

# French Retrospect of Miraculous Power and Absurd Believes of Fakir, Jogis, Mullas and Sanyasis

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**Abstract-** The French travelers' and adventurers' records in northern India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gave different facets of a section of society which are sometime considered as pious while at other times as hypocrites. These include fakirs, jogis, mullas, boiraguy and sanyasis etc. This article tries to discuss their narratives which highlight about their attaining miraculous powers; absurd and disgusting practices; activities of penances and asking alms. Many untranslated and translated French records have been examined to highlight activities pertaining to their ambiguous activities. The rationalist minded Occidental travelers raised question about their theories, believes, activities and behaviours. These scientific mind voyagers blamed them for propagating the irrational and superstitious custom among the Indians. The objective of this article is to narrative the French travelers' observations about these sections of the society during the period of their voyage.

**Key Words:** Superstitious customs, penances, Fakirs, sanyasis, absurd and disgusting practices, European beggars and alms

Most of the French travelers and adventurers in northern India during the of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had a rational approach, criticized the superstitious and miraculous powers of the fakirs, jogis, mullas, sanyasis and other hypocrites. The article purports to discuss the narratives of these voyagers about the miraculous powers and absurd believes attached to the most ambiguous sections of society who believed to claim the religious sanctity from God. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, occidental voyagers traveled to orient world, who gave a copious account of these men and their implications in the society. Among these accounts the French prospective from original sources is still lacking, so this article uses the first hand (translated and un-translated) sources to comprehensively comprehend their perceptions about these men and their identities. Although some historian have worked on the theme of these people such as Vijay Pinch's *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* and David Gordon White's *Sinister Yogis* etc. but they all have been missing the French prospective of these men. So this article highlights these person's descriptions through the French eyes.

European travel gave narratives that yogis (semi) nude appearance with ashes on their bodies and matter hair; their practice of carrying and blowing horns; their iron implements and weapons and their proclivity for begging alms, other European accounts refer to yogi practices or lifestyles that differentiate them from other types of renounces and to that of Brahmins<sup>1</sup>. Law de Lauriston [French adventurer] said that the temporal advantages which come to the Brahmins from their spiritual authority and the impossibility to set the admitted in their tribe and probably led to the rise of an extraordinary quantity of *faquirs* who by their penitence and austerity attracted the same veneration which a Brahmin acquired by his birth<sup>2</sup>. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier [French traveler] gave a description of the fakirs as being nefarious and lazy and make a show of devotion when they do not find means of livelihood. These monks were approximately 1,200,000 in number in India but they were looked with disdain by the Indians. These monks performed many penitence and led an austere life. They spend rest of their life sometimes in an awkward position, for example raising the hands towards the sky, taking food

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with others help and making long pilgrimages. They are naked, bare foot with heavy chains and many remain upright for several days while repressing their breath. Some travelers does not mention the stoppage of breath in the underground crypt while other does not believe in the state of suspended animation termed as Samadhi. This kind of lifestyle was quite unusual for French voyagers who condemn such of absurd activities and made estimate about their number in India.

Tavernier said these idolaters have no unity among themselves as superstition introduces a strange diversity of opinion and customs that they never agree with each other. An idolater will not eat bread nor drink water in a house belonging to any different caste other than those who are noble and more exalted than his own. They can all eat and drink in the house of the Brahmans, which are opened to all<sup>3</sup>. These men supported the caste distinctions which itself seemed to be bizarre to Occident travelers who do not have this kind of disparity in Europe.

Francois Bernier [1658-68] mentions that India had 'endless variety of fakirs, *dervishes*, and holy men or Gentile hypocrites, who had their different groups which were governed by superior who was given the vows of chastity, poverty and submission<sup>4</sup>. Their followers paid huge respect to their teachers and were believed to have extraordinary sanctity. Travelers show a kind of hierarchy which was being prevalent among these fakirs, this disparity was quite hazy in the eyes of French as they suppose these men living an austere life, in which they follow the caste distinctions and hierarchy.

Tavernier also criticized the Musalman beggars of the East Indies which he believed to be around 80,000 in India. He said 'they are all vagabonds and idlers, who blind the eyes of the people by a false zeal, and lead them to believe that all that falls from their own mouth is oracular<sup>5</sup>. Further he said that some of Musalman [Muslim] fakirs were almost naked like the idolaters Fakirs, as they did not have any regular dwellings and abandon themselves to all kinds of impurity without any shame. They believed to have the

privilege to do all kinds of evils without sin. This French traveler associated fakir's origin with the Ravana whom the Rama despoiled of his kingdom. Thus gave a strange connection that 'on that account he felt so much remorse that he resolved to wander like a vagabond throughout the world, poor and bereft of all property, and completely nude....For being revered as saints, they had abundant opportunities of doing whatever evil they wishes<sup>6</sup>. These fakirs moved in groups who had a chief or superior. These fakir revered a tree at Surat, and believed that 'in its truck, which his hollow, a monster is represented like the head of a deformed women which is said to be the representation of the first women, whom they call Mananiva<sup>7</sup>.

Different kind of penances and the physical conditions of *Jauguis*<sup>8</sup> were highlighted by varied French travelers. Tavernier and Bernier state that they 'were nearly naked with black skin, long hair, spindle arms, long twisted nails and found in unusual posture<sup>9</sup> performing different penances. French travelers dislike such conditions of jogis as they believe in cleanness and sanitation. Bernier said

*I was for a long time disgusted with a celebrated Fakir, named Sarmet, who paraded the streets of Delhi as naked when he came into the world. He despised equally the promises and the threats of Aureng-zebe, [Aurangzeb] and underwent at length the punishment of decapitation from his obstinate refusal to put on wearing apparel.... Sometimes I have only seen brutality & ignorance in them, who appeared to me to be more like trees that occasionally bestirred themselves from one place to another than creatures with reason; or, I have regarded them as people intoxicated by their Religion<sup>10</sup>.*

Bernier wrote that these 'naked fakirs undertake long pilgrimages laden with heavy iron chain, without eating and drinking stood upside down for seven to eight days without sitting or lying down and without any other support than might

be afforded by leaning forward against a cord for a few hours in the night; their legs in the meantime were swollen to the size of their thighs<sup>11</sup>. He was impressed by these severe penances and felt that they were destitute of piety. He called them as egregious fools, or having some sinister views which were hidden from the world. He witnessed the irrational sanctity attached to these men, as 'females would often bring them alms with much devotion, doubtless believing that they were holy personages, more chaste and discreet men<sup>12</sup>.

Bernier was amazed by the superstitious beliefs of the Indian and compared these Fakir's with the French hermits who lived a secluded life in a remote garden without ever visiting a town. Bernier was told by a *Jogi* that their 'souls are often rapt in an ecstasy of several hours duration; that their external lose their functions;...they were blessed with a sight of god...they experience transports of holy joy, and a contempt of temporal concerns which defy every power of description<sup>13</sup>. This French traveller condemned vaunted ecstasies of *Jauguis* and mention that 'it is possible that the imagination, distempered by continued fasts and uninterrupted solitude may be brought into these illusions or that the rapturous dreams of the Fakirs may resemble the natural ecstasies<sup>14</sup>. He quoted another incident of superstitions attached to one aged hermit who resided in one of the mountains of Kashmir where it was believed that 'he wrought miracles, caused strange thunders and raised storms of wind, hail, snow and rain<sup>15</sup>. Bernier criticized the prevalence of such irrational and magical powers of religious hermits among the Indians. Finally, this French traveller called these sects are of *Jauguis* and *soufys*<sup>16</sup> who are mystics who believed in concealing their ideas among themselves. Jean Mocquet also mentions about the penitence of the Gentil *jauguis* of the Goa region who did extraordinary abstinences.

Tavernier's also corroborated Bernier's view by describing a kind of fakirs who wear wearied clothes. They have a chief or a superior. He wore different colour clothes and drag a heavy iron chain attached to one of his legs. When he prays

with a loud voice and makes great noise with this chain, and he attracts the veneration of the people<sup>18</sup>. His disciples proclaim throughout the country, the great virtues of their master and the favours he receives from God, who reveals to him the most important secrets and confers upon him the power to aid afflicted persons with good advice. The people give him great credence, regard him as a holy man, approach him with great devotion, remove the shoes of their feet and prostrates before the Fakir and kiss his feet. 'He boasts of possessing a prophetic spirit, especially for indicating to women who are sterile the way in which they may obtain children and how to constrain anyone they wish to manifest love for them<sup>19</sup>. Tavernier further said 'There are Fakirs who have more than 200 disciples, whom they assemble by the sound of the drum and a horn similar to the horns of our huntsmen. When marching, the disciples carry their standard, lances, and other arms, which they stick in the ground near their master when he halts to rest anywhere<sup>20</sup>.

Joseph Tieffenthaler also describes the superstitions attached to the Gorakhnath, is believed to be the founder of *Joguis*. Gorakhnath was famous for the austerity of his life. He further said that 'it was claimed that...Gorakhnath was buried alive, which made enough confirm to the use of the *Saniasses*'. Then he described the tomb of kabir in Awadh, the famous weaver, the founder of the new sect called *karbirpanthi*: he lived during the time of Sikender Lodi, king of Delhi in the year 1500. Tieffenthaler said that under this dome lies the body of Kabir, and on the right of this dome is a tomb of his son<sup>22</sup>.

Tavernier tells in great details about the band of seventy Fakirs or Dervishes whom he saw after leaving the Mughal court. He not just described their clothes and customs but also the arms they possessed. He said, 'they were all well armed, the majority with bows and arrows, some with muskets, and the remainder with shot pikes and a kind of weapon which we have not got in Europe. It is a sharp iron, made like the border of a plate which has no centre, and they pass eight or ten over the head, carrying them on the neck like a ruff. They withdraw these circles as they require



to use them, and when they throw them with force at a man, as we make a plate to fly, they almost cut him in two. Each of them had also a sort of hunting horn, which he sounds, and makes a great noise with when he arrives anywhere. During the same evening, after they had supped, the Governor of the town came to pay his respects to these principal Dervishes'. The chief of these Dervishes gave orders to the others and were respected by not just the common men but also by the Governor of the town who gives them food as charity while others collected alms from the villages<sup>23</sup>. Tavernier also described oppression of governors forced peasantry to move towards military service, where he said

*You may see in India whole provinces like deserts, from which the peasants have fled on account of the oppression of the Governors. Under cover of the fact that they [Governors] are themselves Muhammadans, they persecute these poor idolaters to the utmost, and if any of the latter become Muhammadans it is in order not to work any more; they become soldiers or Fakirs, who are people who make profession of having renounced the world, and live upon alms; but in reality they are all great rascals<sup>24</sup>.*

Chevalier noticed some gentil fakirs [Hindu Fakirs] when he was travelling from Dhaka to the border of Assam. He said that these Fakirs live in a community like monks and they obeyed the superiors. These fakirs were the incharge of temple of Durga<sup>25</sup>. This temple was highly revered in the country and attracted many pilgrims. He said 'the fakirs ensure that it continues and even that its reputation increases by all sorts of impostures<sup>26</sup>. These fakirs collect copious donations from the people.

Jean de Thevenot also mentions the audacity of the faquirs to demand some money even from a banian, 'it happened many times that a Banian will give a Faquir a considerable sums of money, because he has the boldness to place himself near his shop, and to protest that he will kill himself if he be not supplied with what he demands the Banian promises fair, and brings it him; but

because the fantastical Faquir understands that several have contributed to that Charity, he openly refuses it, and goes about to execute what he had threaten, if the Banian also did not furnish him the money demanded, and the Banian knowing that some faquirs have been so desperate as to kill themselves upon these occasion<sup>27</sup>. Thevenot further described that

*[These Faquirs] cannot be better compared to Gypsies, for their way of Living is like theirs; and I believe their Profession has the same Original, which is Libertinism. They are many times to be seen in Troops at Halabas, where they assemble for Celebrating of some Feasts to perform certain Ceremonies. Some of them as do no hurt, and show signs of Piety, are extremely honored by the Gentiles; and the Rich think they draw down blessings upon themselves, when they assist those whom they call Penitents. Their penance consists in forbearing to eat for many days, to keep constantly standing upon a Stone for several weeks, or several months; to hold their Arms a cross behind their head, as long as they live, or to bury themselves in Pits for a certain space of time. But if some of these Faquirs be good Men, there are also very Rogues among them; and the Mogul princes are not troubled, when such of them as commit violences are killed. One may meet with some of them in the Countrey stark naked with Colours and Trumpets, who ask Charity with Bow and Arrow in hand; and when they are the strongest, they leave it not to the discretion of Travelers to give or refuse. These wretches have no consideration even for those that feed them; I have seen some of them in the Caravans, who made it their whole business to play tricks, and to molest Travelers, though they had all their subsistence from them. Not long since I was in a Caravane, where some of these Faquirs were, who took a fancy to suffer no body to sleep: All night long they did nothing but Sing and Preach; and instead of banging them soundly to make them*

*hold their peace the Company prayed them civilly, but they took it ill; so they doubled their Cries and Singing, and they who could not Sing, laugh'd and made a mock of the rest of the Caravane. These Faquirs were sent by their Superiours, into I know not what Countrey full of Banians, to demand of them Two thousand Roupies, with a certain quantity of Rice and Mans [maunds] of Butter; and they had orders not to return without fulfilling their Commission. This is their way all over the Indies, where by their Mummeries, they have accustomed the Gentiles to give them what they demand, without daring to refuse<sup>28</sup>.*

Later in his travelogue, this French traveller said there were some good faquirs who were honoured, who assembled for celebration of some feasts and performed certain ceremonies. He said that 'such of them as do not hurt, and show signs of piety are extremely honoured by the Gentils and the rich think they draw down blessings upon themselves, when they assist those whom they call penitents. Their penance consists in forbearing to eat for many days, to keep constantly standing upon a stone for several weeks, or several months, to hold their arms a cross behind their head, as long as they live, or to bury themselves in pits for a certain space of time<sup>29</sup>. Besides the good faquirs there were some rogues who 'stark naked with colours and trumpets, who ask charity with bow and arrow in hand and when they are the strongest, they leave it not to the discretion of travelers to give or refuse. These wretches have no consideration even for those that feed them. I have seen some of them in the *Caravane*, who made it their whole business to play tricks and to molest travelers, though they had all their subsistence from them. Not long since I was in a *Caravane* these faquirs were, who took a fancy to suffer no body to sleep, all night long they did nothing but sing and preach; and instead of banging them soundly to make them hold their peace the Company prayed them civilly, but they took it ill, so that they doubled their cries and singing and they who could not sing, laughed and make a mock of the rest of the *Caravane*<sup>30</sup>. There are many Faquirs

among the Mahometans, as well as amongst the idolaters, who are also vagabonds and worse than them and commonly both of them are treated alike.

### **Absurdities And Disgusting Practices**

The absurd and disgusting practices of the Fakirs and other similar groups were severally criticized by the French travelers and adventurers. These voyagers sometimes compared them with European thieves, beggars and frauds. They believed that 'the monks whom they call Fakirs or the poor, are dedicated to the divine service, they live only on charity and wear patch up clothes of old rags which they collect in the streets to scorn the world and to press to the feet; they carry large beads chain in the neck and a fan in the hand, their hair served them as turban and never make them cut; they often wash them and lubricate them of oil without combing them, they go from city to city to wait the time of the pilgrimages of the large Pagodas, or the sacred washing, where they are at the feast day to receive the charity of people of good<sup>31</sup>. Lauriston explains that the poverty of the people is not general. He certifies that he saw the good kingdoms of Europe had more poverty than in India. He admits that there were more beggars in Europe as the extraordinary quantity of fakirs who demand for alms in India<sup>32</sup>.

Various superstitious beliefs or ceremonies were witnessed in the marriages by Chevalier in relation to hermit fakirs. He told that in all weddings the bride has to go to fakir to perform this ceremony. He says 'he (fakir) wears a golden amulet on his genitals that contains some figures or relics of the god which these credulous people honour. The fakir, when celebrating a wedding, has the right to spend the first night with the bride<sup>33</sup>. The husband and the family find themselves highly honoured with his ceremony. Sometimes some people give some money to fakir to enjoy this honour, which was considered to be the blessing for their family and the newly wedded couple. Boullaye le Gouz noticed the corrupt practices of these Fakirs. He observed that these faquirs sit shamelessly near the house of Hindus, without being invited. They search for the moment when the husband left the house and they enter it to corrupt the woman of the house<sup>34</sup>.

Francois Xavier Wendel, a French missionary, also criticized these faquirs and compared them with the European thieves. He said that 'ruined functionaries of India becomes faquirs sometimes on a pretext of awaiting for nothing more than a divine life, retired and removed from all troubles. He compares them with the race of privileged thieves in Europe who established their success on the ruins of the others, declared bankruptcy at an opportune moment to enjoy unmolested the fortune acquired through their devious and deceitful ways....(Later he said that) people of India are foolish enough to respect these rogues who, having assumed a place somewhat removed at the corner of the main route soon have their devotees to promulgate their holiness and celebrate miracles<sup>35</sup>.Some travelers also noticed that these fakirs were also used as spies as they reap the best intelligence for the prince that had employed them.

Lauriston explained the deceiving practices of these Fakirs in order to gain commercial profits. He observed that the 'Gentil faquirs, or religious beggars of all Asia, are the only allowed to make trade of impure gold. There were given the priority in this trade, because being regarded as saints, they pass all the customs without being examined. Moreover, they go in troops, sometimes of two or three thousands, one cannot insult them. They carry this gold to Surat, Golconda, Patna, Bengal, and all the seaports. They change it against pearls, diamonds and other precious stones which they carry in Tibet, where they very sell them costly to the inhabitants<sup>36</sup>. These Fakirs used their identity for their personal benefits.

Anquetil Duperron gave references of the fakirs whom he saw during the course of his voyage in India. He describes some fakirs who were covered with dust, ash and dung of cow and who were almost nude. He said 'knowing him European, he was attached to my aggregation in the hope that I cure him of certain evils produced by his incontinence'. Then he goes on to describe the beauty of one of the fakir women who pleased him so much that he forgot the black complexion of the woman<sup>38</sup>.

The activities of plundering of the armies of the fakirs of Jagannath were mentioned by Duperron. He described their ugly appearances and these fakirs went to make pilgrimage to Jagannath from all the parts of Asia<sup>39</sup>. After adoration in the temple these fakirs choose a chief to whom they give salute, an elephant and a camels, etc. after that the pilgrims who have weapons form an army divided in different groups which maintain discipline in plundering the surrounding cities and burning villages. Sometimes the rajas of the place were obliged to repurchase some plundering<sup>40</sup>. Duperron met approximately six thousand army of the fakirs. He was stopped by the vanguard of 400 men whose formation, arms and alertness were defined by this adventurer.

### **Mullas**

The class of fakirs of the East Indies who was born of poor parents. They wish 'to know the law thoroughly, in order to become *Mullas* or doctors, take up their abode in mosques, where they live on charity and bestowed upon them. Fakirs of this class marry wives and some of them through piety and their great desire to imitate Muhammad, take three or four of them, believing that they render to God signal service, by becoming fathers of many children who will follow the law of their Prophet<sup>41</sup>. Their mystical theories were criticized by the French voyagers who disdain their outlook and superstitious practices.

Wendel severally criticized the nature of the faquirs, 'he was astonished to observe which point the stupidity and obtuseness of the Moors has reached concerning these faquirs and would be saints of Mohammedan law. One sees in all parts of Hindustan dargahs or mausoleums, commemorating them, which are more or less famous and still frequented by the gentils, who were drawn to them perhaps by the masses or the Moor supremacy, being themselves very inclined to accept and believe all manner of superstitions which they are accustomed to assimilate since childhood. There are in this country such Moorish sanctuaries where it is widely known that those buried there and whose name they bear, regarded as veritable saints, were but the most



abominable blackguards conceivable.... They are, in the opinion of believers, great men near to the throne of Muhammad in the seventh heaven, capable of fulfilling the vows of their devotees with every prosperity. The *mullas*, found in throngs at these places of Mohammedan superstition, initially supported by some relative of the purported saint there interred so as to laud his deeds, then by public alms or pensions of the king, are cunning enough to demonstrate to the most exalted degree the power of their *walis* or favourites of God, which since they are being fed thereby, they are most interested to assert<sup>42</sup>. In most of the places of Hindustan, Wendel said one would see some slaves or *chela*, or relative of the deceased afterwards consider them as his jagir or place and source from where to secure the means of living in idleness at the expense of credulity of others.

Wendel goes on to say the Indians believed that the faquirs have the privilege to say and do anything. The insolence of the faquirs is tolerated with utmost patience. He said 'they are viewed as Shimeis who perhaps by quirk of imagination have the right to curse the innocent Davids. As inversely, their benediction, or *dua*, is held to result without fail in good fortune by way of the credit which they are reputed to have with the sovereign bestower of all good, and there are some who brazenly demand charity and themselves clout those from whom they have demanded it<sup>43</sup>. He further said the Moorish faquirs did not lead a life of austerity and consume opium which dulcifies and put them in a state as if beyond the thoughts. Suraj Mal, Jat Raja said amusingly that there was no better way to live than after the fashion of the Moors. They attain to riches virtuously or wickedly, make themselves forthwith amirs, after having dispensed with their fortunes, they becomes faquirs. Finally after their death, there is always someone who erects for them a tomb, and they were considered as blessed and saintly<sup>44</sup>.

Modave mentions the faquirs and mollahs were present outside most of the tombs in Hindustan<sup>45</sup>. He mentions that Mughal emperors was surrounded by fakirs and mollahs. He listened to them in an air of meditation and submissiveness

which appeared quite astonishing. He goes on to say that 'these mollahs jumped, danced, whirled on their feet, the arms in the air with an extraordinary speed and made hundred other extravagances which hardly appeared only worthy of the respect with which the emperor attended this strange spectacle. Sometimes these mollahs approached the emperor stretch out their arms ahead, the tight fist one against the other. Padcha gets up, applied his hands on the fists of mollahs and then passed its sanctified hands by this contact on his face and his beard with a serious which gave me large urge to laugh<sup>46</sup>.

### **Sanyasis**

The most respected were the Hindu monks called *Sannyasis* who devoted themselves entirely to their divinities and make lived in poverty, chastity and sobriety. They wandered all sides in naked form, their heads were bald, did not have anything, held nothing, living only on alms and eating only to survive. Their life was simple and austere.

Comte de Modave, French adventurer, described about the Sanyasis or penitents in India as 'they are divided into sects or communities which have some principles of control and interests very opposite to the others, agreeing only in one point which is to draw from the people in force of grimaces and importunities the broadest subsistence and most convenient that they can get. A small number of these penitents form a class the contemplative that one can compare to our hermits. Those remain alone, building a small hut under some large tree at the door of the cities or on main route and they never lose sight of the fact the place of their retirement. Others live in community in the pagodas having some particular and superiors rules. Others finally run the country or alone, or two to two, or in large troop. In the countries where they are in great number, they are rented for the war and one forms bodies of troops of them, it is what one names Goussins<sup>47</sup>. Modave further said their general profession was that of beggar and pilgrim. These faquirs were spread all over India and had a large number. This adventurer said that 'they are spread all over, to be dressed in hundred different ways and some even entirely naked. (They have a)

detail history of these beggars. Tavernier claims that there is at least eleven hundred and thousand scattered on the surface of Hindustan. I do not know if his calculation is quite exact. However, I would not want much to dispute him, because it is sure that the cities, the large villages and the main routes are filled of these vagrants. They push their races at unbelievable distances<sup>48</sup>.

Later Modave described about *sanyasi* who were from the caste of the Brahmans and who were dedicated to rigorous observance precepts of the religion. He said 'these people here devote entirely towards construction and public education. They live a very austere and mortified life and their manners reflect a kind of meditation and modesty. They are subjected to very rigorous things... These penitent, priests or doctors, called themselves as *samnyasi*<sup>49</sup>. Although there number was not much in India but they were respected among all. They were considered to be true oracles of the Hindus. Modave asked several questions to one *sanyasi* who replied him with accuracy. They were looked as reformed Brahmans by the Hindus.

There was another type of fakirs seen by Chevalier known as *boiraguy*<sup>50</sup>. They were allowed to do business in the kingdom of Assam without paying any tax<sup>51</sup>. Tieffenthaler mentions of another place in Allahabad region named *Tschetercot*, famous for the superstitions of Hindus. He said 'where they flow from all Hindustan: because they make in the idea that RAM, that they take for a God and that they revered as such, returned from the town of *Adjudea*, with his wife Sita, and remained there with her. One sees a quantity of pagodas there where they give a worship to two statues of stone, the one of RAM, the other of Lakshman. At these Pagodes are presided by *Beragiens*, who carries out a life of hermit, though several are married<sup>52</sup>. Overall most of these groups of fakirs were condemned by the French voyagers, as their superstitious practices were considered irrational in comparison to European's rational approach. Sometimes the voyagers compare these faquirs with the European beggars who were condemned by Occident.

## Conclusion

The foregoing discussion help to comprehensively understand the ambiguousness attached to these varied sections of the society. These men had religious affiliations which formulate their identity and further help them to gain popularity among the common masses, esp. among the women. Their penances helped them to gain acceptability and a sense of posing miraculous extraordinary powers; this further helped them to gain reverence and honor. French voyagers severely criticized these barbaric men as they were amused with their practices, probably because of the scientific and rational background which do not permit to believe in any kind of irrational, absurd and bizarre practices.

## Notes and References

1. Davind Gordon White, *Sinster Yogis*, p. 205.
2. Lauriston de Lauriston, *Mémoire sur Quelques Affaires de l'Empire Mogol 1756-1761*, p. 246.
3. Jean-Baptise Tavernier, *Travels in India* , Vol.2, Book III, p. 142.
4. Francois Bernier, *Travels*, p. 316.
5. Tavernier, *Travels in India* , Vol.2, Book III, p. 139.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol.2, Book III, p. 153.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol.2, Book III, p. 155.
8. *Jogi*, a corruption of *yoga*, union or junction. Applied to those followers of the yoga doctrine who are supposed to go about preaching the duty and necessity of religious retirement and meditation. (Bernier, *Travels*, ft. 2, p. 316)
9. Bernier, *Travels*, p. 317.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 317-318
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 317-318.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 317.



13. Ibid., p. 319. These Fakirs believed according to Bernier, "that they exercise painful austerities in the confident hope that they will be Rajas in their renascent state; or if they do not become Rajas, that they shall be placed in a condition of life capable of more exquisite enjoyment than is experienced by those sovereign princes." (Ibid., pp. 319-320).
14. Ibid., p. 319.
15. Ibid., p. 409.
16. *Soufys* refer to Sufism. *Jaugis* refer to Jogis
17. Jean Mocquet, *Voyages en Afrique, Asie, Indes Orientales & Occidentales*, p. 299.
18. Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Vol.2, Book III, p. 140.
19. Ibid., Vol.2, Book III, p. 140.
20. Ibid., Vol.2, Book III, p. 140.
21. Tieffenthaler, *La géographie de l'Indoustan*, p. 258.
22. Ibid., p. 267.
23. Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Vol. 1, p. 68.
24. Tavernier, Vol. I, pp. 391-392.
25. Chevalier, *The Adventures of the Jean-Baptiste Chevalier in Eastern India*, p. 120.
26. Ibid., p. 120.
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