Russian Swami Finds Forefather's Faith in Sanatana Dharma
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"We are Russian Saivites," began the unexpected letter to Hinduism Today. "Our purpose is to unite all Russian worshippers of Lord Siva and of the Divine Mother; to translate the sacred text of Saiva Agama into Russian and to spread the nondual message of Siva around Russia." Behind this intriguing organization is Swami Sadasivachariya, who came to Berlin in June to meet our publisher Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami during his recent European tour. The 25-year-old his recent European tour. The 25-year-old swami is from Siberia, "The most beautiful place on earth," he affirms. He was initiated into Saivism by a teacher in Karnataka who was of Virasaiva origin, but did not teach that tradition. From swami's description, his tradition may be related to the Kalamukha or Pashupata sect of Karnataka, the likely predecessors to the Virasaivas. These swamis wear red robes with a black belt, carry a skull bowl, a trident and wear a Siva Linga around their neck (which they worship personally, as do the Virasaivas). His path is called the Rahasya Sampradaya "secret tradition." It teaches three ways to God: Pasu, the easy path, the path of sattva, Lingam and trident, the middle way; Vira, the hero path, tantric, represented by the counterclockwise swastika; and Divya, the divine path of freedom and liberation, represented by the clockwise swastika. Swami follows the first path, Pasu. Our art director and staff reporter, Natarajaswami, conducted this interview in Berlin:

Hinduism Today: Swamiji, how many centers do you have in Russia?

Swami Sadasivachariya: There are fifteen spiritual communities and satsang groups with 250 members in Moscow and other towns, but they are not yet registered officially. Only Moscow center has official recognition. We are followers of Hindu Tantric religion. We are devotees of Lord Siva and Divine Mother, of Saiva and Shakta traditions.

HT: What can you tell us about Hinduism in Russia?

Swami: The Russian soul and character is very specific. Russians as a people are not like westerners, and they are also not like Asians. Rather they are in the middle. After the communist rule in Russia was destroyed, many, many people wanted to return to religion, but not just to the traditional Orthodox Russian Christian church, or another Christian sect. Many people are deeply interested in oriental religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, but mostly Hinduism. The reason is that long ages ago, before Christianity, the ancient Russian religion was also Vedic. For example, the native Russian name of the Supreme Lord is Rod. That in Russian means the same as the Vedic Rudra or Siva. Siva is not only a Hindu Lord but also the ancient Russian Lord, God of our fathers, God of our great land of Russia.

HT: How will Hinduism evolve in Russia?

Swami: In Russia Hinduism will develop with some differences from the orthodox Hinduism in India. As I see it nowadays in Russia, the traditional sects of orthodox Hinduism cannot exist in Russia the same way they do in India, for the tradition of Russia is very specific. You may see in Russia a new branches of Hinduism--Russian Saivism, perhaps. In many ways we are followers of traditional orthodox Hindu Saivism, the tantric form.

HT: What form does your worship take?

Swami: We perform Vedic fire ceremonies under the open sky near rivers and forests according to orthodox Vedic Hindu rites adjusted for the Russian situation. We have in Moscow a small temple devoted to Shakti and Siva Linga worship. We have kirtan and a meditation hall. People come to daily and weekly worship in the temple. There is one person who knows the Vedic system very well. He teaches classes in meditation and yogic exercises. The Indian embassy in Moscow has an Indian cultural center. Sometimes someone comes from the center to teach yoga. In general, our worship is ritualistic. We are performing pujas and doing certain mantras. Many people are learning the Sanskrit language. Sanskrit in Russia is much more popular than other Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, because Sanskrit is mother of all Indo-European languages, of all Aryan people. When I was teaching Russians to sing in Kannada, they protested. Sanskrit is the Vedic language and is also the mother of our Russian language. We would like to know the language of our fathers and the great Vedic rishis.We are using the three principles of tantric worship--yantra, mantra and mudra.

HT: How do people get involved in Hinduism, and how does it influence their life?

Swami: Many people are starting to perform Hindu worship in Russia because they are deep believers in the Lord and true bhaktars. Their way of life becomes more pure, more spiritual. In a short time they become strong vegetarians. They start to do Vedic exercises, practice Ayurvedic medicine and use astrology. Hinduism for Russians is devotional, much more devotional than Christianity can be. Hinduism is a revival and renaissance of the ancient Russian religions that were in Russia before Christianity. I imagine that in a few years Hinduism in Russia will have many more followers than Hinduism in the West.

HT: How has Hinduism changed your life?

Swami: My life? As for my life, I am a simple monk. I don't like to speak about my own person. But as you have asked, I will give you an answer. Since childhood I was deeply religious. But neither Christian religion, nor Judaism, nor Buddhism could give me that spiritual truth that I sincerely searched for. Only in Hindu tantric worship to Lord Siva did I find the religion of my heart and soul. My wishes were fulfilled. I become a devotee of Lord Siva. Then I took sannyas because my devotion to Lord Siva was deep. Hinduism is my religion, but it is not only my religion. Siva is all for me.

The Tantra Sangha is anxious to communicate with Hindus around the world. They need literature which they can translate into Sanskrit and hope that religious leaders will visit Moscow. Contact: Mr. Stanislav Gorokhov, Tantra Sangha, P.O. Box 70, Moscow, Russia, 103 055. Phone: (70) 95 972- 0230. Fax: (70) 95 229-6141.