THE SAINT WHO SUFFERED LORD JESUS'S AGONY IN HER OWN PERSON.

How a Hindu Yogi, Swami Yoganand, Looked at the Amazing Miracle

by Dosubaba

A home in the small village of Konnersreuth had suddenly caught fire. It was likely to spread out. The villagers instinctively organised themselves to fight it. They surrounded the house. They formed a bucket brigade. Pails of water were swiftly passed from hand to hand to the volunteers standing on ladders.

A twenty-year old peasant girl from a neighbouring home was one of the volunteers. She was standing on a chair passing the pails to a man on a ladder. The heat was intense. Hurry! Hurry! Everybody was shouting. The girl felt dizzy and almost hysterical. Suddenly her arms stiffened. She reeled and felt head-long on the ground.

It was 10th March 1918.

For the girl, Therese Newman, the ordeal had begun.

She was badly injured. She tried to do her work of helping her parents, but in vain. Hardly a month had passed and she fell down a flight of stairs. Her head was injured. On 23rd April, she was hospitalised with violent convulsions due to internal injuries. On June 10, she was sent home..... But she was fast becoming an invalid. Arrived August and her eyesight started failing, and by the end of 1918 she was a bed ridden, blind, invalid, and getting periodical convulsions, which at times threw her out of bed.

"Therese, I was at church last Sunday when I heard about a young man wanting to be a priest", a friend was talking to Therese lying in bed. "Poor fellow, he was asked to leave the seminary because he had some serious throat ailment."

Therese felt a pang in her heart. "Why so, Oh Lord!" She thought, "Here is a young man trying to preach Jesus's word and you take away his voice! Why don't you give his sickness to me? As it is, I am suffering a number of ailments. What difference is it going to make with one more?... Did not my Lord Jesus Himself carry our burdens of suffering? Perhaps He wants me to do the same." And she prayed to Him. Gradually her throat started to ache.... and the young student found himself getting well. After a time, his ailment was duly transferred to Therese!

And that "one more" went on and on. Just by her sheer thought force she took on herself the sufferings of many more. A stomach ailment of a farm woman, chronic fever of a hospital patient, rheumatism of Therese's own father, a soldier's serious infection, even the lameness and blindness were duly taken over by Therese! "Ill? Give it to Therese", became a jest of the village.

Between 1918 and 1925 Therese became a huge bundle of her own and other people's sufferings. Blind, almost paralysed, full of pains and aches...... dying. **Was she trying to copy Lord Jesus?**

Arrived April 29, 1925. A great event had occurred in the world of the Christians. Pope Pius XI announced that a French nun, who had lived only for 24 years, was to be canonised as a Saint. Her name was also Therese - Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897). She had died about a year before Therese Newmann was born.

From her childhood Therese Newmann had great fascination and intense attraction towards the life of Therese of Lisieux. What a life? Even when she was dying and was asked what were her prayers, she had given the simplest of all simple answers. "Nothing. I love Him." Such a lover of Jesus! The day on which she was declared a Saint, Therese Newmann dropped the darkness of her eyes. Her blindness was gone! She had a sudden vision of Holy Mary and heard Her Saying: "You have taken the sickness of other and have patiently carried your own. The Blessed Master wills that you should see."

After some days another vision followed when **she saw Jesus!** Soon she was sitting on the side of the bed. **She had heard the Master's divine voice.** "Think of what happened in my heart. What more does a **person want than that?** What more is there to live for than that?" She said this, years after, to Marcus Bach, a devotional writer. ("The Circle of Faith" - Hawthorn 1956).

Pope's announcement about the beautification of Therese of Lisiex was followed, on May 17, 1925, by a formal confirmation of her canonisation. On that very day, Therese Newmann's paralysis was gone! And on the following September 10, the anniversary day of Therese of Lisieux, Therese Newmann left her bed, fully revitalised! Her decayed left food had grown up regenerated tissues. She was reborn. She entered the second phase of her life.

It was the year 1926. Easter was a few weeks away. Therese was, as always, thinking of Jesus. As the Easter approached nearer; her thoughts about Him intensified. Few days before Good Friday, another miracle entered her life.

Evening had set in and advanced. She went into a deep contemplation. She visualised Jesus being taken with the Cross on His shoulder, to crucifixion..... Sharp cut of the spear in His side..... Suddenly Therese herself became aware of an acute pain on her left side, just beneath her heart. She put her hand there. When she drew the hand back, her fingers were red with blood! "I am pierced as He was. He..... died. So, I will, and I will go to Him". She was waiting to die; but she did not. The bleeding continued for several hours. Nobody knew except her sister-in-law, who was caring for her all along. Strangely, she was not feeling weak. No, she was not dying. She was to live for 36 years more..... In the Holy Week of 1926, Therese herself went through the agonising ordeal that her Lord Jesus suffered when He was dragged to the Cross and crucified She herself was living in it. On Good Friday, the wounds appeared on both the palms exactly where Jesus was nailed, and remained, open for two weeks. Then new skin began to form.

This occurred on many Fridays. She had the nail marks on her feet, thorn-marks on her head, tears and blood streaming through the eyes.

The phenomenon is called "stigmata". Therese was not the first to have it. Many a Christian Saints and even common people had it. One Dr. A. Imbert Gourbeyre, a French physician had enumerated 312 cases of stigmata from the beginning of Christianity to the end of the 19th century.

Therese's stigmata remained with her for the rest of her life - 36 years after 1926. Many a scientists, researchers, journalists, doctors, investigators had visited Konnersreuth, some to find out, some to expose, some just curious. But the common people had no doubt about the miracle. It is only the so called "rationalists", with their ever-doubting psyche, who are too irrational to understand the rationale of a miracle.

But this was not the last miracle of Therese. One more astounding was to follow till her death. And that was: She gave up eating for the last 35 years of her life!

After her first stigmata in 1926, Therese drank only a small cup of tea daily. In 1927 she had a vision wherein she was told that she no longer needed any food. From that day she neither ate nor drank anything! There was quite a commotion in the Christian world. She did not eat and she did not drink; and yet she did not loose weight and was quite healthy and even sturdy! She was subjected to critical tests. From July 14 to July 28,1927, four nuns were stationed to keep her under constant observation. Did she drink water while rinsing the mouth or taking the bath? Measurements were made and all sorts of 'scientific' fuss was carried out. There was no escape and no excuse. This was a miracle.

One Dr. Otto Bushinger, a highly qualified doctor thought all this to be "pure fable" and a "psychophysical reaction" (which is a foolish escapism to explain away miracles). He came to Konnersreuth with his colleagues and studied Therese clinically and otherwise. Truth-seeker that he was, he found himself completely beaten. He came, he saw and he was conquered. He gave his report in a pamphlet, "Wirkliches and Wirkendes" (The Real and the Workable). Despite all care and watchfulness, he was unable to give any explanation as to the fasting of Therese, he wrote. "There is no indication that hysteria is at work here." Here was "something spiritual", "something at work which defies rational explanation". Dr. Buchinger's son, who had accompanied him in the investigation, wrote that Therese's face was "of an ascetic with eyes from which rays appeared to stream". She was a link between "the temporal and the eternal"

Let us now switch over from the German doctor to a Hindu Yogi.

Swami Yoganand (5-1-1893 to 7-3-1952) belonged to a line of holy Saints of Bengal. He is perhaps the only Yogi who ventured to write his own autobiography. His "Autobiography of a Yogi" has a miracle almost on every page. It is translated into 5 Indian and 11 foreign languages including Arabic and Japanese. The book has revolutionised the life and thinking of lacs of people, Indian as well as foreign. His was a spiritual message of love for all and hatred to none. For 15 years he stayed in America and brought to that parched land of materialism, the cool waters of God's grace drawn from the spiritual and mystical ocean of the Hindu Yoga. He has devoted a chapter on Therese Newmann in is Autobiography. It is a true story of how a Hindu Yogi and Christian Saint stood together in attunement before the miracle of Jesus Christ.

"Return to India...... Yoganand, come!" That was the message from his Guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, transmitted through a Yogic channel. The year was 1935. Yoganandji was in America since 15 years. On his way back to India, at his Guru's call, he made it a point to visit Konnersreuth and see Therese. He and his colleagues could reach her after some initial difficulties. The two saints had a dialogue, the like of which we, the ignorant do not come across. Here are some parts of the heavenly talk.

"Don't you eat anything?" Swamiji asked.

"No, except a host at 6 O'clock in the morning".

"How large is the host?"

"It is paper thin, the size of a small coin. I take it for sacramental reasons. If it is unconsecrated I am unable to swallow it".

(Host is a thin water of flour. It is comparable to our "Chashni", a sacred munch.)

When Swamiji expressed wonder how she could do that for 12 years, she said, "I live by God's light".

She described her stigmatic experience this way: "As a helpless onlooker, I observe the whole passion of Christ". Swamiji writes,

"I realised at once that her strange life was intended by God to reassure all Christians of the historical authenticity of Jesus' life and crucifixion as recorded in the New Testament, and to display dramatically the ever living bond between the Galilean Master and his devotees."

So, look my reader! Here is the rationale of a miracle.

Now let us read Swamiji's own words about what he saw when Therese was undergoing Christ's agony on the Cross:

"Just before I went upstairs to her room, I put myself into a yogic trance state in order to attain telepathic and televisional rapport with her. I entered her chamber, filled with visitors; she was lying in a white robe on the bed. "Blood flowed thinly and continuously in an inch-wide stream from Thereses' lower eyelids. Her gaze was focused upward on the spiritual eye within the central forehead. The cloth wrapped around her head was drenched in blood from the stigmata wounds of the Crown of Thorns. The white garment was redly splotched over her heart from the wound in her side at the spot where Christ's body, long ages ago, had suffered the final indignity of the soldier's spear thrust.

Therese's hands were extended in a gesture maternal pleading, her face wore an expression both tortured and divine. She appeared thinner and was subtly charged in many inner and outer ways. Murmuring words in a foreign tongue, she spoke with slightly quivering lips to persons who were visible to her super conscious sight.

As I was in attunement with her, I began to see the scenes of her vision. She was watching Jesus as he carried the timbers of the Cross amid the jeering multitude. Suddenly she lifted her head in consternation: the Lord had fallen under the cruel weight. The vision disappeared. In the exhaustion of fervid pity, Therese sank heavily against her pillow."

Look, my dear reader! What a grand scenario! A Christian Saint, an apostle of love, is suffering the same agony as her Lord suffered centuries ago. And there a Hindu Yogi stands in his own Samadhi attuned with the Saint and observing perhaps himself also suffering – the same pain! It was one of the rarest recorded scenes this infidel century has witnessed, an oasis of devotion in the parched desert of stark materialism. Professors and policemen investigated the phenomenon with their limited equipments and said 'Surely, something is happening here which we do not understand'. Here, however, was a Yogi of many miracles, who actually observed the event through his own spiritual eyes!

Should we be so petty as to quarrel and fight over: 'my religion is better than yours' or 'that particular teaching is contrary to my religion'? Should we not try to understand God's Word from whichever direction it flows, so that we may understand our own Religion better and follow it with greater zeal and devotion?

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