

adopting, it is said, the device of making him one of the incarnations of their own god.

At Benares one sees idolatry in its grossest and most repulsive forms, and it is therefore as interesting today to the student of the world's great religions as to the devoted Hindu who travels hundreds of miles over dusty roads to bathe in the Ganges, whose waters he considers sacred. Benares is built upon the north bank of the Ganges, and it is estimated that each year it is visited by a million pilgrims. When more than three hundred miles from the city, we saw the caravan of one of the Maharaja (Maharaja is the title borne by native princes) on its way to the river. There were five elephants, a dozen camels and twenty or thirty bull carts, besides numerous pack animals and horses. The trip could not be made in much less than two months, and all this for the sake of a bath in the waters of the sacred river.

The bank of the Ganges is lined for a long distance with bathing ghats (as the steps leading to the river are called), and at one point there is a burning ghat, where the bodies of the dead are cremated. Cremation is universal among the Hindus, sandal-wood being used where the relatives can afford it. Taking a boat, as is customary, we rowed up and down the river in the early morning, and such a sight! Down the steps as far as the eye could reach came the bathers, men, women and children, and up the steps went a constant stream of those who had finished their ablutions. Most of them carried upon their heads water pots of shining brass and some carried bundles of wearing apparel. The bathing is done leisurely as if according to ritual, with frequent dippings; water is poured out to the sun and prayers are said. The lame, the halt and the blind are there, some picking their way with painful step, others assisted by friends. Here, a leper sought healing in the stream; near him a man with emaciated form mixed his medicine with the holy water, and not far off a fakir with matted hair prayed beneath his big umbrella. On one of the piers a young man was cultivating psychic power by standing on one leg while he told his beads with his face toward the sun.

Dressing and undressing is a simple matter with the mass of the people. Men and women emerging from the water, throw a clean robe around themselves and then unloosening the wet garment, wring it out and are ready to return. Those who bring water pots fill them from the stream, out of which they have recently come, and carry them away as if some divinity protected the water from pollution. As the river contains countless dead and receives the filth of the city as well as the flowers cast into it by worshipers, it requires a strong faith to believe it free from lurking disease and seeds of pestilence.

When we reached the burning ghat, we found one body on the funeral pyre and another soaking in the water as a preparation for burning. So highly is the Ganges revered that aged people are brought there that they may die, if possible, in the water. While we were watching, a third body was prepared for the burning, and it was so limp that death could not have occurred long before. While the flames were consuming those three corpses, we saw coming down the steps a man carrying the body of a child, apparently about two years old, wrapped in a piece of thin cotton cloth. (The children of the poor are buried in the stream because of the cost of wood.) The man bore his lifeless burden to a little barge and made the corpse fast to a heavy stone slab. The boatman then pushed out from the shore and when the middle of the stream was reached the man in charge of the body dropped it overboard, and the burial was over.

No one has seen India until he has seen the Ganges; no one has seen the Ganges until he has seen it at Benares; and no one who has seen the Ganges at Benares will ever forget it.

In the suburbs of the city stands the Durga Temple, better known as the Monkey temple, because it is the home of a large family of monkeys, which are regarded as sacred. Photographs of the temple present rather an attractive appearance, but the original is anything but beautiful, and the monkeys and general filth of the place deprive it of all appearance of a place of worship.

The Golden Temple, however, is the one most visited by tourists, and it would be difficult to picture a less inviting place. The buildings are old and greasy, and the narrow streets are filled with images and thronged with beggars. One finds his interest in missionary work quickened if he wanders through these streets and sees the offering of incense to the elephant god and the monkey god, and to images innumerable. The air is heavy with perfume and the

odor of decaying flowers, and one jostles against the sacred bulls as he threads his way through the crowd. We have not seen in any other land such evidences of superstition, such effort to ward off evil spirits and to conciliate idols. The educated Hindus, and there are many learned men among the Hindus, regard these idols as only visible representations of an invisible God, but the masses seem to look no farther than the ugly images before which they bow.

It was a relief to find near this dark pool of idolatry an institution of learning, recently founded, which promises to be a purifying spring. I refer to the Central Hindu College of which Mrs. Annie Besant, the well known theosophist, is the head. Although the school is but seven years old, it already includes a valuable group of buildings and has some five hundred students. Among the professors are several Englishmen who serve without compensation, finding sufficient reward in the consciousness of service.

Next to Benares Allahabad is the most important Hindu center. The city is on the Ganges, at its junction with the Jumna, one of its longest branches. There is an old tradition that another river, flowing underground, empties into the Ganges at this point, and the place is referred to as the junction of the three rivers. The great Mogul Akbar built a splendid fort where the Ganges and the Jumna meet, and probably on this account Allahabad is the capital of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. Within the walls of the fort there is another of the Asoka pillars, a very well preserved one, forty-nine feet high and bearing numerous inscriptions, among which are the famous edicts of Asoka, issued in 240 B. C., against the taking of life. Within the fort in a subterranean room is another object of interest, the Akshai Bar or undecaying banyan tree. As this tree is described by a Chinese pilgrim of the seventh century, it is either of remarkable antiquity or has been renewed from time to time.

The religious importance of Allahabad is largely due to a fair which is held there every year and which on every twelfth year becomes a national event. It is called the Mela and last January brought to the city a crowd estimated at from one and a half to three millions. This every-twelfth-year fair brings together not only the devout Hindus, who come as a matter of religious duty, and innumerable traders, who, at such times find a market for their wares, but it draws large numbers of fakirs (pronounced fah-keers, with the accent upon the last syllable) or holy men. They wear full beards and long hair and no clothing except the breech cloth. They put ashes and even manure upon their heads, and their hair and whiskers are matted and discolored. These men are supposed to have raised themselves to a high spiritual state by asceticism and self-punishment. They undergo all sorts of hardships, such as hanging over a fire, holding up the arm until it withers, and sitting upon a bed of spikes. We saw many fakirs at Benares and Allahabad and some elsewhere (for they are scattered over the whole country), and at the latter place one accommodated us by taking his seat upon the spikes.

At the recent Mela five hundred of these fakirs marched in a procession naked, even the breech cloth having been abandoned for the occasion, and so great was the reverence for them that their followers struggled to obtain the sand made sacred by their tread, a number of people meeting their death in the crowd. These fakirs are supposed to have reached a state of sinlessness, but one of them seized a child along the line of march and dashed out its brains in the presence of its mother, claiming to be advised that the gods desired a human sacrifice. He was arrested by the British officials and is now awaiting trial on the charge of murder. The papers recently reported another instance in which a fakir was the cause of a murder. He was consulted by a woman who had lost several children and was anxious to protect her prospective child from a like fate. The fakir told her that she could insure her child's life if she would herself bathe in human blood, and she and her husband enticed a seven-year-old boy into their home and killed him to secure the blood necessary for the bath. The fakirs are not only a danger to the community in some cases and a source of demoralization at all times, but they are a heavy drain upon the producing wealth of the country. Adding nothing to the material, intellectual or moral development of the country, they live upon the fears and credulity of the people.

The Hindu religion claims something more than two hundred millions of human beings within its membership; it teaches the transmigration of the soul or reincarnation as it is generally

called. The Hindu mind takes kindly to the metaphysical, and the Hindu priests have evolved an intricate system of philosophy in support of their religious beliefs. Reincarnation is set forth as a theory necessary to bring God's plans into accord with man's conception of justice. If a man is born blind or born into unfavorable surroundings, it is explained on the theory that he is being punished for sins committed during a former existence; if he is born into a favorable environment, he is being rewarded for virtue previously developed.

It is not quite certain whether the Hindus have many gods or many forms of one god, for the ancient Vedas speak of each of several gods as if they were supreme. The most popular god is a sort of trinity, Bramah, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver, and Siva, the destroyer, being united in one. Sometimes the trinity is spoken of as representing creation, destruction and renovation, in which Krishna appears as the principal god. Out of this system have sprung a multitude of gods until the masses bow down "to sticks and stone."

The most pernicious product of the Hindu religion is the caste system. Infant marriage is terrible, but that will succumb to education; the seclusion of the women is benumbing, but it will give way before the spread of European and American influence, and with it will go the practical servitude of widows, as the practice of suttee (the burning of widows) has practically gone. But the caste system, resting upon vanity and pride and egotism, is more difficult to eradicate. Nowhere in the world is caste so inexorable in its demands or so degrading in its influence. The line between the human being and the beast of the field is scarcely more distinctly drawn than the line between the various castes. The Brahmins belong to the priestly class and are supposed to have sprung from the mouth of Brahm, the great creator; the Kshatrias, or warrior class, are supposed to have sprung from the shoulders of Brahm; the Vaisyas, or merchant class, are supposed to have sprung from the thighs of Brahm; while the Sudras, or laborers, are supposed to have sprung from the feet of Brahm. There are numerous sub-divisions of these castes, and besides these there are outcasts, although there does not seem to be any room below the Sudras for any other class. The caste system not only affects social intercourse and political progress, but it complicates living. A high caste Hindu can not accept food or drink from a low caste and must purify his water bottle if a low caste touches it.

About seventy years ago a reform in Hinduism was begun under the name of Brahmo Somaj. It was built upon monotheism, or the worship of one god, for which it claimed to find authority in the Hindu sacred books. It drew to itself a number of strong men, among them Mr. Tagore and Mr. Sen, the latter making a trip to England to present the principles of the new faith before prominent religious bodies there.

The Arya Somaj, another reform sect, sprung up later. Both of these have exerted considerable influence upon the thought of India, far beyond their numerical strength. So far, however, Christianity has made greater inroads upon Hinduism than any of the reformations that have been attempted from within.

At Allahabad we found two Christian colleges, the Allahabad Christian college for men and the Wanamaker school for girls. Dr. A. H. Ewing is at the head of the former and Miss Foreman, the daughter of an early missionary, at the head of the latter. Both of these schools have been built with American money, Mr. Wanamaker having been the most liberal patron. They are excellently located, are doing a splendid work and are affiliated with the Presbyterian church. Fifty dollars will pay for the food, room, clothes and tuition of one boy while thirty dollars will provide for one girl, and interested Americans have already established several scholarships, but money is badly needed to enlarge the facilities of both these schools.

We spent the Sabbath at Allahabad and visited both of these schools, and our appreciation of their work was enhanced by our observations at Benares. It seemed like an oasis in the desert. Surely those who have helped to create this green spot—may it ever widen—will find intense satisfaction in the good that these schools are doing and will do.

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The organized musicians of the country assert that the "royal Italian bands" are only plebeian handorganists recruited in this country and decorated with red uniforms. The organized musicians have plenty of auditory proof of the truth of their assertions.