

# SÁDHU SUNDAR SINGH

CALLED OF GOD

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SADHU SUNDAR SINGH



## CHAPTER XXVI

### SADHU SUNDAR SINGH AT A GREAT CHRISTIAN CONVENTION

**THE CALL.** "Oh, Young Men, awake and see how many souls are daily perishing around you. Is it not your duty to save them? Be brave soldiers of Christ; Go forward in full armour; Crush Satan's work and victory be yours.

"Glory to God. He has given you a precious opportunity to be saved and to save others. If you are careless now, you will never get another chance. Whatever you have got to do, do it now. For you will never pass through the field of battle again. The day is fast approaching when you will see the martyrs in their glory, who gave their health, wealth and life to win souls for Christ. They have done much. What have you done? Oh! may we not blush on that day."—SUNDAR SINGH.

THIS clarion call resounded all through South India, stirring hearts everywhere; but perhaps nowhere was it so clear, so insistent, as at the Conventions of Christians in Travancore and Ceylon. Where Christians are numerous, annual conventions for the deepening of spiritual life have of late years become very popular. Like the Keswick Convention, meetings are held for a week with settled programmes and preachers, and are attended by increasing numbers as time goes on. Several of the conventions have been blessed by the presence of the Sádhu, the largest in point of numbers being in Travancore.

The historic Syrian Church of Malabar proudly dates

back to the days when it is believed that St. Thomas landed on these shores and laid the foundations of Christianity in India. This ancient Church is divided into three sections, the Roman, the Jacobite and the Mar Thoma Syrian.

About the middle of February, 1918, the Sádhu attended the Jacobite Syrian Convention in North Travancore, when some 20,000 people came together, and he spent a happy and useful time amongst them. From there at the end of the month he went on to the Mar Thoma Syrian Convention, also in North Travancore.

This latter was a romantic and remarkable experience not soon to be forgotten. A hundred miles north of Trivandram is the widest and most beautiful river of Travancore. In the dry season the river flows only in the deepest parts of its bed. A big bend in the river leaves a very large sandy island upon which each year an immense booth is erected to accommodate 25,000 people. For a week meetings are carried on during the greater part of each day. Every day long before dawn a man with a stentorian voice passed round the encampment crying, "Praise be to God! Praise to the Son of God!" Very soon after the sound of prayer rose all around. These prayers were chanted to ancient Syrian tunes, the weird sound rising in gradual crescendo; and thus was the blessing of God invoked before the meetings each day. The Sádhu drew greater crowds than usual, so that before the end of the week the booth had to be enlarged, and at the final meeting no fewer than 32,000 people gathered to hear his last message.

The wonder of that daily scene is almost beyond description. A rough platform about eighteen inches high had been placed about a third of the way from the back of the booth, and on one end stood two chairs



occupied by the two Bishops of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, who appeared daily in resplendent robes of red or purple satin with gold belts and quaint head-dresses. On the platform below, sitting tailor fashion, were the clergy of the Church, and in front of them in the same lowly style sat the Sádhu.

The vast crowds were seated on the sand, the women all in white on the left, and the men in front and at the right. Away over the sea of heads one caught glimpses of the shining river, with its strange craft plying up and down. A more devout crowd it is not possible to imagine. Every day the early part of the meetings was given to prayer. Subjects were given for silent prayer from time to time by the presiding Bishop, when every head was bowed, and the almost inaudible murmur of prayer gradually increased until a sound like the surging sea rolling in full tide rose all around—a most impressive experience !

The fearful heat was only equalled by the intense silence that prevailed as the Sádhu rose to speak. Often in his northern country he had heard of the great number of Christians in Travancore, and thousands had gathered in our own mission to hear him. But here for the first time he realized, as he looked at this mighty crowd how great the number was ; and his heart was filled with wonder as to why the Gospel had been so long in reaching the millions of greater India.

In brave stern words he reminded this multitude that through the ages God had made the Syrian Church the repository of His truth, but that failure on their part to hand on the Gospel to their own countrymen had forced God to call men from America and England to do the work they had left undone. Then, alluding to the great reform movement in this ancient Church, he earnestly and tenderly besought them to rise to the

call—unheard for so long—and send the light to the millions who are still dying in darkness.\*

This same appeal has been made in other places since then, and the hearts of people have been stirred to this great issue as never before. The Sádhu clearly sees the duty and privilege God is offering to the Indian Church to enter into His purposes, and claim for Him the myriads of this ancient land. By his own example, as well as by his words, he urges India's sons to take up their cross at all costs, and follow Christ to final victory.



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\* The Syrian Church in Travancore has been alive to this great need for some years, and is continually increasing the number of missionaries it has begun to send to different parts of India.