

Copy of a LETTER from the Reverend Dr. *Claudius Buchanan* to the Court of Directors of The *East India* Company, dated the 8th June 1813;—containing his further Observations on Mr. *Buller's* Statements, relative to the Idol JAGGERNAUT.

To the Court of DIRECTORS of The Honourable The *East India* Company.

Honourable Sirs,

MY former Letter to your Honourable Court, of the 25th May, having been hastily called for, I had not time to notice a certain part of Mr. Buller's letter so fully as the occasion demanded. I, therefore, now beg permission to address your Honourable Court a second time.

1.—The subject to which I would now beg leave to direct the attention of your Honourable Court is, the attempt made by Mr. Buller to extenuate the impure character of the Hindoo worship. He acknowledges that indecent emblems are sculptured on the Temple of Jaggernaut, and that he has seen them; but, he adds, they are merely what may be seen “in representations of ancient sculpture.” This is true. They are of the same character with those which ornamented the Temple of the obscene god at Rome. Mr. Buller has also, without doubt, seen the painted and engraved emblems on the cars of Jaggernaut in Bengal. It is proper to observe, that in some places, the rutt, or chariot of the Idol, as well as his Temple, is covered with characteristic devices. At Ishera, about eight miles from Calcutta, the chariot of Jaggernaut is freshly painted previously to the annual Rutt Jattrra, and the figures (which exceed all conception, for variety of obscenity) become the objects of sensual gaze to persons of both sexes. It is thought necessary that the god should have his appropriate insignia before he sets out on his progress. No classical scholar can witness these representations without being reminded of the Phallic ceremonies. Now, if any man were to assert that, after such preparation, and with such accompaniments, there was yet no impropriety, in word or action, manifested in the subsequent procession, and by a people too who worship the Phallus, could we believe him? For, in endeavouring to elicit the truth on the subject in question, which Mr. Buller has agitated, and to which he has drawn the attention of your Honourable Court and the Imperial Parliament, we ought not to forget (and the whole nation ought at the present time to keep it in mind) “that the mass of the Hindoo people worship an indecent emblem.” Some sects have an allusion to it in the marks of cast painted on their foreheads. Some pagodas assume an analogous shape*. In sacred groves, and in the Temples of Maha-deva (the great god), the significant Lingam presents itself conspicuously to view. It is the daily, emphatical, primeval, and almost universal worship of the Hindoo people. For the truth of this fact I refer your Honourable Court to every civil and military officer in your service, who has passed through Hindostan, and to every historian of the customs and superstition of the Hindoos that can be produced.

2.—The Rutt Jattrra bears some analogy to the ancient feasts of Bacchus. Learned men entertain no doubt of the fact. “The worship of Bacchus was the same as that which is paid to Siva. It had the same obscenities, the same bloody rites, and the same emblem of the generative power †.” An author well versed in the mythology of the South of India, expressly calls the Rutt at the Temple of Ramisseram, “the car of Bacchus ‡.” The Temple of Ramisseram is also within the territories

* Paolino, page 379.

† Asiatic Researches, vol. 8. p. 50.

‡ “The triumphal cars employed to carry about the images of their gods, on days of solemnity, are also of beautiful workmanship. Some of these cars cost from 20 to 30,000 rupees.

“Of this kind is the car of Bacchus in the Temple of Ramanacoil (or Ramisseram) on the boundaries of the kingdom of Marava. There are others of like kind also at Tiruvandoda, Lanja-puri, and Jaggernat.”

“Besides

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of the East India Company, and is nearly as famous in the South as Juggernaut is in the North of India. A particular account of the scenes exhibited at the Rutt Jatra of that place, may, I understand, be soon expected. In the meantime the Reverend Mr. Cordiner's narrative may suffice. That gentleman describes the "Swamy Coaches" or Ruttts at Ramisseram, which place he visited in 1804, in the following terms:—"The outside is covered with an extraordinary assemblage of obscene images, representing lewd and indecent scenes, too scandalous in the eyes of an European to admit of a description. Each carriage has four wheels of solid wood, and requires two hundred men to draw it. When they are dragged along the streets, on occasions of great solemnity, women, in the phrenzy of false devotion throw themselves down before the wheels, and are crushed to death by their tremendous weight; the same superstitious madness preventing the ignorant crowd from making any attempt to save them." Cordiner's history of Ceylon, vol. 2. p. 16.

3.—It ought further to be observed, that the Phallic worship includes the Hindoo, Triad, Brahma, Vishnoo, and Shiva. The Pedestal is the type of Brahma, the Yoni that of Vishnoo, and the Lingam or Phallus that of Sheva*. And so peculiar are the effects of this impure worship on the minds of the Hindoos, that they are disposed to symbolize the objects of nature in a manner analagous to it. If a man digs a pond, he considers it as a Yoni or emblem of female nature, and he consecrates it by fixing in it a mast, decorated with a chaplet of flowers. The sea, or well or cave, conveys a similar type. A mountain, obelisk, or any thing conical excites the idea of the Lingam †. Thus, in like manner as Christians spiritualize natural scenes for an edifying purpose, the Hindoos *sensualize* the objects of nature.

4.—It seems worth while to consider what was the ultimate object of Mr. Buller in addressing your Honourable Court, and through you, the Council of the Nation, on the rites of Jaggernaut. It could not be merely to describe more accurately the circumstances of a Hindoo festival, or to offer an opinion respecting the sculptures on the Temple, for the satisfaction of the antiquary. Had these been his objects, I should not have been disposed to notice them. But his purpose seems to me to have been to exculpate the Hindoo worship from the charge of blood and impurity, in order that our Christian nation might feel itself justified in leaving the Hindoo people as they are, involved in a baneful superstition.

5.—In regard to the charge of blood, the seventy immolations of females in Bengal in the months of May and June last, just brought before the public, will be a sufficient answer. The same proportion of human life is supposed to be devoted to destruction in the same way, every current month. This is a horrid and painful recital to the feelings of the nations! The cry of such blood arising from a country placed under a Christian administration, cannot fail to enter the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

6.—As to the impurity of the Hindoo worship, all the argument of Mr. Buller in extenuation of it, is (without referring at present to its obvious principle), that when he happened to be at Jaggernaut he did not see any thing improper in the scene. He admits indeed, that he might have heard the *Cubbe*, had he been near enough. But of what consequence is it whether there be a cessation of indecency at times before Europeans, at Jaggernaut, or not? If there were even a complete cessation, what, I would ask, is the occasional exhibition of indecency at a public festival, compared to the common constant characteristic impure worship of the people? Is Mr. Buller prepared to inform us that the worship of the *Lingam* has ceased?—or, that it has been diminished in his time?—or that he indulges the smallest hope that it ever will be diminished? Why then need he be at pains to make the Hindoos appear a chaste and decorous people in the eyes of the English, when his own eyes must have witnessed their impure worship, times without number?

7.—Every

* Besides these grand festivals, there are several others, such as the Shiva Rati or the Night of Shiva, on which the Phallophoria ceremonies that relate to the worship of the Lingam, are celebrated. On this occasion all the inhabitants of both sexes hasten in great numbers to the Temple of Shiva or Maha deva, remain there, the whole night, sing all sorts of indecent songs in Honour of the Lingam, go a hundred times

"in solemn procession around the temple, or around the tree, under which a Lingam is placed, and carry about with them at the same time, a wooden representation of the Lingam, amidst dancing and singing." Paulino. p. 361.

* Sonnerat, vol. 1. p. 179.

† Moor's Hindoo Pantheon, p. 379.

7.—Every man who has studied the genius of the Hindoo superstition, knows, that the contemplation of indecent emblems, from early youth, is a fountain of licentiousness to the people. The prostitution of the heart to sensual images in the daily worship, is the deep, copious, prolific source of general impurity of heart, and indecency of speech and action. With such an ordinance of worship, prescribed from infancy, can we believe it possible that any people should consider lasciviousness as a sin against God? They might, indeed, consider it as a sin against public reputation, and against political principle; for the policy of the rudest nations will restrain community of vice. But that the Hindoos in general account lasciviousness a sin against God, is what, I think, the boldest advocate for their religion will not venture to affirm*.

8.—Let our Christian nation then behold the greater part of the Hindoo people, a hundred million at least of our fellow creatures falling prostrate before a black stone, and that black stone an indecent emblem! Let us imagine the females decorating it, according to their constant custom, with flowers! Let us contemplate the probable effects (without any specific relation) of such a worship on the general morals of the people; and then let us deny to India the instruction of Christianity, if we can.

9.—One argument urged sometimes by the European defenders of the *Phallic* worship is, that young persons do not understand the emblems, as they are not exhibited entirely in the natural form. But where is the sense of supposing a person worshipping emblems which he does not understand? One should think, that the very first business of the Brahmins would be to make the pubescent youth understand them; besides, it is not admitted, that the people pronounce at their festivals, certain licentious songs, which must soon explain the supposed mysteries. Admired and familiar songs, consecrated by religion and ancient use; ancient, they doubtless are, and bear a strict analogy to the *Phallica Asnata* †, the *Phallic* songs of Greece and Egypt.

10.—But the grand apology of certain philosophers for the worship of the *Lingam*, and its companion, has been, that they are merely symbols of the procreative power of the Deity, and therefore that the worshippers may have very sublime conceptions, and cherish very pure thoughts, notwithstanding the presence of such objects. I do not however believe, that there exists a philosopher among us, who will now seriously avow and defend the proposition, that the constant exhibition of sensual images will not taint the purity of the youthful mind ‡.

11.—The only object which I can conceive Mr. Buller to have had in writing the letter which has been laid before Parliament is, that of insinuating that the Hindoos are not imbued by such impure principles as has been asserted, and that therefore it need give us no pain to see them remain as they are. It becomes necessary therefore, on the other hand, to assert the truth, and however painful it must be to the pure mind, to reveal the whole scene of the polluted worship of Brahma, in its principle, essence, origin and practice. Let us only suppose (to bring this matter home to our feelings), that the youth of both sexes in Great Britain were brought to the Temple, and instructed to worship indecent symbols, and what must be the effect on their moral habits; is it then to be regarded as either decent or humane, to labour to perpetuate this unseemly worship of our fellow subjects in India, by excluding

* "It is probable, that the idea of obscenity was not originally attached to these symbols; and it is likely, that the inventors themselves might not have foreseen the disorders which this worship would occasion amongst mankind. Profligacy easily embraces what flatters its propensities, and ignorance follows blindly wherever example excites; it is therefore no wonder that a general corruption of manners should ensue, encreasing in proportion as the distance of time involved the original meaning of the symbol in darkness and oblivion; obscene mirth became the principal feature of the popular superstition; and was, even in aftertimes, extended to and intermingled with gloomy rites and bloody sacrifices." *Asiat. Res.* vol. 8. p. 55.

† *Φαλλικα Ασματα.*

‡ "The *Sacte* of *Siva*, whose emblem is the *Phallus*, is herself typified by the female organ. This the *Sactas* worship, some figuratively, others LITERALLY." In this last mentioned sect "the *Sactus*, as in most others, there is a right handed and decent path, and a left handed and indecent mode of worship: but the indecent worship of this sect is most grossly so, and consists of unbridled debauchery with wine and women"—"They require their wives to be naked when attending them at their devotions." See Mr. Colebrook on the Religious Ceremonies of the Hindoos. *As. Res.* vol. 7. page 280 & 281.

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excluding true religion; or to endeavour to extenuate its moral turpitude in the face of a nation professing the pure religion of Jesus Christ.

• 12.—Mr. Buller has told us that he saw obscene sculptures on the walls of Jaggernaut; but has not told us what he heard of the scenes within. Had he wished to give the English nation a just idea of the worship of Brahma, there are two circumstances of a fundamental character, in relation to that worship, which he would no doubt have mentioned in the outset; viz.,

First:—The band of courtesans retained for the service of the Temple. These form a part of the religious procession in the public streets on certain days, and are kept in every great Temple of Hindostan. From infancy they are prepared by education and elegant accomplishments for public seduction. Now, these Priestesses form the character of the worship, “being consecrated,” says Sonnerat, “to the honour of the Gods. They are the ministers of the Idol, and it is a part of their service “to sing hymns to his praise.” Is Mr. Buller then prepared to inform us, that this character of the worship is abolished, and that the courtesans at Jaggernaut do not receive the accustomed stipend presented, with other charges, for the sanction of the English Government; he knows that we might as well attempt to raze the Tower of Jaggernaut from its foundations, as attempt to remove this constituent part of the Brahminical ritual. And thus it is throughout the extensive regions of the Hindoo idolatry; the ministration of the Priestesses being a natural fruit of the worship of the Lingam. Does not this admitted fact alone set the question at rest, respecting the character of the worship in question? In regard, however, to its moral effects (for that after all is the main object to be considered), let us only suppose, that the youth of Great Britain of both sexes were accustomed to worship at the altar, in company with a band of impure females invested with a sacred character, and then to witness the songs and dances of those females in the same place, what would be the character of the people of this country in a few years?

Second:—In my printed account of the transactions at Jaggernaut, I wished to state merely what I myself saw; and therefore, as I was not within the Temple, I have not thought fit to mention what I heard. But Mr. Buller having resided for some time at the place, and having held while there a high official station, must have had various opportunities of obtaining satisfactory information as to the character of the scenes within the Temple, particularly at certain festivals; and under such circumstances, he might have stated what he had heard to the public with perfect confidence. Is all then, according to Mr. Buller's information and belief—pure; is all decorous within the Temple? And, if it be not, what signifies it, whether at certain festivals, the ministering Priest used unseemly attitudes in the presence of the European superintendent, or not? If there actually be impurity “within,” in the sacred place—in the recess of sanctity, how can a vindication of Jaggernaut remove this corner stone from Brahma's Temple?

13.—I would not impute a bad motive to those Asiatic Gentlemen who maintain a different opinion from me on these subjects. Much allowance is to be made for the effects of an imperfect education previously to leaving England, and for the constitutional habits which grow upon men by long intercourse with Indian scenes, and which, in some instances, have changed the very principles and character; but I apprehend, that those who labour to extenuate the atrocities of the Hindoo idolatry, may be justly charged with two most serious delinquencies; first, by defending and confirming a sanguinary and obscene superstition, they are in effect, guilty of the utmost cruelty towards whole nations of men; and secondly, they are guilty of a culpable indifference to the truth and excellency of the Christian religion.

I have the honour to be,

Honourable Sirs,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) C. BUCHANAN.

Kirby Hall, Borobridge, }
8th June 1813. }