

"False Gods in India"

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"What ugly looking pictures! What can they be?"

I do not wonder that you think the pictures ugly, but if you could see them, idols in the temple of Juggernaut, in India, you would think them still more ugly than their pictures.



And yet you would see something that would seem worse to you than the idols themselves; you would see people bowing down before these hideous looking idols and calling them their gods, and praying to them!



"And are these the only gods that the people of India know anything about?"

Oh no, there are more gods in India than there are people! There are so many that a person could not worship them all if he should try.

Each person therefore chooses the ones that he likes best and worships them.

"Well, are the gods all like them!" you say.

No not just like these, but very many are as bad as these, and some are still worse.

There are "idols of every form and shape, from the little painted clay image in a poor man's house, up to the huge figure of gold in one of their temples, or to the image of a bull, twenty feet high, cut out of a rock." Then besides these frightful idols of clay, and stone and brass, and gold, some of them worship demons, which they say are the blood-thirsty spirits of wicked men who have died. Others worship "the sun and moon and stars, the fire which blazes on the hearth, the wind which sweeps across the plains, the stream which flows by their dwelling, the cow which browses in the pasture, the very tools with which they work, the snakes that crawl across their path, the trees that surround their villages, the mountains, hills, plants, and stones, and numberless other familiar objects.

The three greatest gods are Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer. [pictured in order below]



Siva is worshipped more than the other because the people are afraid of him. He and his wife, Kali Devi, are said to be so

bloodthirsty that the people are willing to give them almost anything, not because they love them, but to keep them from hurting them. Siva is represented by a small black bone carried in a silver box around the neck, or fastened to the arm.

Siva's wife, Kali Devi, is an idol of very dark blue, almost black. "She has four arms, having in one hand a sword, and in another the head of a giant which she holds by the hair, another hand is open to bestow a blessing and with the fourth she is forbidding fear. She wears two dead bodies for earrings, and a necklace of skulls; her



mouth is open, and her tongue hangs down to the chin. The heads of several giants are hung as a girdle around her waist, and her tresses fall down to her feet. As she is supposed to have been drinking the blood of the giants which she has slain, her eyebrows are bloody, and the blood is falling in a stream down her breast; her eyes are red like those of a drunkard. She stands with one foot on her husband, Siva, who had cast himself down before her among the bodies of the dead."

Just think of worshipping a god like that! It is said that she can be kept from hurting them in no other way than by giving her plenty of blood. "The blood of a tiger is said to please her for a hundred years, and the blood of a lion, a deer, or a man, a thousand, while by the sacrifice of three men she is pleased a hundred thousand years." No wonder that the poor people at one time offered human beings to her, and that they still spend so much of their money for animals to sacrifice to her at her yearly festivals. Every year the blood runs in streams before her shrines.



Ganess, the elephant-headed son of Siva and Kali Devi, is also much worshipped. His image is found everywhere, by the roadside, and under trees, and in small temples. "No one sets out on a journey without praying to him, 'O! thou work-perfecting Ganess grant me success in my journey.' At the head of every letter, his peculiar mark is made. When a person begins to read he

salutes Ganess, and shopkeepers and others paint the image or name of this god over the doors of their shops or houses, expecting him to protect them and help them in their work. Many keep in their houses a small brass image of him and worship it daily. In him they think is found all wisdom. Often is the Hindu mother seen pointing her frightened infant to this hideous idol, and joining its tiny hands together towards the god."

The people live in fear all the time. Those who worship demons dare not even show that they love their children, or take good care of them when they are ill, for fear the demons will see their love and kill their children or cause some other dreadful thing to happen to them.

And what has one of these idols ever done that they should be thus worshipped and feared? Not one thing.

They are but wood or stones or brass or clay made into these shapes. Can a piece of stone or clay hear you when you speak to it? Can it feel when you touch it? Does it know when you are in trouble?

Has it power to come and help you? No; and neither can these false gods.

"They have mouths, but they speak not;
Eyes have they, but they are not;
They have ears, but they hear not;
Noses have they, but they smell not;
They have hands, but they handle not;
Feet have they, but they walk not;
Neither speak they through their mouths." [Psalm 115:5-7]

"If they can do nothing to hurt anyone why do so many of the people of India fear them?" "If they can do nothing to help a person, why do they pray to them?"

It is because they are following false guide-books. They are told that these are their gods and that bad spirits come into their idols that will do dreadful things to them unless they worship them and give them many offerings. They believe this so strongly that sometimes they go for years without noticing that their prayers are never answered, and when they do notice, they often think it is because they must offer still greater sacrifices, or more sorely afflict their bodies.

Oh, that all might get hold of the true Guide-Book! Oh, that all might learn of the true God!

"The Most High God"

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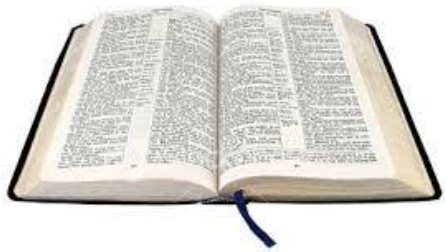
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The idols of India are called gods because people worship them, but they are no more like the only true God than a piece of mud is like the sun, or a grain of sand is like the ocean.

We have seen that the idols do not know anything; they never have had power to do anything, and never can have power to do anything; they have no beauty, no glory, no life, no goodness, no love; they cannot even feel, or hear, or see. But they are thought to be filled with hateful, cruel spirits that delight to torture, kill and destroy.

But, praise the Lord, there is a true God. There is a living God. One who knows and feels, and hears and sees, and who manifests a good and loving Spirit.

I see flashes of His glory in the sun and moon and sky, and exhibitions of His power in the heavens and the earth. I see the reflection of His greatness in the sea, and examples of His handiwork in the fleecy clouds, balmy air, and downy snowflakes. I see marks of His wisdom, and tokens of His love and thoughtfulness, in the animals and birds and flowers, and in the tiniest thing that He has made. I know of His goodness and His mercy, for I have felt them in my own heart. I find Him all that the Bible says He is.



The more I know of God the more I know that He alone "is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens." [Psalm 96:4] He not only has life in Himself, but He has power to give life. Everything that lives gets its life from Him, for He "made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." [Acts 14:15]

The most high God lives in heaven, up, up above the starry sky. He has a great white throne, surrounded by a dazzling rainbow, a temple such as this earth has never seen, a glorious city, and shining attendants more than can be numbered. His face is brighter than the sun, and "he dwells in a light which no man can approach unto." [1 Tim. 6:16]

And yet what seems still more wonderful, this glorious being so high and lifted up, is willing to come down and by His Spirit dwell in our poor bodies, cleansing them from sin and using them for His temples,—if we but love Him and invite Him in!

"How can He come and live in us?"

I am sure I cannot tell. But He says He will if we really want Him to, and I know that He does because I've asked Him to, and He has kept His promise; and the peace and joy and comfort that He brings with Him is more than this world can give or take away. When He is within, we can do right, but without Him, we can do nothing right. He can do this thing that seems so impossible to us, because He knows so much more than we, and is so much more powerful.

His love is as great as His glory and His power. He has given us our lives and everything else that we have. He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall that we may have corn for bread, and water for drink, and fuel for fire, and clothing for our bodies. He surrounds us with life and beauty everywhere, with green grass, bright flowers,

shady trees, merry birds, wonderful insects and animals, singing brooks, and lofty mountains. And best of all, when He saw us in sin and without hope, He loved us so that He gave His only Son, whom He loved as His own life, to suffer and die that we might be saved from our sins and live. And He promises that if we will take Jesus as our Saviour, and let Him live in us, He will with Him give us all that we need,—peace and joy and righteousness now, and immortality, a crown of life, and endless happiness on the earth made new. Then we may see Him as He is. Then we may share His glory and shine as the stars for ever and ever.

Although God is so great, yet He is so like a loving Father that we need not be afraid to go and talk with Him whenever we wish. "Like as a Father pitieth His children so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." [Psalm 103:13] He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He knows all about us, for He sees us all the time. He knows our names and where we live, and everything we do. He sees when we are in trouble, and He feels for us, and hears us when we cry unto Him; and He is able and willing to help us.

God knows that He alone can help us to be good, that no one else is able to care for us and save us. He therefore says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." [1 John 5:21]

"Why," you say, "I never could care for an idol!"

Do not be too sure. If you love anything better than you love God, you are making an idol of that thing, and are trusting in it to save you. It may not be an image of stone or brass, but it is an idol, and an idol of any kind cannot save you.

Do not think that you must wait till you are older to become acquainted with this wonderful God. Do not think because you are a child that He does not notice you or care for you. He is not like the

gods of India. You need not be afraid to come to Him. Although so wise and great He loves you and longs to save you.

When Jesus was on earth He took little children in His arms and blessed them, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." [Mark 10:14] He loves them now just as much as He did then. He longs to have you come and tell Him when you are tempted to do wrong, and when you are in trouble, for He can help you. He longs to be your best Friend, for He has done more for you than your own father and mother. In His word He speaks to you. There you may listen to His voice, and become acquainted with His goodness.