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FOLK-LORE OF NORTHERN INDIA



BATHING IN THE GANGES, HARDWAR.

THE
POPULAR RELIGION,
AND
FOLK-LORE
OF
NORTHERN INDIA

BY
W. CROOKE, B.A.
BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I.

A NEW EDITION, REVISED AND ILLUSTRATED

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE success of this book has been much beyond my expectations. That a considerable edition has been exhausted within a few months after publication proves that it meets a want.

I have now practically re-written the book, and have taken the opportunity of introducing a considerable amount of fresh information collected in the course of the Ethnographical Survey of the North-Western Provinces, the results of which will be separately published.

For the illustrations, which now appear for the first time, I am indebted to the photographic skill of Mr. J. O'Neal, of the Thomason Engineering College, Rurki. I could have wished that they could have been drawn from a wider area. But Hardwar and its shrines are very fairly representative of popular Hinduism in Northern India.

W. CROOKE,

SAHARANPUR,
February, 1895.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

MANY books have been written on Brâhmanism, or the official religion of the Hindu; but, as far as I am aware, this is the first attempt to bring together some of the information available on the popular beliefs of the races of Upper India.

My object in writing this book has been threefold. In the first place I desired to collect, for the use of all officers whose work lies among the rural classes, some information on the beliefs of the people which will enable them, in some degree, to understand the mysterious inner life of the races among whom their lot is cast; secondly, it may be hoped that this introductory sketch will stimulate inquiry, par-

ticularly among the educated races of the country, who have, as yet, done little to enable Europeans to gain a fuller and more sympathetic knowledge of their rural brethren; and lastly, while I have endeavoured more to collect facts than to theorize upon them, I hope that European scholars may find in these pages some fresh examples of familiar principles. My difficulty has arisen not so much from deficiency of material, as in the selection and arrangement of the mass of information, which lies scattered through a considerable literature, much of which is fugitive.

I believe that the more we explore these popular superstitions and usages, the nearer are we likely to attain to the discovery of the basis on which Hinduism has been founded. The official creed has always been characterized by extreme catholicism and receptivity, and many of its principles and legends have undoubtedly been derived from that stratum of the people which it is convenient to call non-Aryan or Drávidian.* The necessity, then, of investigating these beliefs before they become absorbed in Bráhminism, one of the most active missionary religions of the world, is obvious.

I may say that the materials of this book were practically complete before I was able to use Mr. J. S. Campbell's valuable collection of "Notes on the Spirit Basis of Belief and Custom;" but, in revising the manuscript, I have availed myself to some extent of this useful collection, and when I have done so, I have been careful to acknowledge my obligations to it. Even at the risk of overloading the notes with references, I have quoted the authorities which I have used, and I have added a Bibliography which may be of use to students to whom the subject is unfamiliar.

The only excuse I can plead for the obvious imperfections of this hasty survey of a very wide subject is that it has been written in the intervals of the scanty leisure of a District Officer's life in India, and often at a distance from works of reference and libraries.

W. CROOKE.

MIRZAPUR,
February, 1893.

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