

SHRAVAN PURNIMA AUR RAKSHA BANDHAN KI HARDIK SHUBHKAMNAYEN!



Swami Vivekananda at cave temple of Amarnath

Swami Vivekananda translated some of the most charming Vedic verses, and songs of Surdas and other poet-devotees, in his intense and poetic way intoning every line in the original before giving its English form.

The Rudra-prayer was thus rendered by him.

“From the unreal lead us to the Real.

From darkness lead us unto Light.

From death lead us to Immortality.

Reach us through and through our self.

And evermore protect us.....Oh Thou Terrible! —

From ignorance, by Thy sweet compassionate Face”

And then the psalm of invocation of peace and benediction:

“The blissful winds are sweet to us.

The seas are showering bliss on us.

May the corn in our fields bring bliss to us.

May the plants and herbs bring bliss to us.

May the cattle give us bliss.

O Father in Heaven, be Thou blissful unto us!

The very dust of the earth is full of bliss.

It is all bliss—all bliss—all bliss.”

“The pilgrimage of thousands of devotees to the far-away Cave of Amarnath, nestled in a glacial gorge of the Western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. One is struck with wonder at the quiet and orderly way in which a canvas town springs up with incredible rapidity at every halting-place, with its tents of various colours and of all shapes and sizes, with its Bazaars, and broad streets running through the middle, and all vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn when the whole army of gay pilgrims set out on the march again. The glow of countless cooking-fires, the ashen-smearred Sadhus under the canopy of their large Gerua umbrellas stuck in the ground, sitting and discussing or meditating before their Dhunis, the Sanyasins of all orders in their various garbs, the men and women with children, from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes, and their devout faces, the torches shimmering at nightfall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus—all these are most impressive, and convey to some extent an idea of the overmastering passion of the race for religion”....

“On August 2, 1898 the day of Amarnath itself, the pilgrims after making a steep climb, and then a descent in which one false step would have meant instant death, walked along the glacier mile after mile till they reached a flowing stream, in which they bathed before entering the cave which was reached after another stiff ascent. The Swami, who had fallen behind, perhaps intentionally, so as to be alone with his thoughts, came up and sent his waiting disciple on and bathed in the river. He then reached the cave, his whole frame shaking with emotion. The cave itself was “large enough to hold a cathedral, and the great ice-Shiva, in a niche of deepest shadow, seemed as if thronged on its own base”. Then, his body covered with ashes, his face aflame with supreme devotion to Shiva, he entered the shrine itself, nude, except for a loin-cloth; and kneeling in adoration he bowed low before the Lord. A song of praise from a hundred throats resounded in the cave, and the shining purity of the great ice-Linga overpowered him. He almost swooned with emotion. A great mystical experience came to him, of which he never spoke, beyond saying that Shiva Himself had appeared before him and that he had been granted the grace of Amarnath, the Lord of Immortality, not to die until he himself should choose to throw off his mortal bonds, corroboration of the words of his Divine Master regarding him: “When he realizes who and what he is, he will no longer remain in the body!” Also it might be that, in his wrestling with the soul to keep itself from merging in the Absolute, “was defeated or fulfilled that presentiment which had haunted him from childhood that he would meet with death in a Shiva-temple amongst the mountains.” Indeed, so intense had been the shock of his mystical experience upon his physical frame that later on a doctor said, “Swami ji, it was almost death! Your heart ought naturally to have stopped beating. It has undergone a permanent enlargement instead.”

Never had the Swami ji visited a religious place with such spiritual exaltation. To his European disciple he said afterwards, ‘The image was the Lord Himself. It was all worship there. I never have been to anything so beautiful, so inspiring! So saturated had his personality become with the Presence of that God that for days thereafter he could speak of nothing but Shiva. Shiva was all in all; Shiva, the Eternal One, the Great Monk, rapt in meditation, aloof from all worldliness.

ICE LINGA at CAVE TEMPLE AMARNATH, Swami VIVEKANADA with KASHMIRI PANDITS
(Source: Swami Vivekananda in Kashmir)