

## THE CROSS AND THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

~Other Speakers S-Z: Sadhu Sundar Singh:

### SECTION I

**The Disciple,Â—**What is the meaning and purpose of the cross, and why do pain and suffering exist in the world?

**The Master,Â—**1. The cross is the key to heaven. At the moment when by My baptism I took the cross upon My shoulders for the sake of sinners, heaven was opened, and by means of My thirty-three years bearing of the cross and by death upon it, heaven, which by reason of sin was closed to believers, was for ever opened to them.

Now as soon as believers take up their cross and follow Me they enter heaven through Me (John x.9) and begin the enjoyment of that unbounded bliss which the world cannot understand, for heaven is closed to unbelief. Hope and experience will teach the unbeliever that joy follows pain, but that that joy does not endure. But I give to My children ease in pain, and perfect happiness and peace. Those who joyfully take up My cross are themselves upborne by it, and ever supported by that cross they enter heaven at last.

2. Pain arises out of manÂ's perverse and rebellious nature, just as tropical heat is irksome and painful to those who live in cold lands, and bitter cold to those who live in tropic climes. Heat and cold depend on the relation of the earth to the sun. So man, by the exercise of his own free will, enters into a state of agreement or disagreement with God, and inasmuch as the laws of God are intended for the spiritual health and happiness of man, opposition to them brings about spiritual pain and suffering. Now God, instead of altogether removing these states of opposition and rebellion to His will, makes use of them to make clear to man that this world was not created to be his home, but is to him a foreign land (2 Cor. v.1,2,6).

This world is but to prepare him for a perfect and eternal home, and the oft-repeated blows of ill-fortune are intended to keep his spirit awake, lest he should become careless, and falling away from the truth share in the ruin of this unstable world. He is meant to come into communion with his Maker and, after being freed from the suffering and misery of this fleeting life, to enter into His heaven of eternal happiness and peace.

3. Pain and suffering are bitter as poison, but it is also well known that sometimes the antidote of a poison is itself a poison. And thus I sometimes employ pain and suffering as bitter medicines in order to promote the spiritual health and vigour of My believers. As soon as their perfect health is secured there will be an end of all suffering. Their pain is no pleasure to Me, for My one object is their eternal well-being (Lam. iii.31,33).

4. Just as after a shock of earthquake springs of sweet water sometimes emerge in desert places, and the arid wastes are irrigated and become fruitful, so in certain cases the shock of suffering opens up within the heart of a man hidden springs of living water, and in place of murmurings and complainings there issue from him streams of gratitude and joy (Ps. cxix.67,71).

5. As soon as a child enters the world it is most necessary that it should begin to cry and scream, so that its breath may have free play and its lungs be brought into full use; and if for some reason it does not cry out it must be slapped till it does so. Just so with perfect love. I sometimes cause My children to cry out by the blows and stings of pain and suffering, that the breath of prayer may have free course through the lungs of their spirit and they may thus gain fresh vigour and abide in endless life.

6. The cross is like a walnut whose outer rind is bitter, but the inner kernel is pleasant and invigorating. So the cross does not offer any charm of outward appearance, but to the cross-bearer its true character is revealed, and he finds in it the choicest sweets of spiritual peace.

7. When I became incarnate, I bore the cruel cross for manÂ's salvation, not for the six hours of My crucifixion only, or even for the three and a half years of My ministry, but for the whole thirty-three and a half years of My life, in order that man might be delivered from the bitterness of death. Just as it is painful to a cleanly man to stay for even a few minutes in a filthy and unclean place, so those who abide in Me find it most distasteful to have to live among vicious people; and this is the reason why some men of prayer, distressed by the foulness of sin, have abandoned the world and gone to live as hermits in deserts and caves. Consider this, then, when men who have been sinners themselves feel the presence of sin so hard to bear that they cannot endure the company of their own kind, so much that they leave them, and never wish to return to them again, how extremely painful and hard a cross must Mine have been, that I, the Fountain of Holiness, should have had to

live for more than thirty-three years constantly among men defiled with sin. To understand this and rightly to appreciate it is beyond the powers of man's mind, and even the angels desire to look into it (1 Pet. i.12). For before the creation they knew that God is Love, and yet it was to them a most wonderful and amazing thing that the love of God should be such that, in order to save His creatures and to bring to them eternal life, He should become incarnate and bear the cruel cross.

8. In this life even I share the cross of those who abide in Me, and enter into their sufferings (Acts ix.4). Though they are creatures and I am their Creator, yet, just as the body and the spirit, though separate entities, are yet so intermingled that if even the smallest part of the body feels pain the spirit immediately becomes conscious of it; so I am the life and spirit of My children, and they are, as it were, My body and members. I share their every pain and grief, and at the right moment give them relief.

9. As I Myself bore the cross I am able to deliver and keep in perfect safety those who are crossbearers, even while they walk amid fires of persecution. I was with the three young men in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, which with all its raging had no power to hurt them (Dan. iii.23-5; 1 Peter iv.12-13). So those who by the baptism of the Holy Spirit have received the new life will never feel the fires of persecution nor any hurtful thing, for they ever abide in Me in eternal peace and safety.

## SECTION II

1. In the bitter cold of winter the trees stand bare of leaves, and it seems as if their life, too, had departed for ever, yet in the spring time they put forth new leaves and beautiful flowers, and the fruit begins to show itself. So was it with Me in My crucifixion and resurrection, and so it is with my faithful cross-bearers (2 Cor. iv.8-11; vi.4-10). Though they seem to be crushed and dead beneath their cross they still put forth the beautiful flowers and glorious fruits of eternal life which abide for ever.

2. In grafting a sweet tree on to a bitter one, both feel the knife and both are called upon to suffer in order that the bitter may bear sweet fruit. So, too, in order to introduce good into man's evil nature, it was necessary that first of all I Myself and afterwards believers also should suffer the agonies of the cross, that they might in future for ever bear good fruit, and thus the glorious love of God be made manifest.

3. If in this world men persecute and slander you do not let this surprise or distress you, for this is for you no place of rest, but a battlefield. Woe to you when men of the world praise you (Luke vi.26), for this proves that you have taken on their perverse ways and habits. It is against their very nature and temper to praise My children, for light and darkness cannot exist together. If for the sake of appearances evil men act contrary to their nature and cease to persecute you, yours is the greater injury, for their influence enters into your spiritual life, and your spiritual progress is hindered.

Further, to put your trust in the world or in worldly men is to build your house upon the sand, for today they will raise you aloft and tomorrow will so cast you down that there will be no trace left of you, for they are in all things unstable. When I went up to Jerusalem at the Passover, they all with one voice began to cry out, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" (Matt. xxi.9), and only three days after, when they saw that what I said was against their life of sin and self-seeking, they at once changed over and began to cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (Luke xxiii.21).

4. If through some misunderstanding some, or even all, believers turn against you and cause you pain, you must not count it a misfortune, for if in all honesty and faithfulness under the guidance of the Holy Spirit you continue to do your duty, remember that God Himself and all the hosts of heaven are on your side.

Do not allow yourself to be discouraged, for the time is at hand when all your good designs and purposes and all your unselfish love will be made known to the whole world, and, in the presence of all, honour will be done to you for your labours and faithful service.

I, too, for the salvation of men, had to renounce all things, and was Myself renounced by all, yet at the last I regained all and everything. Neither be surprised if the world desert you, for it has deserted God Himself, so that in this you are seen to be a true son of your Father.

5. Do not suppose that those who live in luxury and seem to be always successful in worldly affairs are all true worshippers of God, for the opposite is often the case. It is possible for sheep to wander away from the fold and the shepherd, and find in the jungle good pasturage, but they are all the time in danger of being torn to pieces

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by wild beasts, which will indeed be their fate in the end. But those who abide in the fold with the shepherd, though they may appear to be sick and feeble, are certainly free from danger and in the shepherd's care. This is the difference between believers and unbelievers.

6. The life of the believer and that of the unbeliever show great similarity in their beginning, but when their end comes, they are as diverse as the snake and the silkworm. The snake, however many times he casts his skin, remains a snake and nothing else, but the silkworm, when it casts off its unsightly cocoon, becomes a new creature, and as a dainty pretty moth flies about in the air. So the believer, casting aside this body, enters into a state of spiritual glory and flies about for ever in heaven, while the sinner after death is but a sinner still.

Though the silkworm, cramped within the cocoon, is in a state of depression and struggle as though upon a cross, yet this very condition of strife and difficulty gives strength to its wings, and fits it for the life that is to be. So My children, while in the body, are in a state of spiritual struggle and conflict, and look forward to their release with sighs and longing, but through the bearing of the cross I give them strength, and they become fully prepared and fitted for that state of endless life (Rom. viii.23).

In the midst of this spiritual warfare, and even while they are bearing their cross, I give them a truly wonderful peace of heart, that their courage may not fail. For instance, when a faithful martyr of Mine had borne witness to Me in word and deed, his enemies took him and hung him up to a tree head downwards. In this condition such was his peace of mind that he was utterly unconscious of the pain and disgrace to which he was subjected, and turning to his persecutors said, "The way you have treated me does not distress or dismay me, for I can expect nothing else in a world where everything is upside down, and where one can see nothing upright. In accordance with your own nature you have turned me as you think upside down, but in reality I am right side up. Just as when a slide is put into a magic lantern wrong way up it shows the picture correctly, so though now in the eyes of the world I am upside down, I am for ever right side up before God and the heavenly world, and I praise Him for this glorious cross."

8. For believers it would sometimes be an easy thing to become a martyr to My Name, but I also need living witnesses who will daily offer themselves as living sacrifices for the salvation of others (1 Cor. xv.31). For death is easy, but it is hard to live, for a believer's life is a daily dying. But those who are thus ready to lay down their lives for My sake shall share My glory and live with Me for ever in fullness of joy.

9. Should pain and suffering, sorrow, and grief, rise up like clouds and overshadow for a time the Sun of Righteousness and hide Him from your view, do not be dismayed, for in the end this cloud of woe will descend in showers of blessing on your head, and the Sun of Righteousness rise upon you to set no more for ever (John xvi.20-22).