

HOLY GANGES.

Every year, Hindus in their thousands make the pilgrimage to the River Ganges, to bathe in its sacred waters. For the Hindu, God pervades the whole universe, and everything is part of him; rivers are his very life-blood, and of all rivers the Ganges is the most holy. Old and young, the strong and the sick, all come to its banks to wash away their sins.

The most pious tribute a Hindu can pay to the Ganges is to walk the whole of its 1,500 mile length from the Bay of Bengal to the Himalayas and back again on the other bank; but this takes many years, and most pilgrims must be content with bathing themselves - and their cattle, who are also a sacred part of the Hindu universe.

Though this is a religious occasion, it is far from solemn; like Christian families at Christmas, these Hindu families combine celebrations and devotions to them, the Ganges is the forgiver of sin, the giver of life.