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Tagebuch von Johann Ernst Geister und Johann Zacharias Kiernander.

**Geister, Johann Ernst
Kiernander, Johann Zacharias**

Cuddalore, 01.01.1740-29.12.1740

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October

(22)

17th — Guest: went this Evening to Tripapplore in order to address himself to such as should be in or near the Pagoda there. Some people being at the large Pond near the Pagoda (the water of which is accounted holy though it was very muddy and thick covered with water lentils) they were asked if this water could have the virtue of cleansing not only the Body but even the mind from its Sins, or suppose one wanted to be cleaned if there was no better water in the Rivers and other Ponds adjacent. They endeavoured to say something but as this would not go far they told at last, that Bramines and other wise men had told them that this Water had a Particular virtue. It was answered, that any one who had the use of his Eyes, even a child could see that the water was exceeding unclean and consequently unfit for cleaning one's body & it was strange to depend on other Peoples affirmations when one might easily come to a certainty by applying his own Senses. They might as well doubt what colour the Bricks on the Steps before us were of and vend for a wise man who would tell them they were Green for all that our Eyes plainly found them to be Red. Amongst these discourses I happened to see the Priest of the Pagoda on the other side of the Pond, and therefore went that way though I was a little doubtful to go within the Steps, that go down into the Pond for fear of offending them. The people seeing me backward to step in told me there was no manner of Reason for that, on which I answered that Perhaps their Priest would be angry and I had no mind to give a cause for it. They replied that their Priest was very wise and virtuous & had subdued his Passions. I told them, I should not be much surprized at his turning angry, having read in their Books, to what a degree of anger their Gods, had been transported even so far as to fight and to destroy one another. With these words we came very near to the Place, where the Priest sat, though from behind, which made me stand still a little again, because I could not know how he would take it, if I should come in and defile the pretended holy Place. But he soon turned himself round rose up and in a handsome manner desired me to come in and sit down with him, which I did and saw several people come to hear us. Though I talked with him for near half an hour our discourse was not so regular as at other times, & he seemed to be in a manner perplexed, so that now and then the By-standers —

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put him in mind that he should speak to the Purpose and answer my objections. I talked of true wisdom and of the way to please God and to serve him. He turned himself several ways laying the whole fault on an absolute Destiny & that our present State depended from what we had committed in our former Births — (according to their notions of a transmigration of Souls) my answer was that I could not but be surprized, to hear the malabarians always refer themselves for proofs to things quite unintelligible, uncertain, and so distant, that it was beyond any man's Capacity to come within the Reach & perception of them. I could assure him that when we were to Consider the cause of our ignorance, unhappiness & evilfulness, it was wrong to go far from home because the Root of Corruption was in us & consequently we ought to begin from within ourselves. He could not deny this but immediately run out again into a great many Proverbs — Similes &c. so that he almost puzzled me. But I went through at once telling him that the Similes proposed by him were only human ones, and that ~~was~~ touching the Ready assistance which God would willingly give us towards our delivery, I would propose him a Simile truly divine, which was Simothine Rain & other innumerable benefits for our Body, which God gave always universally and equally, so that the Sun did rise every day, not only by days appointed by destiny and the like. We came at last upon this point, why their wise Men did hide their pretended knowledge from the people. After some insufficient answers he told me plainly, that it was, because the people could not pay them for their trouble. To which I replied that it was strange to ask pay for things, and to withhold them on Nonpayment when they themselves had received them gratis, & I hoped he would allow that the Gift of wisdom was an undeserved Favour of God. He answered in the Negative saying that the wise men had merited and deserved these Things. But being asked for proofs he fell again to his way of Similes and Verses out of their Books. As it began to be dark. I took my leave of him asking him to come once to Cuddalore and see me which he ~~also~~ Promised. To those that had heard us, I told that any one who had a mind to be better instructed should find me ready to serve him without asking pay or any other Recompence for it. At this very interview it was found out that this Priest had been a Christian before at Tranquebar, and afterwards amongst the Roman Catholics being the same Person of whom some remarkable Circumstances are mentioned in the Propagation of the Gospel in the East Part 2. Page 30. sequ. He was discovered by the Malabar Catechist who was with me, & who some

Years

October

(24)

Years ago was under this man's Care, when he was yet Schoolmaster at Tranquebar. It gave me a very deep impression but it was not proper to talk with him of these Things before a Company and though he promised to come to Cuddalore yet I believe he will not because I strongly suspect that he knows he is discovered, and I am apt to think that his perplexity in this interview came from thence. Formerly I wondered to see a malabarian behave so handsomely and not to be shy at all to see a European come near him but I do not wonder now because he has been not only in Tranquebar with the Europeans but likewise amongst the Dutch and French, because the Roman Catholics by underhand dealings had enticed him away from Tranquebar.

The copying of the malabar part of the malabarian Dictionary was finished about the middle of this month, afterwards we caused two Copies of a pretty large collection of the best malabar Proverbs to be wrote on Paper. Some months ago under Queist's direction the Old Schoolmaster had begun to collect them promiscuously. Afterwards they were brought in alphabetical Order & wrote out. They are very useful not only for the learning of the language but in conversation with the people they can be applied not only to raise their attention but to refute their common Sentiments, because a great many of these Proverbs contain good doctrines. D

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27- We went partly for exercise & partly to enlarge our acquaintance to a place which lyeth near three miles without the Bounds called Tiru wendipuram, and is reputed amongst the Indians as a holy Place. Coming to the Pagoda, we found a number of Bramines but they were in no disposition at all to be talked with. Because a Rich Merchant some weeks ago, when one of his Family was very sick had made a vow, if the sick Person should recover to give an Entertainment to 1000, Bramines and we found them just receiving this Benefit. There were a number of Bramines within the Pagoda, but as we came near, the doors were shut, because they pretend that if any body should see them ^{it would burn their Stomachs.} eating. However a discourse was begun with some without but as they had filled their Bellies, they did not mind any thing

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