

# **SKETCHES OF HINDOO LIFE**

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Sketches of Hindoo life by Devendra N. Das

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**DEVENDRA N. DAS**

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HINDOO LIFE**



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OF  
HINDOO LIFE

BY  
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## PREFACE.

IN these Sketches I have tried to depict some phases of the inner life of my countrymen in India, and to make them as clear as possible to English readers. More than half of the Sketches have appeared almost in their present form in the *St. James's Gazette*, eight in the *Standard* (Evening), one in the *Nineteenth Century*, and the rest in the *Graphic*, the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, and the *Young Folks' Paper*. I have to thank the Proprietors and Editors of these journals and periodicals for permission to reproduce them here.

DEVENDRA N. DAS.

LONDON,  
October, 1887.

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## WORSHIP IN BENARES.

I HAVE often been asked by my English friends to describe the orthodox mode of worship in a Hindoo temple. Europeans have travelled throughout the length and breadth of India, visited almost all the places considered sacred by the Hindoos, and have lived and died in India ; yet hardly any of them have been able to give an accurate description of the *poojah*, or worship, in a Hindoo temple. And the reason is not far to seek. (None except strict Hindoos are allowed to step within the precincts of the Hindoo *devalays*, or abodes of gods, much less to join in the service conducted in them.) It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I now recall my young days, which I spent in the city most venerated by the Hindoos—Benares.

I wake up early on an autumn morning at the confused noise of the passers-by in the street beneath : some of them shouting " Jai Sita Ram ! " (victory to Sita and Ram, the heroes of Ramayana) ; some muttering prayers ; others teaching the birds which they carry on their way to the bathing-ghát the sacred names of Krishna, Radha, etc. The sound rising most distinctly above all others is that of " Ram, Ram ! " which is the morning salutation among Hindoos. I cannot remain in bed any longer. I dress myself in a hurry and start for my ablutions in the River Ganges so as to prepare for the poojah, before which we must not touch any food. Descending the steep stairs of our house, the ground-floor of which is considerably higher than the street, I find myself among a host of people, all wending their way to the ghát. The sun is just up ; but its rays can hardly penetrate the narrow and tortuous streets, which are lined on both sides by lofty stone houses, most of them being five or six stories high. The shops are not yet opened ; neither the trotting of a horse nor the rumbling of a carriage reaches the ear : the shouts of the people in the streets alone invade the quietness of the morning hour. After passing through a labyrinth of dark and