

1. *Some observations on Coral, large Oysters, Rubies, the growing of a sort of Ficus Indica, the Gods of the Ceylanese, &c. made in Ceilan, by Mr Strachan.*

T Here is great quantity of a kind of white Coral upon the shore betwixt *Gale* and *Mature*, and many other Coasts in the *Indies*, of which the *Hollanders* cause Lime to be burnt for building of Houses, and the Walls of the Fortifications. There are great Banks of the said Coral, it is porous, neither so firm and smooth as the upright, which grows in little Branches, and when they are come to the full growth, there grows other betwixt these, and then upon these grows others, until it is become like a Rock for thickness; these Branches are not softer when they are young, than when they are ripe, yet I have observed a slime upon them always when they are under water, which I suppose is the substance which petrifies, I have seen three Leagues from *Batavia*, upon that Island, where the *Hollanders* turn up the keel of the Ships to dress and mend them, Oysters of a foot Diameter, the Shell of one of these did grow until it was 3 foot of Diameter broad and a foot thick, after the Flesh was putrified, upon these Shells lying only 3 or 4 foot under water, I also always did find a slime. Upon the Coast betwixt *Gale* and *Gindere* lies always *Os Sepie*, and in the River at *Catoene* there are found Rubies, and if one is desirous, and seek among the Sand in the Water, he will find above a drop weight of Rubies in the space of one hour, but they are very small, for 20 of them will scarcely weigh a grain weight, so that it is not worth a mans while.

Upon the Sea Coast upon the Sand do lye a kind of little Cockles of the bigness of Crabs Eyes or *Oculi Cancrorum*, there is no cavity within, if beat in Powder they have the same effect.

effect as *Testaceous* Powders, and are used instead of *Oculi Cancrorum*.

There are several Trees, one of which will be above 6 fathom high, whose Root (I may say) grows above ground, after the following manner, when the Twig is about one half foot high above Ground, there grow out of the middle of the stem a little knot which grows downward, making an angle with the stem of 30 Degrees or thereabout until it touch the Ground, then it fixes in the Ground, sending forth small Sprigs, which before it touched the Ground had neither Branch nor Leaves, but all over green even like a shoot. While this shoot grows and the Stem grows higher, it still shoots forth other shoots, which always comes out of the middle of the Tree or Trunk; thus it continues shooting forth these shoots, until the Tree be at his full growth, and the higher the Trees grow, the knots and the shoots are the thicker and longer, so that one of the shoots which grows last, will be a foot thick of Diameter, and 3 fathom long.

Now the Flower which is called *Happumal* grows upon a Tree that grows after this manner, and grows only two fathom high, if they be planted round about an Orchard they are an excellent Hedge, for the Leaves are thorny and full of pricks, when the Flower decays it carries a Fruit like a Pine-apple, but is for no use.

Some Naturalists affirm all Plants to have a Heart, or something analogous to it; it would be worthy the enquiry in what place the Heart of these kind of Trees is, as also the Palmito and Coco-tree.

It is very difficult to know which of these two have a greater respect given to them, the *Budum* or *Sakradewendra*.

Sakradewendra commands and governs all the rest of the Gods, and did hear formerly the Prayers that were offered up to him from distressed People here upon Earth, and did grant their request, but now the Golden Chair whereupon he used to sit is gone, and the Prayers which are offer'd up to him now have no effect, because the foot of that Chair was made

made of a kind of Wax, which would turn soft by the Prayers and Tears of the Supplicators, and would sink downward, by which means the *Sakradewendra* would look down and take notice of the Prayer of the Suppliant and grant their request.

This Chair being of fine Gold was distributed among the poor, which is the cause wherefore he does not now perceive or know when any man makes Supplication to him, therefore there are but few People that has any benefit of the Prayers and Tears which they offer to him.

He can indeed look far when he turns his Eyes towards any place, for his Forehead resembles the Peacocks Tail, it is so full of Eyes, and so sometimes it chances that he looks down and takes notice of men, but this is but seldom, therefore there is a necessity for one to pacify these wicked Spirits which trouble us here on Earth. I could never understand of them how long this *Dewendra* had been a God, or how long he would Reign, for none trouble their Heads to regard him any more.

The *Budun* whereof the *Banapots* (or their Bibles, if I may call them so) makes great mention, has had the Life of all the Species of living Creatures that are in the World, having been first an Insect, after his Death his Soul was regenerated into a Mouse, after that an Ox, then a Monkey, and so forth, then a Man, and still by his good Life and Merits was still born in a better condition until, he is become the supreme of all the Gods.

Of the *Buduns* there has been 3, every one of these Reigns has been counted after this manner, there is a great Hill about half a mile of perpendicular height, and about six miles in circumference, from the Hill a certain Bird comes once in a thousand year, and takes one grain to a certain place, and continues every thousand years once, until he has removed that Hill to another place.