



Smithsonian Institution

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Eight

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BEDUR, OR VEDDAR.

management; but he conducted himself badly, joined the rebellious conspiracy in the southern Mahratta country in 1857-8, attacked a small force which had been sent for the protection of the Political Agent, and, on the advance of other British forces, fled to Hyderabad, where he was arrested, tried, and condemned to death; but his sentence was commuted, and on his way to Madras he shot himself. The state was then sequestered, and was given finally to H. H. the Nizam by the treaty of 1860.

The only other Bedur principality of consequence was Chittledroog, in Mysore, which, after a very valiant resistance in two sieges by Hyder Ali in person, was at last captured, and its territories annexed to Tippoo Sultan's kingdom. Tippoo drafted all the Bedurs of Chittledroog and other baronies into his army, and they became the nucleus of his famous infantry. When Mysore was conquered by us, all the small baronies were settled by pensions and estates, and the Bedurs becoming ordinary cultivators, carriers, &c., laid down their exclusive character of soldiers.

Thus they continue, and are for the most part industrious cultivators, of steady, peaceable habits; but they have in some localities evil reputation as dacoits and cattle stealers, which is not perhaps without foundation. They are great hunters of game of all kinds, chiefly wild hog and deer; but they kill also hares, partridges, and quail, by means of snares and hawks, which nearly all of them keep, training them with much skill. They are for the most part a fine, stalwart race, of dark complexion, and not unfrequently, especially some of their women, extremely handsome. They marry only among themselves, according to Hindoo rites, but are barely admitted as Hindoos, their caste being considered low and impure, or indeed no caste whatever. Many of them, however, have joined the Lingayet profession of religion, and are instructed in some degree by Lingayet priests, and these are the steadiest and most industrious classes of their tribe, generally abjuring animal food and all intoxicating liquors. Education of any kind is rare among them, and is confined entirely to the upper classes. They are fond, however, of hearing the recitations of their bards, which relate to the ancient warlike deeds and traditions of their race, now so widely scattered; but even these are passing out of memory, and may not be worth preserving. Of all descriptions of plays and fantoccini, &c., wherein the action of passages of the Mahabharat and Ramayana are given in the local dialect, Bedurs are passionately fond; and both men and women will collect from considerable distances around to hear them. These representations often continue for two or three nights in succession, and the acting, as well as the memories of the performers, who deliver interminable speeches translated from the Sanscrit poems, are truly wonderful. Not unfrequently the performers are Bedurs, or otherwise weavers and stone-cutters, who, one and all, are entirely illiterate. Bedurs have also several many games of peculiar

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