

Christ is Victor

MAR/APR 1998

Sadhu Sundar Singh

“A man who walked with God”

His conversion

Yoga and concentration (samadhi) have given the sadhus, sanyasis, and the poets of India great mental development and power. These psychic exercises lead to self-hypnotism and also self-deception—a sort of satisfaction which comes from self-denial and rigorous, self-imposed discipline of the physical body and the mind.

So far, I have never met a sadhu or a religious man who could say he had truly found shanti (peace) or God. All they venture to say is that they are still seeking. How can they who reject the only Saviour, who gave His life for the salvation of mankind, get shanti and salvation?

Some of these men, however, can also work miracles and signs, which totally captivate people. We know that the magicians of Egypt did some of the miracles which Moses performed under the direction of God. Some, by worshipping evil spirits, can do certain things which appear like miracles. Some, by living a life of self-denial and by yogic exercises, can even heal the sick or read others' minds and sometimes even make a clever guess at what the future holds. Many who worship evil spirits can tell the past events of men. Most people do not know that there are powers of darkness, which, if worshipped, can help them on a short-term basis, to feel fulfilled and even be apparently successful. But a true change of character and new life, none of these spirits of the underworld can give.

Indian religions are highly developed intellectual achievements of men. The mind, when highly developed, can function in an extraordinary way and even subdue man's instincts and desires. This ultimately results in killing oneself and destroying one's spiri-

tual potentialities. But when a man comes under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, those instincts are not killed but controlled and sanctified and led in the right channels of service. Love with heart purity, love with holiness of life, and faith with humility, which the Lord Jesus gives a repentant sinner, result in a great capacity to bring men under the influence of the Cross of Christ. When people are truly broken at the Cross, the resurrection power of Christ begins to operate in them.

No great Indian sadhu can say, “I can bring salvation to another.” The religions of India in their highest disciplines can only bring about a kind of negative ordering of the soul and body, which renders the body as a corpse, while all the time the spirit still remains unkindled and dead. Christ brings salvation to the spirit, soul and body and causes a person to live on a high level of faith, which in turn makes one go and rescue the fallen, and lift them into the New Life and the cleansed walk.

With the passing away of his mother and the deep void it left in Sundar Singh's heart, there came a desperate longing for reality and peace. If ever a man could have found true release and fulfillment through Yoga, it was Sundar Singh, as he was in dead earnest to practise and implement all that this system taught. But at this stage, he knew that he had tried all the available methods and meditations known to him, but the deep void persisted.

Sundar's struggles therefore continued. A great sadhu visited their home six months before his conversion and said, “This lad would become in future a great man in the world or a mad person.” One day his father

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God's Method

“I will make you fishers of men” said the Lord Jesus Christ to Peter, the fisherman. [Matthew 4:19]. Peter was henceforth going to learn faith and obedience. In other words, Peter was going to become a willing and active instrument in God's hands.

Yes, we have often heard that man is God's method but did you ever stop to think about this? Then you and I should be God's answer for the problem around us. Dear reader, you know only too well how often we fail to help those who are around us. Each one of us likes to chalk out his own programme and plan of action. We seem as willing to rest in the hands of God as some squirming, overactive children are, in the arms of their mothers. Some mothers do find it very difficult to hold on to strong squirming babies. If we want to be God's method and God's men and women of this day, we must give time and room to our Lord to make us, and make us, and make us, until we are like Jesus in thought and action.

“I will make you.” However impulsive and impetuous Peter was, yet he had a willing heart. He spoke out of turn, slept when he should have been praying, sought the warmth of the first-side where Jesus' enemies were warming their hands and even denied Him outright; yet there was a readiness and a willingness in him to be made God's method after the Lord Jesus was physically taken up to Heaven.

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rebuked him when he saw him pouring kerosene and burning the Bible with perverse delight. Although he counted it to be a meritorious act, a deep unrest took hold of him shortly after this outburst of bigotry. He could not eat nor sleep for three days. This intense search for finding reality in God could not go on forever. He wanted to end his life if he could not find that real peace, which his mother had asked him to seek.

On the third night he got up at 2 o'clock and had a bath in cold water for one hour. Then he sat in meditation or prayer and said to God, "Oh God, if there is a God, if You answer me and give me peace before 5 o'clock this morning and appear to me in your true form, I will serve You as a sadhu all my life. If I do not get an answer from You I will end my life by throwing myself on the rails of the railroad behind my house, when the Ludhiana Mail passes in the morning." Sundar meant what he said. He went on praying and meditating and at four he closed his eyes again. At 4:30 when he again opened his eyes he saw a white smoke-like glow in his room. For a moment he wondered if there was fire in his room. But then came the thought that God perhaps was answering him and he closed his eyes again. As he prayed on, lo, before him stood a glorious figure with such brightness that exceeded the sunshine at midday. Yet he could see it without being dazzled by the sight. Then he saw the crown of thorns on the head of the figure which stood between the ceiling and the floor. There were wounds in the hands, feet and in the side which were bleeding. Having recognized Him to be Christ, Sundar turned away his face saying within himself, "He is none of the incarnations whom I believe." But then he heard these words, "I am Christ whom you are

persecuting. There is salvation only through Me. If you believe Me now, you will be saved. If you don't believe Me you will be damned forever."

Then flashed into his mind the fact that he had never prayed to Christ but to the universal God, to reveal Himself to him. He had challenged God that if He would appear to him, he would never back out but follow Him. He had never, for even a moment, expected that the answer to his prayer was Christ. How could he now refuse the revelation of the Living God? Immediately he fell on the Feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and worshipped Him. A mighty power like the power of electricity flowed into him and a great peace came upon him. He was so full of joy that he ran to his old father, who was sleeping, and woke him up saying that he had seen Christ and that he had given himself to Him. The father remembered the statement of that great sadhu who prophesied that this lad would become either a mad man or a great person. He told his son that something had gone wrong with his mind and that he should go and sleep. In this manner the Lord God Almighty captured for Himself a well-prepared young man to be His follower.

Expulsion from Home

It was the year 1903, and December with its biting cold was beginning its dreary siege of the Northern plains of India. It was on the third of December that the Lord Jesus appeared to Sundar Singh, just a little while before the suicide which he had planned.

Right from the start, Sundar Singh made no secret of his conversion to Christ. As he publicly began to acknowledge Jesus as his Lord, the rage of his family and relatives waxed hotter. The example of his own mother who had sought truth in several religions, was cited. Why bring shame upon the whole family and its fair name by fol-

lowing the religion of the foreigner, was the big question which was set before the young convert. Most people in the East don't know that many in Europe and America have no religion at all and most others merely lend lip service to the historic truths of Christianity.

The boy who had hated and ridiculed his Christian teachers, not befriended them to the astonishment of everybody. His erstwhile friends whom he had led in many acts of persecution of Christians, now quickly turned to be his enemies.

Soon the rage of the whole community turned upon the small group of Christians at Rampur. It was organized ostracism. No one would buy from them or sell anything to them. Unable to bear this persecution and threats to their lives and property most of them fled to a neighbouring place where there was a stronger, and older Christian work.

Incidents such as this are quite common in several parts of India. On the conversion of a loved-one to Christ, the proverbial tolerance of the Indian appears to turn into implacable hatred and rancour. Sometimes relatives swear to kill a person, rather than let him live as a Christian. This underscores the strength of the caste system, too.

At this stage, Sundar Singh persuaded his father to send him to a Christian boys' boarding school in Ludhiana. From the distance his father wrote pleading with him to renounce his faith in Christ. Another ruse was also employed. His father practically commanded him to get married. That girls can nearly always be depended upon to turn away the heart of a boy from pursuing God with all his heart is, of course, common knowledge. If he should get engaged, his father promised him much wealth. But offers of wealth and money had little appeal

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for Sundar Singh; his heart was set upon following Jesus.

Finally, when his father ordered him home, he did return to Rampur. But he made it clear to his father, that it was the unchristian lives of the 'Christian' boys at the boarding school which had greatly disappointed him and caused him to return home.

His relatives courted him, "Why should you not marry one of our daughters?" One of them, in fact, showed him a whole chest of gold and golden jewelry and then promised to give it all to him, together with his daughter in marriage. Such are the blandishments with which most Indian boys are tested by their relatives. But those truly transformed by the Spirit of God are able to withstand all these seductions and pleas, and in many cases do God's will in marriage, making a final break with caste. The ploy used by Sundar Singh's relatives is widely used to this day. A rich girl is produced; her qualifications are eulogized and most of all the wealth and the lands which are tagged on to the contract sway the mind of the eligible young man who is shopping around. This is also a device by which to keep the wealth and property within the family circle, and thus contribute to the whole clout of the caste. Thus, when a marriage is celebrated in a wealthy Indian home, one can never tell whether the boy has married the girl or the dowry!

On seeing the fabulous wealth which was offered to him, young Sundar Singh exclaimed, "All this gold cannot give me the peace which the Lord Jesus Christ has given me." The unshakable determination of Sundar Singh to follow Jesus only made his father more desperate and angry.

But as long as the religious marks sacred to Sikhism were still upon his person, there appeared to be some hope of drawing him back to the fold. The long hair, uncut from his childhood, and the bracelet on his hand were marks that identified him anywhere as a member of the Sikh faith. When

young Sundar Singh was constantly being scorned and reprimanded as a renegade and a disgrace to his race, he decided to cut off his long hair. This immediately betokened that his desire to be a disciple of Jesus and renounce Sikhism was decisive. This thoroughly infuriated his father.

It was by no means Sundar Singh's intention to aggravate his father, nor was he trying to make a great display of his religion; yet the time had come for him to signify to his family that his discipleship to the Lord Jesus was irrevocable. These were, of course, inevitable steps which one has to take to this day, in one way or another, to free oneself from the age-old tentacles of caste. His father, no doubt, felt that he could not maintain his standing in his community without forthwith disowning his dear boy.

Thrust out from home, as Sundar Singh walked away into the cold night, with just the clothing which was upon him and his New Testament, he did not know that together with his last meal at home, he had been administered poison which was designed to kill him.

He shivered through the night in the inhospitable jungle and proceeded along the tracks of the railway and caught a train at a station. On the train, he grew gravely ill, vomiting blood. Detraining, he managed to reach the one place in the neighbourhood where loving hands would nurse him back to health from the near-fatal effects of the poison which he had been given with his last meal at home.

Soon after his recovery, he was received by two missionaries at Ludhiana. As it happened in scores of other places in India, so here also, mobs threatened to tear down the mission building. His father with tender entreaties made one last attempt to reclaim his boy to his community and tight-knit family. It is hard for people who have not grown up in the East to understand what a Chinese Buddhist family or a Moslem family and most of all a Hindu caste family goes through, when one son or daughter turns to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is painful to realize that this fanatic zeal to so seal the caste circle as to preclude the possibility of a break-away, has nothing at all to do with uprightness of life or purity of heart. When one pleads with the family and says, "But you know very well that your son is free from his drug-addiction today because of Jesus," or "Your husband has become a faithful husband after long years of immorality by being changed by the Lord Jesus," it simply has no weight with them. It is as though they would say, "We would rather have him as an alcoholic or drug-addict but not as a Christian."

This adherence to an inherited way of

life, which is essentially based on greed, mistrust of others and an intolerance of anything which is not native to their insular culture, is a serious roadblock to all progress and even makes a mockery of secularism in local government, or even of national integration at a high level.

What a deliverance the Cross of Jesus brings to cause an individual to love and labour for everybody, setting him free from the blind crippling creed and the congenital mental-block of caste. From henceforth Sundar Singh was free to love and serve white, brown, blue, black, green, yellow- men of all hues.

Sundar Singh was waiting for his sixteenth birthday. No one could be legally implicated in his conversion, if he were baptized after he was sixteen, as the law stood at that time. Thus on September the third--his sixteenth birthday--he was baptized by Rev. G. Redman and Canon Chandu Lal at Christ Church, Simla, in the lower ranges of the Himalayas.

Reaching forth to Perfection

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." (Philippians 3:13)

Saint Paul was a positive thinker. Sound faith in Jesus makes us look forward always. There was no defeat mentality in St. Paul. He felt, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." We must one day attain to this great consciousness. Our lip prayer must become our heart prayers. These two must become one. When these work together, there will be no doubt in us about God's answer. Such a man will be a mature man in faith. We must be careful not to speak any insincere word to please man or to gain these things which we have left behind. This would be a backward step--a regression. Once we have humbly confessed our sins and have been forgiven, we need not think of them and be discouraged. They must not prevent us from reaching forward to things that are before. Those who run the hundred-yard race do not look back. They cannot win if they do so. The devil wants us to look back. When anyone has done us evil we must not think of it. As quickly as possible we must forgive and forget. Evil will never succeed. We often think it does, and try to defend ourselves against it or hit back. Evil is a defeated power. ... "PERFECTION" CON'T ON PAGE 4

There is no place for evil in a Christian's philosophy of life. We must never resort to evil. "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5:39). Do not recognize evil as a power to resist. Evil is not a power. In the lives of Joseph and Daniel there was no negative thinking. They were lives of great victory because they did not resist evil. Joseph did not brood over the evil done to him. Daniel never brooded over the evil done to him. He did not even care to defend himself but just let God prove him to be in the right. Blessed is the man who can forgive. Forgiving, you must go forward.

A man who believes the Word of God must believe that God is always thinking of him. Resist not evil. Do not recognize it as a power. When you resist it, it gets power. Paul did not reflect on the insults and injuries he received. If we brood over the evil done to us it will grow into our souls. The memories will be ulcers in our souls and bring us low in our spiritual life. When we learn to forgive, we develop a new grace and a new power and a new faith. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." When you kneel down to pray first pray for your enemies. This is the only way or else you will go down till the devil completely possesses you. Think of the loving God who wants to lift you. He does not slumber. Christ has conquered evil. Do not recognize evil as a power. Love, faith, holiness and purity- these things last. Hatred, anger, and envy will perish. They destroy those that entertain them. They ruin your personality. You have to fight a big battle against negative thoughts. God Almighty has got great things for you. Do not think of lower things. When God has a palace for you, why are you angry with those that denied you a place in a hut? Forgive those that have acted negatively. Think of God who has a wonderful blessing and a wonderful place for you.

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil:... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:39-48). These are the statements of our God who won the battle. When we are trying to be perfect like our Father in heaven, the very nature around us will cooperate with us. Let us not make much of our enemies in our thoughts when a mighty God is prepared to give us all things. I have seen people going down, down, and down in their spiritual life and becoming wicked by thinking of the evil done to them. Do not look back. You must feel, "I shall do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

— Late Mr. N. Daniel

Today we speak as though we know everything. We have streamlined everything. From the little Promotional Sunday School button to the right colour scheme of the interior appointments of the church building, and to the shape and size of the podium and pulpit, we have everything perfectly designed and planned. The choice should be thus and in no other cut or size, shape or style. We pride ourselves in the excellence of our methods and 'know-how', while all the time we are withholding from God our lives and the details of our day and the manner in which we spend our hours. How can we ever become God's method?

If the Lord Jesus Christ could have us completely at His disposal, He would accomplish what 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard' even in our poor lives. But when we are just too proud to give into His hands the detailed ordering of our lives, then our years would be wasted in puerile and foolish pursuits, and wild quixotic assaults on what seem like giants but are really inconsequential windmills of our days, "Not as though beating the air", said St. Paul but would it not be right and honest for us to admit that most of our labours are as beating the air with verbal violence and painstaking vehemence? Instead we must repent of our deep trust in ourselves and our methods. Then only can we become God's method. God's men have the beauty of that oftentimes unpremeditated utterance and that amazing and spontaneous inspiration to action that leads to incalculable victories.

What is the method which we see in the Book of Acts, the third chapter? The flow of events appear so natural and utterly unplanned. Peter and John went out for prayer in the temple without a penny in their pockets. But the look of compassion, the words of power, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk" were an unpremeditated outcome of a true walk with Jesus. These words of power stemmed from a heart that was fixed on Jesus.

When the lame man leaped to his feet, and the multitude gathers, wondering at the miracle that had taken place, Peter's hands did not frantically reach for his sermon notes. There came bubbling out of his soul words of grace and power; words which exalted Jesus, His Cross and His resurrection, words which brought conviction of sin and salvation to five thousand men. In short, Peter became God's method, God's instrument, God's voice.

A Christian leader in Australia said to me that one of the big evangelical denomi-

nations there spent six million dollars and added only six souls to their church rolls as church increase for a whole year. This godly man pleaded with one of the leaders of that denomination, "Surely there must be something very wrong if, with all your organization and the huge amount expended, you can hardly add six souls--six persons--to your membership." Let us know, membership increase does not imply spiritual increase. The leader who was spoken to by my friend feared that the calm of his church and its smooth working would be broken up by my preaching. The calm around the courts of the temple was surely broken while Peter and John pointed thousands of souls to the Cross of Jesus. Five thousand souls were added to the church without a penny being spent. Have you ever heard of such a thing in our present setup? Unless we renounce our trust in money, and our organizational methods, and repent of the inordinate importance that we have given to such things in our thinkings and plans, we are never going to see great things.

We are God's method!

— Joshua Daniel

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