

**THE SADHU  
A STUDY IN MYSTICISM AND PRACTICAL RELIGION  
BY**

**B. H. STREETER,  
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**SADHU SUNDAR SINGH.**

**INTRODUCTION**

**BETWEEN the Mystics of any past age and us there is, quite apart from the problem of the mystic consciousness itself, a barrier of time and circumstance which no effort of the historic imagination can completely penetrate. In this book we attempt a study of a Mystic, with the unique advantage that he is a**

contemporary of our own.

He is also one of those Mystics who appeal to the present age because it is precisely his consciousness of communion with the Divine that impels him to a life of unselfish activity and the practical service of mankind.

Sadhu Sundar Singh " the Sadhu " as he is popularly called lives in this twentieth century a life which, so far as external conditions are concerned, resembles that of St. Francis of Assisi. His inward experience recalls rather, in some ways, St. Paul, in others Mother Juliana, while in others it is individual to him. If, however, we venture thus to speak of him and them together, it is not by way of asserting, a comparison of greatness: it is merely to indicate an identity of type. Whether Sundar Singh is a great man in the sense in which History employs that term, History alone can decide. In that sense no man can be pronounced great till his career is ended, nor even then by his own contemporaries. But while we do not suggest that the Sadhu is on the same plane with St. Francis or St. Paul, we feel that, from having known him, we understand them better.

The Sadhu is no metaphysician, no scientist and no higher critic. Indeed his intellectual horizon is in many respects nearer that of the New Testament writers than that of the modern world but so also is his intuitive insight into moral and religious values. It is this directness and simplicity of spiritual perception which impresses upon all who have been in close contact with him the conviction that he has a message not only to his own countrymen, but also to the West.

The manner of his teaching, even more than its substance, has a peculiar freshness for a Western hearer, with its picturesque abundance of illustration and parable, often quaint but always apt, its unstudied spontaneity, its gleams of kindly humour. \_ It is rendered doubly effective by an arresting appearance the impression of the turbaned head and saffron robe harmonising in some subtle way with the deep tranquillity of a countenance lighted up by loving kindness, and with a vivacity of expression, and occasionally of gesture, which somehow seems not to conflict with, but to express, the Peace of God within.

For the cold printed page to reproduce the atmosphere diffused by such a personality, or even to transmit to others the creative impression of his speech, is impossible. It is the more so, since we have his utterances, not in his native tongue in which he is a master of expression, but in English, a language of whose

subtleties he has but small command, so that he has at times to express in the phraseology of conventional religion thoughts which to him are fresh and living. Face to face with him in private this hardly counts, hearing him on a platform it matters more, but where there is nothing but the bare written word it does materially impair the rich impression of the message and the man. Nevertheless, though the printed page cannot do full justice to the Sadhu, it can do something. The many who have seen him once, and have felt that there was much more beyond which they would gladly apprehend, will read into it the memory of his manner and his presence ; and even those to whom he is only known by hearsay may yet, we hope, find something of solid value. At any rate the attempt ought to be made to secure that the Sadhu's visit to the West should leave behind it something more definite, and

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perhaps more permanent, than the personal impressions of a fortunate minority and the passing interest of the crowd. The Sadhu's mind is an overflowing reservoir of anecdote, illustration, epigram and parable, but he never makes the slightest effort to avoid repetition; in fact he appears to delight in it. \_We do not," he says,\_ refuse to give bread to hungry people because we have already given bread to others." Hence we have constantly found the same material occurring in more than one of the written or printed authorities we have used. \_My mouth," he says,\_ has no copyright " ; and many sayings that we had noted down from his own lips we afterwards discovered to be already in print. In most cases the versions differ extraordinarily little, but we have always felt free to correct or supplement one version by another at our discretion ; and, seeing that English is not the Sadhu's native tongue, we have not infrequently ventured on emendations of a purely verbal character.

It was only when we had begun to collect together scattered sayings on the same topics, that we ourselves realised the extent to which his teaching is a complete theology in picture form, making with his way of life and his mystic experience an organic whole. And if this book has any merit beyond fidelity to fact, it largely consists in the attempt to seize and bring out this inner unity and coherence. This has necessarily involved much rearrangement of materials and the bringing together into the same context, occasionally even into the same paragraph, of sayings originally spoken on different

occasions or derived by us from different sources. We have thought it necessary to indicate in the text the exact source of our information only in the case of important or disputable facts. But wherever phrases like " we asked " or " he told us " occur they imply that at least one of the authors was present when the Sadhu made the particular statement ; assertions are, however, often made on this same evidence in contexts where the insertion of the personal pronoun would have seemed intrusive.

Mr. A. J. Appasamy, who collaborates with me in this study, is a member of my own College who, after graduating in India and spending four years in post graduate study in the United States of America, is now engaged in research upon the relation of the Mysticism of St. John to that of the Hindu Bhakti Poets. During the week which the Sadhu spent in Oxford last February, he was in continual contact with him. Subsequently, when we had conceived and had commended to the Sadhu the idea that a permanent record of his teaching might be of real value towards following up and consolidating the results of his visit to England, Mr. Appasamy lived with the Sadhu for about a fortnight in London and Paris, asking questions and making notes, and was present at the interviews which he had with various distinguished persons. One such interview was of particular value for our purpose. Baron von Hügel, who had read Mrs. Parker's account of the Sadhu, put to him a number of carefully prepared questions suggested by his unrivalled knowledge of the literature of Mysticism ; and he was so good as to write us a memorandum on certain aspects of the Sadhu's philosophy and religion, and subsequently to discuss them with us by word of mouth.

I myself had personal talks with the Sadhu and heard him address meetings both in Oxford and in London ; and last May, just before leaving for America , he came again to Oxford and stayed with me in College for the express purpose of discussing the book. For the greater part of a couple of days he answered our questions and poured out his ideas, providing us with much material, including an account of his mystical experiences, which, to the best of our belief, has never been made public before.

In order to secure unity of style and presentation, it was arranged that the final rewriting of the book should be in my hands. But at every stage, including even the final revision of the proofs, my collaborator and I have worked in the closest harmony and co-

operation, and it is impossible to say of the book as a whole that it is any more the work of the one than of the other ; it is in every sense a joint production.

It was the Sadhu's desire that any net profit that might accrue to the authors from this book should be devoted to some religious purpose. I asked him to name one, but he preferred to leave the choice to me. My collaborator and I have agreed that it would be most appropriately assigned to the National Missionary Society of India .

The most considerable account of the Sadhu that has so far appeared is Sadhu Sundar Singh, by Mrs. Parker, of the London Mission , Trivan dram, Travancore, published by the Christian Literature Society of India , who has courteously assented to our reproducing the portrait which forms our frontispiece. By the author's kind permission we have to some extent drawn upon this valuable source of information. But, partly because her book has been already so widely circulated both in England and America, and partly because our purpose is not primarily biographical, we have, so far as possible, deliberately avoided covering the same ground.

Next to the notes taken of what we heard

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from the Sadhu's own lips, our main authorities for his teaching have been three. First, the full shorthand reports of six of his addresses in this country generously put at our disposal by the National Council of the Y.M.C.A., through the kind intervention of Mr. W. Hindle not the only service for which we owe him gratitude. Secondly a collection of the Sadhu's discourses published by the National Missionary Society of India , Madras , in the Tamil language the native tongue of Mr. Appasamy. The Sadhu informed us that these were dictated by him in Hindustani, during a period of comparative leisure, to a friend whom he relied on as expert in the interpretation of his thought. Thirdly, Seven Addresses, delivered in Ceylon and published under that title by the Kandy United Christian Mission. We have also incorporated some valuable matter which appeared in The Bible in the World and in The Foreign Field, June x 920. Some occasional quotations from writings by Mr. A. Zahir, of St. John's College, Agra, a friend and devoted admirer of the Sadhu, and by Mr. A. E. Stokes, at one time his fellow worker, are acknowledged where they occur in the text. We desire here to express our hearty thanks to those editors and publishers who have most generously allowed us an

unrestricted liberty in making use of copyright material. It has been our good fortune that several of our Indian friends now in England happen to have come into close personal contact with the Sadhu at different periods of his life from schooldays onward. These, as well as various English friends who had known him in India and elsewhere, have given us the greatest assistance in the way of answering questions, suggesting points of view, or in reading the whole or portions of the book in manuscript or in proof. But when it is impossible to name all it would be invidious to mention any. Finally, we gratefully record our obligation to Mrs. White, of Sherburne, for the immense labour which she has bestowed upon the correction of the proofs, and to Mr. R. D. Richardson, of Hertford College, Oxford, who has compiled the Index. That this book should be a true interpretation of his message has, we know from his letters, been the Sadhu's constant prayer. The book is finished; but we are filled with a sense of its inadequacy to portray the man. Coming from the presence of Sundar Singh, men forget themselves, they forget him but they think of Christ.

B. H. S.

QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD, Feb. 1, 1921.

#### THE MAN AND HIS MAKING

THE career of Sundar Singh, up to his return to India from the West in September 1920, falls into four periods clearly defined. The first of which the latter part is marked by an ever more and more anxious quest for Peace ends in his sixteenth year with his conversion to Christianity. The second, characterised by his adoption, as a Christian, of the life of a Hindu "holy man" or Sadhu \*) comprises seven years of varied experience and inward growth. At the age of twenty three he was impelled to attempt, in imitation of our Lord, a Fast of forty days. The forty days were apparently not completed, but from the attempt he himself dates a great accession of spiritual strength and insight. This marks the Fast as the beginning of a third period in his life - a period of, relatively speaking, spiritual maturity, as well as of adventurous labours and hairbreadth escapes. Till the end

\*) the word is pronounced as if spelt Sādhoo, with accent on the first syllable. Its significance is explained on p. II.

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Mission School in his village, but it repelled him as being utterly

subversive of the religion of his fathers and offensive to the proud traditions of his Sikh blood. He little thought that from this unlikely source he would ultimately gain the Peace he sought.

#### **CONVERT AND SADHU**

**1904-1912**

The story of his conversion, which occurred on December 18, 1904, is best given in his own words, quoted from one of the Kandy addresses. \_Preachers and Christians in general had often come to me and I used to resist them and persecute them. When I was out in any town I got people to throw stones at Christian preachers. I would tear up the Bible and burn it when I had a chance. In the presence of my father I cut up the Bible and other Christian books and put kerosene oil upon them and burnt them. I thought this was a false religion and tried all I could to destroy it. I was faithful to my own religion, but I could not get any satisfaction or peace, though I performed all the' ceremonies and rites of that religion. So I thought of leaving it all and committing suicide. Three days after I had burnt the Bible, I woke up about three o'clock in the morning, had my usual bath, and prayed, ` O God, if there is a memorial in Indian religion. She died when he was fourteen, and we may surmise that the sense of loss helped to accentuate the ardour of his quest during the next two years.'

The desire to obtain this Peace which she had planted in his heart grew stronger; but the means for obtaining it which she had pointed out completely failed him. By the age of seven he knew by heart most of the Bhagavad-Gita, by common consent the most sublime of the Hindu Scriptures. By sixteen he had read the Granth of the Sikhs, the Muhammadan Quran, and a number 2 of the Hindu Upanishads a remarkable achievement even if we recollect that the Indian matures considerably earlier than the Anglo Saxon. But it was all in vain. His mother had taken him to priests and sadhus who might point out to him sacred texts which would show him the way; and for some time, under the direction of a Hindu sadhu, he practised a form of Yoga one of the methods, much esteemed among Hindus, of seeking identification with the Supreme Spirit, and the resultant peace and illumination, by concentration leading up to a state of trance, but with no avail. With the Bible he first became acquainted at the Presbyterian

\*) the reflexions on the death of dear ones seem to be based on personal experience, p. 162.

s He is uncertain how many; he thinks fifty two. The Quran

would be read in Urdu.

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**God, wilt thou show me the right way or I will kill myself.' My intention was that, if I got no satisfaction, I would place my head upon the railway line when the 5 o'clock train passed by and kill myself. If I got no satisfaction in this life, I thought I would get it in the next. I was praying and praying but got no answer; and I prayed for half-an-hour longer hoping to get peace. At 4.30 A.M. I saw something of which I had no idea at all previously. In the room where I was praying I saw a great light. I thought the place was on fire. I looked round, but could find nothing. Then the thought came to me that this might be an answer that God had sent me. Then as I prayed and looked into the light, I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ. It had such an appearance of glory and love. If it had been some Hindu incarnation I would have prostrated myself before it. But it was the Lord Jesus Christ whom I had been insulting a few days before. I felt that a vision like this could not come out of my own imagination. I heard a voice saying in Hindustani, 'How long will you persecute me? I have come to save you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it? \_The thought then came to me, 'Jesus Christ is not dead but living and it must be He Himself.' So I fell at His feet and got this wonderful**

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**Peace which I could not get anywhere else. This is the joy I was wishing to get. This was heaven itself. When I got up, the vision had all disappeared; but although the vision disappeared the Peace and joy have remained with me ever since. I went off and told my father that I had become a Christian. He told me, 'Go and lie down and sleep ; why, only the day before yesterday you burnt the Bible ; and you say you are a Christian now.' I said, ' Well, I have discovered now that Jesus Christ is alive and have determined to be His follower. To day I am His disciple and I am going to serve Him.' "**

**The suggestion has apparently been made to him that the vision was nothing but a dream or a creation of his own imagination ; or, again, that it was similar to visions seen by Hindu Yogis in that trance state which Sundar is himself inclined to ascribe to self-hypnotism. In reply Sundar emphasises the two facts that before commencing his prayer he had taken a cold bath that winter morning and so could not have been dreaming, and that the appearance of Christ was entirely unexpected. But he attaches most importance to the**

**consideration that the effect of the vision has been so revolutionary and so permanent; the Peace which rushed into his soul on that occasion has never abandoned him**

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**all these fourteen years, and in moments of exceptional stress or persecution only becomes the more profound. The one inference he can draw from this is that some new power from outside entered into his life from that moment, and that it was Christ Himself who appeared and spoke to him. He also thinks that at that time he did not know the story of St. Paul 's conversion; though, of course, on a point of that kind the human memory cannot be implicitly relied on. But he acknowledges, and is indeed always anxious to emphasise, the part played by the Bible in leading up to his conversion. (Cf. p. 203.) In speaking to us of visions of Christ seen, and words heard, by him on subsequent occasions when in a state of Ecstasy, he clearly and emphatically distinguished the vision at his conversion, when he saw Christ with his bodily eyes and heard Him "with these ears," from the later visions when he saw and heard with\_spiritual " sight and hearing.**

**Believing as we do that the spirit of scientific enquiry is in no respect opposed to the spirit of Religion, but that they are two separate ways by which man may attain to different aspects of the one Truth, we should ourselves maintain that the Divine power works in and through the laws of psychology, no less than in and through the other laws of Nature. 1 Hence we have no hesitation in affirming our conviction that the Sadhu did in this vision receive a real and definite Divine call. But we do not on that account feel any inclination to deny that the form in which it was received was conditioned by psychological laws. At any rate, there is no doubt that this vision was the turning point of his life.**

**Henceforth the discordant elements which had been striving within him for mastery were composed into a new harmony, a new equilibrium was set up, a new scale of values was established, and from that hour he became a new man. His father, his uncle, his elder brother and his mother (we remember, was already dead), made every effort to dissuade the boy from becoming a Christian. Promises of the wealth and social position that would be his if he remained in the ancestral religion, doleful reminders of the shame and dishonour that would fall upon the family should he become a Christian, failed to move him from his purpose. When love and reason failed, persecution was tried. For nine months indignities and**

humiliations were heaped upon him. After that, when an appeal by a friendly Raja to his honour and pride of race left his resolution still unbroken, he was finally disowned and ordered to depart for ever. He left his 1 Cf. *The Spirit*, ed. B. H. Streeter, Essay 11. (Macmillan).

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home with food in which poison had been mingled. It was better that he should die than continue to disgrace the family. " I remember the night when I was driven out of my home - the first night. When I came to know my Saviour I told my father and my brother and my other relations. At first they did not take much notice; but afterwards they thought that it was a great dishonour that I should become a Christian, and so I was driven out of my home... The first night I had to spend, in cold weather, under a tree. I had had no such experience. I was not used to living in such a place without a shelter. I began to think: ` Yesterday and before that I used to live in the midst of luxury at my home; but now I am shivering here, and hungry and thirsty and without shelter, with no warm clothes and no food.' I had to spend the whole night under the tree. But I remember the wonderful joy and peace in my heart, the presence of my Saviour. I held my New Testament in my hand. I remember that night as my first night in heaven. I remember the wonderful joy that made me compare that time with the time when I was living in a luxurious home. In the midst of luxuries and comfort I could not find peace in my heart. The presence of the Saviour changed the suffering into peace. Ever since then I have felt the presence of the Saviour." (The Bible in the World, June 1920.)

He was baptized at Simla, in the Church of England, on September 3, 1905.

In deciding as a Christian to don the habit and take up the way of life of a Hindu "holy man," Sundar was putting into practice a striking and creative idea. A sadhu, a sannyasi, or a fakir - the distinction between these we need not here elaborate - owns nothing on earth but the saffron robe which is the mark of his" profession." He devotes himself entirely to the particular type of the religious life he has adopted, which varies with the individual and may consist predominantly either in ascetic practices, in solitary meditation and mystic trance, or, more rarely, in preaching. A "holy man\_ is treated with profound respect. Men of the highest place do him reverence.

Superstition invests him with mysterious powers. To supply him with a meal or a night's lodging is an act of religious merit

- a fact which makes the "profession" a possible one to men of high ideals and holy life, an attractive one too many whose ideals and whose lives are the reverse of high or holy. But, in spite of the delinquencies of the many, the conspicuous asceticism of the few has kept alive its prestige; and a true sannyasi is saluted with divine and royal titles like Swami, Mahatma, Maharaja .

The adoption by a convert to Christianity of the role of a sadhu promised one great advantage at the price of one great difficulty. The advantage lay in the opportunity of presenting the new religion in a specially and characteristically Hindu form. The difficulty arose from the fact that the respect and veneration traditionally accorded to the person and life of a sadhu was liable to be turned into resentment and persecution once it was realised that it was Christianity which this particular sadhu was concerned to preach. During the next seven years Sundar was to experience acutely both the difficulties and the advantages of the choice he made wandering from place to place, possessing nothing but his robe, his blanket, and a copy of the New Testament, living on food offered him by hearers grateful or compassionate, or, when that was not forthcoming, on roots or leaves, accepting hospitality when offered or, failing that, sleeping in caves or under trees.

The population of India , it should be remembered, and of the adjoining states lives mainly in villages. Hence it is in the villages, where the advent of a newcomer requires no advertisement to collect an audience, that the Sadhu has until quite recently done his main preaching work. His

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first journey covered the Punjab , his own province, Kashmir , Baluchistan and Afghanistan . He ended up with a short rest at a village named Kotgarh, in the Himalayas , some 6000 feet above sea level and 55 miles from Simla. This village has ever since been a kind of headquarters or, at least, a point of beginning and ending for his preaching tours.

Here, towards the end of 1906, Sundar came into contact with Mr. S. E. Stokes, a wealthy American gentleman who, fascinated by the character and ideals of St. Francis of Assisi, had renounced all earthly possessions and was endeavouring to found a brotherhood for missionary work in India on the model of the early Franciscans. " Some weeks after I had changed my life," writes Mr. Stokes, " an Indian Christian was moved to join me. He was a convert from the Sikhs and had been travelling

about the country as a Christian sadhu (holy man) for more than a year. . . . When my work took me to the plains, he remained in charge of our interests up in the mountains and laboured so faithfully and with such effect that all were astonished. His work has been far better than my own, and although he is scarcely more than a boy he has suffered hunger, cold, sickness and even imprisonment for his Master."

Besides

1 S. E. Stokes, *The Love of God*, p. y (Longmans). Mr. Stokes gave up

the Franciscan manner of life after about five years.

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preaching in the villages the two worked together in the Leper Asylum at Sabathu and in a plague camp near Lahore, Sundar himself says that he and Stokes actually lived together only for three months, though they worked in co-operation for two years. From Stokes naturally he heard much about St. Francis. The Sadhu always speaks of St. Francis with the utmost veneration ; and to have thus, at the beginning of his career, been enabled to admire a spiritual genius whose aims and manner of life were so closely akin to his own ideal of a " Christian sadhu " cannot but have been both an inspiration and an abiding influence. At the same time we must rule out the idea of any conscious imitation of St. Francis. "Be yourself, do not copy others" is a fundamental principle with the Sadhu, both in his own life and in his advice to others. Indeed, while speaking with considerable admiration of the character and work of Mr. Stokes, he told us that he thought that his friend had made a mistake in attempting too slavishly to imitate the Franciscan model, and that he had declined himself to become a full member of the new brotherhood.

In regard to one very important matter he has always hitherto refused to imitate St. Francis. "St. Francis felt that it was God's will that he

should start a new Order: but I do not feel it is God's will for me." Wisely or unwisely, he has so far given small encouragement to those who have urged him to form an Order of Christian sadhu. He thinks that such Orders generally become corrupt after the lifetime of the Founder, and also that religious organisations tend to make too much of human help. " On the mountains torrents flow right along, cutting their own courses. But on the plains canals have to be dug out painfully by men so that the water might flow. So among those who live on the heights with God, the Holy Spirit makes its way through

of its own accord, whereas those who devote little time to prayer and communion with God have to organise painfully." This decision of the Sadhu's, and his complete lack of interest in organisation and probably of any capacity for it-differentiates him at once from St. Francis and St. Paul, the two supreme Missionary Mystics, with each of whom he has so many other points of contact. The Sadhu has felt deep solicitude for individuals among his\_ spiritual god-children," as he calls them, but " the care of all the churches," or the threatened contumacy of a General Chapter he has not experienced. He has borne the cross in many ways, but he has never had to agonise or fight lest some beloved community should relapse to

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legalism, collapse in schism, or apostasies from the primitive simplicity of the Rule. And, perhaps, just for this reason, there are subtle ways in which his vision has in some directions not penetrated quite so deep as that of Paul or Francis.

In 1908 the Sadhu took his first journey into Tibet. And from that time on he has made that country his principal' field of work. He was drawn to Tibet, partly by the fact that little or no Christian preaching has been done there hitherto-there being only a few Missionaries, chiefly Moravians, on the border,-and partly because he regards the conversion of Tibet as a duty pre-eminently incumbent on the missionary effort of the Indian Church. The religion of Tibet is a debased form of Buddhism ; and the fact that the priests, or Lamas as they are called, in virtue of their priestly office occupy also all positions of civil authority naturally makes them bitter opponents of religious innovation. But the attraction for the Sadhu of . this particular field has been undoubtedly strengthened by the exceptional hardships which the work entails. Suffering amidst the cold and snow, the certainty of persecution, and the possibility of martyrdom appeal to that passion in him for companionship in the sufferings of Christ which is a dominant quality in his life and which has led many-mistakenly, as we shall see later

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to style him an Ascetic. Since 1908 his plan has been to spend half the year or rather more in Tibet, and during the winter months to work in India. He once tried preaching in Tibet in winter, but a drift of snow twelve feet deep kept him seventeen days in one house, and convinced him that the life of an itinerant preacher was impossible there at that season. The years 1909 and 1910 were spent at St. John's Divinity

**College, Lahore. A fellow student at the College recalls how there also he lived the life of a sadhu. Though he never complained and rarely criticised, he was undoubtedly out of harmony with the interests and outlook of the average student. He was also sincerely distressed at the extent to which Christians in general fell short of the ideals of their profession- a judgement which must be interpreted in the light of the Sadhu's own exalted practice, and not be taken as a special reflexion on the Christians of Lahore. The curriculum of studies also, however suited to an ordinary student, could hardly have appealed to one of his temperament and experience ; and it would seem that to this period of his life must be assigned the maturing of the conviction that religious knowledge of the highest kind is acquired, not by intellectual study, but by direct contact with Christ, which expresses itself in his c**

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**favourite doctrine that Religion is a matter, not of the head, but of the heart.**

**It was apparently at Lahore that he first came across the Imitation of Christ, a book which he has read frequently since and which has left clear traces on his " Philosophy of the Cross." The Bible and the Book of Nature are, he says, the only books which he still regularly reads. And indeed they are the only books he has always by him. But occasionally when staying with friends he will take up other books, especially if he finds something by or about one of the Mystics. He has read a life of St. Francis -by whom or when he could not remember, that is the kind of detail in which he takes no interest. At some time he has dipped into Al-Ghazzali and other Sufi Mystics. He has also read in this way something of Boehme, St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, and a very little of Swedenborg and Madame Guyon. We fancy that he only made the acquaintance of these last five in comparatively recent years, but could learn nothing definite from him about dates.**

**While at college he began to learn to play the Sitar, an Indian stringed instrument, but he soon gave it up, because it took up too much time and because, as a sadhu, it would be difficult to carry it about with him. So he gave it to a friend, asking him to make the best use of it for the glory of God. Music affected him very differently in different moods ; when his mind was burdened with the largeness of tasks ahead, it tended to be depressing. At supreme moments he sometimes breaks out with hymns of thanksgiving, but his general attitude he humorously expresses thus : " I would**

rather not sing : I am afraid I might only make a noise." Shortly after this, he came to an important decision. He had been recommended for Deacon's Orders, and had been already given a license to preach. But when he realised that taking Holy Orders in the Church of England would hamper his freedom of action in regard to Christians of other denominations and would impose restrictions and limitations on his sphere of Christian work, he decided not to proceed to the Deaconate and at the same time returned his license to Bishop Lefroy, at that time Bishop of Lahore. The Bishop, recognising the call of the Sadhu for work of a special character and a wider sphere, entirely acquiesced in the wisdom of the step, and continued to the end of his days to take a deep and fatherly interest in him and in his work.

When the Sadhu was in Oxford we enquired his exact motive in giving up his license. " I was told," he replied, " that if ordained in the Church of England I could not preach in other

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#### **THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 21**

Churches, though I could speak in the schools and colleges of other Christians." This remark led on to a conversation on the subject of Christian unity. We noted the following characteristically epigrammatic remarks : " If Christians cannot live together happily here in this short life, how will they live together in Eternity?" "The children of God are very dear but very queer. They are very nice but very narrow." " I told the Archbishop of Canterbury that just as there are high caste and low caste in India, so there are high Church and low Church in the Church of England : Christ Himself would not have made such differences." Speaking further of his interview with the Archbishop at Lambeth, " I told him frankly," he said, " that I was speaking in Anglican Churches and that I had also accepted an invitation from Dr. J. H. Jowett to speak in Westminster Chapel and another invitation to speak in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. ` That is quite all right for you,' said the Archbishop with a smile." But though quietly insisting on complete freedom of action for himself , the Sadhu is in no sense hostile to ecclesiastical authority as such. Before leaving the Archbishop, responding to a suggestion from a High Church friend who accompanied him, he devoutly kneeled before him to receive his blessing. The Archbishop expressed an anxiety to meet him again, and, as this could not be arranged, was present on the platform at a meeting of London clergy, presided over by the Bishop of London, at which the Sadhu

spoke.

Three anecdotes will suffice just to suggest the " atmosphere ," so to speak, of the life of a Christian sadhu unattached to any religious organisation, which from now on he finally adopted. The first we heard from his own lips in a drawing-room in Paris. One day while journeying towards a certain village he caught sight of two men in front of him, one of whom suddenly disappeared. A little farther on he overtook the remaining man, who, pointing to a figure on the ground covered with a sheet, told the Sadhu that this was his friend who had died by the way. " I am a stranger here ; I pray you, help me with money for his burial." Sundar had only two piece which had been given him for the toll bar of a bridge he was to cross, and his blanket, but these he gave to the man and passed on. He had not gone far when the man came running after him, fell at his feet and sobbed out, " My companion is really dead." The Sadhu did not understand, until he explained that it was their practice to take it in turns to prey on travellers by pretending that one of them was dead. This they had done

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for years, but that day when the man went back to call his friend there was no response, and on lifting the cloth he was horror-stricken to find him actually dead. " I am very glad," he added naively, " that it was not my turn to play the dead man to-day." The wretched man, convinced that here was some great saint whom they had robbed of all he had, and thus merited the displeasure of the gods, implored forgiveness of the Sadhu. Then Sundar spoke to him of Christ and how, from Him he might obtain forgiveness. " Make me your disciple," said the man. "How can I make you my disciple when I myself am only a disciple ? " replied the Sadhu.<sup>1</sup> He allowed the man, however, to accompany him in his wanderings for a while. Later on he sent him to a mission station near Garhwal, where in due time he was baptized.

A second story we quote from Mrs. Parker's sketch.

" At a village in the district of Thoria the people behaved so badly to him that his nights were always spent in the jungle as long as he was working amongst them. On a particularly dark night, after a discouragingly hard day, the Sadhu found a cave where he spread his blanket and spent the night. When daylight came it

<sup>1</sup> We are not quite certain whether this reply was made on this or on some other occasion.

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## **I THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 23**

revealed a large leopard still asleep close to him. The sight almost paralysed him with fear, but once outside the cave he could only reflect upon the great providence of God that had preserved him while he slept. `Never to this day,' he says, `has any wild animal done me harm.' "I

Our authority for the story that follows is a signed letter to the North Indian Christian weekly, the Nur Afshan, quoted by Mr. Zahir? The writer, an Indian gentleman in the Forest Department of the Civil Service, tells how one day, when descending a mountain, he met a sadhu going up. Curiosity prompted him to watch what would happen, so instead of joining him for a talk ,

as he at first thought of doing, he waited. And this was what he saw. When the Sadhu reached a village he sat down upon a log, and, wiping the perspiration from his face, commenced singing a Christian hymn. Soon a crowd gathered, but when it was found that the love of Christ was the theme, many of the people became angry-including the writer of the letter, who was a keen member of the Arya Samaj. 3 One man jumped up and I Parker, p. &cent;6. \$ Zahir, A Lover of the Cross, p. x&cent;; a The Arya Samaj is perhaps the most influential of the various modern reform movements in India. It is a kind of Protestant Reformation Of Hinduism, its motto being "back to the Vedas"-the primitive scriptures of India-accompanied by the abolition of images in worship and great stress on education. Much of its inspiration is derived from its claim to find in the most ancient elements of the national religion ideals sufficiently lofty to be an effective counterpoise to the growing attraction of Christianity.

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dealt the Sadhu a blow that knocked him off his seat, cutting his cheek and hand badly. Without a word Sundar rose, bound up his hand with his turban, and, the blood still running down his face, began to sing praises to God and to invoke His blessing on his persecutors. The man, Kripa Ram, who had thrown Sundar down, afterwards sought long and earnestly for him; in the hope that he might be baptized by "that wounded hand"; but not finding him, he accepted baptism from a local missionary, whose name is given, but still hopes some day to see the Sadhu. The witness goes on to explain at length how the incident has completely revolutionised his own attitude towards Christianity, and ends with a request to all readers of the paper to pray for him that he may be able (by baptism) to

**confess openly his faith in Christ.**

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## **THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MATURITY**

**1912-1918**

### **THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 25**

a means of reckoning time, a heap of forty stones, one of which he was to throw aside every day. During the early stages of the fast there was a feeling of intense burning in his stomach on account of lack of food, but this soon passed away. In the course of the fast he saw Christ ; not, he says, as at his conversion, with his physical eyes, because they were now dim and could not see anything, but in a spiritual vision, with pierced hands, bleeding feet and radiant face. Throughout the whole period he felt in himself a remarkable enrichment of that sense of peace and happiness which has been his in a measure ever since he became a Christian. Indeed so great was this sense that he had no temptation whatever to give up the fast. As his physical powers became enfeebled he saw, or thought he saw, a lion or other wild animal and heard it growl ; the growl appeared to come from a distance, while the animal itself seemed to be near-hearing apparently being more quickly affected than sight. Also he became too weak to throw aside the stones, with the result that he lost count of time, and is quite uncertain how many days he completed. Two woodcutters found him in this condition, and carried him in his blanket to Rishi Kish and then to Dehra Dun. He remembers, being at the time fully conscious of what was

In spite of the dissuasions of friends, the Sadhu, in his twenty-third year, felt driven to essay a Fast of Forty Days in imitation of his Master. Choosing a shadowy place in the jungly country between Hardwar and Dehra Dun, and noting down in his New Testament the exact day on which he began his fast, he placed near him, as

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### **THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 2'7**

happening, though he had not the strength to speak.

The Sadhu asserts that the Fast has left a permanent effect on his spiritual life. Certain doubts he had entertained were finally cleared up. Previously he had sometimes wondered whether his sense of peace and joy might somehow be " a hidden power of his own life," welling up from within himself and not due to the Divine presence. But during the fast, when his bodily powers were nil or almost nil, the peace increased considerably and became much stronger. This has convinced him that this peace

is a heavenborn peace and not the result of the natural operation of his human faculties. Another consequence of the fast was the conviction that the spirit was something different from the brain. He had been used to wonder what would become of his spirit after the decay of his body. But since during the fast he found that as his body became weaker his spiritual faculties seemed to become more active and alert, he drew the inference that the spirit was something altogether apart from the brain. "The brain was only the office where the Spirit worked. The brain is like an organ and the spirit like the organist that plays on it. Two or three of the notes may go wrong and may produce no music. That does not, however, imply the absence of the organist."

The Fast, he told us, also left a permanent influence on his character. "Before I attempted the fast of forty days I was frequently assailed by temptations-when you write your book you ought to write about my weaknesses also-more especially, when I was tired, I used to get annoyed when people came to talk to me and ask questions. I still feel this difficulty, but nothing like so much as before the fast. Indeed I have been told by my friends that it is not noticeablebut even if they are right it is still a weakness which I do not like to have in my life. It has caused me much difficulty and doubt, but perhaps it is given me to keep me humble, like the thorn in the flesh, mentioned by St. Paul, which I sometimes think may have been the same thing. Or perhaps it is partly the result of still living in the body, but I wish it were not so. Before the fast, I suffered also from other temptations. When suffering from hunger and thirst I used to complain, and to ask why the Lord did not provide. He had told me not to take any money with me. If I had taken money I could have bought what I needed. Since the fast, however, when overtaken by physical hardships I say, 'It is my Father's will, perhaps I have done something to deserve it.' Again before the fast I was sometimes tempted to give up the life of a sadhu with its hardships, to go back to the

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#### **I THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 29**

luxury of my father's house; to get married and live in comfort. Could I not be a good Christian and live a life of communion with God there also ? But then I saw that, though it was no sin for others to live in comfort and have money and home, God's call for me was different ; and the gift of Ecstasy which he had given me is better than any home. Here I find wonderful joys

which transcend all others. My real marriage is with Christ. I do not say that marriage is not good for others. If I am already bound to Christ, how can I marry another ? "

We asked whether he had ever fasted since for shorter periods . " I have been forced to, on the Himalayas," he replied. " Have you found this kind of fasting good for your spiritual life ? "

" I have found everything to be of use to me in my spiritual life, hunger and thirst as well as other things."

The Sadhu made it clear to us that he did not undertake the Fast with a view to inflict upon himself suffering-that, he declared, is a Hindu idea.'- He does not intend to repeat it ; nor does he think it desirable for every Christian to attempt it. But from various references he made

1 It is only fair to point out that many Hindus regard fasting less as an ascetic discipline than as a means of enhancing spiritual perception.

to it we drew the conclusion that it was a crisis in his spiritual development. We should have been tempted to describe it, in the technical language of mystical theology, as the transition from the " Illuminative " to the " Unitive " stage ; but the very slight indications of anything corresponding to the intervening stage known as the "Dark night of the Soul "-a point we shall return to in a later chapter-would make the analogy misleading. Again, if it were legitimate to exclude the Epistles of the Captivity from a characterisation of St. Paul, we might speak of the transition as being one from a Pauline to a Johannine type of experience. But this would be in some respects equally misleading. The Sadhu's personality is sufficiently individual to have marched towards maturity along individual lines.

The period that followed the Fast is notable as one in which he endured an extremity of persecution, especially in Tibet ; and also experienced some remarkable deliverances which he is himself inclined to regard as most probably due to angelic intervention. With some difficulty the Sadhu was induced, at a small gathering at the Pusey House, Oxford, to give his own version of one of the most striking of these incidents. We quote the story as given by Mrs. Parker, indicating in a footnote the only differences, not

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purely verbal, which we have noted between the two accounts. " At a town called Rásár he was arrested and arraigned before the head Lama on the charge of entering the country and

preaching the Gospel of Christ. He was found guilty, and amidst a crowd of evil-disposed persons he was led away to the place of execution. The two favourite forms of capital punishment are, being sewn up in a wet yak skin and put out in the sun until death ends the torment, or being cast in the depths of a dry well, the top being firmly fastened over the head of the culprit.' The latter was chosen for the Sadhu.

" Arrived at the place he was stripped of his" clothes and cast into the dark depths of this ghastly charnel-house with such violence that his right arm was injured. Many others had gone down this same well before him, never to return, and he alighted on a mass of human bones and rotting flesh. Any death seemed preferable to this. Wherever he laid his hands they met putrid flesh, while the odour almost poisoned him. In the words of his Saviour he cried, 'Why hast Thou forsaken me ? '

"Day passed into night, making no change in

1 These methods are an ingenious attempt to evade the Buddhist law which forbids a true disciple to kill. Similarly in Ceylon 1 was shown the precipice over which condemned criminals were pushed in the old kingdom of Kandy-also a Buddhist state.-B. H. S.

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### **THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 31**

the darkness of this awful place and bringing no relief by sleep. Without food or even water the hours grew into days, and Sundar felt he could not last much longer. On the third night, just when he had been crying to God in prayer, he heard a grating sound overhead. Some one was opening the locked lid of his dismal prison. He heard the key turned and the rattle of the iron covering as it was drawn away. Then a voice reached him from the top of the well, telling him to take hold of the rope that was being let down for his rescue. As the rope reached him he grasped it with all his remaining strength, and was strongly but gently pulled up from the evil place into the fresh air above.

"Arrived at the top of the well the lid was drawn over again and locked. When he looked round, his deliverer was nowhere to be seen, but the pain in his arm was gone and the clean air filled him with new life. All that the Sadhu felt able to do was to praise God for his wonderful deliverance, and when morning came he struggled back to the town, where he rested in the serai until he was able to start preaching again. His return to the city and his old work was cause for a great commotion. The news was quickly taken to the Lama that the man they all

thought dead was well and preaching again.

" The Sadhu was again arrested and brought to

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the judgement seat of the Lama, and being questioned as to what had happened he told the story of his marvellous escape. The Lama was greatly angered, declaring that some one must have secured the key and gone to his rescue ; but when search was made for the key and it was found on his own girdle, he was speechless with amazement and fear. He then ordered Sundar to leave the city and get away as far as possible, lest his powerful god should bring some untold disaster upon himself and his people."

To this period belong two incidents which have appealed to the popular imagination.

He discovered the existence of a Christian brotherhood, said to number 24,000 members, commonly spoken of as the " Secret Sannyasi

Mission ." They appear to have, along with much that is genuinely Christian, some curious, but-if we may judge from those which have been so far divulged-not very interesting or valuable, secret doctrines and traditions. The Sadhu has consorted with them, as with all sects of Christians, in a spirit of sympathy and brotherhood ; but he has urged them to come out into the open. To his mind the courage to confess Christ, and the duty

1 Parker, pp. 6&cent; ff. In speaking to us he said his arm was " struck with a club and almost broken" before he was thrown down; also the rope had a loop at the end, in which he put his foot, otherwise with his injured arm he could not have supported his weight. He also strongly emphasised the fact that, along with the horror, pain and despair, he felt all along an immense accession of inward joy and peace.

**1 THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 33**

to bear witness to Him, are of the essence of true Christianity. Later, in a cave 13,000 feet above sea-level on the Kailash range of the Himalayas , he found an ancient rishi or hermit-the " Maharishi of Kailash." The Rishi gave the Sadhu a marvellous account of his own immense age and wonderful powers and adventures, and also imparted to him a series of visions of an apocalyptic character. The Sadhu was undoubtedly impressed by the personality and communications of this remarkable individual, revisited him more than once, and reported what he had seen and heard to many people in India . Unfortunately,

but perhaps not unnaturally, popular interest, attracted by the more bizarre elements in the story, has concentrated on this picturesque hermit in a way that has latterly caused some embarrassment to the Sadhu, who is frequently bombarded with queries about him and his revelations. " People have made too much of this incident in my life," he said to us in Oxford . " The Maharishi is a man of prayer, and I have a great respect for him ; but my work is, not to preach the Rishi, but to preach Christ."

We have spoken of this period in the life of the Sadhu as that in which he attained to spiritual maturity-so far, that is to say, as such a thing can properly be said of any man still alive. It D

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### THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 35

will be convenient, therefore, to call attention to the three outstanding features of his inward life -his Philosophy of the Cross, if we may so name his characteristic orientation towards suffering ; the ineffable Peace which belongs to his mystical experience of the presence of Christ ; his times of Ecstasy. These, though all present, and indeed conspicuous, before the Fast, appear now to have taken on an enhanced intensity and persistency.

Already in the autumn of 1906 Mr. Stokes tells how, when he was tending the Sadhu during an attack of fever combined with acute pain in the stomach, he heard him murmur below his breath, " How sweet it is to suffer for His sake." The notion that suffering is a privilege, in so much as it is an opportunity of sharing an experience of Christ and helping on His work, is as fundamental to the Sadhu as it is to St. Paul. There is no doubt that he does literally rejoice in bearing pain for Christ's sake. For this reason many have described him as an Ascetic ; but, as we shall see later, he quite definitely repudiates the ascetic idea as ordinarily understood. Suffering, not for its own sake, but for the sake of Christ and His work, is what he loves.

" There is nothing like the Cross in all heaven or earth. It was through the Cross that God revealed His love for man. But for the Cross we should have remained ignorant of the Love of our Heavenly Father. For this reason God desires that all His children should bear this heavy but ` sweet ' burden of the Cross, because only through this will our love for God, and His love for us, be revealed to others."

" We shall never get a second opportunity of bearing the Cross after our life on earth ; for we shall never return to this life. So

now is the time to bear the Cross joyfully : never again will an opportunity be given us of bearing this sweet burden.' 2 My choice is to work in poverty and simplicity. If offered an archbishopric I should decline."

In the second place, we must notice the unutterable Peace, " Heaven on earth " as he calls it, which flows from his abiding consciousness of the presence of Christ as solace, as companionship, and as power. It is this alone which enables him to translate his Philosophy of the Cross into the actualities of daily life. We shall attempt a description and discussion of it in the chapter entitled " A Mystic's Peace." In the present context it will suffice to record his testimony that this experience has always risen to a

1 The word " sweet " has not to the Sadhu the sentimental connotation it has in modern English ; both thought and language are influenced by the Imitation. Paradoxically as it sounds to the ears of the average man the Sadhu finds an almost physical pleasure in suffering in Christ's service. A. Zahir, Soul-Stirring Messages, p. 6.

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#### **THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 37**

peculiar intensity at times of acute suffering and persecution. He told us that he especially remembered the intensified Peace of the time he spent awaiting death in the dry well in Tibet, and on another occasion, which we shall speak of later, when he was compelled to spend a day and a night without food or water, his hands and feet in the stocks, and his naked body covered with leeches sucking his blood.

Lastly, there are his times of Ecstasy, which since the Fast have been of more frequent occurrence and have seemed to him richer in content. In these, as he believes, he is rapt up like St. Paul into the Third Heaven, when he sees and hears things unutterable. From these he derives, not only spiritual comfort and illumination, but also physical refreshment and renewed strength. They are described and their nature and value are discussed in a later chapter of this book.

" I believe," said the Sadhu, " that a life of prayer and the inner peace which goes with the Christian life enable one to a large extent to resist disease as well as to endure hunger and hardship. I was surprised when I heard that some of the Mystics suffered considerably in their physical health."

In this connexion the experience of Mr. Stokes is worth quoting. " Before going to

India I was not strong : indeed it was considered questionable

whether I could live in the Indian climate even under ordinary conditions. After going to India , but before taking up this work, I had a very bad attack of typhoid fever, with relapses. The doctors-there were two of them-ordered me home, and assured me that I would be dead within fourteen months if I did not obey them. Feeling that I could not leave the work, I remained; and yet I lived and have been stronger ever since. As a matter of fact it seems to me that we are apt to conclude that many things are impossible before we have ever tested their possibility. The man who suffers against his will speedily becomes a physical wreck ; but if he suffers of his own free will, impelled to do so by his ideal, there is hardly any limit to his powers of endurance. This I have seen in Brother Sundar Singh and in Hindu bhagats, and know from what I have myself undergone. The ideal makes the suffering entailed by living up to it a privilege. At home I was placed by my doctor on a diet-list, but as a Friar I have often eaten food which some Indians are afraid to touch. . . . A man's strength is commensurate with the work God gives him to do and his purpose and enthusiasm in undertaking it." 1

1 S. E. Stokes, op. cit. p. 1q.

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## **THE MAN AND HIS MAKING 39**

### **WORLD FAME**

**1918-1920**

The Sadhu's visit to Madras early in 1918 begins a new epoch in his life, marking as it does the transition from a position of obscurity to one of world-wide reputation. In South India the fame of his activities in the North had preceded him. Thousands flocked to hear him. Among Christians wherever he went a wave of spiritual awakening followed. Non-Christians also were affected, and in one place alone no less than nineteen were converted.

In this connexion we may note the fact that in spite of repeated requests the Sadhu always declines to baptize converts. He always refers

them to the regular ministers of the particular denomination which has work on the spot. His own father about this time decided to become

a Christian. " You have opened my spiritual eyes," he said, " so you must baptize me." " If I baptize you," replied the Sadhu, " there are hundreds of others whom I must baptize. My work is not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." The Sadhu, no doubt, recognises the desirability that baptism should be preceded by

a longer course of instruction than could be given by a wandering preacher, and also sees the necessity 'to the average convert, unless he is shortly to relapse into his old state, of a direct affiliation to a definite Christian community. But the refusal himself to perform the rite of baptism is probably due, at least in part, to a well-founded apprehension that the uneducated convert might attribute some specific virtue to his personal action. The Hindu readily attributes supernatural powers to a " holy man," fears his curse or implores his blessing as potencies inherent in the man himself. Any such reputation for powers personal to himself the Sadhu is above all anxious to avoid.

We asked him once whether he had ever tried spiritual healing. "Yes," he said, "but I gave it up because I found it made people look to me and not to Christ, and that is a cross I cannot bear. In Ceylon the son of a Christian gentleman was dying, and the doctors had given him up. The mother besought me to come and lay my hands on him and pray for him. I said, ' There is no power in these hands, only in the pierced hands of Christ.' At last I consented to go and see him in the hospital, and prayed for him and put my hand upon his head. Three days later I saw the boy sitting with his mother in the back seat at a meeting I was addressing. Then I found that, however much I impressed upon people that it was not my personal power that had effected the cure, but the power of Christ

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in answer to prayer, they insisted on looking upon me as a wonder-worker; and I saw that I must not do this again, as it would encourage superstition and distract attention from the Gospel I have to preach."

Sundar's aliveness to the evil consequence of purely personal notoriety may be further illustrated by a fact told us by a lady missionary. On the first occasion that he visited the town in Northern India where she worked, he mentioned in his addresses, as he often does by way of illustrating the lesson he is enforcing, some of the remarkable, and, in his own view, supernatural, deliverances which he has experienced. The Indian Christians of the place talked of nothing else for weeks. Three or four years later he visited the same city, but this time he did not mention a single incident of this character.

His preaching tour through the South of India and Ceylon was followed by a similar visit to many of the chief towns in Burma , the Federated Malay States , China and Japan , after which he returned to spend the summer at his usual mission work in

**Tibet .**

**In January 1920 he took ship for England . His desire had been to visit Palestine, but he could not obtain a passport; he left India, however, with the hope that on his way back from England he might be able to do so. He left England in May for the United States. He was invited to visit Sweden, France and Switzerland on his return to England, but ultimately accepted an invitation to go to Australia instead, and thence back to India.**

**His principle of travelling from place to place with no money or other provision for the morrow, trusting that whatever is needful the Lord will provide , he still adhered to strictly. To one who raised a doubt whether this side of the " Sadhu -ideal " was practicable in the West, he replied, " God is the same God in the East and in the West." And as a matter of fact no difficulty has occurred. His father, who, as we have mentioned, had lately become reconciled to him; paid his passage to England and in England and America friends have naturally found small difficulty in securing hospitality for so remarkable a personage. His host, on seeing him off at the station, hands him a ticket to his next destination. For major expenses, like his passage to America, friends collected contributions. In visiting the West, Sundar had more than one object. He wished to investigate for himself the truth in the statement made to him in India by non-Christians that the West is immoral and that Christianity has ceased there to be a living force; he hoped to hold converse there with**

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**" Godly men "; and he felt called, also to bear witness to the power of Christ there.**

**The visit has been well worthwhile. Supporters of missions have felt great encouragement, seeing in him a conspicuous evidence of the Divine benediction on their prayers and labour in past years. Many others have found inspiration in listening to his fresh and vivid presentation of religion, and not a few think of their personal contact, with him as a turning point in their lives. Perhaps, too, the effect of this visit to the West in broadening his own outlook and enlarging his own experience may not be inconsiderable nor without influence on the future development of Christianity in India.**

**In the streets of a Western city the saffron robe and turban are conspicuous. But anywhere he is a figure to attract attention. Erect, somewhat above middle height, with black hair and beard, light olive complexion, a Syrian-looking face with soft**

dark eyes, his calm of mien and bearing and firm peaceful dignity of stride make him, even apart from robe and turban, look, as some one put it, " as if he had stepped straight out from the pages of the Bible." The story is told that once, when calling at a certain house, a little maid fresh opened the door to him from a distant country village. He gave the name " Sadhu Sundar Singh." She rushed off to her mistress. "There's some one wants to see you, ma'am. I can't make anything of his name. But he looks as if it might be Jesus Christ."

Being naturally of a retiring disposition, he frequently in public places wears a raincoat over his robe to avoid attracting notice. When possible he shuns buses or crowded trains, preferring to walk or, on occasion, to go by cab. Nevertheless he always takes in good part the way in which he and his unfamiliar garb are stared at; and he is never in the least put out by the vociferous and sometimes none too courteous attentions of children in the streets. When at Birmingham he was taken to see over Cadbury's Chocolate Works. Asked afterwards how he had enjoyed what he had seen; " I enjoyed myself," he said, " but I think the girls and men working in the factory enjoyed themselves more looking at me." " You ought to have charged them something for it," put in a friend. " Yes , yes," said the Sadhu, smiling, " but then they gave me so much chocolate I could not eat my dinner that day." Such flashes of humour are not infrequent with him; and, like the Medieval Saints, he disregards at times conventional reverences. After an ascent of the Eiffel Tower with its three floors he remarked, " You can say now that you have been to the third heaven, like St. Paul."

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People who invite the Sadhu to a meal will often enquire beforehand whether he has any restrictions as to food. He has none " Any thing at any time" is the principle he often reaffirms. He is equally ready to sit down to a good dinner, well served and well appointed, or to eat the plainest fare, or, if necessary, to do without. And if coffee or sweets are offered to the company he does not disdain them.

" England is not cold enough for me," was his remark to some who were afraid that in his thin clothes he would feel the rigours of the climate. Tibet has inured him to extreme cold. Once he remarked that he would not wear even sandals-in India he never does so-but that friends had suggested to him that in English houses ladies might be solicitous about carpets and the dirt which, if he walked barefoot, he might bring in. Accordingly he wore sandals in the streets, but usually, in

oriental fashion, slipped them off when entering a room. Affectionate to friends, courteous and considerate to all, a lover of animals—we marked how almost tenderly he stroked a little dog that craved his notice he struck every one who met him as the embodiment of peace, gentleness and loving-kindness. To awake suddenly and find oneself a " star turn " in London or New York is an experience

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that may easily demoralise even those who know enough of Western civilisation to discount and assign to its proper value the quality and depth of the popular enthusiasm it implies. Not a few of the Sadhu's well-wishers naturally, but, as we believe, quite unnecessarily, felt some apprehension that, to use a current phrase, he might " be spoilt."

The adulation of the Church may be harder to withstand than the hostility of the World. But the Sadhu is not ignorant of the human soul. " We must follow Christ with our eyes steadily fixed on Him, but with both our ears closed. For on the one side we may hear flattering remarks which might make us proud; on the other side we may hear criticism or slander which might make us despond." " People write about me," he said to Baron von Hügel, "but they don't point out my defects, so that I may remedy them." The fact that Mrs. Parker's book was on sale at a certain shop was once mentioned in his presence. " It is not good," he said, "that a man's biography should be written in his lifetime." Indeed, it was only on the express understanding that this book of ours was to be, not another biography, but an attempt to interpret his message to the West, and so perhaps do something in the way of following up his preaching, that he consented to provide us with materials for the undertaking.

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The bustle and roar of life in Western cities visibly jarred upon and wearied one constitutionally a lover of outdoor nature and of the contemplative life. Even in India he dislikes large towns. He always feels the spirit of evil to be peculiarly powerful there. " To go into big towns is always against my desire, and I have to constrain myself to do so, but I was told once in an Ecstasy that the present life is the only opportunity that will be given me for helping others in this world. That is a privilege, which even Angels are not allowed. We shall have Heaven forever, but we have only a short time for service here, and therefore must not waste the one opportunity. I know why hermits prefer to live in caves and mountains. I much prefer it myself."

At table, in Oxford, some one asked him point-blank what he thought of English Christianity and English life. He clearly found a difficulty in expressing his views in a way that would not seem discourteous to his hosts, saying he had not seen enough as yet to enable him to give an opinion, but that it seemed to him too little was made of the aspect of religion as peace of soul, " Spiritual things cannot be discerned without quiet and meditation; " then, perfectly naturally, he fell into a discourse on the Peace of God and the lack of it in English life and in English religion, which none of those who heard it will soon forget.

A letter of the Sadhu's to a friend in India is more explicit. " Many people are surprised to see me in my simple dress with no socks or boots on my feet. But I told them that I love simplicity and that wherever I go I want to live in the same way as I live in India, not changing my colour like a chameleon. I have been in England only two weeks and so cannot speak with much confidence of my impressions. But I feel that, just as the Sun is seldom to be seen on account of fogs and mist, so the Sun of Righteousness is almost always hidden by the fogs and mist of materialism . . . . Many people, especially those who have received blessing from the meetings, tell me that more missionaries from India are needed."

On the other hand, he told an Indian friend that, in spite of the English people being so materialistic, he had found many spiritual people among them. And he expressed a very definite dissent from the suggestion that India had no more to learn from Western missionaries. Indeed he regarded the missionary interest and activity as the most vitalising force in Western Christianity.

In America this two-sided impression of the West seems to have deepened-at least he gave it

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a more public expression. " Christ would say here, ' Come unto me all ye that are heavy gold-laden, and I will give you rest.'" " Still God's people are all over the world, and He has His own witnesses in the West also."

In America, as in England, wherever he went he was received with enthusiasm, and, as the result of practice, it became less and less difficult for him to address large audiences in the English language. He appreciated the welcome, he formed friendships, and he had reason to believe that his message was not delivered in vain. Yet those with whom he was most intimate felt that he was not quite happy in the West, and saw

him growing day by day more restive for the calm of the Himalayas and the severe simplicity of an Indian Sadhu's life.

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### **A MYSTIC'S CREED**

#### **A CHRISTOCENTRIC MYSTICISM**

It has been remarked of St. Paul that he was one of the world's great mystics, but that, in contrast to those who aspire to union with the Absolute or with Infinite Reality, his is a mysticism centred in Christ. So it is with the Sadhu. In Ecstasy in every vision Christ is the centre of the scene. In ordinary life, whenever, among friends, he speaks of Christ, the love-light beams from his eyes and his face is transfigured -as sometimes in supreme moments a woman's is, gazing on her beloved. Seeing him, one knows why a Christian has been defined as one " who has fallen in love with Christ."

Once grasp the Christ centric character of his mysticism, and you have the key to the understanding of his teaching, his character and his whole way of life.' The Divine, apprehended  
1 Of course all specifically Christian mysticism is directed towards Christ, but the influence of Neo-Platonism has often given it a metaphysical direction foreign to the direct, concrete simplicity of conception in mystics like St. Francis, Mother Juliana, or the Sadhu.

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in and as the Eternal Christ, elicits in him a passion and a devotion not possible to the mystic to whose imagination absolute Reality takes on a less vividly concrete and personal form. That is why he is a missionary, although his own natural bent would be towards the hermit's life of contemplation in solitary mountain caves. The love of Christ constrains him. " Loves thou me more than these? " . . . " Feed my lambs." That, too, is the reason why he so often urges that religion is not of the head but of the heart -not metaphysical comprehension but personal devotion, not the Vision of Reality but the love of one who saves. And it is mainly because of this that we have ventured to assert that some who have known the Sadhu feel that they understand the better the inner life of two greater men, St. Francis and St. Paul.

We quote an article dictated by him, when, having seen with his own eyes London, Oxford and Paris-famous cities symbolising to his mind Western thought and civilisation in its diverse aspects-he summed up for a Western magazine' what he felt to be his special message. If only we had it in his native tongue it would read like a hymn in prose form.

**" Christ is my Saviour. He is my life. He is everything to me in heaven and earth.**

**1 Cf. The Foreign Field, June 1920.**

**Once while travelling in a sandy region I was tired and thirsty. Standing on the top of a mound I looked for water. The sight of a lake at a distance brought joy to me, for now I hoped to quench my thirst. I walked toward it for a long time, but I could never reach it. Afterwards I found out that it was a mirage, only a mere appearance of water caused by the refracted rays of the sun. In reality there was none. In a like manner I was moving about the world in search of the water of life. The things of this world-wealth, position, honour and luxury-looked like a lake by drinking of whose waters I hoped to quench my spiritual thirst. But I could never find a drop of water to quench the thirst of my heart.**

**I was dying of thirst. When my spiritual eyes were opened I saw the rivers of living water flowing from His pierced side. I drank of it and was satisfied. Thirst was no more. Ever since I have always drunk of that water of life, and have never been athirst in the sandy desert of this world. My heart is full of praise.**

**"His presence gives me a Peace which passed all understanding, no matter in what circumstances I am placed. Amidst persecution I have found peace, joy and happiness. Nothing can take away the joy I have found in my Saviour. In home He was there. In prison**

**He was there. In Him the prison was trans-**

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**formed into Heaven, and the cross into a source of blessing. To follow Him and bear His cross is so sweet and precious that, if I find no cross to bear in Heaven, I shall plead before Him to send me as His missionary, if need be to Hell, so that there at least I may have the opportunity to bear His cross. His presence will change even Hell into Heaven. As the dumb man cannot express the sweetness of sweetmeats, even so a saved sinner cannot express the sweetness of His presence in his heart. Only a heavenly language can give adequate expression to this heavenly Peace. Even though I am in the midst of danger, temptation, sin and sorrow of this world, through Him who gave His life**

**I am saved. The sea is salty and the fish lives all its life in it. But it never gets salty, because it has life. Even so if we receive life from Him, though in the world we are not of the world. Not only here, but also in Heaven we shall find ourselves in Him.**

**" Now I have no desire for wealth, position and honour. Nor do I desire even Heaven. But I need Him who has made my heart Heaven. His infinite love has expelled the love of all other things. Many Christians cannot realise His precious, life-giving presence, because for them Christ lives in their heads or in their Bibles, not in their hearts. Only when a man gives his heart shall he find Him. The heart is the throne for the King of Kings. The capital of Heaven is the heart where that King reigns." Obviously the man who can speak and feel like this, has little need of a systematical theology with all its metaphysical implications carefully thought out. Besides, he thinks in pictures. For him an analogy or illustration is not merely a means to establish an argument; it is often the argument itself. He does not state a general principle and then buttress it with illustration. He puts first the illustrations and then draws out the general principles implied in them. Nor does he seek afterwards to co-ordinate these general principles. The illustrations stand out vivid and striking; but no pains are taken to present them so as to cohere into a system, even though the thought which they illustrate has an inner coherence of its own. And the teachin**

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