



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Eight

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The person represented belongs to the same class as the foregoing, and we continue our explanation of the Brahmins of Southern India. "These," writes Mr. Gover, "are divided into three great sects: those who believe that there is but one soul -- in short, that everything is God -- (Adwaita); those who believe that there are two souls, God and man (Dwaita); and those who take a medium course and believe that there is only one soul, which in man and created things, is somewhat different from the divine soul (Vishishta Adwaita)." These distinctions are based upon the commentaries of the very ancient schools of Hindoo philosophy, Nyaya, Mimansa, Vaishishika, &c., which are based upon interpretations of the Veda by their several founders. All are full of metaphysical subtleties which their present followers strive to expound; but the result is a confusion worse confounded, and has little direct effect upon the people at large, who, independent of the Brahmins, have their own priests who are not Brahmins, and who manage their flocks in a very simple and far more comprehensible manner, and their doctrine consists for the most part of a pure theism, the worship of one God under one of the popular names, Siva, Vishnu, or whatever it may be. By these sects and casts Brahmins are nevertheless worshipped and held sacred, according to their degrees. Certain ceremonies, marriage, and the like, cannot be performed without them; and the reverence paid to them is more a consequence of their position than following conviction of their religious teachings and doctrines. We have already mentioned the doctrines and preachings of Chun Bussappa, the religious reformer of the twelfth century, which has so numerous a following in the entire opposition to Brahminism: and we consider that, though there is no overt opposition on the part of the general mass of Hindoos (not Lingayets) in the south, yet that the Brahmins only retain a very slight hold on the real belief of the people at large. The Brahmins represented in this and the following Plates, though of different classes, are never, or very rarely, priests of temples or shrines;

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