

A little girl born in such a home receives very little care and love; she is wrapt in a little piece of old cloth and laid on the hard rope bed, and so neglected that she is often half starved, becoming of course puny and fretful. When old enough to do so she is allowed to run about and play, in the dirty yard or road, quite naked. Between the ages of five and twelve, you can imagine you see her with her dark skin so dirty that you wonder if she was ever washed, black hair that seems never to have been combed, and wearing a scanty skirt, and perhaps a sleeveless jacket as dirty as her skin. She spends most of her time on the street, sometimes playing, but always on the watch for the droppings which oxen and cows leave as they pass; these she gathers with her hands into a basket which, when full, she carries to her mother, who mixes it with a little water and forms it into pats, which she sticks on the sides of the house to dry. This is their fuel, and many poor women make all they can, and when it is dry go round the town with it in baskets, which they carry on their heads, offering it for sale.

When the poor child is hungry she does not go home to a nice dinner, but just eats a little parched grain, or a bit of coarse cake she has brought from home tied up in a rag, and fastened to the cord which holds up her skirt. When she goes home she will get some rice, or dal, a vegetable something like a pea, and another cake, and soon after she goes to bed without washing or changing her clothes. She knows nothing of books or school; she is never taught anything but how to lie and cheat cleverly, and how to do *pūja* as the worship of idols is called. The smallest village has its idol-shrine where gods of wood, clay or metal are set up, to which offerings and sometimes bloody sacrifices are made, and as each god and goddess is worshipped in a different way, the children must learn how to do it, and some of the things they are taught are very wicked.

As I have already told you, little girls are married when about twelve years of age, or even younger. On the wedding day a great feast is made, drums are beaten, trumpets blown, gifts exchanged between the two families, some disgusting ceremonies are gone through, her clothes and those of her boy husband are fastened together in a knot, a ring is drawn through her nose, and the poor little girl is a wife. For a little longer she may be allowed to live with her mother, but while she is yet a mere girl