

# FRANCIS VINEETH VADAKETHALA CMI

## *Footprints of a Philosopher-Theologian Mystic*



of the Real," which was very much influenced by his book, *The Discovery of Being*.

Father Vineeth's appreciation for the Indian thought was manifest in his formal and informal talks – on music, art and architecture, philosophy, meditation, mysticism, holy liturgy, etc. It had its impact on a few generations of students. I think one could read between the lines that he was anguished and pained that there was a long way for the Indian Church yet to go in her efforts to communicate the Christ experience through the Indian genius. His uniqueness was that he didn't

sit back finding fault with the situation or the system. His meditations, retreat talks, lyrics, even Vidyavanam Ashram, are all fine expressions of the 'creative unrest' that he had been experiencing deep within himself.

I pay my tributes to this honourable teacher of mine who was simple and humble, truly 'vineeth' as a human person, a 'vishwa manav' (world citizen), who dedicated every moment of his life to radiate the divine love to the 'sacred' and the 'profane' alike, no matter in the East or the West. I must admit that I had a secret pride that he was a CMI.

## **Karuna Vadakethala SJB**

**(Sister of Father Vineeth)**

**My Great Brother**

**F**ather Vineeth loved Indian ashrams. Years ago, in 1968, he, along with a small team of Fathers and Brothers, stayed about two weeks in Vinoba's ashram at Pavanar in Wardha. Wardha, in the diocese of Chanda, is the main centre of our Congregations' activities in India. The purpose of his coming with the team was to make a draft of an Indian text for the holy Eucharistic celebration. This request was made





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by his Eminence Mar Joseph Cardinal Parecattil, the then Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly. The team visited our house more than once and also Sevagram where our sisters work. He

also stayed in several other Hindu ashrams before he started his own ashram. They are Shivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, Saccidananda Ashram in Narasimhpur, Shantivanam in Kulithalai near Thiruchirappilly, Aurobindo Ashram in Pondichery, Kristuprema Ashram, Pune, and so on.

In the year 1996, he came forward with his own idea of setting up an ashram in Bangalore. I remember well that after the initial establishment of his Ashram in Bangalore, he invited me to live there at least for three years in accordance with our custom. Though I liked this idea very much, I had to sacrifice it due to my other commitments to my congregation and Father

Vineeth accepted it with grace. At a later stage, I came with my sister, a nun in the Holy Family Congregation, and made our retreat in the Ashram. This was my longest stay. Otherwise, I had visited the Ashram only for short periods. I am happy to see that the Ashram has flourished well, the desert land which was bought for the Ashram has already been converted into a living forest, perfectly suiting its name Vidyavanam (Forest of Wisdom) and its motto, *Vanad-astu-vidyodaya*, let Wisdom emerge from woods!

Father Vineeth was not just my brother, but also to a certain extent, a spiritual guide to whom, time and again, I have turned for valuable suggestions and counselling. For the same of brevity, I would like to conclude these reminiscences with two appreciative sentences on Father Vineeth. (1) Though he made his own suggestions, whenever he was consulted, he never imposed any of his views upon us. He always gave us complete freedom. (2) He was very simple and transparent in voicing his opinions which made dealing with him very easy. For what he was and all that he had been to me, his youngest sister, these truthful attestations and loving reminiscences stand as tribute to my great brother.