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XV. A short Account of the Sauds

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XV. *A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE SAUDS.* BY WILLIAM HENRY TRANT,
Esq., M.P.

Read February 5, 1825.

IN March 1816, I went with two other gentlemen from *Fatahghar*, on the invitation of the principal persons of the *Saud* sect, to witness an assemblage of them, for the purpose of religious worship, in the city of *Farrukhabád*, the general meeting of the sect for that year being there.

The assembly took place within the court-yard of a large house, where the number of men, women, and children was considerable.

We were received with great attention; and chairs were placed for us in front of the hall. After some time, when the place was quite full of people, the ceremony commenced, which consisted simply in the chaunting of a hymn; this being the only mode of public worship used by the *Sauds*.

At subsequent periods I made particular enquiries relative to the religious opinions and practices of this sect, and I was frequently visited by BHAWÁNÍ DÁS, the principal person of the sect in the city of *Farrukhabád*.

The following is the substance of the account given by BHAWÁNÍ DÁS of the origin of this sect.

“ About the year 1600 of the era of VICRAMÁDITYA, corresponding with A.D. 1544, a person named BÍRBHÁN, inhabitant of *Bújast*, near *Narnoul*, in the province of *Delhi*, received a miraculous communication from UDAYA DÁS, teaching him the particulars of the religion now professed by the *Sauds*. UDAYA DÁS, at the same time, gave to BÍRBHÁN marks by which he might know him on his re-appearance.

“ 1. That whatever he foretold, should happen.

“ 2. That no shadow should be cast from his figure.

“ 3. That he would tell him his thoughts.

“ 4. That he would be suspended between heaven and earth.

“ 5. That he would bring the dead to life.”

BHÁWANI DÁS gave me a copy of the *Pothí*, or religious book of the *Sauds*, written in a kind of verse in the *T'henth Hindí* * dialect; and he fully explained to me the leading points of their religion. That book I have now the honour to present to the Royal Asiatic Society.

The *Sauds* utterly reject and abhor all kinds of idolatry; and the Ganges is considered by them not to be a sacred object; although the converts are made chiefly, if not entirely, from among the Hindus, whom they resemble in outward appearance.

Their name for God is *Satcara*; and *Saud*, the appellation of the sect, means, they say, "servant of God."† They are pure Deists, and their form of worship is most simple, as I have already stated. The *Sauds* resemble the Quakers, or Society of Friends, in England, in their customs, in a remarkable degree.

Ornaments and gay apparel of every kind are strictly prohibited. Their dress is always white. They never make any obeisance or salutation. They will not take an oath; and they are exempted in the courts of justice; their asseveration, like that of the Quakers, being considered equivalent.

The *Sauds* profess to abstain from all luxuries; such as tobacco, betel, opium, and wine. They never have exhibitions of dancing. All violence to man or beast is forbidden; but, in self-defence, resistance is allowable. Industry is strongly enjoined.

The *Sauds*, like the Quakers, take great care of their poor and infirm people. To receive assistance out of the sect or tribe would be reckoned disgraceful, and render the offender liable to excommunication.

All parade of worship is forbidden. Private prayer is commended. Alms should be unostentatious: they are not to be given that they should be seen of men. The due regulation of the tongue is a principal duty.

The chief seats of the *Saud* sect are *Delhi*, *Agra*, *Jayapur*, and *Farruk-hábdád*; but there are several of the sect scattered over other parts of the country. An annual meeting takes place at one or other of the cities above-mentioned, at which the concerns of the sect are settled. In *Farruk-hábdád*, the number was about three thousand.

* Genuine or pure *Hindí*, unmixed with Persian or Arabic. The mixed dialect is *Hindustání*—H.T.C.

† Probably the word may be *Sádh* (Sanskrit, *Sádhú*), signifying pious.—H.T.C.

The magistrate of *Farrukhábád* informed me, that he had found the *Sauds* an orderly and well-conducted people; they are chiefly engaged in trade.

BHÁWANÍ DÁS was anxious to become acquainted with the Christian religion, and I gave him some copies of the New Testament in Persian and Hindustání, which he afterwards told me he had read, and shown to his people, and much approved.

I had no copy of the Old Testament in any language which he understood well: but as he expressed a strong desire to know the account of the creation as given in it, I explained it to him from an Arabic version, of which language he knew a little. I promised to procure him a Persian or Hindustání Old Testament, if possible.