

## ***"Death in India"***

The Present Truth – June 15, 1893

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Death is a great enemy. How it makes our hearts ache to see our loved ones cold and silent in death! How empty the house seems, after they have been laid away in the grave! How could we bear it without Jesus, and without the precious promises in His word? His words alone bring comfort. His presence alone satisfies our longings and fills the aching void in our hearts. On Jesus only can we roll off the heavy burden.

There are people in India who know nothing of Jesus, and nothing of His word, and nothing of His power to help in such trying times. How much more sad death must be to them!

When their friends die, they generally burn them instead of burying them. "After the body has been burned they think the parts all join



together and go through a river of mire and blood. When it gets to the other side of the river it must walk over ground like fiery hot copper, and finally lie down in a place full of sharp spikes. Then comes the judgment, when all the good deeds and all the bad ones committed by the dead man are added up. If there are more bad deeds than good ones, he will have to be born again at once in a lower animal; but if there are more good than bad, he goes to heaven for a little while, and then comes back to be born again into

something else. So there is no end to their misery even in heaven; the best they can hope for is a little rest before they begin again."

They are taught, you see, that when their friends die they do not really die, but that they merely stop living in that body and go to live in some other body. If they are not very bad they think they will go into a nice animal—"a cow or sheep, or something of that kind; but if they are wicked, they go into such creatures as mice, or rats, or flies; and this does not



## Sacred Cows of INDIA

happen only once, but again and again, till the soul has done more good things than wicked ones. This is why the Hindus will not eat meat; they are afraid of turning out the souls of their friends into a worse animal. "They do not dare

to kill an ox, or cow, or monkey, or even a crow." The crows are allowed to fly in and out of the houses just as they like, and to help themselves to anything that they want. Once a year the crows have a great feast, called 'Ancestors' Dinner,' when the people pray to their dead relations to come and eat the good things they have made ready for them."

"The Jains never eat or drink in the dark, for fear they might unconsciously swallow an insect, and thus cause pain to some departed human soul. Some Jains carry a broom to sweep the ground before they tread on it!"

A baker is sometimes seen before his shop feeding twenty or thirty yellow street dogs. "The priests have told him that the soul of his father has gone into the body of a dog, so he feeds all, that his father may be sure of something to eat."

"The soul has to pass out of body into another no less than eight million four hundred thousand times before it is thought to be quite free from sin." "For all the wrong things they do or say they expect to be punished when their souls have gone into other bodies."

"If a man loses his caste when he is dying, his soul would go after his death into the body of a very low animal, perhaps a rat, and then it would not be able to get back into another man after the rat died, but into the animal that comes next above a rat; for they think that the soul must go in regular order through all the animals, rats and cats and dogs and donkeys, and all the rest, until it gets up to a cow; and then from a cow to a man, and then back again into another animal, according as it behaves itself in its different bodies; so that losing your caste before you die means that your soul will have to begin its journey all over again."

Many of the people in South India, you remember, worship demons, which they think are the spirits of very wicked men who have died. They live in fear of them all the time.

The Mohammedans think that "an angel is in every man's grave, waiting for him, and as soon as he is buried the angel tells him that two examiners are coming to him, they ask him whether he believes in God and in Mohammed; if he says, yes, then they comfort him; but if he says, no, they torment him.

"The soul does not go to heaven until the resurrection day; where it does go depends upon how good it has been; if the man was very holy, his soul will go to Paradise, to be with the prophets; if not quite good enough for that, it will go into a green bird, and live with the

martyrs; if only a common sort of a believer, it will either stay near the grave, or with Adam, in what is called lowest heaven, or in a well, until the trumpet sounds at the resurrection day. The souls of those who do not believe in Mohammed, have to bear terrible sufferings all the time until the resurrection day.

"When that day comes, all the dead bodies will rise, and their souls will go into them, after which they all will go to sleep till judgment has been passed upon them.

"Then everyone in turn has to walk over a tiny bridge, as fine as a hair, and sharp as a sword; the good people get over it very nicely, but the wicked ones tumble off and fall into hell, which is underneath. If they are Mohammedans, they will come out again someday, and go to heaven; but if not, they must stay there always."

"The Parsees suppose that there is a particular dog in the spirit world, that takes care of the souls of dead people, and keeps the evil spirits from hurting them, especially on the fourth day after death, when they are judged." For three days the spirit of the dead man is supposed to hover about the Tower of Silence, where he is left for the vultures to eat.

Oh, that these poor souls knew of the sweet peace and comfort found in our blessed Bible. Let us go to it ourselves in every time of trouble, then we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble and know not of Jesus, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.