



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Five

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BLACKSMITHS.

workmen and skilful imitators of English fabrics, are not to be depended upon for their safety. Ordinarily the blacksmiths are equal to any ordinary work, agricultural or household, and are a very industrious and deserving class of artizans in all parts of India.

Like the carpenters, the blacksmith's trade is hereditary. The sons of a blacksmith must be blacksmiths too, unless they are utterly unskilful, which is of rare occurrence; hereditary occupation, perhaps, transmits hereditary skill in a greater or less degree, and so the family maintains its position. Blacksmith's sons must marry blacksmith's daughters, and there are degrees or ranks of caste, or gote, to suit all. Some of the craft, like the carpenters, wear the sacred thread, and are the highest in grade; others follow in various degrees, and there are besides vagrant or itinerant smiths, who are "chandals," or outcasts, nigh akin to gipsies, who work fairly, and make iron buckets for wells, iron measures and weights, and do odd jobs of mending, but are counted very low in the Hindoo social scale, not being allowed to reside in villages, but pitching their black blanket tents in their precincts, and living there with their families and donkeys. In the Punjab, blacksmiths revere the Sikh prophets; but they are in reality Hindoos, and for the most part in India worship Devee. Like the carpenters they have no priests but Brahmins. They do not object to animal food, but rarely use it except on special occasions, and in social customs they do not differ from the other artizans with whom they work. Blacksmiths who are Hindoos are not found in the North-West of the Punjab. The trade there belongs to Mahomedans.

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