

Penances of the Holy Men of India

Self-Inflicted Religious Punishment Which Include Being Buried Alive, Living on Beds of Thorns and Wires, Being Strung from Poles by Hooks Through the Muscles of the Back—All to Gain "Perfect Peace"



"Lying on Thorns"—This Hindu Form of Penitential Self-Torture is Very Ancient and Was Imported into the West by Saint Benedict.



Showing an Aged Patient Who Has Held His Arm Upright for So Long That It Remains, Withered and Jointless, in That Position—Hindu Beggars Accomplish the Same Result by Supporting the Arm on a Cunningly Devised Rest.

To the Right—The Penitent's Hands Have Been Kept So Long in This Position That They Are Paralyzed and Useless.

THE pictures on this page, illustrating forms of self-torture, "mortification of the flesh," as practised by East Indian yogis and fakirs, and the descriptive article accompanying them, by the Rev. W. M. Zumbro, form the leading feature in the December number of the National Geographic Magazine.

Illustrations of this curious religious custom—which is abused for gain by beggars and "fakirs" in India—are familiar to most persons in connection with descriptions of life in that strange land whose scenes and characters, entering into the best work of Rudyard Kipling, made that author famous.

The occasion for these subjectings of the body to all sorts of tortures—by actual religious devotees—is concisely described by Mr. Zumbro in these words:

"Heaven is established on the air, the air on the earth, the earth on the waters, the waters on truth, the truth on the mystic lore (of the sacrifice) and that on Tapas (penance or self-mortification)."

There is no doubt that the "holy men" of the East practise these tortures of their own bodies, and for the reason just quoted. There also is no doubt that they are greatly outnumbered by the "fakirs," who cultivate the ability to bear the same

sort of fatigue and pain for purposes of gain.

Whichever the motive, several favorite forms of this "mortification of the flesh" make the simulated ulcers, consumptive coughs, paralyzed limbs and club feet of East Side New York professional beggars mere child's play.

Neither are these exceedingly painful forms of penance confined to the mysterious East. The penitential act of lying nearly nude upon thorns, for example—torture by thorns being regarded as particularly efficacious—was imported into the West by St. Benedict, founder of Occidental monasticism. This was his favorite form of penance.

In India the highest form of holiness is inseparable from the completest possible asceticism—all the desires of Nature and the flesh must be subdued. Starvation to the point of death is not enough; the body must be subjected systematically to all the pain it is able to endure and retain life.

Upon occasions of great religious gatherings—where pilgrims congregate by tens of thousands—fanatic religionists vie with one another in demonstrations of their ability to endure self-torture. As tangles of natural thorns are not always available, the Indian ascetics have invented a substitute even more cruel. This is a portable "bed of thorns," composed of a surface thickly stuffed with sharpened iron spikes.

The penitent, nearly nude, stretches out his body on these sharp points and lies there for hours at a time, "acquiring merit" and holiness, and gaining the admiration of all beholders. The fact is, that the spikes are driven so closely together that the weight of the body is well distributed, and the punctures, therefore, rarely more than skin deep. Moreover, especially in the case of the fakirs, the heavy weight of the upper part of the body is held off the "thorns" by a sort of wooden pillow placed under the shoulders.

All of the "thorn" forms of self-torture are derived from the legend of Blahma, whose entire body was penetrated by the arrows of the enemy. But when he toppled from his chariot he was upheld from the ground by the arrows, so that he lay on a couch of darts. The early Christian adaptation of this method of doing penance, of course, was

derived from the crown of thorns placed on the brow of our Saviour.

The East Indian ascetic usually accompanies his profound contemplation upon holy matters by some form of self-mortification. A favorite practice is to sit on the ground for days, weeks and months, holding one arm high in the air. To be really successful in this act of devotion the arm must be so held until it withers, its joints stiffen, and it can never again be held otherwise.

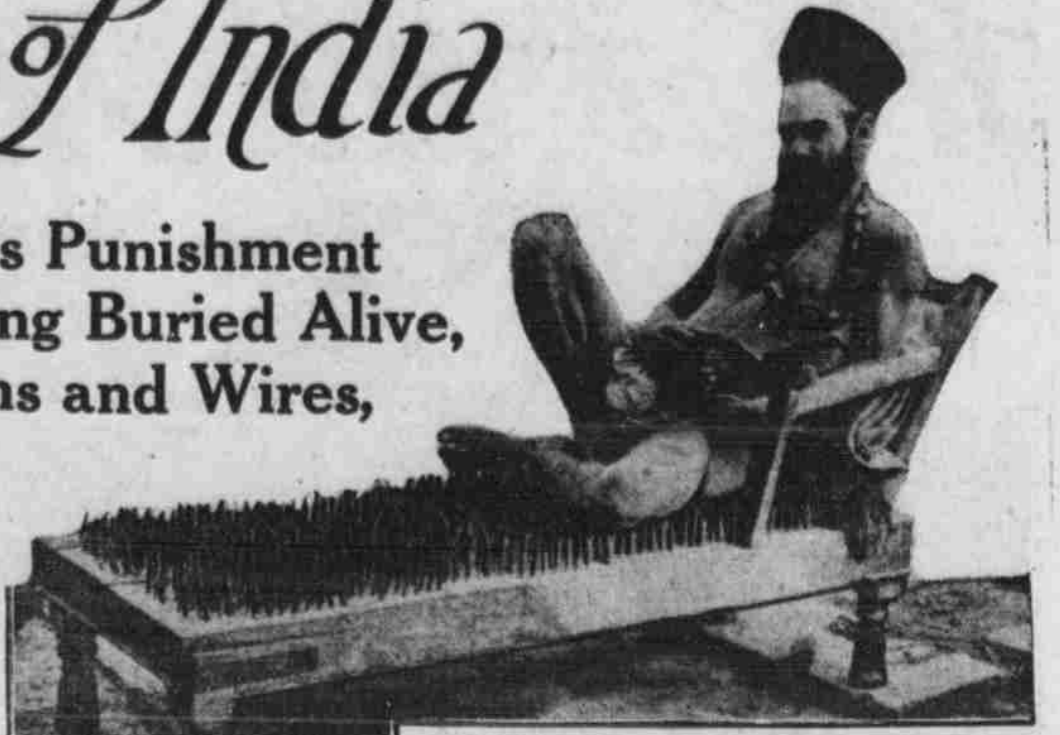
Beggars accomplish this with the aid of a cunning mechanism which supports the arm in the desired position until it atrophies and will remain there of necessity. The successful performance of this feat produces another much-desired result; the nails of the upraised hand grow to an enormous length, curving, and frequently embedding their points in the palms.

A profoundly admired variation of this act of penitential self-torture is accomplished when the devotee appears on a holy pilgrimage with both hands, palms together, in the attitude of prayer, behind his head, held permanently in that position by their paralyzed muscles and stiffened joints.

To submit oneself to remaining buried alive for weeks at a time is regarded as an admirable act of penance on the part of those who shrink from actual mutilations of the flesh. It is necessary that the body, in a standing position, shall be enveloped in the earth, all but the mouth and nostrils. Food, drink and air can be taken, but in other respects the body might as well be in the grave.

The ingenuity of these East Indian ascetics is taxed to find forms of self-torture more difficult to endure than the old ones. Young and lusty penitents slash themselves with knives in a most horrible fashion. Others have strong iron hooks thrust through the skin and under the broad muscles of the back, and allow their bodies to be thus suspended in midair upon poles for hours at a time, all the weight being borne by the muscles grappled by the hooks.

Devotees are seen parading through the streets holding aloft in their bare hands earthen vessels filled with live coals. Others sit all day in the fierce glare of an almost



"The Bed of Thorns"—Sitting and Lying Upon the Points of Innumerable Iron Spikes is Considered Very Efficacious in Subduing Earthly Desires.

tropical sun, surrounded by blazing fires. Still others lie at length upon the ground and roll over and over until they have in this way accomplished the circuit of some holy temple or tomb.

Women, and even babies, are not exempt from these practices. Children of one and two years of age are frequently seen lying naked in a bed of sharp thorns. The child that makes the least objection to this kind of treatment is marked for exceptional holiness in its adult existence.

Hindu ascetics take a very practical view of the value of these tortures they practise upon themselves. They regard them in the light of "making deposits in the Bank of Heaven." By degrees an enormous credit is accumulated, which enables the depositor to draw the amount of his savings without fear of his drafts being refused payment. The power thus gained by weak mortals is so enormous that gods as well as men are equally at the mercy of these all but omnipotent ascetics.

Thus, not even the Rockefeller of India are able to entirely crush and subjugate even the poorest and most miserable inhabitant who has the fortitude to hold his arm up in the air until it is withered and paralyzed and stays there of its own accord.



Here a Devotee is Having Iron Hooks Thrust Under the Muscles of His Back, to Sustain His Weight When Swung High on a Pole.



To the Left—"Large Deposits in the Bank of Heaven" Are Made by Remaining Buried to the Mouth for Weeks at a Time.

My Secrets of Beauty--How to Improve Your Nose--By Mme. Lina Cavaleri

By Mme. Lina Cavaleri, The Most Famous Living Beauty.

BEAUTY is beset by enemies. It is not enough to have good features. They must be cared for and protected against their foes. It is curious but true that there is always a tendency away from beauty. We must lead beauty back, as it were, into right paths.

The Last Straw.

With a look of extreme disgust on his face, old Farmer Giles looked out from the train on the outskirts of London, which he was visiting for the first time.

Neither did he approve of the appearance of a lady who had got into the carriage a few stations back, and, altogether, he was in a very grumpy state of mind.

As the train neared the terminus it passed a factory of some sort which sent an appalling and altogether overpowering odor in at the carriage window.

The farmer who had been observing the crowded buildings on either side of the line, turned sharply round and beheld the lady holding a smelling-bottle to her nose. This was too much! With his face sufficed in an enormous red handkerchief, he leaned across to her.

"Madam," he shouted, choking with wrath and the smell from the factory, "for goodness' sake put the cork back in that bottle again!"

Grandmother's Will.
"Well, old fellow, I hear that your grandmother is dead."

"Yes, she died yesterday," replied the old fellow, somewhat sadly. "It is the way of the world. We must all die some time, and the old lady was well advanced in years."

For example, the nose! You are blessed with a straight one, perfectly proportioned in its relation to the face. Very well, but there is no certainty that all will remain very well. The nose must have its care as scrupulous as that the good gardener gives to his garden. I repeat that there is always a vexing tendency away from beauty. This is manifest in the nose, which is, in the matter of its beauty, no more stationary than pleasant states of life. If your nose is straight and delicate, its tendency, especially as you grow older, is to grow too thin and sharp. If it is delightfully retreating in youth it soon manifests a spreading motive. It is your task to correct these habits of the most prominent feature. Pinching is good for the nose if it be very delicately done.

The nose will not bear hard usage. The nose that is "mauled" grows permanently red and coarse. Many a mother gives her child an ill-shaped nose by her use of the handkerchief. Pinch the point lightly, but often, if your nose be broadening at the point. If it be broad at the bridge the flesh can be delicately coaxed downward by the same slight but persistent pinching. If the nose is obstinately broad the most drastic remedy is the nose clamp. Expensive ones are manufactured in Paris and this country, constructed of metal and lined with velvet. But a very good and cheap household substitute is the clothespin. Press this upon the nose often, but do not leave it long, lest it inflame and reddens the feature. If the nose be too small specialists have improved the contour of the face by massaging the cheek muscles so that they become firmer and smaller in the region of the nose, thus thrusting the nose more into relief.

Besides its tendency to slowly alter its shape the nose has three chief enemies. They are glistening,

unbecoming redness; blackheads and long, obtrusive hairs.

Redness of the nose can be traced usually to one of two bad habits—either that of wearing clothes too tight or overindulgence in rich food or strong drink. Change your habits of eating and dressing and you should not be long troubled by redness of the nose. Occasionally it is a symptom of oversensitiveness of the tiny blood vessels in the nose. In that case bathe the nose often with a piece of linen or absorbent cotton dipped into borax water made as follows:

Water 1 pint
Pulverized borax 1/2 oz.
1 teaspoonful of eau de Cologne.

If the redness is caused by sunburn, pressing a half lemon against it should after a few applications reduce its redundant color.

Yet another remedy is to bathe it often in hot water. If the nose has the mirror-like habit of shining bathe it every night with camphor water. Cornmeal should be used instead of soap.

Blackheads will not appear if you are careful to remove the dust through the pores from the face at night. If you have neglected this and permitted the pores to become choked and darkened apply cloths heated in vinegar. When they are softened gently press them out, with a needle applied sidewise. To prevent the pores thus rudely opened to force out the contents part a little alcohol upon each pore to close it. Remember that neglect of blackheads means enlarged pores and the cure is almost as ugly as the remedy. So prevent the blackheads by keeping the skin free from dust. To do this make

your face baths two-fold ones. First remove the dust by bathing the face in cold cream or oil and removing the dust it collects with cotton or cloth. Then bathe it in warm water.

Beauty Questions Answered

G. J. inquires: "Will you kindly advise me what would be good to whiten hands in Summer and Winter? My hands are always red and my nose is never white."

For the hands try the various remedies that follow and see which more speedily bleaches the hands. Then keep to that:

Six drops of tincture of benzoin to a bowlful of tepid water in which you wash your hands.

Six drops of liquid ammonia to the same quantity of water.

Half a teaspoonful of lemon juice in the same quantity of water.

After drying the hands use this lotion:
Glycerine 1 oz.
Lemon juice 1 oz.

Rub these thoroughly into the hands.

A red nose, according to most medical authorities, is a sign of indigestion. It means that waste matter is being retained in the system and is poisoning it, as the water from a green scum-covered swamp poisons the fresh, clean water with which it mingles. In a few weeks plain food, much water drinking and out-of-door exercise should cause the flush to fade from your nose. I need hardly say to such an intelligent girl as G. J. seems to be that alcoholism causes the nose to redden.

A. J. G. writes: "Is there anything you can recommend for removing superfluous hair from my arms? Even if it only removes it for a while, as my arms are simply covered with hair and it prevents my wearing short sleeves."

Observant.

"Be observant, my son, said Willie's father. 'Cultivate the habit of seeing and you will be a successful man.'"

"Yes," added his uncle. "Don't go through the world blindly. Learn to use your eyes."

"Little boys who are observing know a great deal more than those who are not," his aunt put in. Willie took this advice to heart. Next day he informed his mother that he had been observing things.

"Uncle's got a bottle of whiskey hidden in his trunk," he said. "Aunt Jane's got an extra set of teeth in her drawer, and father's got a pack of cards behind the books in his desk."

"The little sneak!" exclaimed the members of the family indicated.

Almost Human.

There was only one possible explanation. Either Bill, the butcher boy, had not a nodding acquaintance with the elementary laws of horsemanship, or else the horse was a regular brute.

With its ears well back, it would trot along for a few yards and stop dead; then, without any warning, start off again, only to stop once more a little further on. The wretched Bill, having had two solid hours of this, was almost delirious.

"Hallo, my boy," cried out an interested spectator. "What do you keep pulling that horse up for? Are you scared of it?"

"Scared of it—pullin' it up?" answered the almost tearful youth. "Whatcher take me for?"

"Well, something's wrong with the horse," persisted the stranger. "You're right there," said Bill heartily. "But I ain't got nothin' to do with it. Truth is, the beast is so afraid that I shall say 'Whoa' and he won't hear me and he keeps stoppin' to listen! See?"

Tommy's Invitation.

Little Willie wanted a birthday party, to which his mother consented, provided he asked his little friend Tommy. The boys had had trouble, but, rather than not have the party, Willie promised his mother to invite Tommy.

"On the evening of the party, when all the small guests had arrived except Tommy, the mother became suspiciously and sought her son.

"Willie," she said, "did you invite Tommy to your party to-night?"

"Yes, mother."

"And did he say he would not come?"

"No," explained Willie. "I invited him all right, but I dared him to come."



"The nose clamp for a too broad nose can be improvised from a clothes pin."



"Pinch very lightly the end of the nose to correct a spreading tip."

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