

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Books of enduring scholarly value

Religion

For centuries, scripture and theology were the focus of prodigious amounts of scholarship and publishing, dominated in the English-speaking world by the work of Protestant Christians. Enlightenment philosophy and science, anthropology, ethnology and the colonial experience all brought new perspectives, lively debates and heated controversies to the study of religion and its role in the world, many of which continue to this day. This series explores the editing and interpretation of religious texts, the history of religious ideas and institutions, and not least the encounter between religion and science.

A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos

William Ward's account of the Hindu communities among whom he served as a Baptist missionary in Serampore in West Bengal was first published in 1811 and reprinted in this 'carefully abridged and greatly improved' third edition in 1817. It was an extremely influential work that shaped British views of the newly defined entity of 'Hinduism' in the early nineteenth century. Ward and his fellow missionaries Joshua and Hannah Marshman and William Carey were dedicated to the service of people within the town. They promoted social reforms and education, establishing the Serampore Mission Press in 1800 and Serampore College in 1818. Ward devoted twenty years to compiling his study of Hindu literature, history, mythology and religion, which was eventually published in four volumes. It provided richly detailed information, and was regarded as authoritative for the next fifty years. It is therefore still an important source for researchers in areas including Indian history, British colonialism, Orientalism and religious studies. Volume 1 describes and categorises Hindu deities and objects of worship, celestial, terrestrial, animate and inanimate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection will bring back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship
William Ward
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos

*Including a Minute Description of their
Manners and Customs, and Translations from
their Principal Works*

VOLUME 1: OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

WILLIAM WARD



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship
William Ward
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108007917

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2009

This edition first published 1817
This digitally printed version 2009

ISBN 978-1-108-00791-7 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship
William Ward
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

A
V I E W
OF THE
HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND RELIGION

OF
THE HINDOOS :

INCLUDING
A MINUTE DESCRIPTION OF
THEIR MANNERS AND CUSTOMS,
AND
TRANSLATIONS FROM THEIR PRINCIPAL WORKS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

BY THE REV. W. WARD,
ONE OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARIES AT SERAMPORE, BENGAL.

THE THIRD EDITION,
CAREFULLY ABRIDGED AND GREATLY IMPROVED.

LONDON:

Printed, by Order of the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society, for
BLACK, PARBURY, AND ALLEN, BOOKSELLERS TO THE
HON. EAST INDIA COMPANY, LEADENHALL-STREET;

By W. H. Pearce, High-street, Birmingham.

1817.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To the Memory of

THE REV. SAMUEL PEARCE, OF BIRMINGHAM;

THE REV. JOHN SUTCLIFF, OF OLNEY;

AND

THE REV. ANDREW FULLER, OF KETTERING;

and to

THE REV. JOHN RYLAND, OF BRISTOL;

THE REV. JOHN FAWCETT, OF HEPDEN-BRIDGE;

AND

THE REV. ROBERT HALL, OF LEICESTER;

and to

THE REV. WILLIAM CAREY,

AND ALL THE OTHER EUROPEAN AND OTHER

COLLEAGUES OF THE AUTHOR IN INDIA;

THIS WORK IS VERY AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

SERAMPORE, *June*, 1815.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,

Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PRONUNCIATION OF HINDOO NAMES.



IN endeavouring to give the sounds of Sūṅskritū words, the author has adopted a method, which he hopes unites correctness with simplicity, and avoids much of that confusion which has been so much complained of on this subject. If the reader will only retain in his memory, that the short ū is to be sounded as the short o in son, or the u in Burton; the French é, as a in plate; and the ēē as in sweet; he may go through the whole work with a pronunciation so correct, that a Hindoo would understand him. At the beginning and end of a word, the inherent vowel (ū) has the soft sound of au.

ERRATA.

Vol. I. p. lxxxvi. l. 9. *for* "adorating," *read* "adoring."

— p. 9. l. 7. *for* "eight," *read* "eighth."

— p. 256. l. 12. *for* "fled," *read* "fled away."

Vol. II. p. 138. l. 3. *for* "Bristol Hot-wells, with all its gilt crutches," *read* "the warm waters at Bath, with all the gilt crutches."

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

OF VOL. I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE Hindoo theology founded on the same philosophical notion as that of the Greeks, that the Divine Spirit is the soul of the world, proved from the Greek writers, i.—from the Védantü-Sarü, iii.—A system of austerity founded on this system, v.—Extract from the Shrêë-Bhagü-vütü on this subject, vi.—Account of the ceremony called yogü, by which the Divine Spirit, dwelling in matter, becomes purified, extracted from the Patünjülü Dürshünü and the Gorükshü-sünghita, viii.—No real yogêës to be found at present, ix.—Absurdity of these opinions and practices, x.—Another class of Hindoos place their hopes on devotion, *ibid.*—The great mass of the population adhere to religious ceremonies, xii.—Conjectures on the origin of the Hindoo Mythology, xiii.—on images, as originating in moral darkness, and the depravity of men, *ibid.*—those of the Hindoos not representations of the One God, xiv.—nor of his perfections, *ibid.*—nor of human virtues, xv.—nor of the objects of natural science, *ibid.*—but in general the invention of kings, to please the multitude, *ibid.*—The doctrine of all the East, that God in his abstract state is unknown, and unconnected with the universe, xvi.—the object of worship the divine energy, subject to passions, in consequence of its union to matter, *ibid.*—the creation of the gods first, xvii.—Proofs that the divine energy is the object of adoration, from the forms of the gods, xviii.—the modes of worship, xix.—the common observations of the Hindoos on the phenomena of nature, xx.—The divine energy the object of worship among the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, &c. proved by quotations from various authors, xxi.—The subjects embraced by the Hindoo mythology, xxii.—The ancient idolatry of this people confined to the primary elements, the heavenly bodies, and aërial beings, *ibid.*—the succeeding objects of worship, Brümha, Vishnoo, and Shivü, the creator, the preserver, and destroyer, *ibid.*—next the female deities, as the representatives of nature, *ibid.*—then sundry deities, connected with corrupt notions of Divine Providence; and afterwards deified heroes, xxiv.—The number of the Hindoo gods, *ibid.*—Benefits sought from different gods by their worshippers, xxv.—Brümha—his form—allusions of these attributes—

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

conjecture of Mr. Paterson's examined, xxvi.—Vishnoo—the attributes of his image explained—conjecture of Mr. Paterson's noticed, xxvii.—Shivü, and the attributes of his image—remarks on the worship of the Lingü—resemblance between Bacchus and Shivü—two other forms of Shivü noticed, Kalü-Bhoirüvü and Müha-Kalü, xxviii.—Indrü, xxx.—Yümü, xxxi.—Günëshü, xxxii.—Kartikéyü, *ibid.*—Söoryü, *ibid.*—Ugnee, xxxiii.—Püvünü, xxxiv.—Vüroonü, *ibid.*—Súmoodrü, *ibid.*—Prit'hivēē, *ibid.*—The heavenly bodies, xxxv.—Doorga, xxxvi.—Kalēē, xxxvii.—Lükshmēē, xxxviii.—Sürüswütēē, *ibid.*—Shēētüla, *ibid.*—Münüsa, *ibid.*—Shüsh't'hēē, *ibid.*—Krishnü, xxxix.—Jügünnat'hü, xl.—Ramü, xli.—Choitünyü, xlii.—Vishwü-kürma, *ibid.*—Kamü-dévü, *ibid.*—Sütyü-Narayinü, *ibid.*—Püchanünü, *ibid.*—Dhürmü-t'hakoorü, *ibid.*—Kaloorayü, *ibid.*—Deified beings in strange shapes, xliii.—worship of human beings, *ibid.*—Worship of beasts, *ibid.*—birds, xliv.—trees, *ibid.*—Worship of rivers, *ibid.*—fish, xlv.—books, *ibid.*—stones, *ibid.*—a log of wood, xlvi*.—Remarks on this system of mythology, *ibid.*—on the use of idols in worship, *ibid.*—Indelicacy of many of the Hindoo images, xlvii.—Corrupt effects of idol worship in this country, xlviii.—especially after the festivals, xlix.—The history of the gods and religious pantomimes exceedingly increase these effects, l.—Practices of the vama-charēēs add to the general corruption, li.—Reflections on this state of things, *ibid.*—causes of the popularity of the festivals, lv.—remarks, with a view of correcting the false estimate made of the Hindoo character by the Rev. Mr. Maurice and others, *ibid.*—Idolatry exciting to frauds, lix.—setting up of gods a trade, *ibid.*—Hindoo Temples—their use, lx.—dedication of them, *ibid.*—Images, of what materials made, lxi.—Priests, lxii.—Ceremonies at temples, lxiii.—Periodical ceremonies, *ibid.*—daily duties of a bramhün, lxiv.—form of initiation into the Hindoo rites, *ibid.*—the spiritual guide, lxv.—Bathing, *ibid.*—forms of worship before the idol, lxvi.—Extract from the Ain Akbüree, *ibid.* note.—forms of praise and prayer, lxviii.—meditation, *ibid.*—repeating the names of the gods, lxix.—vows, fasting, and gifts to bramhüns, *ibid.*—hospitality, digging pools, planting trees, rehearsing and hearing the pooranüs, &c. lxx.—Burning widows, and burying them alive, *ibid.*—an affecting relation by Captain Kemp, *ibid.* note.—number of these victims, lxxiv.—Visiting sacred places, *ibid.*—atonements, and offerings to the manes, lxxv.—heavens and hells, lxxvi.—Confession of faith made by a bramhün, *ibid.*—Remarks on it, lxxix.—Sum of the Hindoo system, lxxx.—view of its effects, *ibid.*—Remarks of the same bramhün on the present state of religion among his countrymen, *ibid.*—Appear-

* In this Introduction, the author has gone over the whole of the Hindoo Pantheon, that he might supply a number of omissions in the body of the work; and hence it forms an epitome of the whole.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,

Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

vii

ances in the streets, reminding the passenger of the different Hindoo ceremonies, lxxxii.—This system incapable of producing moral effects, notwithstanding the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, lxxxiv.—Errors inculcated in the Hindoo writings respecting God, lxxxv.—Impure actions of the gods, lxxxviii.—the gods counteracting each other in the government of the world, lxxxix.—Irreverence of the people towards the gods, xc.—Contrast betwixt Hindooism and Christianity, *ibid.*—Hindoo system ascribes all sin to God, xci.—teaches the bramhün to despise the shōōdrü, xcii.—exhorts to the extinction of every virtuous passion, *ibid.*—declares that sin is removed by the most trifling ceremony, *ibid.*—supplies prayers for the destruction of enemies, xciii.—permits falsehood, and theft even from a slave, *ibid.*—Works, said to raise men to heaven, not beneficial to others, *ibid.*—Remarks on the impurities and cruelties connected with this system, xciv.—Impossible to know the Hindoo idolatry, as it is, without initiation, xcv.—The dispensations of Providence towards the Hindoos unfolded by this state of things, xcvi.—Happiness under the British government, *ibid.*—Misrepresentations of European writers noticed and reprehended, xcvii.—Scripture testimony against idolatry, ci.—Of the seceders, or heterodox Hindoos, the Joinüs, Bouddhüs, Shikhs, and followers of Choitünyü—the founders of all these sects religious mendicants, ciii.—Observations on the tenets of these seceders, civ.



BOOK I.
OBJECTS OF WORSHIP.**CHAP. I.****OF GOD.**

	PAGE.
The One God an object of speculation only; not a single temple erected to his honour throughout the whole of Hindoost'hanü, . .	1

CHAP. II.**OF THE GODS.**

Their number, three hundred and thirty millions,	2
SECT. I. VISHNOO. The source of all the Hindoo incarnations, 2.—	
Accounts of the ten incarnations, 3.—Other incarnations, 10.—Meaning of these fables, 11.—Images of Vishnoo,	

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

CONTENTS.

SECT.		PAGE.
	II. Mark of his followers, 12. His names, <i>ibid.</i> His wives, 13. His heaven,	13
II.	SHIVU. Forms of this god, 14. The lingü, 15. Resembles the phalli of the Greeks, 16. Form of this god as Mūha-Kalü, 17. Names and mark of the sect, 18. Shivü's festivals—particularly the sünyasēē and swinging ditto, 19—26. Origin of these horrid rites, 26. Marriage of Shivü, 27. Fables respecting Shivü, 28. Names, 29. Description of Shivü's heaven,	30
III.	BRUMHA. Account of the creation, 33. Form of this god, <i>ibid.</i> Worship paid to him, 34. He attempts to commit incest, <i>ibid.</i> Heaven of Brümha, 35. His names,	36
IV.	INDRU. His image and festivals, 37. Account of a criminal intrigue, 38. Other fables, 41. Heaven of Indrü, 42. Scenes in this heaven, in several stories, 43. Names of this god,	49
V.	SOORYU. His descent, 50. His festivals, 51. Anecdotes of this god, <i>ibid.</i> His names,	55
VI.	GUNESHU. His image, 56. Descent and birth, 57. Worship, 58. Names,	59
VII.	KARTIKEYU. His image and descent, 60. Festivals, 62. Names,	64
VIII.	UGNEE. His form and descent, 65. Festival, <i>ibid.</i> Names,	66
IX.	PUVUNU. His birth, 67. A story respecting him, 68. His impure character, 69. Names,	69
X.	VUROONU. His image and worship, 70. Fables, <i>ibid.</i> His heaven, 72. His names,	73
XI.	YUMU. His image and festivals, 73. His court as judge of the dead, 75. His palace, <i>ibid.</i> Fables respecting him, 76—82. His heaven, 82. Marriage, 83. Names,	84
XII.	" <i>Host of Heaven.</i> " Remarks on their worship,	85
XIII.	<i>Planets.</i> Worshipped in a body,	89
XIV.	RUVEE. His form and worship, 89. Commits a rape, ..	90
XV.	SOMU. His image and worship, 90. Names,	91
XVI.	MUNGULU. His image, 92. An evil planet,	92
XVII.	BOODHU. His form, 92. Account of his birth,	93
XVIII.	VRIHUSPUTEE. His image, 94. An auspicious planet, 95. Names,	95
XIX.	SHOOKRU. His form, 95. A fable respecting his blindness, 96. A propitious planet, <i>ibid.</i> A fable, <i>ibid.</i> Names,	98
XX.	SHUNEE. His image, 99. An evil and much-dreaded planet,	99
XXI.	RAHOO. His image, 100. Received this form at the churn-	

CONTENTS.

ix

	PAGE.
ing of the sea, <i>ibid.</i> Names, 101. Unaccountable coincidence in the customs of different nations respecting an eclipse,	101. note
XXII. KETOO. His image,	102

CHAP. III.

OF THE GODDESSES.

SECT. I. DOORGA. Her descent, 103. Reason of her name, a fable, <i>ibid.</i> Festivals, 108. Image, 109. Ceremonies at her festival minutely described, <i>ibid.</i> Bloody sacrifices, 111. Offerings, 113. Dances, 114. A scene at Raja Raj-krishnū's at Calcutta, 117. Drowning the image, 120. Fables respecting this goddess,	122
II. <i>The ten Forms of Doorga.</i> Story from the Markündéyū pooranū, and another from the Chündēē, relative to the wars of Doorga, 123. Names of the ten forms, ..	128
III. SINGHU-VAHINEE, a form of Doorga. Her image, 128. And worship,	129
IV. MUHISHU-MURDINEE. Her image and worship, 129. Benefits attending it,	129
V. JUGUDDHATREE. Her image, 130. A popular festival held in her honour,	130
VI. MOOKTU-KESHEE. Her image, 131. Her festival, and the benefits promised to her worshippers,	131
VII. TARA. Her image and worship,	132
VIII. CHINNU-MUSTUKA. Her image, 132. Her worship, and the benefits resulting from it,	133
IX. JUGUDGOREE. Her image and worship,	134
X. VUGULAMOOKHEE. Her festival, 134. Benefits resulting from her worship,	134
XI. PRUTYUNGIRA. Petitions addressed to this goddess, 135. Story respecting her,	136
XII. UNNU-POORNA. Her image, and festival,	136
XIII. GUNESHU-JUNUNEE. Her image, 137. Regular and occasional festival,	138
XIV. KRISHNU-KRORA. Her image, and festival, 138. The history of this goddess,	138
XV. VISHALAKSHEE. Offerings to this goddess,	140
XVI. CHUNDEE. Her worship, and festivals, 141. Offerings to her,	141
XVII. & XVIII. Other forms of Doorga of inferior note,	141, 144
XIX. KALEE. Her image, and anecdotes connected with it,	

* *

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

CONTENTS.

SECT.		PAGE.
	145. Human sacrifices, 148. Other horrid rites, 150. A singular fact, that thieves worship her, 151. Festivals—a scene at Kalēe-Shūnkūrū-Goshū's, at Calcutta, 154. The degree of honour formerly paid to this goddess by the Hindoo rajas, 156. Image and temple at Kalēe-ghatū described, 157. This image much honoured, presents being made to it by kings, merchants, and even by Christians, 160. Statement of the value of the monthly offerings,	165
XX.	Other forms of Kalēe of inferior note,	166
XXI.	LUKSHMEE. Her image, 169. Her descent and festivals, 170	170
XXII.	KOJAGURU-LUKSHMEE, another form of Lukshmēē. Her worship, and festival,	171
XXIII.	SURUSWUTEE. Her descent, 172. Indecencies practised during her festival,	173
XXIV.	SHEETULA. Her image, 174. Worshipped during the small-pox,	174
XXV.	MUNUSA *. Her image and descent, 176. Her festival, 176	176
XXVI.	SHUSHTEE. Her six festivals described,	178

CHAP. IV.

INFERIOR CELESTIAL BEINGS OBJECTS OF WORSHIP.

SECT. I.	<i>Usorūis</i> . Their conduct at the churning of the sea, a story, 184	
II.	<i>Rakshūsūs</i> . Story of Koombhū-kūrū, 186. The Gūndhūrūis and Kinnūrūis, 187. Vidya-dhūrūis and Upsūrūis, <i>ibid</i> . Nayikas, 190. Yūkshūs, 191. Pishachūs, Goodghūkūs, Siddhūs, Bhōōtūs, Charūnūs, &c.	102

CHAP. V.

OF THE TERRESTRIAL GODS.

SECT. I.	KRISHNU. His birth, 193. Juvenile exploits, 194. His image and festivals, 195. Image of Radha accompanies Krishnū's, 200. Number of his followers, <i>ibid</i> . Stories of Krishnū,	200
II.	GOPALU. His image; 203. A story of this image found in a field,	203

This goddess is honoured as she who protects from serpents: but the author is assured, that, in the upper provinces, the serpent itself is worshipped, and that the image is formed into a circle, the head and tail of the serpent being joined. The legend respecting this serpent-god is, that the earth rests on his thousand heads.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

xi

SECT.		PAGE.
III.	GOPEE-NAT'HU. A celebrated image of him at Ugrü-dwēpü,	204
IV.	JUGUNNAT'HU. Form of his image, with the origin of it, 206. His temples, 207. Festivals,	208
V.	BULU-RAMU. His image generally accompanies Jügün-nat'hü's,	210
VI.	RAMU. His history, including his war with Ravünü, 211. His image and festival,	218
VII.	CHOITUNYU. History of this mendicant god, 219. His festivals, 222. Another mendicant-god,	223
VIII.	VISHWU-KURMU. Form of his image and festival,	224
IX.	KAMU-DEVU. His image and festival, 225. A story respecting him, 226. His names,	227
X.	SUTYU-NARAYUNU. His image and worship,	227

CHAP. VI.

TERRESTRIAL GODDESSES.

SECT. I.	SEETA,	229
II.	RADHA,	ibid.
III.	ROOKMINÉE, and SUTYU-BHAMA,	230
IV.	SOOBHUDRA,	231

CHAP. VII.

DEITIES WORSHIPPED BY THE LOWER ORDERS ONLY.

SECT. I.	PUNCHANUNU. Form of the image, 232. A story respecting him,	233, note
II.	DHURMU-T'HAKOORU. A form of Shivü, 235. His image and festival,	235
III.	KALOO-RAYU,	236
IV.	KALU-BHOIRUVU,	237
V.	Worship to cure the itch and scurvy,	ibid.

CHAP. VIII.

WORSHIP OF BEINGS IN STRANGE SHAPES.

SECT. I.	URDHU NAREESHWURU. Origin of this image, as related in the pooranüs, 239. Its festival,	241
II.	KRISHNU-KALEE,	242
III.	HUREE HURU. Form of the image, 242. Different accounts in the pooranüs of its origin,	242

SECT.		PAGE.
CHAP. IX.		
WORSHIP OF HUMAN BEINGS.		
	<i>Deified men and women</i> —Bramhüns, especially religious guides,	
	245. Daughters of bramhüns, <i>ibid.</i> Wives of bramhüns,	
	246. A female, 247. Unutterable abominations practised, <i>ibid.</i>	
CHAP. X.		
WORSHIP OF BEASTS.		
SECT. I.	<i>The Cow</i> ,	249
II.	<i>The Monkey</i> , (Hünooman,) 251. Marriage of two given by the Raja of Nüdēya, who spent 100,000 roopees on the ceremony, <i>ibid.</i> Anecdotes of this god,	252
III.	<i>The Dog</i> ,	254
IV.	<i>The Shackul</i> ,	<i>ibid.</i>
V.	Other animals worshipped,	<i>ibid.</i>
CHAP. XI.		
THE WORSHIP OF BIRDS.		
SECT. I.	GURORU. His image and descent, 256. A story re- specting him, 257. His names,	258
II.	UROONU,	259
III.	JUTAYOO,	<i>ibid.</i>
IV.	SHUNKURU CHILLU, or the <i>Eagle of Coromandel</i> ,	<i>ibid.</i>
V.	KHUNGUNU, or the <i>Wag Tail</i> ,	260
VI.	Other birds worshipped,	<i>ibid.</i>
CHAP. XII.		
THE WORSHIP OF TREES.		
SECT. I.	<i>The Toolüsee</i> ,	261
II.	Other sacred trees,	263
CHAP. XIII.		
THE WORSHIP OF RIVERS.		
SECT. I.	GUNGA. Her image, 264. Descent, 265. Worship, 268. Festivals, 269. Attachment of the natives to this river, 272. This attachment encouraged by the shastrüs, <i>ibid.</i> note. Anxiety of the Hindoos to die in sight of	

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

xiii

	PAGE.
the Ganges, 274. Children and grown-up persons drowned in it, 275. Extracts from the pooranüs, 276. Reflections,	277
II. Other deified rivers,	278

CHAP. XIV.

THE WORSHIP OF FISH.	281
----------------------	-----

CHAP. XV.

THE WORSHIP OF BOOKS.	282
-----------------------	-----

CHAP. XVI.

THE WORSHIP OF STONES.

<i>The Shalgramü*</i> . Different kinds, 283. Reason of its deification, 284. Constant representative of the gods in worship, 285. Other stones worshipped,	286
---	-----

CHAP. XVII.

A LOG OF WOOD WORSHIPPED.

<i>The Pedal</i> . Origin of its worship, 287. Festival given in honour of it by the Raja of Nülü-danga,	288
---	-----

* One of these stones, by a fall, being split asunder, was lately shewn to the author. The internal appearance of this strongly indicates, that these stones are not, as has been supposed, (see Asiatic Researches, vol. vii. p. 240.) perforated stones, but petrified shells: the shell in the inside of this was the Argonauta Argo.—May 8, 1815.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
 Volume 1: Objects of Worship
 William Ward
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

ON THE

HINDOO RELIGION.

THE whole system of Hindoo theology is founded upon the doctrine that the Divine Spirit, as the soul of the universe, becomes, in all animate beings, united to matter; that spirit is insulated or individuated by particular portions of matter, which it is continually quitting, and joining itself to new portions of matter^a; that the human soul is, in other words, God himself; that the knowledge of this, leading men to seek complete deliverance from the degrading and polluting influence of material objects, is the only means of being reunited to the divine nature; that this deliverance from matter may be obtained in the present state by separation from human intercourse, the practice of

^a There are two opinions among the Hindoos on this subject; some philosophers maintaining, that it is one soul which is united to sentient creatures; while others support a contrary opinion, and affirm, that human souls must be emanations from the Great Spirit, otherwise, when one person obtained absorption into the divine nature, all would obtain it at the same moment. The védantù philosophers teach, 'that God exists in millions of forms, from the ant to Brümha, the grandfather of the gods, as one moon is seen at once in twenty different pans of water.'

The agreement betwixt these opinions and those of the Greek philosophers is very remarkable:—'Almost all ancient philosophers agreed in admitting two principles in nature, one active and the other passive; but they differed in the manner in which they conceived these principles to subsist. Some held God and Matter to be two principles, which are eternally opposite; not only differing in their essence, but having no com-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ii

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

bodily austerities, and entire abstraction of mind; and that, if not obtained in one birth, it is to be sought through every future transmigration till obtained.

This doctrine is taught in many parts of the Hindoo writings, especially in the *Dürshünüs*; which works, though almost

mon principle by which they can be united. This was the doctrine taught by Anaxagoras, and after him by Plato, and the whole Old Academy. This system, for the sake of perspicuity, we will call the Dualistic system. Others were convinced, that nature consists of these two principles; but finding themselves perplexed by the difficulty with which they saw the Dualistic system to be encumbered, that of supposing two independent and opposite principles, they supposed both these to be comprehended in one universe, and conceived them to be united by a necessary and essential bond. To effect this, two different hypotheses were proposed: some thought God to have been eternally united to matter in one whole, which they called Chaos, whence it was sent forth, and at a certain time brought into form, by the energy of the divine inhabiting mind. This was the System of Emanation, commonly embraced by the ancient barbaric philosophers, and afterwards admitted into the early theogonies of the Greeks. Others attempted to explain the subject more philosophically, and, to avoid the absurdity which they conceived to attend both the former systems, asserted that God, the rational and efficient principle, is as intimately connected with the universe, as the human mind with the body, and is a forming power, so originally and necessarily inherent in matter, that it is to be conceived as a natural part of the original chaos. This system seems not only to have been received by the Ionic philosophers, Thales and Anaximander; but by the Pythagoreans, the followers of Heraclitus, and others. Zeno, determining to innovate upon the doctrine of the Academy, and neither choosing to adopt the Dualistic nor the Emanative System, embraced the third hypothesis, which, though not originally his own, we shall distinguish by the name of the Stoical System. Unwilling to admit, on the one hand, two opposite principles, both primary and independent, and both absolute and infinite; or on the other, to suppose matter, which is in its nature diametrically opposite to that of God, the active efficient cause, to have been derived by emanation from him; yet finding himself wholly unable to derive these two principles from any common source, he confounded their essence, and maintained that they were so essentially united, that their nature was one and the same.' *Enfield*, p. 329, 330.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ON THE HINDOO RELIGION.

iii

wholly speculative, make known a method of abstraction, to assist ascetics in obtaining deliverance from mortal birth.

Udwüyanündü, a sūnyasēē, and the compiler of ‘the Essence of the Védantü,’ says, ‘Brūmhü and life are one: that which, pervading all the members of the body, gives to them life and motion, is called jēvü, life; that which, pervading the whole universe, gives life and motion to all, is Brūmhü; therefore these two are one. Every kind of matter is without life; that which is created cannot possess life: therefore all life is the creator, or Brūmhü; God is the soul of the world. This is the substance of the Védantü philosophy.’

Not only is God thus declared to be the soul of the world, but the writer of the above work affirms, that the world itself is God—God expanding himself in an infinite variety of forms: ‘All things past, present, and to come; all that is in the earth, sky, &c. of every class and description; all this is Brūmhü, who is the cause of all things, and the things themselves.’ Yet this writer, in another part of this work, seems to affirm, that the universe is the *work* of God:—‘The principle of life is Brūmhü; that which is animated is the work of Brūmhü^b, who directs every thing, as the charioteer directs the chariot. Brūmhü is everlasting and unchangeable; the world, which is his work, is changeable.’

This work represents Brūmhü, in his state of repose, as destitute of ideas or intelligence, and entirely separated from all intelligences. It describes this repose by comparing it to whatever may communicate the idea of undisturbed tranquillity; to the bosom of the unruffled ocean; or to the rest enjoyed in a deep sleep, in which there is an entire cessation even of the faculties of the mind.

^b Or, as some writers explain it, exists as an effect, as heat is an effect of fire.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

iv

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Védantū writers add, that at certain revolutions of time, Brūmhū, awaking from this repose, unites to himself his own energy, and creates the universe^c; that as soon as souls are united to matter, they become impressed, according to their destiny, with more or less of three qualities^d:—as 1st, with that which gives rise to excellence of character;—2dly, with that which excites to anger, restlessness, worldly desire, &c.—and 3dly, that which leads to inactivity, ignorance, and such-like errors. The character is formed, and the future destiny regulated, by the preponderance of any one of these qualities. Krishnū is represented in the Shrēē-Bhagūvūtū-Gēētū as teaching Urjoonū, that, ‘the man who is born with divine destiny is endued with certain qualities, [here follow a number of excellent qualities;] that those who come into life under the influence of the evil destiny, are distinguished by hypocrisy, pride, presumption, harshness of speech, and ignorance; that divine destiny is for eternal absorption into the divine nature; and that the evil destiny confineth the soul to mortal birth^e.’

The soul then, by these writers, is considered as separated from the source of happiness when it takes mortal birth, and as remaining a miserable wanderer in various births and states, till it regain its place in the divine essence. A devotee, sighing for absorption, is described as uttering his feelings in words to this purport: ‘When shall I be delivered from this world, and obtain God!’

^c ‘When Brūmhū withdraws his energy, the destruction of the world succeeds; when he employs it, creation springs to birth.’ *The Védantū-sarū.*

^d The possession of more or less of any one of these qualities is owing to the balance of merit or demerit in the preceding birth. Many Hindoo philosophers, however, have no idea of accountability as the cause of reward or suffering: they suppose that all actions, good and bad, produce certain natural effects, which ripen in a future birth; as poverty, disease, and wickedness, or riches, health, and works of merit.

◦ See Wilkins's translation of this work.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ON THE HINDOO RELIGION.

v

In consonance with these ideas, a system of devotion has been formed, to enable men to emancipate themselves from the influence of material objects, and thus to prepare them for absorption. In the first place, the devotee is to acquire the right knowledge of Brūmhū, namely, that God and matter are the same; that Brūmhū is the soul of the world. ‘That error^f which excites earthly desires, and impels to worldly exertions, is destroyed,’ says the writer of the work already quoted, ‘by the knowledge of Brūmhū.’ The person possessed of these ideas of God is called ‘the wise man,’ *Brūmhū gnanee*; and he who is destitute of this knowledge is considered as in a state of pitiable ignorance, like an insect incrustated with matter.

Further to enable him to subdue his passions, and renounce all natural desires, he is directed to retire from the world; to counteract all his natural propensities; and to confine himself to intense meditation on Brūmhū, till he has thoroughly established in his mind this principle, that, ‘seeing every thing proceeded from Brūmhū, and that, at the end of the four yooḡūs, when the universe shall be dissolved, every thing will be absorbed into him again, therefore Brūmhū is every thing.’

The Védantū-sarū says, ‘There are four ways by which the knowledge of Brūmhū is perfected:—1st, By that reflection, in which the person decides upon what is changeable and what is unchangeable in the world;—2dly, By cultivating a distaste of all sensual pleasures, and even of the happiness enjoyed by the gods;—3dly, By the following qualities, an unruffled mind, the subjugation of the passions, unrepenting generosity, contempt of the world, the rejection of whatever obstructs the acquisition of the knowledge of Brūmhū;—and 4thly, By unwavering faith in the shastrūs, added to the desire of absorption.’

^f Error here refers to the false idea, that a man’s self and spirit are different, as that *I* is any thing different from spirit. This idea of the separate existence of *I*, leads to the idea of *mine*, and thus to every worldly desire.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Krishnū, in his conversation with Urjoonū, makes the perfection of religion to consist in subduing the passions, in perfect abstraction from all objects of the senses, and in fixing the whole mind on Brūmhū : I extract a few paragraphs from Wilkins.—‘ A man is said to be confirmed in wisdom, when he forsaketh every desire which entereth into his heart, and of himself is happy and contented in himself. His mind is undisturbed in adversity, he is happy and contented in prosperity, and he is a stranger to anxiety, fear, and anger. Such a wise man is called a sage. The wisdom of that man is established, who, in all things, is without affection, and having received good or evil, neither rejoiceth at the one, nor is cast down by the other. His wisdom is confirmed, when, like the tortoise, he can draw in all his members, and restrain them from their wonted purpose.’ ‘The wise neither grieve for the dead, nor for the living.’ ‘The wise man, to whom pain and pleasure are the same, is formed for immortality’ ‘The heart, which followeth the dictates of the moving passions, carrieth away the reason, as the storm the bark in the raging ocean.’ ‘The man whose passions enter his heart as waters run into the unswelling placid ocean, obtaineth happiness^ε.’ Even at the hour of death, should he attain it, he shall mix with the incorporeal nature of Brūmhū.’ ‘The man who may be self-delighted and self-satisfied, and who may be happy in his own soul, hath no interest either in that which is done, or that which is not done.’ ‘The learned behold Brūmhū alike in the reverend bramhūn perfected in knowledge, in the ox, and in the elephant; in the dog, and in him who eateth of the flesh of dogs.’ ‘Those whose minds are fixed on this equality, gain eternity even in this world. They put their trust in Brūmhū, the eternal, because he is every where alike free from fault.’ ‘The enjoyments which proceed from the feelings, are as the wombs of future pain.’ ‘To the yogēē, gold, iron, and stones, are the same.’ ‘The yogēē constantly exerciseth

^ε This is strange doctrine in the mouth of Krishnū, who spent his youth in licentious amours; and afterwards cohabited with Radha, the wife of Ayanū-ghoshū, while he retained 1600 mistresses.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ON THE HINDOO RELIGION.

vii

the spirit in private. He is recluse, of a subdued mind and spirit; free from hope, and free from perception. He planteth his own seat firmly on a spot that is undefiled, neither too high nor too low, and sitteth upon the sacred grass which is called *kooshū*, covered with a skin and a cloth. There he, whose business is the restraining of his passions, should sit, with his mind fixed on one object alone, in the exercise of his devotion for the purification of his soul; keeping his head, neck, and body steady without motion, his eyes fixed on the point of his nose, looking at no other place around.' 'The man whose mind is endued with this devotion, and looketh on all things alike, beholdeth the supreme soul in all things, and all things in the supreme soul.' 'He who having closed up all the doors of his faculties, locked up his mind in his own breast, and fixed his spirit in his head, standing firm in the exercise of devotion, repeateth in silence *Om!* the mystic sign of *Brūmhū*, shall, on his quitting this mortal frame, calling upon me, without doubt go the journey of supreme happiness.' 'He my servant is dear unto me, who is unexpecting, just, and pure, impartial, free from distraction of mind, and who hath forsaken every enterprize. He is worthy of my love, who neither requireth, nor findeth fault; who neither lamenteth, nor coveteth; and being my servant, hath forsaken both good and evil fortune; who is the same in friendship and in hatred, in honour and dishonour, in cold and in heat, in pain and in pleasure; who is unsolicitous about the events of things; to whom praise and blame are as one; who is of little spirit, and pleased with whatever cometh to pass; who owneth no particular home, and who is of a steady mind.' 'Wisdom is exemption from attachments and affection for children, wife, and home; a constant evenness of temper upon the arrival of every event, whether longed for or not; a constant and invariable worship paid to me alone; worshipping in a private place; and a dislike to the society of man.'

A most singular ceremony, called *yogū*, is said to have been formerly practised by ascetics to prepare them for absorption. I

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

give an account of this ceremony from the first part of the Pa-tünjülü Dürshünü, and the Gorükshü-sünghita :—

The yogēē must in the first place, by medicines (here described) reduce the appetites of the body, and increase its strength; he must then learn the proper posture for the ceremony: this posture may be various, but a particular one is here enjoined—the yogēē is to put his legs across in a sitting posture, and to hold his feet with his hands crossed behind him. The next act of austerity is that of learning to inhale and discharge his breath; in doing which, he is to take a piece of cloth fifteen cubits long and four fingers in breadth, and swallow it repeatedly, drawing it up and taking it down his throat, drinking water at intervals. He must next choose a seat on some sacred spot, at the bottom of a vūtu tree, at some place frequented by pilgrims, near an image of an uncreated lingū, or in any place peculiarly pleasant to a yogēē; but it must be a secret one.—That on which he must sit may be either kooshū grass, or the skin of a tyger or a deer, or a blanket; he must not sit on wood, nor on the earth, nor on cloth; his back, neck, and head must be exactly erect; and he must remain motionless, keeping his eyes fixed on his nose. The act of yogū consists of several parts: the devotee must first with his thumbs and fingers prevent the air from issuing through his eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth, and with his feet bind up the two other avenues of respiration. This he is to practise by degrees till he is able to exist without inspiration and respiration. He who is thus far perfected will be able to subdue his passions, and to disrelish all the pleasures of the senses. Should the mind, at any time, be again entangled in worldly attachments, the devotee must study the essential virtue of things, as, that the world is a dream; that God is the all in all; and thus bring back the mind to abstraction. He is next to meditate on his guardian deity according to the rules of the shastrū. After thus annihilating, as it were, the body and the world, he is then to fix in his mind that he and Brūmhū are one, and so to settle this point as never to lose sight of it, nor return

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ON THE HINDOO RELIGION.

ix

to earthly attachments. From this state of mind arises complete pleasure; he becomes dead to food and to every other bodily want.

The *yogēē* who has attained this state of perfection becomes emancipated in the following manner:—while he sits confining the air within his body, and closing his eyes, by the power of wisdom all his members become dead to action; he unites the energy which is lodged in the body to the soul, and they both ascend by means of the veins and arteries to the skull, from which the soul escapes, by the *basilar suture*: and the body being thus shaken off, he is reunited to the supreme soul^m.

The *Védantū-saru* also pronounces in favour of an opinion of the philosopher *Shūnkūrū*, that the practice of ceremonies is to be renounced by the person seeking absorption, in whom all desires respecting himself are to be annihilated.

From the preceding sketch, the reader will be able to form some idea of this system of Hindoo theology, which is doubtless very ancient. No *yogēēs*, however, now exist, who perform these bodily austerities to the extent laid down in the *shastrūs*. A number of mendicants may be seen, who profess to aim at abstraction of mind, and contempt of the world; but they are in general the greatest sensualists in the country.

Amongst the learned, a few are to be found, who consider the attainment of divine wisdom, as the only means of securing future beatitude: these persons either renounce all worldly connections and become pilgrims, or they remain in a secular state, and ground their expectations (if they have any) of future happiness, on their speculative opinions being less gross than those of the vulgar. As an apology for not practising severe austerities, and for continuing in a secular state, they quote a sentence

^m For further remarks on absorption, and on those mendicants who practise austerities leading to it, the reader is referred to vol. ii. pp. 177, 178. 197—201.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

of Jūnūkü : ‘ A man does not become a hermit by residing in a forest ; but he is a hermit, who even in his own house subdues his passions. Some of these persons despise the popular superstition.

The absurdity and impiety of the opinions upon which the practices of these yogēēs are founded, need not be exposed : the doctrine which destroys all accountability to the Creator, and removes all that is criminal in immorality, must be condemned by every good man ; and the absurdity of rejecting those rational enjoyments which at once prove the beneficence of the Creator, and contribute to the refinement of our nature, is so flagrant, that the slightest notice of it may surely be considered as more than necessary to the discharge of our duty to the interests of Christian morals.

The author may however remark, that he has had many opportunities of witnessing the pernicious effects of the belief, that it is God in man who is the author of every volition, and that evil and good actions are both to be referred to him. A Hindoo, perverted by these ideas, does not perceive the evil of ascribing every villainous action to God ; though when the dreadful and unavoidable result of this doctrine has been pointed out, many revolt from the conclusion. Under the influence of this doctrine, that the human soul is God, the crimes of a malefactor lose their turpitude, and he is bewailed as a person who has acted under unfortunate influence, or as one born with evil destiny. It is also easy to perceive, that where such a belief prevails, all efforts to fly from evil, and to attain moral perfection, are out of the question :—‘ God does every thing ;’ ‘ My evil destiny follows me every where, as a shadow the body,’ is the method by which the Hindoo accounts for all his evil propensities and unjust actions.

Another class of Hindoos place a greater reliance on DEVOTION than on divine knowledge. They derive their opinions from different parts of the Hindoo writings, and from favourite books

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ON THE HINDOO RELIGION.

xi

of their own, as the *Madhyū-bhashyū*, *Bhūktee-rūsamritū-sindhoo*, &c. One of the sentiments of this sect is thus given in the *Shrēe-bhagūvūtū* :—‘ He who, renouncing the service of God, enters the path of wisdom, (practises religious austerities,) works hard at bruising the straw, but obtains only chaff.’ Another of their poets has a verse to this purport :—‘ He who dies at *Kashēe* obtains absorption : true ; but the cause of his emancipation is his devotion.’—*Vūrahū*, a poet belonging to the court of *Vikrūm-adityū*, says, personifying a person of this sect, ‘ O God ! I ask not for the merit of works ; nor for riches ; nor for fame ; I leave all this to fate ; nor do I refuse to endure the fruit of my actions :—but this I ask, that, through every transmigration, I may be thy devoted servant.’—*Vilwū-mungūlū*, another poet of this sect, says, addressing himself to *Vishnoo*, ‘ O God ! I desire not absorption. I ask for a distinct existence, and to be always near thee, as my lord and master.’ Some of these persons express attachment to their guardian deity in the most familiar acts of devotion—as his friends, or servants ; in songs or prayers ; by bowing or making offerings to his image, by washing its feet, by repeating his name, or listening to his praise, or meditating on his qualities. These persons are mostly found among the followers of *Krishnū* and *Choitūnyū*.

Such a worshipper presents himself before the image of *Krishnū*, and says, ‘ Oh, t’hakoorū ! thou art God, the maker of the world, the saviour, the friend of the friendless : I am destitute ; I am thy servant ; save me !’ Others, more fervent in their attachment, omitting the usual purifications and ablutions before morning worship, hasten, as soon as they rise, to pay all those marks of respect and attention to the image which belong to the character under which they worship it. For instance, one man’s image is that of the infant *Krishnū* : he imagines it necessary, that the god should be honoured as a child, and he therefore makes an offering of sweetmeats to him early in the morning ; he is very careful too that the image should be laid down to rest, and raised up again, only at the appointed hours ; he bathes, anoints it, and adorns it with the utmost fondness. Songs in

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

praise of Krishnū are very common amongst this sect; and sometimes an enthusiast falls to the ground while singing, and exhibits all the symptoms of superstitious frenzy. These persons reject many of the Hindoo ceremonies; but they repeat the name of Krishnū, worship the common images of this god, and observe the national festivals to his honour. Some individuals are directed in their religious duties by the Hindoo writings: but the great body are enthusiasts, following the impulse of feelings enkindled by their own impure imaginations. Some of them wander from village to village, proclaiming the name and reciting the praises of Krishnū.

Those who reverence the philosophical doctrine, and those who thus adhere to devotion, form however but a very small part of the Hindoo population. The great majority of the community are attached to the popular ceremonies, considering them as at least *leading* to the knowledge of God, or as laying in a stock of merit which will influence their condition in this or a future birth.

The other branch of Hindoo theology enjoins RELIGIOUS DUTIES, as preparing a person for that state which leads to absorption. Krishnū, in his address to Urjoonū, thus holds up the value of religious practice:—‘Perform thy duty, and make the event equal whether it terminate in good or evil. The miserable are so on account of the event of things. Wise men, who have abandoned all thought of the fruit of their actions, are freed from the chains of birth, and go to the regions of eternal happiness¹. Jūnūkū and others have attained perfection even by

¹ Mr. Wilkins has thus translated this part of the Bhagūvūtū; but the fact is, that there is no *distinct* happiness in the Hindoo absorption, because there is no remaining individuality. The spirit being liberated from every thing which is not spirit, and absorbed in the ocean of universal spirit, or deity, there can be no such thing as individual enjoyment. The Hindoos illustrate their idea on this subject, by comparing the soul to air confined in a vessel, which, when the vessel breaks, is immediately lost in the vast body of air which composes the atmosphere.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ON THE HINDOO RELIGION.

xiil

works. Wise men call him a pūndit, whose every undertaking is free from the idea of desire. He abandoneth a desire of a reward of his actions; he is always contented and independent, and although he may be engaged in a work, he as it were doth nothing. God is to be obtained by him who maketh God alone the object of his works. The speculative and the practical doctrines are but one, for both obtain the self-same end, and the place which is gained by the followers of the one is gained by the followers of the other. The man who, performing the duties of life, and quitting all interest in them, placeth them upon Brūmhū the supreme, is not tainted by sin; but remaineth, like the leaf of the lotus, unaffected by the waters.—If thou shouldest be unable, at once, steadfastly to fix thy mind on me, endeavour to find me by means of constant practice. If after practice thou art still unable, follow me in my works supreme, for by performing works for me thou shalt obtain perfection.’

This brings us to the popular superstition of the Hindoos, of which I shall now endeavour to give a summary account, beginning with their mythology.

It is very difficult, perhaps, to speak decisively on the precise origin of any of the *Ancient Systems of Idolatry*; but not so difficult to trace idolatry itself to certain natural causes, and to prove, that the heathen deities owe their origin to the common darkness and depravity of men; who, rejecting the doctrine of the divine unity, and considering God as too great or too spiritual to be the object of human worship, chose such images as their darkness or their passions suggested. Hence idolatry has arisen out of circumstances common to all heathen nations; which fact, and another hereafter mentioned, will account for many coincidences in the mythology of nations the most remote, while differences in manners and customs, and in the degrees of civilization, may account for most of the diversities found in the images and worship of different idolatrous nations.

It is not to be supposed that any of the images invented by the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00791-7 - A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,
Volume 1: Objects of Worship

William Ward

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

heathen were intended to be representations of the One God, according to the ideas given of this adorable Being in the sacred Scriptures; they are images of beings formed by the fancies of men, who 'by wisdom knew not God.' It is probable, indeed, that no heathen nation ever made a single idol in honour of 'the one living and true God;' and that direct worship to Him was never offered by any heathens.

Nor does it appear, from the various systems of idolatry, that the heathen regarded the gods as intercessors with the Supreme Being. It is certain that no such idea exists among the Hindoos, who never worship the One God, either directly or through the intercessions of others. The gods are regarded as the only divine beings from whom evil is to be dreaded, or good to be expected. It is true, I have heard the bramhūns often speak of the worship of the gods as introducing the worshipper to a greater approximation to final beatitude, but this has nothing to do with the Christian doctrine of mediation.

Writers on heathen mythology have frequently supposed, that the extraordinary bodily organs of the gods were intended to represent the *perfections of Deity*. Such writers, in elucidating the Hindoo system, would have said, 'Indrū is represented as full of eyes^k, to exhibit the divine omniscience; Brūmha with four faces, to display the perfect wisdom of God; and Doorga with ten hands, to teach that God is almighty.' It is a fact, however, that the Hindoos are never thus instructed by the forms of their idols. When the author once interrogated a learned bramhūn on this subject, he rejected this Christian explanation of the forms of his idols, and referred him to the image of Ravūnū, the cannibal, who is painted with a hundred arms, and ten heads^l.

^k The Hindoo fable on this subject is so insufferably gross, that it cannot be printed.

^l Thus Briareus, one of the monsters brought forth by the earth, is said to have had a hundred arms, with which he threw up to heaven the rocks from the sea shore against Jupiter.