

would not allow the right of religious exercises to the S'údras, whose *caste-duty* was servility to the higher orders. The Vaishnavas, however, not only received them as brethren in the faith, but promoted them also to the dignity of spiritual guides and tutors, when any were found worthy of such dignity by reason of learning and zeal. That such spiritual enfranchisement of S'údras was a great innovation on the old system, will appear from a fact related in the Rámáyana. I give it in my own words from another work.

“ After Ráma had returned home from his expedition to Lánka, and commenced a happy and prosperous reign in Oudh, a Brahmin came to his door, bitterly complaining of the untimely death of a child, only five years old, and attributing the tragical event to some curse under which the kingdom lay, owing to the king's want of watchfulness. Ráma, listened to the Brahmin's invectives with self reproach, and could not, with such a humiliating fact before him, gainsay the Brahmin's conclusion. Advised by ministers and Rishis, he proceeded, sword in hand, to search out the unknown cause of the national sin. By the side of a tank he discovered a man absorbed in deep and austere devotion. Challenged by the king, the devotee gave his name (Sambuca), and confessed his race (S'údra). For a servile man to seek admission to the society of gods by such religious exercises, was an iniquity, which sufficiently accounted for the national calamity. With one stroke of his sword, the king severed the S'údra's head from his body. Indra and the other gods fell into ecstasies of delight at the promptness with which the son of Dasaratha exterminated such a crying evil, and immediately sent down a perfumed shower of celestial flowers, acknowledging at the same time that the stop, so effectually put to the aspiring S'údra's attempt to obtain a footing in heaven, was a service done to themselves. And Ráma was then assured that the moment the wretched man's head dropped from his neck, life was restored to the Brahmin's son.” *Dialogues on the Hindu Philosophy.*

It is for the reader to judge for himself whether the South Indians when they introduced such innovations in doctrine and practice had received no suggestion from their Christian neighbours on the Coromandel and Malabar coasts.