are presented with the rice, which but for their friendly co-operation man could hardly hope to obtain. The other beasts of the field, like the jackal, sacred to the god Mahádeva, and even the birds of the

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air, must not go without their portion. Govinda is told by the priest to put a plateful of the *navánna* in a neighbouring thicket for the former, and another on the top of a wall for the latter. A small quantity is thrown into the tank near the house for the fishes, and another small quantity is put near a hole in the corner of a wall for rats, mice, ants, and all creatures that creep on the ground. When the gods of every description—celestial, terrestrial, and infernal—and living creatures of every species, have been thus feasted, Badan, Kálamánik, and Govinda squat on the floor, and partake with thankful hearts of the bounty of Providence; and woman, the Creator's last and best workmanship, comes in finally for her share. The religious part of the festival is now over.

We are more concerned, however, with what follows. That day the dinner is required to be unusually grand, and Alanga had made preparations on a magnificent scale. Animal food being prohibited to the class of Hindus to which Badan belonged, and wines being out of the question, the reader may easily imagine in what the magnificence of the dinner consists. There was in the first place,

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boiled rice, without which no Bengali can exist; in the second place, *dál*, or boiled pulse; in the third place, two or three kinds of greens fried in mustard oil; in the fourth place, about half a dozen sorts of vegetables like the potato, brinjal, *paṭal*, *uchhe*, *pániphal*, and others, fried in the same fragrant oil; in the fifth place, a hodge-podge, called *tarkári*, of three or four sorts of vegetables; in the sixth place, fish fried in the eternal mustard oil; in the seventh place, fish cooked in tamarind; and in the eighth or last place, *paramánna*, that is, rice *par excellence*, a pudding made up of rice, milk, and sugar or molasses. Such are the delicacies which serve to make up a first-rate dinner for a Bengal ráiyat; and though the English sybarite may laugh at the concoction till his sides burst, it must be acknowledged by every right-thinking person that the materials of the ráiyat's dinner, though perhaps less nutritive, are more innocuous than the highly-seasoned dishes and intoxicating beverage of the Luculluses of Europe. Let us leave the ladies in the kitchen, and attend to the gentlemen in the streets and the outskirts of the village.

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In a spacious lawn, between two mango groves, are seen men and boys, about one hundred in number, engaged in amusing themselves. Our hero, his father and uncle, joined this merry group. Most of them were husbandmen, though of different castes; and the artizan class was well represented. All Govinda's friends were there—Nanda the blacksmith, Kapila the carpenter, Rasamaya the confectioner, Madan the grocer, Chatura the barber, and Bokárám the weaver. They all seem to be enjoying themselves, as ever and anon are heard gleesome shouts, clapping of hands, and merry peals of laughter. One party is playing at *ḍāṇḍaguli*, the cricket of Bengal. The *ḍaṇḍa* is a thick stick of the babool wood, about two feet long; and the *guli*, made of the same wood, but thicker, measures about five inches: the former serves the purpose of a bat, and the latter of a ball. Govinda joined this party, as his *sángát*, his *bandhu*, and his *mitá* were in it. He soon distinguished himself in the sport, sending the *guli* to a greater distance than the rest, and hitting it always on its return. Badan, who, on account of his advanced age, did not join the party, and who sat under an adjacent tree smoking

along with other old husbandmen, could not conceal the joy he felt in the display of his son's vigour and activity. *Boom! boom! boom!* the *guli* went whizzing through the air. Lo! the forehead of a stalwart lad is struck. The old men sitting under the tree rush to his assistance; the blow has cut through the skin, and brought out blood. The lad is taken away by his relatives; and the play goes on merrily as before.

On a spot not far distant is a party playing at *háḍu-guḍu*, sometimes called *háḍu-ḍuḍu* in other districts. Why the play is so called I do not know, except it be from the circumstance that the lads engaged in that play keep muttering in a low voice the sounds, *háḍuguḍu*, *háḍuguḍu*. The game is a sort of battle between two juvenile armies. A line is drawn, on the opposite sides of which are ranged the hostile combatants. They have no weapons of any sort—no needle-gun, no chassepot, nor Henri-Martini, nor sword, nor spear, nor sabre, not even a stick—are they not Bengali heroes? The sport begins with a man of the one army crossing the boundary line and invading the ground of the other.

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If the man, while on the ground of the enemy, succeed in touching one of the enemy, and in escaping to his own side of the line without being caught, the man who is so touched is said in the language of the play to *die*, or to be disabled, and must therefore be removed from the scene. But then this feat is to be accomplished in one breath—the continuity of the breath being ascertained by the player making a sound. Should he lose his breath before returning to his own camp he too is said to *die*, that is, disabled from further playing. The death or disablement of the last combatant on either side concludes the sport.

Under yonder tree a wrestling match is going on. Not mere boys, but men in the prime of manhood are seen there. Our friend Kálamánik is distinguishing himself there. Look how he and another large-built man—no unworthy foe—are catching hold of each other's arms in the middle of the stadium, wrestling with all their might, each trying to bring his opponent to the ground. They are now struggling with all their strength; victory seems to be hanging in a balance; now Kálamánik, and now the other

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man seems to fall to the ground. At last a loud hurrah is heard. Kálamánik has left his opponent sprawling on the earth.

In these and other ways do the peasantry amuse themselves in the heat of the day, and in the cool of the afternoon, under umbrageous trees, on a common or by the side of a tank, on the day of the festival of the new rice. As it was drawing towards evening, the assembly dispersed, and went home to their dinner, which their mothers, wives, and sisters had prepared for them.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE HARVEST.

There too he form'd the likeness of a field  
Crowded with corn, in which the reapers toil'd  
Each with a sharp-toothed sickle in his hand.  
Along the furrow here, the harvest fell  
In frequent handfuls ; there they bound the sheaves.  
Three binders of the sheaves their sultry task  
All plied industrious, and behind them boys  
Attended, filling with the corn their arms,  
And offering still their bundles to be bound.  
Amid them, staff in hand, the master stood  
Enjoying mute the order of the field ;  
While, shaded by an oak apart, his train  
Prepared the banquet, a well-thriven ox  
New slain, and the attendant maidens mix'd  
Large supper, for the kinds, of whitest wheat.

*The Iliad.*

ABOUT a month after the Navánna, or the new rice,  
came the harvest, a time of joy to the peasantry.

As it is of great importance to cut all the paddy at once, Badan obtained the help of his friends, and of those whose fields lay near his own, on condition that he would render to them the like assistance. Of these associates, the foremost was Padma Lochan Pál, who, ever since the murder of his second daughter, Yádumani, whose dead body was first discovered by Govinda, and brought up from the water by Kálamánik, had been greatly drawn towards Badan and his family. On the appointed day, they all repaired to the field with sickles, bullocks, ropes, &c., and commenced operations. The reapers were three in number—Badan, Kálamánik, and Padma. Squatting on the ground on their heels, they incessantly plied the “sharp-toothed sickle” to the cluster of paddy held by the left hand. The paddy stalks were tied into sheaves by the assistants; the sheaves were made into loads, put on pack-saddles, and carried home on the backs of bullocks. Kálamánik, on account of his prodigious strength, was the most successful of all the three reapers. With his huge hand he caught hold each time of a large quantity of the paddy stalks; pressed his lips together,

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putting them fairly inside the mouth; and cut the corn away with great force. *Mash! mash! mash!* the paddy fell rapidly before the sickle; and this music was greatly enlivened by the sounds of *umph! umph!* which ever and anon issued from Kálamánik's wide nostrils as from two subterranean caves. As soon as the pack-saddles were ready, they were put on the bullocks; and it was Govinda's business to see them safely landed at home, where other husbandmen were waiting to stack them. Many a trudge Govinda had on these harvest days, with the loaded bullocks, from the paddy-field to the house, and from the house back to the paddy-field. He had, however, more leisure than the others, for his work began only when the paddy-loads were ready. During the interval he smoked and chatted merrily with the little boys and girls who had come for the gleanings; for it is a rule amongst Bengali Hindu husbandmen, as it was amongst the Jews of old, not to take up any little paddy stalk that falls from the pack-saddles either in the fields or on the roadside, but allow it to be gleaned by boys and girls who usually exchange the gleanings of the

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day in the grocer's shop for parboiled peas fried in oil—a delicacy which makes its appearance in village shops at the harvest. There was one bright little girl there with whom Govinda talked oftener than with the rest; and she was the eldest daughter of Padma Lochan Pál, Dhanamani by name, the elder sister, though herself only eleven years old, of the lamented Yádumani. He gave her quantities of the *muḍi* and *muḍki* tied in his *gámchhá*, and handfuls of which he was every now and then putting into his mouth; and he often filled her little gleaning-basket—and it is not reckoned dishonourable for children of prosperous husbandmen to glean—with paddy-stalks from the bundles. The reapers, sheaf-binders, and other assistants, took their noon-day meal, which had been brought by Govinda, under a tree, not far from the field; and though no ox was killed and no bread of the “whitest flour” baked, as in the days of Homer, there was as much joy in the hearts of these vegetable-eating and water-drinking peasants of Bengal as in those of the beef-eating and wine-bibbing swains of old Hellas. On such occasions Dhanmaani sat beside her father and partook of

the dinner, and went home when Govinda returned next with the laden bullocks.

After gathering in the harvest, and arranging it in the open yard of his house in stacks, Badan, agreeably to previous arrangement, helped his neighbours in cutting their paddy. This being done, the process of threshing commenced. No flails or threshing machines of any sort are known to the peasantry of the Vardhamána district. They place on the ground a simple plank on an inclined plane; the thresher stands at the head of the plane, takes a sheaf of paddy by both his hands, and strikes it against the plank with all his force. Thump succeeds thump, till all the corn is beaten out of the paddy stalk. Should some grains of paddy, after the operation, remain on the stalk, the whole of the straw is laid out on the yard, and some oxen tied in a line to a post are made to tread it; and on such occasions, contrary to the Mosaic rule, the oxen are invariably muzzled, to prevent them from munching straw. The straw thus trodden upon is tied in wisps, and is called *lot*—so named from the circumstance that the straw has been tumbled about. This

*loṭ* is sold dearer than the ordinary straw, and is used for thatching huts. The paddy is then stored up in the granary, and the straw stacked.

The harvest is followed by a festival, greatly enjoyed by the peasantry, and called *piṭá sankránti*, or the feast of cakes. It is so called from *piṭá*, cake, and *sankránti*, the last day of a month, as it always takes place at the end of the month *Pausha*, which comprises half of December and half of January. The festival lasts three days. Early in the morning of the first day of the feast, Alanga, Sundari, and Áduri bathed, and boiled different kinds of pulse-like grain, *kalávi*, *barbaṭi* (*Embelia basaal*), *mug* (*Phaseolus aureus*), which they formed into a sort of thick paste. They next extracted the kernel of the cocoa-nut, mixed it with treacle, and fried it. They then took out a large quantity of rice, which had been previously pounded, made it into a paste, and formed it into innumerable small cups, which they filled with either various kinds of the prepared pulse, or the prepared kernel of the cocoa-nut, or cream, and covered them up. These rice balls were then put in a *hándi* of boiling water; and in a few

minutes the *piṭá* was fit to be eaten. These cakes are usually eaten with treacle. A larger sort of cakes is usually prepared, called *askes*, which are of two kinds, the *dry* and the *wet*; the former being eaten along with treacle, and the latter soaked in milk. A thinner species, called *saruchaklis*, is very much esteemed. Alanga made heaps of these rice-cakes; and they were greedily devoured by the members of the little household. On one of the festival days Alanga made a *piṭá* of a monstrous size in the shape of a cat, which was offered to *Shashṭhi*, the protectress of children. These rude and somewhat unwholesome cakes may not suit the taste of refined palates, but they are vastly enjoyed by the peasantry, who get no harm by them. The feast of cakes is attended with games and sports similar to those which take place during the festival of the new rice. I had almost forgotten to mention that, in the evening of the first day of the feast, the peasant boys of Kánchanpur sang in chorus some doggrel verses addressed to the harvest month, describing its unnumbered blessings, and praying for its annual return.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### MATTERS HYMENEAL.

Thus ben they weddid with solempnite ;  
And atte feste sittith he and sche,  
With othir worthy folk upon the deys.  
Al ful of joy and blis is the paleys,  
And ful of instruments, and of vitaile,  
The most deintevous of al Ytaile.

*The Marchaundes Tale.*

THE reader has already come to know from the women at the bathing *ghát* of Kánchanpur that there has been for some time past some talk about our hero getting married to the daughter of Padma Pál, and he may therefore not unnaturally have come to the conclusion that we purposely put Dhanamani in the way of Govinda at the harvest-field, in order to make up something like a courtship between the two. We solemnly declare that we had no such pur-

pose. The fact is, neither the boy nor the girl knew anything of the affair. They had not the remotest idea that their parents were contemplating their union for life. Indeed, if Govinda had known it, he neither would have been seen in company of the girl, nor would he have spoken to her; and if Dhanamani had known it, she would have always kept herself at a respectable distance from Govinda—such is the reserve maintained by Bengalis in matrimonial matters. This may appear odd to the English reader, but it is the simple fact. Not only is there no courtship in Bengal, but if a boy and a girl, whom Prajapati and their parents had determined to unite together, were to be found walking together or speaking to each other, their conduct would be universally deemed unbecoming and indecent. Whether Govinda's interest in the girl was not something warmer than simple friendship I will not take upon me to determine; but I have no hesitation in saying that Dhanamani was unconscious of any tender feelings towards Govinda. The truth is, they were both ignorant of the wishes of their parents regarding themselves.

Alanga, now that she had become an old woman,

was anxious to see her grandson married before she left the world; and Sundari, like every Bengali woman, thought it the highest happiness of her life to have a daughter-in-law beside her, and to dandle a grandchild on her knees. Nor was Badan unconcerned in the matter; like every parent, and especially every Hindu parent, he was anxious that his children should get settled in life before his own exit from the world. In casting about for a suitable wife for Govinda, their attention was naturally directed to the daughter of Padma Pál, who was by no means opposed to the alliance. Everything almost had been settled, except a formal betrothment, before the harvest—though neither Govinda nor Dhanamani had any inkling of the matter. After the harvest had been gathered, and the rice-cakes eaten, the actual betrothment took place with all its formalities, and an auspicious day was fixed in the month of Phálgun—the *gameliôn*, or marriage-month of Bengal—for the celebration of the nuptials. The reader need not fear that we are about to inflict on him another description of a wedding, though if we did we could hardly be blamed, as Bengal is *par*

*excellence*, the land of marriages. The same ceremonies as at the marriage of Málati and Mádhava were gone through; the same exclamations of *ulu!* *ulu!* *ulu!* were uttered; there were the same lavish use of turmeric, the same sort of musical, or rather unmusical *tom-toms*, the same gyrations round the plantain-trees, the same blows on the ill-starred back of Govinda, the same prayers, the same jests of the women, the same kind of nuptial chamber scenes, the same feasting and merry-makings—though these last were on a grander scale, as all the relations and friends of both the bride and the bridegroom, who were natives of the same village, were on the spot. All the relations of Govinda were there, and amongst them Málati of Durgánagar, her son, Yádava, and her sister-in-law, Kádambini. Next to Badan, Aġanga and Sundari, who were, during the days of the wedding, burdened with an infinite amount of work, the two persons who were excessively busy were Gangá the barber and Rám Dhan Misra the priest, the former doing all the menial and the latter the higher and more dignified sort of work. The

spiritual guide himself was not present, as he was at the time elsewhere in his annual visitations; but he had sent his legate in the person of Prema Bhakta Vairági, but who, as will appear afterwards, was more busy in accomplishing his own private purposes than in assisting at the wedding. It is unnecessary to remark that the friends and companions of Govinda—his *sángat*, his *bandhu*, his *mitá*, and the rest, were in constant attendance every day, and partook of the general festivity. Ráma Rúpa, the pedagogue, also came with his crutch, to congratulate his pupil on his marriage, and received a rupée for his pains. Nor must we omit to notice the unfeigned joy of Rúpa's mother, the venerable midwife of Kánchanpur, on this occasion. During ten days she never went once to her own hut, but ate and slept in Badan's house, and was as busy as any member of the household, though being of an inferior caste she was prevented from doing all that she could have wished. She blessed the bride and bridegroom a thousand times, and often congratulated Alanga on her singular good fortune.

“You are blessed above most women,” said Rúpa's

mother to Alanga; "a woman is considered fortunate if she is blessed with a child, but your grandson is now married; and you have also seen your granddaughter's child! What a fortunate woman must you be! You must have been very holy in your former birth, otherwise, why this wonderful good fortune? The saying is fulfilled in your case—

Nátir náti,  
Svarge báti.

[That is, he who sees his grandchild's grandchild lights a candle for himself in the heavens.]

*Alanga.* "I have seen only my grandchild's child, so the saying is not quite fulfilled in my case. The gods have, however, been very kind to me in keeping me alive so long."

"You must be very holy; you are mother Lakshmi herself."

"How holy? If I were righteous, would I have suffered so much trouble in my life?"

"What trouble? You are like a queen! Yea, more fortunate than a queen, for how few queens can see their grandchild's child!"

"O Rúpa's mother! why call me fortunate when

that golden moon of a son, Gayárám, has been bitten to death by a snake? I must be a great sinner to have deserved such a dreadful calamity! The gods must have been very angry with me to have sent such a visitation. O my dear Gayá! my moon of gold! my lost treasure! where art thou? Where are you gone, leaving your mother here?"

"*Ginni* [mistress], don't think such thoughts at Govinda's marriage. Why grieve when you have Govinda on your lap? The gods spare his life, and he will yet have sons and daughters, and then your heart will overflow with joy."

"True, Rúpa's mother! but how can I forget my poor Gayá devoured by the ruthless serpent? My chest is going to split with sorrow."

"*Ginni*, leave off these sad thoughts. Now rejoice at Govinda's marriage. Bless him, and he will remove all sorrow from your heart."

"The gods make my Govinda immortal and perfectly happy! But as for me there is no happiness in store for me. I shall be happy when I die; the wind will then enter into my bones. My wish has now been fulfilled; I have seen my Govinda married. I have

seen my Govinda's wife with my eyes. I have no further wish. I can now die in peace. Let me go now to some place of pilgrimage, and there end my wretched days."

"Don't say so, *Ginni*. Banish that thought from your mind. Get up and join in the merriment. You will yet see Govinda's child."

At this moment Badan came accidentally to the spot where the two old women were talking together, and seeing tears trickle down his mother's cheeks, said, "You are weeping, mother? You weep when everybody else is rejoicing!" Alanga replied, "These are tears both of joy and of grief." Badan, of course, understood that his mother was sorrowing on account of Gayarám's untimely death; he therefore said, "Mother! do not fill your mind with melancholy thoughts on such a joyful occasion. Gayá died because his rice had been finished. His *paramáyu* (allotted life) was over, therefore he went away. Who could reverse the fate inscribed on his forehead? All sorrow therefore is useless. Besides, you have your Govinda. Delight yourself in him. One Govinda will be found equal to seven Gayá's. Now,

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get up, mother! come with me; speak to those women who have come to rejoice with us. Come and look at the sweet face of Govinda's bride." So saying, Badan took hold of his mother's hand, and joined a company of women who were making themselves merry.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE SUGAR-CANE.

These ways of planting Nature did ordain,  
For trees and shrubs, and all the sylvan reign.  
Others there are by late experience found ;  
Some cut the shoots, and plant in furrow'd ground ;  
Some cover rooted stalks in deeper mould ;  
Some cloven stakes ; and (wondrous to behold !)  
Their sharpened ends in earth their footing place ;  
And the dry poles produce a living race.

*The Georgics (Dryden's Translation).*

LIKE every substantial husbandman of the district of Vardhamána, Badan had a sugar-cane plantation. When the paddy was gathered in, the sugar-cane was almost ready to be cut, but it is customary to allow the crop to remain in the field some time longer, in order that the juice may attain to consistency. The sugar-cane is therefore cut generally a month

after the paddy harvest, that is to say, about the end of January or the beginning of February—at least, such is the custom in the village of Kánchanpur. As the sugar-cane is a valuable crop to the Bengal ráiyat, as its cultivation is attended with greater labour and pains than that of paddy, and as India has supplied the rest of the world, amongst others the Southern States of America, with the precious plant, we hope to be pardoned for saying a few words on the manner in which it is cultivated.

When in the previous year Badan had cut his sugar-cane, he had lopped off the upper parts of the cane, and planted them in nurseries on the edge of the tank near his house, whence they were to be transplanted into the field, when the soil should be ready to receive them. Unlike the paddy-field, which requires only to be slightly scratched to ensure a plentiful harvest, the soil for the sugar-cane needs careful and repeated ploughing. As early as the beginning of March, the soil is turned up. The field is ploughed three or four times, and sometimes oftener. It is then manured with cow-dung, the earth of crumbling walls, and mustard oil-cakes.

After this, the field is again ploughed. The clods are then pulverised, and the field made smooth and level by drawing over every part of it, with the help of bullocks, a bamboo ladder, which serves the purpose of a harrow. The whole field is next covered with parallel ridges of heaped-up earth, between every two of which is dug a trench. In these trenches, the cuttings are planted at the distance of a cubit, with the fingers closed, from each other. At the time of planting, around each cutting is put a small quantity of pulverised oil-cake, as manure. As the cuttings are invariably planted long before the rains set in, they require to be kept wet by artificial irrigation from a neighbouring tank, whence water is brought by a sluice, and thrown into the sugar-cane-field by means of baskets. This operation is repeated every day for about a fortnight. Cow-dung and oil-cakes are again applied to the cuttings, and the earth round about them is turned up. Irrigation commences anew, and continues for four or five days; and when the water is absorbed by the soil, the earth of which the ridges consist is put round the cuttings. This may be considered as the first process.

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Should the cuttings not take root and sprout, the process is repeated again and again, till the object is accomplished. When the plant rises about two feet from the ground, some of the useless leaves are torn off, and the rest tied round. Weeding also is carried on at this time; and should the plants become dry, they are again watered. As by this time Heaven sends rain in copious showers, the husbandman is relieved of the laborious and troublesome work of irrigation, and his attention is chiefly directed to weeding the garden, and to its general superintendence. Constant inspection is, however, necessary, as, not unfrequently, a peculiar species of insect attacks the cane, and makes the ráiyat's labours abortive. Care is also taken that the plantation is not robbed and spoiled by that nocturnal thief, the jackal, an animal which seems to be particularly fond of chewing the cane, and of swallowing its sweet juice. Such, in brief, is the mode of cultivating sugar-cane in the village of Kánchanpur.

In the village three varieties of sugar-cane are produced—the *Puri*, the *Kájule*, and the *Bombai*. The last sort, which is blackish in colour, is by far

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the longest and the stoutest of the three; but much of it is not grown at Kánchanpur, partly because it requires a more moist soil than that of the village, which is rather high and dry, and partly because the peasants are of opinion that though a single cane of that species gives out more juice than two of the others, it contains less saccharine matter. The *Kájule*, the colour of which is deep purple, is believed to contain the largest amount of saccharine matter of the three varieties; but it so often cracks of itself, through excess of juiciness, and is so apt to be attacked by worms and insects, that it is considered not economical to grow it to any great amount. The *Puri*, therefore, which is white in colour, tinged with a slight yellowishness, and which is about seven or eight feet in height, is grown largely, and, indeed, may be said to be almost exclusively cultivated in the village of Kánchanpur.

Early one bright morning in the delightful month of February, Badan, Kálamánik, Govinda and his father-in-law Padma Pál, and about a dozen other husbandmen, who were either neighbours or friends of Badan, were seen busy in the sugar-cane planta-

tion and its immediate vicinity. Some were cutting the cane with the sickle; others were taking off the dried leaves covering the cane, and cutting off the upper part of the stalk; and others still were carrying the canes thus cut and prepared to the *áuksálá*, or sugar-cane house, which is a temporary hut erected at no great distance from the plantation, where the juice is pressed out of the cane and boiled down into molasses. This hut contains what is called a *báin*, or boiling-house, an immense furnace for boiling sugar-cane juice in large earthen vessels. It is often a mere thatch of straw supported by bamboo posts, but sometimes the boiling-house is constructed in the open air, where the spot is shaded with mango or other trees. Just outside the boiling-house is the press for squeezing the juice of the sugar-cane. It consists of two massive wooden cylinders, cut into notches all over, and furnished at both ends with wheels, or rather simple spokes, for the spokes are not surmounted by a felloe. The cylinders are placed so close as almost to touch each other; and it is through this interstice between the cylinders that the canes are inserted and crushed,

the juice falling into a large earthen receiver placed below. Two persons sitting opposite to each other insert the cane between the cylinders, which are kept in perpetual motion by four persons. As the cylinders are placed very close to each other, the friction produced is very great when the canes are inserted between them; strong men are therefore made to work at the spokes. Kálamánik was the best sugar-mill turner in the whole village. There he was now, with his two long legs placed firmly on the opposite side of the trench, tugging away at the spokes with almost superhuman strength, now pressing his lips together when making a grand pull, and now hallooing his associates to excite them to get on briskly. Our hero, who had now developed into a strong, well-built *Ugra-kshatriya* peasant, was also working at the spokes. Badan and Padma Pál were inserting the canes between the cylinders. Nor is this an easy task; indeed, it is the most perilous of all, since it not unfrequently happens that the fingers get jammed between the cylinders. The juice, taken out of the receiver, is put into the boilers, beneath which a glowing fire is kept up by

two firemen on opposite sides of the kiln, the fuel being chiefly the dried leaves of the sugar-cane itself. Near each boiler stands a peasant, whose duty is to stir the boiling juice, and to skim it off by means of large wooden spoons or ladles.

It must not be supposed that the sugar-cane house and press, which we have now described, were set up only for Badan's purposes. It was the affair of a joint-stock company composed of all the husbandmen who grew sugar-cane living in the northern and eastern divisions of Kánchanpur. The sugar-cane of each of these was crushed and turned into *gud* or molasses in succession. We say turned into *molasses*, for Bengal husbandmen never manufacture sugar, that being the work of another caste, called the *modaka*, or the confectioner. Another sugar-cane house, with its attendant sugar-mill or press, was set up in the southern outskirts of the village for the benefit of the husbandmen of the southern and western divisions. I may state here that certain religious ceremonies are always gone through when Hindu ráiyats set up the boiling house. At the setting up of Badan's press, his family priest,

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Rám Dhan Misra, consecrated it. Prayers were offered chiefly to two divinities—Lakshmi, the Indian Demeter; and Agni, the god of fire. The first was not so much thanked for past favours as prayed to for future ones; and the second was earnestly besought to preserve the sugar-cane house from fire, for it sometimes happens that through the negligence of the firemen the sugar-cane house becomes reduced to ashes.

We have said above that a great deal of friction is produced in the sugar-cane press when the canes are inserted between the cylinders. The consequence of this is that the press makes an unearthly noise. The noise is quite deafening in the neighbourhood of the machine, and can be heard at the distance of two or three miles. Day and night—for the operation goes on all night—for three or four weeks together are the inhabitants of Kánchanpur regaled with this delicious music—a music which can be compared only with the “jarring sound” produced by the opening of the gates of hell, which “on their hinges grated harsh thunder,” and shook Erebus to its lowest bottom.

But though the village *áuksála* has this drawback, it has also its advantages. The paddy harvest-field is, as we have seen, a scene of rural joy, but the sugar-cane house is a scene of still greater joy. It is visited every day by every little boy and girl in the village, each of whom receives one sweet cane as a present from the kind-hearted peasants. Every day loads of sugar-cane are given away to children and Brahmans; but the peasants give them away with cheerful hearts, believing that Mother Lakshmi will bless them the coming year with a more abundant crop; and the name of the niggardly and impious husbandman who sends away children and Brahmans empty-handed from the sugar-cane house is held in execration by the whole of the village community.

Not only is the cane given away, but quantities of the juice while boiling are dealt out to children, who come provided with vessels for the purpose; and not unfrequently brinjals (egg-fruit) and other vegetables are thrown into the boilers, and then taken out and eaten with infinite relish by the children, multitudes of whom are seen, at all hours of the day,

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loitering about in the precincts of the sugar-cane house, to the great detriment of the village school, which during those days has a thin attendance.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### ADURI BECOMES A VAISHNAVI.

No finer dish  
Than broth of fish ;  
Nothing is sweeter  
Than lap of spinster :  
With joy all ye the name of Hari shout.

*Nityānanda.*

THE reader has doubtless got some inkling of the religion of Badan and his family; but as religion forms a prominent part of the social and domestic life of Bengalis—the agricultural and working classes not excepted—we should be hardly excused if we did not speak of it at some length. The Hindu population of Bengal may be ranged under two classes, the Sāktas and the Vaishnavas: the worshippers of Sākti or the Divine Female Principle, and the worshippers of Vishnu, or rather of Krishna,

for though the Hindus in general take the latter deity to be only a manifestation of the former, the Vaishnavas of Bengal regard him not as a part of God but as *Púrna Brahma*: that is, the full and complete divine essence itself in human shape. The Bengal Vaishnavas, however, are the followers of a Bengali reformer of the name of Chaitanya, whom they worship as a god, or, more strictly speaking, as an incarnation of Krishna. Images of Chaitanya, made of clay painted, and of the size of life, and those of his two chief associates, Nityánanda and Advaitánanda, are worshipped by them; and in the village of Kánchanpur a life-size image of Chaitanya is adored, under the name of Syáma Sundar, by hundreds of the inhabitants. But the chief divinity of the Bengal Vaishnavas is Krishna, the cow-herd of Vrindávan near Mathurá (Muttra); and his mistress, Rádhá, the principal *gopi* (cow-herdess) amongst sixteen hundred women of the same occupation, receives equal adoration to himself. The sports and amours of Rádhá and Krishna form the subject of the Vaishnava's daily meditation; and there is no Vaishnava who has the slightest pretensions to piety

that does not repeat the name of Hari or Krishna at least one hundred and eight times on a bead-roll made of the stem of the sacred *tulasi* (basil) plant. This institution of the repetition of the name of Hari is called the sacrament of *Harináma*. It is observed by elderly men and women, especially widows. Alanga observed it punctually twice every day—once before her noon-day meal, and again after sunset. The words of this formula of devotion are as follows :—

Hare Krishna!  
 Hare Krishna!  
 Krishna, Krishna!  
 Hare, Hare!  
 Hare, Ráma!  
 Hare, Ráma!  
 Ráma, Ráma!  
 Hare, Hare!

Áduri also occasionally told her beads, but not so punctually as her mother-in-law.

The visiting of holy places is another part of Vaishnava devotion. The three holiest places of Vaishnava pilgrimage are the groves of Vrindávan near Mathurá, where the divine neat-herd Krishna romped about when a lad with the milk-maids; the

temple of Jagannátha at Puri in Orissa; and Dváraká in Gujaráth, once the residence of Krishna. But in the district of Vardhamána itself and its borders there are three places of some sanctity. These are Navadvípa, the residence of Chaitanya, Ambiká (Culna), where Nityánanda lived for some time; and Agradvípa, famous for the shrine of Gopináth, the lord of the milk-maids.

We have seen that Alanga felt that her cup of earthly felicity had become nearly full at the marriage of Govinda. She had now nothing brighter to look to. She could now sing her *Nunc dimittis* and calmly devote the rest of her life to religion and to pilgrimage. She therefore made up her mind to visit first the holy places of the Vardhamána district, and afterwards at some convenient opportunity to set out on the distant and somewhat perilous pilgrimage to Jagannátha. Áduri expressed great desire to accompany her mother-in-law. She said that as a widow she had no earthly object to live for; it was therefore her intention to devote the remainder of her life to pilgrimage. Though Badan and Kálamánik doubted the sincerity of her pro-

fessions, yet they did not think it proper to put any obstacles in the gratification of her religious wishes, they therefore complied with her request, and the rather as their mother would thus have a companion in her peregrinations. In the company of two other women of the village, who went on the same errand, Alanga and Áduri set out on pilgrimage. Their plan was first to go to Ambiká, next to visit Málati at Durgánagar which was not far from it, then to go to Navadvípa, and last of all to Agradvípa, whence they resolved to return home direct. Our pilgrims, each of whom had a bundle containing one or two pieces of cloth, a quantity of rice, a small earthen pot of mustard oil, and one brass vessel, reached Ambiká in two days. They went to the house of the Gosvámis, bowed down before Syáma Sundara, worshipped the foot-print of Nityánanda under a tree, and bathed in the holy Bhágirathi. From Ambika to Durganaga was an easy journey of about eight miles. We need not say that Málati was delighted at her grandmother's visit, and made the party as comfortable as she could. After stopping there a couple of days they went to Navadvípa, the

birthplace of Bengal Vaishnavism. There was not much to see there, for they were told that the house in which Chaitanya lived was in the middle of the Bhágirathi, as the river had since changed its course and washed away a good part of the old town.

From Navadvípa (the new island) they proceeded to Agradvípa (the fore island), where the great festival of Mahotsava (literally, the great rejoicing) had already commenced. Vaishnavas had flocked thither from all parts of the country. Vairágis, Báuls, Nágas, Neḍas, and Neḍis, in their grotesque habiliments, were all there. The music of the *khol* or *mridanga* and of the *karatála* was heard day and night. They sang the praises of Gopinath in merry groups through the village. They danced with wild excitement.

Now pursuing, now retreating,  
Now in circling troops they meet;  
To brisk notes in cadence beating,  
Glance their many tinkling feet.

They shouted the names of Rádhá and Krishna till their throats became hoarse; they foamed at the mouth; they cut religious somersets; men and women

danced together promiscuously, the latter excelling the former in the violence of their gestures; many *mridangas* and *karatáls* were broken through violence of striking; and many women had fits of devotional fainting. The excitement among the pilgrims—and their number was about fifty thousand—was immense. The joy of Alanga and Áduri knew no bounds. They seemed to be translated to Vaikuntha, the Paradise of Vaishnavas.

While Alanga, Áduri, and their two companions were one day—for the festival lasted several days—going round the parti-coloured groups of regular, that is, mendicant Vaishnavas, they were attracted to one particular group, where the music and the singing were more vociferous, and the dancing more violent than the rest. There was one actor on this scene to whom every eye was turned, partly on account of the violence of the music—if music that could be called, which was dissonance itself—which his *karatála* sent forth, and partly on account of the vehemence of his devotional dance. He was in a state of primitive nudity, save and except a small bit of rag, called *kaupin*; a red cone-shaped cap

was on his head; and his neck was encircled with a three-fold bead roll. He was singing, dancing, and shouting at a tremendous rate; now falling to the ground, now jumping up, and now twisting his body in varied contortions, as if in convulsions; in a word, he was conducting himself in such a manner that anyone not acquainted with the manners of the Vaishnavas would think that the man had gone "daft." But the madder a Vaishnava is, the holier he is deemed by the people. As he was going through all this buffoonery, to the edification, doubtless, of the spectators, his eyes met those of Āduri. Suddenly he fell down on the ground as if perfectly senseless, foaming at the mouth, his body trembling and moving like a fish hooked by an angler. His friends immediately gave out that he was possessed of *dasá*, that is to say, was under superñatural influence. When he lay thus stretched on the ground, Alanga and Āduri at once recognised him to be Prem-Bhakta Vairági, the same who often came to their house for alms, and who acted as their *guru's* legate on the occasion of Govinda's marriage. His companions lifted him up, and put a little water on his

lips. Being still in a state of *dasá*, he was asked what he had seen. He said he had a sight of Gopináthji, who had revealed to him the interesting fact that there was one woman there standing amongst the group who was destined to be one of the most glorious of mendicant Vaishnavas. With a view to the identification of this favoured person, Gopináth had told him that the woman in question was a young widow, who had come to the festival in the company of three other women, and who was at that moment standing under a tree in the north-east corner of the area. All eyes were turned to the foot of the tree; and sure enough four women were standing there, one of whom, Áduri, was a young widow. The leader of the Vaishnava group went up to Áduri, acquainted her with the subject-matter of the revelation vouchsafed to Prem-Bhakta, congratulated her on her singular good fortune, and added that, under the circumstances, it was her duty to take *bhek*, that is to put on the garb of a mendicant nun and to join the Vairági order. Alanga did not know what to make of the affair. The idea never occurred to her simple soul that any

imposture was practised; and yet she felt it difficult to part with a friend whom she loved and who was a member of her household. Other Vaishnavas now came forward, and poured their oily eloquence into the willing ears of Áduri. After a few moments' hesitation she consented to take the *bhek*.

As religious bigotry allows of no delay in swallowing its victims, Áduri was there and then made to go through the ceremonies, and admitted into the order. Vairágis, as men who are destitute of passion—for that is the meaning of the term—of course never marry; neither are female Vairágis given in marriage, they being like the angels in heaven; yet a pious Vairági has a religious female companion, who is to him a sort of helpmeet, and an invaluable auxiliary in devotional exercises. For this holy purpose Áduri was entrusted to the care of Prem-Bhakta who was the instrument of her conversion.

Poor Alanga, though a sincere Vaishnavi, could not help shedding tears at the calamity which had befallen a member of her household. With a heavy heart she started the next morning with her two com-

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panions, on her homeward journey. She had scarcely reached the door of her house at Kánchanpur when she set up a loud cry lamenting the loss of Áduri. Sundari and Dhanamani rushed out on hearing Alanga's cries, led her into the house, and, on hearing of the fate of Áduri, joined their lamentations to hers.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### ALANGA GOES ON PILGRIMAGE.

Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,  
And palmeres for to seken strange strondes,  
To serve halwes couthe in sondry londes ;  
And, specially from everie schires ende  
Of *Bengala*, to *Jagannath* they wende.

*Prologue to Canterbury Tales.*

“THE *Sethuyá* was just here,” said Alanga to Badan, as the latter returned from the fields; “he said I must be ready to start the day after to-morrow early in the morning. It is an auspicious day; and all the *yatrís* of this village and of the neighbouring villages, will start on the same day.”

Badan said, “So you have made up your mind, mother, to go? I am very sad; Sri Kshetra is at a great distance; it will take you about four months to go and come back and to stay there. And the

way is long and tedious. My chest is almost breaking to think of what may be in store for us."

So saying the old husbandman burst into tears like a child. Alanga, wiping his eyes with the skirt of her *sāḍi*, said,

"Bábá Badan, don't cry. I am going on religious duty, and not on pleasure. The gods will take care of me in the way; Jagannáth will protect me. Don't be sad. And besides, you know whatever is written on my forehead will surely come to pass. Who can undo the writing of Vidhátá?"

At this moment Kálamánik and Govinda came in, and were not a little surprised to see Badan weeping. On being acquainted with the cause Kálamánik said,

"Mother, if you go I will also go with you. If you be sick in the way, who will put water into your mouth? How can you go alone?"

"I am not going alone, Bábá," said Alanga; "you know six women of Kánchanpur are going; they will take care of me; and the Sethuyá will also take care of me."

"The Sethuyá has hundreds of people to take

care of, and as for the six women of our village, they can hardly take care of themselves. Let me accompany you, mother."

"How can you come with me? If you come, who will till the fields? My son Badan is getting old and feeble, and Govinda is but a child; you, my Mánik, the treasure of seven kings, are the prop and stay of this house. If you come with me how will this family get on? No, child, you must not come with me. Mahá Prabhu will protect me."

Govinda, joining in the conversation, said, "But, grandma, what is the use of your going at all? you can worship Jagannath here in the house. Every man's mind is a temple of worship. I do not see the use of going to distant places to worship God. God can be worshipped in the mind."

"You have become a Pandita," replied Alanga; "you have got wisdom by conversing with Khonda Mahásaya, and by reading the books the Vardhamána Padre Saheb gave you. But I am an ignorant woman. I think there is great merit in going to Sri Kshetra."

"So there is," rejoined Govinda; "pilgrimage

is good for those who can afford it. But how can you, grandma, leave my mother alone in charge of this house; as for *bou* she is but an infant."

"I know that, Govinda; but I hardly do anything for the house; all the work is done by your mother and your wife. I only eat and sleep, that is all. You will not miss me. You have got a golden wife, Govinda. She works day and night. She is Lakshmi herself in flesh and blood; and because she is so active and energetic I am emboldened to go on pilgrimage. As for my safety, don't be anxious about it; Jagannath will protect me. Don't prevent me from going. My mind is made up, and won't be quiet. I have almost become mad for going."

Yes, indeed, it is a sort of religious madness which takes possession of old Hindu women, impelling them to go on distant pilgrimages, utterly regardless of the pains and troubles connected with the journey. The *Sethuya*, or the pilgrim-guide, had for many days past been visiting Alanga, describing to her the glories of the temples of Jagannath at Puri in Orissa, and expatiating on the ineffable merit of visiting those holy shrines. Alanga's imagination

was set on fire. She made up her mind to go. In her dreams every night she saw the armless deity in all his glory. Nothing would dissuade her from going. The auspicious day scarcely broke, when the *Sethuya*, long before sunrise, came to the door of Badan's house, and shouted, "*Jagannáthji ki jaya.*" "Victory to Jagannath." The members of the household had been up long before—as for Alanga, she had had no sleep through excitement. Alanga took up a small bundle of rice, clothes, and two brass vessels, tied a few rupees at one extremity of her *sádi*, and hid it in her waist, and bade farewell to all those that were dear to her. She embraced and kissed Sundari and Dhanamani, and put her right hand on the heads of all and blessed them. They all gave vent to tears, Sundari and Dhanamani crying aloud, as if they were never to see Alanga again. Alanga, choked with tears, at last pronounced the words, "Sri Hari! Sri Hari!" and the *Sethuya* shouted out, "*Jagannáthji ki jaya!*" They both rushed out of the house, and Alanga did not look back, as that would have been an unfavourable omen.

It is superfluous to remark, that Alanga, like the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims that annually visit Jagannath, went on foot. The plan is to travel every day between twenty and thirty miles, and sometimes more, and stop at places called *chatís* or *áddás*, that is inns, or huts, where are sold rice, *dál*, salt, mustard oil, fried rice, treacle, and a few other necessaries of Bengali life. As hundreds of pilgrims may be stopping at the same inn the same night, there can be no room for them all to sleep under sheds; hence the great majority of pilgrims bivouack on the bare ground under the open sky, or at best under trees. It is easy to conceive that, under these circumstances, travelling all day and exposure at night generate disease, and numbers of *yátris* or pilgrims die before they reach the holy city. It is not our purpose to relate all the incidents connected with the pilgrimage of Alanga to Puri, but briefly to indicate the stages of her journey. The *Sethuya*, Alanga, and the six other women of Kánchanpur, went to Vardhamána, and from that place to Medinipur (Midnapore), through Chandrakona and Khirpai. At Medinipur they met with hundreds—it would be

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more correct to say thousands—who had come from all parts of Bengal, Behar, and the North-west, and who were on their way to the temple of the “Lord of the World.” It was at Medinipur that Alanga’s troubles commenced. After a weary day’s travel of thirty miles or more, she had to assist in the evening at the cooking of the evening and the only meal, and then at night to sleep on the bare ground under the open sky. An hour or two before dawn the march again commenced, and did not end till near nightfall. Day after day did she pursue her wearisome journey, and night after night did she sleep on the bare ground. From Medinipur the pilgrims went to Náráyanagaḍ, then Chhatrapál, then to Pátna Jalesvara, and then to Rájghát, where they bathed in the Suvarna rekhá, or the Golden Line. From Rájghát they marched on to Valesvara (Balsore), the many temples in the neighbourhood of which they visited; then going by Panchagaḍ, they went to Bhadraka, near which they crossed the Vaitarani, the river of death, the Brahmani, and the Mahánadi. They then came to Kaṭaka (Cuttack), or the “Middle of the Mountains,” for the spurs of

the Vindhya Hills make their appearance there; and then passing through Gopináth Prasád, Balavanta, Sri Rám Chandra Sásana, and Hari Krishnapur, they came to Puri, or *the city*, by way of pre-eminence.

As we have brought Alanga to Srikshetra (or the Holy Field), we think it proper to inform the reader why the ground is holy, and briefly to recite the legend of Jagannath. Once on a time there lived a pious king of the name of Indradyumna, who, after he had performed great religious austerities, was told by the god Vishnu to form an image of Jagannath, and put in it the bones of the god Krishna, who had been killed by the chance arrow of a hunter, and whose bones had been put into a box by some person. On being asked as to who should be the architect of this image, the king was told that the image should be constructed by Visvakarma, the World-maker; so the king prayed to the World-maker, who agreed to make the image on the condition that, if he should be disturbed in his work, the image would be left incomplete. In one night the mighty World-maker built a magnificent temple on Niláchal, or the Blue Mountain—that is, Orissa; and then proceeded

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leisurely to construct the image of Jagannath, or the World-lord. But the pious king became impatient. Fifteen days had elapsed, and yet he had not heard of the completion of the image. In an evil hour he went to the spot to see what the World-maker was about. The architect, agreeably to the terms fixed on, immediately ceased from working, and the image was left without hands or legs. The king became very sad; but he was assured by heaven that the image, incomplete though it was, would become world-famous. The king invited all the gods to assist in the consecration and deification of the image. Brahma, the supreme god, himself officiated as hierophant on the occasion, and endowed it with the power of vision and a living soul; and the bones of Krishna were put into it. This is the image of Jagannath placed in the temple of Puri, called the Pagoda by Europeans; and it was to worship this legless and armless deity that Alanga, along with about two hundred thousand pilgrims, plodded on her weary way through hundreds of miles. What Alanga did at Puri must be described in the ensuing chapter.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE CAR FESTIVAL.

    |All around, behind, before,  
With frantic shout and deafening roar ;  
And the double, double peals of the drum are there,  
And the startling burst of the trumpet's blare.  
And the gong that seems, with its thunders dread,  
To stun the living, and waken the dead.

SOUTHEY'S *Kehama*.

NEVER had Alanga seen so many human beings crowded together in so small a space as at Puri. She had been to Agradvípa, and had seen thousands of devotees worshipping the "Lord of milk-maids;" but they were as a drop compared to the ocean of human heads which she saw in the Holy Field. There were pilgrims from all parts of India; from Bengal, from Behar, from the North-West, from the Central Provinces, from Madras, from Bombay, from the

Deccan ; devotees of every religious persuasion were there, especially Vaishnavas of all orders and habiliments. The utmost enthusiasm prevailed amongst the pilgrims. They spent their time in visiting all the temples in the neighbourhood, and especially in loitering about within the precincts of the great Pagoda, near which, within an enclosure of stone wall, there are no less than one hundred temples. The attractions of vice were not wanting. The number of courtesans and women of easy virtue was immense ; and in the purlieus of the holy temple itself dwelt women who were destitute of all sense of shame. To Alanga, however, who sincerely believed in the divinity of Jagannath, and was diligent in the discharge of every religious duty, the scene was one of high devotional enjoyment.

The worship of Jagannath is always associated with that of his brother Balarám, and of his sister Subhadrá. The image of each is a rudely constructed and ill-shapen wooden bust, of about six feet in height. The image of Jagannath is painted white, that of Balarám black, and of Subhadrá yellow. Jagannath has mere stumps of arms, while Subhadrá is destitute

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even of those stumps. On the whole, the two divine brothers and their sister are the ugliest of all the deities in the Hindu Pantheon. But though the ugliest, they are the most luxuriously fed of all the gods and goddesses. At the time Alanga visited Puri, Jagannath had the largest establishment of any prince in India. It consisted of 3,000 families of servants and dependants, of whom 400 families were cooks. The deity's daily bill of fare was as follows:—

“ 220 pounds of rice, 97 pounds of *kalái* (pulse), 24 pounds of *mug* (another sort of pulse), 188 pounds of clarified butter, made from buffalo's milk, 80 pounds of molasses, 32 pounds of vegetables, 10 pounds of sour milk, 2½ pounds of spices, 2 pounds of sandal-wood, some camphor, and 20 pounds of salt.”

During high festivals, the 400 families of cooks, of whom we have spoken, are all engaged in preparing food for the pilgrims, who buy cooked food; and it is believed that within the court of the temple itself food for about 100,000 pilgrims is daily cooked and sold. No Hindu ever buys cooked food in any place, but the Holy Field is an exception to the rule. Boiled rice in large quantities is bought by the

pilgrims, is dried and taken to their respective homes, under the name of *maháprasád*; and in all parts of India, but chiefly in Bengal, one grain of this dried holy rice is eaten every day by every devout Vaishnava, male or female, before ordinary food is tasted.

The first great ceremony which Alanga witnessed at Puri was the *Snán Yátra*, or the Bathing Festival. The image of Jagannath was brought out from the temple in great state by the *Pándás*, or priests, and placed in an open terrace, amid the deafening shouts of "Jaya Jagannáth! Jaya Jagannáth!" "Victory to Jagannath! Victory to Jagannath!" raised by myriads of spectators. Holy texts were then chanted, and water was poured on the head of the "Lord of the World;" the deity, thus bathed, was wiped, and presented with offerings by innumerable votaries; and was taken back to his abode.

The other festival, the greatest of all the festivals of Jagannath, which Alanga saw, was the *Ratha Yátrá*, or the Car Festival. On the appointed day—and it usually takes place in June or July—the three idols of Jagannáth, Balaráma, and Subhadrá, were brought, or rather dragged—for they are actually

pulled by means of cords fastened round the necks of the images—from their thrones in the temple, and taken out at the *Sinha-dvār*, or the Lion Gate. When the deities made their appearance at the gate, shouts of “*Jaya Jagannáth! Jaya Jagannáth!*” rent the air. The images were then dragged in the same irreverent manner as before, by means of ropes, up an inclined plane, into the *rathas*, or cars. The cars are huge vehicles, five stories high, with a number of wheels, turrets, and flags. The car of Jagannath is  $43\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, having 16 wheels of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet in diameter, and a platform  $34\frac{1}{2}$  feet square; the car of Balarám is 41 feet high, with 14 wheels; and that of Subhadrá, 40 feet high, with also 14 wheels. After the stumps of the idols had been put in their places on the cars, hands, feet, and ears (all made of gold), were supplied to them; and orders to drag the cars were issued. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm of the people at the first movement of the cars. From myriads of throats issued the shouts of “*Jaya Jagannáth! Jaya Jagannáth!*” “*Hari bol! Hari bol!*” accompanied by the harsh dissonance of hundreds of so-called musical instru-

ments. To touch the holy ropes, or hawsers, by which the sacred vehicles were pulled, is reckoned an act of high merit; hence the rush towards the cars is always great. In former days, men and women used voluntarily to fling themselves under the wheels of the ponderous chariots, and were crushed to death. But, thanks to the humanity of the British Government, that murderous practice has been stopped. The gods remained eight days in their cars, receiving the adorations and offerings of their devotees. On the ninth day they returned to their temples. Soon after their return, the two gods and their sister were put to sleep, and as their sleep extends generally from about the middle of July to the middle of October—a shorter *siesta*, by the way than that enjoyed by the earthly divinities of the Calcutta Government House, on the sublime heights of the Indian Olympus—the pilgrims commenced returning to their homes.

It is when the pilgrims return from the Holy Field that the horrors of pilgrimage appear in their full magnitude. Owing to constant exposure, day and night, to the heat of the sun, to the rains pouring

every now and then in copious showers, and to night dews—for most of the pilgrims sleep in the open air for want of accommodation in the inns; owing to the immense mass of human beings crowded into a small space; owing to the badness and insufficiency of food—for most of the pilgrims spend nearly all their means of subsistence before they set their face homewards; owing to imperfect sanitary arrangements in the sacred city and its environs; owing to these and other causes, no inconsiderable a proportion of the pilgrims fall victims to fever, to dysentery, and to cholera. The tract of country in the immediate vicinity of Puri becomes a vast Golgotha. Dead bodies are met with everywhere. The little river which flows near it is often covered with corpses. The great road from Puri towards Kataka (Cuttack) may be traced by funeral piles on which dead bodies have been burnt, or by bones left by jackals or vultures; while in the inns on the roadside may be heard every hour of the day and of the night the groans of dying men. On the pilgrim road to Puri, if anywhere, may be witnessed the shocking scene described by the poet:—

He saw the lean dogs  
Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb ;  
They were too busy to bark at him.  
From a pilgrim's skull they had stript the flesh,  
As ye peel the fig when the fruit is fresh ;  
And their white trunks crunched o'er their white skull  
As it slipt through their jaws when their edge grew dull ;  
As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,  
When they scarce could stir from the place where they fed ;  
So well had they broken a lingering fast  
With those who had fallen for that repast.

Poor Alanga left Puri with the seeds of disease sown in her system. On the second day after her arrival at nightfall at an inn, she discovered all the symptoms of malignant cholera. The six women of Kánchanpur who had accompanied her did as much for her as they could under the circumstances ; in other words, they did nothing, for they could do nothing. They did not succeed in getting shelter for her in a hut. She was laid down under a tree all night. There was no doctor, no medicine. The six women resolved next morning to leave Alanga to the tender mercies of dogs and vultures. Early in the day, however, Prem Bhakta Vairági and Áduri, who had come on pilgrimage, and who were returning

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home, accidentally came to the tree under which Alanga was lying. The Vairági, who pretended to have some knowledge of medicine, made her swallow some drugs. But in vain. Alanga died the same afternoon, after an illness of less than twenty-four hours. No firewood could be procured for the purpose of cremation, and the rest may be imagined. Such was the end of Alanga, a woman estimable both for her intelligence, considering her station in life, and for her character.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### BENGAL FEVER AND THE VILLAGE LEECH.

Learned he was in med'cinal lore,  
For by his side a pouch he wore,  
Replete with strange hermetic powder,  
That wounds nine miles point-blank would solder ;  
By skilful chymist, with great cost,  
Extracted from a rotten post.

*Hudibras.*

“I HEAR your father is sick, *sángát*,” said Nanda to Govinda one morning, as the latter was sitting on his haunches on the threshold of the door of his house and enjoying his smoke.

“Yes, last evening when he returned from the fields he was in a strong fever. And all night the fever was upon him and has not yet left him.”

“You should take care, as the fever this season is of a very bad type; are you thinking of calling a Voidya?”

“What’s the use just now? I hope the fever

is' of a slight character; it may go off by fasting one or two days."

This, in truth, is almost the universal practice in the villages. In the first instance, in case of fever, no medicines are taken, but the patient is made to abstain from all food; and, as to drink, a few drops of water are given at long intervals, and only when the sick man loudly calls for drink. Two days had already passed, and there was no remission of the fever, indeed it was every day increasing in strength, and the patient had already become very weak. Kálamánik and Govinda both felt that the case was becoming serious, and that it was high time to call in the aid of a doctor. By the advice of neighbours they delayed one day longer, as it was imagined that if the fever were of a light kind it would go off after three days—the three being a magical number among Bengalis—but if it did not leave the patient on the morning of the fourth day, it would be necessary to call a Kaviráj. The morning of the fourth day dawned, and Badan was worse. Kálamánik therefore at once went to call a doctor.

There were several families of the Voidya or medical caste at Kanchanpur, the male members of which have in succession been practising medicine from time out of mind. They were all called Kavi-rajés, or lords of poets, though none of them ever perpetrated poetry in their lives. The most eminent physician in the village was Mritunjaya, or the Conqueror of Death, though to speak the truth, he seldom cured any serious case which he took in hand. Bengali physicians have been facetiously divided into "killers of ten," "killers of hundreds," and "killers of thousands;" and it is to this last class of heroes that Mritunjaya belonged. It might have been truly said of him:—

Nor engine, nor device polemic  
Disease, nor doctor epidemic,  
Tho' stored with deletery med'cines,  
Which whosoever took is dead since,  
Ever sent so vast a colony  
To both the under worlds as he.

This trifling circumstance, however, did not detract from his reputation as a first-rate physician; for it is argued that a physician can only apply proper remedies; he cannot annul the decrees of fate; and

if it is written on the forehead of a patient that he should die of a certain disease; no doctor in the world—not Dhanwantari himself—could cure him. That Mritunjaya had a collection of the best and rarest medicines was a fact admitted by every one in the village. He had the ingredients of several excellent aperients composed of five, ten, and eighteen different sorts of vegetables. Metallic medicines of various kinds, especially a famous one made of gold dust; *rasásindhu* of the first quality; poisons of serpents of various species of the cobra; and oils of an infinite variety. But the richness of his laboratory was his least merit. For many miles round no Kaviraj had such perfect *Dhátujnan*, or knowledge of the pulse, as Mritunjaya; and this must be acknowledged to be perhaps the most difficult part of the practice of medicine. Nor was he less profound in his knowledge of the diagnosis of disease. It is well known that he never made any mistake in ascertaining the nature of the disease, though it must be acknowledged that he was seldom successful in grappling with it. The wonderful insight which he had acquired into the nature of diseases was

chiefly owing to a diligent study of those renowned medical treatises in Sanskrit which were written several centuries ago, and which showed such a miraculous knowledge of both diseases and their remedies, that he believed them, along with all his brethren of the craft in Bengal, to have been composed by divine inspiration—indeed, to have been written by the finger of Mahádeva himself. For modern medicine, and especially European medicine, he had a perfect contempt: and it was one of his constant sayings that European doctors did not at all understand the treatment of Indian fever. He admitted the superiority of English to native doctors in surgery, but then it was his opinion that surgery formed no part of the functions of a medical man, as surgical operations belonged, properly speaking, to the province of the barber.

In our accomplished physician there was only one drawback, and that was that he was an inveterate opium eater. He began with swallowing every day a dose of the size of a pea, but the modicum increased gradually, till at last he used every day to gulp down a quantity sufficient to kill a horse. Owing to this

habit he was seldom in a perfectly wakeful state; whenever he sat for five minutes his eyes were almost always half-closed. As his practice was not large, and as a doctor's fee is very little in the villages—generally a rupee for curing a patient, who may require attendance every day for a fortnight or upwards, and in case of non-recovery nothing at all—he was often in pecuniary straits. But whether he had his daily *Dál* and *bhát* or not, the supply of his daily modicum of opium was absolutely necessary, and sometimes when the exact hour had passed away without his swallowing that precious drug, he became so sick as to seem almost to be in a dying state. Such was the redoubtable physician who now accompanied Kálamánik.

On feeling Badan's pulse Mritunjaya found him in strong fever, and therefore prescribed one of those aperient mixtures or *pánchans*, which goes by the name of *Dasmúla*, so called from its being a composition of the roots of ten different vegetables; but before the mixture could be prepared he made him swallow a couple of pills—a large number of which he always carried about with him in his pouch—

mixed with the juice of a *pán* leaf. The *Dasmúla* had no effect; and there was no remission of the fever. Various other mixtures and pills were tried successively, but with little effect. *Rasásindhu* was applied, but with the like result. *Badan* was evidently in high fever. The members of his family were alarmed, and *Rámdhan Misra*, the family priest, was requested to come to the house, and offer every day to the gods one thousand leaves of the sacred *tulasi*; and various forms of prayers called *Swastyayanas* were offered, with a view to averting the displeasure of the gods and the recovery of the patient. Vegetable and serpent poisons were next tried by the Conqueror of Death, but no signs of victory were forthcoming. As a last resource the patient was made to swallow a deadly poison, which passed under the name of the *hukáwálár gundo*, or the *powder of the Hubble-bubble seller*, so called from its having been invented by a dealer in hookahs of the town of *Várdhamána*. All these poisons, instead of contributing to *Badan's* recovery, only made him worse. He became delirious. It was evident he was fast sinking, and there was not the remotest chance of his recovery. In order

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to prevent the spirit from departing from the body in a room, Badan was taken down one evening from his bed-room to the open yard, where shortly he breathed his last, amid the loud cries and lamentations of all the members of the household. That very night the corpse was taken to a tank called *Náráyaṇ Sil*, on the embankment of which it was burnt, as it is considered inauspicious to keep the corpse for a long time in the house.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE SITUATION.

They perished—the blithe days of boyhood had perished—  
And all the gladness and all the peace I knew !  
Now have I but their memory, fondly cherished—  
God, may I never, never lose that too.

*Longfellow.*

THE morning of life, like the prime of day, is unquestionably the pleasantest and happiest period of a man's existence. Devoid of all care and anxiety, having no experience of the asperities of life and the roughness of the world, the thoughtless youth eats and drinks, and takes his pleasure and rejoices in everything about him.

Govinda had hitherto lived a life of ease and quietude. It is true he had none of the elegant comforts of polished life; it is true he laboured every day in the field, either at the plough, at the

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barn, or the field; it is true he dined off only boiled rice and pulse, a vegetable or two, and some miserable looking fish, and washed down that food, not with wine, but with simple rain water; yet he felt himself as comfortable and happy as the proudest English nobleman who rolls in wealth and magnificence, and to furnish whose table with delicacies, earth, ocean, and air are laid under contribution. What though Govinda ate only *Punya Sāk* (*Basella lucida*) along with his coarse rice, and slept on a palm-leaf mat spread on a mud floor, his stomach was not the less filled, neither was his repose the more disturbed on that account. Govinda's usual article of clothing, it is true, consisted of a single *dhuti* wrapped round his waist, and dangling down perhaps a little below his knees, while both the upper and lower regions of his frame remained in a state of primeval nudity; yet who shall tell me that the man who is covered in *kinkob* and gold brocade is, on account of that circumstance, happier than he. As a peasant youth he spent most part of his time under the canopy of Heaven, inhaling the fragrant breeze of the fields, and holding communion, such as it was,

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with the beautiful, if somewhat uniform, scenery of his native land; and though education was wanting to enable him fully to profit from his daily contact with external nature, yet there was nothing in paddy-fields and mango-groves and hedge-rows, as in towns and cities, to corrupt his heart and to brutalise his nature.

In most countries marriage brings in its train all sorts of cares and anxieties. It is not so in Bengal. Govinda got married, and even begat children, but he took no thought for the support of his wife and his children. It was Badan's business to provide for his daughter-in-law and his grandchildren. The family treasure, such as it was, was in the hands of Badan. He kept in his own possession all the money obtained by selling paddy and molasses, and the small sums he realised every month by selling milk and some of the products of his fields, like pulse, brinjal, *palval*, and other vegetables. He paid rent at fixed periods to the zamindár, or landlord, for the ground on which his house stood, and for the fields which he cultivated. He borrowed money from the *mahájan*, or the money-lender, when

funds were a *minus* quantity; and though he consulted sometimes with his son, the task of making both ends meet never fell on the shoulders of Govinda during the lifetime of his father.

Next to Badan, Alanga had had the largest share of care and anxiety in the management of the family; indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Badan did nothing without consulting his mother, who was endued with no little amount of common sense. Sundari, though the wife of the master of the house, had never been its mistress. That post was always filled by Alanga, without, however, the slightest jealousy on Sundari's part; indeed, Sundari often expressed her thankfulness for the privilege of being under the guidance of so wise and so affectionate a mother-in-law.

But all this now underwent a change. Badan has been gathered to his fathers, and Alanga has fallen a victim to the "Moloch of the East." According to Hindu manners and customs, it was Kálamánik's business to take Badan's place in the household; but though he was a brave fellow, and the sturdiest ploughman in all Kánchanpur, his

defective intelligence incapacitated him for the task. Govinda therefore became the master of the house, and his mother Sundari the *grihini* or mistress. Hitherto Govinda had lived without anxiety. The colour and complexion of his life underwent a change immediately on the death of his father. How to support the family entrusted to his care became now the problem of his life.

At such a time it may not be deemed unseasonable briefly to glance at the situation in which Govinda now found himself. There has been no change in his homestead. There is the same big hut, with its two compartments, one serving as a dormitory, and the other as a refectory, or rather store-room; there is the hut, in the verandah of which is the homely pedal; there is the third hut, which now serves the double purpose of a kitchen and a sleeping-room for Kálamánik; and there also stands the cow-house as before. It is unnecessary to remark that death had made havoc of the family. Gayárám had been bitten to death by a serpent; Badan had been carried off by fever; and Alanga had died on the "holy field" of Orissa. Málati

was in her husband's house at Durgánagar, and Áduri, having become a mendicant, was wandering about the country in the company of her pious lover Prem Bhakta. There remained now our hero, his mother Sundari, his wife Dhanamani, and his uncle Kálamánik, who was still living in single blessedness.

The fields which Govinda cultivated were precisely those which his father had tilled; there was neither increase nor diminution in the number of *bighás*. Govinda, however, commenced life with one serious drawback. His father had bequeathed to him the legacy of a small debt, which had been considerably increased by Govinda having had to celebrate in succession the funeral ceremonies of his father and grandmother. What made the burden of the debt galling was that it was contracted at a heavy rate of interest, namely, two pice a rupee per mensem, that is, thirty-seven and a half per cent. per annum, though the rate, as it was the usual one, was not regarded as extravagant by any *maháján* or money-lender.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE ZAMINDÁR OF KÁNCHANPUR.

Our laird gets in his racked rents,  
His coals, his kain, an' a' his stents ;  
He rises when he likes himsel ;  
His flunkies answer at the bell.

*The Twa Dogs.*

ONE morning as Govinda was sitting at the door of his house, smoking and engaged in thought, he was accosted by a person who had a thick bamboo club in one hand and a bit of paper in the other. The person who came up to Govinda was of stalwart size, being six feet in height, with a fine pair of moustaches which joined the whiskers descending from the temples, and a thick beard brushed upwards. It was evident from his dress and features that he was not a Bengali, but a native of the North-Western Pro-

vinces. Hanumán Singha, for that was the name of the person who accosted Govinda, was one of the officers, or *nagodis*, of the zamindár of Kánchanpur, whose business was to bring them over to the *gomastá*, who received rent and gave receipts.

“And what is that in your hand, Hanumán Sing?” asked Govinda.

“In this paper is put down your share of the *máthot* which is being levied from every ráiyat on account of the approaching marriage of the son of the zamindár in February next.”

“*Máthot!* dear me! how can I pay *máthot*, when I am in arrears to the zamindár for rent, and largely in debt to other parties, chiefly on account of the funeral obsequies of my father and grandmother?”

“It is not much you will have to pay; and besides it is only once in a way, as the Raya Chaudhuri’s son is not going every now and then to get married. You, along with other ráiyats, are to pay only two annas for every rupee of rent you give to the *Talukdár*. The amount of your rent is forty rupees per annum, and surely it is not too much for you to give five rupees.”

“My dear sir, I am not in a position now to give any *máthot* or *abwab*. It is all very well for persons well-to-do to pay their cesses. But surely the zamindár ought not reasonably to expect me to pay anything of the sort, since now I am in great distress. You speak of five *tákás* not being too much, I cannot give five cowries.”

“But you must give. It is the order of your zamindár. Any how, you must produce the five rupees either by begging, or borrowing, or mortgaging the ornaments of your wife, or selling your brass vessels.”

“You go and tell the *gomastú* that I am unable to pay.”

“What a fine fellow you are! You have become wiser than your father, who regularly paid every *máthot* demanded by his landlord. Come now, and get me the five rupees.”

“Am I joking with you, Hanumán Sing? I have no money in the house. If you make a diligent search through the house you will not find even five *payasás*. Go and tell the zamindár when I have means I'll pay; at present I can't pay.”

“Well, then, you yourself come and tell the zamin-

dár. And if you don't come willingly, I have orders to take you by force."

Govinda, perceiving that resistance was hopeless, agreed to go. He put away the hookah, took his *gámchhá*, put it on his left shoulder, and went with Hanumán Singha.

The house of the zamindár was the largest and best building in the village. Its entrance faced the south, like most houses in this part of Bengal, as the object is to avoid the sharp, cold, north wind in winter, and to get the benefit as much as possible of the delicious south wind which blows during summer. The outer gate of the mansion was built of solid masonry, with a colossal door of *sál* wood, studded with huge nails, surmounted with the figure, in stucco and plaster, of a lion. As you go within through the gate, you see before you a courtyard of about sixty feet square, on the north of which is a large hall, and on the east and west suites of small rooms, extending from the sides of the hall, and meeting the long and high wall, in the middle of which is the gate. This part of the house, including the courtyard, the hall, and the suites of rooms on

the sides, is called *Káchhári báḍi* (Cutcherry-house), where the zamindár holds his court, and transacts all affairs regarding his zamindári. The hall is covered with *satranajas*, or Indian carpets, in the middle of which sits the zamindár, propped up by pillows on all sides; the *divána*, the *gomastá*, and other officials squatting at distances varying according to their rank. Beyond this hall, and further to the north, is another courtyard of equal area with the first, in front of which is a spacious hall, called the *dálán*, supported by arches, and on the two sides of which are covered verandahs, two stories high, consisting of several small rooms. This part of the house is called the *Báhir-báḍi* (outer-house), or the *Dálán-báḍi*. The *Dálán*, properly so called, is used only on great religious festivals; the images are placed there, and all sorts of dramatic and pantomimic exhibitions are made in the open courtyard below, which on such occasions is covered with a large cloth canopy, called *chandrátapa* or moonshade. The hall of the *Káchchári-báḍi* opens into the courtyard of the *Dálán-báḍi*; but the regular entrance into the latter is by a lane on the left of the hall. Beyond the *Dálán-*

*báḍi* is a third courtyard of exactly the same area with that of the other two, which is built round on all sides with covered verandahs similar to those in the *Dálán-báḍi*, two stories high, containing a large number of small rooms, with very few windows. This part of the house is called the *antahpura*, or the *andar-mahal*, or the *zenana*, properly so called. There are the women's apartments, visited only by the light of the sun.

Govinda passed through the lion-gate of this huge pile of brick and mortar, walked on to the door of the hall, and putting his sheet round his neck, made obeisance to the zamindár, who was leaning on one of those bolsters called *tákiás*, but which looked more like a huge bale of cotton than a pillow. The zamindár was a large-built man, taller than ordinary Bengalis, and proportionately corpulent. He was sitting like a lion couchant. His eyes first attracted the notice of every one that approached him. Bright, large, and rolling, they seemed to be sending forth every moment flashes of lightning rage; and the sturdiest peasant of Kánchanpur has confessed that there is no standing the fire of those

two dreadful batteries. His voice was singularly powerful, of immense volume, and sounded, when he was in a tempest of rage, like the artillery of heaven. The silver streaks in his hair showed that he was between forty and fifty years of age. Jayachánd Ráya Chauduri (for such was the name of the zamindár of Kánchanpur) was, strictly speaking, not a zamindár, but a middle man, for he only held a *Pattanitáluk* under his Highness the Mahárájá of Vardhamána; but though he was only a *Pattanidár*, he was usually called the zamindár of Kánchanpur and of scores of other villages lying round about. He paid 2,000 rupees a year to the Mahárájá for the village of Kánchanpur: but it was generally believed that he himself realised in rents about three times that amount. For the whole of his zamindari, or rather *pattani*, he gave eighty thousand rupees to the Raja, but he himself has admitted that after paying the *Sadar Jamá*, his own net profit amounted to the round sum of two lakhs, or £20,000 a year. Such immense profit could only be obtained by a system of rack renting, of illegal extortion, and of cruel oppression; and it must be admitted that

Jaya Chánd belonged to a class of zamindárs who were the greatest curses to their country. Not having had the benefit of an English education, unacquainted with Sanskrit, and possessing only a smattering of his mother tongue, he was an ignorant man; and the natural selfishness of his character made that ignorance dangerous to those husbandmen who had the misfortune of being his tenants. Unscrupulous in his character, he did not hesitate to have recourse to any means, however illegal or dishonourable, to screw out of his ráiyats as much money as he could. Of the *Haptam* and the *Pancham* he often took advantage; and many were the ráiyats who were ruined by his oppression. By forgery, by chicanery, by all sorts of fraud—for Jaya Chánd stuck at nothing—he deprived many a poor man of his *lákhrúj*, and though by religion a Hindu, he did not hesitate to rob many a poor Bráhmána of his *Brahmotra*. He was the object of universal dread. His name was never pronounced by his ráiyats except with execrations; and he was so much feared that it is said that at his name the tiger and the cow drank water at the same *ghát*. Such was the man in whose

presence Govinda now stood with folded hands, and with his sheet round his neck.

“Who is there?” asked Jaya Chánd Ráya Chaudhuri, of his divána.

“He is Govinda Sámanta, the son of Badan,” answered the divána.

“He is the son of a worthy father. What does he want?”

Hanumán Sing, advancing in front, said, “Maháráj! He refuses to pay the *máthot* for the marriage of your worship’s son. I have therefore brought him before Khodáwand.”

“Refuses to pay *máthot*! Is there any ráiyat of nine who dare refuse to pay any *máthot* I choose to impose? Did you not say, he is the son of Badan Sámanta? Badan was one of the best and most obedient of my ráiyats. Is this fellow his own son? Who has put such high notions into his head?”

The divána now whispered to his master that he had heard Govinda had as a boy attended the lame schoolmaster’s *páthsálá* for some years. The zamindár, darting a fierce glance on Govinda, said, “So you have become a *Pandita*, and your eyes have

got opened, therefore you refuse to pay the *máthot*. I must forbid Ráma Rúpa to teach any peasants' sons; if he persists in doing it, I must break his other leg, fool that he is."

Govinda said in a faint voice, "O, Incarnation of Justice! I have not refused to pay. I dare not refuse. I only said I am unable to pay at present. On account of the funeral ceremonies of my father and grandmother, I have got largely into debt, and my rent will be again shortly due. I will pay the *máthot* afterwards, when I am able."

"Now, hold your tongue. This is my offer. Within three days you must pay the *máthot*. If you fail to pay within that time, you shall be brought here with your hands tied. Remember that. Diána, let the fellow go."

I beg the reader not to run away with the idea that all zamindárs of Bengal are like Jaya Chánd Ráya Chaudhuri, of Kánchanpur. Amongst landholders, as amongst every class of men, there are black sheep as well as white. Before this story is wound up I hope to present to the reader the picture of a just, humane, and philanthropic zamindár—the

father of his people; but the lines of our hero had fallen on unpleasant places, and it was his fate—so Govinda expressed himself—to have his homestead in the zamindári of a man who was a Bengal tiger in human shape.

## CHAPTER XL.

### POLITICS AT THE SMITHY.

Low lies that house where *tobacco* inspired,  
Where grey-beard mirth, and smiling toil retired,  
Where village statesmen talk'd with looks profound,  
And news much older than their weed went round.

*The Deserted Village.*

It is evening. The sun has long ago gone in his fiery car behind Mount Sumeru; the cows have returned from the fields, and have been shut up in their house; the birds have slunk into their nests; the women of Kánchanpur have "shown the lamp" in all the rooms of their houses, to scare away ghosts and other evil spirits which might lurk in them; and most of the peasantry, after the day's toil, are either smoking in their huts or making preparations for their supper. Kavera, however, and his son Nanda, are busy as in

the day ; for their toil knows no intermission except in the dead of night. It is true that the people who frequented the smithy during the day for little jobs are no longer there, but their place has been taken up by friends who have come to enjoy an evening chat. But, friends or no friends, the father and son are never unmindful of their own business. Vulcan senior and junior have just taken out of the forge a large piece of iron, glowing and red-hot, have put it on the anvil, and are belabouring it with their hammers and scattering about particles of incandescent matter. *Swish ! swish ! swish !* go the paternal and the filial hammers, till the sound becomes changed, after the iron had cooled and been dipped in water, into *dhip-dháp ! dhip-dháp ! dhip-dháp !* While Kuvera and his son were at this exciting work, four or five people were sitting on a mat in the room. There was Kapila, the carpenter ; Madan, the grocer ; Chatura, the barber ; Rasamaya, the confectioner ; and Bokárám, the weaver. After the hammering had stopped and the piece of iron had been again put into the forge, Kapila said to Nanda—“Have you heard that Govinda was taken this morning before the *jamidár*” [Hindu Bengali

peasants always call the landholder *jamidár*, and not *zamindár*], “and warned that if he did not pay the *máthot* within three days, he would be handcuffed and taken before the *jamidár*?”

“Yes, *súngát* told me on his return from the *jamidár*’s house. It is a great shame that poor people should be oppressed in this way. I do not think, however, that *súngát* should yield in this matter. What have we to do with the marriage of the son of the *jamidár*? That is an affair of his own. Why should we pay its expenses?”

“But is it prudent not to pay? The *jamidár* is a rich man; he has a band of *láthiáls* [club-men] under him. How can a poor man, like *bandhu*, cope with him.”

Nanda, greatly excited, took hold of his hammer and said, “I wish I could give a blow of this on the *jamidár*’s fat belly and send him to the house of Yama [the king of death]. What have we to do with his son’s marriage? What have we to do with *máthots* or *abwabs*? We will only pay the rent fixed by the *Kompáni Báhádur* [The East India Company].” Chatura, the barber, giving a sarcastic

smile, said—"Well done, Nanda! You are a great hero! You show your heroism in the corner of your hut. You are a true 'palm-leaf Sepoy'—a very cheap sort of a hero! But here comes Govinda."

*Govinda.* "Sángát! You are very indiscreet. Don't you know that the jamidár's spies are all about? If what you said just now were reported to him by an enemy, it would go hard with you. Don't speak so loud, for aught I know somebody may be listening from behind the wall."

*Nanda.* "I don't care if it is reported to the jamidár. It is impossible to bear all this oppression. His injustice knows no bounds. Is there no God in the heavens? All the ráiyats have got their bones fried through oppression. The Bráhmanas are cursing him loud, taking the sacred *paita* in their hands, and looking up towards the sun. It is time we all made a *dharmaghat* and refused to pay the iniquitous *máthot*. What say you, *sángát*?"

*Govinda.* "What you say, *sángát*, is all true. It is no doubt a terrible oppression. But what can we do? He is rich and powerful, and we are poor people. How can we fight with him?"

*Nanda.* "Then I suppose you mean to pay the *máthot*?"

*Govinda.* "I have no choice in the matter. If I refuse to pay, he will ill-treat me, perhaps imprison me, and possibly set my house on fire; and it will be impossible to get justice done."

*Nanda.* "I say, is there no one above? Will He not punish the wicked *jamidár*?"

*Govinda.* "I believe the gods punish wicked men. But we do not see that in this life. Perhaps in his next birth he may be punished. But I see no hope of his being punished in this life."

*Kapila.* "Friend, you are quite right. There is no use opposing the *jamidár*. You should anyhow pay down the *máthot*. You cannot prevail against the mighty."

*Madan.* "No one is more against the iniquitous *máthot* than I am. The *jamidár* has no right to impose this cess on us. But how can we successfully fight against him? Therefore my opinion is that we should quietly pay the cess."

*Nanda.* "But why not make a *dharmaghat*?"

*Govinda.* "That is easily said; but with whom

will you make *dharmaghat*? Will all the people of the village agree with us? Don't you know that fifteen annas (fifteen sixteenths), of the people through fear of the *jamidár* will not join us, if we refuse to pay? And of what use will a *dharmaghat* of half-a-dozen persons be? You are very bold, *sángát*, but you want discretion."

*Bokárám*. "I don't understand about *dharmaghat* or *farmaghat*. I know this, that, if we don't pay the *máthot*, we shall be ruined. Besides, it is useless fighting against fate. It is his fate to be a *jamidár*, and it is our fate to be his *ráiyats*; we must, therefore, submit to his exactions, whether just or unjust."

*Nanda*. "Well said! you, *Bokárám*, are a true hero. *Sábásh! sábásh!*"

*Bokárám*. "You need not ridicule me. I do not see any difference between you and me. In talk, you are as big as a mountain, but in action, you are like a mustard-seed. I know your father will at last pay the *máthot*. Then of what use is this boasting?"

*Nanda*. "If my father pays the *máthot*, it will be without my consent; and, as he is the head of

his family, he can certainly do whatever he likes ; but his paying or not paying will not alter my views. But, here comes uncle Mánik, I am much mistaken if he consents to Govinda's paying the *máthot*. What say you, uncle Mánik ? ”

*Kálamánik*. “What about, Nanda ? don't bother me with questions just now. Let me first take a whiff.”

Govinda was smoking at the moment *Kálamánik* entered the room, and he immediately put the hookah into his uncle's hands. Amongst the higher and middle classes, it would be deemed bad manners for a young man to smoke in the presence of his father's brother, but it is not considered so amongst the labouring classes, and chiefly for this reason, that, as they always work together in the field, where there can be no privacy, and, as tobacco is the only refreshment they enjoy, they are obliged to smoke in the presence of their superiors.

*Kálamánik* gave three or four hard pulls with his mouth at the hookah—indeed, the pulls were so hard that the *kalika* blazed up—and then turning towards Nanda, enquired on what subject he wished to have his opinion.

*Nanda.* “What other subject can it be, uncle Mánik, except the all engrossing one, of the *máthot*? I wish to know whether you are going to pay the *máthot* or not.”

*Kálamánik.* “I thought you knew me too well to ask such a question. I consider the *máthot* to be a most unjust imposition, and, as such, I can never submit to it. Forsooth! because his son is going to get married, therefore we, poor people, must pay the expenses of the wedding! When the sons of poor ráiyats get married, pray who pays the expenses! Does the jamidár pay one cowrie? On the contrary, does he not on such occasions expect, and actually receive, presents? Such is the way of the world! On the head which is already saturated with oil, more oil is poured, whereas we poor folk go entirely oilless.”

*Nanda.* “Well said, uncle Mánik. I quite agree with you. We should not submit to injustice.”

*Kálamánik.* “That is what I say. But Govinda is like his father. He is a man of peace; he has already made up his mind to pay. He is quite frightened by the jamidár’s threats. If I were he, I would refuse to go again to the jamidár’s cutcherry

and crack the skull of the first fellow that came to catch hold of me.”

*Govinda.* “But, uncle, would not that be foolhardiness? I quite agree with you that the imposition is unjust and oppressive. But what can I do? and what can you do? If I beat any of the jamidár’s servants, I shall be without doubt put in jail. Living in water, how can I quarrel with the alligator? The best plan is to live on good terms with him. If I resist, I am ruined.”

*Chatura.* “That is speaking like a wise man. How can we, poor and weak as we are, contend with the jamidár? Dwarfs as we are, how can we hope to catch the moon with our hands? Govinda is wise in making up his mind to pay.”

*Kálamánik.* “People say that I am rash, and have not much sense. But it is said of over-sensible people, that a string is—you know the proverb. No, no; I do not wish to be wise like you all. I should like to see the fellow that dares come to me asking for *máthot*. Won’t I make him drink sour milk on the spot, and perhaps send him to the house of Yama.”

*Govinda.* "Take you good care, uncle, what you do. By your boldness you may bring ruin upon our family. You are the strongest and bravest man in the village, but you cannot fight singly against one hundred men; and the *jamidár* can muster five hundred men against us."

*Kálamánik.* "Don't be apprehensive of me, nephew. I am not a fool; I will not bring ruin upon you."

*Kapila*, the *bandhu*, or friend of *Govinda*, who had been all this time quietly listening to the above conversation, said, "Is it not extraordinary that the *Kompáni Báhádúr* allows all this injustice to be inflicted upon us? *Kompáni Báhádúr's* rule is in many respects better than the rule of the Mussulmans; but how is it that in this respect it is worse? How can *Kompáni Báhádúr* see without concern all this oppression of its own subjects by wicked *jamidárs*?"

*Chatura.* "What a sheep you are, *Kapil*! you think *Kompáni Báhádúr* cares either for our weal or for our woe! Not a bit of it. All that it cares for is the regular payment of the *Jamá*. So long as the *jamidár* regularly pays the *Sadar Jamá*, the *Kompáni Báhádúr* does not enquire how he collects it, or how much he

collects. Has not the *Kompáni Bahádur* armed the jamidár with those dreadful weapons, the *haptam* and the *pancham*, to the ruin of all its raiyats ?”

*Madan*, Govinda’s *mitá*, said : “ But I have always heard old people say that the *Kompáni Bahádur* is just and merciful. How then can it allow the jamidárs to oppress the ráiyats so much ? The *Sadar Jamá* which the jamidár pays is the blood-money of the ráiyats.”

*Govinda*. “ The fact is, though the *Kompáni Bahádur* is just and merciful, it has made laws on the supposition that the jamidárs have common honesty and humanity. The *Kompáni Bahádur* never dreamt that jamidárs would be so wicked.”

*Basamaya*. “ But you don’t mean to say that all jamidárs are wicked. The jamidár of my maternal uncle in Zilla Hugli is said to be a very good man. My uncle says that that jamidár is the father of his ráiyats. He not only does not exact illegal cesses, but in a season of drought, or of inundation, he exempts the ráiyats from paying rent.”

*Nanda*. “ I daresay there are a few jamidárs of that sort. But fifteen annas of them are tyrants. I

should say fifteen annas three pansas out of the rupee are of that sort. They rob the poor, deprive Bráhmanas of their rent-free lands, and burn the houses of their ráiyats. Why does Mother Earth suffer these miscreants to remain in her lap?"

*Govinda.* " *Sángát*, you are always hot. Some crow will carry your words to the jamidár."

*Nanda.* " I don't care if it does."

The conversation detailed above was followed by a game of cards called *Grábu*—Nanda and Govinda being partners on one side, and Chatura and Madan on the other; the rest of the assembly ranged themselves under the one party or the other as spectators. As Chatura was the best player of them all, his party won, having hoisted no less than three sixes and two fives to the disgrace of the other party. When the winning party hoisted a six, great was their joy, which they expressed by a loud clapping of hands. Not a drop of wine or any spirituous liquor had ever gone down the throat of any of these rural players—their only refreshment was the hookah, which ever and anon went round. It was almost midnight when our village statesmen arose and went to their houses.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### BEFORE THE ZAMINDÁR.

I've noticed, on our laird's court-day,  
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,  
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,  
How they maun thole a factor's snash :  
H'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear,  
H'll apprehend them, poind their gear ;  
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,  
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble.

*The Twa Dogs.*

THE next two days Govinda spent in earnestly debating in his mind whether he should pay the cess or not, and he found no little difficulty in making up his mind. In his own house he had talk on the subject with his mother and his uncle, and they were of opposite views.—the mother urging him to pay, and the uncle insisting on not paying and on abiding the consequences. The arguments of Sundari may be thus summed up :—

“It is a dangerous thing to incur the displeasure of a powerful man, and especially of one’s rájáh. The jamidár can ruin us, can seize the crop in the field on pretence of arrears of rent, can carry away our cattle, can sell our houses, can imprison us, can kill us. How can you, then, my son, incur the displeasure of such a man? Fishes cannot afford to be on bad terms with the alligator of the tank.” Kálamánik, on the other hand, thought it would be great cowardice to submit to so iniquitous an exaction. He broke out against the zamindár in a most violent manner, calling him his brother-in-law (wife’s brother), and describing him as the greatest sinner upon earth. Govinda’s father-in-law, Padma Lochan, was of the same opinion with his mother, thinking it madness not to pay. He moreover told Govinda that he must not put faith in the empty declarations of people, some of whom, though they use tall language, submit at last; and that not a few people were mischievously inclined towards him, dissuading him from paying the *máthot* only that they might witness Govinda’s ruin. On the whole Govinda thought it wise and expedient to make up his mind to submit to the zamindár’s exaction, but

at the same time he determined to tell the landlord to his face at the time of payment that the imposition was illegal and unjust.

On the appointed day, at about eight o'clock in the morning, Hanumán Singha called at the house of Govinda, and said that he was wanted at the zamindar's cutcherry. Tying the amount of the *máthoṭ* in his *dhuti* round his waist, he followed the *táidgir*. The zamindár was seated in his usual place, surrounded by the divána, the gomastá, and others. Govinda, putting his bathing-towel round his neck, made obeisance to him by touching the ground with his forehead. The divána said,

“Well, Sámanta, have you brought the *máthoṭ* with you?”

*Govinda*. “If the divána *mahásáyá* were to forgive me I should feel greatly obliged, as I am largely in debt.”

*Zamindár*. “You scoundrel, you still talk of being excused? It is only in consequence of your father, who was a good tenant, that you escaped with impunity three days ago, when you refused to pay the cess. I mean to punish you well for delaying

to pay, and for doing an infinite deal of mischief among my tenants, whom you were trying to dissuade from paying."

*Govinda.* "O, Incarnation of Justice! I never attempted to dissuade anyone from paying."

*Zamindár.* "Harámzáda! I am well informed, you did try. Did you not hold nocturnal meetings to discuss this subject? And did you not use threatening language towards me?"

*Govinda.* "I never used threatening language towards your worship."

*Zamindár.* "You did, you rascal; and if you again deny it you will be beaten with shoes. You mean to say you did not hold meetings at night for abusing me?"

*Govinda.* "I do not know of any meeting especially held for the purpose of discussing the subject of the *máthot*, or of abusing your lordship."

*Zamindár.* "Were you not present in the shop of Kuvera the blacksmith two nights ago? and did you not abuse me then?"

*Govinda.* "I happened to be there that night, as I am there almost every evening, but there was

no meeting especially called; and I never said one word against your worship, O Incarnation of Justice."

*Zamindár.* "I repeat, if you deny it, you will immediately get shoe-beating."

The divána now suggested that perhaps it was not Govinda, but some other person at the meeting that abused the zamindár, though he must have heard it with approbation.

*Zamindár.* "No, I am sure it was this wicked fellow who used threatening language. Well, if he did not, let him name the party who did."

Untruthfulness not being regarded by the Bengal ráiyat as dishonourable, especially in dealings with landlords, Govinda had no hesitation in saying that no one at the meeting abused the zamindár. The zamindár, who had received from some unknown person an account, with considerable additions, of the talk at the smithy, became now furious, and was almost going to strike Govinda, when the divána interposed, and represented that he was too mean a person to deserve the distinction of being beaten personally by the great zamindár himself. The

divána then ordered Govinda to pay down the *máthot* and go away. While in the act of untying the money from his *dhuti*, he said, "I am paying the cess; but the imposition is an unjust one. It is contrary to the laws of the *Kompáni Báhádur*." The zamindár could no longer restrain his anger, but got up, and taking into his hand one of his own slippers, struck Govinda with it, abusing him at the same time somewhat in the following strain: "You, wife's brother, ungrateful wretch, you accuse me of injustice! You, ghost of a peasant, you pretend to be versed in law; you dare teach me my duty! I will shorten your mouth by shoe-beating. This is only the beginning of your misfortunes. Worse calamities are in store for you. I will ruin you till dogs and jackals weep and howl at your misery." Govinda had not courage enough to make any reply to this castigation and this outburst—indeed, he had already shown more than the average courage of Bengali peasants. He quietly bore the castigation and swallowed the insult, wiped his eyes and that part of his body to which the shoe had been applied, paid down the cess, and left the catcherry.

The zamindár and the divána now entered into a conversation as to the extent of dissaffection created in the village, and both of them dwelt on the necessity of severely punishing Kálamánik who, it was said, was doing more mischief than any other man. The gomastá mentioned the name of the young blacksmith as another dangerous fellow, who was always speaking against the zamindár; but the divána, who was kindly disposed towards Kuvra, Nanda's father, represented that the lad was indiscreet, using always high-flown words, but that he did no mischief, as he exercised no influence in the village. There was no doubt, however, of the guilt of Kálamánik. It was only through his representations that Govinda had at first refused to pay the cess, and there could be no reasonable doubt that he was endeavouring to prejudice the other ráiyats against their landlord. But how was he to be punished? He was a most determined and obstinate character; and as to personal strength, he had such an uncommonly powerful body, that he was more than a match for any three men in the village. It was deemed necessary, however, that he

should be somehow punished. The zamindár immediately ordered Hanumán Singha, who was in attendance, to go in search of Kálamánik, and to tell him that his landlord wanted to see him. The divána said that Kálamánik was not likely to obey the summons, and that it would be necessary to send at least a dozen men to catch hold of him. The zamindár replied that should Kálamánik refuse to come, severer measures must be resorted to; but it was expedient in the first instance to have recourse to less coercive measures.

Hanumán Singha, accordingly, went in search of Kálamánik, whom he found in the field busily engaged in watering a field of sugar-cane. Seeing the zamindár's *taidgír*, he said, "Hallo, Hanumán Sing! what brings you here?"

*Hanu.* "I have come in search of you, Mánik Sámanta."

*Kála.* "In search of me! What have you to do with me?"

*Hanu.* "The jamidár wishes to see you."

*Kála.* "The jamidár wishes to see me! What have I to do with the jamidár? I owe him nothing

He may have to do with Govinda; but what on earth have I to do with him?"

*Hanu.* "I do not know the reason why he has sent for you. I simply obey orders."

*Kála.* "I am not the jamidár's servant that I should go to him at his bidding. Go and tell him I am watering my fields, and have now no leisure to go to the catcherry."

*Hanu.* "I advise you to come with me. Why should you incur the displeasure of the jamidár for nothing? There is, surely, no harm in going to him. He will not eat you up."

*Kála.* "Eat me up! I should like to see him try to eat me up. Should he succeed in swallowing me up, he would die of a pain in his stomach. Whereas I can swallow and digest many jamidárs like Jaya Chánd Ráya Chaudhuri. Mánik Sámanta is too tough to be easily digested. Do you go and convey my reply to his summons."

So saying, Kálamánik went on, with greater energy than before, with the work of irrigation.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE INDIGNATION MEETING.

Thou knowest the discontent,  
The ill-pent murmurs, which this man's oppression,  
His cruelty and avarice, hath provok'd  
Amongst all honest hearts in Schwytz.

SCHILLER'S *Wilhelm Tell*.

AMONGST the peasantry of Western Bengal there is not a braver or a more independent class than the Ugra-Kshatriyas, or Águris, the caste of which our hero was a member. Somewhat fairer in complexion than Bengal peasants in general, better built, and more muscular in their corporeal, they are known to be a bold and somewhat fierce race, and less patient of any injustice or oppression than the ordinary Bengali ráiyat, who is content quietly to submit, even without a protest, to any amount of

kicking. The phrase *Águrir gonár*, or the “Águri bully,” which has passed into a proverb, indicates that the Águris are, in the estimation of their countrymen, a hot-blooded class; that they are fearless and determined in their character, and that they resent the slightest insult that is offered them. Fewer in numbers than the Sadgopa class, which constitutes the bulk of the Vardhamána peasantry, they are a compact and united band; and there is amongst them a sort of *esprit de corps* which is hardly to be found in any other class of Bengalis. Naturally stronger and more industrious than other husbandmen, the Águris, as a class, are in better circumstances than the rest of the peasantry, and, in consequence of their superior wealth, display a correspondingly higher spirit of independence. Hence it is not to be wondered at that the zamindár’s treatment of Govinda should rouse the indignation of all the Águris of Kánchanpur. Shoe-beating is looked upon as a most degrading punishment, fit only for the lowest classes of the people; and by how much the Águris deemed themselves to be better than *Bágdís*, *Doms*, and *Háđís*, by so much

was their indignation roused at the insult offered to one of their tribe. Kálamánik, when on his return from irrigating the sugar-cane field he heard of the shoe-beating, became almost insane with rage; he broke out into the most violent language, called the zamindár all sorts of names, and vowed revenge to wipe out the blot with which the honour of the family had been tarnished. In the course of the day and the ensuing evening, almost all the Águri peasants of the village visited Govinda and Kálamánik in their house, expressed sympathy with them, regarded Govinda's cause as their own, and resolved to harass the landlord in every way they could. And yet what could they do? There were not more than twenty-five families of Águris in the village; and if their number were larger, how could they hope to be successful in a contest with a zamindár, whose ráiyats numbered by thousands, and who had an organised *láthiál* band of at least one hundred able-bodied men? Nor were the *Sadgopas* and other classes of husbandmen on the side of the Águris. Accustomed as many of them were to be daily beaten, cuffed, and kicked by the

zamindár and his deputies, they were strangers to that sense of honour which animated Govinda and his caste-men. So far from sympathising with them, they looked upon the Águris as a very thin-skinned class, who made much ado about nothing.

In the days of which we are treating (and it is about twenty-five years ago), it was hopeless for a ráiyat, or any number of ráiyats, to cope successfully with zamindárs. The zamindárs were armed with tremendous powers by the British Government, especially by Regulation VII. of 1799 and V. of 1812, which empowered them not only to distrain the crops and cattle and all the property of tenants who are in arrears of rent, or supposed to be so, but to compel them to attend their cutcherries, and to imprison them. And the zamindárs of those days were not generally an honourable class. They made false charges against their tenants, refused to give receipts for rents received, and had recourse to perjury, chicanery, forgery, and the thousand and one arts of knavery for their own aggrandizement and the destruction of the peasantry. Nor were the peasantry spirited enough to oppose the

landlords in their high-handed measures. We have represented the Águris to be a spirited and brave class; but it must be remembered that they were spirited compared only with other Bengali ráiyats, and Bengali ráiyats are, as a rule, a sheepish and submissive race. Were Bengal peasants like Irish cottiers, Orangemen, Ribbonmen, and the rest, zamindari oppression would be impossible. An old husbandman of the Águri caste, speaking in reference to the mode in which they should endeavour to harass the zamindár, said—"As most of us have already paid the cess, it will not do to prevent the rest from paying it. In what precise way, then, should we vex the landlord?"

*Kálamánik.* "In my opinion, the best mode would be to deliver by one stroke Mother Earth of so heavy a burden as the wretch whom we call our rájá. I could undertake by one blow of my club to dash out his brains."

*The Old Peasant.* "Mánik Sámanta, I fear you will by your rashness bring all of us into great trouble. Should you kill the jamidár, you will get yourself suspended from the gallows at Vardha-

mána, and some of us will perhaps be imprisoned for life or transported beyond the Black Water.”

*Kálamánik.* “Mánik Sámanta will never do business in such an awkward manner as to imperil either his own life or the lives of his friends. The act will be done, but the hand that will do it will not be seen.”

*The Old Peasant.* “My son—I am old enough to be your father—dismiss such a horrid thought from your mind; do not imbrue your hand in the blood of a fellow-creature. The gods will punish him. It is not for us to anticipate the decree of fate. We should content ourselves with giving him all sorts of petty annoyances.”

*Kálamánik.* “But have you heard that I have personally given mortal offence to the jamidár? He sent for me through Hanumán Sing, and I refused to go.”

*The Old Peasant.* “What did he send for you for? Did Hanumán Sing not tell you the reason why you had been called?”

*Kálamánik.* “No reason was given, and it was therefore I refused to go. But I know the reason why. Some mischievous fellow, some tale-bearer,

must have reported to either the jamidár or the divána, what I said the other night at Kuvera's shop. I am supposed to be the ringleader; and the creator of disaffection."

*The Old Peasant.* "You were quite right in refusing to go. If you had gone you would perhaps have been dishonoured. You might have been beaten with shoes or imprisoned."

*Kálamánik.* "Ah well! let me see. If my name be Mánik Sámanta, the jamidár will have to rue his treatment of Govinda."

The Águri husbandmen of Kánchanpur, however, did not determine upon the mode in which they should wreak vengeance on the zamindár. But Kálamánik seemed to revolve some scheme in his mind. From the next day he seldom went to work in the field, but was seen to go about much in the neighbouring villages. Not unfrequently he left Kánchanpur early in the morning, long before sunrise, and returned at night. Govinda could not but notice this circumstance, but as Kálamánik kept quiet when questioned about the matter, he thought it proper not to make any further inquiry.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

FIRE ! FIRE !

Why flames yon summit—why shoot to the blast  
Those embers, like stars from the firmament cast ?—  
'Tis the fire-shower of ruin.

*Campbell.*

ONE night when Govinda and the women were fast asleep, and when Kálamánik lay half-awake on his bed, tossing from side to side, partly on account of the sultry heat of the weather, and partly on account of the bite of that little creature (the *Cimex lectularius*) which infests in shoals the dormitories of poor people in Bengal as in England, but whose inodorous name in vernacular Anglo-Saxon we dare not mention in this history, in the event of some English lady honouring it with a perusal—I say when Kálamánik was in this state,

his half-drowsy ears were assailed by the loud barkings of the house-dog Bághá. As Bághá was not in the habit of setting up such a loud howl at the dead of night, Kálamánik thought it strange; and the idea suddenly crossed his mind that some burglar might be, with a view to theft, making a hole in the wall of the big hut where the valuables of the house were deposited. Finding that the barking was becoming louder and louder, he got up from his bed, took in his hand his bamboo-club which stood in a corner, opened the door, and went softly and slowly into the lane behind the huts. Scarcely had he entered the lane when two men rushed past him in great haste, and ran away with as great speed as their heels could carry them. One of these men he distinctly recognized—for the moon was still in the heavens though not far from the horizon—to be Bhima Katál, 'the head of the zamindár's band of club-men. Kálamánik called out and said, "Bhime! Bhime! Thief! Thief." But at that dead hour of night no one responded to the call, as all his neighbours were asleep. He at first thought of pursuing the two men, but finding they

had already gone a great distance alongside the tank far into the mango-grove, he gave up the idea, and went round to the back-side of the big hut to see whether any hole had been bored. On going to the south-east corner, he found to his horror that the thatch was on fire. His first thought was to save the lives of Govinda, of his wife and children, who were all sleeping in the very hut the thatch of which was blazing. He rushed back into the house, knocked at the door of the big hut with his club, at the same time bawling out with all his might, "Govinda! Govinda! get up! get up! fire! fire! the house is on fire!" Govinda, startled with the loud noise at the door, and the crackling noise of the thatch overhead, was on his feet in a moment, wakened his wife, and rushed out of the room with their children in their arms. Kálamánik rushed into the room, and seizing with both hands whatever clothes and other valuables he could find, brought them out into the open yard. He then ran towards the huts of his neighbours, and raised the cry of "Fire! fire! get up, neighbours!" Having succeeded in rousing some of his neighbours, he, before their

arrival, rushed back into the house, and ordered Govinda, who by this time had scarcely realised the horror of his situation, to bring *kalsis* of water from the tank which, as the reader knows, lay near the house, while he himself went up to the thatched roof of the big hut, part of which was blazing with fire. When Govinda brought the first *kalsi* of water, some of the neighbours arrived and assisted in the work of putting water on that part of the hut which the fire had not yet reached. One of these neighbours stood at the *ghút* of the tank and filled the *kalsi* with water; it was then carried by a relay of men from shoulder to shoulder to the top of the bamboo ladder where Govinda was standing. Govinda put the *kalsi* into the hands of Kálamánik, who poured it over the thatch. *Kalsi* after *kalsi* of water was in this manner brought and poured on the thatch. But the attempt to save a part of the hut was in vain. The fire had spread itself to the highest part, which is the middle of the thatch, and, in spite of the frequent effusion of water, was making rapid progress. Kálamánik was obliged to come down from the thatch, and resign the hut to the

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flames. Lest the other huts should take fire, they were copiously watered in the manner we have described. The bullocks and the cows were taken out of the cow-house, and put at as great a distance as possible from the fire, for it is looked upon as a great sin if any member of the bovine species is allowed to be burnt; indeed, the penance which a householder has to submit to in the event of such a catastrophe is far severer than the penance he has to submit to if his wife or children are consumed in the flames. In the meantime, the whole of the big hut, which was the best, was on fire. The smoke ascended far into the heavens; the light which the blazing hut produced, lit up half the village; the sounds of "*phut, phut, doom, doom,*" which the burning bamboos and palmyra-beams sent forth, were heard from a great distance. The news of the fire was carried to every part of the village, and people from all directions came running to see the spectacle. All of them expressed much lip-sympathy, but few lent a helping hand. Agni, the god of fire, was, however, satisfied with consuming one hut, and the conflagration was stayed. Govinda,

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Kálamánik, and the other members of the little household, spent the remaining hours of the night in the open yard in front of the fire yet blazing. They had the company of a few sympathising friends like Nanda the blacksmith, Kapila the carpenter, Madan the grocer, Padma Lochan, Govinda's father-in-law, and a few other Águris. They had not succeeded in saving anything excepting those few articles which Kálamánik had brought out. Whatever valuable things they had—and they were certainly very few—were burnt, including of course all the papers and documents belonging to the family. Kálamánik told them the events of the night, how the dog barked, how he got out of his room suspecting a burglar was at his work, how he had met Bhima Kotál, the zamindár's head *láthiál*, and another, how they ran away, and the rest. All came to the conclusion that the hut had been set on fire by Bhima Kotál, doubtless at the bidding of the zamindár. Next morning Kálamánik went to the *Phándidár*, or police-constable of the village, informed him that his big hut had been reduced to ashes, and that Bhima Kotál was the incendiary. Bhima Kotál was sent for

by the constable. Bhima's wife sent word that her husband was away a couple of days at his father-in-law's house, which was in a village five miles distant, and that he had not yet returned. Khoda Bux, the village *Pháñḍidár*, asked Kálamánik how he reconciled his own statement with the fact that Bhima was not in the village the last two days; but he and other *Águris* who were with him maintained that Bhima was certainly in the village yesterday, and that his wife's statement was false. The next morning Bhima returned to Kánchanpur, for he had certainly been away after setting Govinda's house on fire; an investigation was held by the *Pháñḍidár*, and it was deposed by more than a dozen witnesses amongst the zamindár's retainers that Bhima was not in the village the last three days, and witnesses from Bhima's father-in-law's village for the last two days; the *Pháñḍidár* therefore dismissed the case, and, at the bidding of the zamindár, did not send any report of it to the Daroga of Mantresvar, his official superior. Most inhabitants of the village, however, notwithstanding this investigation, believed that poor Govinda's house

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had been set on fire by Bhima Sardár by the order of the zamindár. The indignation of the Águris was roused still more than ever, and Kálamánik, gnashing his teeth in anger, thirsted for vengeance.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE MAHÁJAN.

Go with me to a notary ; seal me there  
Your single bond ; and, in a merry sport,  
If you repay me not on such a day,  
In such a place, such sum or sums as are  
Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit  
Be nominated for an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

*The Merchant of Venice.*

How to reconstruct the best hut, reduced to ashes by the zamindár, now formed the great subject of Govinda's anxiety. The walls only were standing ; the straw-thatch, the bamboo frame-work, the palmyra posts and beams, had been all burnt down. The cost of erecting such a cottage—and cottages in the Vardhamána district are probably better built than those of other districts in the country—including the

raising of the walls, could be hardly less than one hundred rupees; but, as the walls and the flooring remained intact, the roofing and the palmyra supports would alone cost about fifty or sixty rupees. Whence could Govinda get such a large sum? In his money-box—for he had a small wooden box, of about the length of a span—there was hardly anything, excepting perhaps one rupee and a few *payasá*, as it is reckoned ominous to keep the money-box quite empty. A peasant, however well-to-do, and Govinda was confessedly poor, has no ready money at any time, all his silver being in the shape of ornaments, on the persons of his wife and children. A ráiyat's wealth consists almost wholly in his *marái* of paddy, *pálai* of straw, and in his cows and bullocks. In all cases of pecuniary difficulty, the ráiyat's only resource is the iron chest of his *maháján*, that is, by way of eminence, the "great man"—the man of all men in the village, who gives help to the distressed husbandman in the hour of his need. We have selected for the motto of this chapter, the words of Shylock; but the reader must not suppose that all mahájans of Bengal are as hard-hearted and inhuman

as Shakspeare's model Jew. It is true that all mahájans, without exception, take usurious interest, but the husbandman gladly pays it; and we do not believe that, in Bengal at least, the money-lender is so much detested by the peasantry as a portion of the Indian press represents him to be. Indeed, but for the good offices of the mahájan, many a Bengal ráiyat would have to cool his heels in the cells of some prison-house. The very next day after his house had been burnt down, Govinda paid a visit to his mahájan, who lived at no great distance from the smithy of Kuvera.

Golaka Poddár, for that was the name of Govinda's mahájan, was by caste a *Suvarna vanika*, that is, the banker caste, though of a lower order than that to which the Malliks of Calcutta, and the Láhás, Silas and Mandals of Chinsurah belong. He was not a *svarnakára*, or goldsmith, by caste, though his chief business was to make gold and silver ornaments; and he had the reputation of being the best ornament-maker for many miles round. But he was a master-goldsmith, having under him a number of workmen whom he superintended. He also bought

and sold ingots of gold and silver. He lent money on mortgage of silver and gold ornaments, or on interest. He had a shop in the town of Vardhamána in the immediate precincts of the Mahárája's palace, where business was carried on by two of his sons. The people all declared that Golaka Poddár was the richest man in the village, though nobody would have thought so from the sort of house in which he dwelt or from his style of living. His house was, certainly, surrounded by a high brick-wall, the top of which was stuck with broken pieces of bottle, to make it difficult for thieves and robbers to climb; but there was not on the premises a single brick-built room; there were only several cottages of mud thatched with straw, though, it must be admitted the frame-work was of superior workmanship. He spent so little upon himself and his family, performed so few religious ceremonies requiring some outlay of money, bestowed so little charity on either Brahmanas or beggars, that he was looked upon as a miser of the first water; and his name was never pronounced of a morning by anyone, lest the unhappy pronouncer should be deprived that day of his dinner

for having taken on his lips so unlucky a name. Nevertheless, Golaka Poddár was a most respectable man; he never cheated any one, and was honest and upright in his dealings.

When Govinda entered his maháján's house, he saw Golaka sitting on a mat on the verandah of a neat cottage, with a touch-stone in his hand, and a piece of gold which he was rubbing against it, in order to ascertain its quality. He was dressed in a simple *dhuti*, the upper part of his body being quite naked. He looked like a man more than fifty years old; his chest was largely covered with hair; he had spectacles on; and his hair was mottled grey. Raising his head and taking off his spectacles, he looked at Govinda and said—"Well, Sámanta, what's the news? I am sorry to hear that your big cottage was burnt last night. Has the whole of it been burnt, or only a part of it?"

*Govinda.* "The whole, Poddár *mahásaya*. Not a bit is remaining. It is all ashes."

*Golaka.* "Who could have done such a wicked deed?"

*Govinda.* "What shall I say, sir? The poor

are always oppressed. My uncle saw Bhima Koṭál running away towards the mango-grove in the company of another man, immediately after the fire had taken effect."

*Golaka.* "Bhima Koṭál! and did you inform the *Pháñḍidár* of it?"

*Govinda.* "Yes, Uncle did. But you know very well, the *Pháñḍidár* is in the palm of the *jamidár's* hand. The *jamidár's* people came and gave witness that Bhime was that night and two days before in his father-in-law's village five miles distant; so the case was hushed up, and no report of it was sent to the *Dárogá* of Mantresvar. Poor people never get justice."

*Golaka.* "Aye! aye! So it is, *Sámanta*. It is a wicked world. I have seen enough in my day. That is one reason, *Sámanta*, why I have taken no lands for cultivation; I do not wish to come in contact with any *jamidár*."

*Govinda.* "You, sir, can afford not to rent land, as you have plenty of gold and silver. But what are we husbandmen to do? Land is our life."

*Golaka.* "True. What is to be done now?"

*Govinda.* “Nothing, so far as punishing the burner of the house is concerned. But the hut must be thatched again. And who is to befriend me on this occasion except yourself? You are really my *annadátá*—the giver of rice.”

*Golaká.* “Sámanta! You already owe me a considerable sum of money, and though I never have had recourse to the law-courts for recovering my money in any case, yet you must pay back the money to me soon. How can you afford to borrow more money?”

*Govinda.* “But if I don’t borrow, how can I get on? Shall my wife and children sleep at night in the open air? If you don’t give me money the house cannot be built.”

*Golaka.* “Well, let me see; how much do you want?”

*Govinda.* “Less than sixty *tákás* will not do.”

*Golaka.* “Sixty *tákás*! What do you want such a large sum for? The walls must be all there, the flooring is there, and perhaps some of the posts; and you must have plenty of straw in your *pálai*; and then, near the tank, you have some clumps of

bamboo. Thirty *tákás* will, I think, be quite sufficient."

*Govinda.* "Not one cowrie less than sixty *tákás*. All the posts have been reduced to ashes; the straw in the *pálai* is barely sufficient for the cows and bullocks; and as for the clumps of bamboos near the tank, there is not in them one single bamboo fit for building purposes, they are all young and unseasoned."

*Golaka.* "I can give you the money, certainly; but what I am thinking of is that the interest of the former debt, added to the interest of the present debt, will make a large sum and press heavily on you. You must, of course, pay interest at the rate of two *payasá* per *táká* a month."

*Govinda.* "Of course, the interest will be heavy. But there is no medicine for this disease: I must somehow bear it."

Golaka Poddár brought out a piece of paper, wrote on it a regular receipt, which was signed by Govinda as well as by two workmen as witnesses. The silver was then counted out.

On receiving the money Govinda and Kálamánik

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immediately set to work. Palm trees were bought and cut ; bamboos were brought from a village several miles distant, were slit, and turned into *bákháris*. In these and other operations Govinda and Kálamánik were materially assisted by Nanda the blacksmith, and Kapila the carpenter ; the former doing gratuitously all the necessary iron-work in the shape of nails, hooks, &c., and the latter preparing the palmyra posts, the beams, and rafters. .

## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE VILLAGE GROG-SHOP.

Pass where we may, through city or through town,  
Village, or hamlet, of this merry land,  
Though lean and beggared, every twentieth pace  
Conducts the unguarded nose to such a whiff  
Of stale debauch, forth issuing from the styes  
That law has licensed, as makes Temperance reel.

*Cowper.*

SOME days after Govinda's big hut had been reduced to ashes, Babu Jaya Chánd Raya Chaudhuri was sitting in his Cutcherry, or rather half sitting, half lying down, his elbows resting on a huge bolster, and smoking, by means of one of those monstrous pipes called snakes, "which extended long and large, lay floating many a rood;" when Jaya Chánd was sitting in this interesting position, surrounded by the pomp and circumstance of landlordism, by his

divána, his gomasta, and mohurirs; Bhima Sardár, the captain of his clubmen, stood in front of the room, and made a profound bow. Jaya Chánd raised his head a little, took off the snake from his mouth, and said, "Well, Bhima Sardár, what's the news?"

*Bhim.* "Maháráj! everything is right. In Mahárája's dominions nothing can go wrong."

*Jaya.* "You managed the thing rather neatly, the other night. But you were almost caught, and if the fellow had once seized you, it would have been all over with you; for the rascal is not only as black but as strong as Yama."

*Bhim.* "That fellow catch me! Maháráj, by your blessing I have strength enough to fight alone and unaided with half-a-dozen fellows like him."

*Jaya.* "Ah, well, I don't know about that; you are exaggerating your strength. That fellow must be stronger than you. If you are Bhim, he is Arjjuna. However, you did your work successfully. You deserve some *bakshish* (reward)."

*Bhim.* "Maháráj! everything I have is your lordship's. In your lordship I live and eat and drink. What more could I expect?"

Jaya Chánd ordered the treasurer to give to Bhim Sardár two rupees. As the treasurer threw the rupees on the floor, the zamindár said to the Sardár, "Take that *túká*, and enjoy yourself with your companions." The Sardár made another profound bow, repeating the words, "Ráma, Ráma! Maháráj," and went away.

Leaving Jaya Chánd and his ministers to their confabulations, with the reader's permission, we will accompany the Sardár and see how he and his friends enjoy themselves. He, along with about a dozen of his companions, went to a grocer's shop and bought some quantities of *mudí*, *mudki*, *bátás*, *phut-kalái*, and *pátáli*, and went towards the tank Krishna Ságara, below the high embankment of which lay the only grog-shop in the village.

I suppose there were grog-shops in the country before its occupation by the British, but there is no doubt that the increase of drunkenness in the land is chiefly owing to the operation of the *Ábkári* system of the Government. That three thousand years ago the Aryan settlers in India were, as may be inferred from the *Rigveda*, hard drinkers and

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staunch beef-eaters, is probably true, but it is equally true that the inhabitants of India have been for centuries the soberest people in the world; and it is sad to think that amongst this remarkably temperate people drunkenness should be introduced and extended by the foremost Christian nation in the world. It is all very well to say that the excise on spirits, which it is the office of the *Ábkári* Department to collect, has a tendency to repress and not to increase the sale of spirits, as it makes them dearer than before; but anyone who is acquainted with the working of that department must be aware that the practice belies the theory. The aim of the *Ábkári*, like that of every other branch of the fiscal service, is to increase the public revenue; but the revenue from spirits cannot be increased without an increase in their sale. It is therefore the aim of all *Ábkári* officers to establish as many grog-shops as they can in the country. To this State interference we owe it that there are at this moment, in the year of grace 1871, more grog-shops in the country than it ever had since it was upheaved from the universal ocean. Now every

village almost has a grog-shop, and the larger villages more than one; though things were not in so bad a state in those days when the scene of this story is laid as at present.

But to proceed. Bhim Sardár and his dozen friends went to the grog-shop, which was a small mud hut thatched with straw. They sat on the ground and ordered some *kalsis* of an intoxicating liquid called *dhenó*, prepared from *dhún*, that is, paddy. In those days no European wines, spirits, or liquors could be had in the village grog-shop. Only two sorts were sold, one prepared from treacle, and the other from paddy. The spirit distilled from treacle was rather dear for the poorest classes, who alone drank, as it was sold about eight annas or a shilling a bottle; whereas *dhenó*, or, as it used to be jocosely called, *dhányesvari* (that is, the goddess of paddy), which is simple fermented paddy and water, a gallon could be had for a trifle. A large *hañdi* of *dhányesvari*, which is as much as any human stomach can contain, was sold for one *payasá*, which is a little less than a halfpenny. The thirteen clubmen, including Bhima Sardár himself, sat in a row

on the floor on their feet, without their bodies touching the ground, lifting up their heads and keeping their mouths open, as if they were going to catch the rain. The *sunḍi* (wine-seller), with a *kalsi* of *dhánesvari* in his hand, approached them, and into the open mouth of the first person in the row he poured as much liquid as he wished to drink. In this manner the whole company, thirteen in number, were served. After all had had a drink, they opened their store of provisions, which consisted of *mudḍi* and *mudḍki*, *bátúsa*, *phut-kalái*, and *pátáli*, and fell upon them with the utmost fury. The *mudḍi* and *mudḍki* were in such large quantities that when put on a piece of cloth on the floor they made a hillock. But in a short time the whole was demolished. As they ate the *phut-kalái* they became very jolly, and cracked many a joke; some of them rolled on the mud floor, and thus gave unmistakable signs of intoxication. After the provisions had been all demolished, they again called for *dhányesvari*, and the *sunḍi* again served them in the manner I have already described, pouring into their upraised throats as much of the liquid as they wanted.

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They now prepared their hookahs and smoked tobacco,

Sooty retainer to the vine,  
Bacchus' black servant, negro fine.

With hookah in hand, some half-tipsy, and some entirely so, they left the grog shop, and passed through the village, dancing and wild with merriment. I have heard it said by some of the inhabitants of Kánchanpur, that of an evening respectable Bráhmans of the village sometimes visited the grog-shop. I believe the statement is true, but still there is no doubt that the grog-shop was visited mainly by the lowest class of inhabitants, a class lower than that to which our hero belonged.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE INDIGO-PLANTER OF DURGÁNAGAR.

He finds his fellow guilty of a skin  
Not coloured like his own ; and having power  
T'enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause  
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey.

*The Task.*

THE reader will perhaps recollect that, a long time ago, we left the little family of Durgánagar, giving his first rice to the infant Yádava, the son of Mád-hava ; since then no noteworthy event had happened, excepting that Málati once paid a visit to Kán-chanpur on the occasion of the celebration of the usual purificatory rites, which, amongst the Sudras, always take place one month after the death of an individual. When she first heard of her father's dangerous illness, she was anxious to come to Kán-chanpur, but her mother-in-law dissuaded her from the

journey; when subsequently the tidings of her father's death reached her, she hastened to her native village to be present at the purification. Her stay, however, had been short; and she had returned again to her own house at Durgánagar, of course walking all the way on foot, as her husband was too poor to pay for a *pálki*, the only vehicle used by the wealthier classes in the country, where the roads—where there are such—are in such a state, that no four-wheeled carriage can possibly pass on them. Mádhava and Málati, the most affectionate couple at Durgánagar, were happy in each other's company, but as no earthly state is susceptible of unalloyed happiness, each had a cross to bear. The crook in Málati's lot, as the reader knows, was the unhappy temperament of her mother-in-law, who, true to her name, was every hour of the day distilling nectar, in the shape of cross words, rebukes, threats, and ill-natured language of every sort, to the never-ending torment of Málati and Kádambini. These nectarine outbursts could be tolerated if they were occasional, but the Wise man's saying was realized in Sudhámukhi, that, "a continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a con-

tentious woman are alike;” and poor Málati felt with the said Wise man that, “it was better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.” And to the wilderness she would have fled, or would have, like Áduri, turned a Vaishnaví, if she had not been either a wife or a mother; but her conjugal and maternal ties chained her to her homestead, made, however, uncomfortable by the ebullition of an unhappy temper. The crook in Mád hava’s lot was of quite a different sort; it consisted in his relation to the indigo planter of Nildángá.

Nildángá (that is, the “Field of Indigo”) was not, properly speaking, a village, as it consisted only of an indigo factory, together with scores of huts, in which dwelt the Buná coolies (chiefly the natives of Chota Nagpore, and the Sonthal Pergunahs) who worked in the factory. The residence of the planter was a fine-looking house, with an immense compound, in which there was a beautiful avenue of the stately fir, introduced into the country since its occupation by the English. In front of it there was the factory properly so called, where were carried on the complicated

operations of indigo manufacture. Round about the factory, but at some distance, stood miserable huts, in which lived the Buná coolies of whom we have spoken. The planter was an English gentleman of the name of John Murray, who, though not the proprietor of the factory, was its manager and superintendent, the factory itself being the property of the East India indigo concern, one of the richest indigo joint-stock companies in the lower provinces, and which supplied the English market with the largest quantity of the blue dye. As the ráiyats of Bengal find it difficult to pronounce English names aright, they generally lengthen and widen them agreeably to the genius of their mother tongue, and make them correspond to some Bengali names or sounds. By this interesting process, Campbell is turned into *Kambal* (a blanket); Larmour into *Lál Mohana* (a sort of Bengali sweetmeat); Sibbald into *Subol* (a Bengali personal name); Saunders into *Sandes* (a sweetmeat); Brown into *Varuna* (the Neptune of the Hindu Pantheon); Maskelyne into *Maskil* (trouble); and Baldwin into *balad* (that is, a bull). Agreeably to this system of metamorphosis—each instance of

which is as remarkable as any sung by Ovid—Mr. Murray, the planter, was called *Mári*, which in Bengali means either flogging or the plague. And, truly, when we consider the relation in which Mr. Murray stood to hundreds of the peasantry in the neighbouring villages, we think he merited the cognomen, for he was constantly in the habit of beating refractory coolies and ráiyats with a sort of cat-o'-nine-tails, which he christened under the name of *gadádhar*, or the *club-wielder*. He was, for this and other reasons, looked upon as the plague or the pestilence. Mr. Murray, though a young man of about thirty-five years of age, had a sunburnt complexion, for he was constantly out in the fields inspecting the plantations. Early in the morning—that is to say about seven o'clock—he had his *chhotá házri* (breakfast), which consisted of a cup of tea, a slice of bread, and a half-boiled egg; mounted on his Bucephalus, and rode many a mile, with his inseparable companion, *gadádhar*, in his right hand. He did not return home till about ten o'clock, when he held a sort of court, hearing petitions from coolies and ráiyats, and giving decisions on them.

At about one o'clock he had his breakfast, properly so called, when he consumed quantities of claret and brandy. In the afternoon he again rode out, more for pleasure than for business, and had his dinner at about eight at night. It is also certain that he compelled unwilling ráiyats to take contracts for indigo, forcibly seized the lands of poor and helpless husbandmen, and sowed them with indigo seed, burnt the houses of many, imprisoned them in his factories, and employed his *láthiáls* (club-men) to plunder villages. And yet if anyone saw and conversed with Mr. Murray, it was difficult to believe that he could be capable of such acts. He was a gentleman of good family and of some education. His manners, especially to Europeans, were exceedingly pleasing. He kept an open table, and his hospitality to Europeans was proverbial. He paid a monthly subscription of ten rupees to an English school established in a neighbouring village for the education of native youth; he had a large medicine chest out of which he used to deal out freely quinine and other drugs to the sick people of the villages, and his name, I believe, has been found in the subscription lists of

the Tract and Bible Societies, and even in the reports of one or two missionary societies carrying on their operations in Bengal. How all this tallies with his barbarous inhumanity towards the peasantry, his oppressive measures, and his acts of spoliation, I do not pretend to understand, but there is no doubt that both these classes of facts are true; and it is the business of a philosopher — not of a matter-of-fact historian like myself—to reconcile them. Mádhava's father, Kesáva, had in an evil hour taken *dádan*, as it is called, that is, advance-money, from Mr. Murray, for cultivating indigo in his fields, and ever since, he had been supplying the factory with many cart-loads of the plant every year, till the day of his death. He often tried to get out of the muddle, but that was impossible. Whoever once touched the indigo planter's advance, became a slave for evermore. Somehow or other, whatever quantities of the indigo plant Kesáva gave in at the factory every year, he always remained a debtor to the planter. For the debt of one year he was obliged to sow indigo the next year, and the sowing went on every year simply because the debt was never cleared. A ráiyat's debt

to the planter descends from generation to generation. No matter what heaps of the indigo plant the ráiyat brings into the factory, the debt has the singular faculty of never getting cleared off. Agreeably to this self-perpetuating faculty of the factory 'debt, Mád hava felt himself bound hand and foot to the planter. Though he hated the name of indigo, yet sow he must, as against his name in the factory books there was the everlasting debt. He would have gladly paid off the debt in the shape of money, in order to rid himself of the incubus. But the planter would not receive it. The debt was not an ordinary one, which could be paid off by specie; it was advance-money—originally it was so with Mád hava's father—and must be paid off by so many bundles of the indigo plant; and as Mád hava's bundles of the plant which he raised in his own fields had the singular faculty, when taken to the factory, of never coming up to the prescribed measure and quality, his debt went on increasing and increasing, till it became something considerable for so poor a peasant as he was. The planter, like the Old Man of the Sea in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, never

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left those upon whose shoulders he had once got up till he ruined them. Before concluding this chapter, however, it is as well to remark that we do not regard every Bengal ráiyat as a saint, and every indigo-planter as a blue devil. Some planters are benevolently disposed, but the system which they follow, being pernicious in the extreme, is sufficient to convert the gentlest of human beings into ferocious tigers, unless, indeed, they choose to bring ruin upon themselves. And even more than this. There are some indigo-planters in Bengal who are not only not hated by their ráiyats, but loved by them, and looked up to as their *Ma-báp*, that is, *mother and father*. But the planters of whom we speak are not Europeans, neither are they natives. They are rich East Indian gentlemen—they are confined to the district of Purneah—not birds of passage, like the Europeans, whose only object is to make money and then run away to merry England as fast as steam can carry them; but men born and bred in the country, and who purpose also to be buried in it. They are kind to their ráiyats, and their ráiyats look up to them as benefactors. Such planters—alas, that their race is

dying out!—are like the better sorts of zamindárs. And as for the ráiyats, no doubt some are dishonest, trying to evade cultivating indigo after taking advances, and sometimes taking advances from two planters, if they be sufficiently near each other, for the same crop. But making every allowance for the dishonesty of the ráiyat, there is not the slightest doubt that a fearful amount of injustice and oppression has been exercised upon the helpless cultivator by the powerful indigo-planter.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### THE ADVANCES.

And from his coffers  
Receive the golden earnest of our death.

*King Henry V.*

THERE are two systems of indigo-planting, the *nijábád* and the *ráiyati*. In the former, the planter cultivates the plant on his own lands, of which he is either the zamindár or which he has taken on lease from a zamindár; and in the latter, he gives advance of money to the ráiyat on condition that he should cultivate the plant on his own lands and sell it to the planter at the factory rate. In the *nijábád* system there is not much room for oppression, for the planter cultivates the plant on his own land by his own men and at his own cost; and if there be any oppression, it is not extended to the peasantry,

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but is confined to his own servants and coolies. The *ráiyati* system is the fruitful mother of innumerable evils. In this system the ráiyat enters into a contract, in which he stipulates to supply the planter in the season of manufacture with a certain quantity of the plant at fixed rates, and obtains advance of money in order to help him in the cultivation. No doubt there are cases in which dishonest ráiyats, after receiving the advance, do not produce the plant at the proper time; but these cases are few and far between, owing chiefly to the fact that the planter is infinitely more powerful than a single ráiyat or a number of ráiyats, and can maintain his rights by law or by force. It is the ráiyats who suffer most. The contracts are very generally forced upon ráiyats who are unwilling to take them. To the English reader this may appear strange, but it is a simple fact; and it will not appear strange when we consider that the peasantry of Bengal are weak and spiritless, and are unable to resist the all but omnipotent planter. The unwillingness of the ráiyats to take contracts for the indigo plant arises from the fact that indigo cultivation is not remunerative to

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the ráiyat. It exhausts the soil more than other crops. The rate at which the ráiyat is paid for the indigo-plant which he cultivates is, though nominally just, in reality ruinous. When the husbandman takes his plant to the factory, it is measured by an officer of the planter called *ojandár*, or weigher, or rather measurer. This officer is provided with an iron chain six feet long, which he puts round the girth of the plant, and whatever quantity of the plant this chain encloses is, in the language of the factory, called a *bundle*. The *bundle* is six feet not only in girth but also in length, and as generally, unless in an exceptionally good season, the plant does not attain the requisite length, it is placed on the ground and put end to end with the stalks outwards, and the whole is pressed with the utmost force of the measurer, who is selected for the strength of his arms. The ráiyat who measured the plant in his own field and found it to be, say, six bundles, finds to his astonishment at the factory that it has become reduced by the Procrustean process to which it is subjected to only two bundles. He wrings his hand in despair; he weeps. But there is no help for it.

The *ojandúr* has found it to be only two bundles. At this rate the ráiyat, of course, is never able to produce his full tale of the plant, and is accordingly put down in the planter's books as a debtor by the difference. This happens every year, and the debt is ever on the increase.

One day towards the end of March, Mádhava was ploughing his field, when Mr. Murray in the course of his morning ride made his appearance, and stood under a tree which was not far off. Mádhava immediately put the plough into the hands of his companion, and advancing towards the planter, made a profound bow after the Hindu fashion, that is, bending down his head and touching the forehead with joined hands.

“Well, Mádhava,” said the planter, “I see your land is ready for sowing. Are you going to sow indigo in this field?” “Hazúr,” said Mádhava, “if I sow indigo, what will my family eat? I have prepared this field for paddy, but if indigo be sown in it, I shall be without food.” “You don't mean to say you are not going to sow indigo! You must come and take advance to-morrow! besides, you owe

me some money. As long as that debt is not discharged you must cultivate indigo.”

“*Khodáwand!* I will pay my debt in silver. What can I do? I will borrow the sum from the *mahájan* and pay *Hazúr.*”

“Pay your debt to the factory in silver! Who ever heard of such a thing? I suppose *Nava Krishna Banerjea* has been tampering with you.”

“*Gurrib Purwar!* no one has been telling me anything. I find that by cultivating indigo I only lose; I do not get any profit, and my granary of paddy remains empty.”

“By cultivating indigo you only lose! Who has put this bright idea into your head? Your father cultivated indigo for me every year; he never lost anything by it; you have become wiser than your father! I find a great many husbandmen of this village are refusing to take advance. There must be meaning in all this. The wicked *zamindár* must be at the bottom of it all. I must teach you all and the *zamindár* a lesson. You must come to the factory to-morrow and take advance. If you do not, you will feel the consequence.”

“Khodáwand! forgive me this year. I am unable to obey Hazúr’s order.”

“Take care, fool, what you do; don’t be led away by the evil counsels of designing men. Come and take advance, and cultivate indigo.”

“Excuse me, Khodáwand! this year I will pay Hazúr in cash. Have pity upon me, O Incarnation of Justice, and grant my petition!”

“You are a great fool, Mádhava! You are rushing headlong into destruction with your eyes open. I tell you, when I am angry with you, no *sálá* (wife’s brother), not even the zamindár, will be able to protect you.”

“I know Hazúr is omnipotent, like the gods. Who is able to contend against Hazúr? How can I make Hazúr angry, and live? Have mercy upon an innocent man.”

“You an innocent man! I believe you are the ringleader of all the malcontents of this village. You have been dissuading them from taking advance, and the zamindár has been promising to support you. But I shall see who supports you.”

“Khodáwand, I never dissuaded any one from

taking advance. I am too insignificant a person to have any influence upon other people. I look upon Hazúr as my protector. I pray Hazúr will be pleased to grant my humble petition."

"Your petition cannot be granted. You are a dishonest fellow. You owe money to the factory, and you now refuse to sow indigo. But I will see to it that you do sow indigo in your field."

"Khodáwand! be pleased to consider that the debt, properly speaking, is my father's, and I am quite willing to pay it in full in silver."

"You are very kind! Dare you say that you are not bound to cultivate indigo for the factory, when your name is in the factory books as a debtor? If you say that again, you will get something on your back immediately. Now, listen. Come to the factory to-morrow and take advance. If you do not, your ruin is certain; and not only your ruin, but the ruin of all the *sálás* of this village who refuse to sow indigo. Now, remember what I have just now said. You know Murray Saheb means to do what he says."

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“Hazúr!—” Mád hava was going to say something, when Mr. Murray, turning his horse’s head, said, “No more words; no more of your impertinence!” and cantered off.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### THE ZAMINDÁR OF DURGÁNAGAR.

He is a noble gentleman ; withal  
Happy in 's endeavours ; the general voice  
Sounds him for courtesy, behaviour, language,  
And every fair demeanour an example :  
Titles of honour add not to his worth,  
Who is himself an honour to his title.

*Ford.*

THE reader will have gathered, from the conversation between Mr. Murray and Mádhava that several peasants in the village of Durgánagar had refused to take advances for cultivating indigo in their fields. As such refusal on the part of poor and spiritless ráiyats was quite unusual, at least in those days, Mr. Murray was right in supposing that they had been promised support by the zamindár. The fact is, the village of Durgánagar was the property of the

Banerjeas, or Banđujes as they were called, a wealthy zamindár family of Dakshinpalli, a large village situated on the Bhágirathi a few miles distant. The old zamindár, who had joggled on well with Mr. Murray, had lately died, and his son now managed the property. This young man, Nava Krishna Banerjea by name, was quite different from his father. His father belonged to the old school, had received no English education, and was somewhat loose in his principles. He cared not for the welfare of his ráiyats, and therefore did not interfere with the indigo-planter in his tyrannical career. He felt that Mr. Murray was a powerful planter, having scores of club-men under him, and that he was in high favour with the Deputy Magistrate, the Magistrate, and the Collector of the district, who sometimes partook of his hospitality; he therefore took care not to quarrel with him. Nava Krishna, on the other hand, was not unacquainted with English; he had studied for some years in the *Hindoo College* of Calcutta, and become animated with liberal and patriotic sentiments. From his childhood he had heard and seen a good deal of the oppression exercised by Mr. Murray and

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his predecessor at Nildángá on his father's own ráiyats, and often regretted that his father did not afford them sufficient protection. The histories of Greece, of Rome, and of England, which he read at College, introduced him to a new world of ideas, and as he grew in years his hatred of the oppressors of the peasantry began to increase. At Debating Societies, which were numerous in those days, he used to denounce the oppression of the indigo-planters, and sometimes sent anonymous letters to the Calcutta newspapers praying for justice to poor and ill-treated ráiyats. After leaving College, he became a member of the British Indian Association in Calcutta, where he used usually to reside, and frequently spoke at its meetings, advocating measures for putting a stop to the oppression of the planters. Nor was he unaware of the oppressive conduct of several zamindárs. He regretted this for the sake of the poor peasantry, and for the sake of the class to which he belonged, as he looked upon those zamindárs as a disgrace to their order. Nava Krishna was, it thus appears, one of those few zamindárs who know the duties attached to their

station, who was actuated by public spirit, who was inspired by liberal and patriotic sentiments, who had sympathy with the down-trodden ráiyats, and who was honourable in all his actions. The number of such zamindárs was very few in those days, but, thanks to the spread of English education in the country, it is daily on the increase. On his accession to the *gadi* he made a general proclamation throughout his estates that there was to be thenceforth an end of all injustice and oppression, so far as he himself was concerned, in his zamindári; that might would not be allowed to prevail over right; that he would protect, to the utmost of his power, all his own ráiyats from the unjust interference of strangers and outsiders; that all *abwábs*, *máthots*, *salámis*, and other cesses, which were illegal, should cease; and that he was determined, according to the measure of his means and ability, to promote the welfare of all his tenants. The accession of Nava Krishna to the landlordry of Dakshinpalli was greeted by the peasantry of the district with an enthusiasm similar to that of the people of Ayodhyá on the consecration of Ráma to the regal office.

The joy of the people knew no bounds. The oldest inhabitants wept through excess of delight when they heard the words of the proclamation. They compared the new zamindár to Ráma the son of Dasaratha; they said that they now had the prospect of dying in peace, leaving their children and grandchildren free from all oppression, and happy in the enjoyment of their rights; and the old women of a hundred villages lifted up their hands towards heaven and blessed the young Rája (for such they styled him) who had now mounted the zamindári throne. Nor was Nava Krishna satisfied with merely issuing a proclamation. He strictly enjoined on all his servants, from the corpulent and well-greased divána to the piyádás, to be just and honourable in all their dealings with the ráiyats, to avoid all unjust demands in the shape of *salámis*, *abwábs*, and *párhanis*; adding at the same time that any of his *amlas* that disobeyed his injunctions would be dismissed from his service at the first offence. The divána, who was an old sinner of the most orthodox type, and who had done no little work in his day in the line of ráiyat oppression, remonstrated against

the impolicy of such a procedure. He represented that lying, knavery, chicanery, and even forgery, were necessary to the successful management of a zamindári, that without such weapons the estate would be a losing concern; and that if his young master persisted in so insane a policy, the zamindári would soon be brought to the Collector's hammer. Nava Krishna remained deaf to these remonstrances, and indeed hinted that if the divána could not manage the estate according to the policy he had adopted, his services might be dispensed with. From this time the divána not only remonstrated no longer, but became loud in the praise of the policy which his master had initiated. The subordinate *amlas* took their cue from the divána, and all seemed apparently to be convinced of the superiority of justice and right over injustice and oppression. But this was not all. Nava Krishna, for the education of his tenants of every description, established several vernacular schools, on the model of Lord Hardinge's schools, in his zamindári, and at Dakshinpalli set up an Anglo-vernacular school, at the head of which he put a class-fellow of his

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in the Hindoo College. He also set up a dispensary for the gratuitous distribution of medicines among his ráiyats, at the head of which establishment he placed a graduate of the Medical College of Calcutta, on a salary of 100 rupees (£10) a month, whose business it was not only to superintend the dispensary, but also to attend professionally to as many sick people as chose to come to that establishment for help. He also wrote to Mr. Murray, the planter, with whom he had formed acquaintance in his youth, a friendly letter, in which he dwelt on the poverty and helplessness of the ráiyats, and urged upon him the equity as well as the good policy of treating them with justice and clemency; and concluded with expressing the hope that his own tenants at any rate would not be compelled, contrary to their wishes, to take advances for sowing indigo on their own fields. It was on this account that Mr. Murray said to Mád hava that he had been encouraged by the zamindár. Such was the zamindár of Dakshin-palli, the representative of a class of Bengal landlords which, I am glad to say, is every day on the increase.

Shortly after the last harvest in December, about forty ráiyats of Durgánagar, including in the number our friend Mádhava, had been to Babu Nava Krishna Banerjea, whose tenants they were, represented to him the utter unprofitableness of indigo cultivation, and the injustice and oppression to which they are invariably subjected, and begged protection from him as their landlord. Amongst those forty there were ráiyats who had been cultivating indigo for a number of years, others who had been the previous year forced to do so, and others still who had not hitherto cultivated the plant, but who had been warned that they must take advances immediately, otherwise they should be subjected to ill usage. There was nothing new in all this to the zamindár, for he was well acquainted with those practices. He warmly took up the cause of the ráiyats, especially as they were his own tenants, with whom the indigo-planter had nothing to do whatever; advised them to decline taking advances to cultivate indigo on their fields if they thought that cultivation was prejudicial to their interests; and offered his willingness to lend any sums of money to those ráiyats who were in debt

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to the planter. It was after this conference with the laird and his tenants that the conversation between Mr. Murray and Mád hava took place, which I have recorded in the preceding chapter.

As Mr. Murray had used threatening language towards the ráiyats of Durgánagar, Nava Krishna thought it necessary to keep a number of men on the spot to prevent the outrage. At the same time he thought it proper to send to the Dárogá of Ság arapur, within whose jurisdiction the village of Durgánagar lay, a representation to the effect that the planter of Nildángá had used threatening language towards the husbandmen of the above-mentioned village, and that a raid upon the ráiyats was highly probable. He further requested the Dárogá, in pursuance of his duty, to prevent the outrage. Having sent this representation to the Tháná (Police Station) he made some preparations and told his men to be on the alert.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### ALL ABOUT INDIGO.\*

Why did all-creating Nature  
Make the plant for which we toil ?  
Sighs must fan it, tears must water,  
Sweat of ours must dress the soil.  
Think ye, masters iron-hearted,  
    Lolling at your jovial boards,  
Think how many backs have smarted  
    For the *gains* your *weed* affords.

*Cowper.*

WHILE Mr. Murray is devising measures for the punishment of the recalcitrant ráiyats of Durgánagar—whose only crime was that they refused to engage in a cultivation which was notoriously dis-

\* For much of the information contained in this chapter, the author is indebted to Mr. Coleworth Grant's elegant treatise, entitled "Rural Life in Bengal."

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advantageous to them—and while Nava Krishna is making preparations for the prevention of any violence upon those ráiyats by the planter, I may take this opportunity to tell the reader all about that wonderful plant, the dye of which is so highly valued in the markets of Europe, and the production of which has been always attended with so large an amount of human suffering.

The indigo plant, which must have been growing in a wild state ever since the upheaval of the Indian continent from the bed of the universal ocean, was hardly turned to any profitable account till English skill was applied to its cultivation and manufacture. There are two ways of cultivating the indigo-plant; *first*, by the ordinary method of cultivation, that is, by ploughing the land and sowing the seed; and *secondly*, by a process called *chhitáni*. In order to explain this second mode, it is necessary to remind the reader that, owing to heavy rains in Bengal, the rivers, whose name is legion, overflow every year, and inundate both banks to some distance. At the end of the rains, when the waters recede and the rivers fall, there is left on the banks, as on those of

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the Nile, a deposit of loam, which is taken advantage of by the Bengal ráiyat. These *chaḍús* (*churs*), as they are called, are ready-made fields, where the seed can be scattered without the preliminary processes of ploughing and harrowing, provided the sowing takes place when the mud is soft. The process is called *chhitáni*, or scattering, since the seed is merely scattered over the mud by the hand, without preparing the ground. Hence the sowing of the *chaḍús* must take place immediately after the receding of the waters, that is to say, in the month of October. The sowings on the ordinary lands cannot take place before the month of February, or March, or even April, long after the paddy crop has been gathered in, the ground ploughed and harrowed, and the early rains, called by Anglo-Indians the *chhotá barsát* (the little rains), have moistened the soil. Though there is an interval of about five months between the two sowings, the crop of both the low and the high lands is reaped nearly at the same time, the harvest of the high lands being gathered, at the utmost, only four or five weeks later than the crop of the low lands; and both the

reapings take place before the heavy rains set in in June or July.

The indigo crop, though it exhausts the powers of the soil, and is in every respect unremunerative to the ráiyat, does not require much labour. Human exertion is hardly necessary, "boon Nature" doing nearly the whole. Two days after it is sown, the seed germinates, and in the course of a week the whole field is covered with an infinite number of plants about half an inch in height. In June the plant becomes about five feet high, when it is considered to be full-grown. It is then cut. In *nijábád* cultivation, the planter cuts his own indigo and brings it to the factory in carts or in boats, according to the situation of the plantations. In *ráiyati* cultivation, the husbandmen, who have taken advances and have cultivated indigo, must cut the plant and carry it to the factory at their own expense. Then begins the process of measuring, which has been described in a previous chapter, and in which so much injustice is done to the poor cultivator.

The plant is next put in the vats. The vats,

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which are solid masonry, are a range of brick buildings, or rather pits, open at the top. They are always in pairs, a higher and a lower series, the higher ones communicating with the lower ones by means of openings which may be stopped with plugs when necessary. The vats are generally twenty-one feet square, with a depth of about three feet and a half. In Mr. Murray's factory at Nil-dángá, which was a large one, there were no less than twelve pairs of vats. The upper vat is now filled with the indigo plant, which must be done soon after it is cut, otherwise it will rot. The plant is then pressed by means of a number of bamboos put upon it. Over these bamboos, at right angles to them, are placed large beams of *sál* wood, which serve further to press down the plant and bring it to a general level.

Then commences the important process of steeping the plant in the vats with water. The water is brought from a river through aqueducts and Chinese pumps, till the plant is completely steeped. It is allowed to remain in this state for about twelve hours. The plug of the upper vat is now

removed, and the liquid, saturated with the colouring matter of the plant, is let off into the lower vat, into which no plant had at all been put. The dead plant, technically called *sithi*, whose colouring essence has mixed with the water, is then removed and spread out to dry; but it is not completely dried till after the lapse of two or three months, when it is stacked, to serve in future the purpose of fuel for the factory boiler and of manure for the fields.

We must now attend to the liquid in the lower vat. It is first subjected to the process of *beating*. A number of men go down into the vat, each furnished with a piece of bamboo about five feet long, flattened at one end, like the oar of a country boat. With these bamboo sticks the blue devils of the vat beat about the liquid in a most picturesque manner, ranging themselves in a variety of positions, putting their bodies into every conceivable posture, and often regaling themselves during the operation with singing in a chorus—the object of the whole being to separate the colouring matter, technically called the *grain*,

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from the liquid. The beating, which lasts usually about two hours, is put a stop to when the grain is found to be separated from the liquid, and ready to precipitate. The liquid is now allowed to rest for two hours, when the grain precipitates and subsides to the bottom of the vat. The water, now separated from the bluish grain, is drawn out of the vat by means of a series of plugs, and carried through an aqueduct into the river. The liquid colouring matter is then carried through another aqueduct, pumped into the boiler, and subjected to the process of ebullition by means of huge furnaces fed with the *sithi* of last year's manufacture. Then follows the process of *straining*, which is effected by means of a monstrously large piece of American sheeting. The thickish liquid is then pressed in a variety of ways, till all the water is drawn out, and the grain formed into solid blocks, which are then cut into cakes. The cakes are next stamped with the name of the factory, and exposed to dry in a room furnished with bamboo shelves. They take about three months in drying; after which the cakes, weighing eight ounces each,

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are packed in boxes, taken down to Calcutta, and shipped off for the Indigo Mart in Cannon Street in London. Such is a brief account of indigo manufacture, as it is carried on in the indigo districts of Lower Bengal and of Behar.

## CHAPTER L.

### BENGALI HEROISM.

Some village Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,  
The little tyrant of his fields withstood.

GRAY'S *Elegy*.

THE day following that on which Mr. Murray had given notice to the peasants of Durgánagar that they should either immediately accept advances, or be prepared for the worst, Mádhava, having nothing particular to do in the afternoon, put his bathing-towel on his shoulder, and, taking in his hand the hookah, the cup of which was diffusing around the sweet odour of tobacco, wended his way to a *vakula* tree growing in the middle of the village. On the brick-built platform around the tree he found four husbandmen sitting; he joined them; others dropped in; and in the course of a short time the number of peasants

under the tree amounted to about twenty. They were all dressed in *dhutis*, which went down as far as the knees, the rest of the body, both upward and downward, was, of course, naked. Some of them had the *gámchhá*, or bathing-towel, on their shoulders, and others had it not; but considerably more than half the number had each a hookah in his hand. A great deal of smoking, coughing, and expectorating went on in the midst of talk on various subjects; but the chief burden of the conversation was the threat of the planter. Mádhava, addressing a peasant whose hair was silvered over with age, and who had just finished one of those long fits of coughing into which he invariably fell whenever he applied his lips to the hookah, said,

“And what say you, Muraḇbi?” (The word *murabbi* is equivalent to the English word “Governor” in colloquial English.) “What is to be done at this time of difficulty?”

The old peasant answered,

“What shall I say, *bábá* Mádhava? I have become old; three stages have already past, and the fourth and last stage only is remaining; a few days

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more and my body will be reduced to ashes. I am for peace. The whole of my life I have been cultivating indigo for the Sáheb of Nildángá; I have suffered much. What is the good of resisting the Sáheb now, at the fag end of my life? You are young; you have before you many years of enjoyment and of trouble. If you be successful in your resistance I shall be glad—not for my sake—but for the sake of you all. But I doubt whether your resistance will be successful.”

“It is not our resistance, murabbi. Who are we? We cannot prevent Mari Sáheb from doing anything. Our kind Rájá has promised to assist us.”

“It is all very well for the jamidár to promise to assist us, but you will see that he will not be able to protect us. All *topiwálás* (hat-men, that is, Europeans) are brothers to each other. The magistrate and the judge will always decide in favour of their white-skinned brother.”

“What are you driving at, old man?” said a third party, in a somewhat angry tone. “Do you advise us to take Mari Sáheb’s advances, and go on

cultivating indigo till the day of our death? Old age seems to have taken away your sense.”

“Don’t be angry,” said the old man, “I have seen enough of opposition, in my day, to the Sáhebs of *Nilkuthis* (indigo factories); but those Sáhebs can never be put down. They always come off victorious from the struggle. I say, therefore, it is useless to contend. It is wisdom to submit.”

“It would be madness to submit,” said a fourth peasant, who seemed to be somewhat better dressed than the rest, and to exercise some sort of authority over the assembly, “it is better to die than to cultivate indigo. The moment you touch the cursed gold of the planter, you are done for. Your debt is never liquidated. It increases year by year. The best portion of your fields is selected by the planter for sowing indigo. When the plant is cut and taken to the factory, it is found always less than when you measured it in the field. You get less paddy than is sufficient for the support of your family; and thus eating the food of your own house, as the saying is, you drive buffaloes in the wilderness. Mari Sáheb is a merciless creature, like all indigo-planters. Pro-

vided he gets his indigo, he does not care whether poor husbandmen live or die. His only object is to make money, and then to go away to his native land. But there is justice in the heavens. The man that builds happiness on the ruin of other people can never prosper. Such is the decree of the gods. No, no, we must not submit. May the gods make Nava Krishna Bábu immortal! He has promised to befriend us. With his help we will oppose the wicked Feringi."

This speech of the respectable-looking husbandman, who in fact was the *mandal*, or headman of the village, elicited general applause from the audience, on which the old man wept. Mádhava, after the applause had subsided, said,

"What the *mandal* has just now said is exactly my opinion. We ourselves cannot contend against the *Nilkar* (indigo manufacturer), but, if the *jamidár* be on our side, what can *Mari Sáheb* do?"

The *mandal*, who had now worked himself up into great excitement, said in a loud voice,

"*Mari sáláke máro!*" (strike the scoundrel Murray),  
"*Mari sáláke máro!* that should be our battle-cry.

The indigo-planters have been the ruin of our country. Before those *sálás* came, this country was as happy as Ayodhyá in the time of Ráma. But now everything has gone to wreck and ruin. They oppress us; they beat us; they imprison us; they torture us; they kill us; they dishonour our wives and daughters. Down with the indigo-planters! Down with the blue monkeys! *Mari sáláke máro!*”

These words, which were repeated with great energy and fierce gesticulation, produced a tremendous sensation in the assembly, and all exclaimed, “*Mari sáláke máro!*” But the old peasant, who had hitherto been silent, could no longer contain within himself. He stood up, with the eternal hookah in his hand, and said—“We shall see, friends, how you beat Mari Sáheb. I have seen enough of the heroism of my countrymen. You are like mountains in words, but in action you are like the mustard-seed. You have big mouths, but little chests. You talk big, but when you see the face of a Sáheb you shrink into nothing. When Mari Sáheb comes with his bands, you will all run away like dogs, putting their tails between their hind legs.” The assembly was greatly

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excited, and some of the young fellows proposed that the old man should be turned out of the place, when at that moment the *gomastá* of Bábu Nava Krishna Banerjea came to the spot. On seeing him they all stood up, and made him sit in the middle of the platform of masonry on a mat. He had come, he said, to inquire, in the event of a raid on the village by Mr. Murray, what amount of opposition the people could make. The people there assembled declared their readiness to stand on the defensive. There were no swords in the village, excepting a few owned by the *páiks*, or the village police. But though swords and spears were wanting, there was no lack of bamboo clubs; and the peasants all declared that they would be ready to wield their clubs at the bidding of the zamindár. The *gomastá* then addressed them in a short speech, in which he dwelt on the iniquities of indigo planting, and on the necessity of union amongst the peasantry with a view to put down all oppression. He also assured them of the earnest determination of the zamindár to stand by his tenants, to free them from the oppression of indigo-planters, and to promote their welfare in any

way he could. The ráiyats were overjoyed at this announcement, and they shouted out—"May Nava Krishna Bábu become immortal! May he live for ever!" The peasants then went away to their houses.

## CHAPTER LI.

### THE AFFRAY.

For why? Because the good old rule  
Sufficeth them; the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.

*Wordsworth.* 73

TWENTY-FIVE years ago there was hardly an indigo-planter or zamindár in Bengal who had not a regular establishment of *láthiáls* or club-men. The keeping up of such an establishment was considered a necessary item of expense, as it was deemed impossible in those days to manage either an indigo factory or a zamindári without an armed force. Mr. Murray had the reputation, such as it was, of being the owner of one of the finest bands of *láthiáls* in the country. They were usually fifty in number, which was his

peace establishment; but the number could be considerably increased on the occasion of an affray conducted on a large scale. These club-men were, for the most part, natives of Pharidpur (Furridpore) and Pabna—the two districts in Bengal noted for their excellent *láthiáls*; there was a sprinkling also of *goálás* (milk-men) of Sántipur, who are said to be amongst the most stalwart and spirited peasants in the country; and there were besides a few up-country-men, who were, however, used as a sort of reserve force for times of emergency. These last had been initiated into the mysteries of firing muskets, which were seldom used in ordinary village frays. The majority of the club-men were furnished with clubs made of bamboo. The *láthiáls* were also called *sarkiwálás*, that is, wielders of *sarkis*, which are bamboo clubs having at end an iron spear-head. These *sarkis* are used not only for striking the enemy at close quarters, but thrown at him from a distance. Hence in a fray a club-man is furnished with about half a dozen *sarkis*, one of which he keeps in his right hand, ready for use either at close quarters or at a distance; and the others he carries in his left hand successively

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to supply the place of the one in the right hand. Besides these *sarkis* the *láthiál* is furnished with a shield, which he carries in his left hand along with the *sarkis*. The shields are usually made of rattan, the Indian cane, covered with cow-hide; though a better class of shields are covered with the more valuable and less penetrable hide of the rhinoceros.

Early one morning, long before sunrise, about forty or fifty of Mr. Murray's *sarkiwálás*, suddenly emerging from a mango-grove beside a tank with lofty embankments, raised a loud shout, and approached the peasant huts of Durgánagar. Scarcely had the husbandmen washed their eyes after getting up from their beds, when the club-men fell upon them with fury. The zamindár's people were scarcely ready; but even if they had been quite ready they would have been no match for the practised club-men of Mari Sáheb. Not that Bengali zamindárs have smaller establishments of club-men than European indigo planters, but the fact is that the father of Nava Krishna Banerjea, having been prudent enough never to pick a quarrel with Mr. Murray or his predecessor, his club-men, for want

of exercise, had become rusty, and had almost forgotten their vocation; and Nava Krishna himself was too enlightened and humane a zamindár to pay much attention to the improvement of his military resources. The peasants, who had no *sarkis*, could not offer determined opposition; and the club-men of the zamindár, unaware of the exact time of attack, were not in readiness. The villagers, however, soon assembled in large numbers, and pelted the foe with brickbats and pieces of broken *hándis*. They also came out with their hoes, their axes, and their sickles. The veteran *sarkiválás* of Mr. Murray, who was himself on the scene; riding on a milk-white Arab, and fortified with fire-arms, soon became masters of the field.

About this time, however, the *láthiáls* of the zamindár appeared on the scene of action, and rushed into the fight with great impetuosity. Both parties threw *sarkis* against each other; the combatants drew nearer and nearer till they came to close quarters. For a moment the zamindár's party seemed to be gaining ground, when Mr. Murray fired off two pistol shots, to the infinite consternation of

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his opponents. These latter now took to their heels. The factory people pursued them and the villagers to some distance, captured some of the ráiyats, entered into the huts of the peasants and plundered them. Several on both sides were wounded, but not seriously. The only person who had received a bad wound was our friend Mádhava. As the first fury of the assailants had been directed against his huts, he had defended himself with some spirit, and had in consequence been pierced by a *sarki*. Smarting with the wound, he had concealed himself in a thicket near his house. The *sarkiválás* of the factory, on their return from the pursuit of the zamindár's men, found Mádhava in the bush. They caught hold of him and took him away, especially considering that he might die of his wound, which would greatly embarrass the planter. The prisoners, about twelve in number, including Mádhava and the *mandal*—the same who had spoken with vehemence against the planter—were handcuffed and taken away by the *sarkiválás*, who rent the air with shouts of exultation, Mr. Murray himself bringing up the rear. On reaching the factory grounds the *mandal* and the other

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captives were confined in a large go-down, but Mádhava alone was taken, by the planter's orders, towards the river side.

It is but doing simple justice to Mr. Murray to state that he had not the least desire to kill or even severely to wound any of the ráiyats of Durgánagar; his object was merely to intimidate them into submission. Nor did he wish that their property should be plundered; but as he could not be present at the same time in every part of the scene of the conflict, his men plundered, without his knowledge, whatever valuable things came in their way. What became of the prisoners, and why Mádhava was separated from the rest, will be told in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER LII.

### WHAT HAPPENED IN FATHER-IN-LAW'S HOUSE.

And worse than all, and most to be deplored,  
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,  
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat,  
With stripes, that mercy with a bleeding heart  
Weeps, when she sees inflicted on a beast.

*The Task.*

IN the high and palmy state of indigo-planting in Bengal, every factory had a large go-down-looking room, which passed among the men of the planter under the *soubriquet* of *Sasurbádi*, or Father-in-law's House. However it may be in other countries of the globe, in Bengal at least most men regard their sons-in-law with the utmost kindness and affection. Whenever a young son-in-law goes to the house of his wife's father, he meets with the warmest reception from every member of the family; he is coaxed and caressed beyond measure; he is presented with

valuable gifts; and of feasting and jollification there is no end. Hence one's father-in-law's house is looked upon as the happiest and sunniest spot in this world of care and anxiety. The go-down in the indigo-planter's factory, which went under the name of father-in-law's house, had none of these attractions. It was not the sunniest, but the gloomiest room in the factory premises; no other presents were given in it than kicks, cuffs, shoe beatings, strokes of the cat-o'-nine-tails called *gadádhar*, racking pains produced by pressing the chests of prisoners against two bamboos; no music was ever heard in it except the wailing of distress and the sigh of despair; and as for feasting, the whole of it was comprised in a handful of *bhát* and *álál* once a day, just sufficient to keep the bones and flesh together. The fact is, the go-down is a veritable dungeon for incarcerating, on the planter's own authority, all defaulting and recalcitrant husbandmen, and was called *Sasurbádi*, or Father-in-law's House, in bitter irony. Of course there was no furniture in it, not even a mat to sit upon; there were only some instruments of torture, like bamboos,

old boots, one or two *sarkis*, and a number of cane switches. There was only one small hole in the upper part of one of the walls, which was not a window but an apology for one. Such was the room in which the *mandal* of Durgánagar and his ten fellow villagers found themselves. They had not, however, been a quarter of an hour in it when they saw entering by the door the dreaded Mari Sáheb himself, his redoubtable *divána*, and two of those formidable looking *sarkiwálás* who had signalized themselves in the recent fight. The planter seated himself in a chair which was brought in, the *divána* and the *sarkiwálás* standing on either side of their august lord. Mr. Murray called the *mandal* to him, and thus addressed him:—"Well, *mandal*, you are now the *mandal* of a broken-up village, as the Bengali proverb has it. What has become of your boast—'Mari Sáheb *sáláke 'maro* (beat the scoundrel, Mr. Murray)?"

*Mandal.* "Khodáwand, I never used these words! Some enemy of mine must have told you a lie in order to ruin me."

*Planter.* "You are a lying rascal, like the whole

of your race. Do you think I do not know everything that passes amongst you? You and that other rascal, Mádhava, threatened to beat me, and persuaded the other husbandmen to oppose me and fight with my men. The zamindár *Sálá* promised to protect you. Where is now your father, Nava Krishna? Let him now protect you."

*Mandal.* "Hazúr is all-powerful; Hazúr can either kill me or save me. Khodáwand, show mercy to a poor peasant like me."

*Planter.* "You are guilty of such heavy crimes that you deserve instant death; and no father of yours can save you. But I will spare you under two conditions. One condition is that you immediately take advance for indigo; and the other condition is that when the police make an investigation of this affray, you affirm, with Gangá-water in your hands, that no affray did take place, that you were not brought by force into the factory, and that you willingly took the advances."

*Mandal.* "Dharma-avatár! (Incarnation of Justice!) I shall be ready to swear that there was no affray at all; but Hazúr will excuse my not taking advances."

Mr. Murray was highly incensed at these words, and ordered the *sarkiwálás* to put the *mandal* down on the floor, and to torture him with bamboos. These two messengers of *Yama* immediately caught hold of the prisoner, threw him down on the floor, and began pressing his chest with a bamboo.

The *mandal*, agonising with pain, shrieked—"O father! O mother! My life is going out! O save me!"

Mr. Murray, enjoying the scene, and being in a jocular vein, said—"Let me see which father of yours will now come to your help. Come now, why have you not kept your promise to beat Mari Sáheb? *Sarkiwálás*, get on smartly with the bamboo."

The *mandal* yelled out again in a yet shriller tone—"O father! O mother! My life is going, going, going! Give me the advance, Sáheb!"

The *sarkiwálás* immediately stopped in their work, the *mandal* was put in a sitting posture, and a tumbler of water was given him to drink.

Mr. Murray said he was glad the *mandal* had so soon been brought to his senses, and expressed the hope that the lesson might not soon be forgotten. The

other ten prisoners, who were eye-witnesses of their friend's agony, when asked whether they would take advances, readily agreed to the proposal. They were all removed from the *sasurbádi* to the *daphtarkhúna*, where papers of agreement were drawn up and signed, by the *mandal* in writing (for he could read and write), and the other prisoners by a cross mark; and advances were given. They were then dismissed by the planter, who warned them that if they gave evidence against him before either the *Dárogá* or the magistrate, he would, on an early opportunity, burn their houses and put an end to their lives. About noon they left the factory and went to their village.

As for *Mádhava*, the reader knows that, instead of being sent to *sasurbádi*, he was taken to the river-side; the reason was this. Mr. Murray perceived by a glance at *Mádhava*'s wound, that, if not fatal, it was very serious; if the police got hold of him, they might make a serious case of the whole affair; hence it was necessary to shove him out of the way. I do not mean to say that Mr. Murray resolved to kill him outright; of such cold-blooded

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murder, I believe, though rough and inhuman in his dealings with the ráiyats, he was incapable. On the contrary, Mádhava's wound was dressed by a barber attached to the factory, who generally discharged the functions of a surgeon. After this, he was put into a boat, and sent away privately in one of the planter's own boats to a distant factory, away from the scene of the affray and the police investigation which was sure to follow.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### THE POLICE INVESTIGATION.

'Tis gold

Which makes the true man kill'd, and saves the thief ;

Nay sometimes hangs both thief and true man. What

Can it not do, and undo ?

*Cymbeline.*

THE reader will doubtless recollect that the zamindár Nava Krishna Banerjea, had, before the occurrence of the affray, sent notice of the planter's threat to the Dárogá of the Tháná of Ságarapur, requesting him to prevent the outrage. But Nava Krishna had been forestalled by the indigo-planter. Mr. Murray had, on the very day of his conversation with Mádhava, sent word to the Dárogá that, in order to bring some recusant ráiyats of Durgánagar to their senses, he would be obliged to have recourse to some measures of intimidation; and that he must

not, in consequence of any representations the zamindár might make, interfere with the planter's dealings with his defaulting ráiyats. The Dárogá jumped at this notice of Mr. Murray, as he knew it would bring him gain. There was always a good understanding between the indigo factory of Nil-dánga and the Tháná of Ságarpur; indeed, the indigo-planter could not have committed half the outrage he did commit, without the connivance of the police; and this connivance was obtained—*purchased* would be too vulgar a word—not, indeed, by bribes—for so honourable a gentleman as Mr. Murray must be presumed to be incapable of giving a bribe—but by presents of money, given either before, or immediately after, the perpetration of an outrage. Such being the case, the Dárogá was always thankful whenever he heard of an intended affray. In case of an affray, the Dárogá usually manages to get money from both parties; but, in the present case no money—call it a gift, a present, a donation, or a bribe, if you please—could be expected from Nava Krishna Banerjea, as he had sedulously set his face against corruption from the commencement of

his administration. On receiving representations from both Mr. Murray and Babu Nava Krishna Banerjea, the Dárogá had no difficulty in adopting his course. "My best policy," said he to himself, "will be not to stir in the matter at all, but to wait till the affray is over, and then immediately after to repair to the scene of the conflict, and make the most of the business to enrich myself; and as that raw youth, Nava Krishna, inexperienced in the ways of the world, will, I fear, not give me a single *paysá*, I must screw from Mr. Murray as much as I can, especially as he will be victorious in the affray, and will doubtless cause much injury to the ráiyats." Such were the calculations of the Dárogá; and he was not mistaken.

Immediately after Mr. Murray had set free the captive ráiyats, he sent an express to the Dárogá, informing him of the result of the affair. The Dárogá forthwith ordered his pony to be made ready, and then proceeded in state with the *Baksi*, the *jamadár*, half a dozen *barkandázes*, and a score of *chaukidárs*. As his way lay through the village of Dakshinpalli, he had an interview with

Nava Krishna, who gave him a detailed account of the affray, including the capture of the ráiyats, the tortures inflicted upon them, their subsequent release after advances having been forced upon them, and the disappearance of Mádhava, who perhaps had been killed in the fray. He denounced in forcible words the violent conduct and tyranny of the indigo-planter, and called upon the Dárogá to send a truthful report of the affair to the magistrate. The Dárogá quietly said that he must not form any opinion of the affair without holding an investigation on the spot; that in all affrays both parties are generally to blame, though the degree of criminality on one side may be greater than that on the other; and gently hinted that his sending to the magistrate a report favourable to the zamindár depended chiefly on the zamindár himself. Nava Krishna, though he understood the hint, took no notice of it, but urged on him the propriety of his sending, as a police officer, a truthful report to the magistrate.

The Dárogá was not disappointed, as he had not expected any *douceur* from Nava Krishna, and proceeded on his way more and more confirmed in

his mind of the good policy of sending in a report favourable to the planter. There was one fact he learned from the zamindár which gave him great satisfaction, and that was the disappearance of Mádhava. He thought Mádhava must have been killed in the fray, and that the planter must have either thrown his body into the river or buried it in the factory grounds. The Dárogá deemed this fact to be a perfect God-send, as it would enable him to extort a large bribe from the planter. Gloating over this unexpected good fortune—for police officers, as a rule, live on the ruin of the raiyats—the Dárogá proceeded on his journey, and reached Durgánagar in the afternoon.

The advent of a Dárogá into a village in Bengal, is regarded with the same horror as the entrance of a body of Prussian Uhlans into a town of France was regarded by the French during the late Franco-Prussian war. Requisitions become the order of the day. Soon after the Dárogá entered Durgánagar, the *barkandázes* and *chaukidárs* went on a foraging expedition. In the course of one short hour an incredible amount of provisions was obtained. From the Muham-

madan inhabitants were extorted fowls by the dozen and eggs by the score; and the Hindus gave large quantities of unboiled rice, pulse, vegetables, mustard oil and clarified butter. The provisions which they collected must have sufficed the officials of the Tháná of Ságarpur for a whole month. Nor were provisions the only thing extorted. Timid ráiyats gladly gave copper, and even silver, in order to purchase the goodwill of the formidable myrmidons of the police.

The Dárogá held an investigation on the very spot where the affray had taken place, which was not far from the house of Mádhava. There was nothing to show that any affray had taken place, for the *sarkiwálás* of the factory had carefully abstained from making such depredations as might leave traces of the outrage. Besides the Dárogá and his subordinates, and the ráiyats themselves, there were present on the spot the *gomastás* of the planter and the zamindár, who were watching the case on behalf of their masters. Before the depositions were taken down, the *gomastá* of the planter drew aside the *Baksi*, who is a police officer next to the Dárogá, and, indeed, his right hand, and talked with him for a few minutes. The *Baksi*

resumed his seat next to the Dárogá and whispered to him. What formed the subject of conversation between the planter's *gomastá* and the *Baksi* of the Tháná has not transpired; and I should be abandoning my character as a veracious historian were I to put down in this authentic narrative a guess of mine own; the *gomastá* of the zamindár, however, declared that the Dárogá was offered a large bribe through the *Baksi*. Be that as it may, the depositions began now to be taken down. The reader will scarcely believe me when I say—nevertheless it is a simple fact—that the ráiyats, one and all, including the *mandal* himself, swore that no affray had taken place, that no ráiyats had been captured, and that they had willingly received advances from Mari Sáheb. The reason why the ráiyats perjured themselves must be plain to the reader—they were afraid of Mari Sáheb, who had proved himself to be stronger than the zamindár. They believed the zamindár to be animated with the sincere wish of doing them good, but it was evident he was unable to cope with the planter. To lean on Nava Krishna would be to lean on a broken reed. They therefore at once

denied that there had been any affray. One ugly fact remained to be accounted for. What had become of Mádhava? The ráiyats all declared they did not know; indeed, they had not seen him at all during the affray.

When all these depositions had been taken down, the Dárogá, with an air of triumph, turned towards the *gomastá* of the zamindár, and said, "What a lot of liars these Hindus are! (The Dárogá himself was a Muhammadan.) The zamindár's representations are now proved to be all false. I now see through the whole. From the beginning to the end it is a trumped-up case of the zamindár's. He has got up the story of the affray in order to involve Mr. Murray in trouble; and it is clear to my mind as noonday that the zamindár himself has concealed Mádhava in order to bring a heavy case against good Mari Sáheb." Agreeably to these views, the *Baksi* drew up, on the spot, a report for the magistrate to the effect that the Dárogá had been to the spot of the alleged affray, and examined every witness that could be brought forward, and found that there had been no affray at all. That the story had been

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evidently invented by the zamindár to bring Mr. Murray into trouble; and that it was highly probable that Mádhava had been concealed somewhere by the zamindár himself.

The Dárogá returned the same evening to the Tháná, after having had an interview with Mr. Murray at the factory, where his hand was well oiled.

## CHAPTER LIV.

MÁDHAVA'S END.

The undiscovered country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns.

*Hamlet.*

THE ráiyats of an indigo district will tell you that one of the modes in which the planter punishes those whom he deems most dangerous is to make them “drink the water of seven factories.” A ráiyat of some pluck, “some village Hampden,” is spirited away, and sent from factory to factory—for one indigo concern has generally several factories—according to the circumstances of the case; and this mysterious translation from place to place ends in his exit from the stage of the world. We must do Mr. Murray the justice to remark that before the affray he had not the slightest intention to spirit

Mádhava away, and send him the round of the factories; but the severe wound which he had unfortunately received in the *mélée*, left the planter no choice. If Mádhava had been allowed to remain at Durgánagar after having been wounded, it would have been highly prejudicial to the interests of Mr. Murray, as the wound alone would have been sufficient proof of the affray; and if he had died in consequence of the wound, in the course of a few days, the planter's case would have been more serious. Hence the necessity of kidnapping Mádhava away. The first factory to which he was carried was ten or twelve miles distant, but here he was not kept for more than twenty-four hours. The magistrates, believing, on the strength of the Dárogá's representations, that there had been no affray at all, and that the zamindár had hidden Mádhava in some secret place in order to get Mr. Murray into trouble, had issued orders on the zamindár immediately to produce Mádhava, on pain of heavy penalties. Though the zamindár was as innocent in the matter as the unborn babe, he was obliged to take measures for ascertaining the whereabouts of the planter's captive. The police were also

active in the search, not so much in obedience to the magistrate's orders as with a view to obtain illegal gratification from the party in whose custody the missing Mádhava might be found. The zamindár's spies and the *choukidárs* of the Tháná were forthwith set in motion, and they found out that the boat which carried Mádhava on board had sailed towards Kuládaha. On this circumstance being known to the assistant planter, the wounded prisoner was sent to the next factory on the Bhágirathi named Serpadá, which, though distant only a few miles from the former one, had the advantage of being situated in a different district, namely, Hooghly. But the spies and *choukidárs* followed the fugitive to that place; therefore it became necessary to remove Mádhava to some far-off factory in Eastern Bengal. The boat touched at several factories in the way, such as Krishnadhám, Rádhánagar, Chakradwípa, Sárísamudra, at each of which places the prisoner was taken ashore and kept a few hours, till he reached Moulaviganga, on the banks of the Ichhamati, the factory of which was determined to be his prison. Poor Mádhava, however, had not long to live. In consequence of his

removal from place to place, his wound, which was utterly neglected, festered, and scarcely had he been landed at the *ghát* of the planter at Moulaviganga, when he died. His remains were neither burnt nor buried, but were simply thrown at night into the river, which carried them to the Bay of Bengal. Such was the end of Mádhava, the victim of the planter's cupidity.

It was after a long time that the news of Mádhava's death reached his family at Durgánagar. Immediately after the conclusion of the affray, his wife and mother supposed that he had been carried along with the other captives to the factory at Nildángá; but when all returned excepting Madhava, their grief knew no bounds. Consumed with grief, they waited day after day, and week after week, and yet no tidings came of the object of their affection. Málati wept by day and by night. She broke her silver ornaments and cast them aside; she often dashed her head against the floor through despair; she scarcely ate or drank anything. The mother of Mádhava became almost mad with despair. She became ten times more furious than ever: it

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was impossible for any human being to approach her. At last a chance traveller announced in the village the news of Mádhava's death. We will not attempt to describe the state into which the women were thrown on hearing the melancholy tidings. Sudhámukhi became insane, and hung herself one night on one of the bamboo rafters of her sleeping hut. Kádambini went to her late husband's relatives, who were not unwilling to support her. Málati sold off the huts and everything else she had, and, taking her son Yádava with her, came to Kánchanpur and took up her abode with her brother. Govinda was ill able to support his sister and her son. Nor was it necessary. By selling her late husband's property she had got about one hundred rupees, with part of which she traded, and part she lent out on heavy interest. The trade which she carried on was this. She bought paddy, turned it into rice, and sold it. The proceeds of this little trade, together with the interest of the money lent out, were sufficient to supply her wants and those of her son. The boy was also able in a short time to earn a little money, about a shilling a month, by

tending the cows of neighbours and by gathering cow-dung every day, which Málati turned into cakes and sold as fuel.

As in the course of this narrative we shall not have occasion to mention the name of Nava Krishna Banerjea, the zamindár of Durgánagar, we may remark once for all that, though often opposed by the indigo-planter of Nildángá in his honest endeavours to protect his tenants and to ameliorate their condition, his exertions were crowned with complete success; and there is no name in the lay-roll of the zamindárs of Bengal which stands higher for philanthropy, liberality, uprightness of conduct, and public spirit than the honoured name of Nava Krishna Banerjea. Concerning Mr. Murray, of whom the reader will not hear again, we may state that the Rob Roy principle which he adopted—“the simple plan that they should take who have the power, and they should keep who can”—did him little good. His oppression created universal disaffection among the peasantry, and produced an outbreak some years afterwards; and he had so

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completely mismanaged affairs that the Bengal indigo concern, of whom he was a servant, were obliged to shut up shop and sell the factory to the highest bidder.

## CHAPTER LV.

### THE LARES AND THE PENATES.

Hail, Ceres, hail, by thee from fertile ground  
Swift springs the corn, and plenty flows around.

*Kallimachos.*

THE reader will probably remember that, before speaking of the affairs of poor Mádhava and the indigo-planter of Durgánagar, we left our hero reconstructing the big hut which had been reduced to ashes. A peasant's cottage is not so easily built, or rather thatched in the present case, as the reader might suppose. One reason of the delay is that the materials cannot be had ready at hand; and even if they can be got ready, the peasant has not the means to buy them. Bamboos could certainly be had at Kánchanpur, but they were dearer than in some

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villages ten or twelve miles off, where they were cheap because they were plentiful. Kálamánik had to go to one of these distant villages, select some bamboos in a plantation, cut them down, and bring them to Kánchanpur; but as there were no roads for carts, the bamboos had to be brought on the backs of bullocks, and one bullock could hardly carry more than four long and stout bamboos. But the bamboos thus brought were not fit to be used immediately. It is always advisable to season them by keeping them some time soaked in water. The bamboos were therefore thrown into the tank near Govinda's house. After they had lain for some days in water, they were taken up; some of them were cut for posts, and others were split and smoothed and turned into laths. Then the palmyra trees had to be cut, sawn, and smoothed for beams and rafters. Ropes and strings could certainly be purchased, if not at Kánchanpur at least in Vardhamána, but that would be too expensive for the poor family; Kálamánik and Govinda had, therefore, to spin them, by a reel of the primitive type called *dhera*, from the hemp which grew in their fields. Then again the paddy-straw,

which was in the stack, and which was the food of the cows, was not fit to be used for thatching purposes unless it had been subjected to some process. The bundles were all loosened: bullocks, strung together in a line and tied to a post in the centre of the yard, were made to tread upon them in order to remove from the straw any grain of paddy that might not have been thrashed out; and then the whole was tied again in long bundles of picked straw called *loṭ*. Day after day, week after week, did Kálamánik work incessantly at the thatching of their hut; and when the *madkachá* (the ridge of the thatch) was laid on, their joy was as great as that of the Jews when they saw the completion of the temple of Solomon.

The hut thus thatched was not used for human habitation without the performance of some religious ceremony. Uneducated and poor as Kálamánik and Govinda were, they had, like most Hindu peasants, a deep sense of religion. No new house, or an old one rebuilt, is in Bengal used without a religious ceremony. The Lares and the Penates had to be invoked and reinstated in their former seats. Besides,

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the case of the hut of which we are speaking was a peculiar one. It had been reduced to ashes by Brahmá, the god of fire; and though they knew that the act had been perpetrated by the orders of the wicked zamindár, it was looked upon by the superstitious family as a judgment from heaven. There were, therefore, especial reasons for consecrating it. When the last wisp of straw was put on the *madkachá*, and everything was complete, Rámdhan Misri, the family priest, held within its walls a solemn service, repeated *mantras*, and invoked *Ganesa* and the fire deities. But the deity chiefly worshipped on this occasion was Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, the Déméter of the Hindu Pantheon, whom Vishnu had obtained at the churning of the ocean. There is not a single Hindu family in all Bengal, however poor, which does not regard this goddess with peculiar veneration. She is the *Lar familiaris* of Bengali Hindu houses; all prosperity in life is owing to her auspicious influence. The favour of Lakshmi makes a man rich, her disfavour makes him poor. When a household is in affluent circumstances, Lakshmi is said to have taken up her abode in it; and when it is reduced to poverty,

it is said to be *Lakshmi-chháḍá*—that is, deserted by akshmi. Hence she is worshipped in every house. She is usually represented as a handsome young lady, painted yellow, sitting on a water-lily. But it is not in this form that she is worshipped in every Hindu household, and especially in every Hindu peasant's household. Her more common symbol is a corn-measure, called *kálhá*, painted with red-lead, filled with paddy, adorned with a garland of flowers, covered with a white cloth, and encompassed with a number of cowrie shells. This is the palladium of a Hindu household's prosperity—it is the Bengal ráiyat's most sacred symbol.

After the religious ceremony was over, a few Bráhmans were feasted—three, I think, was the number, as Govinda was too poor to entertain more—and presented with a little money called *dakshiná*. A few friends and relations were also feasted, and thus the feast of dedication was over. After this the hut was used for household purposes.

People may call this fetichism if they choose, but it is impossible not to have respect for that deep religiousness which underlies the Hindu character

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even in a common Hindu peasant. Though the rites are superstitious, they are not meaningless; they indicate the existence of an essentially noble and supersensual sentiment; they show that, even in an uneducated peasant, there is something which could not have been either inherited or developed from a monkey; they are an acknowledgment that human happiness is dependant on the smiles of an unseen power, and that all prosperity flows from the bountiful Author of all Good.

## CHAPTER LVI.

### A GALA DAY.

Therefore sacrifice they unto their net,  
And burn incense unto their drag ;  
Because by them their portion is fat,  
And their meat plenteous.

*Habakkuk.*

It was in the sunny month of Chaitra (half of March and half of April) that all the artizans of Kánchanpur had their day of worship and festivity. This was the *pujá* of Visvakarmá, the World-maker, the Hephaístos of the Hindu Pantheon, the patron of arts and manufactures in the holy land of Bhárata. The celebration, like all Hindu *pujás*, was partly religious and partly social. On that day the sound of the hammer, which is never still, was not heard in the village, nor did any of the artizan class pursue their ordinary avocations. It was the yearly Sabbath

of Bengali artizans. Visvakarmá, the engineer of the celestials, is represented by the figure of a man painted white, having three eyes, wearing on his head a crown, a necklace of gold, and bangles on his wrists, and holding a club in his right hand. But the image is seldom made, its place being supplied by the implements and tools in the various departments of mechanical labour. Every peasant, every artizan, worships the tools of his trade in his own house.

On that day Govinda set up in a corner of his house the plough, the hoe, the sickle, and other implements of husbandry; Nanda, his hammer, his anvil, and his bellows; Kapila, his axe, his wedge his inclined plane; Chatura, his razors, his basin, and the sharp instruments for paring off the nails; Bokárám, his loom and shuttle; the fisherman, his nets, his rods, and lines; the oilman, his oil-mill; the potter, his wheel; the mason, his trowel and plumb-line; the shoemaker, his awl; the washerman, his beetle, his mallet, and his ironing instrument—they all washed and cleaned these implements, and set them apart for the day from ordinary use.

The worshippers themselves, after performing their ablutions in the village tanks, were dressed in their holiday's best. The religious part of the ceremony was soon over. The prayers recited by the Bráhmanas expressed not only gratitude for past favours, but a desire for future ones. It is superfluous to remark that the implements of handicraft, which are set apart for the day and presented with flowers and offerings, are not themselves worshipped; and the best proof of this is found in the fact that those implements are not regarded with any degree of reverence on other days. The great Architect of the Universe, the Master Mason, is worshipped by these simple artificers without any other visible representations than the symbols of the arts; and we cannot but think that this periodical and public acknowledgment of the Creator by the working classes of Bengal is to be infinitely preferred to the absorbing secularism and practical atheism of the proletariat of some of the countries of Europe.

The religious ceremony is followed by festivity. That day, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the weaver, the barber, the husbandman, eat better dinners

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than perhaps on any other day in the year. Nor does each one selfishly eat his own dinner by himself. The richer artizans give feasts to their poorer brethren of the same craft. Though the system of caste does not allow a blacksmith to dine with a carpenter, it does not seem to us to impede the flow of brotherly kindness between members of two different guilds. There is no country in the world where the spirit of caste is not to be found in some shape or other. In India, caste is practically based on occupations, people who pursue the same trade forming one caste by themselves; in England, it is based chiefly on money, the richer class forming the Bráhmanas, and the poorer, the *Chandálas* of English society. In its practical working, though not in its theory, the Indian system of caste is hardly worse than the English system. In England, though a rich goldsmith dines with a rich cotton spinner, he does not admit to his table a very poor member of his own guild; in India, a rich goldsmith does not dine in the company of a rich cotton-spinner, but cheerfully admits to his table a very poor goldsmith. In our opinion, this particular phase of the English

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system of caste is a great deal worse than that of the Hindu system.

The feast over, the peasants and the artizans betake themselves to all sorts of amusements. As on the occasion of the Navánna, or the new rice, they engage at this festival in all sorts of sports; they play at *hádu-guḍu*; they angle in the tanks; they play at *guli-dándú*; they shuffle cards; they sing songs, accompanied with instrumental music; they form themselves into companies in different parts of the village, and sit, and smoke, and talk, under trees, on matters affecting their craft, or tell stories, of which, like all simple men, they are immensely fond.

## CHAPTER LVII.

### KÁLAMÁNIK.

In the dust he fell :  
So nourished long in some well-watered spot,  
Crowned with green boughs, the smooth-skinned poplar falls,  
Doomed by the builder to supply with wheels  
Some splendid chariot, on the bank it lies  
A lifeless trunk, to parch in summer airs.

*Homer.*

THE reader might have inferred from what we said in a previous chapter that ever since the time when Kálamánik incurred the zamindár's displeasure, he had been meditating on some dark design, and with this view had been visiting the villages round about Kánchanpur. As he never fully disclosed his mind to anyone, it is impossible to ascertain the exact nature of that design, whether it was an intended personal attack on the zamindár himself,

or some scheme of daring robbery in the zamindár's house. But whatever its nature might have been, the hand of Fate prevented him from accomplishing his object.

Jaya Chánd Ráya Chauduri was seated one morning in his catcherry when Bhimá Kotál, the leader of his club-men, approached him and made him obeisance. Jaya Chánd said—"You seem to be a worthless fellow, Bhime; you have not been able to do anything with that wicked fool, Kálamánik, who has defied my authority, and who seems to be sowing the seeds of disaffection among my tenants not only of this village, but of all the villages round about. Can't you get rid of him?"

*Bhim.* "O Incarnation of Justice! had I only known that such was your honour's wish, Mother Earth would long ago have been rid of him."

*Jaya Chánd.* "But did you not know that that was my wish? I have hardly pleasure in anything so long as that fellow walks about at large. He will do an infinite deal of mischief if he is not arrested in his course."

*Bhim.* "I thought your worship wished merely

that that fellow should be beaten. But if I had known that the Incarnation of Justice wanted to get rid of him altogether, the deed would have been accomplished long ago. What cannot Bhim Sardár do if ordered by your honour? Order me to bring the milk of a tigress, and I shall do it. Give but the word, and Kálamánik's head will be brought this instant."

*Jaya Chánd.* "I do not want that exactly; but I wish the thing to be done without noise."

*Bhim.* "It will be done to-day, Khodáwand."

So saying, Bhimá Kotál went away from the catcherry, consulted the zamindár's *goindás*, or spies, —for he maintained a regular system of *espionage*— as to the movements of Kálamánik in the evenings, and accordingly adopted measures.

It was evening when Kálamánik left the village of Kádrá, just four miles to the north-east of Kánchanpur, whither he had gone in the course of the day, for reasons known only to himself. The cows had all come home from the meadows, on which the shades of evening were fast descending. The tract of land between Kádrá and Kánchanpur was a

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plain, the like of which is to be found in many parts of the Vardhamána district. It was one vast paddy-field, interrupted by no hamlet or village, the only objects which disturbed the monotony of never-ending paddy were a tank here and there, and an *asvatha* tree on its embankments. The peasants of Kádrá told Kálamánik that he should spend the night with them, as night had already covered the plains, and there were no intervening villages. But Kálamánik would not be dissuaded from setting out. Conscious of his own immense strength, and naturally foolhardy, he laughed at the idea of *láthiáls* attacking him in the way. Wrapping his bathing towel round his *dhuti* on his waist, with his thick bamboo club in his right hand, he plunged into the encompassing darkness. There was no road, the path lay over paddy fields from which the harvest had been recently gathered. He went on rapidly, with giant-like strides. He met with no human being on the solitary plains, the birds even had taken shelter on trees which skirt the villages; and excepting the chirping of the grasshoppers and the occasional flight of some belated night-bird, there was

no sign of life in the darkened plain. He had proceeded more than a mile when the moon emerged from the horizon, and shot forth her friendly beams. Kálamánik walked faster and faster. There was no fear in his dauntless breast. He had now nearly come half the way where there was a large tank, covered with aquatic plants, and a tall *asvatha* tree. At the foot of the tree Kálamánik descried from a distance, through the moonlight, the figure of a human being in a standing posture. As the nearest villages, on all sides round, were about two miles distant from the spot, he wondered who that person could be; but as he considered himself more than a match for half-a-dozen men, he fearlessly went on his way. No sooner had Kálamánik gone within about twenty yards of the tree, which lay in his path, than he heard the voice of Bhimá Kotál accosting him in the following style—"Welcome, brother Kálamánik! welcome! We have been waiting for you for a long time." Kálamánik, nothing daunted, said—"So, Bhime, you have come here to meet your doom;" and with that he sprang forward like a tiger and made Bhima's shoulder feel the weight of

his Herculean club. In a moment Bhimá fell down, and lay sprawling on the ground. Before Kálamánik could give a second blow, he found himself surrounded by about a dozen club-men, who had been sitting on the water's edge. Dire was the conflict. Kálamánik maintained the struggle with superhuman valour, wounding many of his assailants. Victory for a long time hung in the balance, when Bhimá got up from the ground, and joined his comrades. A thump of Bhima's club brought Kálamánik to the ground; and as he lay stretched, like a palmyra tree felled by the woodman's axe, the *láthiáls* belaboured him with their clubs till Kálamánik was no more. As the club-men had, by anticipation, brought two hoes with them, they dug a trench on the side of the tank, threw in it the corpse of Kálamánik, and covered it up with earth and turf. For three days no one at Kánchanpur knew of the fate of Kálamánik. On the fourth day some passers-by saw the remnants of a dead body lying on the side of the tank half-way between Kánchanpur and Kádrá. The grave had been dug open by jackals, and the corpse half devoured; but it was not impossible for those who

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knew Kālamānik to make out that they were his remains. Through the influence of Jaya Chānd the affair was hushed up, and as the hands of the police officers were well oiled, no report on the subject was sent to the magistrate of the district.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### THE PANCHAM.

They covet fields, and take them by violence ;  
And houses, and take them away ;  
So they oppress a man and his house,  
Even a man and his heritage.

*Micah.*

ONE day about noon, when Govinda was washing his feet in the tank adjoining his house, after returning from the field, a paper was put into his hands by one of the peons of Jaya Chánd Ráya Chaudhuri. The purport of the paper was a demand for some ninety rupees and odd, being the amount due to the zamindár on account of arrears of the rent of the fields which he cultivated. The paper also contained a *jamá másil báki*, a statement which exhibited the grounds on which the demand was made. Govinda was thunderstruck. To make use

of an expressive saying in Bengali, "his hands and feet entered into his stomach" through fear. "I am in arrears," said Govinda to himself, "to the zamindár, and in arrears to the amount of ninety *tákás*! O gods! what is this? Am I awake or am I dreaming? Surely the paper is not intended for me. But sure enough my name is on it. Have I not paid every *payasá* of the rent? O gods, how can ye allow such injustice to be perpetrated on this earth?"

The fact is, that when the zamindár gave orders to Bhimá Kotál to burn the big hut of Govinda, it was not with a view merely to burn the hut itself, and thus inflict on him the loss of property, but chiefly with a view to reduce to ashes those receipts which the zamindár had given him on the payments of rents; and now that those receipts had been destroyed, Govinda was entirely at the mercy of his landlord. And Jaya Chánd was determined to stretch to the utmost those vast powers with which the law had invested him for the ruin of Govinda.

There were two Regulations in the Revenue Code which were the dread of every ráiyat in the country.

These were the *Haptam* (or the *seventh*), and *Pancham* (or the *fifth*), so-called from the numbers those Regulations bore in the Fiscal Code. The one was Regulation VII. of 1799; and the other was Regulation V. of 1812. The former Regulation empowered landholders summarily to arrest and to imprison any tenant who was a defaulter, or was supposed to be a defaulter; and the latter empowered them to distraïn and sell off to the highest bidder the property of a ráiyat who was a defaulter, or who was supposed to be one. The object which Government had in giving such extraordinary powers to landholders was to enable them to realise their rents regularly, and transmit them punctually to the public exchequer; but, in consulting its own interest, the Government virtually consigned the entire peasantry of Bengal to the tender mercies of a most cruel and rapacious aristocracy. Happily, a more enlightened and humane legislation has taken away from the code those iniquitous regulations; but it is worthy of note that, for half-a-century, those horrible engines of oppression were allowed, by a Government calling itself Christian, to grind

to the dust many millions of probably the most peaceful people upon earth.

Govinda was not in arrears to the amount of even a farthing. To Golak Poddár, the money-lender, he owed a considerable sum, but to the zamindár nothing. He knew the nature of the beast, and therefore took great care not to fall within his clutches. But Govinda had reckoned without his host. It mattered nothing to Jaya Chánd, though a tenant whom he wanted to ruin had paid up his rent; it was not difficult for him to make the tenant out to be a defaulter by the arts of chicanery, perjury, and forgery, in which he was so great an adept. And in the case of Govinda it was the easiest thing in the world, as all his receipts had been destroyed.

The property of Govinda was attached; his crops in the field, now ready for the sickle, his *marái* of paddy in the yard of his house, his cows, and all his personal property, were attached by a process of law. On the sixth day after the attachment, the *phodosh-ámin*, or Sale Commissioner, who was entitled to a commission of ten per cent. on the

amount of money realised by the sale, gave notice of the sale of Govinda's property, fixing the day and the hour of the day. The terrible *Pancham* just left one little loop-hole for the escape of the victim; but that lay beyond Govinda's power. It provides that a tenant whose property has been attached, may, within five days, enter into a bond before the Collector or Sale Commissioner, with good security, binding himself to institute a summary suit, within fifteen days from the date of the bond, for the trial of the demand, and to pay whatever sum may be adjudged to be due, with interest. But where was this "good security" to be got? Govinda tried all Kánchanpur, but none was forthcoming.

At last the terrible day of the sale arrived. Govinda's crops of paddy, and sugar-cane, and other products, his store of paddy in the house, his cows, were all knocked down by the hammer of the ruthless *phoḍosh-ámin*. All his personal property was also knocked down. But the proceeds of the sale had not yet come up to the zamindár's demand, *plus* the commission of the sale-officer. It was given

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out that there was valuable property with the women and children, who had shut themselves up in one compartment of the recently rebuilt big hut. With the help of a police officer, who was in readiness, the door was broken open, amid the shrieks of the women and children. All the brass vessels were taken possession of, and put up to auction. The man of law was now satisfied, and our hero was completely ruined.

## CHAPTER LIX.

### THE RÁIYATS' MAGNA CHARTA.

A bold peasantry, their country's pride.

*The Deserted Village.*

THE year 1859 witnessed a great change in the status of the Bengal ráiyat. Act X. of that year is justly regarded as the Magna Charta of the peasantry of Bengal; and though, owing to causes inherent in the ráiyat himself, namely, his ignorance and the consequent want of spirit, that celebrated piece of legislation has not done him all the good it is calculated to do, it must be admitted that it has effected his legal emancipation.

Anyone that has paid attention to the subject of the tenure of land in Bengal can hardly deny that that tenure is based on the right of labour.

He who clears the land of jungle becomes its owner. It is true he pays a certain share of his profits to Government, or to the zamindár, who is usually a collector of tax appointed by Government; nevertheless the right of ownership lies with the clearer of the jungle and the occupant of the soil. This theory underlies all legislation on land in this country. It is implied in the protection given to casual occupants, and in the right with which the law invests an occupant for a certain period, to keep possession of the land on the payment of a customary rent. The zamindár, on the other hand, practically regards himself as the owner; and hence, there has been, ever since the effecting of the Permanent Settlement, a perpetual struggle between the ráiyat and the zamindár, the one insisting on the payment of a fixed rent, and the other endeavouring to enhance that rent under all sorts of pretexts.

But periodical enhancement of rent was not the only hardship to which the Bengal ráiyat was subjected. Cesses, called *abwabs*, of various sorts were levied, though not authorised by law. The celebration

of the marriage of the zamindár's son or daughter, or of the ráiyat's son or daughter, the performance by the zamindár of a *puja* or religious ceremony, or the observance of the thousand-and-one social customs of the land—all these were taken advantage of by the landlord to exact money from the ráiyat. The number of these *abwabs* was, and, we are afraid, still is in some parts of the country, so great that the amount of money extorted in this illegal way far exceeded in many cases the rent justly due for the occupation of the soil.

But this was not all. The zamindár was armed by law with extraordinary powers, which placed the ráiyat entirely at his mercy. One act allowed him to let the rent accumulate till it became so heavy that the ráiyat was unable to pay it, and was consequently ruined. Another law allowed him to distrain, merely on his own declaration that the ráiyat intended to abscond. And a third law empowered him to compel the ráiyat's attendance at his cutcherry, and to flog him almost to death. These two last Acts, usually called the *pancham* and the *haptam*, spread ruin and desolation throughout the country.

From this terrible oppression Act X., of 1859, delivered the Bengal ráiyat. That Act, passed through the exertions chiefly of Mr. Edward Currie and Sir Frederick Halliday, abrogated the hated *pancham* and *haptam*. It declared that any ráiyat who has occupied land for more than twenty years can never have his rent enhanced. It declared that a ráiyat, who has occupied land for more than twelve years, is entitled to receive a lease at a fair and equitable rate; and any enhancement of rent that is to be made, is to be made on certain conditions. It ruled that no enhancement can be made without a year's previous notice, with a view to enable the ráiyat to contest his liability. It made it compulsory on the zamindár to give a receipt for the rent he receives. And lastly, it declared the exaction of *abwabs* to be a punishable offence.

Such were the provisions of Act X., of 1859. If this act had been passed a few months earlier; Govinda would not have been ruined; but as the *haptam* and the *pancham* had their full swing, his property was sold to the highest bidder. Govinda was now perhaps in a more helpless state than at

the time when his homestead was reduced to ashes by the orders of the zamindár. He had hardly recovered from the effects of that conflagration when he was plunged into fresh distress. Though his homestead was standing, he was rendered penniless. Inexpressible was his grief, when, the morning after the sale, he saw his house stripped, not only of the comforts of life—if a Bengal peasant can be said to have any comforts at all—but even of its necessaries. As Govinda was somewhat undemonstrative in his nature, he did not give vent to extravagant expressions of grief. He simply sat down on his haunches, and, crossing his arms on his knees, rested his head upon them, and silently wept bitter tears. The women, however, were not so quiet in their demonstrations of grief. They imprecated the wrath of the gods on the head of the zamindár, poured maledictions not only on him, but on his ancestors up to the fourteenth generation. They cursed the very gods themselves for taking pleasure in heaping calamity upon calamity on poor people like themselves; they violently struck their foreheads with the palms of their hands, and

exclaimed, "Oh, Vidhátá! why did you write all this on our foreheads?"

Govinda, however, had no leisure to indulge in unavailing grief. He had to feed several hungry mouths, which, like the daughters of the horse-leech, were continually crying, "Give, give!" The wants of his family roused him from his momentary stupor, and impelled him to adopt every means in his power for the support of his wife and children. Of means he had scarcely any. He had, in fact, nothing to fall back upon except the good-will of the ever ready Golak Poddár, the money-lender. Golak kindly came to his rescue, and Shylock though he was, he was so greatly affected at Govinda's pitiable situation, that, on this occasion, he lent him money on less interest than formerly. It took Govinda, however, a long time to be restored to the state in which he had been before the *pancham* and the *haptam* were brought to bear upon him. The debt pressed upon him heavily; and it was not till nine or ten years had elapsed after the auction that he was able to pay off the debt. The history of those ten years, as it was a history of silent suffering and

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self-denial, I shall not here recount; thus much I may state, that when he paid his last instalment to the *mahájan*, he celebrated the event by giving a feast to his friends and relatives.

## CHAPTER LX.

### THE EPIDEMIC.

With his breath he draws,  
A plague into his blood ; and cannot use  
Life's necessary means, but he must die.

*The Task.*

WE have seen in the last chapter that Govinda gradually extricated himself out of the wretched plight to which he had been reduced by the zamindár. It now seemed as if the cloud of adversity had been dissipated for ever, and as if Govinda was destined to pass the evening of his life in peace and prosperity. But Providence had determined otherwise. In the year 1870, Kánchanpur was visited by a terrible epidemic. That dreadful plague had years before manifested itself amid the marshes of the district of Jessore; and year after year it had been marching

westwards, not only decimating the population, but depopulating entire villages and reducing them to jungles, the abode of the hyena and the tiger. It crossed the Bhágirathi, and fell upon the towns and villages pleasantly situated on its right bank, and hurried to untimely graves thousands of the population. It showed itself in the form of a wasting fever, which no medicines could allay. The demon of the epidemic stalked from village to village, from district to district; and its ghastly form spread dismay and consternation wherever it went. Of the origin of this "scourge of God," no rational account could be given. Some people ascribed it to the rank vegetation with which the villages had been covered; others to the accumulated filth of centuries; and others still, to the checking of drainage by the laying on of the iron road. But, whatever the cause, there could be no question but that the epidemic carried off a large per centage of the population.

East Burdwan had always been regarded as one of the healthiest districts in the country. The dryness of its soil, its comparative elevation, its proximity to that long range of hills which, under various names,

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stretches from one end of the Indian peninsula to the other, its freedom from rank vegetation, its want of stagnant pools and stagnant marshes, and its thorough cultivation, made it a delightful garden; and so salubrious was its air, and so medicinal its waters, that people from Calcutta and the eastern districts repaired to Burdwan as to a sanatorium. But all this was now changed. The malignant genius of the epidemic entered the district, and infected its air, and poisoned its waters, and the smiling plains of Burdwan were converted into scenes of suffering and desolation. When the first case of epidemic fever occurred at Kánchanpur, its inhabitants were filled with dismay, and though the case did not prove fatal, the consternation of the people did not diminish. The fever went from one end of the village to the other, killing some people, and reducing others to skeletons. Govinda had never seen so many people die in the village. Every day the solemn sound of "Hari, Hari bol! Hari bol! Hari!" was heard in the streets, and announced to the terrified inhabitants the exit of their fellow-villagers from this transitory scene. The fire at the burning tanks was not put

out; when the remains of one man were reduced to ashes, those of another were ready for cremation. The oldest inhabitant declared that he had never witnessed such a dreadful visitation. From nearly every house were heard the sounds of lamentation and weeping; and the people in the streets looked more like ghosts than human beings clothed in flesh and blood. The physicians of the village, who followed the ancient Hindu method of medicine, were powerless. A benevolent Government was sending native practitioners of medicine, according to the European system, to the infected villages; and Kánchanpur was fortunate enough in getting one. A charitable dispensary was established in the village, at which quinine was dealt out liberally. The native doctor was overwhelmed with work; he had no rest either by day or by night. Despite, however, his indefatigable exertions, the plague was not stayed.

The unwelcome visitant did not for a long time enter the homestead of Govinda; and as the rage of the epidemic was evidently abating, he congratulated himself on his escape. But his mother, Sundari, always regarded these congratulations as ominous.

She would sometimes say, "Oh, my child, Govinda! don't say we have escaped. If you say so, we are sure to be attacked." Sundari proved a true prophetess. The epidemic fever was upon Govinda, and he lay prostrate for weeks. Other members of the family also got it, but they soon recovered. It was now Sundari's turn, and she fell a victim. The distress of the humble family at this calamitous event can be more easily imagined than described, especially as it took place at a time when Govinda himself had hardly regained his strength. "Oh gods!" cried he, in extreme agony, "for what sin of mine are you punishing me so severely? What dreadful sin had I committed in my former birth that you are visiting me with such terrible afflictions? Why do you not make an end of me once for all? Why torment me after this fashion? Why cut my body, as it were, into slices, and put salt into them? Oh, Vidhátá! didst thou write all this on my forehead? Oh, my mother! my dearest mother! who never didst rebuke me, who never didst speak to me angrily once in thy life; Oh, thou, the best of mothers, where art thou gone? Where art thou gone, leaving

thy Govinda in this forlorn state?" Such were the exclamations uttered by Govinda on this sorrowful occasion. He wept rivers of tears, and dashed his head on the ground. All this may seem extravagant to the English reader; but it is to be remembered that in Bengal, as in all India, the parental and filial affections are livelier and more intense than amongst the inhabitants of colder regions, and amongst nations who are not accustomed to the peculiar joint-family system of the Hindus.

Though Govinda's grief was sharp and poignant, it soon subsided. A firm belief in predestination reconciles the Hindu to every event in life, however calamitous. It was so decreed by the gods, therefore it has happened—such was the thought that allayed Govinda's grief. For a whole month Govinda was in mourning, and subjected himself to privations similar to those which he had endured at the time of his father's death. The mourning ended with the performance of a religious ceremony. Govinda, like all orthodox Hindus and dutiful Hindu sons, performed the ceremony with suitable pomp. He gave to every Brāhman of the village a priestly fee of four

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annas. He gave a feast to all his caste-men living at Kánchanpur and in the surrounding villages. And lastly, he had to give both rice and pice to hundreds of poor men, beggars, and religious mendicants, who on such occasions crowd to the houses of all classes of Hindus. All this entailed considerable expense; and as Govinda's exchequer was seldom solvent, he had again to consign himself to the tender mercies of the eternal blood-sucker, Golak Poddár. The English reader may exclaim, "Govinda must have been a fool to spend money on such an occasion, especially as he had no money." Fool or no fool, he had to spend it. Whether he had money or not is beside the point. Spend he must, whether he had it or not. The customs of the country, the laws of Hindu society, the Hindu religion, all demand it. If Govinda had not made the usual presents and given the customary feasts, he would have lowered himself in the estimation of his caste-men. He would have been black-balled. There was therefore no help for it.

## CHAPTER LXI.

THE END.

He calls for Famine, and the meagre fiend  
Blows mildew from between his shrivelled lips,  
And taints the golden ear.

*The Task.*

It is a trite saying that misfortunes never come singly ; they always come in clusters. This was the case pre-eminently with our hero, Govinda Sámanta. Wave succeeded wave ; after he had recovered from the shock of one, another was ready to overwhelm him. He had hitherto nobly kept his head above the waters, right manfully riding upon every wave that came rolling upon him in never-ending succession. But his strength had been exhausted by repeated exertions, and no wonder he succumbed at last under the terrible calamity of 1873.

Early in the beginning of that year the eagle eye

of Sir George Campbell discovered from the watch-tower of Belvidere the approach of a formidable enemy in the north-western corner of the territories over which he bore sway. He looked at the sky, and behold, it was brass. He looked at the earth, and behold, it was flint. With characteristic energy he blew the note of alarm. The Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, who had been taking repose on the heights of Simla, after the harassing labours of the preceding twelvemonth, left the hills, and hurried to the capital. Consultations were held; accurate accounts of the state of the country were called for; the probable magnitude and extent of the threatened famine were estimated; and wise plans were adopted for alleviating, if not entirely averting, the impending calamity. Day after day, week after week, month after month, millions of the population looked up anxiously to the skies, to discover a cloud of the size even of a man's hand. But not a speck was seen in the blue canopy. The heavens had been completely shut up. When there was no doubt that famine would be sore in a part, at least, of Bengal, the supreme and the local Governments made extra-

ordinary exertions to store up food for starving millions. Never did any Government in the world act, in the face of a great calamity, with such promptitude, such presence of mind, such energy, such considerate benevolence, as the Government of Lord Northbrook. And yet it is a singular fact, that there are people in India, both Englishmen and natives, who thought that the famine was a hoax, that it was "got up" by Sir George Campbell, and that the show was kept up by his able successor, Sir Richard Temple. Such people would have believed in the existence of the famine, only if they had seen myriads of the population die of starvation. The fact is, the paucity of deaths was owing, not to the slight character of the famine, but to the extraordinary energy of the Government, and to the splendid organization of relief, which was due chiefly to the high administrative ability of Sir Richard Temple.

Though the famine was not so sore in the district of Burdwan as it was in Behar, the population suffered greatly from an insufficient harvest. Govinda's fields at Kánchanpur did not produce a fourth of the usual annual crop. As he had no other

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means of support than the produce of his fields, he was in great distress. He had food for himself and his family for three months; what was he to do for the remaining nine months? He could not get work as a day-labourer in the village, as most of his fellow-villagers were in equal distress with himself. There was therefore nothing left for him but to go to Burdwan, where Máharájáh Mahtáp Chánd Bahádur — the greatest landholder in Bengal — was with characteristic benevolence creating work for about two thousand labourers every day, with a view only to give them relief. It was with a heavy heart, and with tears in his eyes, that Govinda left his home, and wended his way towards Burdwan. He had never in his life hired himself out as a day-labourer. He had always tilled his paternal acres, and lived upon their produce. But now, in mature life, he had to stoop to the degradation of becoming a coolie. This thought dried up his life's blood. Like other labourers, he certainly worked on the Máharájáh's relief works, and got his daily wages. But the thought of his degradation haunted him by day and by night. It preyed upon his spirits. He wept day

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and night over his wretched lot. His health visibly declined. He was reduced to a skeleton. His heart was broken. And one morning he was found dead in his miserable hovel, far from his home and from those he loved. His son, on hearing the mournful news, hastened to Burdwan, put the remains of his father on the funeral pile, and reduced them to ashes. Thus was Govinda delivered from all his troubles.

## GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS.

- Aibara-bhāt*.—Literally, bachelor's rice; the dinners given to a man shortly before his marriage.
- Alakta*.—Lac; leaves or flimsy paper saturated with lac.
- Āman*.—The principal crop of rice; winter rice.
- Āmra*.—The hog-plum; *Spondias magnifera*.
- Andarmahal*.—The inner part of a house; that is, the women's apartments.
- Annaprāsana*.—The ceremony of giving rice for food to an infant for the first time, generally performed when the child is six months old.
- Anārhabhojana*.—Same as *Aibara-bhāt*.
- Arhar*.—A kind of pulse (*Cytisus cajan*).
- Āske*.—A sort of cake made of pounded rice.
- Asoucha*.—Ceremonial uncleanness consequent on a death in a family.
- Asvatha*.—*Ficus religiosa*.
- Ātapa*.—Rice of unboiled paddy.
- Ātkouriyā*.—A ceremony so called from there being used in it eight sorts of fried pulse and cowries.
- Auksālá, or Ikshusālá*.—A temporary hut raised for expressing the juice of the sugar-cane and turning it into molasses.
- Aus*.—Spring rice; literally, ripening in a short time.
- Bāblá*.—The babool tree (*Acacia Arabica*).
- Bāgde*.—A low-caste Hindu.
- Bainchi*.—A shrub and its fruit (*Flacourtia sapida*).
- Bakula*.—*Mimusops Elengi*.
- Bálá*.—Ornament for the wrist.
- Bandhu*.—A friend.
- Bara-ghar*.—The big room.
- Barbati*.—A sort of pulse (*Embelia*).
- Bari*.—Little balls made of mashed pulse, dried in the sun, and used in curry, or fried separately.
- Bat*.—*Ficus indica*.

- Bátásá.*—A light cake of sugar.
- Beri.*—A pair of tongs for taking down a pot from the hearth.
- Bhát.*—Boiled rice.
- Bhujno.*—Same as *Annaprāsana*.
- Bhuta.*—A ghost.
- Bhutanath.*—Lord of ghosts: a name of the god Siva.
- Bhutariya.*—An expeller of ghosts from a person possessed: an exorcist.
- Bibi.*—A lady; applied by Hindus especially to a European lady.
- Bidhátá, or Vidhátá.*—Purusha. The Creator.
- Bigha.*—About a third part of an acre.
- Bishuti.*—A stinging plant (*Tragia involucrata*).
- Bonti.*—A sickle placed erect on a wooden frame for chopping.
- Bouti.*—An ornament for the arm.
- Brahmadaitya.*—A Brahman ghost.
- Burkundáz.*—A police constable.
- Chádar.*—A sheet or scarf for the body.
- Chandimandap.*—Literally the house of the goddess Chandi or Durga; but it usually means a sitting-room in the outer yard of a house.
- Chandrahár.*—An ornament for the neck.
- Charitámrita.*—Literally, the nectar of biography—a biographical memoir of the Bengali reformer, Chaitanya, is so-called.
- Charká.*—Spinning-wheel.
- Chásá.*—Husbandman.
- Chaturdola.*—A litter used for carrying a bridegroom or bride.
- Chhálnátalá.*—An awning under which the marriage ceremony is performed.
- Chhari.*—A stick.
- Chhenchki.*—A hodge-podge of vegetables.
- Chhoto-bahu.*—The wife of a younger brother.
- Chichinga.*—Snake gourd (*Trichosanthes anguina*).
- Chira.*—Flattened rice.
- Chongá.*—A piece of bamboo, between two joints, used as a phial for oil.
- Dá.*—A bill-hook; a husbandman's knife.
- Dadhi.*—Curds.
- Daivajna.*—An astrologer.
- Dál.*—Pulse.
- Dán.*—Gift; presents.
- Danda.*—The sixtieth part of one day and night, that is, twenty-four minutes.
- Dándá-gulí.*—The bat and ball used by Bengalis.
- Dhenki.*—The pedal; instrument for husking corn.
- Dhol.*—A sort of drum; tom-tom.
- Dhuti.*—The lower garment of a Bengali, usually a piece of cloth five yards long, and a yard and a half broad. The dhuti of the lower classes is shorter and narrower.

- Dighi* or *dirghiká*.—An oblong shallow pond.
- Dom*.—A low caste Hindu, especially engaged in making baskets of wickerwork.
- Duli*.—A litter for conveying women chiefly.
- Durgápuja*.—The annual celebration of the worship of the goddess Durgá.
- Gamasta*.—Agent of a zamindár.
- Gámchhá*.—Bathing towel.
- Gaya asvatha*.—A species of *Ficus cordifolia*.
- Ghát*.—Landing-place of a tank or river.
- Ghatak*.—A professional match-maker.
- Ghati*.—Waterpot.
- Ghi*.—Clarified butter.
- Ginni (Grihini)*.—House-mother.
- Godá*.—A large baboon.
- Gonthuli*.—Literally, *cow's dust*, twilight so-called, from cows returning from the fields in the evening, and kicking up the dust.
- Govála*.—Neatherd; a name of the god Krishna.
- Gosála*.—Cow-houso.
- Gosvámi*.—Literally the lord of cows, a spiritual director.
- Got*.—An ornament for the waist.
- Gotama*.—Founder of the Indian system of logic.
- Gotra*.—Race, tribe.
- Guru*.—Spiritual director.
- Gurumahásaya*.—Schoolmaster.
- Hánđi*.—Earthen pot, generally used in cooking food.
- Hári*.—The sweeper-caste.
- Haridra*.—Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*).
- Hari-lut*.—Literally, Hari's plunder, a ceremony at child-birth.
- Hát*.—Market.
- Hát*.—The hand.
- Hátá*.—An iron ladle or spoon.
- Hátchhari*.—Striking on the palm of the hand by a cane.
- Háte*.—In the hand.
- Huká*.—Smoking apparatus, hookah.
- Indra*.—One of the Hindoo gods, king of Heaven.
- Jajajhampa*.—A sort of drum, so called from its sound.
- Jám*.—A tree and its fruit (*Eugenia jambos*).
- Jhúmp*.—A mat-door, a screen made of palmyra leaves and split bamboo.
- Jhumko*.—An ornament for the ear.
- Kabulyat*.—Counterpart to a *pátá*, written agreement given by a *raiyat* to a zamindar, assenting to the conditions on which he holds land.
- Kachu*.—Arum indicum.
- Kachhari*.—Cutcherry, court-house.
- Kadmá*.—A kind of sweetmeat.
- Kalam*.—Reed for writing, calamus.
- Kalai*.—A sort of pulse.
- Kalasi*.—A water-pot.

- Kalki*.—Tobacco-bowl for the huka.  
*Kamádeva*.—God of love.  
*Kamarsáldá*.—Smithy.  
*Kanchi*.—A bamboo twig.  
*Kánsi*.—A musical instrument in the form of a metallic plate, also the player on it.  
*Kánthala*.—Jack tree and its fruit.  
*Kanyá*.—Daughter, bride.  
*Kanyá-Sampradána*.—The giving away of a daughter in marriage.  
*Kapála*.—The forehead.  
*Karaniya*.—Reckoning by karis or shells.  
*Karánja*.—A tree and its fruit (*Pongamia glabra*).  
*Kári*.—Cowries, small shells.  
*Kartikeya*.—God of war and of beauty.  
*Káste*.—Sickle.  
*Kítári*.—A bill-hook, a husband-man's knife.  
*Katbel*.—A tree and its fruit (*Feronia elephantium*).  
*Káthá*.—A measure of land about four cubits square, or six feet long.  
*Káthákali*.—Measurement of land.  
*Kaviráj*.—A physician.  
*Káyastha*.—The highest Sudra caste, the writer caste.  
*Keutiya*.—A species of *Cobra de capello*.  
*Khábár*.—Food.  
*Khadi*.—Fried paddy.  
*Khágrá*.—Species of reed (*Saccharum spontaneum*).  
*Kháichur*.—A kind of sweetmeat; literally, pounded fried paddy.  
*Khájá*.—A kind of sweetmeat.  
*Khájná*.—Land rent.  
*Khali*.—Mustard oil-cake.  
*Khari*.—Chalk; ochre.  
*Khát*.—A bedstead with tester-frames and posts for mosquito curtains.  
*Khenki*.—An ill-natured, snarling woman.  
*Khoka*.—A male infant.  
*Khonrá*.—Lame.  
*Khud*.—Broken rice.  
*Kodáli*.—Hoe; spade.  
*Kúlin*.—High in rank.  
*Kuputra*.—An unworthy son.  
*Kurul*.—Axe.  
*Lagna*.—Auspicious time, astrologically speaking.  
*Lákhraj*.—Rent-free land.  
*Lakshmi*.—Goddess of wealth and beauty.  
*Láru*.—Sweetmeat, especially in the shape of balls.  
*Lavanga-latá*.—A scandent shrub (*Limonia scandens*).  
*Lekhá-pará*.—Reading and writing; education.  
*Lotá*.—A brass pot.  
*Maharir*.—Writer; clerk.  
*Mahásaya*.—Schoolmaster.  
*Mal*.—Silver rings for the ankles.  
*Mál*.—Snake-catcher, or charmer.  
*Málákar*.—Florist; dealer in flowers.

- Mamdo*.—A Muhammadan ghost.
- Man*.—Forty seers, or 80 lbs. avoirdupois.
- Manasá-Devi*.—The goddess of snakes.
- Mandal*.—Head-man of a village.
- Mankasha*.—Working of a sum (in arithmetic) in *man*.
- Mantra*.—Prayer; incantation.
- Marai*.—Storehouse of paddy.
- Masál*.—A torch, usually made of rags soaked in oil.
- Mitá*.—A friend.
- Modá*.—A kind of sweetmeat.
- Mudi*.—A grocer.
- Muga*.—A species of pulse (*Phaseolus aureus*).
- Muri*.—Parched rice.
- Murki*.—Parched rice soaked in treacle.
- Nath*.—Ring for the nose.
- Navinna*.—Literally, new rice; the festival of first fruits.
- Nándá*.—A large earthen vessel.
- Nápit*.—A barber.
- Nápitni*.—A barber's wife.
- Nisi*.—Night.
- Nousádar*.—Sal ammoniac.
- Ojhá*.—One who cures persons possessed, or bitten by serpents.
- Olá*.—A kind of sweetmeat.
- Padre*.—A clergyman; father.
- Págri*.—Head-dress.
- Painchhá*.—Bracelet.
- Páká*.—Ripe; complete.
- Palákánti*.—A string of coral beads for the wrist.
- Palása*.—*Butea frondosa*.
- Pálki*.—A conveyance carried on the shoulders of four people, palanqueen.
- Pánchan*.—Bamboo stick.
- Panchánan*.—The Five-faced, a god with five faces and fifteen eyes.
- Pán*.—Betel-leaf.
- Pandit*.—A learned man.
- Paniphal*.—An aquatic plant and its fruit (*Trapa bicornis*).
- Papaya*.—A tree and its fruit (*Carica papaya*).
- Pásá*.—Ornament for the ear.
- Pátá*.—A document given by a zamindár to a ráiyat specifying the conditions on which land is held.
- Patal*.—A cucurbitaceous fruit (*Trichosanthes dioica*).
- Pátáli*.—A cake of molasses.
- Páthsáldá*.—School, school-house.
- Pausha*.—Half of December and half of January.
- Petni*.—A dirty female ghost.
- Phálgun*.—Half of February and half of March.
- Phalsá*.—A tree and its fruit (*Grewia Asiatica*).
- Phánrá*.—Misfortune or accident as recorded in a horoscope.
- Phánri*.—A subordinate police station.
- Phánridár*.—A constable in charge of a phanri.
- Phuthalai*.—Fried peas.

- Pimri*.—A low stool.
- Pithá*.—Cake made of pounded rice.
- Podá*.—Half-pound.
- Prahara*.—Eighth part of day and night, that is, three hours.
- P'rajápati*.—Creator, the god that presides over marriages.
- Purohita*.—Priest.
- Ráiyat*.—A cultivator.
- Rákhál*.—Cowherd, shepherd.
- Raktakamala*.—The red water-lily (*Nelumbium speciosum*).
- Rámkhari*.—A sort of chalk.
- Rangmasál*.—Bengal light.
- Rirhi*.—Belonging to the country of Rarh, the districts on the western side of the river Bhagirathi.
- Rasanchauki*.—A sort of musical instrument.
- Rasagolla*.—A kind of sweetmeat.
- Rásináma*.—The zodiacal, or astronomical name of a person.
- Ráyabághini*.—A tigress, metaphorically used for a termagant.
- Rishi*.—A Hindu saint.
- Rohita*.—A species of fish (*Cyprinus denticulatus*).
- Sábásh*.—Well-done !
- Sadgopa*.—The agricultural caste.
- Saheb*.—A European.
- Saheb-lok*.—Europeans.
- Síl*.—A tree (*Shorea robusta*).
- Sínái*.—Flute ; flute-player.
- Sángát*.—Friend.
- Sankhachurni*. { —Female ghosts of  
*Sankhachinni*. { white complexion.
- Sankshipta-sára*.—A treatise on Sanskrit Grammar, used in Western Bengal.
- Sara*.—A species of reed (*Saccharum sara*).
- Sardár-poro*.—Senior scholars in a village school.
- Saresvati*.—Goddess of wisdom.
- Sári*.—A piece of cloth about five yards long and one yard broad, worn by women.
- Sarkár*.—An agent ; a writer.
- Saruchakli*.—A thin sort of cake made of pounded rice.
- Satya-yuga*.—The true or golden age.
- Satranja*.—A coarse Indian cotton carpet.
- Sayyátoláni*.—Fee exacted by the friends of the bride from the friends of the bridegroom in the Vásarghar.
- Ser*.—One pound avoirdupois.
- Serkashá*.—Working of a sum in *ser*s.
- Sidá*.—A gift of rice, pulse, vegetables, oil, &c.
- Síl*.—Curry-stone.
- Siva*.—A Hindu god.
- Skandakátá*.—Headless ghosts.
- Sloka*.—A couplet in poetry.
- Solá*.—The Indian cork-plant (*Æschynomene paludosa*).
- Sráddha*.—Funeral ceremonies.
- Sripthal*.—A tree and its fruit (*Cratæva marmelos*).
- Srotriya*.—A class of Brahmans.

- Subhankara*.—An eminent Indian arithmetician.
- Sudhkaśhā*.—Interest in arithmetic.
- Suktārā*.—Venus, or the morning star.
- Sutikā-griha*.—The lying-in-room.
- Sutra*.—Aphorisms.
- Surarna-Vanik*.—The banker caste.
- Tābij*.—Ornament for the arm.
- Taktaposh*.—A wooden frame used for sitting on or sleeping.
- Tāl*.—*Borassus flabelliformis*.
- Tanpurā*.—A musical instrument.
- Tarkāri*.—Curry.
- Tejpatra*.—A leaf (*Laurus cassia*) put in curry to give flavour.
- Tol*.—A Sanskrit school.
- Tolā*.—Cess, fee, exaction.
- Topiwālā*.—Hat-man, a person wearing a beaver hat, that is to say, a European.
- Tulasi*.—The sacred basil (*Ocimum sanctum*).
- Uchhe*.—A vegetable (*Momordica muricata*).
- Ugra-kshatriya*.—A Sudra caste engaged chiefly in husbandry.
- Ulu*.—An exclamation of joy made by women at the time of marriage.
- Uthan*.—The open yard of a house.
- Vāydān*.—Betrothal.
- Vaidya*.—The medical caste.
- Vairāgi*.—A mendicant.
- Vaishnava*.—A follower of Vishnu, especially in the form of Chaitanya.
- Vāsarghar*.—The room in which a married couple spend their first night.
- Vedantism*.—A system of Hindu pantheism.
- Vijaganita*.—Algebra.
- Vijamantra*.—The seed-prayer, the essence of prayer supposed to be expressed in certain unmeaning sounds.
- Vinā*.—A musical instrument.
- Visvakarma*.—The Creator, the Indian Vulcan.
- Yaksha*.—Fabulous beings in Hindu mythology.
- Yama*.—The Indian Pluto.
- Yānti*.—Betel-nut-cracker.
- Zilla*.—District.

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