

INDIA AND ITS FAITHS

A TRAVELER'S RECORD

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TO MY DEAR COMRADE
IN INDIA AND IN LIFE
AT WHOSE SUGGESTION THIS BOOK WAS BEGUN
AND BY WHOSE ASSISTANCE IT WAS
COMPLETED

PREFACE

IF there is room for a new book on India and its faiths, that certainly is not due to any lack of learned and excellent treatments of the subject already obtainable. And the only excuse I shall offer for adding to a long list is that I have sought to deal with the subject from a point of view different from that of most writers, and that I have found my interest centering on aspects of India's religious life not often emphasized in our books upon that land. I am neither a Sanskritist nor a missionary nor a convert to some Oriental cult; and that perhaps constitutes my chief qualification for writing on India. For I have had no axe to grind, and my interest has been centered on existing conditions, on present-day ideas and their significance, and on the methods used by the different communities of India for religious education and religious reform. In spite, therefore, of the many excellent works that have been written on India, I conceive that there is still a place for a book whose author's preparation for his task has been, not in Sanskrit or missionary literature, but in the study of the general problems of the psychology and philosophy of religion, and who seeks to present Indian religious life as it is to-day, without partisanship or antecedent bias. When I started for India it was with no thought of writing a book on the land and its faiths, but to gain fresh light on the psychology of religion — a subject that had interested me for a dozen years. Before I had been long in the country, however, I found I had collected, from observation and from conversation with all sorts of people, a considerable amount of information concerning the religions of India which seemed to me most interesting and which I, at least, had not found in books; and my wife suggested that what had brought new insight to me might be of interest to others also. Hence the writing of this book.

It is only right that I should here express my indebtedness to a number of friends and acquaintances without whose assistance this book would not have been worth writing. Most of