

**PEARSE'S GUIDE TO ELEPHANTA.  
ENTERED AT STATIONERS'  
HALL, AND REGISTERED UNDER  
INDIAN ACT XXV. OF 1867**

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**VARIOUS**

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PEARSE'S  
GUIDE TO ELEPHANTA;

(OR GHARAPURI.)

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1884.



## THE CAVES OF ELEPHANTA.



THE compiler of this work has had many and varied opportunities of observing the air of bewildered astonishment, with which the majority of visitors regard the numerous and gigantic figures with which the walls of these Caves are filled; and certainly, to any one totally unacquainted with Hindoo mythology, every panel with these large and small human and inhuman shaped figures must seem like the nightmare ideas of some wild sculptor

“When he works  
Without an object or an aim.”

They have been described in several works, but only recently in a separate form, in a large folio volume, by J. Burgess, Esq., M.R.A.S., F.R.A.S.,—but as that work may be considered too expensive by the majority of visitors to Elephanta, especially if not much interested in Indian antiquities, this small Hand-book is issued, to enable the reader to understand something about the figures, by giving him the most generally acknowledged meaning of the different pieces of sculpture; such as we hope will make the visit more interesting and not altogether unprofitable. In order to be as concise and clear as possible, we have avoided using Indian words where English ones would express our meaning.

It would be impossible, in a small work like this, to give any explanation (even were we able) of the complicated system of Hindu Mythology, which is not understood in its *entirety* by any but a few of the most educated



amongst the Hindus themselves. There being several sects, each paying worship to a particular deity—from which they contend the gods of every other sect emanate—the gods of each sect have had innumerable *avatars* (transformations or descents upon earth) to accomplish some particular purpose; each of these, again, have been transformed to infinity, till the complexity is endless.\* There is not a passion, feeling, vice, or virtue of the human race but what is personified, together with all the hosts of heaven, fire, wind, earth, water. No Hindu will approach the supreme unknown God, incomprehensible to any mind but his own, except through some of the personified attributes “of Him whose glory is so great there is no image, and His will cannot be known or comprehended” except in some such attribute.

According to Sir W. Jones the most venerable text in the Indian scriptures is called *Gayatri*—

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\*Shiva and Vishnu are each said to have a thousand names.

the mother of the Vedas, or holiest verse of the Vedas—which he thus translates: “that divine and incomparably greater Light, which illumines all, from which all proceed, to whom all must return, and which alone can irradiate (not our visual organs merely but our souls) our intellects.” Another translation says, “Let us adore the supremacy of that divine Sun,—He, the Godhead who illuminates all, who re-creates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards the holy seat.”

The following paraphrase, or commentary, is by the learned Pundit Rhadacant, and is evidently descriptive of Brahmi or the incomprehensible: “Perfect truth: perfect happiness, without equal: immortal: absolute unity: whom neither speech can describe nor mind comprehend, all pervading: all transcending, delighted *with his own* boundless intelligence, not limited

by space or time; without feet, moving swiftly; without hands, grasping all worlds; without eyes, all surveying; without ears, all hearing; without an intelligent guide, understanding all; without cause, the first of all causes; all ruling, all powerful, the Creator, preserver; transformer of all things: such is the great one!" When he wished the world to exist and continue, he created a triad of three persons, representing creation, preservation and destruction: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Each of these has his particular and peculiar worshippers, who are subdivided again over and over. The most numerous sects, however, at present are the Vaishnavas and Shivais—those who pay exclusive adoration to Vishnu and his avatars, and those who worship Shiva. Brahma has very few worshippers, and no altars are erected to his honour; which is rather a natural expectation: as he created the world, his work is done, and there is nothing else to be expected