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Volume 2: The Hindoo Mythology

William Ward

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THE  
HINDOO MYTHOLOGY



BOOK II.

OF THE TEMPLES, IMAGES, PRIESTS, AND CEREMONIES OF THE HINDOOS.



CHAP. I.

OF THE TEMPLES.

THE Hindoo temples in Bengal, though different in shape, are nearly of the same description of architecture: they are very inferior, it is true, to the sacred edifices in Europe; but some of these buildings are in a better style than might have been expected from a people so little advanced in the arts.



SECT. I.—*Of different Kinds of Temples.*

The *Mündirū*<sup>a</sup>, dedicated to the lingū, is a double-roofed Gothic building, the body square, but the upper part short-

<sup>a</sup> *Mündirū* means any edifice of brick or stone; but custom has appropriated it almost exclusively to the temples of the lingū.

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and tapering to a point. It contains one, two, three, or more rooms, about three cubits by four, with a porch in front for spectators. The centre room contains the lingŭ; in the others are placed the utensils for worship, the offerings, &c.—Small square temples for the lingŭ, with flat roofs, are erected in rows facing the houses of rich men, or before a college, a consecrated pool of water, another temple, or a flight of steps descending into the river. Similar temples in honour of Gŭneshŭ are to be seen in some places. Very small temples like the Mŭndirŭ, only three or five cubits high, and containing a lingŭ about a foot in height, have been erected at Benares.

The *Déoolŭ*<sup>b</sup> temples, sacred to Jŭgŭnnat'hŭ, rise from the foundation in a gradual slope like a sugar loaf, with an iron image of Gŭroorŭ on the pinnacle. These temples, made of brick, are ascended by a flight of steps, and contain only one room.

The *Pŭnchŭ-rŭtnŭ*<sup>c</sup> temple has two or three rooms, and a single-arched roof, with a large pinnacle or turret on the dome, and a smaller one on each corner. It is dedicated to the different forms of Vishnoo, as Radha-bŭllŭbhŭ, Gopalŭ, Mŭdŭnŭ-mohŭnŭ, Govindhŭ, &c. The temple called *Nŭvŭ-rŭtnŭ*<sup>d</sup>, dedicated also to the various forms of Vishnoo, has a double roof like the Mŭndirŭ, with a small turret on each corner of the lower roofs, and on the upper one a larger turret to crown the dome. It contains four or five rooms. At Ŭgrŭ-dwēpŭ, the temple of Gopēē-nat'hŭ has different houses attached to it; one for cooking, an-

<sup>b</sup> Corrupted from dévalayŭ, i. e. dévŭ, a god, alŭyŭ, a house.

<sup>c</sup> Having five turrets.

<sup>d</sup> Having nine turrets.

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other for the utensils used in worship ; another is a store-house for the offerings, and two others are open rooms for the accommodation of visitors and devotees.

The *Fishnoo-mündirū*, having one room, with a portico in front, is a flat-roofed building, erected either within or without the wall which incloses a Hindoo house, or at a little distance from the owner's house ; and sometimes by the side of the Ganges, when the person's house is near the river. A few temples may be seen, having three rooms ; one of which is the god's hall of audience, another his dining room, and the third his room for sleeping.

Another kind of temple, with a flat roof, is often erected by rich Hindoos adjoining to their houses, and called *Chūñ-dēē-mündūpiṣṭi*, and is designed for the image of Doorga or Kalēē. This is built on four sides, with an area in the middle. The image is placed at the north end, with its face to the south ; the two sides, and the north end, in most cases, contain upper rooms with porticos beneath. The room which contains the image is about ten cubits long and sixteen broad : the other rooms are open in front with arched doorways ; and in these the visitors sit to see the ceremonies of worship, hear the singing, &c.

The *Yorū-bangala* is made like two thatched houses or bangalas, placed side to side ; and has what is called in England a double-pitched roof, generally covered with tiles or bricks. The front is open without doors. These temples are dedicated to different gods, but are not now frequently built in Bengal.

The Hindoos have another sacred edifice, called *Rasū-mūnchū*, in which the image of Krishnū is annually placed

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and worshipped. This building is octagonal, with eight turrets at the corners, and a steeple in the centre supported by pillars ; and consists of one room, open on all sides, and elevated five or six feet from the ground. On the nights of the rasū festival the image is brought and placed in this elevated open room, there worshipped, and afterwards carried back to the temple adjoining to the owner's house. The *Dolū-mānchū* is a similar building, but is sometimes made larger.

A great number of small clay and thatched buildings are erected in Bengal, in which the images of Siddheshwūrēē, Kṛishnoo, Ramū, &c. are set up. The roofs of these buildings are sloping, like the huts of the poor in Europe.

Images of some of the inferior deities are placed under trees, and these trees become as it were temples for worship.

In some few towns a number of different temples are built in a square. I once saw a *Dévalūyū* of this kind at Chanhra, in Jessore, which contains twenty-one temples and as many gods. One thousand acres of ground are attached to this place ; one bramhūn performs the ceremonies ; six others cook for these gods ; four others gather flowers, and bring the articles for the daily worship. Nimaee-mūllikū, a goldsmith of Calcutta, built and endowed this place. Similar dévalūyūs are to be seen at Krishnū-nūgūrū<sup>†</sup>, Gūnga-vasū, Shivū-nivasū, Būrūhū-nūgūrū<sup>‡</sup>, Natorū, Poonté<sup>§</sup>, Somra<sup>h</sup>, Bhōō-koilasū, Gooptū-para, and at many

\* These belong to Girēshū-chūndrū, the raja Navu-dwēepū.

† This first place is in Moorsūdadabādū, and belongs to raja Vishoonat'ū, as does that at Natorū.

‡ This belongs to raja Bhoovūnū-t'hakoorū.

h This place is the property of Ram-sūnkūrū-rayū, a voidyū.

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other places in Bengal.—Raja Chüन्द्रü-rayü, of Patülee, is said to have built two hundred of these dévalüyüs, at each of which two or three hundred people are daily fed. The relict of raja Tilükü-chüन्द्रü, of Burdwan, erected one hundred and eight temples in one plain, and placed in them as many images of the lingü; attaching to them eleven bramhüns and inferior servants, and endowing the temples with estates to the amount of the wages of the attendants.

Before many temples is seen a roof, supported by pillars, under which portions of the shastrüs are recited or sung, and at other times animals for sacrifice slaughtered. In general, however, the singing and dancing at the festivals take place under an awning in the open air, near some temple, or near the person's house who bears the expense. The long periods of dry weather in this climate render this practicable; nor would the heat allow of such large assemblies meeting in houses, even if buildings sufficiently large could be constructed. This accounts for the Hindoo temples being so small in the inside: many of them, especially those of the lingü, are only large enough to contain the image, the offerings, the utensils of worship, and the officiating priests.

Much of the wealth of the Hindoo kings was formerly expended in building temples, and supporting splendid festivals. At present, those who erect these temples in Bengal are principally the head-servants of Europeans, who appropriate part of their gains to these acts of supposed merit<sup>i</sup>.

The expense of erecting one of these temples, if a single

<sup>i</sup> The capitol, or temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, was raised in consequence of a vow made by Tarquinius Priscus in the Sabine war.

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room, amounts to about two hundred roopees; and the wages and daily offerings to one image are about three roopees per month. Some give the bramhūn who officiates twelve anas, and others a roopee monthly, with his food and clothes. Sometimes the offerings are given to him, but in other cases they are presented to the bramhūns of the village alternately, and the priest has money given him in their stead. These offerings frequently consist of a pound of rice, a pint of milk, half an ounce of sugar, and two plantains. The quantity, however, is not prescribed; and other things are added by the wealthy.



#### SECT. II.—*Dedication of Temples.*

WHEN a Hindoo has erected a temple, he appoints a day to dedicate it to some god. The following account of the dedication of one hundred and eight temples to Shivū, some years ago, at Talitū, in the district of Burdwan, by the mother of Tėjūsh-chūndrū, the raja of Burdwan, will give an idea of the manner in which this ceremony is performed.

The foundation of these temples being about to be laid, a place was dug in the earth about a cubit square, into which water was poured, and a brick placed in the hole; after which the worship of the household god, (Vishnoo,) of Vūroonū, and the lingū, was performed. At the close of the worship, a flower was thrown into the water, the floating of which to the right was considered as a good omen, and decided the point that the temple should be raised on that spot. The following prayer was then addressed to this brick: 'As long as the earth and mountains remain, so long

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do thou remain immovable.' After the temples were nearly finished, many bramhūns and the relations of the queen were invited, and on an auspicious day the ceremony of consecration was performed. An altar was raised before each temple, and four priests chosen for each altar; who, purifying them, performed the worship of the five gods<sup>k</sup>, the nine planets, the ten guardian deities of the earth, and of Shivū, Vishnoo, and Doorga. To this succeeded the burnt-sacrifice. One hundred and eight officiating priests then celebrated the worship of Shivū, while sitting at the doors of the temples. A person, in the name of the queen, next made a present to the builder, and hinted to him that she now wished to consecrate these temples to Shivū. The trident of Shivū was next worshipped, and fixed on the steeple. The princess then, sitting in an inclosure below the steps of one of the temples, in the presence of one of the priests and her attendants, devoted these temples to Shivū, saying, 'O Shivū! I present to thee these one hundred and eight temples, made of brick: may I be rewarded with an everlasting residence in heaven.' In making this offering, a number of minute ceremonies took place. The princess next sent one of her relatives to perform the worship of Indrū near a bamboo, bearing a trident, with a flag fastened thereto. The same person, after professing to animate one hundred and eight wooden images of the bull, worshipped them, and placed them in the temples thus dedicated. A representative of the princess next walked round the temples three times:—(the princess herself began to perform the ceremonies of circumambulation, but being very corpulent, she resigned it to one of the priests.)—One hundred and eight priests, bringing garlands<sup>l</sup> and the

<sup>k</sup> Brūmha, Vishnoo, Shivū, Gūneshū, and Sōoryū.

<sup>l</sup> At the time of worship the priest always puts upon the image a garland of flowers. This seems to have been practised among other idolaters:

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other articles used in worship, now performed the worship of the lingü in the temples. At the close of these ceremonies, the princess presented a roopee to each of the four hundred and thirty-two officiating bramhüns, and one hundred and eight roopees to her own privaté priest, who also obtained the offerings. She also presented twelve kinds of offerings to Shivü, among which were vessels of gold, silver, and other metals,, cloths, &c. An entertainment to the bramhüns succeeded, and at length the guests were dismissed with presents from among the offerings, or in money, from ten to fifty roopees each bramhün. One hundred thousand roopees, it is said, were expended upon these buildings <sup>m</sup>.

The ceremonies are nearly similar to the above when idols are dedicated and set up in temples; when pools or trees are consecrated to the public use; when cars are presented to some god; and when a person is finishing the ceremonies of a vrütü or vow.

SECT. III.—*Endowment of Temples.*

THE worship in some temples is conducted, and the offerings supplied, by the family which has erected the temple; but in others by a hired bramhün, who receives

for when the priest of Jupiter came to worship Paul and Barnabas, (Acts xiv. 13.) he brought oxen and garlands. No doubt the latter were intended to be put upon the heads or necks of the apostle and his companion, the persons about to be worshipped.

<sup>m</sup> Téjüsh-chündrü has since built one hundred and eight temples at Umbika, and dedicated them to Shivü.



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monthly wages : the offerings are in general distributed among the bramhũns of the village.

To a temple particularly celebrated, rich men make grants of houses, sometimes of whole villages ; and of lands, orchards, pools, &c. to a large amount ; and the produce of these grants is applied to the uses of the temple.

The temple of Radha-bũllũbhũ at Bũllũbhũ-poorũ, about twelve miles north of Calcutta, has been endowed with lands, houses, &c. to the annual amount of 3,000 roopees, by Raja Nũvũ-Krishnũ ; which is divided among sixteen families of bramhũns.

The temple of Jũgũnnat'hũ at Mũheshũ, about the same distance from Calcutta, has been endowed with lands, &c. to the annual amount of 1,400 roopees, by Raja Anũndũ-Chũndrũ-Rayũ.

The temple of Gopẽe-nat'hũ at Ūgrũ-dwẽepũ has been endowed with lands, &c. to the annual amount of 6 or 7,000 roopees, by Raja Krishnũ-Chũndrũ-Rayũ.

The temple of Jũgũnnat'hũ in Orissa has been endowed by several rich Hindoos : Raja Ram-Krishnũ-dẽvũ gave two villages, the rents of which bring in about 4,000 roopees annually : Nimoo-mũllikũ of Calcutta gave daily one roopee, or 365 annually ; and his children continue the donation. Other rich men make similar annual presents. It is supposed that not less than 100,000 roopees a year are drawn from the Hindoos by the bramhũns of this temple.

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## CHAP. II.

### OF THE IMAGES.



THE images of the Hindoo gods are made either of gold, silver, quicksilver mixed with the powder of tin, brass, copper, iron, mixed metal<sup>n</sup>, crystal, stone, wood, or clay<sup>o</sup>. The common workmen in gold, silver, brass, &c. make these images.

The images made of gold are generally those of Doorga, Lūkshmēē, Radha, Krishnū, and Sūrūswūtēē; which are kept in private houses, and worshipped daily. These images must not be less in weight than one tolū<sup>o</sup>; they are generally three or four.

The image of Shēētūla is often made of silver, kept in the house, and worshipped daily. It is as heavy as ten or twelve roopees.

The images of Shivū only are made of quicksilver and

<sup>n</sup> Containing, as the Hindoos say, eight ingredients, viz. gold, silver, tin, copper, iron, zinc, lead, and brass.

<sup>o</sup> The shastrūs allow images to be made of no other substances than these. The image of Shūnee alone is made of iron.

<sup>p</sup> Three tolūs are rather more than one ounce. At Kidderpoorū, adjoining to Calcutta, is a golden image of Pūtitū-pavūnēē, two cubits high. Near Serampore is a golden image of Jūgdhatrēē, about a cubit and a half high.