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spirit amongst us,' he said. 'The sitting in the dust ([Ezek. 36](#)) is more pleasing to God ... give me a broken-hearted Christian, and I prefer his society to that of all the rest.'

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My Experience With and Without Christ

Sadhu Sundar Singh

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I was born in a family that was commonly considered Sikh, but in which the teaching of Hinduism was considered most essential, and my dear mother was a living example and faithful exponent of its teaching. She used to rise daily before daylight, and, after bathing, used to read the *Bhagavad Gita*, and other Hindu scriptures. I was influenced more than the rest of the family by her pure life and 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. At times I insisted that I must have food first, but my God-fearing mother, sometimes with love and sometimes with punishment, fixed this habit firmly in my mind, that I should first seek God, and after that other things. Although at that time I was too young to appreciate the value of these things, yet later on I realized their value, and now, whenever I think of it, I thank God for that training, and I can never be sufficiently thankful to God for giving me such a mother, who in my earliest years instilled in me the love and fear of God. Her bosom was for me my best theological school, and she prepared me, as much as she was able, to work for the Lord as a Sadhu.

A PUNDIT AND 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. They used to come to our house for two or three hours daily to teach me. The pundit taught me single lessons out of the Hindu *Shastras*, and, when he died, another pundit, Nashi Nath, taught me the Sanskrit scriptures. The venerable Sadhu taught me the Granth, or Sikh scriptures. I recognized that I got some degree of consolation from this teaching, but I was still hungering for real peace. They taught me with great sympathy, and freely gave me the benefit of their experiences; but they had not themselves had that real blessing for which my soul was craving, so how could they help me to get it? **P. 197**

MY FATHER

I often used to read the Hindu scriptures till midnight that I might in some way quench the thirst of my soul for peace. My father often objected, saying: 'It is bad for your health to read so late.' Though there was much in my home to make me happy, I was not attracted by it. My father often remonstrated with me, saying: 'Boys of your age think of nothing but games and play, but how has this mania possessed you at so early an age? There is plenty of time to think of these things later in life. I suppose you must have got this madness from your mother and the Sadhu.'

THE PUNDIT AND I

I frequently asked the pundit to explain my spiritual difficulties for me. He said: 'Your difficulties seem to be of a new and strange kind. I can only say that when you grow up and get more experience and knowledge about spiritual life, these difficulties will disappear of themselves. Now don't worry about these things at present, but do what your father advises you.' 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"? Will he be happy in playing when he is hungry, or can he live till he is grown up if he gets no food? He should get food now. I feel very hungry for spiritual bread. If you have not got it, then please tell me where and how I can get it. If you do not know where I can get it then say so.' The pundit said: 'You cannot understand these deep spiritual things now. You cannot get to the grade of spirituality all at once. To get to it a long time is essential. Why are you in such a hurry to get to it? If this hunger is not satisfied in this life it will be satisfied in your next re-births, provided that you keep on trying for it.' So saying, he evaded me, and my problem was not solved.

THE SADHU AND I

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 knowledge (*jnana*), all these difficulties will disappear.' I replied: 'No doubt it is true that when I obtain this perfect ultimate knowledge my difficulties will disappear, but even at this stage the little knowledge that I have should remove some of my difficulties, while I **P. 198** should be able to hope for further enlightenment in the future. But I do not see how this increase of knowledge will be able to do much, for it looks as if further knowledge will result in my needs and difficulties being still more clearly seen by me, and how will these new needs be met? Here one requires not only knowledge but bread for the hungry, for when this little knowledge has shown my needs to me, then more knowledge will show more needs, so the question is: How am I to meet these needs?'

The Sadhu replied: 'Not with imperfect, finite knowledge but with perfect and final knowledge will your needs be met; for when you get perfect knowledge you will realise that this need, or want, is only an illusion, and that you yourself are Brahma (God) or a part of him, and, when you realise 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.

'In this way, instead of helping me you are throwing me into a whirlpool. I shall be most thankful to you, if from your experience and knowledge you can help me to know him so that I may satisfy my spiritual hunger and thirst in him. But please remember that I do not want to be absorbed in him, but I do want to obtain salvation in him.' Then he said: 'Child, it is useless to waste time on these things now. The time will come when you yourself will understand these things.'

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.

LYING AND STEALING

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 **P. 199** 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 five 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 five 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 anything, and on my part, I decided that I would never do anything that should be against my conscience, or against my parents' will.

DEATH OF MY BROTHER AND MOTHER

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 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*.

MISSION AND GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Now another change came into my life. I was sent, for my secular education, 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. My teachers insisted that I should attend; but I was so opposed to this that the next year I left that school, and went to a Government school at Sanewal three miles away, and **P. 200** there I studied for some months. To some extent I felt that the teaching of the gospel on the love of God attracted me, but I still thought 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 a Gospel and burned it.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LIVING CHRIST

Though, according to my ideas at that time, 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, to serve the Living Christ, was born.

THE BEGINNING OF PERSECUTION

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'; and he himself turned over again. 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 P. 201 unrest I had had when I was without Christ; and it was not difficult for me to endure the troubles and persecution which now began.

The thought of being a Sadhu had long been in my mind. and I now decided that as a Sadhu I would serve the Lord Christ. There were two or three other boys at that time who also wanted to become Christians. Two, because of the punishment given them by their parents, went back, and another went to Khanna, and was baptized there by the Rev. E. P. Newton, but shortly afterwards his father went to him with a story that his mother was dying, and enticed him back. Very soon after he died, apparently of poison.

CHRISTIANS A STUMBLING BLOCK

When it became difficult for me to remain at Ramput, Mr. Newton advised me to go into the Christian Boys Boarding School at Ludhiana. There the missionaries, Drs. Wherry and Fife, received me very kindly, and protected me in every way. But I was shocked when I saw the un-Christian life of some of the Christian boys and of some of the local Christians, for I had the idea that those who followed the Living Christ must be like angels; in this I was sadly mistaken. 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 become an enemy of Christianity. Even as it was, 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. During the summer holidays I went to Subathu and Simla and, instead of returning to school, I was baptized, and began to go about as a Sadhu and preach the gospel.

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 whole-hearted 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 signally failed.

MEDICINE IN THE EYE

Now, through living with Christ and having had experience of him, I have learned this secret, that before ever I knew him or believed on him as my Saviour, He, unknown to me,

was working in my soul like medicine working in the eye. For the eye cannot see the medicine that is in it which is clearing the sight, though it feels its presence. **P. 202**

MOTHER AND CHILD

My restless soul searched for him; but, though he was near, he was hidden from my view and was trying to bring me to himself. I was in the world's garden like a child whose mother had hidden herself behind a bush. The child began to cry, and as soon as the gardener heard him he came and to soothe him offered him one kind of fruit after another. But he threw them all down and kept on crying: 'I don't want them. I want my mother.' At last his mother came out from behind the bush, and taking him in her arms, kissed him and wiped his tears. Safe in her arms he found what he wanted. In this way, our Universal Mother at times hides herself in the garden of this Universe. Those who, like this child, can be satisfied with nothing but their mother's love, will find that she also watches them and lifts them to her bosom, and wiping away their tears, restores to them real happiness for ever ([Isaiah 49:15](#); [Rev. 21:3-4](#)).

FAITH AND LOVE

Without Christ I was without hope and full of fear about the future life. Now, by his presence, he has turned fear into love, and hopelessness into realization; and fear is transitory, but love is eternal. Faith and love are the tendrils of the soul, which, in the light and heat of God's sun, grow towards heaven, and cling round the Lord of Love; but without him, hopeless and in the dark, they wither away and die.

DEATH AND LIFE

In fellowship with Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life, we are freed from fear of death, and by sharing in that victory over death, enter into eternal life. He is, at the same time, present in both worlds. He was in the physical world and was at the same time in the spiritual world; because, when he stood at the tomb of Lazarus and with his Creator's voice said: 'Lazarus, come forth,' he called the spirit of his friend not from his body, nor from his grave but from the spiritual world. Thence, as soon as it heard his command, it returned to the grave and to his body.

A VILLAGE EXPERIENCE

It is a characteristic of this new life that it constrains one to bring others to Christ, not by compulsion but from the desire to let others share in the joy of this wonderful experience. However sore one's trials may be, they are forgotten in the joy of that service. **P. 203**

Once I went to preach at a village two miles from my old home in Ramput. I spoke for a long time, and it was dark before I finished, and then the people all left me and went to their houses. Tired and hungry I sought rest under a tree. I had had no food all day, and it was against my principles to beg. Lying there, weak and hungry, Satan tempted me with the thought that, when I was at my home I always had every comfort, but now that I had left all for Christ's sake I was poor and hungry. Then, in spite of it all, my heart was filled with a wonderful peace and joy, that not only overcame the temptation, but compelled me to break out into song, and till midnight I praised the Lord; and after this, these words broke from my lips: 'When I had ease and comfort at home, I knew nothing of this

wonderful peace. But now when all is gone I have found in Christ this peace, which the world can neither give nor take away.'

Some of the people had been aroused by my singing, and two of them came to me. They were greatly impressed when I told them a little of my experience, but when they heard that I had not eaten since morning they were very perturbed that I had not told them. They at once prepared some food and gave it to me, and I thanked God and them; and, having eaten it, I lay down and slept.

EXPERIENCE IN RAMPUR

The next day I preached in a few villages nearby and then went to Rampur. There also the people listened well. In the evening I went to my home. At first my father refused to see me, or to let me in, because 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 to-night; 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 from flowing from my eyes that my father, who used to love me so much, now hated me as if I was an untouchable. In spite of all this, my heart was filled with inexpressible peace. I thanked him for this treatment also, and said: 'It does not matter if you have forsaken me, because I have taken Christ for the love of him who gave his life for me, and his love is unchangeable, and is far greater than yours. Before I became a Christian I dishonoured Christ, but he did not forsake me; now I do not complain. I thank you for your past love to me, and also for this **P. 204** present treatment,' 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.

THE LORD'S TRUE PROMISE

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. Little by little the Lord sent me in the way of his service to different countries of the world, and after many years, my unceasing prayer was answered and my father also turned to the Lord. Though I have had to go through various kinds of suffering it has all been for me a means of great blessing, and with thankful heart I can truly say from my experience that every word is literally true in the promises of the Lord who said: 'There is no man that hath left house, brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time; houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and, in the world to come, eternal life' ([Mark 10:29-30](#)). I have found not only a hundredfold, but a hundred times a hundredfold, and if there are any to whom this promise is not fulfilled, it does not mean that the Lord's promise is not true; it means rather that there is something wrong in their lives, or that God has 'provided some better thing' concerning them ([Heb. 11:39-4](#)).

Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929) a convert to Christ in the Punjab, India. **p. 205**