

* * The women of this Island are the ugliest in the world, with their great mouths and big eyes and thick noses ; their breasts too are four times bigger than those of any other women ; a very disgusting sight.

The people live on rice and flesh and milk and dates ; and they make wine of dates and of rice and of good spices and sugar. There is a great deal of trade, and many merchants and vessels go thither. But the staple trade of the Island is in elephants' teeth, which are very abundant ; and they have also much ambergris, as whales are plentiful.⁴

They have among them excellent and valiant warriors, and have little fear of death. They have no horses, but fight mounted on camels and elephants. On the latter they set wooden castles which carry from ten to sixteen persons, armed with lances, swords, and stones, so that they fight to great purpose from these castles. They wear no armour, but carry only a shield of hide, besides their swords and lances, and so a marvellous number of them fall in battle. When they are going to take an elephant into battle they ply him well with their wine, so that he is made half drunk. They do this because the drink makes him more fierce and bold, and of more service in battle.⁵

As there is no more to say on this subject I will go on to tell you about the Great Province of ABASH, which constitutes the MIDDLE INDIA ;—but I must first say something about India in general.

You must understand that in speaking of the Indian Islands we have described only the most noble provinces and kingdoms among them ; for no man on earth could give you a true account of the whole of the Islands of India. Still, what I have described are the best, and as it were the Flower of the Indies. For the greater part of the other Indian Islands that I have omitted are