

David king over you, now then do it." Yes, we have thought in times past that we would make the Son of David more completely king of our lives, that we would talk with Him more, sacrifice for Him more. Now then do it; do it, and God grant that none of us may be proved to have been hindrances when the day comes that "every man's work shall be tried by fire of what sort it is."

### THE GODS OF INDIA.

By Lucy F. Guinness, in the London Christian.

"Stay—what on earth is this?"

We have caught sight in passing of a little doll-like object, tricked out in finery, but uglier and odder than any conceivable doll—a preposterous little figure with an elephant's head and trunk attached to a human body, dressed in an immensely full crinoline skirt, and looking like some novel form of an elephant ballet-dancer.

"Mem Sahib," replied my guide with the utmost gravity, "this is the god of wisdom, Gunputti, son of Siva."

"But why with an elephant's head?"

"Gunputti fought with Vishnu," answers the pundit. "Siva, to end the quarrel, cut off Gunputti's head. The mother, Kali, threatening to wreck the universe if the head was not restored, Siva promised to do it, but the head could not be found, so he gave him that of the first animal they met—an elephant."

"An elephant is wise too?"

"Very wise, Mem Sahib. Gunputti is invoked by travellers and scholars. His name is written at the head of philosophic books."

We look at the pantomime doll again—its foolish gown, its ponderous proboscis curling down among the spangles. Yes, it is quite true; India worships this. This is a fair example of her innumerable gods—the gods of Hinduism—that all-inclusive, all-accommodating cult, "a religion which unites the grossest possible idolatry, in the most horrible and degraded forms, with a very high development of philosophy; a faith that covers and includes monotheism, polytheism, atheism, morality and immorality, ceremonial, non-ceremonial, no rites or any amount of ritual—binding its followers inflexibly together like columns of the hardest adamantine stone."

From the Golden Temple and Lake of Immortality in Northern India, down to the Bombay shrines we are visiting to-day, and away across the continent, till it meets the faith of Buddha in Burmah, the Himalayas, and Ceylon, this ancient idolatry still reigns—reigns over more than five times as many men and women as there are in the United Kingdom at this hour.

Dozens and scores of people, mostly men and boys (for very few women are anywhere to be seen) gather round us whenever we stop our gari and get down with the guide to see what Hindu temples actually are. Sometimes the shrine is very sacred, no European being allowed within; sometimes a considerable temple, with little shrines around it, a handsome pillared entrance, shaven priests, and the perpetual bull gazing unconsciously towards the central idol. Worshippers pour water over the stone bull's back.

"Why do they do that?" I ask. "Worship," is the answer.

"What use is it when he can't feel?"

"It is the system."

This is the constant reply to every query as to underlying reasons. Always the same thing over again.

"Why do you have a stone bull here?"—It is written in the Puranas.

"Why do they ring the bell?"—It is a kind of sign of worshipping the God.

"Can the god hear the bell?"—"I cannot answer that question."

"But do you think that he can hear?"—"I would rather not say."

You turn to another—"Do you think he can hear?"—"No."

"Then why do you ring the bell?"—"It is the system."

"It is written in the Vedas, 'Ring the bell,'" explains my guide. He is himself a scholar, teaches Marathi in the mission-house, and sees the folly of idolatry, and yet remarks all the same—"It is the system."

One wayside temple is very pretty; green trees outside, a verandah over the lofty entrance, and a young fellow in red and green and purple looking down; a quiet spot with little birds fitting past and a large tree in leaf in the courtyard. The tinkle of the soft bell shows the whereabouts of the idol. A group of men around the door are excitedly discussing the marriage question. Near the priest's house on the courtyard a cow is tethered to the tree. Women, with the usual pretty figures, pass here and there, and children, bright, wee creatures with jewelled nose-rings are playing about. They seem to do so freely all over the sacred precincts. The latter are dark and gloomy, wooden pillars supporting the low roof, fresco pictures on the wall representing grotesque gods variously occupied; glass candle-bowls hung from the ceiling, and a decorated canopy stretches over the idol.

"What is this building at the side?" I ask. "Places for holy men—poor men" (pilgrims and fakirs).

"Do people worship here much?"—"Every day, once a week, on the chief day."

"How do they worship?"—"With flowers and water."

"Can the idols see the flowers or the water?"—"No."

"Then why?"—"It is the system."

"Have you read the New Testament?" I ask an intelligent-looking young priest. "Being a Hindu," he answers, "I don't wish to read that."

What does he read—the histories of his idols? "Do you know that, as a Bengali newspaper\* confesses, 'abomination worship is the main ingredient of modern Hinduism'?"

Standing in the sunshine and looking into the gloom of the idol hall, the contrast between the Light of the World and India's heathen darkness fills the heart. Face to face with Christ, think of the ideals before us: of

BIVA.

"Siva, the destroyer, covered with the ashes of funeral fires, drawing a veil over the sun, and driving creatures into chaos." A glance from the third eye in his forehead strikes dead those who offend him. His necklace is of human skulls, and his rosary is of the same; serpents writhen in his hair and wreath his neck.

Think of these ideals! of

\* The *Reis and Rajes*, in an editorial.