

# FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

*Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic*



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### The Holy River Carrying a Smile on Others



When I was doing my philosophy studies, Fr. Vineeth was a *Dharma Acharya* for me. He was an *Acharya* who was teaching us dharma and living his life with the dharma he thought. Using simple English vocabulary in the class, he made us more comfortable in learning philosophy.

That understanding helped us to go deep into the philosophical thoughts which he implied in his own books. He had given a lot of freedom to our immature thoughts and enormously encouraged our creative ideas. We all unanimously had admired the *vineethabhava* in his personal life.

When I was doing theology, I met him in Vidyavanam Ashram. Then, Fr. Vineeth was a *Sannyasa Guru* for me. Really, I could see a transformation in him from a teacher to a *Guruji*. He was living what he taught. We had wondered and were inspired by see-

ing the simple life of *Guruji*, working in the garden, washing the vessels, and spending a long time in front of the tabernacle. He was a courageous *sannyasi* to take all the troubles and challenges in the starting period of Vidyavanam Ashram. His enthusiasm and commitment gathered many people to the ashram for experiencing an ashram life and peace of mind. Still remembering the smiling face amid the total insecurity that the Ashramites had experienced those years.

After my ordination and studies when I came to Hullhalli, Begur, again I visited Fr. Vineeth at Vidyavanam Ashram. Then, Fr. Vineeth was like my beloved father. I became a frequent visitor of the ashram. I used to listen to the long conversations of Fr. Vineeth. It was very interesting and relaxing to spend time with him. I became very close to him. I was enriched with Indian spirituality, the lessons of harmony and coexistence. Since those subjects were very passionate to me, I was a keen listener to him. The closeness to nature, the rhythm, and dharma of the Mother Nature had given a harmonious vibration into my heart. His



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wisdom from these green woods had led me to the path of green school projects. The way he explained the church history and the theological talks from his mouth were so impressive to remember till today. The icons in the chapel had been explained to me more the twenty times. Each time he was expressing different spiritual and philosophical meanings to those icons. Looking at his enthusiasm in explaining, I experienced a living presence or a life in those holy icons.

Today, when I reflect on him, I consider him as a Holy River which was flowing calmly among the people by giving spiritual energy and smile to each and every one whom he met in his journey of life. The wis-

dom had flowed from him like a spring. There was a soothing feeling in our mind when we were immersed in his meditations. He never hurt anyone's feelings; instead, he respected everyone: he respected nature, religions, people, nations, cultures, and languages. He had given equal importance to all those who associated with him. He expressed his 'real'. Purity in mind and thought, innocence, and sincerity were his hallmarks. There was a uniqueness in himself and his thoughts. He was an open-minded person who was accepting everyone without any discrimination – men or women, poor or rich. *Pranaamam* to my *Dharma Acharya*, my *Guruji*, my beloved father, and, above all, 'the life-giving stream that is flowing through my heart'.



## **Murali Krishnan, Coimbatore**

(Yoga Teacher and Former Youth Member of Divyodaya)

### **Peace with Oneself and Harmony**

Only once I met Fr. Vineeth in Divyodaya. It was in 1993 when Fr. Thomas Cheeran was the director. Fr. Vineeth spoke on happiness and harmony. Inner harmony within oneself can be possible through various means. Meditation shifts the brain waves from beta level to alpha level and thereby calms the mind. Harmony in individuals evolves to social harmony. One cannot work for peace when he is not happy within himself. This was the essence of Fr. Vineeth's speech which inspired me a lot. Though 28 years have already passed, still the thought he triggered lingers in my memory. Thanks, Divyodaya!