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Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Eight

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KUNBO DASARE.

gentle, industrious, faithful, and trustworthy. If asked why he took upon himself an ascetic, wandering life, he will tell how he was converted to the adoration of God by some eloquent Brahmin; or that his wife died, and he had no heart to live in his lonely house, and makes pilgrimages for the rest of her soul; or that a child was born to him after many years, and he vowed pilgrimage for a year, or whatever it might be, that the good Vishnu might preserve it to him, and he hears it is well, and is happy. Simple stories, having the true ring of humanity in their varying moods and circumstances, lend an interest to these devotional wanderers, who are objects of sympathy and pity to all.

The man is a Kunbi, or, as it is called in Canarese, Vokaliger, a tiller of the soil, like his brethren of Northern India, Berar, and Maharashtra. He is a Sudra of good caste, numbers of whom sometimes take service as servants, porters, and members of the police; but for the most part preferring agricultural pursuits, in which they are very successful.

To Mr. Gover the public of England is indebted for many poetic illustrations of the humbler classes of Southern India. These are songs, hymns, dirges, labour songs for the most part, and all, without exception, having a devout tenor, free from dogma or the introduction of idol worship in any form. There are professional Dasares, or singers of these melodies, which for the most part are very ancient; and those non-professional, like the figure represented, who are mendicants under vows, and who have learned the songs which they sing or recite from the professionals. We may be allowed to quote one short ditty, which is a favourite everywhere. The translation is very literal.

1. My stock is not packed on the backs of strong kine,
Nor pressed into bags strongly fastened with twine;
Wherever it goes, it no taxes doth pay,
But still is most sweet, and brings profit, I say.

CHORUS - Oh, buy my sugar candy! my candy is good!
For those who have tasted, say nought is so good
As the honey-like name of the godlike Vishnu!

2. It wastes not with time, never gives a bad smell,
You've nothing to pay, though you take it right well;
White ants cannot eat this fine sugar with me,
The city resounds, as its virtues men see.
CHORUS. - Oh, buy my sugar candy! &c.

3. From market to market it's needless to run,
The shops know it not, the bazars can have none;
My candy, you see, is the name of Vishnu,
So sweet to the tongue that gives praise, as is due.
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