

him why he worships idols, if he does not say, "Because my forefathers for ages have done so," he will reply "The Supreme spirit is so far beyond me in his essence that I can contemplate him as present in the idol and so render worship." In this way he seems to localize God and to make it easier to contemplate Him. Then if you say, 'that hideous stone is not like God, nor does it in any way suggest God, it is used to represent one of your man gods and goddesses whose vile and shameful lives are recorded in your sacred books,' he will reply, "That is true, but they were incarnations of God, powerful incarnations whom it is worth while to worship. God, associated with ignorance or illusion is in everything, and everything indeed may be worshipped as an incarnation of God. But I choose these powerful incarnations and worship them that I may gain their favor and avert their displeasure."

Thus the Hindu may worship anything he pleases. It is all the same in the end. As many roads lead into a city, so all forms of worship and all forms of religion conduct to the same goal. No matter what gods are worshipped, no matter what religion is followed, the end will be the same. Some roads may be longer, rougher and more difficult than others, as the result of demerit in a previous birth, but inasmuch as they have been appointed by fate in accordance with that demerit they must be followed to the end.

Here lies the reason why the Hindu is so conservative in his religion as in everything else. As he was born with a dark skin, and dark skinned he must remain, so he was born a Hindu in religion and a Hindu he must remain. Nor does he try to bring any one else to his way of thinking, or try to convert any one to his religion. He will tolerate any and all religions that let him alone in his religion. His devotion to his own religion and his toleration of other religions are involved in his doctrine of fate or Karm. The Hindu firmly believes that what he is in the present life is an effect of what he was and did in a previous birth. His color, his food, his clothes, his poverty, his wealth, his sickness, his health, his joys and sorrows, his virtue, his vice, his good deeds and his sins, as well as his religion, are the fruit of deeds done in a previous state of existence, and he must accept the situation and submit. To change the religion in