

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

PICTORIAL



Padmakasari.

**Swami
Vivekananda**
(Pictorial)

Swami Raghaveshananda

Illustrations
Padmavasan



Sri Ramakrishna Math

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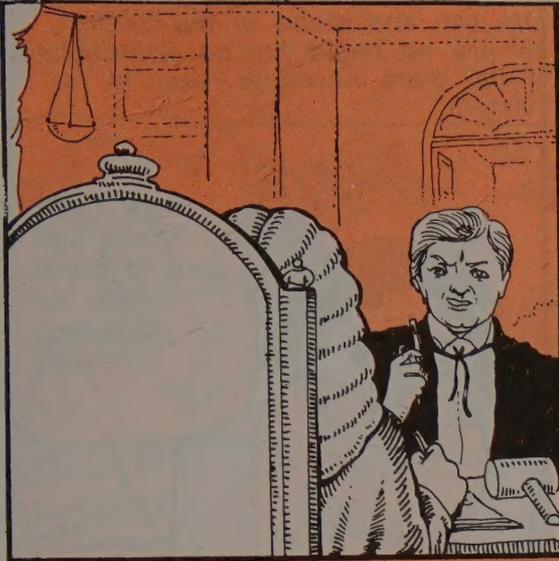
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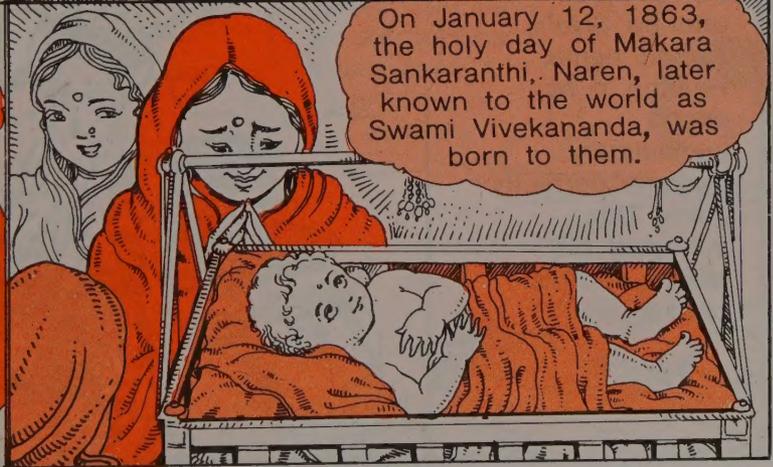
Padmavasan



Sri Viswanath Dutta was a leading attorney of Calcutta.



Bhuvaneshwari Devi, the pious wife of Viswanath Dutta had four daughters. She prayed intensely to Lord Siva for a male child.



On January 12, 1863, the holy day of Makara Sankranti, Naren, later known to the world as Swami Vivekananda, was born to them.

O Naren!
Is there
no end to
your
mischief?
Today
you will
be
punished.

Naren was all play,
frolic and fun.

He ran and stood in the ditch
where he could not be approached.
From there he made faces at his
sisters.

Here I am!
Would you
dare to come
here for
punishing
me?

His sisters dared not approach
him for they then had to stand
in the ditch-water to fight with
him.

Whenever his
pranks became
too intolerable,
his mother would
pour cold water
on his head
uttering Siva's
sacred name.
Hearing it he
would
immediately
become perfectly
calm. This
indicated his
inborn spiritual
nature.

I prayed to Siva for
a son, but He has
sent me one of His
demons.





Naren loved birds and animals. Among his boyhood pets were a monkey, a goat, a peacock and several pigeons and guinea pigs.



While listening to the stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata narrated by his mother, the child Naren would be greatly moved.

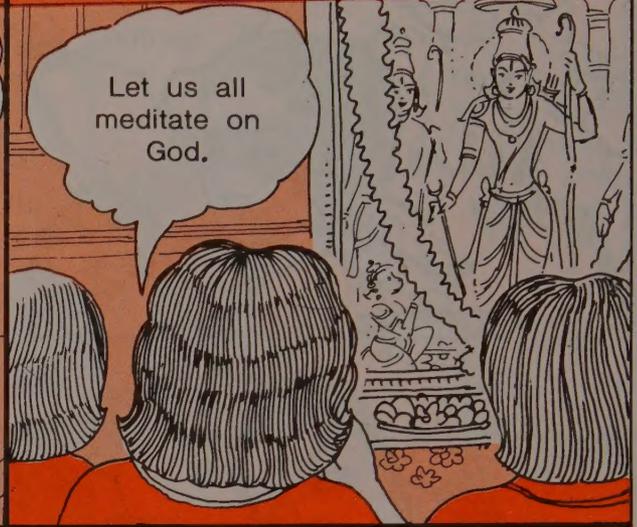
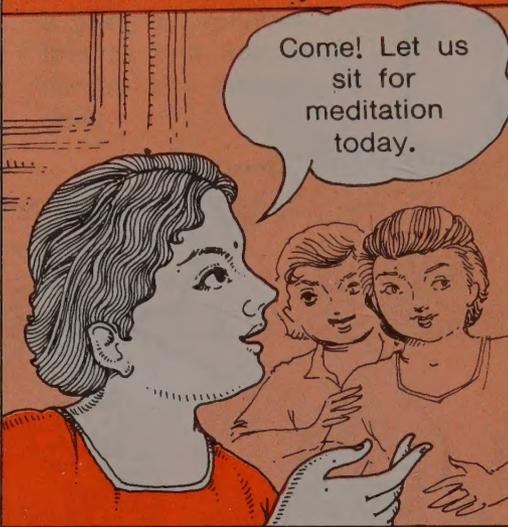


At the age of six Naren was sent to a primary school. He was the most brilliant pupil in the class.

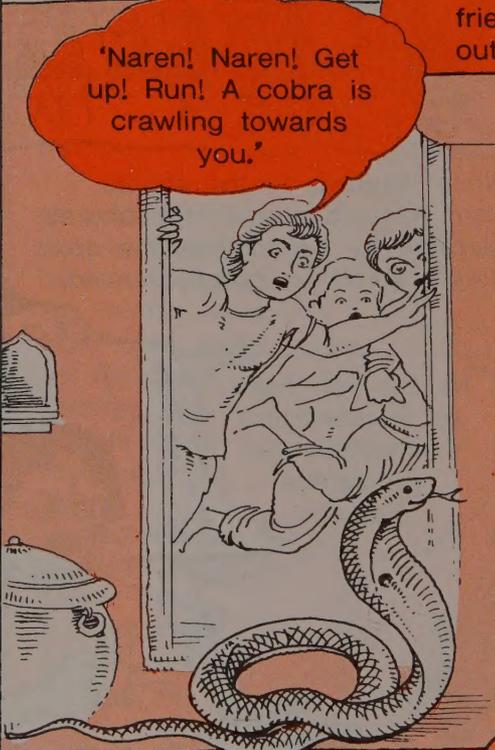
Naren! You have an extraordinary intelligence and prodigious memory.

Naren joined his friends in all sorts of merriments with gusto as long as they did not overstep the limits of morality.

Naren and his friends sat for meditation in the shrine, closing their eyes.



When they were sitting for meditation his friends saw a cobra in the room. They ran out of the room, shouting....



But Naren sat absorbed in meditation totally unaware of either the cobra or the shout of his friends. The cobra moved away without harming him.

As he grew, he learnt gymnastics, wrestling, fencing, rowing and many other sports.



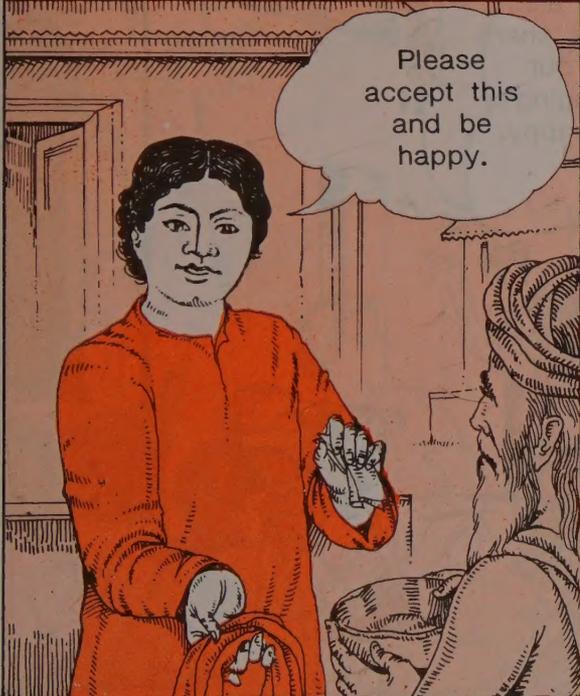
He had a melodious voice. He used to sing with great feeling.

'When will dawn the blessed day, when love will waken my heart!...'

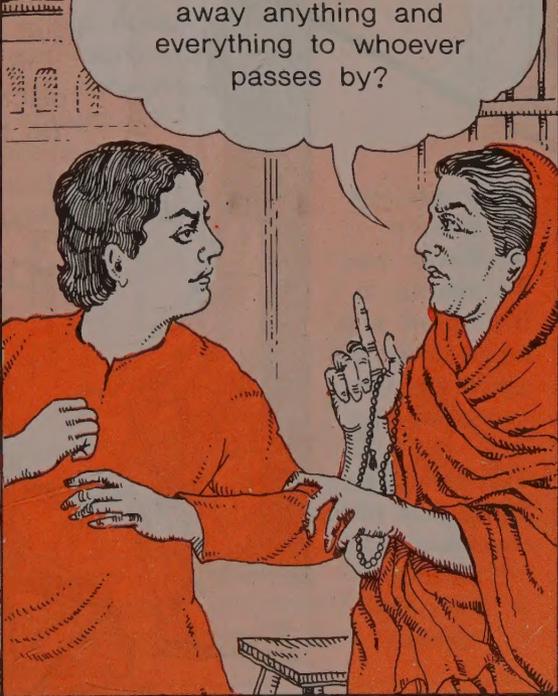


Many beggars and Sadhus used to pass by his house. He gave away to them anything that came to his hands. He was unconcerned about their cost.

His mother could not understand his generosity.



Please accept this and be happy.



Naren! Why do you give away anything and everything to whoever passes by?

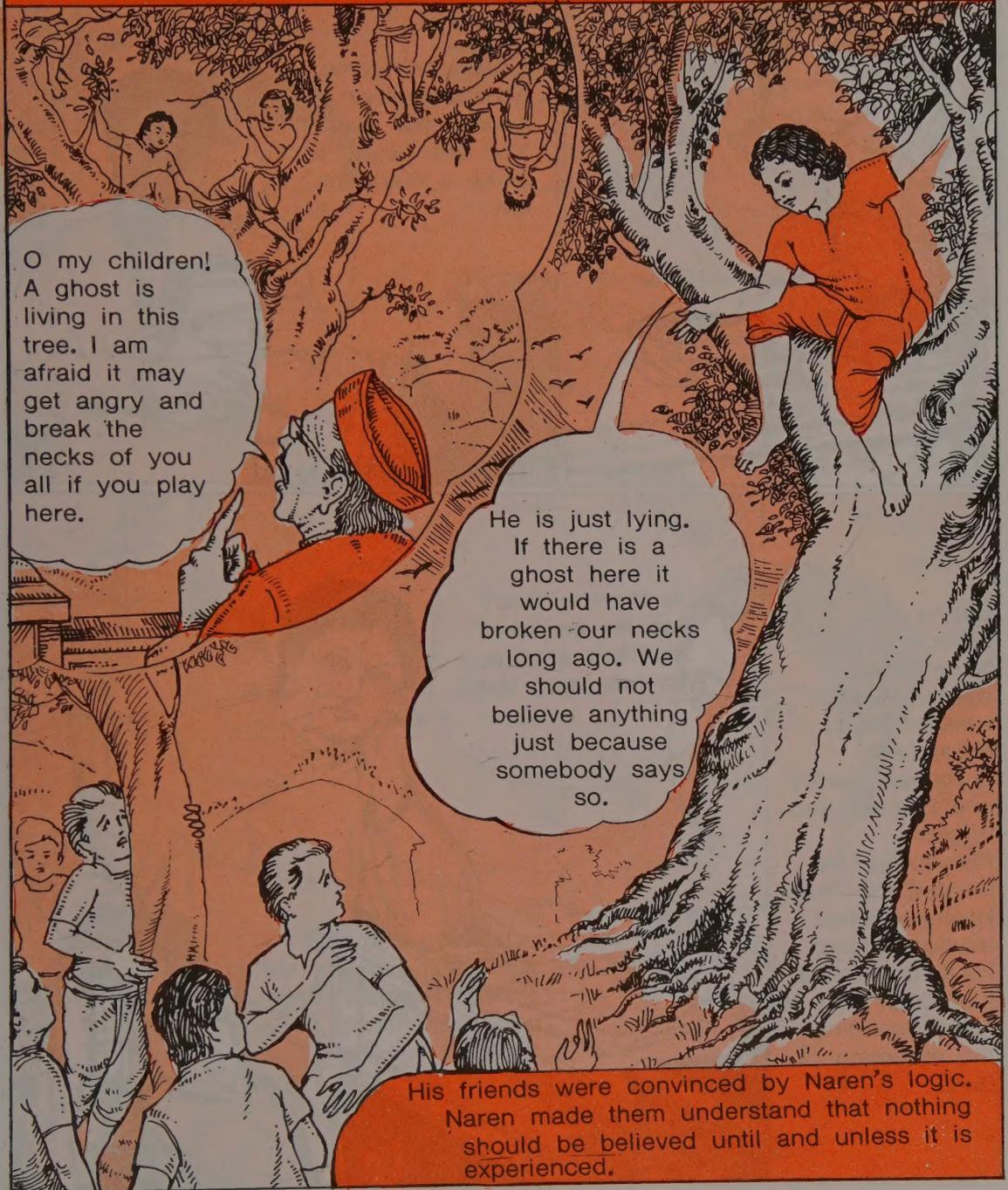
His generosity became a problem to his mother. So she used to lock him up in a room upstairs whenever beggars were around.

Ha! I know why my mother has locked me in this room. But I also know the way to help the poor.

O Grandpa!
You also have a share
in our belongings.
Be happy.

He used to snatch whatever was available in the room and throw it down through the window into the out-stretched hands of the beggars and Sadhus standing below.

Naren and his friends used to play in a garden, swinging head down, from the branches of a tree. This irked an old man who wanted to stop this. He thought of a plan.

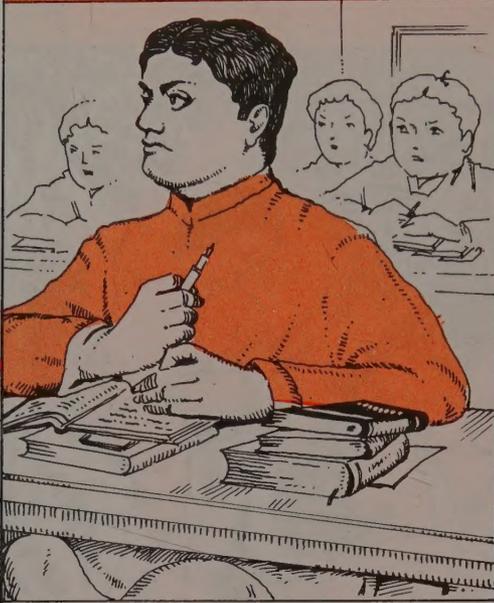


O my children!
A ghost is
living in this
tree. I am
afraid it may
get angry and
break the
necks of you
all if you play
here.

He is just lying.
If there is a
ghost here it
would have
broken our necks
long ago. We
should not
believe anything
just because
somebody says
so.

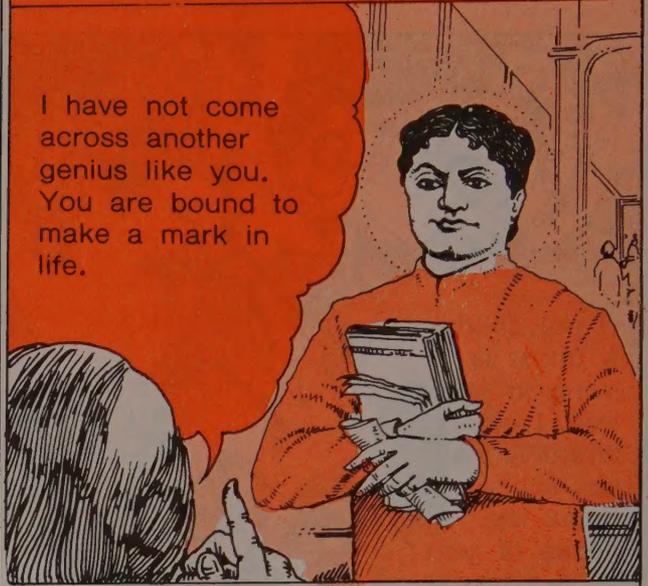
His friends were convinced by Naren's logic. Naren made them understand that nothing should be believed until and unless it is experienced.

His keen intelligence was evident at college also. His Professors were astonished at his brilliance.



One of them William Hastie, was much impressed by this young student. He had a very high opinion of him.

I have not come across another genius like you. You are bound to make a mark in life.



During his college days, Naren also deeply studied western logic, Indian and European History and Eastern and Western Philosophy. He thirsted for Truth. However these studies did not solve the doubts that crept into his mind regarding the existence of God.

Is there a God?
Can He be seen?
Is there anyone
who has seen Him?



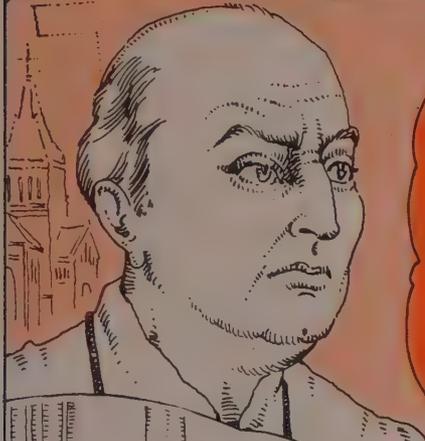
Naren was eager to meet someone who had seen God face to face. He went from place to place in search of such a person.



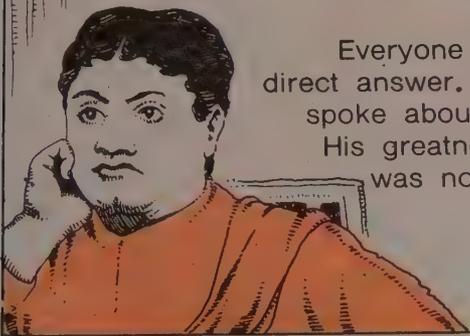
Sir, You regularly worship Lord Shiva. Have you ever seen Him?



Sir, have you seen the God Narayana whom you say you worship day and night?



Sir, have you seen Jesus Christ face to face?



Everyone avoided a direct answer. They only spoke about God and His greatness. Naren was not satisfied.

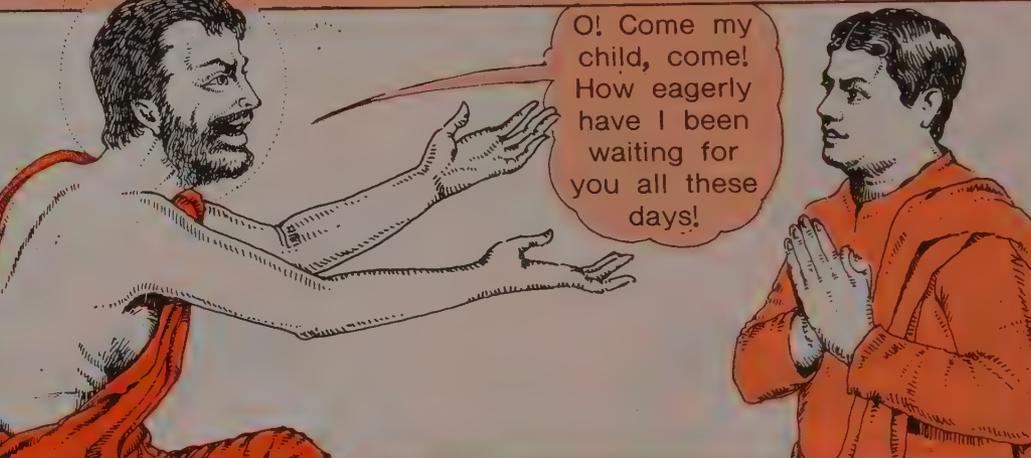
His heart was athirst for one who had actually seen God. One day he broached the subject with his relative Ramachandra Dutta.



Visit Sri Ramakrishna. He will solve your problem.

All right! I shall see this person too.

One day Naren went to the Dakshineswar Kali temple where Sri Ramakrishna was staying.



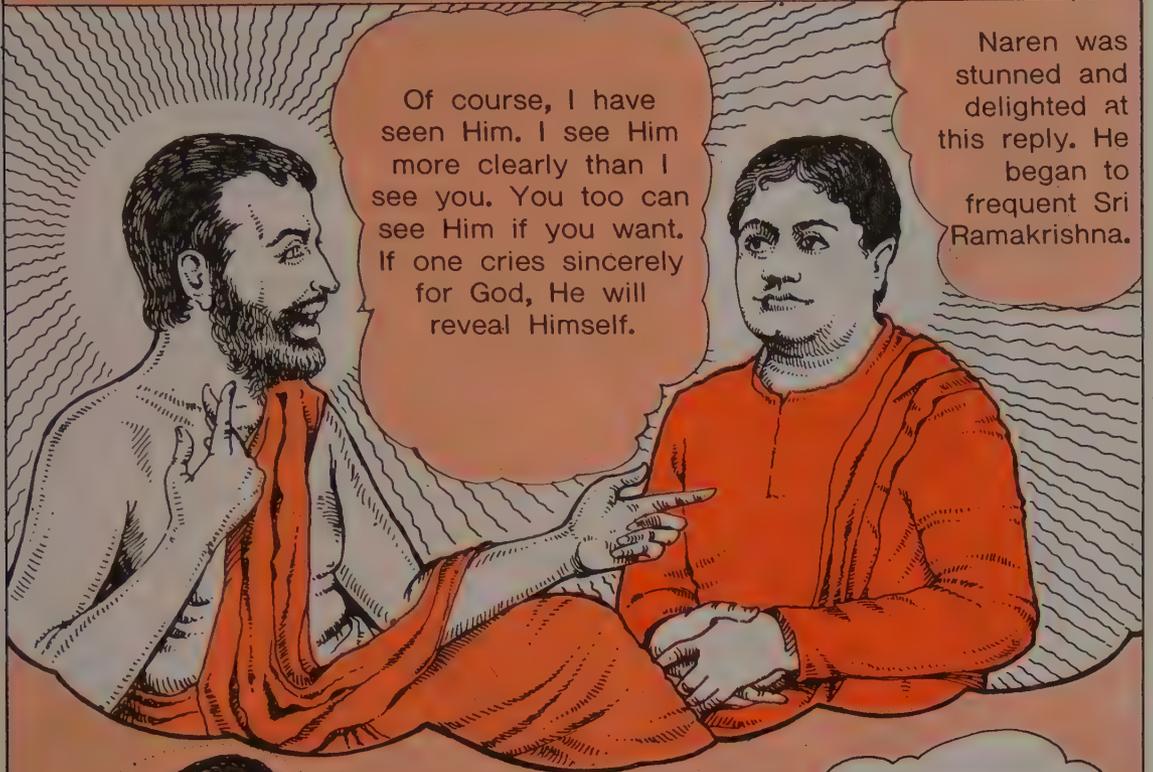
O! Come my child, come! How eagerly have I been waiting for you all these days!

Sri Ramakrishna shed profuse tears of joy on meeting Naren. He fed him with sweets and fruits with his own hand. But Naren wanted his doubts to be cleared.



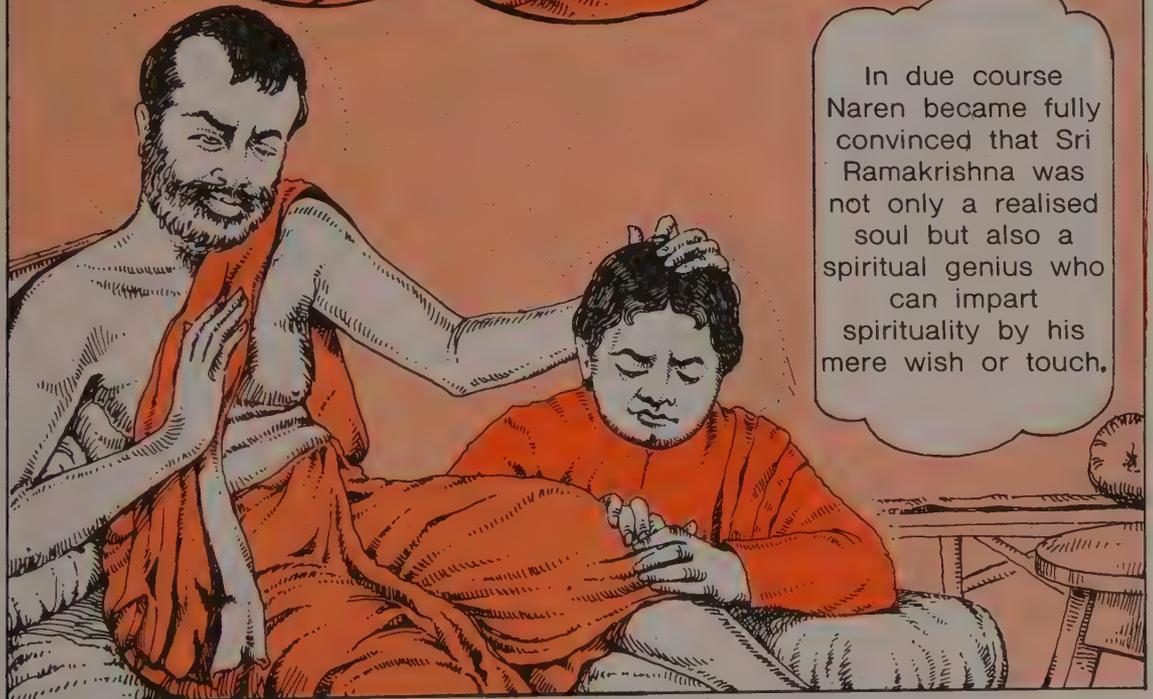
Have you seen God, Sir? Can I too see Him?

At once Sri Ramakrishna replied with a smiling face.



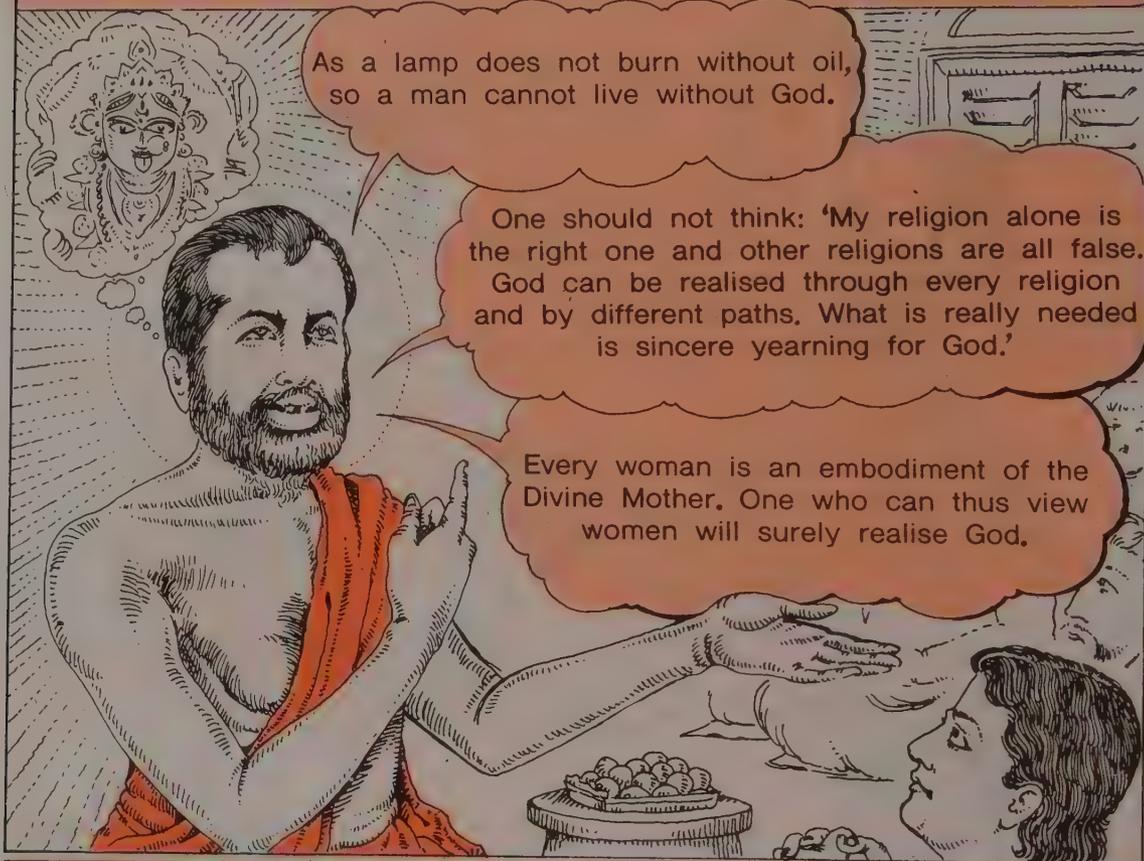
Of course, I have seen Him. I see Him more clearly than I see you. You too can see Him if you want. If one cries sincerely for God, He will reveal Himself.

Naren was stunned and delighted at this reply. He began to frequent Sri Ramakrishna.



In due course Naren became fully convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was not only a realised soul but also a spiritual genius who can impart spirituality by his mere wish or touch,

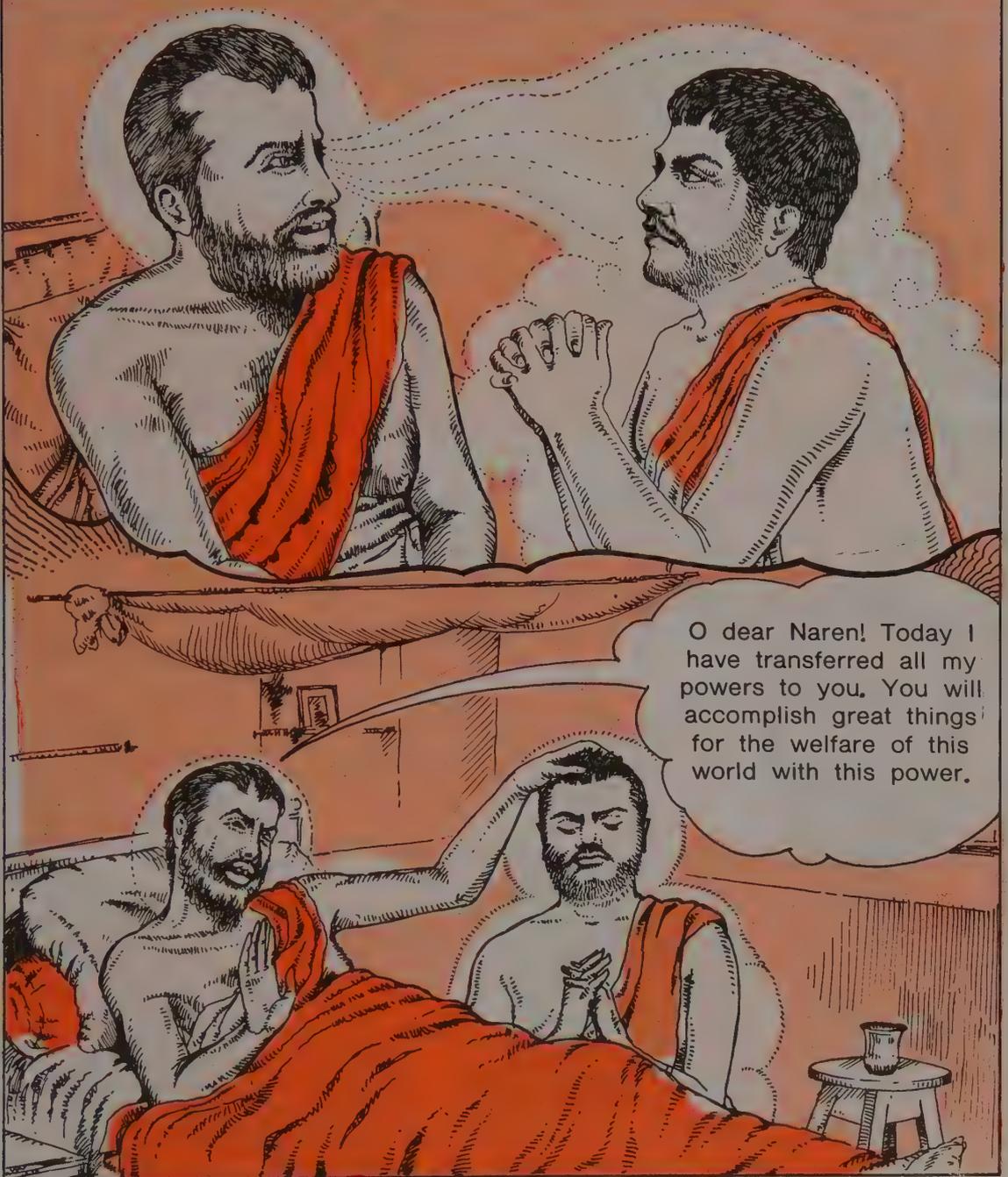
Sri Ramakrishna had practised many spiritual disciplines not only of Hinduism but also of Christianity and Islam. He had realised the same God through all of them.



Under Sri Ramakrishna's loving guidance, the disciples, specially Naren engaged themselves in intense spiritual practices for realizing God



During this period of more than five years, Naren had innumerable spiritual experiences. Sri Ramakrishna commissioned Naren to be the leader of the band of his young disciples who would later become the torch-bearers of his world-wide spiritual mission. When finally the Great Master fell seriously ill with cancer he called Naren to his bedside and by his gaze transferred all his spiritual powers to Naren.

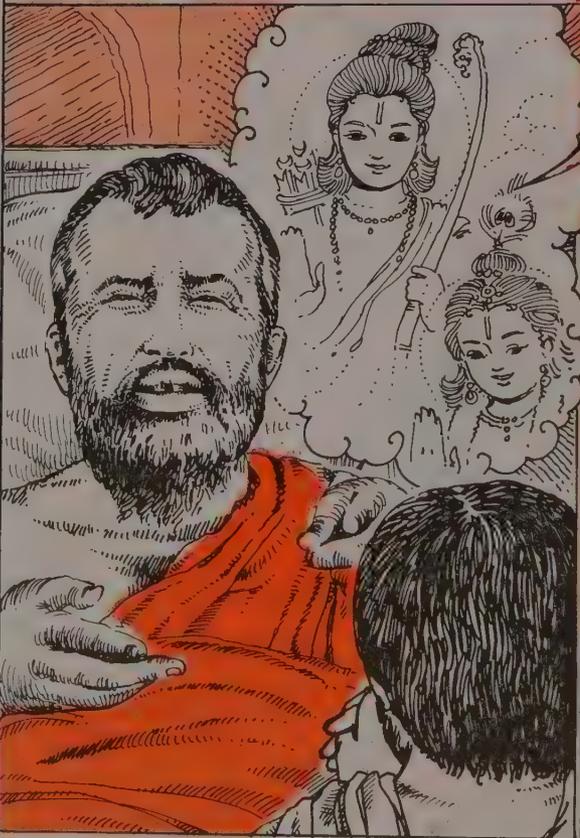


Two days before Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, a thought flashed in Naren's mind.



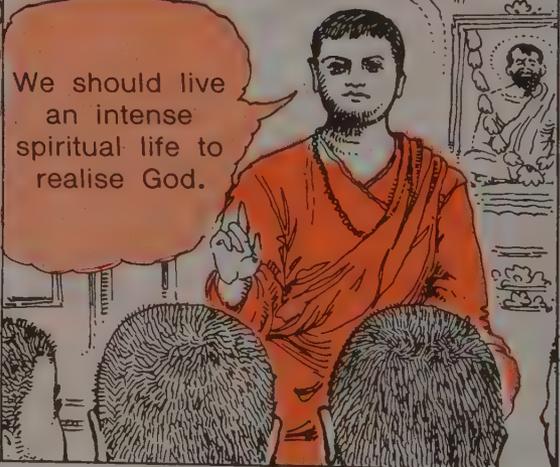
If he declares now, unasked, that he is an incarnation of God I'll surely accept him.

O Naren! Are you still not convinced? He who was born as Sri Rama and again as Sri Krishna is now born as Ramakrishna.

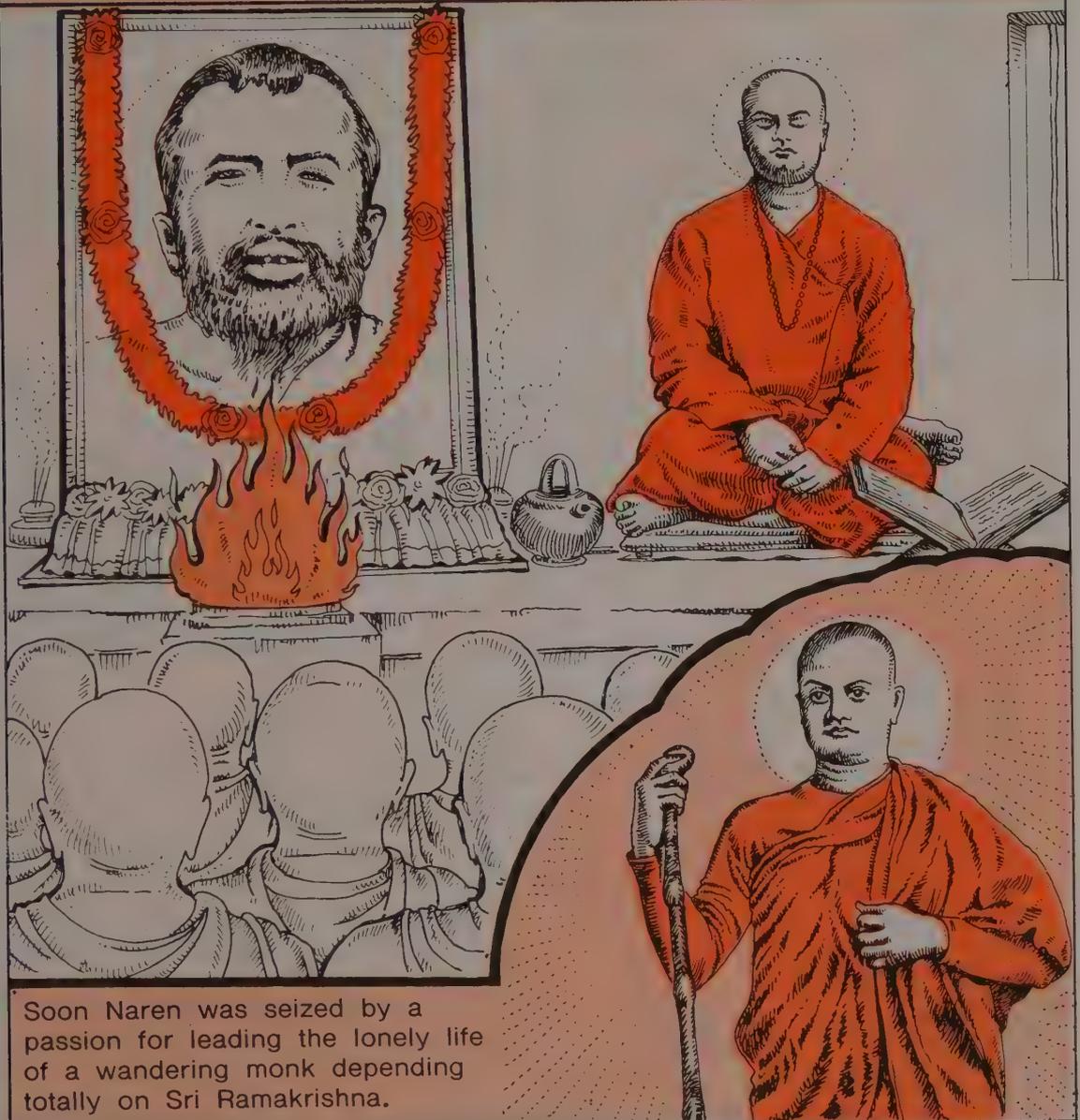


Sri Ramakrishna passed away on 16th August, 1886. Under Naren's inspiration some of the disciples left their homes to live a spiritual life.

We should live an intense spiritual life to realise God.



Within a few months these young disciples took the sacred vow of Sannyasa and became monks. They established a monastery in a dilapidated house at Baranagore in Calcutta. Under the guidance of Naren, the young monks practised severe austerities for realising God. No other concern could stand in the way of their one-pointed spiritual efforts. Worship, scriptural studies, discussion and devotional music filled their days.

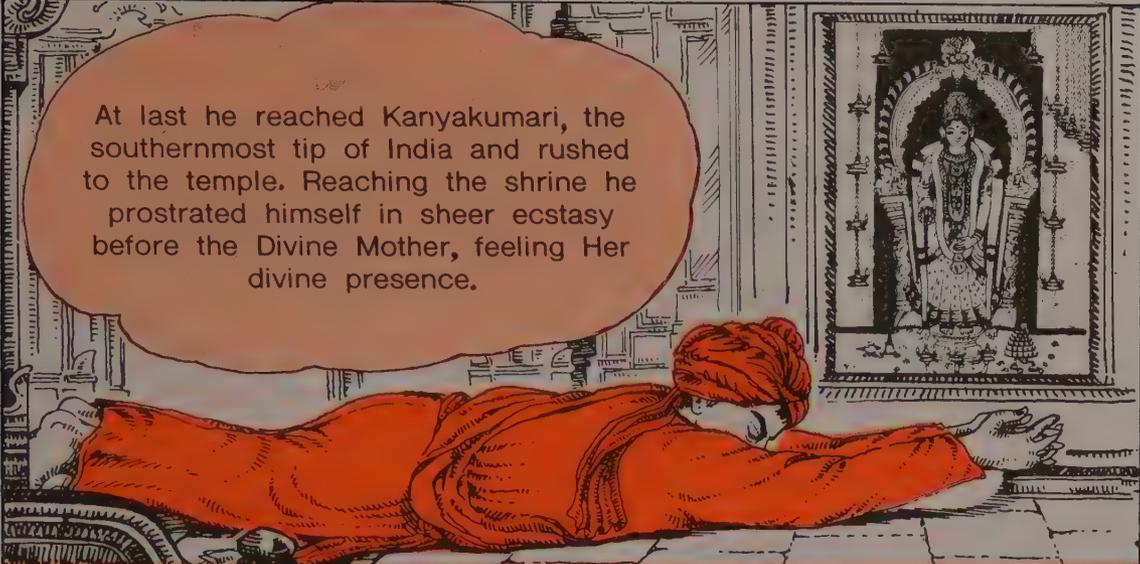


Soon Naren was seized by a passion for leading the lonely life of a wandering monk depending totally on Sri Ramakrishna.

In this mood he visited Varanasi, Ayodhya, Haridwar, Rishikesh and many other sacred places throughout the vast expanse of India. Thus started his discovery of India.

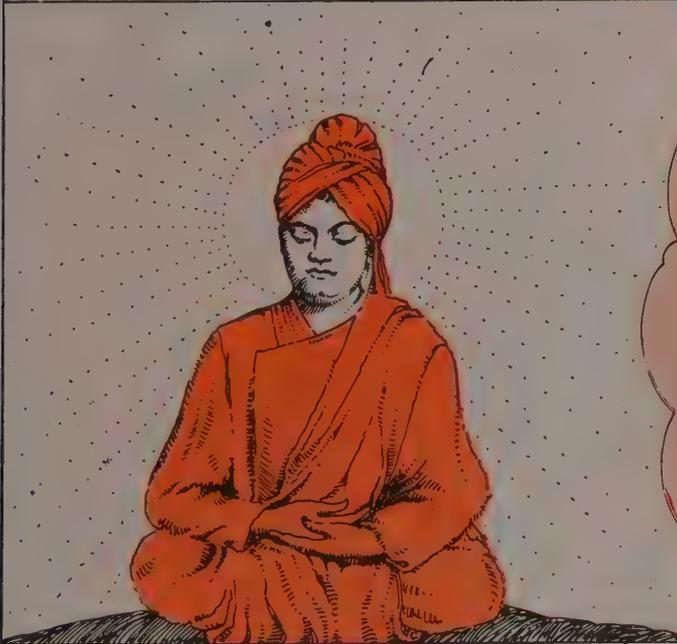


Sometimes he lived in the huts of poor villagers, sometimes in the houses of middle class city folk, occasionally in palaces with Maharajas and often under trees. Thus he came into direct contact not only with the heart and soul of his dear motherland, but also with the abject poverty of the Indian masses.



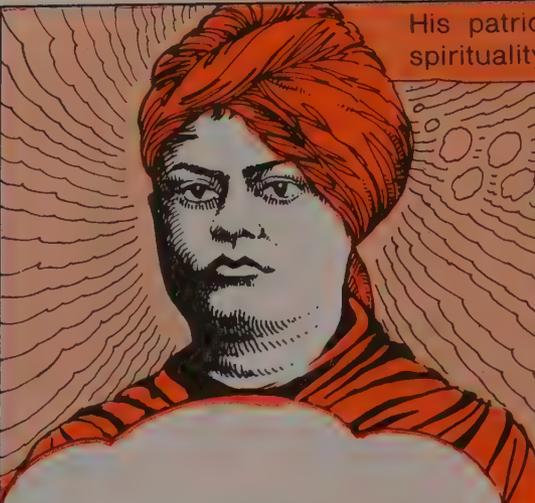
At last he reached Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of India and rushed to the temple. Reaching the shrine he prostrated himself in sheer ecstasy before the Divine Mother, feeling Her divine presence.

He then went to the seashore. An inner urge prompted him to swim out into the ocean and meditate sitting on a huge rock at the confluence of the three seas.

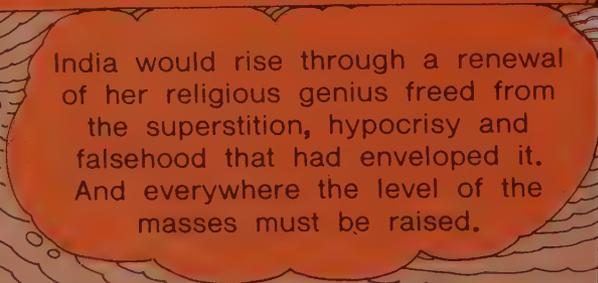


A black and white illustration of a man in an orange robe sitting in a meditative posture on a rock. He has his eyes closed and a serene expression. The background is a light, stippled texture.

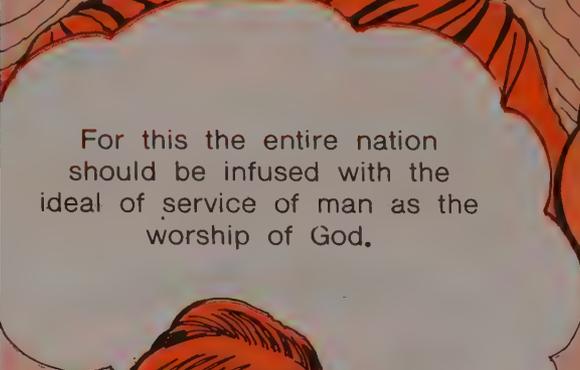
Meditating on the rock, he became, as he declared later, 'a condensed India.' The glory of India's past and its present miserable plight gripped his mind. The way to its regeneration flashed before his prophetic soul with stunning brilliance.



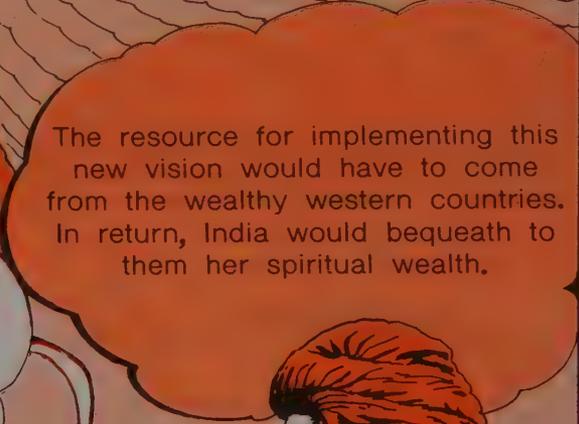
His patriotic fervour fused into his burning spirituality.



India would rise through a renewal of her religious genius freed from the superstition, hypocrisy and falsehood that had enveloped it. And everywhere the level of the masses must be raised.

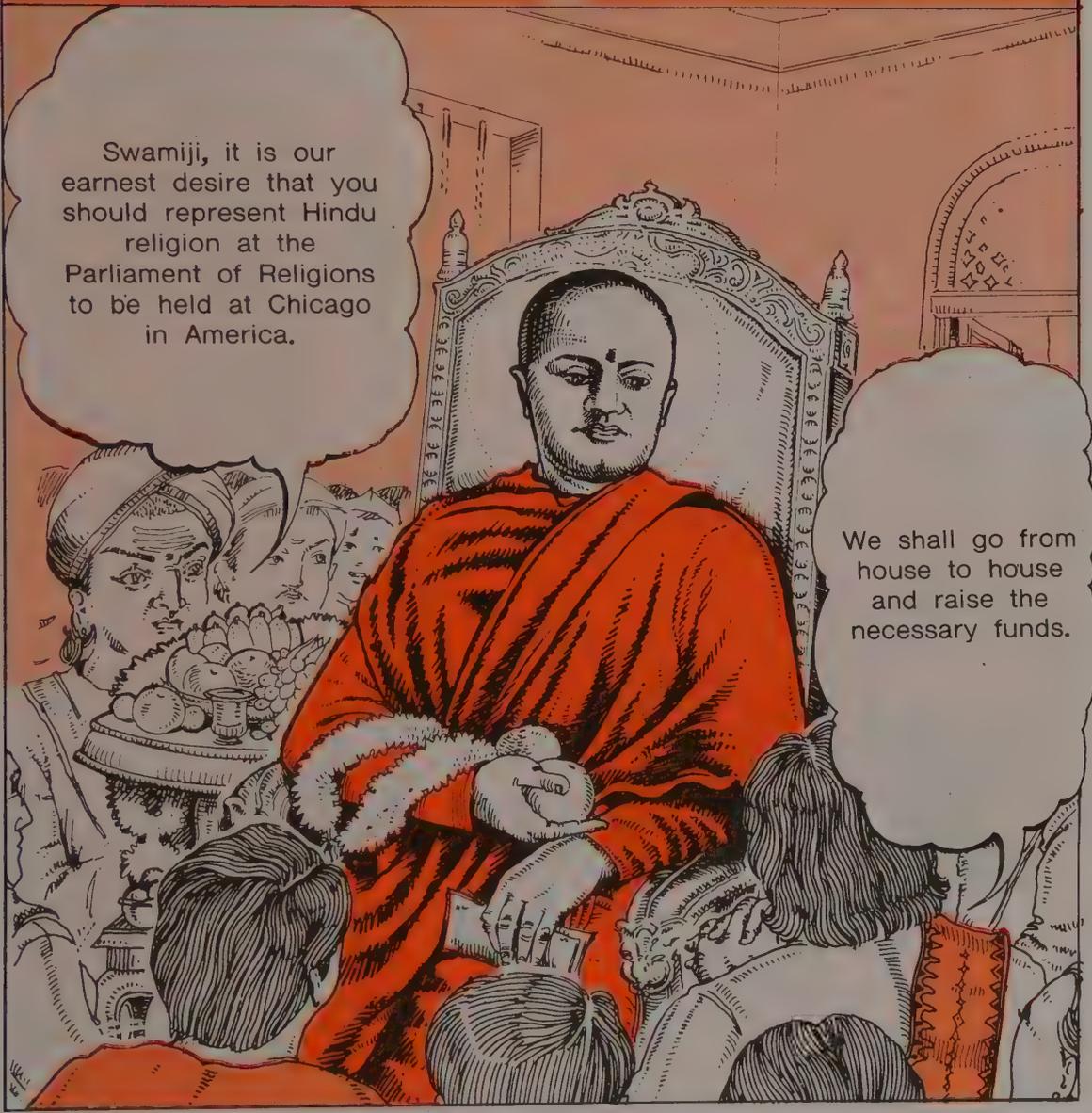


For this the entire nation should be infused with the ideal of service of man as the worship of God.



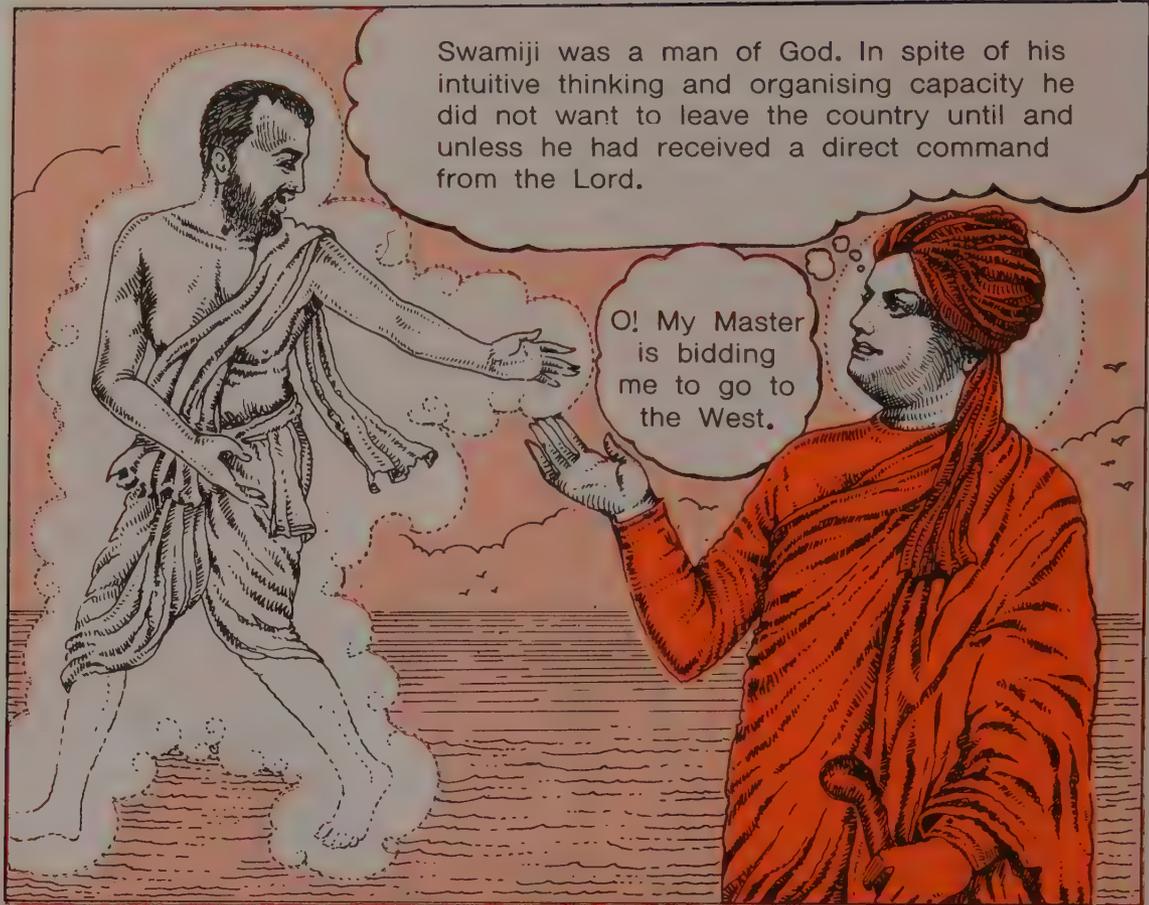
The resource for implementing this new vision would have to come from the wealthy western countries. In return, India would bequeath to them her spiritual wealth.

From Kanyakumari Swamiji reached Madras. In the annals of Swamiji's mission Madras has pride of place. He was 'discovered' in Madras. Young Madras, noted for its keen intellect was drawn to Swamiji. His flawless English, his impressive way of presenting philosophical ideas, the modernity of his exposition and above all his vibrant saintliness drew the young men of Madras to him. He became their hero.



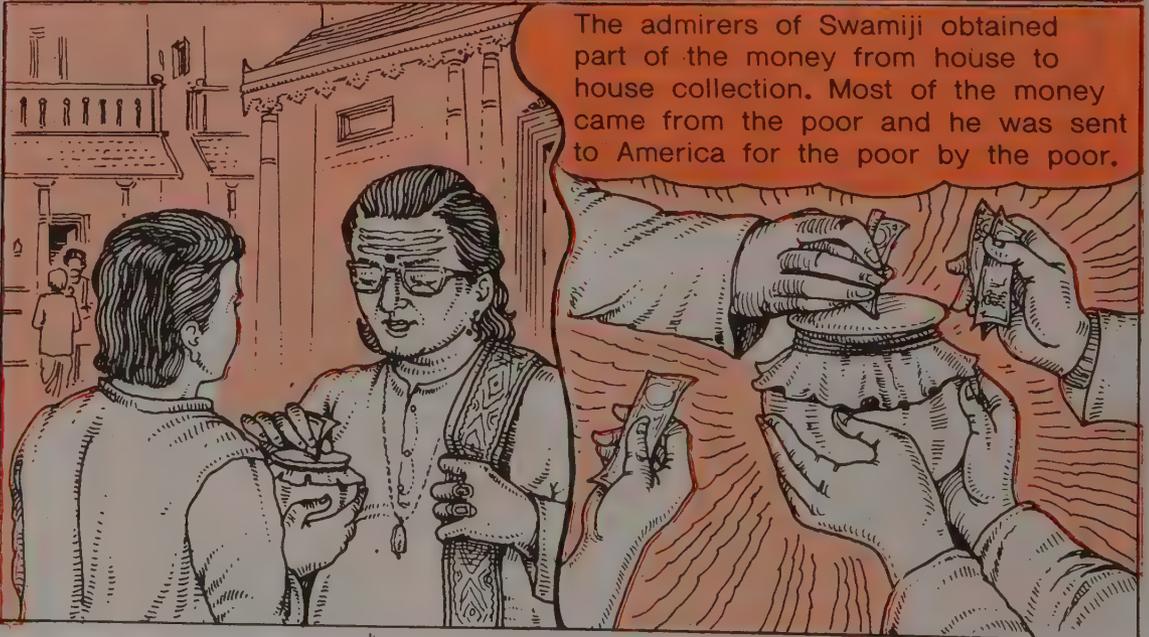
Swamiji, it is our earnest desire that you should represent Hindu religion at the Parliament of Religions to be held at Chicago in America.

We shall go from house to house and raise the necessary funds.



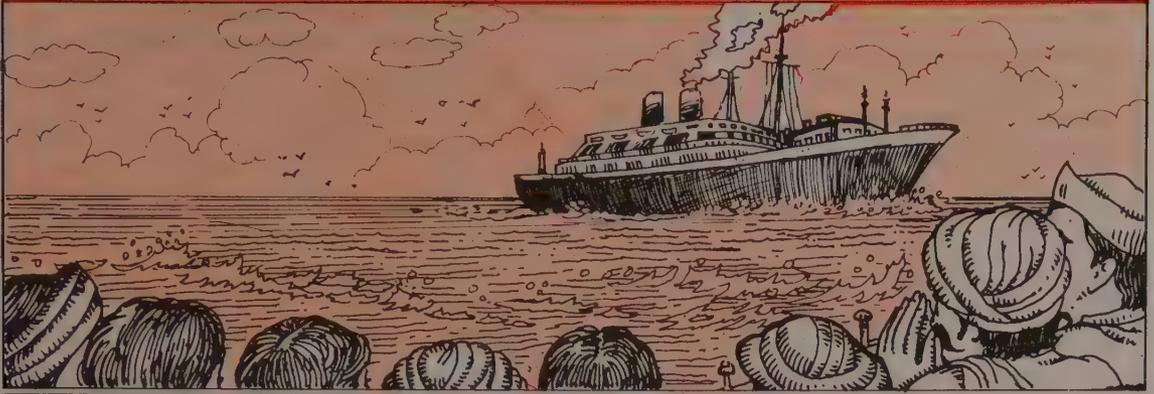
Swamiiji was a man of God. In spite of his intuitive thinking and organising capacity he did not want to leave the country until and unless he had received a direct command from the Lord.

O! My Master is bidding me to go to the West.

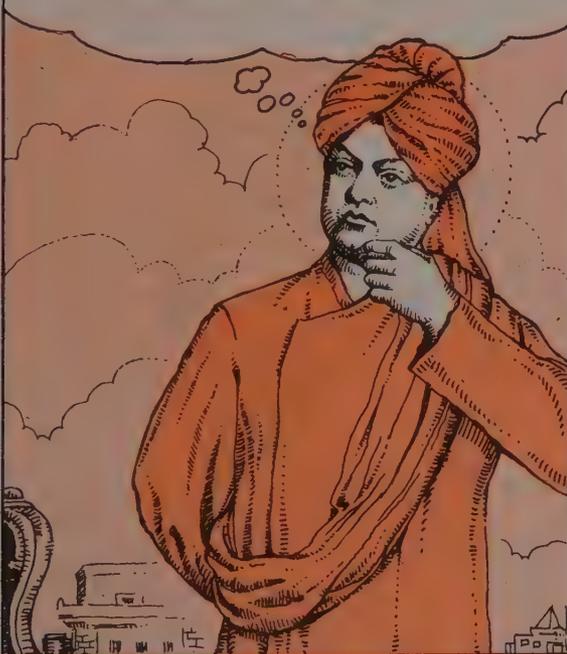


The admirers of Swamiiji obtained part of the money from house to house collection. Most of the money came from the poor and he was sent to America for the poor by the poor.

The Raja of Khetri invited him and also made arrangements for his sailing from Bombay. On 31st May, 1893, Swami Vivekananda as he would be known hence forward embarked on his historic trip to the New world.



Verily from the land of renunciation, I have come to the land of enjoyment. I know no one here. It looks as if I will not be able to participate in the Parliament of Religions.

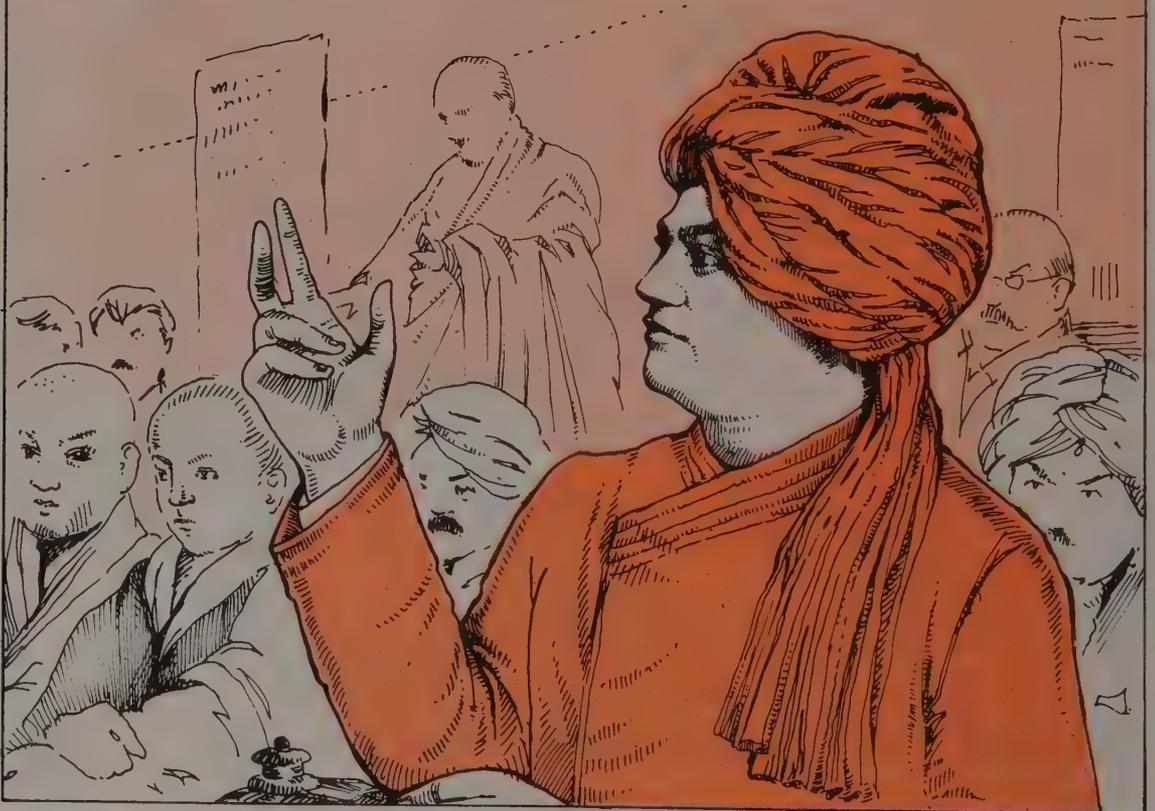


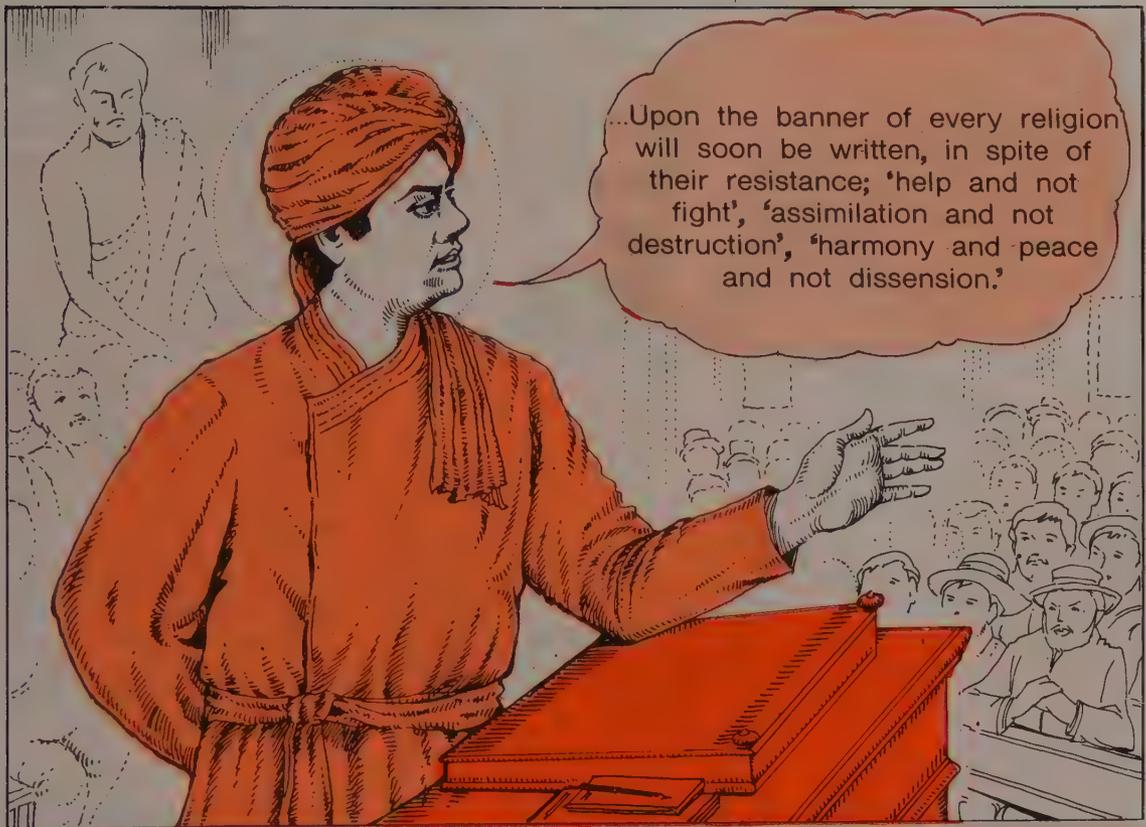
Let things take their own course. I am only an instrument in the hands of the Lord. I totally surrender myself to Him.



Swamiji was just thirty years old. He had to encounter many difficulties. But his surrender to the Lord bore fruit. Help came from unexpected quarters; finally he was accepted as a delegate to the Parliament of Religions.

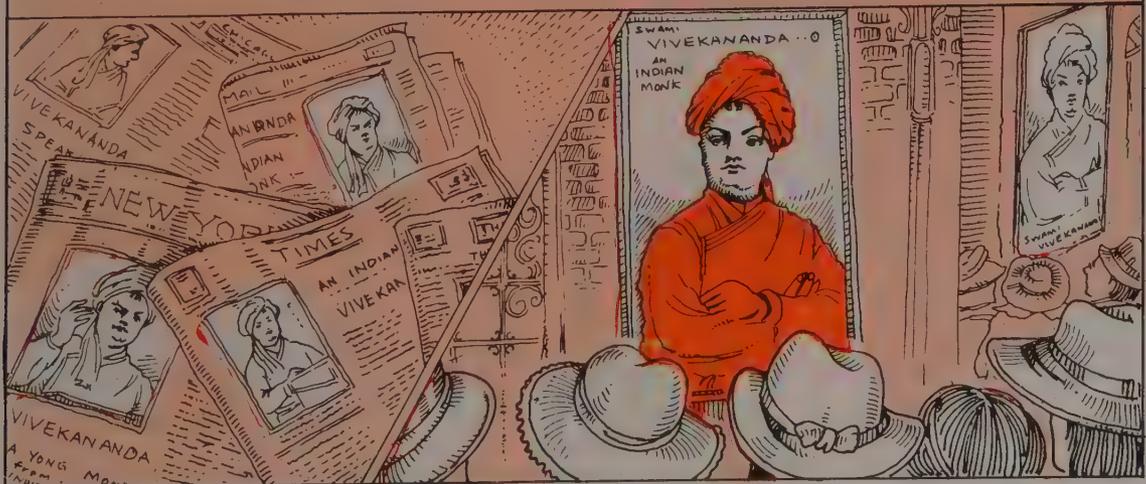
The Parliament of Religions opened on 11th September, 1893, at the Art Institute of Chicago. Delegates of different religions were seated on the elevated platform facing an enlightened audience of about seven thousand. Conspicuous among them was Swami Vivekananda with his yellow turban, bronze complexion and fine features. For the first time in his life, this young monk of thirty was to speak to such a distinguished audience. Others had come with prepared speeches. But Swamiji was empty-handed. When the Chairman called upon him to speak, he requested he might be allowed to speak later. After several postponements he at last came to the rostrum and was introduced to the gathering. But he was not himself. He was rather the soul of India, the voice of Sri Ramakrishna, the mouthpiece of the Supreme Spirit. Mentally bowing to Mother Saraswati he spontaneously addressed the audience as 'Sisters and Brothers of America!' The effect was electric. He had struck a chord in their hearts. Thousands of listeners rose in their seats and gave him a thunderous applause for full two minutes. His endearing words had entered their hearts and they could not but be deeply moved.





...Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of their resistance; 'help and not fight', 'assimilation and not destruction', 'harmony and peace and not dissension.'

His universal message thrilled everyone. The young unknown monk from India leapt from obscurity to fame in a few minutes. He became an outstanding public figure in America and was acclaimed as an extraordinary religious teacher. His life-size portraits were displayed in the streets of Chicago and many passers-by would stop to do him reverence with bowed heads. He was the subject of discussion everywhere.



He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to that learned nation. What must be the greatness of Hinduism if it can produce sages like Vivekananda?

He was beyond question the most popular and influential personality in the Parliament. People thronged and hung with eagerness on every word of his. Oh, we can sit and listen to him for ever!

Swamiji now longed to return to his motherland. Arrangements were made for his return on 16th December, 1896. His followers felt sad at heart. He had inspired them to live a pure and spiritual life. They had found peace and happiness in their hearts.

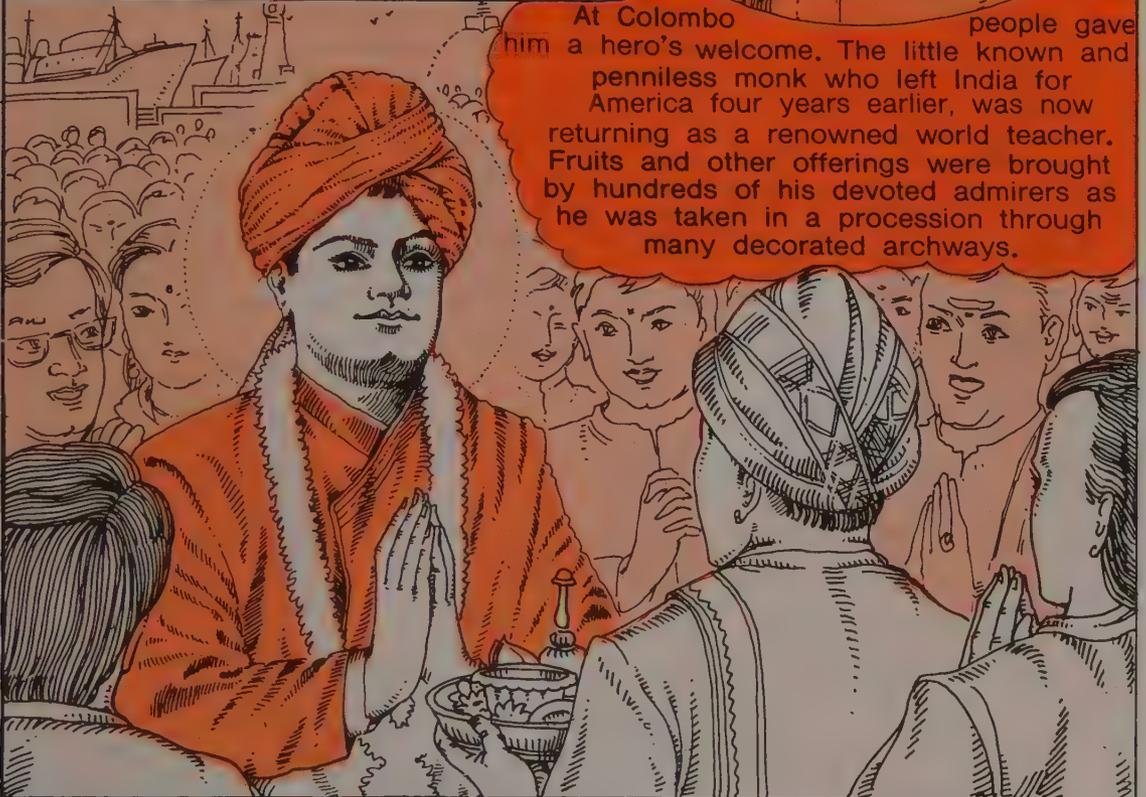
After the end of the parliamentary sessions, Swamiji toured the big cities of America in response to insistent demands for lectures from different societies and centres of culture. He spoke of the glories of India, the greatness of its culture and spirituality. He also visited England thrice between August, 1895 and December 1896. Two of his lectures here made a tremendous impact on the English public. The breadth of his religious culture and the depth of his spiritual intensity had an irresistible appeal everywhere. From 19th June, 1895 onwards for seven weeks he trained a dozen earnest disciples in meditation, prayer, study and other spiritual disciplines in a solitary retreat in Thousand Island Park. He taught them from the outpourings of his own spirit.

He leaves us soon. Perhaps we shall never see him again. But he has left an ineffable joy in our hearts that will comfort us to the end of our lives.

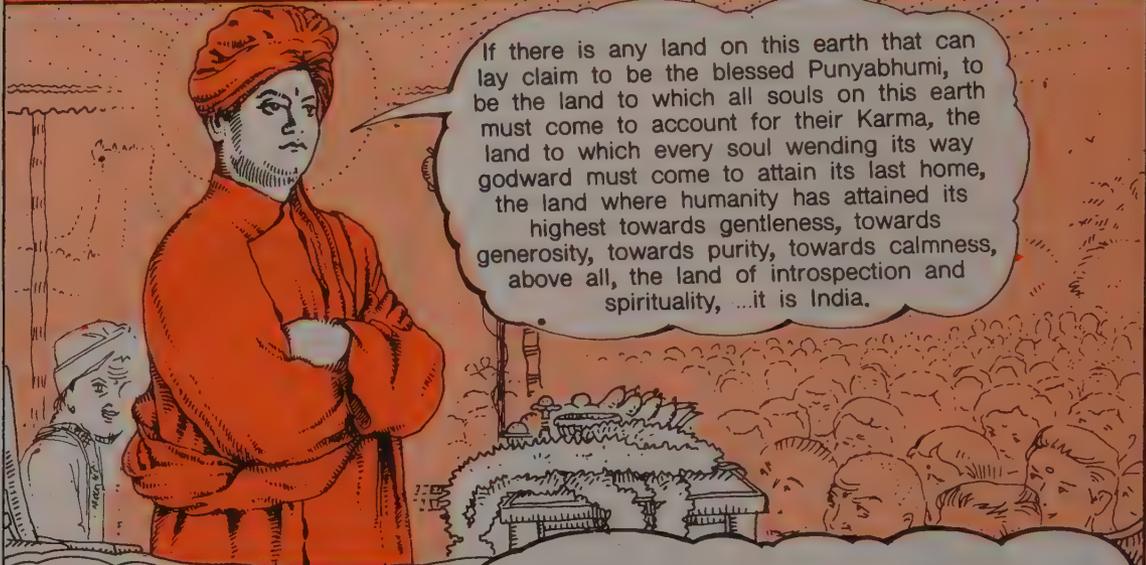
Swamiji started on his return voyage to India from England. Thousands assembled to give him a warm send off. Swamiji was moved by the affection of the British people.



At Colombo people gave him a hero's welcome. The little known and penniless monk who left India for America four years earlier, was now returning as a renowned world teacher. Fruits and other offerings were brought by hundreds of his devoted admirers as he was taken in a procession through many decorated archways.



Every stop of his journey from Colombo to Madras saw multitudes giving him resounding cheers. The whole country went wild with joy.



If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed Punyabhumi, to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for their Karma, the land to which every soul wending its way godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and spirituality, ...it is India.

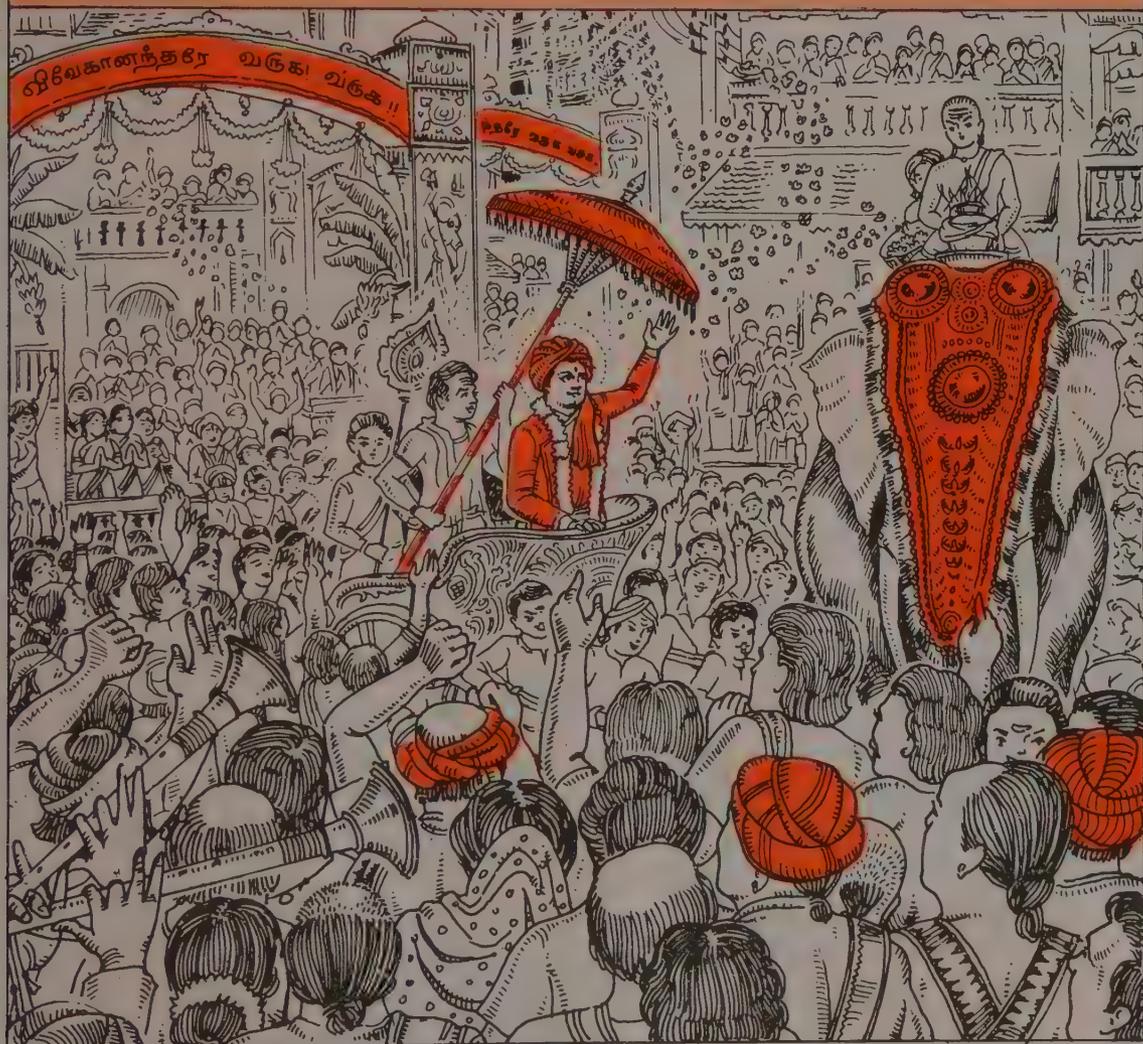


The longest night seems to be passing away, the severest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us... like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away... none can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep anymore; no outward power can hold her back anymore; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet...



At a small railway station near Madras, hundreds of people had gathered to have a glimpse of Swamiji; but the train was not scheduled to stop here. So, the crowd flung themselves on the track and the train had to be halted. Visibly moved Swamiji blessed the multitude.

The enthusiasm of the people reached a crescendo in Madras, the city that was the first to recognize his greatness four years back when he had come here as an unknown Sannyasin. His name was now on everybody's lips. The thoroughfares of Madras were beautifully decorated and triumphal arches were erected at every turning. Thousands jammed the railway station to give him a thunderous welcome. His zealous young admirers themselves pulled the coach after unyoking the horses. Vast throngs lined both sides of the street eager for his Darshan. It was a memorable procession from Egmore railway station to Castle Kernan, on the beach, where he was to stay. Decorated elephants led the grand procession. Bands played devotional songs and sonorous chants filled the air. Swamiji was deluged with fragrant flower petals raining from house tops all along the way. He accepted all these honours calmly. He regarded them only as tributes being paid to the spiritual ideals of India. Swamiji gave some of his most memorable public lectures during his nine days' stay in Madras.



Arise! Arise! Awake! Awake from the hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God with in you, do not deny him...



In his lectures Swamiji underlined the glorious religious and cultural heritage of India. He spoke of Avatars and the unbroken line of sages who have blessed this land down the centuries. He castigated the social evils that had crept into Indian society and explained his own plan of action based upon the universal principles of Vedanta, to rectify them and painted the picture of a new India before whose greatness even its eminent past will pale into insignificance.

Sailing from Madras, Swamiji reached Calcutta where also he was accorded a huge reception. Here too he was taken in a procession in a long decorated carriage drawn by enthusiastic youths through triumphal arches to the accompaniment of music and religious songs. Shouts of victory in his honour rent the air.

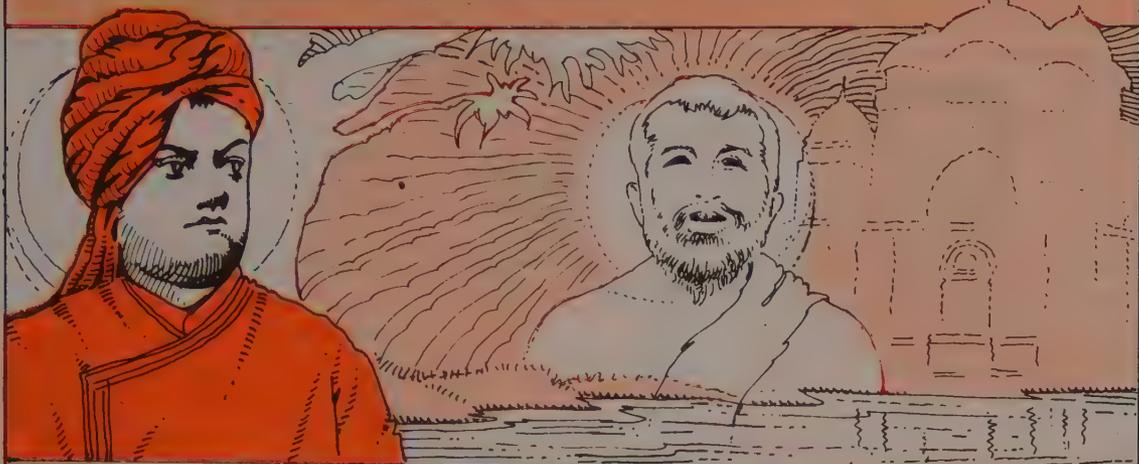


Hearty welcome to the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna!

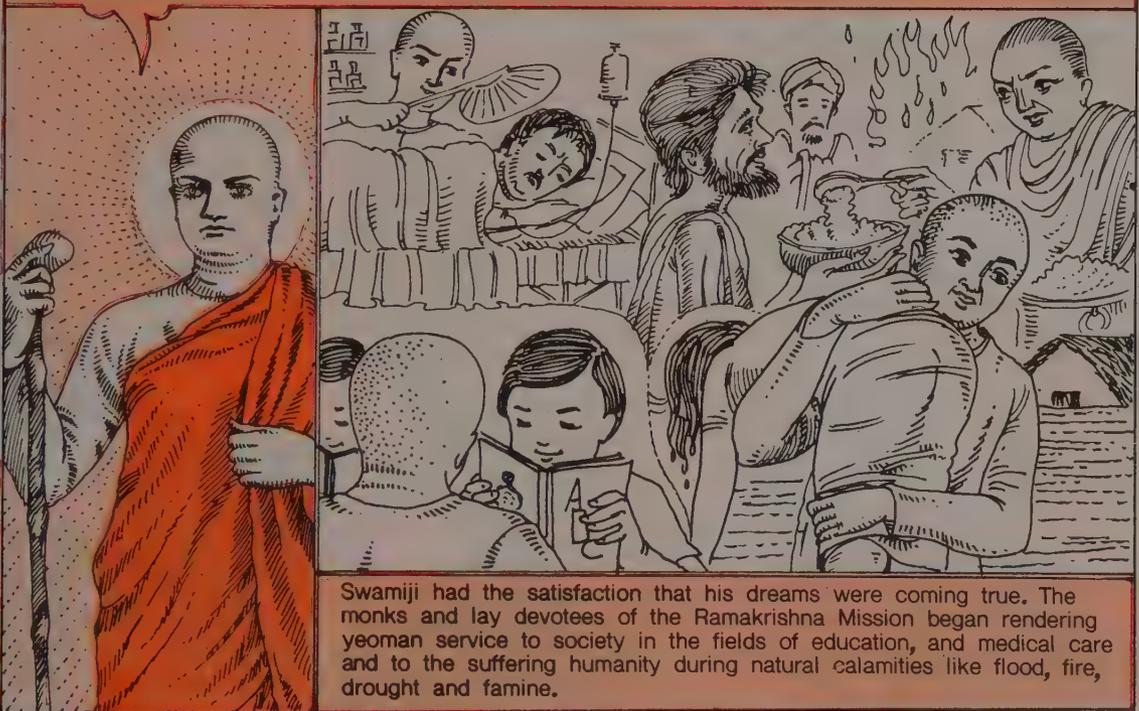
Jai Swami Vivekananda! Jai Sri Ramakrishna!

Long live Swami Vivekananda!

On December 9, 1898 he consecrated the Belur Math with the installation of the Master's relics in the shrine. Thus the permanent Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order for the propagation of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings came into being. He also drew up plans for the construction of a magnificent temple for his Master.

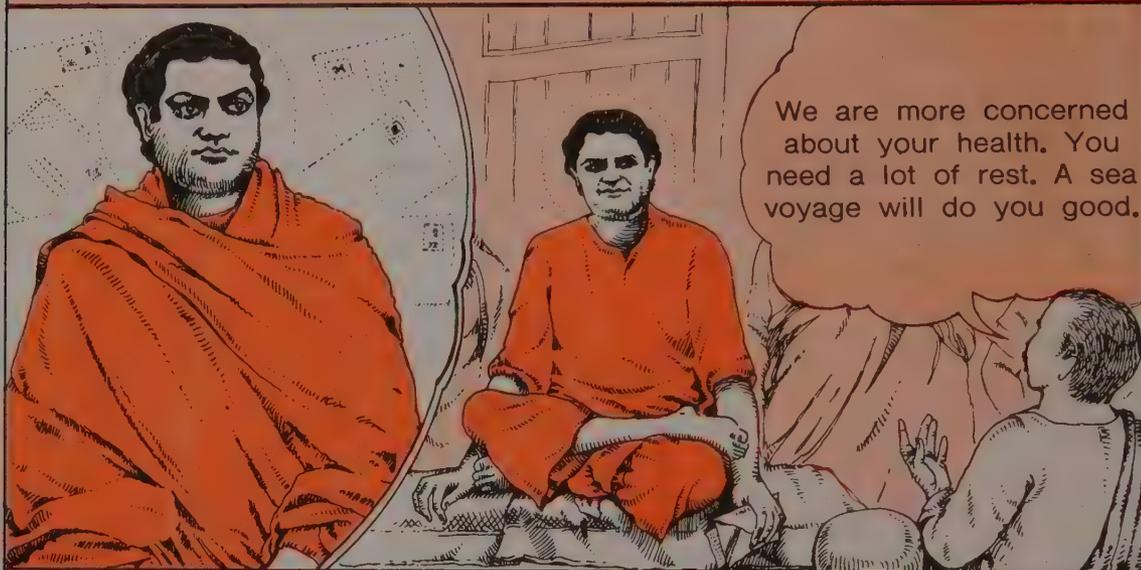


Do you all, my brothers, pray to the Lord with all your heart and soul, that He, the Divine Incarnation of this age may bless this place with His hallowed presence for ever and ever, and make this a unique centre, a holy-land, of harmony of different religions and sects.

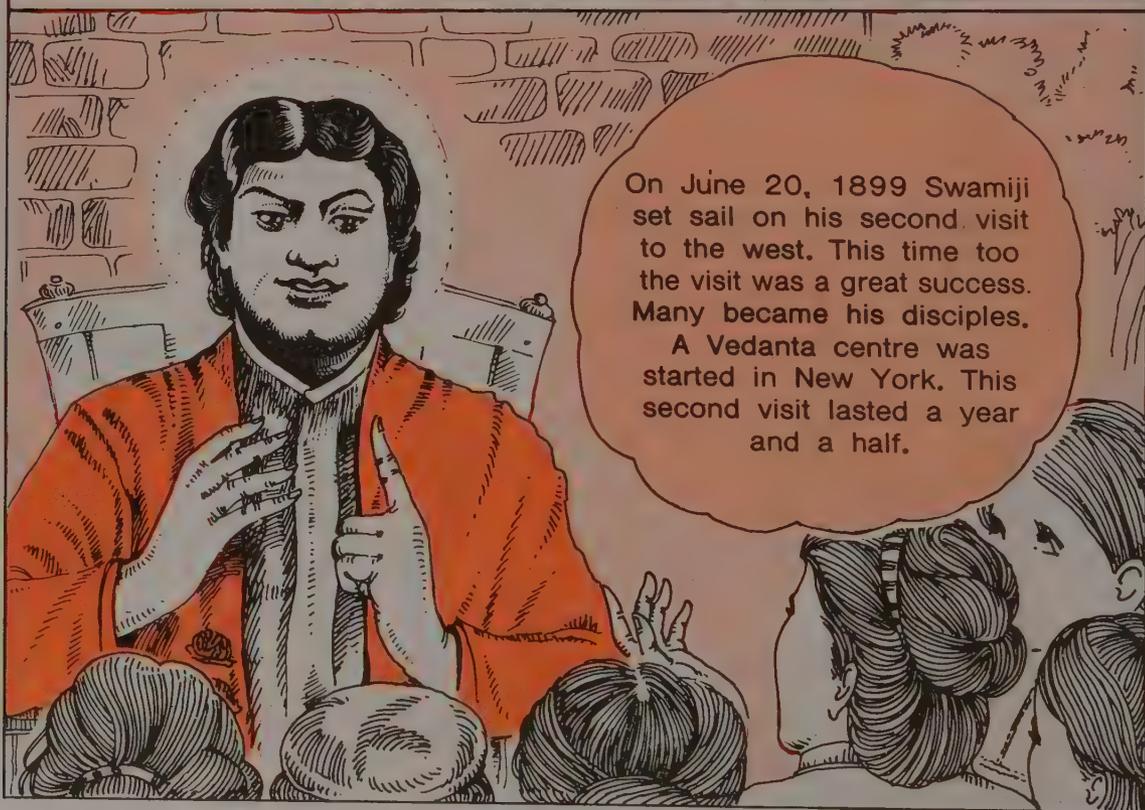


Swamiji had the satisfaction that his dreams were coming true. The monks and lay devotees of the Ramakrishna Mission began rendering yeoman service to society in the fields of education, and medical care and to the suffering humanity during natural calamities like flood, fire, drought and famine.

For two years Swamiji toiled hard to consolidate the work in India. The strain told upon his health and he fell ill repeatedly. So he was advised by the doctors and brother monks to undertake a long sea voyage to recoup his health.



We are more concerned about your health. You need a lot of rest. A sea voyage will do you good.



On June 20, 1899 Swamiji set sail on his second visit to the west. This time too the visit was a great success. Many became his disciples. A Vedanta centre was started in New York. This second visit lasted a year and a half.

On this occasion besides lecturing in several cities in America, Swamiji went to Paris to participate in the Congress of the History of Religions in September, 1900. Wherever he went he inspired people. But the continuous moving about and lecturing fatigued him. He longed to return to his motherland. He took a steamer to Bombay from where he travelled by land and reached Belur Math in December, 1900.

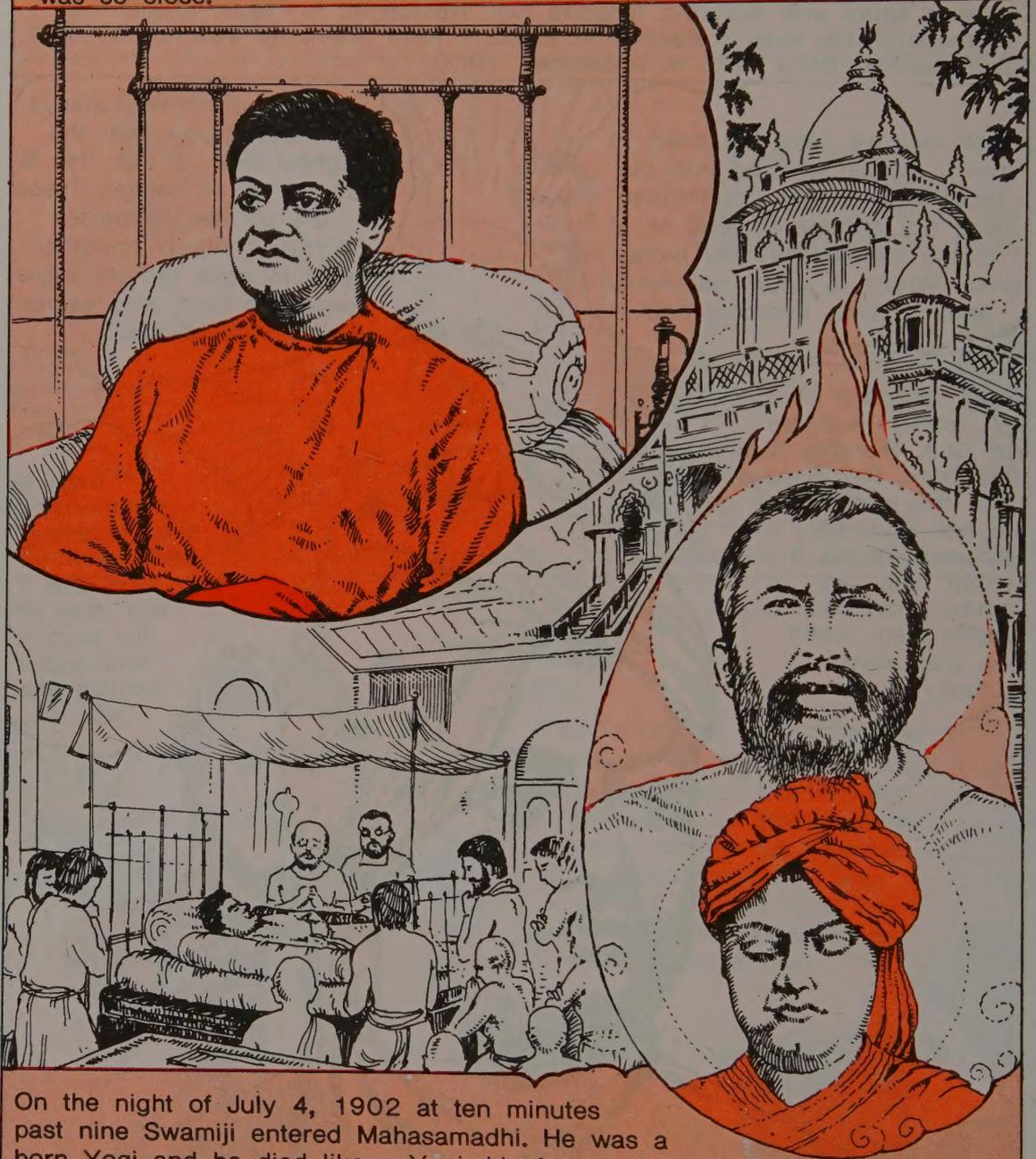
How can we have the heart to put a morsel of food into our mouths when our countrymen have not enough to feed or to clothe themselves? My India, arise! Where is your vital force? It is in your immortal soul.

Worship of man is worship of God. Worship Siva in the poor, the diseased and the weak. I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times if I can raise my countrymen and make them stand on their own feet.

After so much of Tapasya, I have known that the highest truth is this: 'He is present in all beings. These are all His manifested forms. There is no other God to seek for. He alone worships God, who serves all beings.'

India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. But if she goes in for politics and social conflict she will die.

The blazing sun that was Swamiji was slowly setting. Swamiji had been hinting that he would not live to see forty. But nobody thought the end was so close.



On the night of July 4, 1902 at ten minutes past nine Swamiji entered Mahasamadhi. He was a born Yogi and he died like a Yogi, his face aglow with divine serenity. Today on the very spot on the banks of the Ganges in the Belur Math compound where his mortal remains were cremated stands a magnificent temple dedicated to the wonder called Swami Vivekananda.

VIVEKANANDA CALLS

ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Young men, arise, awake, for the time is propitious. Be bold and fear not. Arise, awake, for your country needs this tremendous sacrifice. It is the young men that will do it. Arise and awake, the world is calling upon you. Arise with enthusiasm in your blood. Think not that you are poor, that you have no friends. Ay, whoever saw money make the man? It is man that always makes money. The whole world has been made by the energy of man, by the power of faith.

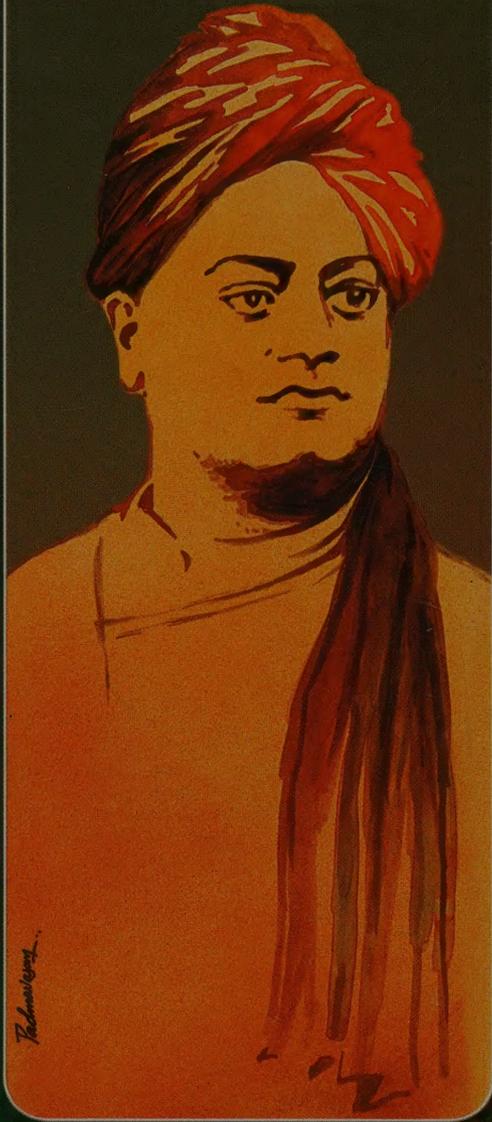
...Take my advice. Set yourselves wholly to the service of others, when you come from your colleges. Believe me, far greater happiness would then be yours, than if you had a whole treasury full of money and other valuables at your command.

...We want Sraddha, we want faith in our own selves. Strength is life, weakness is death. Men we want, and how can men be made unless the Sraddha is there?... We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.

...Go all of you, wherever there is an outbreak of plague or famine, or wherever the people are in distress, and mitigate their sufferings. At the most you may die in the attempt, what of that? ...Die you must, but have a great ideal to die for, and it is better to die with a great ideal in life.

...Do any deserve liberty who are not ready to give it to others? Let us calmly and in a manly fashion go to work, instead of dissipating our energy in unnecessary frettings and fumings.





Stand up, be bold, be strong.
Take the whole responsibility
on your own shoulders, and
know that you are the creator
of your own destiny.
All the strength and succour
you want is within yourselves.
Therefore make your own future.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



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