

ALL ABOUT BENARES.

CONTAINING

A SKETCH FROM THE VEDIC DAYS
TO THE MODERN TIMES

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS, AND A MAP OF BENARES AND ITS ENVIRONS

BY

AN OLD RESIDENT

WITH A FOREWARD

BY

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FOREWORD



The enterprising firm of Messrs. K. S. Muthiah & Co., are reissuing their valuable publication, **ALL ABOUT BENARES**, and I have very great pleasure in contributing a Foreword to it, as it affords me an opportunity of bearing testimony to my high appreciation of the work. There is hardly a City in India which can hope to rival Benares in the affection and reverence which she evokes from the people of our faith, and in her combination of high religious and varied historical interest her position is unique. Her antiquity carries the imagination back to the earliest ages of Indian History; the blessed feet of martyrs and prophets have trod her dust; from her river-bank have gone forth some of the most sublime messages of the world's religion and philosophy; she is hallowed by her association with the lives of the greatest sons of **BHARATA VARSHA**; she encloses within her precincts the noblest sanctuaries of Sanskrit learning in India and amidst all the rush and fury of modern civilization, she still holds her head high, hearkening to us from her high pedestal of ancient greatness. If any city in India deserved the honour of a guide-book it would be **BENARES** and we will only say with regard to the merits of this volume, that it is eminently worthy of the subject.

It will strike even the most casual reader of the book that the writer has exhibited a rare combination of learning and research with clearness of description. Sanskrit texts and modern volumes of history, popular tradition and recent archæological research, have all been laid under contribution in the preparation of the volume and yet it is an eminently readable presentation of the subject. The art of the photographer has supplemented the labours of the writer and we have a volume of the highest usefulness to the student and to the traveller as well as to the pilgrim. Above all, it is the spirit of the genuine **HINDU** that pervades the book and the reader is saved the distorting caricature of the Christian missionary, the hurried impressionist sketch of the globe-trotter, and the patronising superiority of the foreign scholar. I have found it of the greatest help and guidance in my study of the city, her tradition and history, having arrived as a stranger so recently as September of last year.

A closer examination of the volume will reveal its thoroughness with regard to details and there is hardly one subject relating to the city, which has not been touched upon within its spacious pages. Whether it is the glorious martyrdom of Harishchandra for Truth or the inspiring message of the life and labours of the Lord Buddha, the ancient traditions of the Dasaswamedh Ghat on the Ganges, or the political turmoils of Raja Chait Singh and the British Government in the City; the places of interest associated with the poet Tulsi Dass or the Sage Kabir; the records of cruel Moslem vandalism from century to century, or the pious devotion of Hindu prince and peasant embodied in brick and stone.—everything is there and you close down the last page with the feeling that you have known all about Benares and her surroundings, from the remotest past to our own day.

There is an aspect of the book which seems to deserve special mention. Benares is not a mere relic of the past. She has prospered by leaps and bounds within the last century and she occupies no unimportant place among the larger cities of India, with her crowded population of more than two hundred thousand inhabitants, and her flourishing industries of great commercial importance, and no account of the city can therefore be complete without a thorough treatment of her modern developments. They have received careful and elaborate attention too in this book and one could read in its pages of her civic life and business, her hospitals and educational institutions and of all the other features of her modern life. It is thus of interest not only to the devout pilgrim but also to all those interested in the conditions and progress of modern India.

A few miles to the north of Benares are the ruins of Saranath and no visitor coming to the City ought to miss paying his homage to that ancient centre of Buddhism, sanctified by the blessed memory of the prophet himself,

In Earth and Heavens and Hells incomparable,
All-honoured, Wisest, Best, most Pitiful.
The Teacher of NIRVANA and the Law.

The scope of the volume has been very wisely extended to include Saranath and there is a graphic account of all its interesting sights, the gigantic STUPA and the rock-edict of Asoka, the latter with its lion-capital though no longer fixed on it; the excavated ruins of the Monastery and the Museum with its wonderful collection of antiquities; the Jain temple and Humayun's Tower of victory—and all that pertains to its fascination to the pilgrim and to the tourist.

I will only say, in conclusion, that to read the book is to catch vivid glimpses of what is probably one of the most fascinating cities of India and the East, more ancient and active than Athens as a centre of human learning and culture; suggestive of Rome herself in the richness of her historical memories; unparalleled as a vital and ancient centre of religious thought and faith—a city combining the inspiration of the past, the life of the present and the hope of the future in an enthralling unity of charm. As Matthew Arnold said of Oxford, who would not exclaim of Benares, "Beautiful City, so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene!" and who will deny that by her "ineffable charm, she keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection,—to Beauty, in a word, which is only Truth seen from another side"?

THE HINDU UNIVERSITY,
BENARES,
1st May 1917.

P. SESHADRI.



PREFACE.

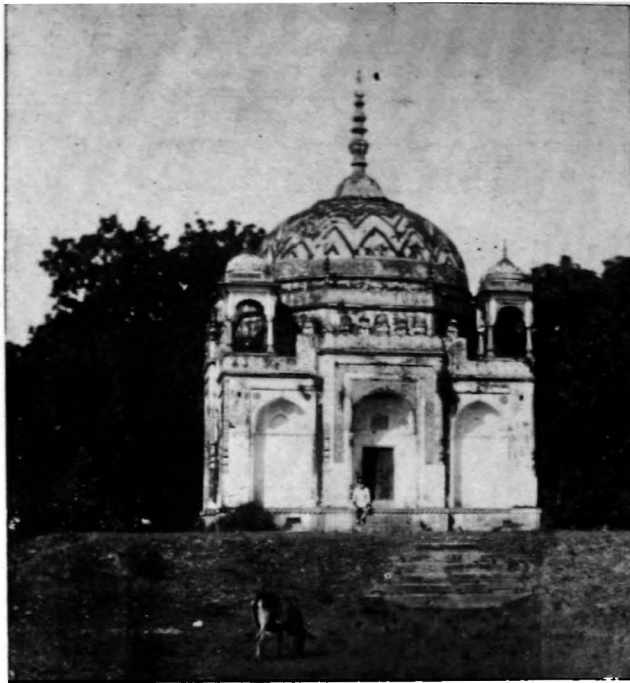
THE ever increasing sanctity and the firm adamantine belief of the Hindus of the eternal salvation which the Holy Kashi confirms upon them have stimulated us to give a succinct history of the Holy of Holies which the Hindu especially and the public generally will readily recognise and our honest efforts have been brought with recognition to make the book instructive and interesting from the social, moral and religious point of view.

K. S. MUTHIAH & Co.,

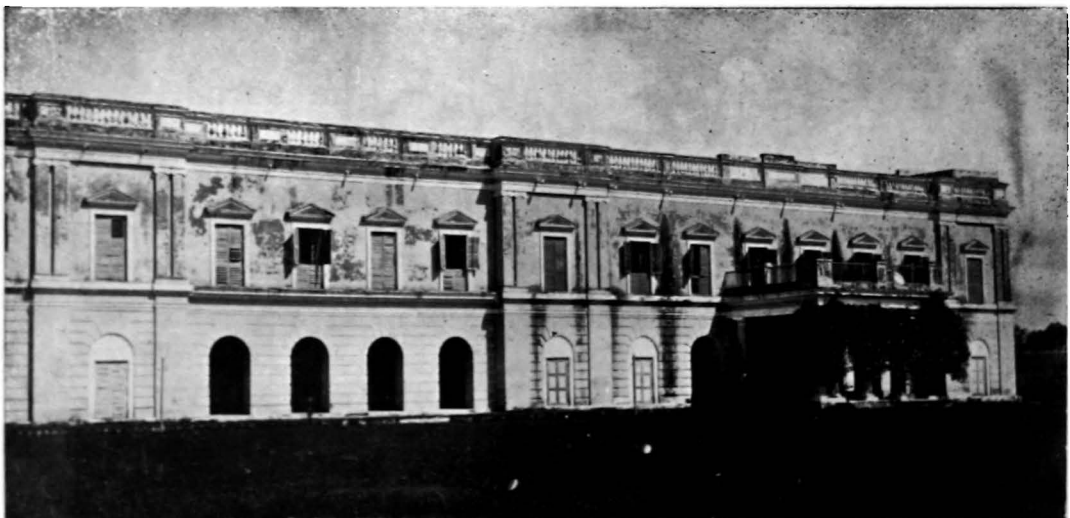
“*Silk House,*”

BENARES CITY.

June 1918.



TOMB OF LAL KHAN, A MINISTER OF A FORMER RAJAH OF BENARES, NEAR KASI STATION.



THE OLD MINT OF BENARES (VIDE PAGE 157).

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