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Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Eight

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BEDUR, OR VEDDAR.

character, which they play by moonlight, accompanied by yells and shouts. They are mostly variations of "prison bass," requiring fleetness and activity. They also practice all gymnastic exercises, and in every village a room is set apart for practice, sword play, wrestling, and the like.

A Bedur's costume does not differ from that of Hindoos at large, but they are fond of gay colours; and handkerchiefs, to tie into turbans or round the waist, are frequently made of gay coloured checks or stripes made expressly for them by the weavers. Their women wear the ordinary sari and bodice. The hunting and war costume of the men is, however, peculiar. On the head they wear a conical leather cap, which is gathered round the forehead, and tied with a string sewn round the edge. Over a small loin-cloth are pulled a pair of leather drawers, which fit close to the thigh. Their powder flask and bullet bag, &c., are fastened to a leather belt for the waist, in which is also a dagger; and, with a matchlock, the equipment is complete. Bedurs, both men and women, wear only sandals.

Their houses are substantial and very well kept by their women, who are good housewives, very neat and clean in their persons and clothes--as are also the men--very industrious too, spinning cotton when their household work is done, or lending a hand in field work when needful. Bedur women too are, in general, good cooks, and contrive many savoury stews and curries out of game, wild hog, or deer. Thus the men have comfortable houses, and are kind to their wives and children. They have rarely more than one wife. Widows can re-marry at their pleasure. Every Bedur community is under the direction of a gooroo, or spiritual guide, in relation to religious affairs and caste, and subject to the government of a punchayet, or court of elders or representatives, which adjusts all disputes in regard to inheritance, division of property, share of crops, &c.; and these punchayets are respected, and considered just in their decrees. Like the Badagas of the Neelgerries, the resort or complaint to any officer of a government is considered contemptible and disgraceful, and few are ever made. Brahmins have no authority over the tribe, and are held generally to be pretenders and deceivers, though they are treated courteously, and perform ceremonies at domestic festivals, when Bedurs have not joined the Lingayet sect. If not a Lingayet, the Bedur worships Kali or Devi, and wears the vermilion mark of the goddess on his forehead, which is extended generally along the bridge of the nose to the tip, while there are streaks of red paint on each side of the throat and on the chest, which have the appearance of fresh blood. Those who have joined the Lingayets are content with dipping their fingers in ashes, and drawing them across the forehead and eyes. Bedurs rarely worship at temples, but they perform fetish ceremonies, accompanied, in all instances, by sacrifices of fowls, sheep, goats, and, in some cases, male buffaloes, to the gram deotas, or village gods, represented by heaps of stones, and solitary rocks surrounded by circles of stones. These

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