

**SADHU SUNDAR SINGH'S
SPIRITUAL PRACTICE
AND TEACHINGS**

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH'S SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

The Sadhu spent at least two hours daily in reading the Scriptures, meditation and prayer. He would get up by 5:00 am and finish by 7:00 or 8:00 or 9:00 depending on what his schedule was for the day. He often spent the whole day or night in prayer.

His discipline was to read one chapter of the Bible, rapidly at first reading, then to return to re-read passages or verses that were more suggestive to him. These he would linger with and meditate on for as long as it was fruitful for him to do so. Next he would enter into a period of 'recollection' for twenty minutes or so. This was a time of silence in which he would allow the Lord to speak to him in some way. With his own mind and heart silenced, he opened his mind and his heart to hear what the Lord would have to say to him or to just simply enjoy companionship with his Lord. Often this period of silence would extend into a deeper state called contemplation in which he enjoyed complete rest and refreshment in the love of God.

Following this period of silence he would often know what to pray about during the rest of his devotional time in the morning. He would also have some indication of what to say or what to do or where to go during the day. He felt as if he had been taught by the Holy Spirit during the time of silence. He knew exactly what to pray about both for himself and for others. Intercession, that is, interceding on the behalf of others - such as for their healing - was a major part of his devotional life.

Often during times of contemplation he entered into experiences of ecstasy. He regarded these experiences as the same as St. Paul's entrance into the "*Third Heaven*". *During his latter years they occurred frequently, as much as ten times a month.* About these experiences he said, "*I never try to go into ecstasy; nor do I advise others to try. It is a gift to be accepted, but it should not be sought; if given, it is a pearl of great price.*"

In all his visions, Christ is the constant centre and background:

"Christ on His throne is always in the centre, a figure ineffable, and indescribable. The face as I see it in ecstasy, with my spiritual eyes, is very much the same as I saw it at my conversion with my bodily eyes. He has scars with blood flowing from them. The scars are not ugly but glowing and beautiful ... The long hair on His head is like gold, like glowing light. The face is like the sun, but it is light that does not dazzle me. It is a sweet face, always smiling - a loving, glorious smile. Christ is not terrifying at all."

THE CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION

In the western Christian tradition meditation refers to thinking about or the use of the imagination around a passage of scripture. Whereas in India meditation refers to silencing thoughts. In the Christian tradition there is a place, however, for the silencing of thoughts and emotions but it has been called contemplation rather than meditation. This is one of those unfortunate twists of semantics, which has caused confusion when discussing the spirituality of East and West.

Sundar Singh practiced a sequence of prayer discipline that is identical to ancient Christian monastic disciplines: reading the Scriptures, meditation on a passage of the

reading (also called response of the mind and heart), recollection and rest. This sequence has been called *lectio divina* in Latin. It means divine reading, or more precisely, divine listening; since few people could actually read.

These are the four R's of *lectio divina* or Christian devotional life:

1. Reading (hearing) the Word
2. Responding to it with mind and heart
3. Recollecting oneself with an open mind and open heart to God's Will,
4. Resting in His Presence.

Ordinary Christians would go to the church to hear the Scriptures read aloud, they would remember - and memorise - a passage or verse and ponder it for the week. They would thus be able to carry the Word with them in their hearts into their daily lives. *Lectio divina* would help them re-collect themselves and stay in the Will and Presence of God.

This was the pattern of Christian prayer life for sixteen hundred years! During the last four hundred years this practice has nearly been lost. Why? Western culture turned the human soul outwards toward the external world. The scientific method and the idea that technology could control human destiny led civilization in a direction away from our true nature.

It is because of marvellous people like Sadhu Sundar Singh of India who remind us that there is indeed an inner spiritual reality - that we were made for personal relationship with the Creator of this Universe - that the deeper spiritual life in Jesus has not been lost. The Creator God wants an intimate, personal love relationship with each and every creature He has created.

Sundar Singh, among others, reminds us that through a daily practice of *lectio divina* and contemplation we can find the Will of God and enter the very Presence of God. We are called to develop companionship with Jesus, companionship, and, ultimately, union with God the Father.

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

"I thanked God my Master for rescuing me ... I opened my mind, and spread it out before Him: Joy of the companionship of my Master came to me: Pleasure filled me, and happiness ... I finished my prayer and opened my eyes. I saw a Person standing before me: tall and fair, with perfect face, keen-eyed, and from head to foot. He was bright, bright! Out of Him lightning-flashes of live truth struck into me: Love full-strength burst from Him: Love full-strength rushed into me - I fell at His feet: His spirit and His image entered me: He filled me with light, with love ... Then He was gone ... Now He shows Himself to me in all places, in all things: It is He, in the beating of my heart, in my breath, In the sun's rays, in the dew, in the wind's moving, In the bird's rising, in the insects' chirp, In the river's chant, In the green breadth of the fields and

the height of the trees, He only, He Himself - Who was and is now and will be endlessly!”

The Sadhu wrote the above account of his second vision in Urdu (translated and illustrated by R. Hunter): Throughout his life, Sundar Singh’s spiritual life was rich and deep. His first vision, as a boy, was followed by other visions and spiritual experiences.

A. J. Appasamy, in his biography of Sundar Singh, reports an account by Rev. Y. Dharmajit of this second vision of Jesus, which he had while fasting in the forest near Rishikesh in 1913:

“After several years of service I felt guided to go into some forest where, free from any kind of interruption, I could have a forty day’s fast and ask for blessing on the past work and power for the future. When I first commenced the fast, for several days I experienced great hardship. Afterwards it was not at all difficult. (fast without water, but never finished it)

“But the blood dried up to such an extent that I altogether lost the power of sight and speech. I could hear nothing and by reason of weakness could not even turn myself. But certainly my intellectual powers were sharpened several times over, from which I gathered proof of the true fact that the soul is an entity that can not cease to exist when the body dies, but goes on living. In that condition I experienced the Presence of God and the fullness of the Spirit, which can not be expressed in words. In that condition too I had a vision of the Lord in a glorious form, from which I gained the conviction that now He would assuredly keep me alive to serve Him for some time.”

Another book, *The Vision and the Call: The Life of Sadhu Sundar Singh* by T. E. Riddle, recalls the same experience in these words:

“Day by day he sat there in meditation and prayer. As his bodily strength declined his mental and spiritual faculties became clearer. At last, when his strength was altogether gone, he swooned. But before darkness came down upon him he saw once more a vision of the Lord, but this time it was the Lord in the glory of the Father and bearing the wounds of the Cross that he saw.”

Rev. Y Dharmajit’s account continues:

“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 become much stronger. This has convinced him that his peace is a heaven-born 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 this 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 liked

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 weakness 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 noticeable, but 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 hardship 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 luxury of my father’s house, to get married and live in comfort. Could I not be a good Yeshu Bhaktan and live a life of communion with God there also? But when I saw that, though it was not 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.”

SUNDAR SINGH - THE SEEKING SIKH

Bitter over the death of his mother, Sundar Singh blamed God. The fourteen-year-old boy became vicious toward his Christian teachers. He threw filth on them, mocked their Scriptures, and interrupted classes. Then he made the ultimate gesture of scorn. He bought a Bible from the Christians. Outside his house he built a fire and page by page tore up the Scripture and burnt it. “Although I believed that I had done a very good deed by burning the Bible, I felt unhappy,” he said. Within three days Sundar Singh could bear his misery no longer. Late one night in December 1903, he rose from bed and prayed that God reveal himself to him if he really existed. Otherwise - “I planned to throw myself in front of the train which passed by our house.” For seven hours Sundar Singh prayed. “O God, if there is a God, reveal thyself to me tonight.” The next train was due at five o’clock in the morning. The hours passed.

A DRAMATIC CONVERSION

Suddenly the room filled with a glow. A man appeared before him. Sundar Singh heard a voice say, “How long will you deny me? I died for you; I have given my life for you.” He saw the man’s hands, pierced by nails. This could only be Christ. In that moment of recognition, the boy who had burnt the Bible became a man who would endure anything for the Christ taught in it. He knew Christ as the Saviour of the world and fell to his knees with a wonderful sense of peace. To meet Christ was only the beginning for Sundar Singh. He was a Sikh. Sikhs had endured terrible persecutions in their early history. As a consequence they were fiercely loyal to their faith and to each other.

Conversion to Christianity was considered treachery. Now every effort was made to woo or coerce Sundar Singh back to his ancestral faith.

WHATEVER IT TOOK TO RECLAIM HIM!

His father pleaded. An uncle opened his cellar full of treasures and said they were all Sundar's if only he would return to Sikhism. A cousin with connections at court introduced him to the prince, who appealed to the boy's patriotism. His own brother spread lies about him. The gang he had led hurled muck at him. He was made to feel that his actions endangered others. Because of him the mission was attacked. Christians were denied service at the stores and driven into exile. A boy who followed Sundar Singh was poisoned to death. Sundar's father alternately pleaded with tears and raged with fury. Thinking marriage would change the boy's attitude, Mr. Singh ordered the fourteen year old to marry. Although parental commands are law among the Sikhs, Sundar Singh refused in Christ's name.

ACCURSED FOREVER

Finally Sundar Singh realised he must break with his people. He cut off the hair he had worn long like every Sikh man. Then he heard the words of out-casting spoken over him. "We reject you forever ... I declare you are no more worthy to be called our son ... We shall forget you as if you had never been born. You will leave this house with nothing but the clothes you wear on your back ..." Hours later he experienced wrenching pain in his gut. His family had poisoned his last meal. He staggered to a mission hospital. The missionary-medic was able to save the young man's life. Sundar now had a decision to make. Conventional Indian churches were willing to grant him a pulpit, but their rules were foreign to his spirit. Indeed, he felt that a key reason the gospel was not accepted in India was because it came in a garb foreign to Indians. He decided to don the yellow robe of India's holy men. Unlike them, he would not let dirt accumulate on his body or torture his body with ascetic practices. Dressed in his thin yellow robe, Sundar Singh took to the road. Wherever he went he preached the gospel of Christ. Sometimes he was blessed, sometimes cursed. He visited his own village and many of the gang members listened to him with curiosity and interest. A few became Christians. Sundar Singh was still a very young man. Already he had endured far more than most mature Christians ever experience. And his sufferings had only begun.

INTO FORBIDDEN LANDS

The mountains of Tibet called to him. In those remote regions were souls starved for the word of God. Buddhist monks exerted tremendous power over the nation. They wanted no part of the Christianity, which might rob them of income and influence. Sundar Singh determined to enter the forbidden land with the gospel of Christ. Before his death he would travel into Tibet about twenty times.

HOW DID HE ESCAPE?

In 1912 in the Tibetan village of Lazar, he was beaten and thrown to die in a pit filled with rotting bodies. His arm was broken; the pit was sealed above him, and only the Grand Lama had the key. The stench was unbearable. Three nights later, Sundar heard the grate open. A shadowy figure lowered a rope and pulled him out. Next morning he

boldly showed himself again, preaching in the streets. The Grand Lama seized him. Furious questions followed. Who had helped him? Who had stolen the key? He pulled the key ring from under his robe. But the key to the pit was still on it. Terrified, he freed Sundar Singh, expelling him from town.

REPEATEDLY DELIVERED

One time, Sundar was left bound to die in the forest of Nepal. Secret Christians came to his rescue. Another time, when he sang of Christ in prison, he was bound in stocks and hurled into the jungle to die. Again secret Christians came at night and released him, speaking to him for long hours of the faith they shared. Men who knew him said he was more like Christ than any other man they had known. He himself said, "A Christian is one who has fallen in love with Christ." Later - and amazingly - his father became a Christian. To make amends for his former actions, he paid for Sundar's passage to the West to preach. Sundar visited Europe, England and America. What he found here upset him deeply. Shocked by Western materialism, Sundar Singh paraphrased Christ's words: "Come unto me all ye that are heavily laden with gold, and I will give you rest." The Sadhu was glad to return even to Tibet after his experience in the West. Worn down, he no longer possessed the strength and will power of former years. For months he was very sick. In 1929, before he had fully recovered, he climbed again to Tibet. He never returned. Nothing was ever heard from him again.

JESUS WAS THE WATER OF LIFE TO SUNDAR

In Sundar's words: "Christ is my Saviour. He is my life. He is everything to me in heaven and earth. 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 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."

ANOTHER SIKH, ANOTHER SINGH

Another Sikh who became an internationally known Christian was Bakht Singh. Born to wealthy parents in 1903, Bakht Singh was converted in 1929 (the same year Sundar disappeared) while studying in Manitoba. Knowing that his parents (like Sundar Singh's) would not accept his conversion, he returned to India with great trepidation. His fears were well-grounded. His wife left him. His parents and relatives rejected him. Despite suffering from a speech impediment, Bakht Singh became an evangelist. He spent hours a day on his knees studying the Scripture. He carried the Bible wherever he went and urged converts to read it daily. His sermons quoted extensively from Scripture. Revival followed wherever he went, but he was unsatisfied. Converts were not receiving the follow up they needed. What should he do? After a night praying on a

mountain, he determined he must form a new kind of congregation for Indian believers, a congregation based on New Testament principles. He started over 500 of these local assemblies in his lifetime. Thousands of these Christian brethren gather each year in designated cities to hold Christian festivals, which Bakht Singh established. They march singing and holding aloft Scripture banners. Bakht Singh helped make Indian Christians independent, the very thing Sundar Singh had wanted to do.

Remember Corrie Ten Boom, Heroine of the WWII Story The Hiding Place? As a teenager, Corrie so badly wanted to hear Sundar Singh when he visited Europe that she came to his conference with a blanket, prepared to sleep in a field. It was not necessary. A kind student found room for her. So Corrie listened with awe as Sundar told how he had met Christ. Disturbed that as a Christian she had never seen a vision of Christ or performed miracles, she asked the Sadhu why. Sundar responded that she was the real miracle. He believed in Christ only after seeing Him. She, on the other hand, had merely heard and believed. He quoted to her Christ's words, "Blessed are those who have not seen but believed."

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SUNDAR SINGH OF PUNJAB

Sundar Singh was born to Sher Singh of Rampur, Punjab in India in 1889. His mother, a deeply religious woman, left an indelible mark on Sundar and nurtured him in the noble traditions of the Sikhs. Sundar often spoke of his mother with much love and respect because of the good foundation she laid for his life to come. Little did anyone know what God was about to do with this keenly intelligent and disciplined young man.

When Sundar was about fourteen, his beloved mother and elder brother passed away. This left the young boy in despair and spiritually restless. Sundar hungered for peace. He sought meaning for his life.

One night, a year or two later, after bathing in cold water in preparation for *pooja* he asked God, 'the all-pervading, impersonal, unknowable, incomprehensible universal spirit', to appear to him as an avatar. He wanted a divine revelation that would once and for all destroy his doubts and end his despair. His spiritual agitation was such that he made a vow to throw himself in front of the early morning passenger train that passed by his village if God did not reveal himself. This vow was not empty words! Shaped by the disciplined life of a devout Sikh, this strong willed youth meant to do exactly that.

That night as he prayed he became conscious of a light shining in the room. He looked outside to make sure it was not someone shining a light. Gradually the light took the form of a globe of fire and in it he saw the face of Yesu.

Yesu was the last person Sundar was looking for. After all, Yesu was the 'foreign god' of the Christian teachers at his school. A zealous Sikh, Sundar had publicly torn up a portion of the Bible to protest its claims. Amazed that his vision had taken the unexpected form of Yesu, Sundar was convinced in his heart that Yesu was the avatar in whom God reveals Himself.

Did Yesu speak to him? No one knows for sure; however, regardless of the nature of the 'conversation', Sundar threw himself on the ground and surrendered His life to Yesu. At once *shanthi* flooded his troubled heart. The weary struggle to seek enlightenment and *moksha* was over for Sundar, for in Yesu he found *shanthi*. This divine encounter with the Lord Yesu was to Sundar a rebirth into a new life.

The following months proved to be very difficult for Sundar and his family. Becoming a *shishya* of Christ was not taken lightly by his family nor his community. Misunderstanding his new found *bhakti* to be a betrayal of all loyalty to his community he was excommunicated. Sundar may have been ill advised by some 'Christians' to cut his hair, unnecessarily maligning an honourable Sikh custom. Unfortunately, he followed their advice and cut his hair, a gesture that did not make things any easier with his family. His family was convinced he had renounced his Sikh heritage. However, through this strife and turmoil God cared for Sundar.

A month after he accepted the water *diksha* of Christ in the year 1905, he took the vow of a *sadhu*. He gave away his meager possessions, put on a saffron robe and

became a barefooted wandering man of God. Among Christians the world over, this barefoot Sadhu was later called the 'apostle of the bleeding feet' because the soles of his feet were often covered in bloody blisters.

The life of a sadhu is hard and entirely dependent on God. Sadhu Sundar Singh's needs were met entirely through the kindness of people he met wherever he went. His life story has been written down for us by several of his friends and admirers. He also, reluctantly, agreed to put his teachings and experiences in writing saying that like His *Satguru*, he did not want to write a word. Sadhu Sundar Singh reflected the character of Christ in word and life; he had found *ananda* and *shanthi* in the abiding presence of Yesu his brother and Lord.

Some of his selected teachings can be found below. More details about the amazing life of this Sikh follower of Christ can be found in many books, some of which are still in print around the world.

THE TEACHINGS OF SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

(Selections from his books)

THE UNBRIDLED TONGUE

It has often been noticed that the woodlouse that eats and destroys hard wood and the insect that makes holes in the rocks in the sea are very weak and delicate. even so, they can penetrate hard wood and stone to spoil them completely. The same can be said of the germs of evil thoughts and habits. However feeble and negligible they may seem, evil thoughts and habits eat into our lives to make us hollow and useless human beings. Unless, with God's help we are able to eliminate such germs, they can completely destroy us. Poisonous as reptiles, evil thoughts and habits cause death by biting and depositing their poison in the wound. Even bugs and flies, though not considered poisonous, are in a way no less dangerous, because they spread the germs of various deadly diseases and many are destroyed through them. Many people are like this. They do not outwardly appear dangerous, like murderous dacoits and criminals, but by insidiously spreading the dangerous words and poisonous influence to others with their unbridled tongues they are just as much of a menace.

A FOREIGNER IN A STRANGE PLACE

When a person goes to another place or to a foreign country the people consider him a stranger and the dogs bark at the sight of him. So followers of Christ do not belong to this world but are strangers (John 17:14; Hebrews 11:13). Therefore they should not be surprised or downcast when the dogs of the world take them for strangers, bark at them, or frequently even attack and rend them. Having put our hand to the plough we must not turn back, nor should we slacken our speed, but press on like a caravan, because the dogs will turn back after chasing us for a while; they will fade out into silence, and we shall reach our destination in safety (Matthew 7:6).

A naturalist took the eggs of a nightingale to a cold country, and hoped that when they hatched the birds would regard that country as their home and remain there. But they came out, and, after the summer, they flew away to their native home, and never came back. Similarly, though born in this world, we are not for this world. As soon as the time comes for us to leave the body, we shall move away into our eternal home.

WHO IS REALLY BLIND?

If a blind man comes down the street the onus is on the person who can see to draw aside so as to avoid collision, and if by chance they collide he should not mind but rather beg the blind man's pardon and help him. If he should get annoyed that would only be proof that the blind man is really not less but more clear-sighted than he is, because he is blind with regard to both sympathy and intelligence. So if anyone opposes and persecutes us because we follow the truth, instead of taking it ill we must forgive, love and pray for him (Matthew 5:44-45), and if he still does not repent and desist we are not the losers, because we ought to do this for the Truth, who gave us sight and is Himself is our reward.

THE REALITY OF THE LIVING CHRIST

We see medicine for our eyes. It is in a bottle, but when it is in our eyes we can not see it. The medicine cleans the eyes and still the eyes can not see it. They feel the presence of the medicine. You say: "I have medicine in my eyes". So when Christ was in Palestine, in the physical body, many people could see Him, but now when He is living in our hearts we can not see Him. Like the medicine. He is cleaning our spiritual eyes from all kinds of sins. We are being saved though we can not see Him. We feel His presence. (I don't mean by "feeling" a kind of physical sensation, this "feeling" is not an emotion either.) By "feeling" I mean we realise the reality of the living Christ and shall be able to bear witness for Him and to say: "Now we are in the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God is within us".

TASTE AND SEE ...

About four years ago I was talking to a very learned man. He said: "It is very useful to know all about the Bible, and also to analyse every part of it". Then, as an illustration, he took a cup of milk: he was a chemist. "Now, is it not so much sugar, and so many other things in milk?" He made everything separate. I said: "It is very interesting, I can not go against it, but I should say that your little child of three years of age is better than you. This child can not analyse the milk, but he drinks it and knows from experience that it is sweet, and in doing so, gets stronger every day. He does not know how many things it is made of, but he knows two important things: first, that the milk is sweet; second, that by it he is getting stronger. You have analysed it, and in doing so have derived no benefit, and you have spoiled the milk." There are many chemists who can analyse the Word of God. They say: "This part belongs to Palestine, this to Greece." They can explain many things about it in different ways, but they never drink the spiritual milk. They analyse the Word of God but never drink it, they have not strength enough to overcome temptation; that is why there is great danger in criticism, and our Lord knew about these things when He took a little child and said: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven". You must be like a child who takes and drinks.

SANDALWOOD AND THE AXE

The good and spiritual man will always endure suffering in the world (2 Timothy 2:12), because people can not understand him; and as their conscience and their feelings, by means of which they should find the truth and value it, are desensitized and deadened through sin, whenever they come across a good man they discover that his nature and his ways are incompatible with theirs, and so are compelled to persecute him. But those whose spiritual sensitivity and conscience are alive and alert uphold the man, and are influenced by the upright man's fragrant and winsome life. The life of a true Christian is like sandalwood - instead of harming in any way the axe that cuts, it imparts its own fragrance to it.

THE ROSE AND ITS THORNS

As long as we are in this world we have to undergo both joy and sorrow. The bee not only gathers honey; to serve a particular purpose it also carries a sting. It is not without reason that beautiful fragrant roses are accompanied by thorns; and Paul's 'thorn in the

flesh' too (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) contributed to the fulfilment of a lofty objective. In the same way it is absolutely necessary for us too to go through such experiences for the fulfilment of a final and eternal purpose.

WORSE THAN THE OX

Many live their lives like beasts of the field. They have tongues, but no power of speech, and are dumb as animals, with no message for themselves or for others. Animals indeed have tongues, but have no ability to speak, because they have nothing to talk about beyond the usual animal feelings, which they express by sounds and movements. Those without spiritual life are like animals; but in a sense they are worse, for the ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib: but man, who is the crown of creation, does not know his Creator (Isaiah 1:3). His tongue is very swift to utter falsehood, but is slow to speak truth because he does not know the Lord his God (Jeremiah 9:3).

SUFFERING AND BEING REVIVED

As in the world, night lasts in some places for only a few hours, and in other places for several months, so there are always seasons of joy and of sorrow to be found in our lives, and all of us must at last pass through the 'valley of the shadow of death'. Those who in their lives bear the Cross may truly say 'We die but behold we live' (2 Corinthians 6:9), and as the tree which in winter loses its leaves and seems to be dying, in spring is infused again with new life and once more shoots out its leaves, so Christians in time of persecution seem to be ready to die, but again and yet again do their lives revive. In spite of all their sufferings 'their lives are hid with Christ in God'. As the Gulf Stream flowing up from the warm waters of the tropics saves the coast of Europe from the rigour of a bitter winter, so God's Spirit flowing through the lives of true Christians keeps them always in the glow of spiritual health and happiness.

HIDDEN POSSIBILITIES OF A SEED

The man who has not seen an apple tree, but has seen only its tiny seed, can never understand that the complete tree - wood, flowers and fruit - is all contained within it. If the seed finds the conditions necessary to its growth, then at the appointed time its real nature will appear; and all its hidden possibilities will come into being, and reach to perfection. Thus the whole problem will be solved. So, leaving everything else out of consideration, man does not even know what qualities and abilities are hidden in him; but if he walks with God, and according to His will, then he will continue to obtain all necessary aids for his growth, and will reach that state of perfection for which God created him. Then all difficulties and problems will be solved.

LIMITS OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

Trees grow in a limited space; there is a fixed limit beyond which they can not extend. The force of gravity will not permit them to go one inch beyond their appointed bounds. In the same way, our wisdom, understanding and thoughts are limited to the circumference of a very small circle beyond which it is not possible to reach.

REALITY IS LOOKING UP TO GOD

When we stand on the edge of a precipice and look down we feel dizzy and are afraid, though the depth may be only a few hundred feet. But we are never afraid when we gaze at the heavens, though our eyes may range over much greater heights. Why? Because we can not fall upwards. There is, however, a danger of falling down and being dashed to pieces. When we look up to God, we feel that we are safe in Him and that there is no danger whatever. But if we turn away our face from Him, we are filled with fear lest we fall from reality and be broken to pieces.

DESIRE IMPLIES FULFILMENT

Belief in the future life has been found among all nations at all times. Desires imply a possible fulfilment. Thirst implies the existence of water, and hunger of food. The desire to live forever is itself a proof of its fulfilment.