

who comprehend, and value, that distinction, which, among Europeans, is little attended to; far the greater portion being, indeed, absolutely ignorant of any reputed difference.

The *Banians* being, without doubt, the first in fortune, as well as in rank, claim priority of description. These are, invariably, Hindus, possessing in general very large property, with most extensive credit, and influence. So much is this the case, that Calcutta was, some twenty years ago, absolutely under the control of about twenty or thirty *banians*, who managed every concern, in which they could find means to make a profit. It is inconceivable what property was in their hands; they were the ostensible agents in every line of business, placing their dependants in the several departments over which themselves had obtained dominion. Was a contract to be made with government, by any gentleman not in the Company's service; these became the securities, under the condition of receiving a centage, and of appointing their friends to such duties as might control the principal, and save themselves from loss. When a person in the service of the Company, was desirous of deriving benefit from some contract, in the disposal of which he had a vote, and which, consequently, he could not obtain in his own name; then, the *banian* became the principal, and the donor either received a share, or derived advantage from