

## CONVERSION OF RAMA CHUNDRA,

A HINDOO NATIVE PREACHER IN ORISSA.

Written by himself, and translated and condensed by Rev. Amos Sntton.

THE father of Rama Chundra was a Mahratta chief, and governor of the fort in Cuttack. Gold, jewels, elephants, horses, implements of war—all kinds of wealth he had in abundance. The governors of the thirty-four forts in the district of Orissa were all subject to him. When his son was five years of age, the English conquered Orissa, and the father fled to Boyerpoor, where, after seven years, he died. At about eighteen, Rama was married, and supported his family by farming the village of Boyerpoor. He says,

“At this time my religion consisted in ignorantly repeating the name of my idol on my sacred necklace. I assumed the sacred thread of the military class. I received the sacred incantation, or mysterious sentence, from my spiritual guide, and the distinguishing mark of my sect. I worshipped the toolsee-tree for my god, and on my mala repeated the name of Hurree Ram Krishnoo. The family idols and many others I now worshipped with great regularity and zeal, procuring offerings and sacrifices to present to them. I moreover performed pilgrimages, cultivated abstraction of thought, repeated the names of the gods, offered clarified butter to Agne, the god of fire, attended to the ancestral shradda, served the Brahmins and other devotees, heard the shastres daily, *and desired very earnestly to discover the true knowledge of the gods, and the right way to worship them.* I connected myself with the holy devotees of the mountains, and with them ate intoxicating drugs—and by playing on many instruments of music, to the tunes of impure songs, I became intoxicated with delusive joys.

“When I was about twenty-seven, the Padre Sahibs (missionaries) came into the country and distributed the Holy Book. We obtained the Testament, the ten commandments, and the Tract ‘Jewel Mine of Salvation.’ Sabbath after Sabbath we came together in the evening, and sat down and read these books, and united in singing holy songs.

“As I read and conversed with the Sahibs, I had in my mind a sense of indescribable guilt. At the same time my soul despised the things which are worshipped in this country. Yea, beginning at Juggernaut, whatever idols are worshipped, I despised them all.

“One mind said, ‘These things man has formed; they are not God!’ In order to try their divinity, I threw unclean things upon them; upon some I trod, some I threw away, some I burned, and some I broke in pieces. The moon, and sun, and water, and fire worship, as well as the worship of Brahmins, and devotees, and holy places, I forsook. My mind also turned away from the sacred books of this country. To this mind my other mind said, ‘What, are you turned against these? To a certainty you will die and fall into hell. No person will endure you, for your forefathers all worshipped these. Against these have you sinned, and you cannot possibly live.’ Hence, my mind became oppressed with sorrow, and I was buried in a sea of distress. I had no desire for food, and no certainty of life. My soul exclaimed, ‘Ah! Ah!’ and I wept.

“I got a little better, and as I lay in my house, I thought in my soul, ‘Who can tell but that merciful God who made all things will save me?’ But again the other mind said, ‘That God will never save you, for he hates sin, and does not hear the words of sinners. This body is full of evil desires and base propensities;’ and in the twinkling of an eye I was filled full of evil thoughts. I read the Holy Book, and other books that are excellent, but my mind would not obey. One mind said, ‘I will commit sin;’ another said, ‘I will hope in God, and do his will.’ Thus in my body did two minds war, and I could not steadily preserve my resolution. My heart was distracted. ‘O that I had never been born,’ I cried; ‘or why died I not in my mother’s womb? or why grew I up in the world? or why read I the Scriptures? Had I died in ignorance I had not had guilt!’

“Then again my mind said, ‘They against whom you have sinned can forgive your transgression,’ and I thought I would once more worship the gods. But against this my heart rose up, for I saw that these gods themselves are sinners, and I could not be saved from sin by worshipping them. ‘What,’ said I, ‘can a sinner save a sinner? What, can a blind man lead a blind? What, trusting in that which

is false, can I obtain truth?' So I was hopeless of being delivered by them.

"Just at this time I resolved to read the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or good news, away from home. My soul labored hard in this, and said, 'By trusting in this Saviour thou mayest be delivered.' I then had some conversation with Gunga Dhor, [the first Hindoo convert in Orissa.] He was going to Cuttack to be baptized. I said, 'Stay yet a little while and I will accompany you; for truly this is the true Lord; we will together devote ourselves to this Lord.' 'No,' he said, 'I am determined to go and be baptized. You can make your mind steady, and then follow me.'

"Soon after this I went to the house of a deceased brother in Deckhanall. His sister and other relations said to me, 'Come, O brother, and marry the wife of your brother, and you shall have this house, and these bullocks, and this money, and all these goods.' I said, 'In all these there is no use; for riches, money, kingdoms, will last but a short time, and in eternity they will not save me.'

"After the baptism of Gunga my friends became very violent against him and the Sahibs, and forbade my reading their books. But in my apartments secretly I spent much time in comparing the Gospel and Tracts with the books esteemed excellent and divine in this country. One day as I was bathing—it was Lord's day—I tore off my small necklace [the badge of his cast] and said, 'O soul, art thou not from this day baptized into Christ Jesus?' From this day in secret, closing the door of my apartment, I prayed unto the Lord, saying, 'Thou God of heaven and earth, I will bless thy name a thousand times; for whereas I was in the valley of death, thou hast opened to me the path of life. I was overwhelmed in guilt, but thou hast made known a way of holiness in our Lord Jesus Christ. Taking his name I confess my guilt, and do thou forgive all mine iniquities. Thy Holy Spirit giving, sanctify my soul.'" [He then describes, in a long poem, his lost condition, and the person and work of Jesus Christ.]

"I soon resolved to be baptized, and accompanied Gunga Dhor as he went out to preach the Gospel. One day I called my wife and family, and said, 'To-day is Saturday, and tomorrow is the Lord's day. I will arise and go to Cuttack, and be baptized in the name of the Lord.' Hearing this they

began to weep, and cried out, 'Ah! Ah!' and were filled with distress. Many people of the village came together to dissuade me, but I could not regard their words. So I left my house. As, when a corpse is carried out to be buried, the people follow weeping and wailing; so did they all follow me. Sudanunda my son threw himself down at my feet many times, and would not release me, saying, 'Indeed, father, if you will go to Cuttack, then tying a rope round my neck, I will hang myself, or plunging in water, I will die.' I said, 'If you will destroy yourself, what can I do? I must go to Cuttack and profess the Lord. Henceforth I am dead to these people, and dead towards thee, and towards all. But if thou wilt be the Lord's, then I will be thine.' Thus speaking, I repeated to them the following lines:

“My father and my mother who? and who my wife and child?  
 Illusions strong surround me here in this deceitful wild.  
 Follow, my soul, the certain light which JESUS to thee gives;  
 The soul that firmly follows him, with him FOR EVER lives.”

[He then took a faithful but affectionate leave of his family, and was baptized. He subsequently endured much persecution and loss of his property. He concludes his narrative by saying,]

“Thus has the Lord changed my heart, and gathering me out of the world, has brought me into his fold. That I may remain in that fold faithful unto the end, in your times of daily prayer, pray daily for me to God.

“After my baptism I removed to Cuttack, and lived in my old house. Then my wife turned to the Lord; and we are united in one heart, and with our children daily live praising God. *O all my brethren and sisters in the Lord, to you all Rama Chundra sends thousand, thousand loving salutations.*”

CHRISTIAN READER, have you embraced that Saviour whom Rama Chundra found so precious?

Are you doing *all you can* to send his Gospel to other lost and perishing heathen?