

"The Homes of India"

The Present Truth – July 20, 1893

E. J. Waggoner

The homes of India are very different from your home.

In the southern part of India the villages are very pretty. They are built amid palm groves, and have no walls. The low, mud houses have thatched roofs—often covered with vines. In the north the houses are close together, and are built entirely of clay. There are no trees, and few flowers. The villages are generally surrounded by clay walls.



The educated and wealthy live in the cities and large towns. Some cities contain very magnificent palaces and mosques of marble and stone, but the houses are mostly built of brick around a central courtyard,

on which all the rooms open. There are scarcely ever any windows on the outside, only a blank prison-like wall, with one door for entrance. When there are windows they are so small and high that the street cannot be seen from them. The streets are very narrow and dirty.

You would be the most surprised if you were to visit some of the villages of the hill tribes, for you would find their houses, not on the

ground but up in the trees! They build them there that they may be out of the reach of wild elephants and tigers.

"The houses of the Hindus are mostly one story in height, though some are two-storied. They are built of clay bricks dried in the sun and white-washed with a kind of lime. They have an open verandah towards the street. The door is placed in the middle. Entering this door you come into a small room with a raised pial, or alcove, on each side. Here the owner receives his guests. Passing on, you come to an open court, paved, but not roofed, and around this the house is built. There are three deep verandahs, and behind these are some small dark rooms where the people sleep when it is very hot or very cold or damp. In ordinary weather, and at night during the hot weather, they sleep either in the open court-yard, or in the verandahs, or on the roof. In one of the verandahs the cooking goes on; there is no kitchen such as we understand it. The stove is made of earth, and stands only a foot from the ground, so an Indian women sits when she does her cooking.



"One room is set apart for the use of the women and girls, and the others for the other members of the family, as well as for various purposes, such as eating, storing grain, etc. The household gods are usually kept in the kitchen, and worship is paid to them before eating. In better houses a special room is set apart for this purpose, where anyone who wishes may go for worship. There are no tables or chairs, but a low bedstead, without mattress, a box for keeping clothes and jewels, a rush mat, and a few earthen and metal pots, are all the furniture.

"Some of the educated and wealthier classes now have chairs, tables, couches, pictures, lamps, etc., but this is not the general

custom. In large houses there is often a second smaller court and a small garden with a well in it. The ceiling, rafters, and beams are of teak or palmyra wood, and the roof is covered with tiles. The dwellings of the poorest natives consist of four mud walls, with bamboo rafters, covered with grass or palm-leaf thatch. Cows, buffaloes, and fowls are freely admitted inside an ordinary Hindu house, and may be seen entering at the front door!"

A missionary says of a rich man's house in India: "If you went into the upstairs rooms, where the gentlemen live, you would find them very nicely furnished, but very dusty. Hindu rooms are always dusty and full of cobwebs, for the Hindu think it is very lucky to have plenty of spiders, and that it is a great sin to disturb them."

But although you will find plenty of gentlemen enjoying themselves, and little boys and big boys and little girls running about playing and laughing, you would not be able to find one lady or one big girl, until you go into another square building, smaller and not so nice as the other. There up at the top after going through a dark narrow staircase we find ourselves on a verandah, "with a few doors and little windows with bars to them, too high up for you to see out, opening into it; and now at last we have got at the women and girls, hidden away up here altogether, where they cannot see anyone, and nobody can see them. There they are, shut away by themselves all the year round, from the time they are a few years old, to the time they die."

"You will find no nice furniture in the ladies' rooms, like that you saw in the gentlemen's; no tables or chairs or sofas; no pictures, except of dreadful gods and goddesses painted on the walls themselves, and no books. Perhaps you will find a bedstead with a mat on it, and there may be even two or three hard pillows; but most likely not. There will be a box in one corner for the ladies' clothes, and a brass cup for them to drink out of, and generally that is all. Not quite, though, for running about under the bedstead, on the box,

anywhere, you will find hens and chickens and dogs, that live there with the ladies. So you may imagine how dirty everything is; and remember this is not a poor man's house but a rich man's, and these ladies, living in this dirty, close, bad-smelling place, are the wives and children of the richest men of India. The rooms where they live form what is called a zenans.

"Under the house, we find a passage leading out of the court to a piece of ground with a high wall all round it, in the middle of which there is a pond. The water in the pond comes from a spring which stops running in the very hot dry weather, and then the pond gets green and muddy, and stays like that till the rain begins. This is all the high-caste Hindu ladies know of a garden. In a very few of these courts there are two or three trees by the side of the pond; but there are some ladies in India, even old ones, who never saw a tree in their lives." The pond is the ladies' bath, in which they bathe every day, and sometimes even twice a day.

Some Hindu ladies have to begin this shut-up life when they are six years old. Do you not think that you have a very pleasant home compared with these poor souls? They are often treated with such unkindness that their lives are very miserable. Their husbands do not visit with them and take them out to pleasant places with them; they see nothing that goes on in the streets, and never go for an outing under the pleasant trees, as you do; and they have very little that is pleasant to do or think about, and no books or pictures to look at. But worse than all else, their gods do not hear them when they cry to them, and cannot help them when they are ready to drop under their heavy burdens. Very few of them know of the living God who can hear their cries, and lighten their heavy burdens, who can bring beauty and sunshine and love into the humblest house, and peace and hope and joy into the saddest heart.

"Our Homes"

The Present Truth – July 20, 1893

E. J. Waggoner

"It matters not," says J. R. Miller, D.D., "how little or how much of grandeur, of luxury, of costly adornment, there may be. Money and art can do many things, but they cannot make a home. There may be more of the spirit of a true home in a lowly cottage or in the one room where poverty finds a shelter, than in the stateliest mansion.

"What is it that makes a home complete after all that the architect, the builder, the painter, the upholsterer, the furniture maker, and the decorator can do? What is it that comes into the furnished house and makes it a home? Is not the answer found in one word—God? If we leave Him out our most perfect home will be but like a marble statue, with all the grace and beauty of life, but having neither breath nor heart-throb."

We need Jesus in our homes to help us each to do our duties faithfully. The parents need Him, or how can they train up their children in the way they should go? The brothers and sisters need Jesus, even the tiny ones, for they have a duty in the making of a pleasant home. How can they be kind and thoughtful, unselfish and helpful to one another and to their parents, if they have not Jesus with them?

"Kindness and patience must rule in the home to make it happy."

"Thankful hearts and kind looks are more valuable than wealth and luxury; and contentment with simple things will make home happy if love, the love of God, be there." When Jesus was on earth "He was a light and blessing in every home, because He carried cheerfulness, hope, and courage with Him." We read that He is the same

"yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Then if we let Him into our homes to-day, will He not bring the same blessings that He did then?

"Oh that we could be satisfied with less heart-longings, less strivings for things difficult to obtain wherewith to beautify our homes, while that which God values above jewels, the meek and quiet spirit, is not cherished. The grace of simplicity, meekness, and true affection, would make a paradise of the humblest home."

We need Jesus in our home in the time of prosperity and in the time of sorrow. "Where is the home into which sorrow comes not? We can build no walls strong enough or high enough to shut it out. We can gather within our doors no treasures so sacred that sorrow will never lay its hand upon them. Then when sorrow comes where shall we find comfort if not in the religion of Jesus Christ? Shall we find anything in the splendors of architecture, in the beauties of art, in the luxuries of costly furnishing or adorning, to bring calm and comfort to our hearts when one of our household lies in the struggle of death?"

"But in the home of prayer when trial comes there is help at hand. An unseen presence walks amid the shadows. A voice others hear not whispers peace. A hand others see not ministers consolation. Religion pours light in the darkness. No home is prepared for the trials which are at some time inevitable which has not its altar standing in the centre, whereon the fires burn perpetually."

As we read of the sad hopeless homes of heathen India, as we so often call it, let us pause and think. What mark is there that distinguishes our home from the home of our godless neighbours, from the homes of heathen India? Is our home blessed with the daily presence of the living God, or is it cursed with the idols of gold, of appetite, of self, that can do nothing but drag us to the same pit into which our heathen neighbours are falling?

May God open our eyes to the grand possibilities in our homes. God has given us our homes, not for our own selfish pleasure, not for our permanent abiding place, but merely as a halting place in which to prepare for the home above, in which to become acquainted with Jesus and accustomed to the atmosphere of heaven. If He finds that He can trust us in our present homes, we soon shall be called up higher to a home where there is no sin, no sorrow, and no death.

Oh, shall we not, young and old, invite Jesus into our homes? Shall we not yield up our wills and choose His will? Shall we not begin to use the lamp of God's word? Then our homes will be filled with the light of heaven, for the word of God in our hearts brings Jesus into our hearts, and where Jesus is there is no darkness at all for He is the light of the world.

"In the time of trouble, cry
To the Lord who rules above,
To thy help he'll quickly fly,
For His heart is made of love."

"Eating in India"

The Present Truth – July 20, 1893

E. J. Waggoner

The Hindus usually have but two meals a day—one at twelve o'clock, and the other at night, although the labouring classes do take a little something early in the morning.

"The principal food is curry and rice. Curry is a kind of powder made of pepper, salt, turmeric, ginger, tamarinds, onions, cocoanut juice, garlic, saffron, etc., mixed so as to suit the taste of the person. This is

added to the rice, fish, fowl, piece of mutton, or vegetable, which is boiled in an earthen vessel."

There are no tables, chairs, knives, forks, or spoons. The person sits cross-legged on the ground. A plantain leaf, sometimes several fig leaves sewn together, form the plate. The curry and rice is placed on this. The women cook the food and bring it when ready and set it before the men and boys, as the women and girls are never allowed to eat with the men. When the men have finished, the women eat the remainder from the same leaf plate.

The fingers are used in eating. Some of the curry and rice is taken, rolled up into a sort of ball, and thrown into the mouth. Ripe fruits are eaten raw when in season. Sweets are much used, and buttermilk and curds.