



Articles and Sermons :: Sadhu Sundar Singh: Excerpts of Sayings & Sermons

Sadhu Sundar Singh: Excerpts of Sayings & Sermons - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/10/20 1:24

Sadhu Sundar Singh: Excerpts of Sayings & Sermons

Knowing vs. Knowing About Christ

"There is a great difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Him...There is no difference between nominal Christians and non-Christians. When we know Him everything is different and we are living in a new world -- a new atmosphere. Heaven begins on earth for us. Those who know Him know that Jesus is everything to them. They can bear witness because they have been living with Him...

If we only know of Jesus as a good man, a great example, it is no help to us. Those who know Him know Who He is. If we live in Him He will reveal Himself to us and we shall bear witness -- not for a day or a night only..."

"When I used to know about Jesus Christ I used to hate Him because I didn't understand Him; but since I know Him I bear witness and I am not ashamed to suffer... 'When a Hindu woman is willing to burn herself with her dead husband, should I be ashamed when He is living?...I wish I could show you my heart -- I have such peace in my heart. I can only give my testimony.'..."

"People misunderstand Him when they don't know Him, but when they know Him they love Him. When I knew about Him I used to hate Him. Now I have heaven on earth. Heaven is in my heart..."

"Christ is not merely a great man who is dead and gone; He is the incarnation of God, the Saviour of the world. We must live in Him -- then we shall have a message for the world and we shall see Him again in glory. We shall be crowned in this world. It is such a joy to live for Him and bring others to Him."

"I was going to commit suicide. Hinduism no spiritual help. Prayer is the most essential thing. Without prayer we cannot understand Jesus. We are living in Hell. Many know about Him but they do not live in Him."

On World Religions

(Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Counterfeits of Christianity)

"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at My saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.

So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8)

"Christianity is the only religion which is universal."

Hinduism:

The Sadhu pointed out that Arjuna was more merciful than Sri Krishna. "Sri Krishna commanded Arjuna to kill, but Christ healed the ear of Malchus" .

"With regard to the doctrine of Karma, it is true that man receives the consequences of his deeds; but the difference between the teaching of Christ and Hindu teaching is this -- that a Christian performs deeds because he is saved and a Hindu in order to be saved."

With regard to Transmigration he said, "Hindu teaching is that God's spirit and man's spirit are both co-existent from eternity. But since in so many cycles of birth I have been unable to attain moksha, what certainty or assurance have I that I shall be able to attain in the future?"

I do not remember anything at all of my previous existence, so what does it profit me if I am now reaping the rewards and punishments of my deed in that existence?

If Transmigration be true we are compelled to believe that sin is the creator of the universe!"

He spoke of Hindu yoga. When he was small his father had a Sastri and a Sannyasi in the home, the former to teach the boy the sacred books and the latter yoga practices. "The strange thing is," said the Sadhu, "that a man according to yoga teaching is not to look to God but at the tip of his nose. Moreover, the thoughts which have been the subject of meditation of the yogi previous to entering the state of trance, present themselves in a very vivid way during trance. So we can understand the discrepancies of teaching amongst yogis. One says, 'There is no God,' another, 'There is only one God,' another, 'There are many gods,' another, 'All is God.'"

"...it is impossible for those who don't know God to come to Him except through Christ. He is the only Saviour. It is only Jesus who has revealed the Father. The Gyana Marga of the Hindus is only for a few; but if it is true it ought to be for every body."

He was asked, "Do you ever ask for food anywhere?"

He said, "Hindu sadhus do, but I never do so. When my Heavenly Father sees that I need food, He arranges it for me."

Buddhism:

Regarding the Buddha, he said that he respected him for the strength of his intellect and the purity of his life; but in the Sadhu's opinion he was lacking in humility and for that reason did not attain knowledge of God. Had he truly longed for God, he would have gone to the Sannyasi whom he had first met. For it is only through humility that we can know God.

"A Buddhist said to me, 'Extinction of desire is salvation'...'No,' said I, 'extinction of evil desire -- I agree with you there. But it is impossible not to have desire. The desire to kill desire is desire and the desire to kill that desire is also desire. Desire has been given to us that it may be satisfied. There is water given to quench my thirst and I am satisfied through prayer'...I have begun to live in heaven now in Jesus Christ. Through prayer I know Him and it is the duty of those who know Him to bear witness."

Islam:

"A Mohammedan preacher went to preach Islam in Scandinavia. There the people asked him what they would have to do in the event of their becoming Moslems. Amongst the five duties prescribed, he mentioned the month's fast when they would have to fast from sunset but feast during the night. They laughed and told him that Mohammedanism was evidently not meant for that part of the world where at one time of the year there is no night!"

Judaism:

A Rabbi whom he saw at the Jews' Wailing Place in Jerusalem was greatly annoyed when the Sadhu told him that he should weep because of his own stony heart and not on the stone wall of the Temple.

Counterfeits of Christianity:

A friend arranged for him to interview the Pope, but when he discovered that many formalities had to be observed, he was unwilling. For he believes neither in the infallibility of the Pope nor that of the Roman Church.

"Those who use mental pictures will be ashamed in the end. I derive no help from a crucifix....but make use of whatever whatever helps spiritual progress."

He was asked about Theosophy. He called it Anglicized Hinduism. In America he found many people who had sorely repented their having ever accepted it.

On Rationalism, Skepticism & Philosophy

Experience must precede reasoning. In the snows of the Himalayas he showed a fellow-traveller a hot-water spring. The man began to argue and to reason that the thing was impossible, when the Sadhu invited him to put his hand in the water. On discovering for himself that the water was really hot as the Sadhu had said, the man now began to adduce many r

seasons as to why it should be hot. Asked what he thought of Higher Criticism and Modernism, he replied that it was all "a spiritual influenza" -- it would pass away, but not before killing a good many people.

He thanked God that he had been enabled to go to the West. Before he went, he thought that there must be something in Modernist theories, otherwise so many men would not write so many books. Besides, Christianity had been in force for so many centuries in the West. But when he discovered how busy these scholars were and how much of their knowledge was second-hand and not the fruit of their experience with Christ, he announced that all their speculations would not move him an inch from his faith.

"It is not by education or philosophy that we know Him. When I was in Australia, I was asked, 'What do you think of our civilization?' -- I said, 'Do you mean your education or your manners of society? In that case I say, you are trained animals, trained to do a certain thing in a certain way.' 'Man, know thyself' -- and he who knows God knows himself. He is the truly civilized man in the image of God in which he was created..."

"Trying to understand spiritual truth through the intellect means increase of self. Men search for God and find Him unknowable... But: He is known through the heart, not through philosophy. The only way for us to understand the infinite God is by becoming infinite and that is impossible. He must become finite and He is so in Jesus."

"How are we to deal with people who are utterly indifferent to religion?"

He replied, "God Himself can do nothing with such people so what can you and I do? Orthodox and strict Hindus and Mohammedans are better than many of the reformed liberals. The latter are stones in their own community and if they come over into the Christian Church they will be stones there too. Far better a man who is strict in the observance of his own religion."

On Western Post-Christianity

"I have been asked, 'Is Christianity a failure in Europe? I have seen some true servants of Christ in Europe.' Christ has not been a failure, but people have failed to understand Him. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness know Him. He reveals Himself to such people -- those who spend time in prayer. We see our face sometimes not in a mirror but in a river, but when there are waves in the river we are not able to see ourselves. When our lives are full of hurry and bustle we fail to see ourselves, but in a quiet place we see ourselves and we shall be entirely changed -- a new life. Then we shall not be ashamed. We shall know Him by living with Him -- and we must live in Him through a life of prayer."

A friend arranged for him to interview the Pope, but when he discovered that many formalities had to be observed, he was unwilling. For he believes neither in the infallibility of the Pope nor that of the Roman Church.

In Germany he was asked about the survival of the fittest. He told them it was not a strange thing at all -- the fit will survive of themselves. "But in my experience," he said, "what I have seen is the survival of the unfit. And that is where God's glory comes in."

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"A great professor in America once asked me, 'Why do we need to go to the Father through Christ?'

I answered, 'Did Jesus lie when He said, "No man cometh to the Father but by Me?"'...

'But,' said he, 'there is no mediator in the Parable of the Prodigal Son'...

I replied, 'Are you so wise and cannot understand that? There was no need of a mediator there. The son had lived with the father before leaving him. He had enjoyed his fellowship. He knew him and knew the way back to him. But it is impossible for those who don't know God to come to Him except through Christ. He is the only Saviour. It is only Jesus who has

revealed the Father. The Gyana Marga of the Hindus is only for a few; but if it is true it ought to be for every body."

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"We are called to work for Him. Are we misled by Modernists and Higher Criticism? Is our faith shaken? If we believe that Christ was merely a great man then we have no message for the world. We will have to jump down into Hell to hide ourselves for every shame. We are to be fishers of men and are we still fishermen? The angels would have been glad to preach the Gospel in this world for five minutes, and that would have been enough. But the privilege is not granted to them. Only saved sinners can preach the Gospel."

"The Gospels are genuine; we find proof of that in the Gospels themselves. They were written by simple unlettered men. If the Gospels were not genuine, more care would have been taken in their composition and arrangement; there would have been more method. For example, the parables would all have been arranged in one place, the miracles in another and so on; but they all have been mixed up!"

People read many books about the Bible, but very few read the Bible itself. The Sadhu himself read very little besides the Bible.

Parables of Truth

"When a man is in a state of sin, he has no sense of sin. A man dives into the water. On his head are lakhs of maunds of water but he does not feel their weight at all. But on coming out of the water if he lifts a vesselful of water he thoroughly understands how heavy the water is. In the same way, when a man is sunk in sin he has no sense of sin, but once he is delivered he is conscious of the least sin."

"It may take a long time to know about a flower, but it doesn't take long to smell its sweet fragrance. It doesn't take long to enjoy Him. I know Him -- that is enough for me. People have been quenching their thirst with water, not knowing that it is hydrogen and oxygen. So with the water of life. If salvation is for a few then it is not universal, and if it is not universal it is not true."

"How can I believe there is life hereafter? -- Heaven and Hell?' I was asked by a professor.

'But,' said I, 'we find the proof in ourselves.'

'Can you give a proof about the future life?' he asked.

'Certainly. Eggs at first contain only liquid matter, then a young bird is gradually formed. Supposing the mother-bird tells the young one, "You will come out of this shell. You will see mountains, hills, clouds, fields and also your mother." What if the chicken says, "No, you are telling a lie. What proof have I?"

"Why, those wings, those eyes have been given to you. You can't use them in the egg shell. You can't see anything but yourself. Your eyes and wings are proof that you are being prepared for a world to come." When the chick came out of his shell he saw everything and his mother and he could enjoy everything.'

So we shall come out and see our Heavenly Mother-Father. Why these desires? Longings for peace? There is no room to satisfy all human desires in this life. But we shall see our Saviour and the saints in Heaven. In this body we could not see them. But all eggs do not get hatched. They need the Mother's warmth. So too we need the baptism of the Holy Spirit to make us warm. We must receive the warmth and heat from Him in prayer."

"When I was in America a wealthy man was telling me of his experience. 'What do you think is the most precious thing in this drawing room?' he asked, 'Some say it is that beautiful picture or these precious stones. But the most precious thing in my house is that tiger skin. One day when I was hunting with my brother a tiger was shot. But he was not killed -- only wounded and still breathing. My brother fired and the tiger jumped on him and so my brother was killed but the tiger was killed too. These scars are my brother's blood. My brother gave his life for me. So this is the most precious thing in my house'."

ouse.'

So when we read the word of God we learn that our Brother gave His life for us. There is no precious thing in the world than this. It has the mark of our Brother's blood."

"I have a stone in my hand. I hit somebody with it -- the man's head is broken and he dies. As long as the stone was in my hand it was in my power, but once the stone was out of my hand it was out of my power. And it was too late, the man was dead. If I repent -- that only means I won't throw any more stones in the future. But the man is already killed! In the future, we shall receive strength, but we must hold fast for the present otherwise we are in danger of losing what we have

There is a danger of losing the gifts or the blessings which we have been receiving from our Heavenly Father. If there had been no danger of losing our crown, our Lord would not have given warnings. So, 'Watch and pray.' Gifts, blessings, spiritual life and crown, there is a difference between having these things and receiving them again. Those who repent may obtain forgiveness if they go to our Heavenly Father, but those who postpone may find it too late."

"It is an excellent plan to entertain noble and lofty thoughts in the mind at all times; for by the Law of Association one good and noble thought attracts another."

"A tree grows and develops in the light and heat of the sun. There is infinite space above the tree, yet when the tree has reached a certain height it cannot increase any more. Why cannot it increase? The power of gravitation of the earth draws it down. We are spiritual beings and are to grow upwards and not downwards though things in this world draw us down.

The heat of the sun makes a tree grow, but by the heat of the same sun another tree dries up. When a worm or an insect has entered a tree, the life of the tree is being gradually destroyed; then the heat of the sun instead of giving it strength helps the process of decay. We have life within us and are to grow through the light of the Sun of Righteousness. To what degree is it possible for us to increase? To this degree, 'Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.'"

"When government began to mint coins, men began to make counterfeit coins. So in the Spiritual life, the Evil One provides counterfeits of every virtues.

In the spiritual life we can do much harm when we fully intend doing good; just like the man in Burma who rushed to pour buckets of water in his house which had suddenly caught fire and found that in that great oil-region he was pouring kerosene oil instead."

On Prayer

"Those who think that prayer is asking are only beggars. I have not seen any beggar understand the truth of Christianity."

"Every day whenever we spend time in prayer and realize His presence, we must hold these things fast in our heart. Without prayer it is impossible. Prayer is not asking for this thing or that thing, but for the Giver of blessing Himself -- that He may live in us. See how wonderful our Saviour is!"

"Some people are very thankful when their prayer is answered. But the people who think that prayer is merely asking are greatly mistaken. God gives Himself. Even wicked are receiving all kinds of things from God. If the Holy Spirit were given without prayer, we should not be able to appreciate Him. But the people who receive Him can't live without prayer. They may fall, they may make mistakes, but they know the value of prayer; and those who know the value of a life of fellowship will never cease."

"Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness know Him. He reveals Himself to such people -- those who spend time in prayer. We see our face sometimes not in a mirror but in a river, but when there are waves in the river we are not able to see ourselves. When our lives are full of hurry and bustle we fail to see ourselves, but in a quiet place we see ourselves and we shall be entirely changed -- a new life. Then we shall not be ashamed. We shall know Him by living with Him -

- and we must live in Him through a life of prayer."

"Prayer is to live in Him for others. We can't stop breathing in the air of the Holy Spirit, and by the Holy Spirit we are being prepared for the world to come -- for the Kingdom of God where we are going to spend eternity. We have not been created to live in this world forever but to get ready for our Heavenly Home."

"A child two or three days old does not know anything about this world -- about his mother and about milk, but he knows how to suck milk. He does not know Khasi or Hindi, but he knows how to suck. God has provided milk for the child in his mother's breast, but it does not flow into the child's mouth. He has to suck and he gets stronger and stronger every day. God is our spiritual Mother and we experience that when we lead a life of prayer. We have desire. This desire is to be satisfied, and only He can meet the needs of the human heart. Everybody knows something about prayer. A child can cry."

"St. Paul was such a practical man of God that he didn't tell others to do what he didn't try to do himself. He lived a life of prayer, he never ceased to pray. When on a long journey, he prayed. He knew the value of prayer from experience. He knew how important and essential it is. Just as breathing and circulation of the blood are functions of the body, so prayer is a function of the soul. The circulation of the blood will not continue forever, the beating of the heart will stop, but prayer will continue. Prayer is to breathe in God -- to breathe in the air of the Holy Spirit. Those who cannot breathe are dead. We breathe in our sleep, so, 'Pray without ceasing.' To live in Him we are to breathe in Him Who is our life."

"A naturalist noticing that certain beautiful birds flew away to a hot country at the beginning of winter, had a great desire that the birds should stay, but was unable to retain them. So he thought of another plan. He got some of these birds' eggs from a hot country. He thought that if these young ones were born in a cold country they would think they belonged to the cold country. But when the winter came they flew away. No one told them, but they went back again to the country whence they had come. They had that instinct, that sense which told them. So we too are going to fly away from here."

"If eggs are not properly hatched they become rotten. So we too are in danger of perishing from sin. But we are being prepared and we shall fly from our shell into our heavenly home. Even animals know their master but we don't know our Creator. We cannot change His will but through prayer we can understand His will. What is necessary for His will, will be given to us to carry out His plans. We are being changed. When the egg is being hatched it is changed; then, in time, the chick will become like the mother-bird. The liquid matter is changed until it becomes a young bird which becomes like its mother. In prayer we are being hatched and changed and prepared to be like Him.
...all eggs do not get hatched. They need the Mother's warmth. So too we need the baptism of the Holy Spirit to make us warm. We must receive the warmth and heat from Him in prayer."

"Why doesn't God give spiritual blessings without prayer? There was Saul. Saul received a kingdom and the Holy Spirit, but he did not pray for the Holy Spirit and was not anxious. The result was that he lost both. Through prayer we are being prepared. We are receiving a blessing through the prayer of preparation. Instead of donkeys Saul found a kingdom. If we receive the Holy Spirit before we are ready we shall lose Him. But if we are ready then our lives will be entirely changed. But if we lose Him we are worse than before. Such men are the incarnation of the devil -- their condition afterwards is worse."

"This is a warning from the Lord Himself. 'Hold fast thy crown.' All will be clear if we live a life of prayer. We must spend time in prayer -- then we shall know who our Saviour is. We receive blessings even through our mistakes. But our God works quietly. He never makes a noise..."

God give me strength and power that I may not lose this blessing. My prayer is to continue. Then Heaven will begin on earth for all who have had this experience. Then we shall see others entering into the kingdom of God. We shall see with our spiritual eyes and fly away and be with our Saviour and be in His Kingdom forever.

May God help us so that we may live in Him in this life -- and that is only possible through prayer which is the vital breath of life -- before we enter into the Heavenly Kingdom where we are going to live with Him forever.

We must begin in our home on earth, otherwise we shall feel out of place in Heaven. If we live in Him now, we shall be prepared to live with Him forever..."

"May God help us to pray without ceasing."

On Persecution, Suffering and Discipleship

"...a little girl thirteen years of age was going from her village to another when she was met by a Lama who said to her, "Your father has become a Christian and that is, I suppose, why you are a Christian too."

She replied, "A Christian Sadhu came to our village to tell of Christ. My family has become Christian -- I am a Christian because I know from my own experience that Christ is my Saviour." The Lama seized her and shut her up in a dark room with the door locked for twenty-four hours without food or water. At the end of the twenty-four hours the Lama thought she would ask to be freed. To his great amazement he found her singing. He shut her up for three days more without food or water. When he opened the door this time he didn't find her singing but she was on her knees in a corner of the room talking to somebody. He could see her lips moving but her eyes were shut. He began to listen to what she was saying. "Lord, I thank Thee for this honour of suffering for Thee." Christ was living in her otherwise it would have been impossible for her.

"Lord, forgive that Lama. Open his spiritual eyes that he may see Thy glory."

The Lama burst into tears, and taking off his turban he laid it on her feet and said, "I am like your grandfather in age, but today you have become my guru." To the Sadhu whom he met afterwards, he said, "I didn't learn as much from you as I learnt from the girl."

"I was so thankful. Can't we have that experience? She is on her way to perfection and has given her life to work for her Saviour."

"When I was preaching between Nepal and Tibet, I was asked in one place not to preach Christianity. But I said, 'I must give my testimony to what my Saviour has done for me.' I was arrested and put in prison for six months. An excellent opportunity of preaching the Gospel! I preached to the criminals but was forbidden.

The jailer said, 'You were put into prison on account of your preaching and here you are preaching again!'

I said, 'I can't keep quiet, I must tell about my Saviour.' Then he told the prisoners not to listen.

They said, 'You have failed to make us better. If listening to him makes us better you ought to be glad.' The jailer was terrified lest all the criminals become Christians and took me away. This time I was put into the jailer's cowhouse as there was no other separate room. The place was full of mosquitoes. My clothes were taken away and my legs and arms put into stocks. Then a basketful of leeches were put on my body. There were leeches round my eyes shutting them, and they were sucking away all my blood. It was very painful. I confess my weakness. God wanted to show me myself. I almost wanted to cry. 'By tomorrow,' I thought, 'I shall be dead from loss of blood.' When I was praying, however, I felt something like electricity all through my body and my prison was changed to Heaven. 'Will heaven be better than this?' I forgot the leeches, and though I am no singer I began to sing a Hindi hymn. Such wonderful joy! In the midst of suffering I had no external comfort of any kind but I experienced such wonderful peace from my living Saviour.

I had given St. Mark's Gospel to the man who had reported me, who immediately tore it up. He came to look at me in astonishment with the jailer. 'What do you think of him?' he asked the jailer.

'I think he is mad,' replied the jailer.

'If by becoming mad one can become so happy, then I should like to become mad too,' said the man."

"These eighteen years He is everything to me -- the life of my life and I am never sorry. My relations ask, 'Are you not sorry now that you have to suffer?'

'I am only sorry I did not follow Him before eighteen years ago.'"

"It is a great pity any of us are living without this wonderful Saviour. We must follow Him. We must be with Him and then we shall be on our way to perfection. Unless we follow our Saviour we cannot be saved. There is a wonderful fish which can change its colour, but a blind fish cannot change its colour."

"Nobody will be allowed to enter into Heaven who has not a face like Jesus Christ. That is the only ticket, otherwise we shall find ourselves out of place there. Only those who follow Him will feel at home there. Are we willing to follow Him? There will be no hiding place in Heaven -- only in Hell. I who used to persecute Him, I who used to tear up Scripture, I must follow Him."

Re: Sadhu Sundar Singh: Excerpts of Sayings & Sermons - posted by davidt, on: 2006/10/20 3:38

amen.

"it takes a long time to learn all about a flower but only a moment to smell its fragrance."

He has revealed these things to babes.

Good word it was stirring and inspiring spiritually to my inner man. I would like to know more about Sadhu.

Re: Sadhu Sundar Singh: Excerpts of Sayings & Sermons - posted by ArthurRosh, on: 2020/8/15 17:37

thank you

Re: Sadhu Sundar Singh: Excerpts of Sayings & Sermons - posted by ArthurRosh, on: 2020/8/15 17:57

Sundar Singh was born on September 3, 1889, in Rampur, a village in the Punjab, into a well-to-do Sikh family. Educated at a nearby Presbyterian mission school, he abhorred the "colonial religion" of his teachers until a deep and mystical encounter with Yesu (Jesus) changed him and left him seeking to follow him. He was baptized in Simla on his sixteenth birthday. Thirty-three days after this he took on the ascetic lifestyle of a sadhu, or wandering holy man. Sundar Singh's significance does not lie in place-names and dates, however, but rather in the devotion and selflessness with which he spread the Gospel, and in the sincerity with which he lived what he preached. As a Christian witness, he was both welcomed and persecuted. Thousands were struck by the simplicity of his faith. Yet by many missionaries and even Indian Christian leaders he was considered a highly eccentric convert, completely out of step with contemporary Christianity as he wandered the roads in his yellow robe and turban. On the road as a Sadhu, he was often mistreated and persecuted. Sundar Singh's spirituality is best approached against the backdrop of his religious upbringing. When Sundar was seven his mother arranged for a Brahmin pundit to come to the house to teach him Sanskrit and to initiate him into the teaching and requirements of Hindu dharma, or religious duty and devotion. A Sikh granthi, a reader of the sacred Granth, also came to teach him gurmukhi, the Punjabi script in which the Granth is written, and to give him instruction in their way of worship and devotion. At the feet of numerous sadhus, he became a devout Sikh, but was still restless. Growing into adolescence, Sundar struggled to hold onto all that his mother taught him. Spiritual exercises now required a great deal of effort; faith had become clouded by doubt. The lives of those around him also seemed fraught with hypocrisy. Adding to Sundar's confusion, Christian missionaries in the area had brought still another truth—a foreign truth introduced by outsiders who did not understand the ways of his ancestors. Grieving the loss of his mother, who had recently died, he couldn't understand why his father made him attend the Christian school. Bitter and full of inner torment, he was going to show his family what he thought of these colonialists and their western ways, and their foreign faith. One day Sundar began throwing stones at his teachers, disrupting classes, and mocking the missionaries. Later, in the courtyard of his own house, a group of teenage boys gathered around him as he tore a Bible to shreds and then, in a frenzy of rage, hurled it into a fire. That night he returned to his room to meditate and pray. The familiar words of the scriptures whirled in his mind. From Guru Nanak: "I cannot live for a moment without you, O God. When I have you, I have everything. You are the treasure of my heart." And there was Guru Arjim: "We long only for you, O God. We thirst for you. We can only find rest and peace in you." That was his only hope. If there was a God, then he had to reveal the way to peace, or else there was no point in living. Sundar recounts what would be the most decisive experience of his life:

Though at the time I had considered myself a hero for burning the Gospel, my heart found no peace. Indeed, my unrest only increased, and I was miserable for the next two days. On the third day, when I could bear it no longer, I rose at 3:00 A.M. and prayed that if there was a God at all, he would reveal himself to me. Should I receive no answer by morning, I would place my head on the railroad tracks and seek the answer to my questions beyond the edge of this life. I prayed and prayed, waiting for the time to take my last walk. At about 4:30 I saw something strange. There was a glow in the room. At first I thought there was a fire in the house, but looking through the door and windows, I could see no cause for the light. Then the thought came to me: perhaps this was an answer from God. So I returned to my accustomed place and prayed, looking into the strange light. Then I saw a figure in the light, strange but somehow familiar at once. It was neither Siva nor Krishna nor any of the other Hindu incarnations I had expected. Then I heard a voice speaking to me in Urdu: "Sundar, how long will you mock me? I have come to save you because you have prayed to find the way of truth. Why then don't you accept it?" It was then I saw the marks of blood on his hands and feet and knew that it was Jesus, the one proclaimed by the Christians. In amazement I fell at his feet. I was filled with deep sorrow and remorse for my insults and my irreverence, but also with a wonderful peace. This was the joy I had been seeking. This was heaven! The vision was gone, though my peace and joy remained.

When the family learned of Sundar's experience they treated it as a joke. When neither ridicule nor mockery moved

him, they became alarmed. They were determined not to let his newfound faith bring shame on their honor. Sundar's family pleaded with him not to disgrace them. They ridiculed and abused him mercilessly. Members of every caste in Rampur village took part in persecuting him. His relations promised him wealth and prestige if he would change. But he refused. For eight months the family continued to assail him. Then, as a public declaration that he had rejected the Sikh religion for once and for all, he cut off his long hair. At this his family cut off all ties with him. He was made to sleep under a veranda. Food was given to him there as if he were an untouchable, and in short order they turned him out from his home. He was dead to them. Sundar was now excluded from caste and home with nowhere to turn for help. Not knowing where to go, he headed thirty-five miles up the canal bank to Rupar, where a few of the Christians there had founded a leprosy home. On the way he had eaten food his sister-in-law had surreptitiously packed for him only to find out that her apparent generosity was a ruse. The food was poisoned, and soon after his arrival in Rupar, he became violently ill, gripped by painful spasms and bleeding from nose and mouth. Then, all of a sudden, the illness departed, like a cloak sliding from his back. He felt God's healing hand upon him and his pain immediately subsided. By morning, though still weak and unsteady on his feet, he was restored to health. His troubles, however, did not come to an end. Shortly after arriving in Rupar, arrangements were made for him to attend the Christian Boys' Boarding School at Ludhiana, where he stayed for a few months. He was shocked to see the godlessness of the students, and of some of the local Christians. Moreover, attempts were made to abduct him forcibly, and once police protection was required to restrain a mob of delinquents who came to the compound to carry him off by force. In the hot weather holidays he was sent to the hills at Subathu, where he was baptized at St. Thomas Church. Nine months had passed since his vision of Christ. Thirty-three days after his baptism, in the quiet of the pinewoods of Subathu, he appeared in the saffron robe of a beggar-monk. His journey had begun; but not as a quest for perfection through renunciation as it was for so many other sadhus, but out of a longing to share the message of Christ to his countrymen. Recognized by their traditional yellow robes and ascetic lifestyle, Indian sadhus (literally "poor man" or "beggar") forsake creature comforts to live lives of devotion and prayer. The intense, mystical encounter that had led to his conversion left him forever changed and gave him an unwavering dedication to Christ. For him, Jesus was the Truth—the completion and fulfillment of the deepest human longings for inward and outward peace, and it was unthinkable to keep Jesus to himself. As a sadhu, Sundar Singh found a ready welcome in most of the places he stayed, though reactions varied when it was discovered that he was a follower of Jesus. When this was discovered, he was often treated as an outcast, being refused food and shelter. Sundar quickly put his vocation to the test by going back to his home village, Rampur, where he was shown an unexpectedly warm welcome. Scarcely fit enough to meet physical hardship, the sixteen-year-old boy went northward through the Punjab, over the Bannihal Pass into Kashmir, and then back through the fanatical Muslim Afghanistan and into the brigand-infested Northwest frontier and Baluchistan. His thin, yellow robe gave him little protection against the snows, and his feet became torn from the rough tracks. Not many months had passed before the little Christian communities of the North were referring to him as "the apostle with the bleeding feet." This initiation showed him what he might expect in the future. He was stoned, arrested, visited by a shepherd who talked with strange intimacy about Jesus and then was gone, and left to sleep in a wayside hut with an unexpected cobra for company. Meetings with the mystical and the material, periods of persecution and times of success, would all characterize his experience in years ahead. Beyond the villages in the Simla hills, lay Tibet, a closed Buddhist land that Christian missionaries had long failed to penetrate with the gospel. Ever since his baptism Tibet had beckoned Sundar, and in 1908, at the age of nineteen, he crossed its frontiers for the first time. The state of the people appalled him. Their airless homes, like many of their inhabitants, were filthy. Nor were they open to the message of a strange outsider. Everywhere he went in Tibet he instances of hostility. In 1909, out of love for his bishop, Sundar Singh went to St. John's Divinity School in Lahore with a view to ordination. Not surprisingly, he felt like a fish out of water. A mystic at heart, he found the required studies too intellectual and left after nine months. From 1912 on, Sundar began to visit Tibet regularly. He knew from personal experience that the preaching of the Gospel was forbidden there and that Christian missionaries were likely to be persecuted and martyred. But to him this only gave the prospect of traveling there a greater appeal. On more than one occasion he visited Kailash, the sacred mountain of the Hindus. Sometime his violent fanatics attacked Sundar while on his travels. Once he was arrested, tossed into a dry well strewn with dead bodies, and left to die—but was later rescued by a mysterious stranger. Sitting amidst rotting flesh, the stench of which made breathing almost impossible, he felt that God had forsaken him. Yet, on the third night he saw the cover opened and a rope let down. He slipped the noose over his arms and was pulled out and lay senseless by the well. Gradually the air revived him, and in the morning he made his way back to the village. There he was seized and brought before the official who demanded to know who had released him. As Sundar did not know, a search was made for the key, but it was found to be in its rightful place. Amazed and in superstitious dread, the official released Sadhu. When Sundar returned to India from Tibet in 1913, he went to Hardwar on the Ganges to carry out a plan that had long been in his mind. He would enter a forty day fast, seeking to imitate his Master before the onset of his ministry. He had a spiritual vision of Jesus, the Master, and was given an unusually deep sense of peace. It would mark a turning point in his spiritual life. As soon as his strength was restored, Sundar set out again. After years of traveling in India, Tibet, and Nepal, Sundar set his sights further afield. In 1919 he journeyed to China, Malaysia, and Japan. Then he set his sights to the West. It had become a widely accepted idea in India that Britain had become so materialistic and immoral that, for her, Christianity was no longer a

living force. Sundar wished to find out if this were true or not. In January, 1920, he left Bombay. He was halfway to England before his friends there heard of his coming. Yet his personality and his message so caught the imagination of all classes that his announcement that he was to speak was enough to fill any of the largest halls or churches. After three months in England he went to the United States, where, as in England, he addressed many large audiences. The relentless chase after wealth he found among all the hurried and hassled "Christians" disturbed him tremendously. He would often say to the people, "Christ would say, 'Come unto me all you that are gold-laden, and I will give you rest.'" In 1922 he traveled throughout Europe, holding public addresses in Geneva, Oxford, London, and Paris, and numerous other cities in Germany, Holland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Everywhere he went, large audiences and prominent leaders—religious and secular alike—received him enthusiastically. In many countries he visited, special trains were organized to transport tens of thousands of listeners to the cathedrals and sports arenas where he spoke. The emergence of a more tolerant liberalism in Christian theology explains part of his widespread appeal; on the other hand, many Europeans were simply curious to see a "real" Eastern mystic firsthand, especially one whose very manner and appearance evoked traditional images of Jesus. There was also his reputation as a miracle worker—something he worked tirelessly to dispel. More than anything else, however, it was Sundar Singh's simple faith and authentic practice of Christ's teachings—something utterly out of sync with western materialistic intellectualism—that his audiences found so compelling. At the same time, Sundar Singh was regularly admonished for his lack of familiarity with twentieth century science. Then there was his attitude to money. Sundar Singh refused to accept it, which bothered people, even when he needed it, and when someone forced a gift on him he gave it away. There was also his unorthodox attitude to matters such as church membership, of which he said:

I belong to the body of Christ—to the true church, which cannot be understood as a building of tiles and stones. It is a body of true Christians, living and dead, visible and invisible. If the living Christ is really near us and lives in our hearts, why should we reject him—the kernel of our faith—and cling to a dried-up outer shell?

Inevitably, such views drew criticism from ecclesiastical authorities and even evoked open hostility in certain quarters. A few attacked his character as well, suggesting that he was little more than a charlatan and publicity seeker, which in turn led friends and supporters to defend his reputation. All this confirmed Sundar Singh's own suspicion that while western Christianity might be rich in organization, theology, doctrine, and tradition, it was poor in spirit and sorely needed re-centering on the foundation from which it had strayed: the living Christ. The tremendous strain of months of large meetings and endless hours of conversation with spiritual seekers, took a terrible toll on Sundar Singh's health. After his return from his European tour he was never the same man again. He had frequent heart attacks of severe pain, and was more than once unconscious—once for a day and a half. After a meeting he almost always had such spells. He also had trouble with his eyes and had to undergo an operation. In these circumstances he no longer accepted invitations to other parts of the world. Even in India he hesitated to promise to speak at conventions (he remained a welcome speaker) and only accepted when his health permitted. During his last years Sadhu had a burning desire to go again to Tibet, but ill-health made it impossible. In April 1927, however, he started from Rishikesh with some Tibetan traders, intending to cross the Niti Pass into Tibet, but when he had traveled only forty miles up the road he had a very severe hemorrhage from the stomach, and was carried back by the Tibetans to the railway in a semi-conscious condition. Two years later, again in the Spring, he left for the last time for Tibet. No news was heard from him. Some say he died of exhaustion, others claim he was drowned. All the efforts his friends made to trace him were futile. After Sundar Singh disappeared in the Himalayas in 1929, admirers from around the world mourned. Though only thirty, his wanderings had led him through at least twenty countries on four continents. He had profoundly influenced tens of thousands of people. Indeed, in the first half of the last century, no spiritual teacher from the East was better known.

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