

HISTORY

OF

I N D I A.

INTRODUCTION.

INDIA is bounded by the Hémaláya mountains, the river Indus, and the sea. INTROD.

Its length from Cashmír to Cape Comorin is about 1900 British miles; and its breadth from the mouth of the Indus to the mountains east of the Baramputra considerably upwards of 1500 British miles. Bound-
aries and
extent of
India.

It is crossed from east to west by a chain of mountains, called those of Vindya, which extends between the twenty-third and twenty-fifth parallels of latitude, nearly from the desert north-west of Guzerát, to the Ganges. Natural
divisions.

The country to the north of this chain is now called Hindostan, and that to the south of it, the Deckan.* Hindostan
and the
Deckan.

* The Mogul emperors fixed the Nerbadda for the limit of their provinces in those two great divisions, but the division of *the nations* is made by the Vindya mountains. It is well remarked by Sir W. Jones and Major Rennell, that both banks of rivers in Asia are generally inhabited by the same community.

INTROD.

Natural
 divisions of
 Hindostan.

Hindostan is composed of the basin of the Indus, that of the Ganges, the desert towards the Indus, and the high tract recently called Central India.

The upper part of the basin of the Indus (now called the Panjáb) is open and fertile to the east of the Hydaspes, but rugged to the west of that river, and sandy towards the junction of the five rivers. After the Indus forms one stream, it flows through a plain between mountains and the desert, of which only the part within reach of its waters is productive. As it approaches the sea, it divides into several branches, and forms a fertile though ill-cultivated delta.

The basin of the Ganges (though many of the streams which water it have their rise in hilly countries, and though the central part is not free from diversity of surface) may be said on the whole to be one vast and fertile plain. This tract was the residence of the people who first figure in the history of India; and it is still the most advanced in civilisation of all the divisions of that country.

A chain of hills, known in the neighbourhood by the name of Aravalli, is connected by lower ranges with the western extremity of the Vindya

The rule applies to Europe, and is as true of the Rhine or the Po as of the Ganges and the Nile. Rivers are precise and convenient limits for artificial divisions, but they are no great obstacles to communication; and, to form a natural separation between nations, requires the real obstructions of a mountain chain.

mountains on the borders of Guzerát, and stretches up to a considerable distance beyond Ajmír, in the direction of Delhi; forming the division between the desert on the west and the central table land. It would be more correct to say *the level* of the desert; for the south-eastern portion, including Jódpúr, is a fertile country. Except this tract, all between the Aravalli mountains and the Indus, from the Satlaj or Hysudrus on the north to near the sea on the south, is a waste of sand, in which are oases of different size and fertility, the greatest of which is round Jéssalmír. The narrow tract of Cach intervenes between the desert and the sea, and makes a sort of bridge from Guzerát to Sind. Central India is the smallest of these four natural divisions. It is a table land of uneven surface, from 1500 to 2500 feet above the sea, bounded by the Aravalli mountains on the west, and those of Vindya on the south; supported on the east by a lower range in Bundelcand, and sloping gradually on the north-east into the basin of the Ganges. It is a diversified but fertile tract.

INTROD.

The Vindya mountains form the southern limit of Hindostan; but beyond them, separated by the deep valley of the Nerbadda, is a parallel chain called Injádri or Sátpúra, which must be crossed before we reach the next natural division in the valley of the Tapti. This small tract is low; but the rest of the Deckan is almost entirely occupied by a table land of triangular form, about the level of that of Central India, supported on all sides by

Natural
divisions
of the
Deckan.

INTROD. ranges of hills. The two longest ranges, which run towards the south, follow the form of the peninsula, and between them and the sea lies a low narrow tract, forming a sort of belt round the whole coast. The hills which support the table land are called the Gháts. The range to the west is the highest and most marked; and the low tract beneath it narrowest and most rugged.

The table land itself is greatly diversified in surface and fertility. Two parts, however, are strongly distinguished, and the limit between them may be marked by the Warda, from its source in the Injádri range, north-west of Nágpúr, to its junction with the Godáveri, and then by the joint rivers to the sea. All to the north and east of these rivers is a vast forest, spotted with villages, and sometimes interrupted by cultivated tracts of considerable extent. To the south-west of the rivers, the country, though varied, is generally open and cultivated.

Guzerát and Bengal are regarded by the natives as neither included in Hindostan nor the Deckan; they differ greatly from each other, but each has a resemblance to the part of Hindostan which adjoins to it.

Though the Deckan, properly speaking, includes all to the south of the Vindya mountains, yet, in modern practice, it is often limited to the part between that chain and the river Kishna.

Superficial
 measure-
 ment and

The superficial extent of India is estimated at 1,287,483 square miles. The population may be

EXTENT AND POPULATION.

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taken at 140,000,000 ; but this is the *present* population ; in very early Hindú times it was certainly much less, and in later days probably much greater.*

INTROD.

 population
 of India.

* These estimates cannot pretend to accuracy. Hamilton (*Description of Hindostan*, vol. i. page 37.) conjectured the number of square miles to be 1,280,000, and the population 134,000,000.

An official Report laid before the Committee of the House of Commons on Indian affairs, October 11. 1831, will (if certain blanks be filled up) make the extent in square miles 1,287,483, and the population 140,722,700. The following are the particulars : —

	Square Miles.	Population.
Bengal Lower provinces -	153,802	37,500,000
Bengal Upper provinces -	66,510	32,200,000
Bengal cessions from Berár -	85,700	(1.) 3,200,000
Total Bengal -	306,012	72,900,000
Madras -	141,923	13,500,000
Bombay -	64,938	(2.) 6,800,000
Total British possessions -	512,873	93,200,000
Allied States -	614,610	(3.) 43,022,700
Ranjít Sing possessions in the Panjáb -	(4.) 60,000	3,500,000
Sind -	100,000	1,000,000
Total of all India -	1,287,483	140,722,700

The superficial extent of the British territories and those of the allies is given in the above Report ; the former from actual survey, and the latter partly from survey and partly from computation.

The population of the British territories is also from the Report, and is founded on official estimates, except in the following instances, where I computed the numbers.

(1.) The cessions from Berár amount to near 86,000 square miles ; of these, 30,000 on the Nerbadda are comparatively well

INTROD. The population is very unequally distributed. In one very extensive district of Bengal Proper (Bardwán), it was ascertained to be 600 souls to the square mile.* In some forest tracts, ten to the square mile might be an exaggeration.

Though the number of large towns and cities

peopled; and I have allowed them sixty souls to the square mile. The remaining 56,000 are so full of forests, that I have only allowed twenty-five souls to the square mile.

(2.) For one district, under Bombay (the Northern Concan), the extent is given from survey, but without a guess at the population. I have allowed the same rate as that of the adjoining district (the Southern Concan), which is 100 to the square mile. It is probably too much, but the amount is so small as to make the error immaterial.

(3.) No estimate is given of the population of the allied states, some parts of which have 300 or 400 the square mile, while others are nearly deserts. On consideration, I allow seventy souls to the square mile, which makes the population 43,022,700.

(4.) The area and population of Sind, and the *population* of the Panjáb, are taken from *Burnes's Travels*, vol. ii. p. 286. and vol. iii. p. 227. The *extent* of the Panjáb is little more than a guess, which I have hazarded, rather than leave the statement incomplete.

The extent of Europe is about 2,793,000 square miles, and the population 227,700,000. ("Companion to the Almanack for 1829," from Walkenaer and Balbi.) If we deduct the 1,758,700 square miles in Russia, Sweden, and Norway, as proposed by Major Rennell, for the sake of comparison, we find the rest of Europe containing 1,035,300 square miles, and India 1,294,602, being nearly a third greater than Europe. But Europe, when freed from the northern wastes, has the advantage in population; for, after deducting Russia, Sweden, and Norway, about 60,518,000 souls, Europe has still 167,182,000 souls, and India only 140,000,000.

* Mr. Bayley, *Asiatic Researches*, xii. 549.

POPULATION.

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in India is remarkable, none of them are very INTROD.
 populous. In their present state of decline, none
 exceed the population of second-rate cities in
 Europe. Calcutta, without its suburbs, has only
 265,000 inhabitants; and not more than two or
 three of the others can have above 200,000 fixed
 population.*

A tract, extending from 8° north latitude to 35°, Climate
and sea-
sons.
 and varying in height from the level of the sea to
 the summits of Hémaláya, must naturally include
 the extremes of heat and cold; but on the general
 level of India within the great northern chain, the
 diversity is comparatively inconsiderable.

The characteristic of the climate, compared to
 that of Europe, is heat. In a great part of the
 country the sun is scorching for three months in the
 year †; even the wind is hot, the land is brown
 and parched, dust flies in whirlwinds, all brooks
 become dry, small rivers scarcely keep up a stream,
 and the largest are reduced to comparatively nar-
 row channels in the midst of vast sandy beds.

In winter, slight frost sometimes takes place for
 an hour or two about sunrise; but this is only in the
 parts of the country which lie far north, or are
 much elevated above the sea. At a low level, if to-

* For Calcutta, see the Report of the House of Commons,
 October 11. 1831. For Benares, see *Asiatic Researches*, xvii. 474.
 479., where it is stated that 200,000 constitutes the fixed po-
 pulation of the city and suburbs, and that 100,000 more may
 come in on the greatest occasions of pilgrimage.

† The thermometer often rises above 100° during part of the
 hottest days. It has been known to reach 120°.

INTROD. wards the south, the greatest cold in winter is only moderate heat ; and on an average of the whole of India, it is not much more than what is marked *temperate* on our thermometers ; while the hottest time of the day, even at that period, rises above our *summer heat*. The cold, however, is much greater to the feelings than would be supposed from the thermometer.

In the months which approach to neither extreme, the temperature is higher than in the heat of summer in Italy.

The next peculiarity in the climate of India is the periodical rainy season. The rains are brought from the Indian Ocean by a south-west wind, (or monsoon, as it is called,) which lasts from June to October. They are heaviest near the sea, especially in low countries, unless in situations protected by mountains. The coast of Coromandel, for instance, is sheltered from the south-west monsoon by the Gháts and the table land, and receives its supply of rain in October and November, when the wind blows from the north-east across the Bay of Bengal. The intenseness of the fall of rain can scarcely be conceived in Europe. Though it is confined to four months, and in them many days of every month, and many hours of every day, are fair, yet the whole fall of rain in India is considerably more than double that which is distributed over the whole twelve months in England.

The variations that have been mentioned divide the year into three seasons : the hot, the rainy, and

the cold, or rather temperate ; which last is a good deal longer than either of the other two. INTROD.

The fertile soil and rich productions of India have long been proverbial. Natural
produc-
tions.

Its forests contain many timber trees, among which the teak is, for ship building, and most other purposes, at least equal to the oak. The *sál* is a lofty and useful timber tree : sandal, ebony, and other rare and beautiful woods are found in different quantities, but often in profusion. Banyan trees, cotton trees *, sissou (or blackwood trees), mangoes, tamarinds, and other ornamental and useful trees are scattered over the cultivated country. The *bábul*, (*Mimosa Arabica*, or gum arabic tree,) with its sweet-scented yellow flower, grows in profusion, both in the woods and plains, as do two kinds of acacia and various other flowering trees. Mulberries are planted in great numbers, and are the means of furnishing a large supply of silk. The cocoa, palmyra, and other palms are common. The first of these yields a nut filled with a milky fluid, and lined with a thick coating of kernel, which is serviceable as food, and on account of the oil which is manufactured from it to a vast extent. The shell is used for cups and other vessels, some of which are in universal use. The thick husk, in which the nut is enveloped, is composed

* This is not the low shrub which bears common cotton, but a lofty tree covered at one time with flowers of glowing crimson, and at another with pods, in which the seeds are encased in a substance resembling cotton, but lighter and more silky in its texture.

INTROD. of fibres, which form a valuable cordage, and make the best sort of cable. The wood, though not capable of being employed in carpenter's work, is peculiarly adapted to pipes for conveying water, beams for broad but light wooden bridges, and other purposes, where length is more required than solidity. The bamboo, being hollow, light, and strong, is almost as generally useful: when entire, the varieties in its size make it equally fit for the lance of the soldier, the pole of his tent, or the mast which sustains the lofty ensign of his chief; for the ordinary staff of the peasant, or for the rafter of his cottage. All scaffolding in India is composed of bamboos, kept together by ropes instead of nails. When split, its long and flexible fibre adapts it to baskets, mats, and innumerable other purposes; and when cut across at the joints, it forms a bottle often used for oil, milk, and spirits.

The wood of the palm is employed in the same manner as that of the cocoa tree: its leaves also are used for the thatch, and even for the walls, of cottages; while the sap, which it yields on incision (as well as that of the bastard date tree), supplies a great proportion of the spirituous liquor consumed in India.

The mahua (a timber tree of the size of an oak, which abounds in all the forests,) produces a fleshy flower, from which also a great deal of spirit is distilled; while it is still more important as an article of food among the hill tribes. To return to the palms, another beautiful specimen bears a nut,