

## ***"The Fakirs of India"***

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E. J. Waggoner

There are three millions of these fakirs in India. Some of them are Hindus and some of them are Mohammedans.

They do not shave, so their hair grows very long and they often coil its filthy links into ropes, and wind them about their arms. "They do not have homes but wander about from one place to another, either without any clothes at all or else in the poorest rags they can get, and with both their rags and their bodies as dirty as they can be. Sometimes they torment themselves with human bones." They never earn anything themselves but are beggars, living on what is given them.

"Mohammedan Fakirs are not pleasant men to meet, for they think it is a very good thing to kill an 'unbeliever,' whenever they get the chance. They do their best to imitate madmen, and succeed so well that often they end by going mad themselves. Sometimes they sit for years together looking at a stone wall, and say they are trying to forget everything but God; sometimes they live in cages; and some of them clench their fists as tightly as they can, and keep them so, till their nails grow through their hands, or they tie their hands and feet together, and roll thousands of miles instead of walking. The Mohammedan Fakirs do more of this kind of thing than the Hindu; and even little children are taught to give themselves up to such a life as this."

"They go on pilgrimages to holy places: if they are Hindus, to the Ganges, or to some of the great temples; if they are Mohammedans, to Arabia, either to Mecca, where Mohammed was born, or to Medina, where he was buried."

At the melas or yearly festivals may be seen different kinds of fakirs, some with matted hair and beards, others with large bonnet-shaped head coverings; others with a wild expression upon their faces which tell that they are far from being holy or perfect.



"Some fakirs make a vow of perpetual silence, and seldom, if ever, open their lips in conversation; some wander from place to place, never remaining long in any locality; others take up their abode by some river or temple, or under some sacred tree, and never stir; many smear their bodies with dust and ashes, and present a frightful appearance as they walk about;" again others have their ears split, and wear large wooden or bone earrings.

"Some take to this profession from sheer laziness, preferring to wander through the country begging, to honest work, while others give up pleasant homes, thinking by such self-denial to win the favour of God" and obtain pardon and holiness.

"A fakir, near Benares, said that from childhood he had wished to know about God. He read his sacred books to see what they could tell him, but did not find what he wanted there. At the age of eighteen he became a fakir and went away into the jungle, there to think about God. Finding the solitude and danger of this life still gave him no light, he hollowed out a pit beneath the floor of his hut and for two years sat there, seeing neither sun nor moon. His mother was his only visitor, but even to her he did not speak. After this He sat alone for twenty-two years outside a certain village, hoping that God would show Himself to him there. But, after all this, he still sadly confessed, 'I do not know God, and I do not know the way of peace.'"

One missionary says, "One day we went to a village called Little Calcutta, situated on the banks of the Ganges. As we walked down to the sacred river, we were surprised to see a man who had his home in a box which floated upon water. The box was about six feet square, and was set in a native boat shaped like a canoe. It was a novel sight, and so we approached the man, whom we recognized as a fakir, and began talking to him. His one desire was to obtain deliverance from sin, and for this reason he had given up the world and become a fakir. He had lived twenty years in a dry well, the people bringing him food and water; but this had failed to give him peace. He then made this box, and took up his abode in it, floating about on the sacred river. Twenty years more were thus passed, and still he felt that the load of sin had not been taken away."

He was between eighty and ninety years old. A wonderful change has taken place in him since then. The darkness of sin has given way, and the light of God's word has shown into the old man's heart, shedding abroad the peace and joy which only Christians know. He has found that when he goes at it in the right way, when he stops trying to save himself and trust alone in Jesus, Jesus is able to save even to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. Although a hundred years old, his eye is not dim, and his voice is strong and clear, as he goes about with his Bible telling of the power of Christ to save.

## ***"You Cannot Save Yourself"***

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"I was quietly sitting in my tent door," says Rev. E. T. Pegg, "and an Indian of rather good caste came up to me, and we talked of Christ.

He said that three months ago his wife died, and the priest told him that if he wished to obtain pardon for her sins he must wander about the fields, and enter house for three months. He did so; it being the rainy season, he fell ill, had a fever, and came to me nearly dead. His furniture had all been stolen. He said he could not trust in heathenism any longer." And no wonder that he could not trust in such works any longer. What good have they done him? Learn a lesson from this poor Indian and from the fakirs. You cannot make yourself good, and you cannot make your friends good; you cannot save yourself, and you cannot save your friends.

The very best works that you could ever do would be only your works, and it is God's works that you must have. He says that His ways are as much higher than your ways as the heavens are higher than the earth. So you see how impossible it is for you to make yourself good and save yourself.

There is only one way that you can get the goodness and salvation of God: Jesus says, "I am the way."

God is not pleased when you try some other way. It grieves Him when you try to work it out for yourself, or try to buy it from Him, for He has offered it to you as a free gift. He has given you His only Son Jesus, and if you will only take Him into your heart, you will find everything that you need to save you, for in Him is wisdom, righteousness (goodness of God), salvation, and eternal life. If you will invite Jesus in and allow Him to stay and use you to do His ways, willingly giving up your ways, you will be saved.

Do not wait one moment thinking that you must make yourself good before you invite Jesus in. He knows just how naughty and weak and wicked you are, and how impossible it is for you to do one good thing without Him. He therefore stands at the door and knocks and pleads for you to let Him in now, just as you are, that He may do for you what you cannot do for yourself.

Jesus is the only way, and His is the only name under heaven given among men whereby you can be saved.