

The Revival of Hinduism in the West

Swami Dibyananda

Acharya Swami Pranavanandajee Maharaj founder of Bharat Sevashram Sangha said, "I am He. The Almighty reveals Himself through me. I am the destined Savior (Sad Guru), the personification of God Himself for this age. I am the common reservoir, the power house of Divine Energies and Benedictions. Come to me, connect yourself with me, resign yourself in me; take refuge in me, worship me, pray to me, meditate upon me, follow me, realize my ideals in your life and work for my mission. In this way you will progress spiritually towards the path of God realization, through my grace. This is the earliest course of spiritual progress in the present age".

"My Sangha is but the second and more perfected edition of the Great Buddha's Sangha founded in order to fulfill the demands of the age. The Sangha sets forth a synthesis of the ideals of the Vedic Age and the spirit of national re-organization of the Buddha's period. As long as the preaching and propagation of *-The Message of the Sangha* would be continuing, the Sangha will be alive."

Indian Cultural Mission

In order to carry out His order, the monks of the Sangha were engaged in preaching His message, the gospel of Hinduism all over the globe. On June 4th, 1948, a cultural mission under the leadership of Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj, the great orator, left for (Darussalam) Tanzania, (East Africa) from Bombay. They traveled by the ship named KANDALA. Swami Akshayanandajee Maharaj was the Deputy leader of the Mission, he organized the tour. He was a dynamic monk in the history of the Sangha. The other members of the Cultural Mission were: Swami Tryambakanandajee Maharaj, Brahmachari Chandi (Swami Ashokanandajee), Brahmachari Paresh (Swami Buddhanandajee), Brahmachari Ramdas (Swami Vedeshanandajee) and Brahmachari Mritunjoy. After preaching and providing the people of East Africa with the wealth of Hinduism, the cultural mission returned to India.

In order to welcome the CULTURAL MISSION, reception programs were organized in different states of India. For example: one reception program was held at the Association Hall in Calcutta, spearheaded by Dr Ramesh Chandra Mazumder, a great Historian. Other receptions were chaired in Delhi and Surat to welcome these fearless monks.

With such vast response from East Africa, the Sangha felt a sense of comfort to send their missionaries to other countries to disperse the verbiage of Hinduism. Then the Cultural Missions continue to send monks to Malaysia, Australia, Hong Kong, Philippines and different countries of South Asia.

India is at last politically free and her people have become independent after thousands of years of subjugation by Muslims and British. There is a proverb, "The Sun never sets in the British Empire." The British Government in India sent farmers from remote villages especially from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh as indenture labourers to the West Indies. It is assumed that the Indians who were transported to the West Indies were from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This theory is still an unknown to people of the West Indies as to which state their ancestors came from. Most of the East Indians landed in Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, Barbados and other Caribbean Islands. These people worked on the sugar plantation as indentured labourers (1838 to 1845). They were paid farmers. Today, the off-springs of the indentured labourers are now lawyers, doctors, politicians and are well- educated men and women in the Society. It is an established fact although people migrated from India so many years, to date; have managed to keep their culture, thus maintaining Hinduism.

The First Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru requested the President of Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Shreemat Swami Satchidanandajee Maharaj to send a Cultural Mission to the West Indies (Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname) to preach and propagate Hinduism (which teaches live and let live). During the period 1835 to 1845 the Indians were sent by the British to their colonial territories. The Christian Missionaries converted a number Indians but Hinduism stayed alive after 112years. Pundits and older generation fought and struggle to sustain our Hindu culture.

In the year 1950, 11Th September, a Cultural Mission again sailed from Khidirpur (Calcutta) traveled via ship (BETYA) to the West Indies, under the leadership of Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj. Other members were Swami Purnanandajee Maharaj (Deputy Leader of the mission) Brahmachari Rajkrishna (Swami Vijayanandajee) and Brahmachari Mritunjoy. The ship reached Mauritius Port and anchored for two days. The Indians welcomed the Indian Cultural Mission and arranged lecture programs. The Indian High Commissioner welcomed Swami Advaitanandajee. Their visit and lectures were publicized in the ADVANCE Newspaper. In Mauritius 70% population were Hindus. Then they traveled to Cape Town in Africa, the Gujarat business community organized lectures in Cape Town. Then to Barbados, the Indians organized lectures in Barbados.

VISIT TO TRINIDAD

Finally the ship reached its destination, PORT OF SPAIN, the capital city of Trinidad and Tobago at 9am, on the 28Th of December 1950.

A Reception Committee headed by Mr. C. V. Mathur was formed in Trinidad to welcome the Cultural Mission. Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj the leader of Cultural Mission and other members of the group were garlanded by the welcome committee. First, Mr. C.V. Mathur (President of the cultural committee) welcomed the Indian Cultural Mission with a short speech. Then, Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj leader of the Cultural Mission replied with a short lecture thanking the people of Trinidad for this warm welcome. The High Commissioner of India, Mr. Anand Mohan Sahay, Bhadesh Sagan Maharaj, Bishram Gopi, R.R. Ojha, Pandit Seunarine ,E. J.Pelse and many other

Hindu leaders welcome Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj and the other members of the Indian Cultural mission . They took them to Champsfleure in the house of Mr. Bhadesh Sagan Maharaj where they were accommodated. He was the richest person as well as a dynamic Hindu leader in Trinidad. The next day, the Welcome Committee arranged a great reception program for the Indian Cultural Mission in Queens Park, Port of Spain (Capital city). Thousands of Hindus, Muslims and Christians from all over Trinidad and different Islands of the West Indies came to the reception program. They were overwhelmed by the lecture of Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj, the great orator. After hearing the dynamic lecture, the Hindus were thinking God has sent these divine saints to our blessed country to save our religion. Since their forefathers came to Trinidad from India about 112 years ago, no preacher came from India and for the first time in their lives they saw Indian monks. Yet, it is amazing how these people from Trinidad managed to maintain their religion without any support from any cultural or ascetic background to keep their faith and religion alive.

The Cultural Mission started preaching from Champsfleure. Mr. Bhadesh Sagan Maharaj from a Hindu background always supported the missionary group and provided them with a pleasant stay. Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj lectured in different cities and villages of Trinidad at the request of the Hindu leaders of Trinidad. The Cultural Mission was preaching the cultural heritage of India with Vedic Sandhya and Havan. The charming and melodious songs of Brahmachari Mritunjoy kept everyone spell-bound. Brahmachari Rajkrishna, the young fair-complexioned and handsome looking was with long curly black flowing hair, provided the backdrop when he used to perform the **HEROIC GURU ARATI**, in the dancing mood, people were captivated. The rebirth of the wonderful Vedic age came alive once more. 112years from one's motherland, change is expected; therefore large numbers of Hindus were converted to Christianity as the Christian Missionaries were in Trinidad. However, after hearing the dynamic lectures of Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj, a large number of them were returned to Hinduism. The Christian Missionaries were not able to convert the Hindus in Trinidad very easily any more. Due to the preaching and propagation of Hinduism by the Indian cultural mission in Trinidad and due to inundating the Hindus with Hinduism, they were unable to convert Hindus into Christianity.

The Hindu Leaders of Trinidad arranged a few farewell programs in different cities. After adding to the wealth of Hinduism to the people in Trinidad, the Indian Cultural Mission flew for British Guyana on September 14th, 1951. Swami Purnanandajee, the deputy leader of the Cultural Mission remained in Trinidad to carry out the stream of Hinduism in Trinidad.

Bharat Sevashram Sangha in Guyana

Dr. Jung Bahadur Singh, Pandit S.P. Sharma, Barrister Sugrim Singh, Ramjas Tewari and many other Hindu leaders were present to welcome the Indian Cultural Mission at the Atkinson (Cheddi Jagan) Airport (Guyana). Dr. Jung Bahadur Singh welcomed the Mission by giving a short speech; people garlanded every one of the monks. Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj replied with a short lecture to thank and welcome the people of Guyana. Lots of people were waiting on both sides of the road to greet them. They brought them to the Kitty Mandir and arranged their accommodation in

the house of Mr. Balkaran in Lamaha Street, Kitty. Next day, the welcome Committee arranged a great reception program in the Town Hall of Georgetown. Mr. Charles Willy, Governor of British Guyana welcomed the Cultural Mission. On behalf of the city, Mr. H. B. Gajraj, Mayor, welcomed all with an accepting speech. The audience was overwhelmed by the dynamic lecture of the great orator, Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj. The Hindu leaders from different parts of Guyana invited the Mission and organized lectures. The Cultural Mission preached the cultural heritage of India with Vedic Sandhya and Havan all over Guyana. They received lot of co-operation from every one. The people of Guyana were captivated by the heroic Arati performed by Brahmachari Rajkrishna. The Cultural Mission spread the words of Hinduism all over Guyana as they did in Trinidad. The Hindu leaders of Guyana requested Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj to recruit one monk in Guyana to carry out the stream of Hinduism. Swami Advaitanandajee Maharaj said, Swami Purnanandajee is in Trinidad right now and he will work with the Hindus in both Trinidad and Guyana and will carry out the activities of the Sangha. After preaching and added to the Hindus on Hinduism in Guyana, the Cultural Mission departed. Farewell programs were organized in the Town Hall, Kitty Mandir and Arya Samaj Mandir. Enroute to India, the Cultural Mission reached London. Dr. Kumaria and other devotees welcomed them at the Airport. Dr. Kumaria is the founder of the Hindu Association in London. Swamjee lectured at the Hindu Association for two days at the Student Burrow and other places. After preaching and increasing to the growth of Hindus in respect to Hinduism in London for three weeks, the Cultural Mission left from London via Paris and Rome and reached Bombay Airport.

Swami Punanandjee in Trindad

As mentioned earlier, Swami Purnanandajee Maharaj the deputy leader of the Indian Cultural Mission remained in Trinidad to carry out the stream of Hinduism at the request of the Hindus of Trinidad permission granted by Governing body of BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA (Calcutta, Head quarters). In Trinidad, Swami Purnanandajee Maharaj had no particular place to stay. Usually he stayed in different Temples, in this way he was engaged in preaching all day. He used to teach Sandhya and Havan to the devotees and lectured on Hinduism. Mr. Sooknanan Maharaj, from Princess Town, donated him a car and he also gave him a newly built house to reside. Swamijee felt it was his obligation to clarify the depth of Hinduism. He did not sleep in the house provided but slept in the car so moving from one area to another can be easily accessible to educate and add to the value of Hinduism to the people of Trinidad. He hardly slept in the house; he returned to his home every 10-15days. His goal was to spread the teachings of Hinduism (teachings of his Guru, Acharya Swami Pranavanandjee Maharaj).

In Trinidad the MAHASABHA was formed through the guidance of Swami Purnanandaje Maharaj. Bhadesh Sagan Maharaj was the President of MAHASABHA. Swamijee encouraged Mr. Bhadesh Sagan Maharaj to open Hindu Schools to protect the Hindus from converting to Christian missionaries. Today, the MAHASABHA has 52 Hindu Schools. After the expiry of Mr. Bhadesh Sagan Maharaj, his son in law, Satyanarayan Maharaj became the President of MAHASABHA.

In 1953 a devotee from Felicity, Brijlal Bansraj donated one plot of land to build an Ashram. When Swamijee got the land, he used to sleep on the ground on a mattress in an open space with a mosquito net. Devotees used to beg him, Gurujee! We are providing you a room, please come, but Swamijee would not listen to them. When rain fell, he used to sit with an umbrella. Devotees used to ask him again, Gurujee! Come to our house; he used to tell them, THE SKY IS MY ROOF. Within a few months he built a Temple in Felicity on that land. Swamijee formed an organization named TRINIDAD SEVASHRAM SANGHA. By his encouragement and support, another three Temples were built; Caparo, Baucarro and Free Port. These Temples are the branches of Trinidad Sevashram Sangha. Swamijee organized hundreds of groups. Swamijee wrote HINDUTVAM, it is called the BIBLE for the Hindus in Trinidad, Guyana and other parts of the world. In Trinidad (Felicity Ashram), his determination was so strong that he would use only one match stick to light the firewood to cook. If it did not light, he would not cook. Some times he used to boil papaya leaves and used to drink it as food. Gayadutt Singh (Sunder), used to visit him every day and Swamijee used to feed him. If there was no food, Swamijee used to give him the boiled liquid papaya leaves to drink. Sunder asked, "Gurujee! What is this?" Swamijee used to say, Sundar, "This is very good for one's health." Sunder entered the kitchen and found out; there was no rice and vegetables to cook. That's why Gurujee boiled papaya leaves to survive. He never asked any one nor would he spend money to buy any thing for him. Swami Purnanadajee Maharaj, dynamic monk, spent five valuable years in Trinidad. He established Trinidad Sevashram Sangha with four branches. Felicity Ashram is the Headquarters.

One African gentleman, Mr. Ephram Charles took initiation from Swamijee. He was a politician and Swamijee selected him as the President of Trinidad Sevashram Sangha. He went every where with Swamijee to preach. Another African gentleman Mr. Huangriggs donated all the money to print the Bhagawad Geeta, which was written by Swami Purnanadajee Maharaj.

The echo of Trinidad reached to Guyana long before. The Hindus of Guyana were waiting anxiously for Swami Purnanandajee Maharaj. Swamijee appointed the executive committee members of Trinidad Sevashram Sangha and Felicity as the Headquarters of all the branches. He gave responsibility to Brijlal Bansraj to run the Service of Felicity Ashram. He purchased a mini bus and he used to travel with the devotees all over Trinidad to perform Sandhya, Havan as well as to preach and propagate the message of Guru Maharaj. Mr. Brijlal Bansraj along with Mr. Shyamlal Jadunandan was very dedicated to Guru Maharaj.

Swami Purnanadajee in Guyana

Hindu leaders of Guyana, Dr. Jung Bahadur Singh, Pandit S.P. Sharma, Mr. R.K. Singh, Mr. Budhu and Mr. Kedar sponsored Swami Purnanadajee Maharaj. On October 28th, 1955, Swamijee arrived in Guyana. All the Hindu leaders of Guyana went to the Airport to welcome him. His accommodation was arranged in the house of Pandit S. P Sharma in Kitty, 29, Sandybabb Street. Swamijee did yojna (Prabachan) for fourteen days in Campbellville Temple (greater Georgetown). He commenced preaching and propagating Hinduism all over Guyana and added to the revolution of Hinduism in Guyana. Mr. & Mrs. Resaul Maharaj met Swamijee in Kitty and offered Swamijee 20

acres of swampy land in Cove and John, East Coast Demarara to build an Ashram. He accepted the generous donation and started to build an Ashram. Bhaijee Dudhnath, a very dedicated disciple of Swamijee, worked with Swamijee all the time in Ashram. He never saw Gurujee neither cooked nor eat. One day he asked for permission from Gurujee to enter in the kitchen and was astonished to see heaps of coconut shells. He asked Gurujee! What do you eat? Swamijee replied, "Coconuts." In this way, he used to survive but he never asked the devotees for anything.

In Guyana, Hindus used to bury the dead bodies like the Christians. Swami Purnanandajee Maharaj defended the cause for the Hindus whereby the Government of British Guyana had to change the law to allow the Hindus to cremate their dead. Dr. Jung Bahadur Singh was the first man to be cremated in Guyana and Swami Purnanandajee Maharaj was present at his cremation ceremony. He showed the devotees how to cremate. Swamijee used to say, "Hindus have the sacred privilege and birth right to cremate their dead bodies."

Swamijee had a dream to live for. He said, "Until and unless I can build a Hindu College and dormitory my dream will not be fulfilled and the Indians will be able to stand on their own feet." Swamijee encouraged Indians, by saying, you the Indians and you are the majority yet you Indians are treated like Coolies. How long you will all be dominated? Arise, wake and be a vibrant Hindu. One day you will have to rule this country. When he used to say these inspiring words, his voice rose and roared like a lion.

In 1956 the prominent lawyer Mr. Sugrim Prasad (son in law of Mr. & Mrs. Resaul Maharaj) supplied materials to build the Hindu College (Secondary School) and Dormitory. Devotees from all over Guyana helped manually and financially and few devotees from Trinidad came and helped for construction also. Brahmacharies and students (boys) used to stay in the dormitory. Hindu Primary School was built by donations. In due course more buildings were constructed in the complex is known as GUYANA SEVASHRAM SANGHA (Cove & John Ashram). The Governor of British Guyana Mr. Patrick Renison laid the foundation for the science lab, 26 February, 1956. The Hindu Primary School and the Hindu College was the top educational institution in British Guyana. All races of students attending in the Hindu college and that was the only School in the west whereby students were allowed to say their own prayers before attending class. Swamijee allowed the poor students; free education and allow them to stay in the dormitory free, thus the reason for Swamijee to build a College for the people of Guyana. This is the work of this great organization (BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA).

Swamijee traveled all over Guyana to preach and propagate the ideals of Hinduism. Sometimes the Pandits created lots of problems, but due to His heroic and dynamic personality and the blessings of His Guru Acharya Swami Pranavandajee Maharaj, on one could touch him. As the Ashram was growing with lots of activities, Calcutta Head quarters send another monk to assist Swamijee, who unfortunately passed away in Guyana after a few years. Swami Purnanandajee trained five Brahmacharies in the first group. Swami Vidyanandajee is the first Sannyasian from the first group in Guyana (South America). He is presently in charge of America Sevashram Sangha and Guyana Sevashram Sangha.

From time to time, Swami Purnanandajee took short trips to India. During those trips, in 1960, he decided to make a short stop in London (UK). He saw the need for the

revival of Hinduism and in 1961 he established LONDON SEVASHRAM SANGHA, in Shepherd Bush, London (UK). Later, he brought two Brahmacharies to London from Guyana. Swami Nirliptanandajee who is presently In-charge of London branch, was one of the Brahmachari he brought from Guyana.

In 1967, Calcutta Head quarter assigned Swami Brahamanandajee Maharaj (B,S.c) to Guyana as the principal of HINDU COLLEGE. Swami Brahmaanandajee served the Hindu College as the Principal and also as the In-charge of Guyana Sevashram Sangha for ten years. In 1973, he rebuilt the new Temple of Guyana Ashram. By the request of Guyanese and Trinidadian devotees in Canada, Swami Brahmaanandajee visited Canada in 1975. With the consent of Governing body of Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Calcutta Head quarters, Swami Purnanandajee sent Swami Brahmaanandajee in 1977 to establish a branch of Bharat Sevashram Sangha in Canada. He stayed in devotees home and conducted Service every other Sunday at the University of Toronto and devotees homes. Swamijee worked hard and with the help of the devotees, a property was bought with a house in 1981 and establish an Ashram at 196, Royal York Road, Toronto, Ontario (Canada). In 1989 the Ashram was moved to 2107, Codlin Crescent, Toronto, Ontario. (Phone 416-679-0967, E mail - bsstoronto@yahoo.ca). Swami Purnanandajee trained Brahmachari Shivshankar (Swami Bhajanandajee) He served Hindu college as an English literature teacher. Swami Purnanandajee sent him to Trinidad in 1981, as In-charge of Trinidad Sevashram Sangha and he served there for five years. In 1986, Swami Bhajanandajee was sent to Canada to assist Swami Brahmaanandajee.

In the absence of Swami Brahmaanandajee in Guyana, Swami Vidyanandajee became the principal of Hindu College and In-charge of Guyana Sevashram Sangha. He is a vibrant monk and he has lot of command on the Hindus of Guyana. Swami Purnanandajee sent Swami Vidyanandajee to New York (USA) in 1987 to establish a branch. He established America Sevashram Sangha (in Jamaica Avenue, N.Y, USA), a branch of Bharat Sevashram Sangha.

In the absence of Swami Vidyanandajee, in Guyana, Brahmachari Bhaskar (Swami Shiveshwaranandajee) took charge of Guyana Sevashram Sangha, also the Asst. Principal of Hindu College. Guyana Sevashram Sangha is the first monastery and first Hindu college and Dormitory in South America. Swami Purnanandajee's strong discipline, great sacrifice, guidance and contributions for the education insurances on moral discipline produced people in every profession and field of activities in Trinidad and Guyana. By his grace, inspiration and blessings, America Sevashram Sangha, Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Canada, London Sevashram Sangha, Trinidad Sevashram Sangha and Guyana Sevashram Sangha were founded.

Swami Purnanandajee worked very hard. He was very sick at the end of 1985. And he was admitted to Hospital in London. One night, Guru Maharaj (Acharya Swami Pranavnandajee Maharaj) appeared before him and told him, ***“Purnananda! You have done a lot in the West. Your lifespan is end. I am granting you few more months’ lifespan. You go and visit Guyana, Trinidad, Canada and America to meet all the devotees and encourage them to continue the activities. Then come back to London and finally come to Mother India, then I will take you.”***

Swami Purnanandajee rapidly recovered by the blessings of Guru Maharaj. At first he came to Guyana. All the Brahmacharis were extremely happy as Gurujee is with them.

They were nagging, Gurujee! You will have to stay in Guyana Ashram with us for the rest of your life. Swamijee Said, My Children! Listen, my lifespan is end, Guru Maharaj grant me few months lifespan to visit Guyana, Trinidad, Canada, America and London. Then I will go back to Mother India to quit my mortal body. Swami Purnanandajee stayed few days in Guyana. On day he proclaimed amongst the Brahmacharies and devotees, Tomorrow morning I will fly to Trinidad. Next day early in the morning Swamijee did Guru Arati. Swami Purnanandajee blessed all the Brahmacharies and devotees and encouraged them to carry out the activities of Guru Maharaj perfectly. Swamijee sat on the car and they all started to cry. The Brahmacharies and devotees told, Gurujee! Please look back and see what you have done in the swampy land on the bank of Atlantic Ocean. Swami Purnanandajee replied, ***“I am the instrument of Guru Maharaj. Guru Maharaj did his work through this instrument.”*** Swami Purnanandajee left Guyana on Monday morning, December 9Th, 1985 and reached to Trinidad. All the devotees of Trinidad gladly came to meet him. He encouraged them to carry out the activities of Guru Maharaj. This time he was different. He gave Prasad to every one and spoke very softly. The devotees said to him, Gurujee! You are so kind to us. Swami Purnanandajee said ***I am going back to Mother India to quit my mortal body; I will not come back physically to you.***

He visited Canada, America and London and encouraged all the devotees to continue the activities of Guru Maharaj properly and told them in the same way, that he is going back to Mother India forever to quit his physical body.

Swami Purnanandajee reached Calcutta Headquarters before MAGHI PURNIMA, he was in good health. Maghi Purnima and Shivaratri festivals were passed. There was PURNA KUMBMELA in March in Hardwar. All the monks requested Swamijee to go to Kumbhmela with them. Swamijee told ***I will not go; I am in Guru Maharaj’s Siddhapith, ‘this is my Hardwar, this is my kumbhamela’.*** Most of the monks went to kumbhmela in Hardwar. On April 11Th, 1986, His Holiness Swami Purnanandajee Maharaj gave up his mortal coil in Calcutta Head quarters at the Holy feet of Guru Maharaj and took rest for ever in the sacred soil of Mother India. Swami Purnanandajee, dynamic monk, shed His blood and energy in the west for the love of His master.

The people of the West are eternally grateful to Acharya Shreemat Swami Pranavanandjee Maharaj, founder of BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA, who continues to inspire and unite the devotees to the spiritual path thereby saving Hinduism which teaches live and let live.

At present there are lots of monks of Bharat Sevashram Sangha from India who are recruited to the West by the Sangha to propagate the gospel of Hinduism and from time to time monks of the Sangha from India are also visiting and propagating Hinduism in the West.

Om Shanti! Om Shanti!