

# INDIA



**By PIERRE LOTI**

**UNIFORM VOLUMES**

---

**CONSTANTINOPLE**

(Aziyade)

**EGYPT**

(La Mort de Philae)

**THE ICELAND  
FISHERMAN**

(Pêcheur d'Islande)

**JAPAN**

(Madame Chrysanthème)

**A TALE of the PYRENEES**

(Ramuntcho)

**MADAME PRUNE**

(La Troisième Jeunesse de Madame Prune)

**A TALE of BRITTANY**

(Mon Frère Yves)

**INDIA**

(L'Inde, sans les Anglais)

*IN PREPARATION*

**JÉRUSALEM**

(Jérusalem)

**MOROCCO**

(Au Maroc)

**SIAM**

(Un Pèlerin d'Angkor)

**THE MARRIAGE of LOTI  
(Tahiti)**

(Rarahu)

# INDIA

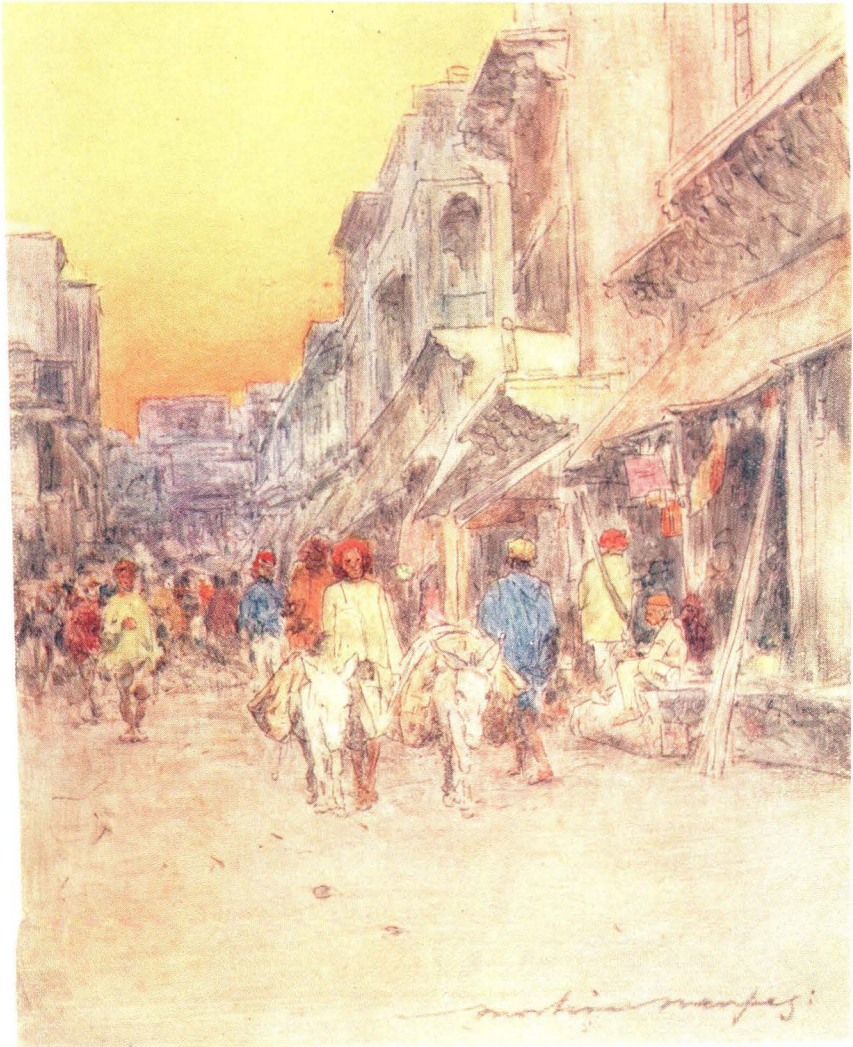
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PIERRE LOTI

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
<small>CHAPTER</small>	
I. THE BURIED CITY . . . . .	5
II. THE ROCK TEMPLE . . . . .	18
III. THE HOME OF THE MAHARAJAH OF TRAVANCORE . . . . .	21
IV. IN THE LAND OF THE GREAT PALMS . . . . .	87
V. IN FAMISHED INDIA . . . . .	143
VI. TOWARDS BENARES . . . . .	221
INDEX . . . . .	279

# INDIA

## INTRODUCTION

It is midday on the Red Sea. There is light, light everywhere, so much light that cries of admiration and astonishment are forced from us ; it is as if we issue from gloom into a clear air of boundless space. The passage from our Northern Autumn to the perpetual Summer that reigns here, is made almost imperceptibly by our modern ships that do not heed the wind. Silvery crested waves dance on the blue waters, and the sky seems more distant from the earth ; the clouds, too, have more definite form and are further off ; new depths of space become apparent, and our horizon is extended.

It seems as though our eyes could appreciate new forms and colours in the increasing brightness which we had been unable to perceive before. From what a land of shadows we must have come, and what can this festival of light be that has sprung on us suddenly and unbidden ?

A melancholy brightness pours relentlessly on this land of tombs, this country thick with dust of bygone races ; but we forget it when we reach our northern clime, and are surprised to find it there once more on our return. Its rays shine constantly on the hot and languid gulfs, and on their sand or granite shores ; it bathes the ruins and that world of dead stones which guard the ancestral faith and the secrets of those the Bible tells us of. This melancholy light is ever present, just as it must have been

in the old, sacred times, and these things give our narrow imagination a sense of infinity, and tell of a time without beginning or end. The biblical times, however, whose antiquity inspires our trust, are but of yesterday when we look back on the history of the world, fearful in the immensity of the past. This superb and intoxicating brightness is but the passing effect of our slowly decaying little sun upon a favoured zone of our still smaller earth, an earth that nestles close to him, as if frightened by the vast and chill orbits of the other planets.

The blue sky too, enwoven with the phantasy of passing clouds, that looks so deep, is but a thin, deceptive veil that serves to screen the yawning space behind. No, this is all nothing, only the space behind is real.

This empty space, this black abyss into which worlds ceaselessly fall, this kingdom that knows neither commencement nor decay, is the one eternal reality.

I must yet spend some seven or eight days amidst the shining blue of heaven and sky before I reach my journey's end. I make my way to India, the cradle of human faith and thought, with nameless dread, fearing that I may find nothing but a cruel and final deception.

I have not come here to make a trifling call, but to ask or beg the keepers of the Aryan wisdom to give me their belief in the lasting duration of the soul in place of the ineffable Christian faith which has vanished from my soul.

The day declines in wondrous splendour. The sun that draws us with him in the madness of his eternal wandering will soon have passed from our view. Our side of the world will turn towards that deep space, towards that land of shadow which the transparencies of the night air will let us see more clearly. But now the magic of the evening, with the burning rays of coppery rose, steals on us. In the east a chain of desolate mountains, whose granite slopes



glow like a furnace, rise from the sea. They are Sinai, Serbal, and Horeb, and the feeling of religious respect, which centuries have impressed upon our race, invades us once more.

The burning summits do not linger long, for the sun has sunk beneath the waters and the evening enchantment is over. Sinai, Serbal, and Horeb fade in the twilight, and are no longer distinguishable. Were they other than crests of jagged rock, idealized in our minds by the superb poetry of Exodus? Vast and calm night will soon restore all things to their true proportions, for space is already filled by legions of wandering suns which make me think of the black emptiness into which they and we are falling. I dream, too, of the miserable fate of our little planets chained to a sun that they can never hope to reach, ever attempting to narrow the orbits of their mad circlings, instead of plunging into space as do the more glorious suns.

A cloudless limpidity spreads from the zenith to the horizon, and the limitless void into which myriads of worlds fall (like sparks from a rain of fire) is unbarred before our eyes.

A sense of alleviation comes from the starry night, like some breath of tenderness or pity that is poured into a pardoned soul.

My God! If the Indian sages that I seek could but convince me that I might find pardon and pity too.

# **THE BURIED CITY**

# INDEX

- Afghan Mussulmans, 244-245  
 Agra :  
   Birds at, 238  
   Characteristics of, 233  
   Fortress, ancient, 237  
   Palaces of, 234-237  
 Amber, 202, 204-205  
 Anuradhapura :  
   Dimensions of, 18  
   Meaning of name, 7 *note*  
   Rock temple of, 15-17  
   Ruins of, 8, 11-12  
   Site of, 7-8  
   Village in, 12  
 Arabian Sea, 80-81  
 Architecture, 119, 219  
 Aunis, recollections of, 19, 27  
  
 Babar, Emp., 220 *note*  
 Balamoni, 115-118  
 Banyan trees, 30, 32, 35  
 Bas-reliefs on stone, 15-16  
 Bathing, ceremonial, 44, 259, 275  
 Bats, 67, 119, 127, 129, 231  
 Bayadère—at Madura, 115-118 ;  
   at Pondicherry (dancing), 135-140  
 Beckanire, 208  
 Bed, suspended, 80  
 Beggars, 127 ; starving, 174 ;  
   diseased, 242, 267  
 Benares :  
   District of, 270  
   Funeral pyres at, 247-250, 252-254  
   Street sights of, 264-267, 274  
   Temples at, 246 ; Golden Temple, 263, 266, 267 ;  
   temple of Kali, 265 ; remains of first Buddhist temple, 272  
   Theosophists at, 254-257, 268, 273, 276-278  
  
 Bhils, 184-185  
 Bible localities, 1-3  
 Birds :  
   Agra, at, 238  
   Benares, at, 250, 270  
   Nesting in temples, 93, 103  
 Boars, 182  
 Boatmen, 63-67, 70, 82, 83  
 Brahma :  
   Evening prayer to, 67  
   Vision of, 278  
 Brahminism :  
   Festival of Vishnu, 90-91, 100, 103, 106-112  
   Festival, sexennial, 51  
   Impenetrability of, 60, 82  
   Obscuring ritual of, 176  
   Temples of, *see* Temples  
 Brahmins :  
   Bathing by, 44, 259, 275  
   Benares, Pundit at, 263, 270-272  
   Diet of, 176-177, 212, 255  
   Dress of, 41, 106  
   Odeypoure, at, 175-179  
   Status of, 113, 265  
 Buddha :  
   Bench of, 270-271  
   Statues of, 17, 19  
   Temple of, first, 272  
 Buddhist priest at the Rock Temple, 16  
 Buried city. *See* Anuradhapura  
  
 Capitals of columns, 97, 113  
 Carpet factories, 42  
 Carriages, various, in Gwalior, 209-210  
 Cars, bullock, 28, 29  
 Caste, symbol of, 41, 85, 106, 178  
 Cattle with supernumerary legs, 237

- aves, 156-166, 168-169  
 Century, nineteenth, end of, 68  
 Chariots for gods, 26  
 Cheetahs, 192, 199  
 Children :  
   Brahmin, 113  
   Cartload of, at Benares, 271  
   Clothes of, 42  
   Famine song of, 169-173  
   Starving, 193-195, 199, 203  
 Chitor, 175 *and note*  
 Chri-Jannath-Raijie, temple of, 175, 177  
 Chri-Jugat-Singhie, King, 176  
 Christianity, Theosophical attitude towards, 273  
 Christians in Travancore, 34, 63  
 Cochin, kingdom of :  
   Arrival in, 71  
   Jewish settlement in, 73-78  
   Palace of Rajahs of, 78-80  
   Voyage from, 81-83  
 Cochin, town of, 80-81  
 Cocoa palms, 34  
 Coloured powder for throwing, 179  
 Cranganore, Jewish settlement at, 73-74  
 Crocodiles, feeding of, 196-197  
 Crows, 32, 38, 53-54, 91, 94, 103, 145, 195-196, 261-262  
 Cruelty in creation, 167-168  
  
 Dagabas, 15  
 Dalantabad, 157  
 Dawn, 103-104, 106-107  
 Decoration of the ground, 54, 90, 101  
 Delhi, palace at, 240  
 Dourga (Kali), 204-205, 265  
 Drama, Sanskrit, 116-117  
 Dress :  
   Brahmins of, 41, 106  
   Turbans, 147-149, 209  
   Women, of, 117, 178, 191, 210-211, 264, 277  
 Dromedaries, 191  
 Drought, effects of, 145-146, 169-173. *See also* Famine  
 Dyeing of muslins, 211  
  
 Egyptian memories, 229  
 Elephant-headed god, 33, 91, 94, 126  
 Elephants :  
   Bath of, 18  
   Fear inspired by, 220  
   Madura temple, of, 128  
   Maharajah's, 49  
   Natural shapes like, 35  
   Old sacred, at Chri Ragam, 98, 102, 105, 107, 108, 109  
   Representations of, 15-16  
   Rides on, 214-220  
   Stone, in cave temples, 162, 163-164  
   Young sacred, 91  
 Ernaculum, 71  
 Evil spirits, superstitions as to, 31, 61  
  
 Fakirs :  
   Benares, at, 264, 274-275  
   Gwalior, in, 211  
   Odeypoure, at, 179-182  
   Tombs of, 242  
 Famine :  
   Cost of rescue from, per man, 203  
   Money the scarcity, not food, 172, 193  
   Rajput, in, 146, 170  
   Song of, 169-173  
   Victims of, 190, 192-195, 197-201, 203, 207-208  
 Fearlessness of animals and birds, 140, 180, 270  
 Female line, descent through, 45-46, 55  
 Fish-eyed goddess, *see* Parvati  
 Fishing, 69  
 Flowers, offerings of, to the gods, 11-12, 15, 16, 52  
 Frescoes, 79-80  
 Fretted stone, city of, 208-215  
 Funeral processions, 211  
 Funeral pyres, 247-250, 252-254  
  
 Galley, voyage in, 63-72  
 Ganesa, 33, 91, 94, 126  
 Ganges River :  
   Ceremonial bathing in, 259, 275  
   Drought's effect on, 246

- Ganges River (*continued*):  
 Funeral pyres by, 247-250, 252-254  
 Palaces on, 251, 267  
 Sacredness of, 268  
 Ghaut Mountains, 29-31, 34  
 Girls' College, 58-60  
 Golconda, 151-156  
 Granite blocks, 35  
 Great Moguls, 233-237, 240  
 Grottos, 156-166, 168-169  
 Gwalior:  
 Ancient, 217-220  
 City of fretted stone, 208-215  
 Palace of, 212  
 Tombs of kings at, 213
- Hanouman, 154  
 Home memories, 19, 27, 67-68, 132, 177, 226, 233  
 Hyderabad, 146-151
- Indian Ocean, 29, 42, 56  
 Interpreter, 186, 263  
 Irrigation, methods of, 131  
 Islamism, 91, 99, 145, 206  
 Isolation in India and impenetrability of things Indian, 45, 50, 60, 72, 82, 85, 176-177, 232  
 Ivory workshops, 42
- Jews:  
 Cochin, in, 73-78; "Black Jews," 77-78  
 Travancore, in, 34  
 Jeypore (rose-coloured city), 189-202  
 Juggernaut, 228-233; pilgrims at, 232  
 Jumna, River, 234, 236
- Kali (Dourga), 204-205, 265  
 Kandy, drive from, 8-10  
 Kuth, tower of, 241
- Lachkar, 217  
 "Land of Charity". (Travancore), 23, 34, 82. *See also* Travancore  
 Litters, 210
- Madura:  
 Brahmin family at, 113-114
- Madura (*continued*):  
 Temple at, 113, 118-120, 124-130  
 Theatre at, 115-117  
 Malabar, Jewish refugees in, 73-78  
 Marriage processions, 35-36, 211, 234, 265  
 Matancheri, 71; Jewish settlement at, 73-78  
 Minakchi. *See* Parvati  
 Monkeys, 230-231, 234, 265-266  
 Montaz-i-Mahal, 238  
 Moonlight, 19-20, 99, 206  
 Mosques, 91, 99, 233  
 Music and Musicians, 46-50  
 Muslins of Rajputan, 210-211
- Nagercoil, 31; journey from, 32-36  
 Neyzetavaray, 32; journey from, 36-37
- Nizam:  
 Nature of country, 145  
 Stones of, 153
- Oberon, Isle of, recollections of, 27
- Odeypoure:  
 Beggars of, 174  
 Brahmin priests of, 175-178  
 Enchanted wood of, 179-183  
 Temple at, 175, 177-178  
 Odeypoure, King of. *See* Rajput prince
- Palancota, 25, 26-28  
 Palm trees, 30, 32, 66; products of, 69; inscribed with sign of Vishnu, 96  
 Pandavas, 51, 231  
 Parrot-faced god, 52  
 Parrots, 97, 108, 189, 267  
 Parvasnath, 220 *note*  
 Parvati (fish-eyed goddess):  
 Image of, 122  
 Indian name of, 113  
 Stables of, 129  
 Treasures of, 124-130  
 Peacocks, 181  
 Pondicherry:  
 Dance of bayadères at, 135  
 140  
 Description of, 132-135

Pondicherry (*continued*):

- District of, 130-131
- Regrets on leaving, 140-142
- Pottery factories, 42
- Pyramids of sculptured gods, 97, 108, 112, 118

## Quilon, 66

## Rajput:

- Dynasty, origin of, 184
- Famine in, *see* Famine
- Rajput prince, 183; visit to, 183-187; palace of, 187
- Ramadan, 99
- Red Sea scenery, 1-3
- Rock temple, 15-17
- Rose-coloured city (Jeypore), 189-202
- Rozas, 157
- Ruins of India, 170-171

## Saintonge, recollections of, 19, 27

- Sanghamitta, Princess, 11
- Sanskrit plays, 116-117
- Senegal, memories of, 140
- Shoranur, 85

## Shrines:

- Flowers offered on, 11-12, 15, 16, 52
- Lamps on, 12, 52
- Wayside, 84

## Singers, 50

## Siva:

- Boat of, 120-124
- Caves of, 156-166, 168-169
- Honour to, 93
- Image of, at Madura, 122
- Lingam of, 166
- Mark of, 41, 65, 261; butterfly, 209
- Procession of, 121-123
- Statues of, in cave temples, 163-164
- Temple of, at Madura, 113, 118-120, 124-130
- Spirits of the dead, native fear of, 12, 20
- Squirrels, 40, 141
- Statues, mutilated, 219-220 *and note*
- Statues of gods in pyramids, 97, 108, 112
- Stones, bas-reliefs on, 15-16

Suffering, universality of, 166-168

Syrian bishop, 34

Tables, roadside, for burdens, 33

Taj, 238-239 *and note*

Tanjore, 89

## Temples:

- Architecture of, 119, 219
- Benares, at, *see under* Benares
- Birds nesting in, 93, 103
- Cattle in, 118, 125
- Cave, 162-166, 168-169
- Chri Ragam, 94, 95-99, 100, 103, 111
- Dirt and neglect in, 119, 126
- Dourga (Kali), of, 204-205, 265
- Juggernaut, of, 228-233
- Madura, at, 113, 118-120, 124-130
- Odeypoure, at, 176, 177-178
- Parrot-faced god, of, 52
- Rock temple, 15-17
- Seashore, on, 57
- Tinnevelli, 23-26
- Tivu Sivaya peria vur, 84
- Trichinopoly, Rock of, 89 *and note*, 91-95
- Trivandrum, at, 39, 61
- Theatre at Madura, 115-117
- Theosophists—of Madras, 223-227; at Benares, 254-257, 268, 273, 276-278
- Tigers, 180
- Tinnevelli, 23-26
- Tirthankars, 220 *and note*
- Tombs:
  - Delhi, near, 241-242
  - Royal—at Golconda, 155-156; at Gwalior, 213; the Taj, 238-239 *and note*
- Tracery in powder on the ground, 54, 90, 101
- Travancore:
  - Approaches to, 29-30
  - Christians and Jews in, 34, 63
  - College for noble ladies in, 58-60
  - Dynastic descent in, 45-46, 55

- Travancore (*continued*):  
 Seaports lacking to, 29, 43, 63  
 Voyage from, 63-72  
 Travancore, Maharajah of, visit to, 43-45; difficulties of communicating with, 45, 50; palace orchestra of, 46-50; elephants of, 49; guests of, 51  
 Travancore, Maharanee of, 45; visit to, 54-56  
 Travancore, Princes of, 56  
 Travellers' rest, 32  
 Trichinopoly, Rock of, 89 *and note*, 91-95  
 Trichur, situation of, 81; port of, 83; temple of, 84  
 Trivandrum:  
 Arrival at, 37  
 Buildings and gardens in, 40  
 Factories in, 42  
 Sea view from, 42-43  
 Street of the Merchants, 40, 60-62  
 Zoological garden of, 42-43
- Turbans, 147-149, 209  
 Vedas; teaching of, 278  
 Vishnu:  
 Car of, 100-101, 106-112  
 Festival of, 90-91, 99-103, 106-112  
 Image of, most sacred, 102  
 Mark of, 41, 96, 102  
 Temple of, at Chri Ragam, 94, 95-99, 100, 103, 111  
 Visits, hour for, 39
- Waterside birds, 69  
 Women:  
 Appearance of, 33, 85  
 Bathing of, in the Ganges, 259  
 Decoration of the ground traced by, 54, 90, 101  
 Dress of, 117, 178, 191, 210-211, 264, 277  
 Ruling caste, of, 45  
 Worship, ultimate object of, 53
- Yoghi, dead, 261-262

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