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She Meditated 16 Hours a Day in a Himalayan Cave

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"Since childhood, the unknown has haunted me," says Vimalaji. She was fond of sitting in meditation when she was hardly five-years-old and continued to do so up to age 12 simply because, "it was such joy and bliss. I did not know why it was blissful, and still do not know how and why there is bliss," she confesses.

Her parents were Hindu Brahmins who enjoyed daily worship and chanting. When Vimala was 12 years old, she sat for 72 hours in a marathon meditation in her home. She was a brilliant student and read many classical Hindu religious texts and books on yoga.

Miss Vimala Thakar is a globe-trotting expert in Vedas and Upanishads, yogasanas and nature cures. She trekked about India for years with Saint Vinoba, serving the poor. Catapulted into an illumined state by the touch of J. Krishnamurti, she discusses modern physics with Dr. Fritzof Capra on its Vedic overlap. Humble, shunning money, publicity and crowds, she teaches the Eternal is here now: "You feel vast like the skies, deep like the oceans, lightness like the sunshine and the peace of the mountains within you. As the cosmos begins to confer all its qualities, one wants to share with one's friends only one thing: that it is possible to live in that dimension even when you may be surrounded by human beings."

Living on Wild Berries

After taking her masters degree with honors in philosophy at Nagpur, she went straight to the Himalayas and stayed alone for 75 days in the cave in Uttarkashi

where siddha master Swami Rama Tirtha had meditated. She did not even take a pot or pan. She sipped water from the Ganges River, ate wild fruits and berries and meditated 16 hours every day. At the end of it, she felt intoxicated by the mantras and solitude and was astonished to gain some siddhis like seeing halos in color behind some people and some powers not unlike clairvoyance.

She then joined the Land-Gift Movement of Saint Vinoba Bhave. For about 6 years, she walked on foot, from village to village through practically every district of India from Kashmir to Tamil Nadu - getting gifts of land from the rich and giving them to the poor. She got up at 2:30 AM every day and walked 6 to 10 miles with Vinoba, during which he would often recite and explain Ishavasyopanishad or some other ancient holy text. It was a spiritual feast and a firsthand discovery of India for Vimala.

Dazzled by J. Krishnamurti

In 1956, she listened to talks by J. Krishnamurti in Benares and met him personally. She was spellbound and often sat alone in utter, deep silence for a whole day after a talk. "The intensity throbbing in his words had opened the doors to the irresistible presence of the Eternal," she relates. "When two minds experience the same state simultaneously, they go through a strange state of communion." The final stage of unfolding had begun for Vimala.

From 1956 to 1959, she continued her incessant travelling in India for the Land Gift Movement. Then she fell sick in November 1959, with bleeding and pain in her left ear, fever and headaches, sometimes becoming unconscious. A surgery on the ear did not help, and it was decided to take her to England for another possible surgery.

It was then that she met J. Krishnamurti once more. He offered to help her and said his mother used to say that his hands had healing powers. Vimala, at first reluctant, agreed to a trial. During six sittings, Krishnamurti held his right palm on her head and left palm on her left ear. Finally, her bleeding stopped, fever disappeared and her lost hearing returned.

Her general health improved but the healing "played havoc with my mind," she remembers. "Right from the first sitting, something new and strange has been pulsating through every nerve - a very strong and forceful current of vibrations passing through the head and the whole body," she told Krishnamurti. "It is like the invasion of new awareness, irresistible and uncontrollable. It has swept away everything. It is strange to see the total mind being born anew." Krishnamurti replied, "You have a serious mind. You were listening to the talks which were sinking deep into your mind. They were operating all the time. One day you realized the Truth."

Vimalaji wrote to her father. "A tremendous tempest has swept away everything with one stroke. I wish I could describe how I witnessed the ego being torn to pieces and being thrown to the winds. The centre of thinking has dissolved into nothingness."

She has tried to describe the undescribable explosion in the following words: "My romance and search for the unknown ended abruptly. There is the beginning of a new life which has no purpose, direction or pattern. It is overwhelmingly fresh, unbelievably new, and keeps one ever alert, keen and insecure."

Against Religious Labels

Now 69, Vimalaji has been travelling in 40 countries during the last 27 years - from Holland to Hong Kong and Argentina to Sweden, giving guidance, group meditations and talks published in five European languages. She also continues to visit and help in the trouble spots in India - Assam, Punjab and Kashmir - and meets with Gandhian followers and other peace-workers.

But she says she does not now belong to any organization, any country or any established religion and does not want to build any new organization or insist on any particular method or technique. She feels that the Vedas and Upanishads have a message of holistic approach to life, which is an indivisible totality. "If the source of all the universe and the container of all creative energies is nothingness and "no-beingness," she argues, "obviously we have to learn and find out if we can live as "nothingness and nobody-ness" so that the creative energy adds a new dimension to human life." "Religion is an inner revolution," she insists. "To be

religious is to be committed to living; very few people are interested in living and discovering the meaning of life, personally, first hand." She feels that if more people live in daily meditation, civilization will pass on from an aggressive, violently competitive society to a psychology of friendship and cooperation, leading to a real authentic democracy. An expert in yoga, she gives guidance on yogasanas, breathing diet and practicing silence in daily life.

"Whether one is in India or elsewhere," she shares, "the moments of total solitude and communion with the wholeness are the real joys in life. The sense of connectedness with the wholeness is always there, in every movement of life. But communion in solitude has its own ecstasy! Incessant travelling becomes bearable due to this holy communion."

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