

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

Essential Writings



Selected with an Introduction by

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died, he couldn't understand why his father made him attend the Christian school. Bitter and full of inner torment, he was going to show his family what he thought of these colonialists and their Western ways and their foreign faith. One day Sundar began throwing stones at his teachers, disrupting classes, and mocking the missionaries. Later, in the courtyard of his own house, a group of teenage boys gathered around him as he tore a Bible to shreds and then, in a frenzy of rage, hurled it into a fire.

Never in the history of the village had anyone publicly burned a sacred book of any faith. Everything had turned black. His mother was dead. His father was shamed.

That night he returned to his room to meditate and pray. The familiar words of the scriptures whirled in his mind. From Guru Nanak: "I cannot live for a moment without you, O God. When I have you, I have everything. You are the treasure of my heart." And there was Guru Arjuna: "We long only for you, O God. We thirst for you. We can only find rest and peace in you." That was his only hope. If there was a God, then he had to reveal the way to peace, or else there was no point in living. But who would give him the answer? Would it be Krishna of the Gita? Rama of the Ramayana? Or Buddha the merciful? Someone had to grant him a vision. Surely the appearing of some *avatar*, or incarnation of God, would destroy the demon of his doubts. Sundar recounts what would be the most decisive experience of his life:

Though at the time I had considered myself a hero for burning the Gospel, my heart found no peace. Indeed, my unrest only increased, and I was miserable for the next two days. On the third day, when I could bear it no

longer, I rose at 3:00 a.m. and prayed that if there was a God at all, he would reveal himself to me. Should I receive no answer by morning, I would place my head on the railroad tracks and seek the answer to my questions beyond the edge of this life.

I prayed and prayed, waiting for the time to take my last walk. At about 4:30 I saw something strange. There was a glow in the room. At first I thought there was a fire in the house, but looking through the door and windows, I could see no cause for the light. Then the thought came to me: perhaps this was an answer from God. So I returned to my accustomed place and prayed, looking into the strange light. Then I saw a figure in the light, strange but somehow familiar at once. It was neither Siva nor Krishna nor any of the other Hindu incarnations I had expected. Then I heard a voice speaking to me in Urdu: "Sundar, how long will you mock me? I have come to save you because you have prayed to find the way of truth. Why then don't you accept it?" It was then I saw the marks of blood on his hands and feet and knew that it was Jesus, the one proclaimed by the Christians. In amazement I fell at his feet. I was filled with deep sorrow and remorse for my insults and my irreverence, but also with a wonderful peace. This was the joy I had been seeking. This was heaven.... Then the vision was gone, though my peace and joy remained.

When the family learned of Sundar's experience, they treated it as a joke. It was unthinkable to them that a proud Sikh should leave the religion to become an outcast. And when neither ridicule nor mockery moved him, they became