

Comparatively few Brahmins, except some of the lower degrees, are actually temple priests; and though they attend temples, and perform ceremonies, read sacred books, and offer oblations on behalf of others, they are rarely Poojaris, or, as they may be termed, temple servants. These are hereditary offices, held by persons of much lower caste, not unfrequently by Soodras. On the other hand, the Loukik, or secular Brahmins, in some instances follow agricultural pursuits; and except actually holding the plough, perform all other work. They are also frequently bankers, money lenders, and money changers, merchants, and the like: but they never descend to the rank of shopkeepers, nor engage in retail trade. They are never artizans or manufacturers. The very lowest orders among them are menial servants to the upper classes, cooks, attendants on temples, and on assemblies where Brahmins are to be feasted, for the purpose of preparing and decorating houses or courts with garlands of leaves and flowers, sweeping and watering the ground, and such like other offices. Many again, especially of the Northern Brahmins, are found in military service.

With the regulations of caste, the enforcement of caste rules and discipline, and the morality or immorality of members of castes, the Brahmins do not interfere. Such matters are the province of the caste gooroo, or instructor, or of its own priests. But the Brahmin's ritual supremacy is absolute: herein he has no competitor, whether in the lowest or the highest castes.

### No. 1. Brahmins.

In the present instance a group of four persons is represented. One of these is reading, probably from a sacred book, to a boy who is sitting on his right hand, and is most likely a pupil. The other two men are apparently listening, though the youth on the right of the group may be a scholar also, of a more advanced age than the other.

### No. 2. Brahmin.

The figure represented is engaged in his "Pooja," or morning worship, with the objects of his adoration before him. From the horizontal mark on his forehead, which is composed of sandal wood paste, and may be either white or saffron colour, he is evidently a worshipper of Siva, under any of his appellations, Mahadeva, Bhudrinath, &c. He is not clean shaven, which may be accounted for by a vow, by being unable to find a proper conjunction of planets for the operation, or by his observing ceremonies after the death of a near relative. He is enveloped in a light silk or serge shawl or mantle, because woollens or silks do not involve impurity which cotton does. Below he wears a dhoti, which, if cotton, must be damp or wet while the ceremony lasts; or he may wear a waist cloth of thin serge or silk. His "junwa," or sacred thread, passed over his left shoulder, hangs outside his mantle, because it has to be passed through his hands at certain portions of his ritual, in order that it may be preserved pure. His objects of adoration are placed upon a low stool before him, which is covered by a clean cloth. In his immediate front are three small idols, which are probably Siva under three forms, or Siva and his consort, Bhowani Doorga or Kali. The sacred stone Shalgrama lies at the side of the plate, as also the necklace of Rudraksh, which is supposed to be worn by the god. All these, and some other objects which are not clearly discernable, are in a brass thali or platter, which he has scoured till it is as bright as gold. Outside this platter are the bell he rings to apprise the divinity of his service; the conch shell which he

blows to invite all gods to partake of it; a small brass vessel containing water and leaves of kusa grass, or the toolsee plant (sweet basil); and an incense burner, from which a stick of fragrant pastile is sending up a grateful perfume, and a cup containing the thin sandal wood paste, used for the idols and himself.

### No. 3. Suroosatee Brahmin.

The subject of the photograph belongs to the highest and most sacred division of his order in the Punjab, who themselves form a distinct class from, and do not intermarry with, other Brahminical classes of the Punjab or elsewhere. Their designation is derived from the river Suroosatee, or Suruswutee, which runs through the district of Hastinapoor, near Delhi, the most sacred of Hindoo territory, as the locality in which the Aryan invaders first settled, and afterwards became famous from the contest of the solar and lunar races described in the Mahabharat. They are for the most part good Sanserit scholars, and are employed as family priests, directors of ceremonials, and expounders of the sacred books. They are also astrologers and astronomers. It is hardly credible how much of the observances of the Hindoos, even of the educated and respectable classes, is dependent upon lucky or unlucky days and hours, as decided by astrologers. Not only do the grave questions of marriage, of journeys, of buying and selling, of serious understandings of all and every kind, depend upon the astrologer's counsel, but the putting on of new clothes, being shaved, having the hair and nails trimmed, paying visits, giving entertainments and the like, as well as reaping or sowing fields, planting trees, commencing buildings, or repairs, must all be decided, as to the most proper and fortunate hours, by the astrologer, and in short, there are no questions of social significance or necessity, which, in most Hindoo families able to pay for them, are not referred for the astrologer's advice and decision, and are decided on the peculiar aspects and conjunctions of the planets.