

THE
SEARCH
FOR
TRUTH

**Sadhu Sundar
Singh**

THE POWERFUL LIFE STORY OF INDIA'S
MOST FAMOUS CHRISTIAN

1889-1929



SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

BORN: SEPTEMBER 3, 1889,
LUDHIANA, INDIA
DIED: 1929, HIMALAYAS



The Search For Truth

I was born in a family that was commonly considered Sikh, but in which the teaching of Hinduism was considered most essential, and my mother was a living example of its teaching. She early impressed on me the rule that my first duty on rising in the morning was that I should pray to God for spiritual food and blessing, and that only after so doing should I breakfast. I thank God for that training, and for giving me such a mother who instilled in me the love and fear of God. She prepared me, as much as she was able, to work for the Lord as a Sadhu.

My mother for some years instructed me from the holy books of the Hindu scriptures, and then handed me over to a Hindu pundit, and to an old Sikh Sadhu. I recognize that I got some degree of consolation from this teaching, but I was still hungering for real peace. I often used to read the Hindu scriptures till midnight, that I might in some way quench the thirst of my soul for peace. A Sikh priest once said to my father: "Your son is not like others. Either he will become a great man of God, or he will disgrace us all by going insane."

I frequently asked the pundit to explain my spiritual difficulties for me. He said: "When you grow up and get more experience and knowledge about spiritual life, these difficulties will disappear of themselves. Don't worry about these things at present."

I said to him: "Suppose I do not live till I grow up, then what will happen? Besides this, getting one's hunger or thirst satisfied does not depend on age or on whether one is big or little. If a hungry boy asks for bread would you say, 'Go and play, and when you are big and can understand the real meaning of hunger, then you will get bread?'"

The pundit said, "Why are you in such a hurry to get it? If this hunger is not satisfied in this life, it will be satisfied in your next births, provided you keep on trying for it." So saying, he evaded me, and my problem was not solved.

I spoke to the Sadhu several times about my difficulties, but he also gave me a somewhat similar answer. "Do not worry about it. When you get perfect knowledge you will realize that this need, or want is only an illusion, and that you yourself are

Brahma (God) or a part of him, and, when you realize this, then what more will you need?"

I persisted, "Excuse me, but I cannot believe this, for if I am a part of Brahma, or am myself Brahma, then I should be incapable of having any Maya (illusion). But if Maya is possible in Brahma, then Brahma is no longer Brahma, for he has been subordinated to Maya. Hence Maya is stronger than Brahma himself, and Maya will then not be Maya (illusion) but will be a reality that has overcome Brahma, and we shall have to think of Brahma himself as Maya, and this is blasphemy."

Again I was disappointed. I could not find anywhere that spiritual food for which I hungered, and in this state of unrest I remained till I found the Living Christ.

Deciding To Never Go Against My Conscience

From my earliest years my mother impressed on me that I should abstain from every kind of sin, and should be sympathetic and helpful to all in trouble. One day when my father had given me some pocket money I ran off to the bazaar to spend it. On the way I saw a very old woman famished with cold and hunger. When she asked help from me, I felt such pity that I gave her all my money. I came back home and told my father that he should give the poor woman a blanket or she would die of cold. He put me off by saying that he had often helped her before and that it was the turn of the neighbours to do their part.

When I saw that he was not willing to help her, by stealth I extracted some rupees from his pocket, intending to give it to her to buy a blanket with. The thought that I should be able to help her gave me great satisfaction, but the thought that I was a thief pricked my conscience. My distress was further increased in the evening when my father, on discovering that the rupees were missing, asked me if I had taken them, and I denied it. Though I had escaped from punishment, my conscience so tormented me the whole night that I could not sleep.

Early in the morning I went to my father, and confessed my theft and my lies, and gave back the money. In spite of the fear that he would punish me, the burden was at once removed

from my heart. But instead of punishing me, he took me in his arms, and with tears in his eyes said: "My son, I have always trusted you, and now I have good proof that I was not wrong." He not only forgave me, but spent the rupees on a blanket for the old woman, and gave me another rupee for myself to buy sweets with. After that he never refused when I asked for something, and on my part I decided that I would never do anything that should be against my conscience, or against my parent's will.

Tragedy Turns To Triumph

Some time after this my mother died, and a few months later my elder brother also died. This brother's nature and turn of mind were very much like my own. The loss of these two dear ones was a great shock to me; especially did the thought that I should never see them again cast me into despondency and despair, because I could never know into what form they had been re-born, nor could I ever even guess what I was likely to be in my next re-births. In the Hindu religion the only consolation for a broken heart like mine was that I should submit to my fate, and bow down to the inexorable law of *Karma*.

Now another change came into my life. I was sent to a small primary school that had been opened by the American Presbyterian mission in our village at Rampur. At that time I had so many prejudices about Christianity that I refused to read the Bible at the daily Bible lessons. To some extent I felt that the teaching of the Gospel on the love of God attracted me, but I still thought that it was false and opposed it. So firmly was I set in my opinions, and so great was my unrest, that one day, in the presence of my father and others, I tore up the Gospel and burned it. I thought I had done a good deed in burning the Gospel, yet my unrest of heart increased, and for two days after that I was very miserable.

On the third day, when I felt I could bear it no longer, I got up at three in the morning, and after bathing, I prayed that if there was a God at all He would reveal Himself to me, and show me the way of salvation, and end this unrest of my soul. I firmly made up my mind that, if this prayer was not answered, I would

before daylight go down to the railway, and place my head on the line before the incoming train.

I remained till about half-past four praying and waiting and expecting to see Krishna or Buddha, or some other *Avatar* of the Hindu religion; they appeared not, but a light was shining in the room. I opened the door to see where it came from, but all was dark outside. I returned inside, and the light increased in intensity and took the form of a globe of light above the ground, and in this light there appeared, not the form I expected, but the Living Christ whom I had counted as dead.

To all eternity I shall never forget His glorious and loving face, nor the few words which He spoke: "Why do you persecute me? See, I have died on the Cross for you and for the whole world." These words were burned into my heart as by lightning, and I fell on the ground before Him. My heart was filled with inexpressible joy and peace, and my whole life was entirely changed. Then the old Sundar Singh died and a new Sundar Singh was born to serve the Living Christ.

After a little while I went to my father, who was still sleeping, and told him of the appearance, and that I was now a Christian. He said: "What are you talking about? It is only three days since you burned their book. Go away and sleep, you silly boy." Later on I told the whole family what I had seen, and that I was now a Christian. Some said I was mad, some that I had dreamed; but when they saw that I was not to be turned, they began to persecute me. But the persecution was nothing compared with that miserable unrest I had when I was without Christ; and it was not difficult for me to endure the troubles and persecution which now began.

Driven From Home And Family

The missionary in charge of the school at Rampur was accused before local authority of making me a Christian by force, so I bore witness to the teacher's innocence before the magistrate. The feeling against the Christians in the village, however, became so strong that many of them had to leave the district.

I remember the night when I was driven out of my home. The first night I had to spend, in cold weather, under a tree. I

was not used to living in such a place without a shelter. I began to think: "Yesterday and before that I used to live in the midst of luxury at my home; but now I am shivering here, and hungry and thirsty and without shelter, with no warm clothes and food."

I had to spend the whole night under the tree. But I remember the wonderful joy and peace in my heart due to the presence of the Saviour. I held the New Testament in my hand. I remember that night as my first night in Heaven. I remember the wonderful joy that made me compare that time with the time when I was living in a luxurious home. In the midst of luxuries and comfort I could not find peace in my heart. The presence of the Saviour changed the suffering into peace. Ever since then I have felt the presence of the Saviour.

Miraculous Healing And First Convert

My relations gave me poison by putting it in my food. I ate it and the next day I was on the point of death. The doctor said there was no hope. I felt sure that I would recover and bear witness for my Saviour. The doctor would not give me any medicine, for he was certain I was going to die, and if he gave me anything and I died, people would say that it was he who had poisoned me. When I regained consciousness I told the doctor to read St. Mark chapter 16. He began to laugh at the concept of the resurrection.

In the morning I felt quite fresh and received new life. The doctor came and when he saw me sitting in the sun he was very surprised and ashamed and went away without saying a word. I saw nothing of him for a long time, but some years later, when visiting Burma, I met him at a meeting. "Do you recognize me?" he asked. "Yes," I answered: "I last saw you when on my death-bed." He told me that my miraculous recovery had made such an impression on him that he had begun to read the Bible and was a Christian.

The Christian Sadhu

After my recovery I was sent to a Christian Boy's Boarding School at Ludhiana. I was shocked when I saw the unchristian life of some of the Christian boys and of some of the local

Christians. It is quite possible that had I not had that appearance of the Living Christ, and received new life from Him, I should have stumbled and gone astray and have become an enemy of Christianity. I decided to leave the school and these Christians, and live apart, and as a Sadhu, follow Christ wherever He should lead me in His work.

According to India law at the time one could not be baptized until he was sixteen. I desired to be baptized because it was the will of Christ, but I felt so sure that the Lord had called me to witness for Him that even if Rev. Redman of the local Mission could not see his way to baptize me, I would have to go out and preach. On the 6th of October, thirty-three days after my baptism, I put on the saffron robes of the Sadhu with a turban. I am not worthy to follow in the footsteps of my Lord. But, like Him, I want no home, no possessions. Like Him, I will belong to the road, sharing the sufferings of my people, eating with those who will give me shelter and telling all men the love of God.

I returned to my native village Rampur. The people who were known to me, the shopkeepers, the peasants and the boys who were my classmates listened to me patiently. In the evening I went to my home. At first my father refused to see me, or let me in, because in his view by becoming a Christian I had dishonoured the family. But after a little while he came out and said: "Very well, you can stay here tonight; but you must get out early in the morning. Don't show me your face again." I remained silent, and that night he made me sit at a distance that I might not pollute them or their vessels, and then he brought me food, and gave me water to drink by pouring it into my hands from a vessel held high above, as one does who gives drink to an outcaste.

When I saw this treatment, I could not restrain the tears flowing from my eyes that my father, who used to love me so much, now hated me as if I was untouchable. In spite of all this, my heart was filled with inexpressible peace. I thanked him for this treatment also, and respectfully I said good-bye, and went away. In the fields I prayed and thanked God, and then slept under a tree, and in the morning continued my way.

Joy In Suffering

When I first began preaching I went to my own village and to the villages in its neighbourhood, but after that I went on extended tours all over India. When I started life as a Sadhu I reached up to Afghanistan via the Khyber Pass. Then returned via Kashmir to Kotgarh and Simla. Here I met an American called Mr Stokes, who had come to India to do evangelical work. He himself had developed a desire to serve the Lord by adopting the Sadhu style.

From August 1906 to November 1907 we were doing the Lord's ministry together. We stayed in Subathu for about a month and engaged in the hospital for lepers, washing their wounds and preaching the Gospel to them, and several of them became Christian. After this we went to Lahore for the purpose of working amongst those stricken with smallpox; and from there Mr Stokes went back to America.

Driven To The Feet Of Christ

When I was twenty years old it was arranged for me to take a theological course in St. John's Divinity School in Lahore. I learnt many useful and interesting things no doubt, but they were not of much spiritual profit. There were discussions about sects, about Jesus Christ and many other interesting things, but I found the reality, the spirit of all these things, only at the Master's feet. When I spent hours at His feet in prayer, then I found enlightenment, and God taught me so many things that I cannot express them even in my own language.

Sit at the Master's feet in prayer; it is the greatest Theological College in this world. We know about theology, but He is the source of theology itself. He explains in a few seconds a truth that has taken years to understand. Whatever I have learnt has been learnt only at His feet. Not only learning, but life, I have found at His feet in prayer. Too many theologians have lost all sense of spiritual reality. They can explain Greek words and all that, but they spend too much time among their books and not enough time with the Master in prayer.

Missions To Tibet

Tibet is our own responsibility. The gospel has been brought to us and we cannot keep it for ourselves. We must take it to Tibet, difficult and dangerous as the undertaking is. This was my challenge to the Indian Church in my later years, but I first faced this challenge eighteen months after baptism. These missionary journeys continued throughout my ministry and letters were published in an Urdu Christian paper to awaken a keen interest in the work of preaching the Gospel on the Himalayas and in Tibet. A letter from T. Nasib Ali, one of my helpers, was published in April 19, 1912:

"After crossing the river we had to walk for about five miles of precipitous ascent, which was really very troublesome. Besides, the wind was so chilly that our hands and face became as cold as ice and we were unable to speak even a single word to each other. Poor Sundar Singh's hands were also swollen on account of the intense cold and he felt pain in them for several days after the journey. But I admire his courage. It is certainly very dangerous for an Indian to pass through such a cold place.

We reached Tashigang safely in the evening. The Kushak (Head Lama) made all necessary arrangements for our comfort. Next day, the Kushak sent for us to meet him in his prayer cell. As he was spending his days in retreat and the shrine in which we met him was dark, we could only talk, but could not see each other's face. The Kushak put some questions relating to worldly and religious matters which were duly replied to by Sundar in detail. The Kushak very gladly heard all that Sundar Singh said to him and expressed his agreements with him in his views.

After this long conversation the Kushak invited the people to come. When they assembled, Sundar Singh gave an address to them on the Christian religion. With Ali's interpretation, the address lasted for three hours."

The Witness Of Kartar Singh

Sundar Singh continues his story: After this I visited several other places, where the people opposed me very much and ordered me to leave. "Otherwise the same treatment," they said, "will be given to you as was meted out to Kartar Singh.

When he refused to leave, we killed him." On hearing this account I was confounded, because before this no one had heard anything of this unknown martyr. Now I desire to write what they told me about this martyr and which I myself confirmed later.

This young man was the son of Surdar Harnam Singh of Patiala. When his father heard that he was about to become a Christian, he made every possible effort to prevent it. But Kartar Singh replied: "It will never be possible for me to forsake my Lord." Upon this his father ordered him to put off all his clothes and to leave the house and to renounce all connection with him from that time. So he took off his clothes and laid them at his father's feet and said to his father: "I am not ashamed today to take off these clothes, because the righteousness of Jesus Christ has covered all my nakedness and sin." And then, according to his father's order, he left the house, praying as he did so. For two or three days he lived in the forest, though he was tormented with hunger and cold, but his heart was full of peace.

Adopting the style of a Sadhu, he went to Tibet to preach the Gospel of the crucified Christ. On the way he was baptized and studying day and night he learnt the Tibetan language. Afterwards, preaching as he went, he reached the Tibetan town of Tashigang and preached there for a period of three months. All the people became his enemies.

On one occasion, when the people realized that he would not of himself go away, they bundled him up in a cloth and in turn bearing him upon their shoulder took him outside their district and left him there, but in a few days time he arrived back again. Then the Lama pronounced the sentence of death against him. On hearing this Kartar Singh said: "You may do what you wish to me, but I shall not leave this place, because the love of my Lord for me and my brotherly love to Him constrain me to offer to shed my blood even for your sakes, in order that you may believe in the truth and escape destruction."

After this they conveyed him to a hill which was the place of execution. Arriving on the hill they sewed him up in the skin of a yak (Tibetan ox) and laid him, thus sewn up, in the sun. As the sun shone on it, the hide gradually shrank and tightened

and for three days this faithful servant was subjected to this misery, singing songs of praise and praying for the welfare of his enemies. Seeing him so joyful under such distressing circumstances, they were astonished. Addressing the people, he said: "Are you standing to see the death of a Christian? Come and gaze attentively, that not a Christian but death itself dies here. Oh Lord! Into thy hands I commit my spirit, because it belongs to you." Saying this, he entered into eternal rest with the Lord, and left us his example.

On one occasion when on Patiala station I was speaking about this witness. I saw a respectable man who wept bitterly, and afterwards on enquiry I learned that he was the father of that Kartar Singh. Weeping he said: "Ha, alas! I knew not that he was such a devout and Christian son, or I should not have treated him so badly." Therefore the result of his becoming a Christian and of his martyrdom was this, that his father is a secret Christian, and of those among whom he was martyred several Tibetans have become Christians.

Rescued From The Pit

Once, at a town called Rasar in Tibet, I was taken before the head Lama and accused of heresy because I shared freely about the Master's work in freeing us from our sin. An angry mob dragged me to the edge of town, stripped me of all my clothes and cast me into a dry well that was then locked shut with a lid. My arm was injured in the fall, but worse than the pain was the smell. Many others had suffered the same fate and wherever I reached in the darkness I could feel bones and rotting flesh. The smell was vile. It was like Hell. There I was tempted to doubt: "Where is the Master now? Why has He allowed this to happen?" But I also remember a sense of peace, a certainty that the Master was there with me.

I do not know how long I had been in the well, perhaps two or three days, when I heard a grating sound overhead. Someone was opening the lock and dragging away the lid. A rope came down and a voice commanded me to take hold of the rope. I grasped it with all my remaining strength and was dragged up into the night air. As I lay on the ground, breathing in the fresh air, I could hear the well being closed and locked

again. When I look around, I couldn't see anyone. I do not know who rescued me, but in my heart, I know that it was the Master.

The next day, I went again into the village and started to teach those who would listen. Some people dragged me again before the Lama, and I told him the whole story of my rescue. He was very angry and ordered that a search be made for the man who had taken the key to the lid. But when he discovered that the key still hung on his own belt, he was speechless. He ordered me to leave the village at once, lest my Master should punish him and the village.

There are many dangers to be encountered in travelling through Tibet. Some bandits who lived in caves compelled us to go with them. The robbers proceeded to take everything we had, but we were grateful that the lives of all were spared. On finding a suitable opportunity, I preached the Gospel to them, which through the influence of God's Spirit so touched their hearts that within an hour they restored to us our things. Taking me to be a Christian Lama, they prepared a special cup of tea for me flavoured with salt and butter. We first praised and thanked God that He had 'prepared a table before us in the presence of our enemies.'

In all my difficulties there was this great comfort, that this was the Cross of Christ, and was necessary for the salvation of souls. For me Christ forsook Heaven and took upon Himself the burden of the Cross, so that if I have left India to come into Tibet on His behalf to claim souls for Him, it is not a great thing to do. But if I had not come, it would have been a dreadful thing, for this is a divine command.

Speaking To A Buddhist Hermit

Once in the Himalayas I learned of a Buddhist hermit, an old lama who lived in a cave in the mountains. He had closed off the entrance of the cave by building a stone wall—leaving only a small opening for air. He never left the cave and lived only from the tea and roasted barley that devout people brought and passed through the small hole. Because he had lived so

long in utter darkness, he had become blind. He was determined to remain in the cave for the rest of his life.

When I found this hermit, he was engaged in prayer and meditation, so I waited outside until he had finished. Then I asked if I might speak with him, and we were able to converse through the hole in the wall, although we could not see each other. First he asked me about my spiritual journey. Then I asked him, "What have you gained through your seclusion and meditation? Buddha taught nothing about a God to whom we can pray. To whom do you pray, then?"

He answered: "I pray to Buddha, but I do not hope to gain anything by praying and by living in seclusion. Quite the opposite, I seek release from all thought of gain. I seek *nirvana*, the elimination of all feeling and all desire—whether of pain or of peace. But still I live in spiritual darkness. I do not know what the end will be, but I am sure that whatever I now lack will be attained in another life."

I then responded: "Surely your longings and feelings arise from the God who created you. They were surely created in order to be fulfilled, not crushed. The destruction of all desire cannot lead to release, but only to suicide. Are not our desires inseparably intertwined with the continuation of life? Even the idea of elimination of desire is fruitless. The desire to eliminate all desire is still itself a desire. How can we find release and peace by replacing one desire with another? Surely we shall find peace not by eliminating desire, but by finding its fulfilment and satisfaction in the One who created it." The hermit closed our conversation, saying, "We will see what we see."

According to the philosophy that desire is the root cause of all pain and suffering, salvation consists in eliminating all desire, including any desire for eternal bliss or communion with God. But when someone is thirsty, do we tell him to kill his thirst instead of giving him water to drink? To drive out thirst without quenching it with life-sustaining water is to drive out life itself. The result is death, not salvation.

Thirst is an expression of our need for water and a sign of hope that somewhere there is water that can satisfy our thirst. Similarly, the deep longing in our soul is a clear sign of hope that spiritual peace exists. Something can satisfy our thirsty souls. When the soul finds God, the author of that spiritual

thirst, it receives far greater satisfaction than any man who receives water.

Seeking Further Blessing

After years of service I felt guided to go into some forest where, free from any kind of interruption, I could have a forty day's fast and ask for blessing on the past work and power for the future. When I first commenced the fast, for several days I experienced great hardship. Afterwards it was not at all difficult. But the blood dried up to such an extent that I altogether lost the power of sight and speech. I could hear nothing and by reason of weakness could not even turn myself. But certainly my intellectual powers were sharpened several times over, from which I gathered proof of the fact that the soul is an entity that cannot cease to exist when the body dies, but goes on living.

In that condition I experienced the presence of God and the fullness of the Spirit, which cannot be expressed in words. In that condition too I had a vision of the Lord in a glorious form, from which I gained the conviction that now He would assuredly keep me alive to serve Him for some time.

Before I attempted the fast of forty days I was frequently assailed by temptations. More especially when I was tired, I used to get annoyed when people came to talk to me and ask questions. I still feel this difficulty, but nothing like so much as before the fast. Indeed, I have been told by my friends that it is not noticeable, but even if they are right it is still a weakness which I do not like to have in my life. It has caused me much difficulty and doubt, but perhaps it is given me to keep me humble.

Before the fast, I suffered also from other temptations. When suffering from hunger and thirst I used to complain, and to ask why the Lord did not provide. He had told me not to take any money with me. If I had taken money I could have bought what I needed. Since the fast, however, when overtaken by physical hardship I say, "It is my Father's will; perhaps I have done something to deserve it."

Missions To Nepal

After many difficulties God opened a way for me to go to Nepal. From two places I tried to enter Nepal, but I was checked by the officers of the state, because they do not allow any man to enter without a passport; and for a Christian to obtain a passport is impossible and especially for a preacher. If any Christian came in he had to undergo rigorous imprisonment for six months.

On the way I passed many villages where people wholeheartedly heard the Word of God. In this territory the roads are awful. One is tired by ascents and descents and the crossing of streams. The 7th of June will always be in my memory—the fatigue of the journey, the extreme hunger and thirst, the heavy showers of rain and the ascent of seven miles. A terrible blast of wind threw me into a cave. O! praised be the Lord; though I fell from such a height, I did not get any hurt at all. The blast of wind turned into a wave of love and the shower of rain into a shower of grace.

The different stages of the Crucifixion of Jesus came before me in a vision, that first of all He was awake in the Garden of Gethsemane the whole night; secondly, He was hungry and thirsty; thirdly, due to the lashes and the crown of thorns He was bleeding; fourthly, besides all these troubles He had to lift up the Cross Himself. For this reason He fell down when He was climbing Golgotha. "My Cross is nothing before thine and, O dear Lord, by the unique love and grace of Thy Cross, I have received and will receive blessings."

After this I went to another village. Many people gathered around me. First I thought they were planning to turn me out, but after a short time they all sat by me. Then I read some passages to them from the Nepali Gospel and made their meaning clear in Hindi, because I can read and understand Nepali language, but I am not well practiced in conversation; and as Nepali resembles Hindi, they followed whatever was said.

The next day, starting from here I reached one of the largest towns of Nepal, named Ilam. Here a Nepali army is stationed. The day I reached Ilam was a special day in which the bazaars were full, like a market day. I began preaching standing in the

bazaar before the post-office. The people gathered together in a large number, because it was a new and strange thing for them. Firstly, because before this, no one had stood and preached in a bazaar; their religious teachers do so either in houses or in temples. Secondly, they were confused to hear about another incarnation who died and then rose and will come again for judgment.

Many people heard me attentively and I distributed the Gospels which were in the vernacular of Nepal. During this time the official got the news. He became very angry and asked who had given me permission to enter Nepal and preach. I said that I did not come by any one's orders or of my own accord, but I had been sent by Him who is the Officer of officers, Raja of rajas and Creator of you and me."

Officer: "Why?"

I: "Because God through Christ has called all nations to life eternal and when I came to know that Nepal is unaware of this fact, He ordered me to give you the Gospel. If you will not have faith in Him, a day will come when you will have to stand before Him, just as at this time I am standing before you and the decree of eternal punishment will be laid upon you."

Officer: "When that time comes it will be seen, but you must be put in jail just now and I will see how your Christ will come for your rescue."

I: "I am not afraid of this imprisonment; if this had been my fear, I would never have come to preach. Though you fasten my feet with a wooden hook (in Nepal at that time the majority of prisoners have their feet hooked by nails in a big plant and they cannot walk at all) I shall still be free. When that happens I will consider my feet not on wood but on rock which cannot be moved."

Officer: "Be quiet and do not talk anymore."

I: "As long as I have got life in me and a tongue to my mouth I will not stop talking about my Christ. Leaving custody aside, I am ready to give my life."

Officer (to Inspector): "There is no need for any more discussion; take him off and put him into custody."

Inspector: "Sir, by taking this infidel into custody we will pollute it. A man is thrown into prison that he may suffer there, but this Christian takes it to be a thing of pleasure and comfort,

so it would be better if some other punishment were planned for him."

Officer: "It would be better if he were turned out from the territory, because if he be put into custody, it is just possible that by his teaching for six months, other prisoners may become Christians and separate arrangement is difficult."

"So all agree on this point and they at once sent a sentinel to take me out of the boundary."

Though Sundar was forbidden to preach and ordered to be taken beyond the boundary, he returned immediately to Ilam and began preaching again.

"When the people saw that I did not cease preaching they seized me and threw me into prison. They took off all my clothes and fastened my hands and feet in a block of wood and bringing a lot of leeches left them near to me. From outside they threw filth upon me and used bad language to me. For two or three hours I felt my suffering very much indeed, but afterwards my Lord by His Holy Presence turned my prison into a paradise. When I was singing, full of joy, many people came to the door to listen and I again began to preach. Then they released me. To such an extent had the leeches sucked my blood that on the following day I suffered with dizziness as I walked. Glory to God that He honoured me by telling me to suffer for His name."

Divine Protection

One evening, I was driven out of a village by an angry crowd, wielding clubs. They drove me into the forest until I came to a rock face and could go no further. There I huddled among the stones waiting for them to attack me and batter me to death. But nothing happened. After it was quiet for a time, I looked around and there was no sign of my tormentors. I built a fire, tended my wounds and slept at that same place.

In the morning, I awoke to the sight of several men staring at me fearfully from a distance. Cautiously, they approached and offered me food and drink, asking, "Sadhu-ji, who were those men in shining robes who stood around you last night?"

Find The Right Way To Seek After God

Some time ago, in Hardwar, I saw a Sadhu lying on a bed of spikes. I went to him and asked: "What aim have you in wounding and torturing your body in this way?" He replied: "I worship god in this way, but I confess that the pricks of these spikes are not as bad as the pain I get from my sins and evil desires. My object is to crush the desires of self that I may gain salvation." I asked: "How long have you been doing this, and how far have you succeeded in your object?" He replied: "I began this eighteen months ago, but I have not yet gained my object, nor is it possible to do it in so short a time. Many years, and indeed many births, will be necessary to accomplish it."

Then I told him of my own experience of failure when I tried to gain salvation by my own efforts, and of how, in an instant, the Lord Jesus changed my heart and calmed my restless soul with that true peace, to gain which, he was expecting to torture himself through many re-births; and I added: "If, in this present birth, you cannot be successful, then what proof have you that you will gain it in any future birth? Now, not because I am in any way worthy, or have any right, but by His grace and mercy I have been freed from the pricks of my sin, and evil desires and temptations, and have yielded myself up to Him who can take away not only my sins, but the sins of the whole world. For, as the spikes have pierced the hands and feet of that Sinless One on behalf of sinners, so now—by His sacrifice—we are saved from sin and its consequences."

When he heard this he made no attempt to agree, but said: "I can never admit that salvation can be obtained as a free gift, and in one short life." How difficult it is for those, who have had no experience of this life in Christ, to understand it, or admit that it can be true.

Then I saw another ascetic who, with a rope tied to his feet, was being swung about from a tree with his head downwards. After a while I returned when he had been untied and had rested. I asked him what motive he had, and what profit there might be, in such trying austerity. He said: "I want to remind myself and all men that, when we entangle ourselves in our sins, we turn ourselves upside down in the sight of God, even

though in the eyes of the world, we appear to be right side up. I want also to keep on outwardly and inwardly reforming myself until I am satisfied that at last I am right side up with God."

I replied: "It is true the world is upside down, but how can we, by our own efforts free ourselves from the entanglements of sin? It is a task beyond our strength, hence the Lord of Love became a man that He might set us free from our bondage; and to set the world aright, He uses as His instruments those whom He has saved and set free." On this the Sadhu gave a sign that he did not wish the conversation to continue, so I rose and went away. In spite of the horrible austerity he was undergoing, he had not been able to effect any such reformation in his life as to give him either satisfaction or peace.

After this I met another ascetic who, in the hot weather, used to sit all day long between 'the five fires,' while in the cold weather, he used to stand for hours in cold water. On his face, sadness and hopelessness were expressed.

I had with me another man who asked him, with great sympathy: "You have been torturing yourself in this way for the last five years; will you give me some idea of what you have learned from this manner of life?" The Sadhu replied: "I have no hope for any kind of benefit in this present life, and I can say nothing at all about the future."

I saw a great many people sitting around a Sadhu seated on the bank of the Ganges. The Sadhu had one hand raised above his head. When I came near, I saw that the bones of his arm were set so that he could not lower it.

When he had finished his talk with the people, I asked him how his arm had become dried and fixed. He gave his reply with great pride, "With this hand I have stolen much, and have beaten many, but there came a day when I had such a great shock that I decided that I would either cut off this hand, or, by making it useless, give it the punishment it deserved. I consulted my *guru* and, on his advice, I held it up continuously above my head till it had completely dried up, and became fixed in this position."

I replied: "I admire your courage and your good intention, but I am sorry, for you have been spoiling a gift given you by God. Instead of destroying your hand you should have used it in helping others. In this way, to some extent, you could have made good the loss you caused by it. My *Guru*, Jesus Christ, said, 'If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off,' and His meaning is, that we should so cut out from our hearts the instrument of evil, that in the future it should never again be available for such a purpose."

I had barely finished speaking when he jumped at me in such a rage that there is no doubt, had his hand been of use, he would have struck me. Afterwards I respectfully pointed out to him how useless it was for him to have mutilated himself.

The next day I went to see another man, a Sadhu who had taken a vow to remain silent for a number of years. This man was a real seeker after truth. For the last six years he had not uttered a word. He wrote on a slate the answer to any question I asked him. One of my questions was: "Why do you not make use of this God-given gift, for He has given you the tongue for speaking, for glorifying and worshipping Him, and for giving advice on spiritual matters?"

Without any show of pride, he wrote his answer: 'What you say is quite true; but my temper is so bad that no good ever came out of my mouth. I used to lie, and say things to hurt people's feelings. It is better to be silent than not to speak good words. Thus far no blessing has come to me, nor any special message for the people, so silence is best for me.' I talked a little longer with him, and then gave him a Gospel, which he accepted thankfully and promised to read carefully.

The lives we have considered are those of a few Sadhus who, unlike the ordinary run of men, devote their time entirely to spiritual and religious duties. But millions of other Hindus hold a like faith; while even such leaders as Mr Gandhi confess they have failed to realize God, for in his autobiography he stated: "I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him"; and again he says: "It is an unbroken torture to me that I am still so far from Him."

Non-Christian seekers after truth willingly suffer unbelievable hardships in order to find it, and had all who claim to be Christians been anything like as true or wholehearted in their effort to spread the kingdom of the Living Christ, the whole world would long ago have become Christian, but we have to confess that in this the Christian Church has often failed.

Preaching Beside The Ganges

One day I went to preach to the pilgrims at a town on the river Ganges. Just as I took my stand a pundit came and sat by me and asked: "Have you also come here to bathe like other pilgrims?" I said, "No, I have already bathed by faith in the blood of Christ, and by His grace have been saved, and have no need for ceremonial bathing in the Ganges. I have come here to tell these pilgrims about the Saviour." When the pundit heard this he was amazed; but my own amazement was no less when, with beaming face, he said: "That is splendid, Swami; I too have come for the same purpose," and with great love he embraced me.

On seeing this several of the pilgrims joined us, that they might hear the conversation of the pundit and the Sadhu. We both preached the Gospel to them, and the people listened attentively. Then one of the pilgrims asked: "By Christ, do you mean Krishna, or some other incarnation?" Then the pundit repeated a few Sanskrit verses, and said: "We are preaching not about Krishna, but about Christ, the sinless Incarnation promised in the Shastras, for Krishna did not come to save sinners, but to destroy them; but Christ came to save sinners."

The pundit told me that for many years he had been working for the Lord in this way, and that many had believed through his preaching. I asked him how he became a Christian, and he told me his story: "I had often heard about Christ, but owing to my prejudices I used to keep as far away from missionaries and Christians. But I met two learned men who were Sanskrit scholars, and at first I thought them to be Hindus, but little by little they proved with great clearness that Christ alone is the Saviour. In a few days my abhorrence and misunderstanding of Christianity disappeared.

They gave me a satisfying explanation of some of my difficulties. They said that, as in some other religions the Law is taught, so in the Hindu religion as well, there is the Law of *Karma* (Works and Retribution). The Law makes no one good. It only distinguishes between good and bad, or between what we ought, and what we ought not, to do. We cannot fulfil the Law, so all are without hope of salvation. It matters not whether the Law was given through Moses, or through *Rishis* (Sages). The law makes no one righteous, but emphasizes the need of righteousness, and this need is met in Christ. By Himself becoming a man He fulfilled the Law for man and, by giving His own life, He imparted life to those who are dead in sin, and then over all this completed work of salvation He proclaimed, "It is finished."

The pundit added, "I and my family have come to know through personal experience that Christ is indeed our Saviour, and the Saviour of the world."

Finding Time To Pray

Sundar Singh began a missionary journey in India in the second half of 1917. A young Indian Christian who acted as Sundar Singh's interpreter, wrote this letter: "On Sunday morning we were taken to a village, about sixty miles distant, where there were a dozen Indian Christians. At 9 a.m. non-Christian, Marathas, Brahmins and all sorts of people began to gather when they learnt of the arrival of the Sadhu. There was an audience of about 300 men and women. Then the Sadhu gave his first sermon in an open field on "Today is the day of Salvation." I have never heard such a sermon in all my life. I interpreted his sermon.

The sermon lasted over an hour and as soon as we sat down nine Hindu men, Marathas, got up and in that public meeting said: "We are willing to accept Christ; we knew all about Christ for the last twenty years from the European missionaries; but now we understand truly that He is the only Saviour." So these nine men, with their wives and children, were baptized by the European missionary who had come with us. In the evening the Sadhu gave another sermon, by which a wealthy Brahmin showed his desire of accepting Christ.

During the night I flashed the light into Sadhu's room. There was no one in the bed. Rather surprised, I flashed the light all over the room and saw the Sadhuji sitting in a corner. He was cross-legged; his hands were clasped; he was deeply absorbed in prayer; his face shone with joy. It must have been nearly 3 a.m. When I asked him the next morning why he was praying at that time, the Sadhu replied: "When I am on my preaching tours I do not find enough time during the day for prayer. There are so many engagements." And I asked him: "Why do you need so much time for prayer?" He said, "It takes fifteen to twenty minutes for me to concentrate. Then I begin to pray but do not use any words. I feel my beloved Jesus so close to me that I place my hands in His. When morning comes and I have to leave my prayer, it is an effort to break away from my Beloved."

Message To South India

In South India thousands of men, woman and children gathered to hear the Sadhu preach. The gathering of so many Christians was encouraging, until he remembered the countless villages to which he had gone in northern and central India, where the gospel of Jesus Christ had never been heard. How was it that so very few of the young men among them were responding to the commission given nearly two thousand years before to go and tell the gospel to every person?

Sundar reminded them that centuries ago God had entrusted to them His Word, had committed to them the gospel of His Son. But they had failed even to pass the good news on to their fellow countrymen. And what had been the result? God had been forced to call men and woman from far countries like America and England to do the work they should have done. Yet India had the gospel hundreds of years before these other countries.

"Oh, young men, wake up! See how many souls are perishing around you! Is it not your duty to save them? If you are careless now, you will never get another chance. Whatever you have to do, do it now! Do it now! For you will never pass through the field of battle again. The day is fast approaching when you will see the martyrs in their glory, martyrs who gave

health, wealth, even life itself to win souls for Christ. They have done much. What have you done? Oh, may we not blush with shame in that day!"

Sundar spoke about what he saw as the greatest weakening influence in the church in South India. He said, "We can compare India to a man. The Himalayas are his head, South India is his feet, Punjab his right hand and Bengal his left. If this man is to stand firm he has to stand on South India, his feet. South India is indeed fit for this. The Christians of South India are very advanced, in numbers as well as in education. But though many of their churches are self-supporting, and though this man can stand on his feet, he is unable to walk now. What is the reason?

I saw a man in the state of Cochin. He stood, but could not walk. Why? Because he had elephantiasis which made his legs swollen and heavy. The Indian Church is unable to proclaim the gospel all over India and to save the whole country because of the elephantiasis of the Indian church in the south. Caste distinction is like elephantiasis. Class distinction is its main weakness. Through this and other causes there is a lack of love, and therefore lack of anxiety to save others. If this disease is healed the Church of South India will be used as an instrument."

Sundar urged hearers to rise to the call, and send the light to the millions who were still dying in darkness. This is the great challenge to share the Gospel far and wide with all of their Indian brothers.

Conversion Of My Father And Mission To England

For fourteen years from my baptism I had prayed incessantly that my father's heart might be changed and that he also might become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. When I met my father now at Rampur, I had the great joy of hearing from my father's own lips that he wanted to become a Christian. This was indeed a matter for the deepest gratitude to God.

I was eager to visit the Holy Land and to walk in the footsteps of my Master. But as I was in prayer one day I heard the voice of the Master to go to England, to bear witness there

to Christ. When I spoke this call to visit England to my father, he agreed to pay for my voyage. Speaking to a journalist in England after my arrival I said: "I had a 'call' to preach in England. I do nothing of myself; I wait until I receive a message. I am happy in this country, although it is a land where the sun seldom shines and the Sun of Righteousness is often eclipsed."

The people of England wasted much time on newspapers which would have been better spent in prayer. Prayer is more than asking. It is conversation with God. Sitting on the bank of a river, I had seen small fish come to the surface as if to breathe. I was told that they could not live in the bottom of the river without coming up sometimes to breathe. So it is in the world where we are working day and night, where we are working very hard and with many affairs. It is necessary for the soul to breathe. It must come to the surface some time or it will die in the depths.

To a congregation of 5000 people I spoke of the three kinds of death which occurred on the first Good Friday—the death in sin (of the impenitent sinner); the death to sin (of the penitent sinner) and the death for sin (of Christ). One time I was admonished for my lack of familiarity with twentieth century science, so I said, "What is science?" "Natural selection, you know, and the survival of the fittest," I was told. "Ah," I replied, "but I am more interested in divine selection, and the survival of the unfit."

Warning To The West

What homesickness I had in Europe! I felt like a bird in a cage. The whole atmosphere was heavy for me. Many people thought I suffered from the cold climate, but this was not so. I have experienced far greater cold in Himalayas. It was not the physical atmosphere that oppressed me, but the spiritual atmosphere.

In India, one feels everywhere—even through idols and altars, pilgrims and penitents, temples and tanks—that there is a desire for higher things. In the West, however, everything points to armed force, great power, and material things. It is this power of evil that makes me so sad. India is more and

more seeking the Master's truth. The West is in danger of becoming more and more indifferent. And yet the West owes so many of its blessings to Christianity. At one time the ostrich could fly, but because the ostrich stopped using its wings, it became unable to fly. So are the people of Europe and America—they do not appreciate the faith of their forebears and are fast losing it.

The West is like Judas Iscariot, who ate with Jesus, only to later deny Him. The West ought to fear the fate of Judas, lest it hang itself on the tree of learning. You have so many privileges. We in the East have to give up many things when we become Christians. For you, it is not so. Therefore be careful that you don't lose your only possibility for eternal happiness.

Once when I was in the Himalayas, I was sitting upon the bank of a river; I drew out of the water a beautiful, hard, round stone and smashed it. The inside was quite dry. The stone had been lying a long time in the water, but the water had not penetrated the stone. It is just like that with the "Christian" people of the West. They have for centuries been surrounded by Christianity, entirely steeped in its blessings, but the Master's truth has not penetrated them. Christianity is not at fault; the reason lies rather in the hardness of their hearts. Materialism and intellectualism have made their hearts hard. So I am not surprised that many people in the West do not understand what Christianity really is.

Word To America

There is a danger of being near the Kingdom but not in it. Many of the so-called Christians of America, though full of good works, are almost saved but lost. Unless some great leader arises America is doomed. Its hustle and bustle keep's men's minds on material things and prevents them from giving sufficient time to prayer. If you expect to go to Heaven when you die you must begin in this life by cultivation these heavenly habits. A great many Americans appear to be too busy to give the matter much attention. Lack of prayer is dangerous to man's soul.

In America, one sees a good deal of Christianity, but it does not address the spiritual needs of the people. Just as salty seawater cannot quench thirst, much of America religion cannot satisfy a spiritually thirsty person because it is saturated with materialism. Looking at the motto "In God We Trust" on the American dollar one might think the Americans are very religious people, but the motto should read, "In the dollar we trust." Americans are seeking the almighty dollar, not the Almighty God.

Still, God has His own witness in the West and all over the world. Sometimes young Indians say that they do not want missionaries from such places; but that is a mistake. The missionaries from the West who come to India keep alive the churches at home and, if the West did not send its missionaries, very soon their churches would become dead like the Dead Sea. So we should welcome the missionaries for the sake of keeping Christianity alive in the West.

In New York a man asked me, "Have you any followers in India; any who imitate your way of life?" After a moment of silence I replied, "No. I have no followers. I am myself a follower of Christ." Some friends asked me what I thought of Western civilization. I told them I did not see real civilization but animalism. People do not know Christ, do not live with Him. They have learnt how to address, eat and be punctual. They are trained animals. Asked whether more missionaries were needed in India, I replied: "Yes, but your philosophy we don't need. It is better to send one who is a disciple of Christ than a hundred who are not."

Writing Of His Books

After his return from his second tour of Europe, Sundar Singh never ventured out of India except into Tibet. In one year nearly six hundred invitations to different countries and places all over the world reached the Sadhu. He used to tell his friends in a funny mood that they should boil him down and make soup of him so that everyone could have an opportunity of having a spoonful.

During the last few years of his life, as his health failed and his eyes were giving him trouble, Sundar Singh wrote six small

books. He wrote them at the urging of friends and followers (the first in his native tongue, Urdu; the rest in English). An overwhelming demand arose for them once they were published. Within the space of a few years, all six volumes had been translated into every major Western language; into Japanese, Chinese, and other Asia languages; and into every principle dialect of the sub-continent. These books were:

At The Master's Feet (1922)
Reality And Religion (1923)
The Search For Reality (1924)
Spiritual Life (1925)
Visions Of The Spiritual World (1926)
Real Life (1927)
With And Without Christ (1928)

Final Journey To Tibet

On the 30th of September 1928, Sundar Singh wrote: 'I know my time of promotion into His glory is not very far off, but I am praying that God may grant me to go to Tibet once more. It is just possible that my prayer may be answered miraculously. Spiritually I am quite happy but physically I am having a rather unpleasant experience which also has a peculiar pleasantness and benefit.

God is continually sending my audiences here for me to preach to. It is wonderful to see how highly educated Hindus come to see me and ask for spiritual advice—Hindu Editors of papers such as Tej of Delhi and Headmasters and Professors from different places, beside European officers and non-officers. So some work is going on in spite of my illness, for which I thank God.'

On April 18, 1929, Sundar Singh wrote to Mr Riddle: 'I am leaving today for Tibet, fully aware of the dangers and difficulties of the journey, but I must do my best to do my duty. I set no value on my own life as compared with the joy of finishing my course and fulfilling the commission I received from the Lord Jesus to attest the Gospel of grace of God (Acts 20:24).'

The time passed for his return and no news came through from the Sadhu or any one at all. He promised to send messengers in case of his illness if possible. Mr Riddle and Dr Taylor spent twenty-eight days hard travelling in search of the Sadhu. They could not find any trace of him at all. Government officials were also hunting through the pilgrim registers to see if they can trace his death there. His friends came to believe that he had come to the end of his earthly journey and was now realizing the Living Presence of Christ more fully than ever before. He might have fallen down a precipice. Or he might have died the death of a martyr for preaching the Gospel in Tibet. To die such a death for Christ was his ambition.

He had often said, "It is better to burn quickly and melt many souls than to burn slowly and not melt any." He had literally poured himself out and melted many hearts for his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

OPENLY CONFESS JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOUR

The good news of salvation is that Jesus died upon the cross to wash away your sins and He rose from the dead on the third day. If you will confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

Jesus said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). I'm calling you to openly confess the Lordship of Christ over your life and acknowledge Jesus before other people. Respond to the Lord right now and get your heart right with Him:

THE PRAYER OF A LOST SINNER FOR SALVATION

"Lord Jesus, I need You to save me. I know that I have sinned, but I don't want to be lost. Thank You for dying on the cross and paying the penalty for my wicked ways. I

confess these sins to You now..... (name those sins).

I turn from them and I look for You to help me to walk the path of righteousness. I realize that my evil deeds are to blame for Your painful crucifixion, so I am truly sorry and I ask You to forgive me.

I believe the good news that You rose from the dead and that You are alive forever. I believe that You are watching me at this very moment, so I open the door of my life to receive You as my Lord and Saviour.

Come into my heart, take away my sins, and make me the kind of person You want me to be. I want to be Your friend. Fill me with the power of the Holy Spirit and let me overcome all the works of the devil. Come Holy Spirit.

Thank You for saving me and giving me assurance of a place in Heaven. I give all praise, honour and glory to Your holy name. Amen.”

‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9).

**I have decided to follow Jesus
all the days of my life!**

Yes

No

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever (your name) _____ believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Date of birthday into God's family: _____
(The day you accepted Jesus as your Saviour)

When you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, you have made the most important decision of your life. I pray that you will become stronger and stronger in your faith, so that you will fulfil the plans and purposes of God for your life. If you have committed your life to the true Living God (the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit), then please let me know. Contact Evangelist Matthew Needham: findsalvation@hotmail.com

