

very popular book, the author tells us that he once retired to a cave, and, placing a butter lamp on his head, he remained motionless until the butter was exhausted—a period of eleven months. In a later period of retirement he was reduced to absolute nakedness, and subsisted entirely upon nettles until his whole body became green like a caterpillar. Tibetan books abound with similar stories of a more marvelous nature, the inference drawn being that the greater the asceticism the greater the moral merit and holiness attained. Such people are, however, only known as having existed formerly; at the present time cases are not wanting in which a man and woman have withdrawn for such periods of “meditation” (*anglicé*—absolute mental vacuity and sleep) to caves or huts not very far apart, with the result that the woman has subsequently given birth to a child.

In a note to II. 43 we are informed that

Buddhism neither denies nor affirms the existence of gods. Every one is free to believe in one or a plurality of gods if he has a wish to do so.

Ladaki, and Tibetans generally, know of an infinite number of deities, both male and female (called “*lha*,” not “*konchog*”). Deities taken from the Hindu pantheon play an important part. But besides these originally Hindu divinities, every village, every hill, every spring has its own deity, whose rights must be respected. A Hindu Wazir of Ladak once caused some stones to be removed from a sacred hill near Leh, and the epidemic of small-pox occurring in the autumn of the same year was universally attributed to the wrath of the god of the hill in question. The gods of springs must be propitiated by offerings, and to remove stones surrounding the spring is a heinous offense.* To cut down or lop certain trees would bring untold calamities on the inhabitants of the nearest village.

Only a short time ago a woman of Leh hit her foot with a mattock while working in her field. As the foot was swollen and painful on the following day, a lama was called in for advice. After consulting his books he replied that the accident had been caused by the local god of the field; for this reason medicines were useless, but religious services should be held to propitiate the offended deity. The woman accordingly went to great expense to pay the lamas for performing services; but as their efforts during a fortnight proved of no avail, she finally came to the missionary for medical treatment. During this time the wound had ulcerated so badly that upward of six months were required to effect a cure. And all this solely because Buddhism “neither affirms nor denies the existence of gods.” On another occasion a woman came with a very painful fistula in the lower jaw, of which a large portion was found to be detached. She stated that it had been caused by a “*lu*”—i.e., a snake demon residing in

* With regard to springs, the Ladaki point to the air bubbles rising with the water as conclusive proof that the deity beneath is alive and breathing.