



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Five

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BLACKSMITHS.
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THE following description of the carpenters (No. 236) applies in many respects to the blacksmiths, who, in regular village communities, hold a position next in grade to the carpenter. The blacksmith is as indispensable to the wants of the community in these days, when iron is so much used, as the carpenter, though his trade may not be quite so ancient a one: and yet there is perhaps little to choose, in this respect, between any of the trades of village artificers. In the most ancient times in India weapons were made of iron and steel; agricultural implements, as hoes and coulter for ploughs, could not have been dispensed with; and we read of chain armour, chains, war chariots, helmets, and the like, which must have been made by blacksmiths; ships and boats also, which navigated the great rivers and even the sea, could not have been built without blacksmiths, and from the earliest ages of civilization in India, it may be safely assumed that blacksmiths existed.

The Indian blacksmith's tools are simple, but much like those elsewhere used by members of the craft. He works sitting on his heels, and has an anvil, large or small, a sledge hammer used by an assistant, a smaller one for his own hand, pincers, files (which he makes himself and tempers), and bellows, which consists of two sheep skins, with iron nozzles fitted to them open at the other end, which is fitted with two pieces of wood faced with rough leather. The blower opens and shuts these alternately, pressing out the air with his hand, so that a continuous stream of air is kept up in the charcoal fire. This simple apparatus can be moved anywhere, set up in a few minutes, and is perfectly effective for ordinary work. The blacksmith is well acquainted with welding iron, soldering brass to it, and making all kinds of iron and steel implements and necessities; he can temper steel to any degree of hardness required to suit chisels for wood work or stone work; he can make horse and bullock shoes, and, not unfrequently, put them on; he can make weapons, but those who are specially armourers usually keep themselves apart from other work, and the gun and pistol makers of Monghyr, though neat

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