

# Manasarovar and Kailash, Pilgrimage of a Lifetime—Part I

PRAVRAJIKA JNANAPRANA

[Pravrajika Jnanaprana undertook a pilgrimage to Manasarovar Lake and Mount Kailash in Tibet in May last year. Her account of that journey will be carried in two parts. Part I will cover Manasarovar; Part II, Mount Kailash.—Ed.]

Mount Kailash has many names and is home to many gods and the journey to its remote setting in Tibet is the ultimate pilgrimage. For Hindus, it is the abode of Lord Shiva, the destroyer of sins. The Kailash Yatra—a journey as daunting as it is rewarding—has featured in the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, *Skanda Purana* and elsewhere. Lord Shiva has been intrinsic to my life for as long as I can remember. I recall hearing stories of the Lord's abode as a child and these first kindled in me an intense desire to see and experience, first hand, the sacred majesty of Mount Kailash and the tranquility of Manasarovar Lake. Last year, in May, my wish of many years was finally fulfilled.

No words can describe what I experienced—how the same journey that was physically challenging was also emotionally, intellectually and spiritually fortifying. I cannot explain how I shook with fever and spiritual ecstasy at the same time on the banks of Manasarovar. But ever since I have returned, I have been asked to do just that—to put the indescribable into words. In the following account, I have tried to recollect how the journey went from the start, leaving nothing out—neither the hardship nor the bliss.

## May 8: Nepal

The first part is easy. I took the morning flight for Kathmandu from New

Delhi and reached at about 1.20 p.m. I had booked a place with a tour operator and within an hour, we were at Hotel Marghyangdi. There was a briefing session on the journey in the evening. We had dinner and retired for the night.

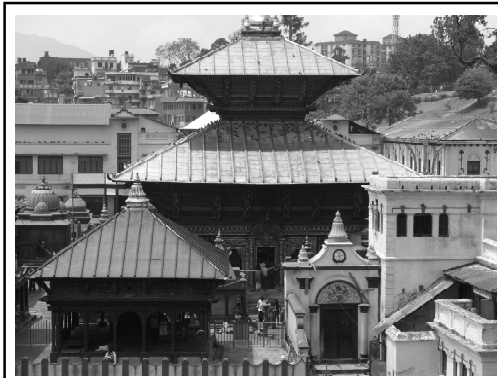
## May 9: The City of Kathmandu

Walking through beautiful Kathmandu is strolling in the Himalayas. Nepal's capital is at four thousand five hundred feet above sea-level and rich in great temples. We spent the day visiting the Pashupatinath temple, Buddhanilkanth temple, Guheshwari Devi temple and Swayambhunath temple.

## May 10: Border crossing and bus-ride

It took us nearly five hours to reach the border at Kodari from where travellers have started their Himalayan odysseys for centuries. At the border, we walked across the friendship bridge to Tibet Autonomous Region and joined the line for immigration. By 3 p.m., we were all set to take on the greatest of all pilgrimages. Occupying two coaches, we set out for Nyalam, a small Tibetan village.

It is about four hours to Nyalam but feels shorter. The route afforded us many a breathtaking view of cliffs, gorges and waterfalls. Tiny villages dot the stunning landscape with yaks, lambs and huge Tibetan mountain dogs milling about. I



Pashupatinath Temple

enjoyed the landscape and had Shiva Mahimna Stotra and other hymns to the Lord playing in the background in the bus. Someone in the bus said that the Chinese Government might not give permission for *parikrama* (circumambulation) due to very heavy snowfall.

The first hint that this was not going to be an easy journey was altitude sickness. One of our co-travellers started feeling giddy and had to be put on oxygen. Our Chinese guide wanted to send her back but she, with the support of the group, convinced the guide to allow her to continue the journey. She not only recovered but also managed a



Swayambhunath Temple

*parikrama* walking, just by her will power and God's grace.



Buddaneelkanth Vishnu Temple

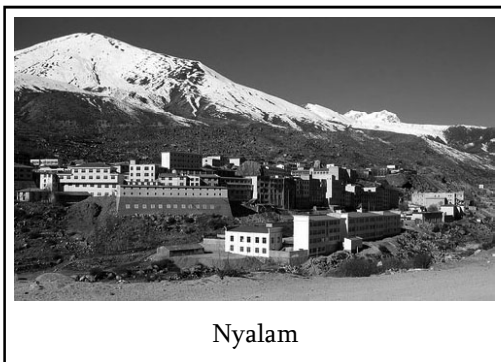
**May 10: Thin air at twelve thousand feet and sunshine at 9 p.m.**

By the time we reached Nyalam it was 7.30 p.m. local time. Here we reset our watches. At twelve thousand feet, the air is thin here though it was cold and windy enough to make us don all our woollens, thermals, balaclavas, scarves, jackets and gloves. Night temperature dipped suddenly to subzero accompanied by biting Himalayan winds. We tried to keep ourselves warm by drinking hot water every now and then. The cold still



Road to Nyalam

got me. The narrow slit in the window next to my bed was the culprit. The cold wind



Nyalam

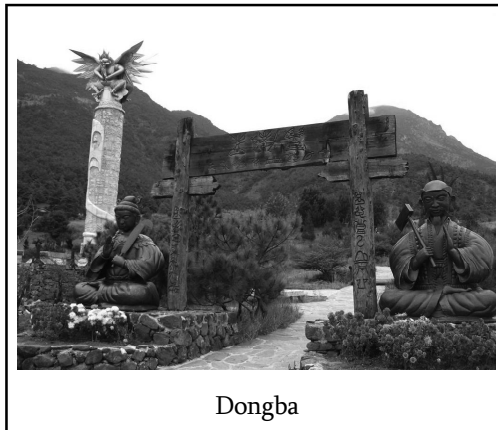
crept in, poking me with its icy fingers all night. By next morning, I had a splitting headache, cold and fever. But I decided it was a good opportunity to practise the virtue of forbearance, constantly demonstrated by Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi.

At Nyalam we started experiencing symptoms of high altitude sickness. We had been asked to take some medicine for it. Even though many in our group suffered from insomnia, nausea, loss of appetite and breathlessness, everyone could forget their discomfort long enough to marvel at the sunshine at nine in the night.

The guest-house had a small shop that seemed to stock everything you could possibly need for the *parikrama*—gloves, socks, caps, jackets, shoes, walking sticks, torches, oxygen cylinders, thermos flasks and much more—and was manned by a remarkably efficient Tibetan girl who took care of her customers even though she did not know English.

### May 11: A practice hike

We were told to go walking and trekking in order to acclimatize for the next phase of our journey. Hot water for morning ablutions followed by steaming cups of tea, Bournvita and a delicious



Dongba

breakfast. We set out for a walk after 10 a.m. and though it was bright and sunny, it was still very cold. We soon found our feet getting heavy and breathing and talking difficult. Yet, we kept going and spoke in a relaxed manner with our backpacks on our backs just to get accustomed to the climate. I climbed a small hillock and the atmosphere on top was so serene I felt like meditating. I sat there for some time but with the wind growing increasingly wild, I had to climb down.

In the evening, we went out to the market to buy a flask and some good quality gloves.

### May 13: The dizzy heights of Dongba/Parayang

The following day, we started for Dongba/Parayang at 8.30 a.m. All day, we saw Tibetan plains as far as the eyes could see, with no sign of life beyond yaks and sheep. The scenery was stunning. On the way, we also caught parts of one of the longest rivers in the world—Brahmaputra, which flows from Mount Kailash.

After a difficult nine-hour drive, we reached Parayang. We were five to a room that had just about enough space for the



River Brahmaputra

beds but we did not mind. There were clean sheets, warm quilts and brightly painted walls. Now at fifteen thousand feet, the impact of the high altitude climate started telling on the body and a tablet of Diamox became an absolute necessity.

**May 14: Sunset at Manasarovar and Kailash behind a cloudy curtain**

Next morning was freezing. Nonetheless, it was a special day, for we were getting our first glimpse of Lake Manasarovar. We did not even mind the 7 a.m. starting time. A little after noon, we reached the point where we had to leave our buses and take the buses allotted by the Chinese government.

We reached holy Manasarovar at around 4 p.m. The sky was



Parayang

clear and we were awestruck by the sensational beauty around us. Lacy white clouds had gathered over the lake; sun beams crisscrossed over the crystal clear water that reflected the colour of the sky. The southern side of the lake was dominated by the Gurla Mandhata mountain range which seemed to us like a celestial staircase.

Manasarovar is a fresh water lake at an altitude of fifteen thousand and fifteen feet. The *Skanda Purana* tells the story of its creation thus: it was first conceived in Lord Brahma's mind and subsequently inscribed upon the surface of the Earth.

The name itself is a combination of the Sanskrit words *manas* and *sarovar* meaning 'mind' and 'lake' respectively. It has been the most sought-after pilgrimage spot for thousands of years. A dip in its sweet waters is said to



Holy Manasarovar at 4 p.m.





Gurla Mandhata Mountain Range

absolve one of all sins committed over a hundred lifetimes. The gods and sages bless those who visit this lake.

My first reaction on seeing the lake was sheer excitement. I was speechless with wonder. The colour of the water seemed to change constantly—turquoise in one moment, emerald in the next. I took a few pictures but then sat on the shore to simply gaze and drink in that celestial view. It seemed to be the greatest blessing to be present on that shore. Even Nature was very kind to us. We had been thoroughly enjoying the place when suddenly, all too soon, we were told it was time to get back on the bus and head for our night stay. Reluctantly, all of us headed back. After stowing our gear, we returned to the edge of Manasarovar. I tried the very difficult task of capturing that mesmerizing view on my camera and then I sat down at a point to contemplate. It was dusk, there was a mysterious silence except for the gushing sound of the water. A sense of utter peace and calm prevailed. This tranquility was

like a balm to the soul. The place was really windy yet I did not feel like leaving. We returned to our room by 7 p.m.

Though we kept hoping the ragged clouds would part and afford us a glimpse of Mount Kailash but no such luck. Holy Kailash evaded us that day. Our Sherpa leader, Wanchu, said we may not be able to see it the next day either if the clouds remain. We kept our fingers crossed and left it to the mighty mountain to reveal

itself to us.

After half an hour, I stepped out again, hoping to catch the sun setting over Manasarovar. I was expecting the sight to be glorious and I was not disappointed. As the sun dipped towards the horizon, it bathed everything in gold. Columns of light seemed to bounce off the lake and split into different colours. Even the sky was shot with a range of hues. I was stupefied by that heavenly spectacle when just as dramatically, the clouds gently pulled aside to reveal the majesty of Mount Kailash. I was thrilled and immediately ran back to



Sunset at Manasarovar

call some of my travelling companions. They came running, bursting with devotion and emotion, prostrated themselves on the ground and started singing hymns in praise of Lord Shiva. I felt the urge to do the same as my eyes turned moist. I lowered myself till I was flat on the ground. The proximity to the mountain struck me, the impact was almost visceral. Something moved within, something shifted. Although it was very cold and windy outside, we remained glued to the spot as none of us wanted to take our eyes off Mount Kailash. At dinnertime, we came back to the room feeling ecstatic.

I was still feeling quite unwell, so had just a bowl of soup and a piece of toast for dinner. My headache had persisted and I still had fever and cold. I tried to get some sleep but could not. I was not sure whether I would be able to go for *parikrama* even if we get permission. Though I was in bed, I could not sleep and my condition was going from bad to worse. I needed a miracle to be able to make it.

#### May 15: Dawn at the lake

We were told that very early in the morning at Manasarovar, the gods, disguised as stars, come to bathe. The two

hours between 3 and 5 a.m. are together called *Brahmamuhurtam*. The gods and sages, many of whom are present at the lake in subtle form, bless the pilgrims who visit.

Some of us decided to wake up early and go to the lake for a glimpse. We went to the lake at 3 a.m. to watch the stars. It was bitterly cold outside. We remained there for about ten to fifteen minutes but could not see anything. Then someone pointed out that the time should be IST 3

a.m. and not the Chinese time which is two and a half hour ahead of India. We went back to the room. I was not able to sleep, so came out and sat on a bench. The sky was



Mount Kailash from Manasarovar

clear and star-studded with a bright moon shining overhead. I remained mesmerized. Sleep seemed far away still.

We returned to the lake shore again at IST 3 a.m. and found many people already there. It was intolerably cold and windy and was very difficult to remain outside. Yet, with great enthusiasm we remained near the shore to watch the angel stars. Five minutes passed, then ten, then fifteen, then twenty but there was no sign of any special stars. People started getting impatient due to the cold and fierce wind. One by one, most of them headed back to the cozy comfort of their rooms. Only five-

six remained. I decided to sit and start performing *japa*; I thought since I could not see the angel stars, I should do the next best thing—perform *japa* on the shores of Manasarovar in the *Brahmamuhurtam*.

I sat down, closed my eyes and started concentrating on my mantra. After about ten minutes, I heard the enthusiastic, joyous shouts of the people present there. I opened my eyes and was thrilled to see a shiny orb resembling a star slowly descending into the lake and disappearing suddenly. I saw five stars like that one. At around 3.40 a.m., we saw a very big star rise from the waters of the lake and remain in the sky over the lake's northern reach. It is impossible to describe the feeling of joy and bliss I felt within. Someone tried to click a photo of the stars but they could not be captured. Some glories of God are best captured in the heart. I stayed there for another half an hour and then came back to the room. My heart was full of an unspeakable joy.

The Sherpa team made arrangements to heat up water from the lake so the pilgrims could bathe in it. You cannot bathe in the water. In a horrific tragedy that we heard of after leaving the lake, a pilgrim

belonging to another group had tried to take a dip during *Brahmamuhurtam* and died on the spot. After the bath, we were off to attend the *puja* at the Manasarovar shore. The *puja* was performed sitting close to the lake facing Mount Kailash. The fragrant wafts of incense, rhythmic chants of mantras, sound of ringing bell and the unruffled ambience evoked immense spirituality. It led to an amazing feeling of bliss which I cannot find words to express. I could live and die at this heavenly lake without ever growing weary of the wonderful spectacle. My fever showed no signs of abating but I could not have missed sitting at the lake for even a moment. I returned to the lodge only after the *puja*.

After lunch we filled bottles with water from the Manasarovar as it was time to say goodbye. I would always remember its azure splendour fringed by snow-capped mountains that touch the clouds—its intense indigo in the afternoon, the warm orange hue at sunset and the golden-yellow at dawn will remain forever imprinted in my memory. Still overwhelmed by Manasarovar, we started for Darchen, the base camp. ❀

### From Almora, 22.5.1898:

... I cannot tell you how real this idea of meditation has grown to me now. One can't talk about it I suppose, but one can see it and feel it here—and the very air of these mountains especially in the starlight is heavy with a mystery of peace that I cannot describe to you... Up here the deodar grows all round us—and adds like everything else to this unutterable depth—so do the snows—the great white range like a Presence that cannot be set aside—towers over there above the lower purple mountains in front and we sit in a rose-bowered verandah and look. The caves would be the right place.

**Sister Nivedita**

## How Swami Vivekananda Taught

—PRAVRAJIKA PRABUDDHAPRANA

As a teacher, Swami Vivekananda was sensational. Reams have been written on what he taught—his exposition of Vedanta philosophy, his understanding of Hinduism but very little on how he taught. What methods did he use to change people's lives? He once said, "The guru is like a crystal in that he reflects perfectly the consciousness of people. A guru must be able to see what each person needs and he must meet them on their own plane of consciousness. Then he can understand how and in what way to help them." He could project himself into the person he was teaching and from that person's perspective lift him up. That was the secret of his teaching.

Like his guru, Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji used similes and examples from everyday life. Haripada Mitra was a married man. He had once remarked to Swamiji that someone of such strong will as he, need not have so many rules and vows. Swamiji replied, citing the example of a henpecked husband, "Look here, the mind is so mad, so intoxicated, that it can never sit quiet; if it gets the least opportunity it will drag you after itself...all are under the delusion that they have the fullest control over their minds and that they allow it some freedom knowingly. When one sits for meditation, one can very well understand how much control one really has over the mind. Even when one wants to think of a certain matter for some time, one cannot keep the mind fixed on that subject for as long as ten minutes. All are under the delusion that they are not

henpecked and that it is only out of love that they allow their wives to exercise some influence over them."

Just the sight of Swamiji was enough to infuse strength. He seemed to see the strength and power of the other person who in turn, felt courage enter him, till everyone who came to him left refreshed and invigorated. Sister Nivedita asked him about his habit of focussing on the strongest aspects of people. Where did this attitude come from? Is it derived from his training under Sri Ramakrishna? Sri Ramakrishna would eat and dress like the people he wanted to understand, take their initiation and use their language. Swamiji said, referring to his guru, "One must learn to put oneself into another man's soul...No one ever before in India became Christian and Mohammedan and Vaishnava by turns." Swamiji likewise, could put himself into the minds of the audiences he addressed in the West and was therefore effective in eradicating their deep psychological pain of considering themselves fallen from perfection or sinners.

In India, Swamiji advised his monks-in-charge of centres outside India that in every country we have to follow its own method. He showed the importance of smaller, culture-bound values and pointed toward an appreciation of others, weaving apparent opposites into a real brotherhood. In this way he wanted to teach people to work towards the unity of humanity, freeing them from the ideas of privilege. One day, Haripada said, "Swamiji, I think

one must be highly educated in order to understand religion.” Swamiji replied, “One does not require any high education to teach others. Paramahansa Ramakrishna signed his name as ‘Ramkesto’ but who indeed knew the essence of religion better than he?” People were charmed by his stories and talks. He was well acquainted with several branches of modern science and was able to solve people’s questions on religion with their help; he frequently drew analogies from science.

### Swamiji Speaks

When Swamiji spoke at Smith College, the discussion following his talk was mainly on Christianity. There was a row of black-coated priests who challenged him. It appeared they had an unfair advantage, knowing their Bibles thoroughly and the European systems of philosophy and commentators. To the texts from the Bible, Swamiji replied by other and more apposite ones from the same book. In upholding his side of the argument he quoted English philosophy and writers on religious subjects. He even knew the poets thoroughly, quoting Wordsworth and Thomas, Grey and others. Swamiji broadened the scope of religion till it embraced all mankind.

People were amazed at Swamiji’s erudition. However, he did not consider that the prime requirement of a teacher. Professor Northrop, a professor of philosophy and law at Yale University

commented, “Most of the Hindu’s life is never seen by the tourist or visiting social scientist since it occurs in the privacy of the Hindu family and in the silence of meditation, before dawn. Swamiji took Western people into this unseen India.” He not only represented India to them, he often demonstrated. In a room full of ladies and gentlemen sitting in chairs, he would sit on the floor. At Greenacre, he preferred to sit under the trees rather than on chairs in the large tent where others lectured. Swamiji was an itinerant lecturer during his first year in America after which he was invited to conduct classes at an inter-faith

camp at Greenacre. It was considered a continuation of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago with many of the same participants but in a rural atmosphere. It proved to be a turning point in Swamiji’s teaching. It was there that he discovered he had something to teach in the West, that they were receptive to Advaitic teaching.



Swamiji’s Class at Greenacre

Swamiji considered that the scientific philosophy of Advaita is the only spiritual idea that can have a hold on intellectual people. As Romain Rolland wrote, “Vivekananda undertook a series of apostolic campaigns with the object of spreading the Vedantic seed and watering it with Ramakrishna’s rain of love. He fulfilled the American dream of Thoreau, the dream of the marriage of East and West, a synthesis of science and religion. He was lauded for his better knowledge of Western philosophy than all their professors put together. He spoke English

better than the majority of Americans a reporter for the Tribune said."

### Swamiji's Methods

Swamiji's exposition and language were clear and simple. The lectures he delivered to graduate students in the department of philosophy at Harvard University combined made one of the

g r e a t e s t achievements for the early Vedanta movement. Swamiji encouraged questions at the end of each lecture and when someone suggested that they were tiring him with too many questions, he said, "Ask all the questions you like,

the more the better. That is what I am here for; and I won't leave you till you understand. In India they tell me I ought not to teach Advaita Vedanta to the people at large, but I say I can make even a child understand it."

Swamiji later met these students and their professors at the home of Sara Chapman Bull near the Harvard campus. When they left after the talk, Professor William James was walking behind two Harvard undergraduates who had attended it and overheard their conversation. The first student said, "I was really disappointed." The second student asked, "Why?" First student replied, "Well, we were told that this man is so great, that his ideas were so profound." Second

student asked, "What makes you say his ideas aren't profound?" The first student said, "Because I understood every word he said!"

Swamiji could outwit anyone and laugh off any insult hurled at him with his witticism. Once at a gathering in California, Swamiji took out his pipe and began to smoke. In those days it was considered very bad manners to smoke in the presence

of women. His hostess was angry and commented, "If God intended men to smoke, He would have furnished the human head with a chimney for the smoke to go out." "But he has given us the brain to invent a pipe," said Swamiji with a smile. He often

purposely offended people's sensibilities and shocked them out of their conventional ideas. Once he blew smoke in the face of Sister Christine. She witnessed how he lovingly ridiculed another. He incessantly hammered at the faults of some others. His method was different with each of them. Once they bought some pickles and the pickle juice ran out on Swamiji's hand; he immediately put his fingers to his mouth and started to lick the liquid. The hostess found this undignified and exclaimed, "Oh Swami!" "This little outside," he replied, "That's the trouble with you here; you always want the outside to be so nice."

Sister Christine wrote of her experience at Swamiji's retreat, "At Thousand Island Park, he would encourage



Swamiji's Retreat at Thousand Island Park

the students to ask questions, often calling one of us to answer. No matter how far wrong these answers were, he let us flounder about until we were near the truth, and then in a few words, he would clear up the difficulty. This was his invariable method in teaching. He knew how to stimulate the mind of the learner and make it do its own thinking. On his own little verandah, overlooking the tree tops and the beautiful St. Lawrence (river), he often called upon us to make speeches. His object was, as he said, to teach us to think upon our feet...It was a trying ordeal. Each in turn was called upon to make an attempt. There was no escape...Often he soared to the greatest heights as the night advanced. What if it was two o'clock in the morning? What if we had watched the moon rise and set? Time and space had vanished for us."

He deliberately attacked his disciple's faults and prejudices. Sister Christine wrote, "Did you in your enthusiasm see the world as beautiful and believe in the reality of good and the unreality of evil? He was not long in destroying all your fine illusions. He encouraged no spineless dependence upon him in any form, no bid for sympathy. 'Stand upon your own feet. You have the power within you,' he thundered. His whole purpose was to develop our innate strength."

One morning, Swamiji found Miss Waldo in tears. "What is the matter Ellen," he asked, "Has anything happened?" "I seem unable to please you," she replied, "Even when others annoy you, you scold me for it." Swamiji said quickly, "I do not know those people well enough to scold them. I cannot rebuke them, so I come to you. Whom can I scold if I cannot scold

my own?" Her tears dried at once. Someone asked Swamiji about renunciation. "Babies!" he answered, "What do you know of renunciation? If you want to be my disciples, you must face the cannon without a murmur."

### **Encouragement and Everything Positive**

Swamiji brought Sarat Maharaj, (Swami Saradananda) to the West to continue the work in his absence. To prepare Saradananda for his work, when Swamiji was invited to speak on vegetarianism at the Theosophist Hall at Regent Park in London, he said to Saradananda, "Sarat, you go there and give the lecture." Saradananda was taken aback and could say neither yes nor no. It was one thing to have to go to America to give lectures. Swamiji would not be there. But here in the presence of Swamiji —what if he made a mistake? Swamiji brought Saradananda along but it turns out, only to hear his lecture and not to deliver one.

Then Swamiji ordered Saradananda to go to America to lecture. Because Swamiji was such a great orator, Saradananda whose experience as a lecturer was nil, could not think of following in his footsteps. Saradananda was quoted as saying, "He says, no matter how, you have to give a lecture. I can't understand him. Furthermore, he has such a temper, who knows when it will flare up...I have never in my life given a lecture. If I don't go, I'll just get another scolding. I am used to being scolded. But since Naren says to do it, I'll try once. Because of my fear of Naren I will have to give lectures." When Saradananda once refused, Swamiji threatened to throw him out of the window. He was joking, of course. A similar threat

confronted Swami Abhedananda when he was sent to America to lecture.

Back in India, Swamiji gathered all the inmates of the newly-formed monastery. He wanted to formulate the discipline of the Math because a large number of young men were joining. He was encouraged to give them some systematic training. He said, "Look here. We are going to make rules, no doubt; but we must remember the main objective. Our main objective is to transcend all rules and regulations." Swami Shuddhananda, to whom Swamiji dictated the rules, said, "Swamiji's central idea was that it does no

that there is an organizing power in you—the Lord has made this known to me." In this way he bolstered his self-confidence. "I want each one of my children to be a hundred times greater than I could ever be. Every one of you will be a giant—must, that is my word." Sometimes he would not order a person to do this or that but describe the state of affairs and difficulty with such drama and feeling that the person would volunteer to help.

In keeping with this habit, Swamiji made all feel they were capable of anything, equal to any challenge. Success or failure on their part would elicit from him nothing



Swamiji with His Brother Disciples

good to men to point out their various defects and tell them, 'You should not do this or that.' He believed that if the proper ideal is clearly placed before the aspirants, it would help them rise up and the defects would gradually fall off by themselves." Shuddhananda was instructed to phrase rules forbidding activities in a positive way. Shuddhananda had a difficult time with some of them, particularly the one prohibiting intoxicants. At last he wrote, "Of all intoxicants, only tobacco is allowed."

Swamiji also taught by encouragement. In 1895, he wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda, "The reason why I give you these few instructions is

but approbation and encouragement. He judged his brothers and disciples not by their achievements but by the spirit in which they engaged in action. That they had dared and done their best was good enough for him. He would push them into the deep-end of the pond and make them learn to swim. They were as capable of inspiration as he himself, he told them. An atom of goodness in a disciple he regarded as a mountain and mountains of faults and failings he saw as atoms!

He was not content just being the leader of men; he taught others how to lead. He wanted the monks to give up criticism altogether. He wrote to Swami Brahmananda, "Sarada is talking of starting



a Bengali magazine. Help it with all your might. It is not a bad idea. You must not throw cold water over anybody's project. Give up criticism altogether. Help all as long as you find they are doing all right and in cases where they seem to be going wrong, show them the error of their ways but gently. It is criticism that is at the root of all mischief. That is the chief factor in breaking down organizations."

Swamiji taught, "Know partiality to be the chief cause of all evil. That is to say, if you show towards anyone more love than towards anyone else, rest assured that you will be sowing the seeds of future troubles." "He whose love knows no end and never stops to consider high or low, has the whole world lying at his feet."

In the years before he left for the West, Swamiji would work twenty-four hours at a time. He was like a lunatic. Early in the morning while it was still dark, he would rise and call the others singing: "Awake, arise, all ye who would drink of the divine nectar!" And long after midnight he and the other monks would still be sitting on the roof of the monastery

building, singing hymns of praise.

He wrote to Swami Akhandananda from Almora, "I am getting detailed reports of you and getting more and more delighted. It is that sort of work which can conquer the world. What do differences of sect and opinions matter! Bravo! Accept a hundred thousand embraces and blessings from me." Swamiji was such a great teacher, he could outwit and out argue with anyone. He always in everything came out first and foremost. As brilliant as he was, he was infinitely loving and as he wrote to Mrs. Leggett, "I have found something beyond brains and that is love."

Swamiji once asked some of his disciples, "Well, will you forsake me if you find a monk greater than me?" Other than Swami Sadananda, his first disciple, the reply of all those present was, "Never. Doing so would be impossible for us." Swamiji then asked Sadananda, "What do you say?" Sadananda immediately replied, "Yes, if I find someone who is greater than you, I shall leave you. *Because to think that someone is greater, itself amounts to forsaking you.*" ❀

### **From Ridgely Manor, 18.10.1899:**

And then he [Swami Vivekananda] went on—The Guru was always Siva, and was always to be worshipped as Siva—because he sat under the tree to teach and destroyed Ignorance. One must offer all one's doings—or even merit would become a bondage and create Karma—so Hindus giving you a cup of water will say "to the world—to the world" or may be "to the Mother." But there is one Soul that can take it all without harm—One who is eternally protected—eternally the same—unspoilt—He who drank the poison of the world and only made Himself the Blue-Throated. Offer all you do to Siva.

**Sister Nivedita**