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*Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

## **The People of India, Volume One**

Extracted on Mar-29-2024 06:08:32

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## TIBETAN. - BHOTIAS.

especially of the peasantry, resemble brick-kilns, being built of very rough stones heaped on each other, with a few apertures to admit light, and a flat terrace, surrounded with a parapet, for the roof. The favourite Tibetan article of diet is raw undressed meat, and at their feasts the joints of raw, predominate over those of boiled, mutton, and obtain general preference. The intense cold and wonderful dryness of the atmosphere render salt meat a needless, and therefore an unknown, article of diet; but tea is almost a necessary of life, and is largely consumed. The milk of the yak, or mountain ox of Tibet, is also much used. Indeed, without the yak, the highlands of Tibet would be all but uninhabitable. That most useful animal clothes as well as feeds his master. "The yak," says Lieut. Wood, "is to the inhabitant of Tibet what the reindeer is to the Laplander. Where a man can walk, he can be driven. Like the elephant, he possesses a wonderful knowledge of what will bear his weight. If travellers are at fault, one of these animals is driven before them, and it is said that he avoids the hidden depths and chasms with admirable sagacity; his footing is sure. Should a fall of snow close a mountain pass to man and horse, a score of yaks driven ahead answer the purpose of pioneers, and make 'a king's highway.'"

Both Tibetans, and, with few exceptions, the so-called Bhotias, are Buddhists. Tibet is indeed the chief seat of this religion, and of its incarnate head, the Grand Lama. The influence of this spiritual lord extends over the whole of Central Asia, but the temporal power formerly exercised by him in Tibet has passed to the Chinese. The Tibetans assemble in chapels, and unite in prodigious numbers to perform their religious service, which is described as very impressive, and recalls to the traveller's mind the solemnity and sound of the Roman Catholic mass. The instruments made use of on an occasion when Turner was present, were "all of an enormous size, trumpets above six feet long; drums stretched over a copper cauldron, such as are termed nowbut in Hindostan; the gong, a circular Chinese instrument of thin hammered bell-metal, cymbals, hautboys, and a double drum, smaller, but of great circumference, mounted on a tall, slender, pedestal, which the performer turns with great facility, striking either side with a long curved iron, as the piece requires a higher or a lower tone. These, together with the human tibia and sea conch, compose, for the most part, their religious band. Harsh as these instruments, individually taken, might sound to a musical ear, when joined together in unison with the voices of 200 or 300 boys and men, managed with varying modulation from the lowest and softest cadence to the loudest swell, they produce an effect extremely grand." Their religion, Lamaism, is described by Moorcroft as "a strange mixture of metaphysics, mysticism, morality, juggling, and idolatry." The transmigration of souls is a prominent tenet. The Deity, absorption in whom by religious contemplation appears a primary principle of the creed of the higher priesthood, is worshipped in the character of a trinity, adoration being also paid to a great number of inferior beings, represented by a variety of curious idols. The

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