

Satyananda Centenary Series

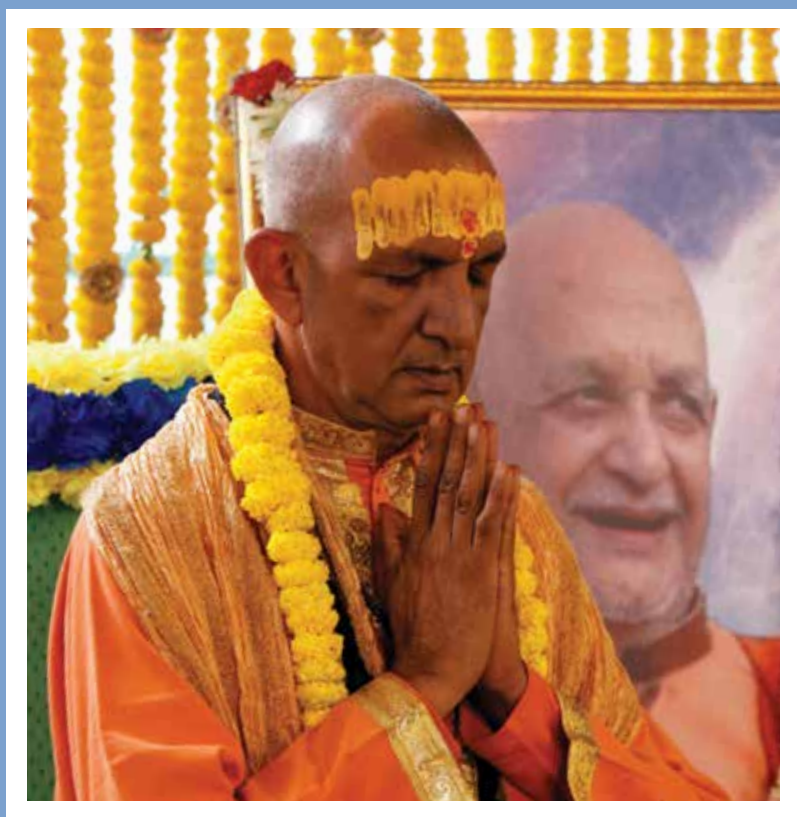
BIHAR YOGA®

Volume I

Walking the Luminous Path

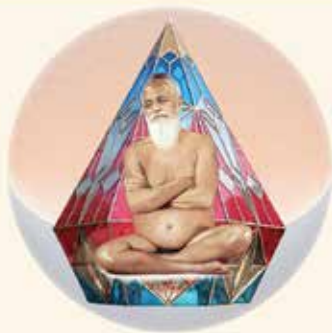
Satyam Poornima 2020–2022

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Walking the Luminous Path



SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

1923~2023

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS



Walking the Luminous Path

Satyam Poornima 2020–2022

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Walking the Luminous Path: Satyam Poornima 2020–2022
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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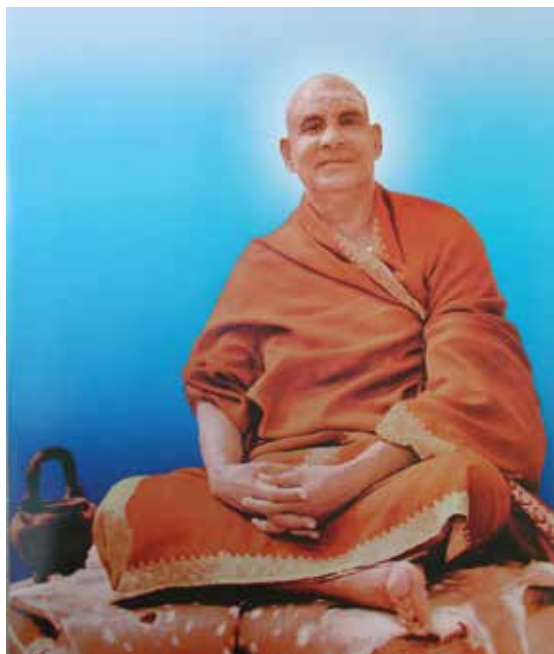
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

Contents

Satyam Poornima 2020

1. In the Beginning – a Dream	3
2. From Yoga Poornima to Satyam Poornima	6
3. A Guru's Miracle	10
<i>Swami Gyansiddhi Saraswati</i>	
4. Back in Vedic Times	13
5. The Naga	14
6. Ma Ganga and Shiva	16
<i>Sannyasi Sivadhara</i>	
7. Wandering Shiva	18
8. Impressions	20
9. Satyam Poornima – In the Fullness of Time	23
<i>Sannyasi Sivadhara</i>	

Satyam Poornima 2021

10. Dedication	31
11. Life of a Sannyasi	37
12. Developing the Mission	46

Satyam Poornima 2022

13. The Dream	59
14. Our Inspiration	61
15. Chapters of Life	69

16. Serve Love Give	81
17. Gratitude	94
18. Impressions	96
19. Shiva Tattwa	102

Satyam Poornima 2020

Sannyasa Peeth, Munger



1

In the Beginning – a Dream

22 December 2020



In Rikhia I had a dream. In the dream I saw the river Ganga and twelve Shivalingas on the banks of the river. One Naga sadhu with twelve kalash was doing jal abhishek to the twelve lingas. This dream came at midnight on the first night of Sat Chandi. I woke up and started thinking why this type of dream had come, and just before slipping back into sleep again, I asked myself, why this dream? The answer that came was that there was something I had to do in Munger during Yoga Poornima. Until now we have not



really celebrated Yoga Poornima in Munger, it has been a Rikhia event, yet the yoga bhoomi and karma bhoomi of Sri Swamiji is Munger. And here we don't celebrate his birthday, it feels weird. This dream was like an indication of what form the Yoga Poornima should take in Munger.

The next day I spoke with Swami Satsangi and she was also happy with the idea. She said, "Yes, it should happen." Then she asked me, "What name would you give, for how can we have one Yoga Poornima in Munger and one in Rikhia, the same event in two locations?" I said, "In Munger we will call it 'Satyam Poornima'." She said, "Can we change it, because yoga is Munger." I said, "No, Swamiji himself gave the name Yoga Poornima." Satyam Poornima will be starting this year in the same period that Yoga Poornima begins in Rikhia.

I had been to Paduka Darshan yesterday to decide, where it will be done. In the upper lawn, where we had the Guru Yantra, we will have the twelve Shivalingas. Satyameshwar will be the thirteenth one, inside Satyameshwar Peeth. He likes being number thirteen. Even when he arrived at Akhara, he was number thirteen and bigger than the other twelve which were all the same size. He has a special affinity



with the number thirteen. Thirteen in Hindi is *tera*, and *tera* also means yours. So Satyameshwar is always yours as he is always *tera*.

The pandits will be chanting the complete *Rudri* which will take about one and half hours. During the chanting of *Rudri*, the abhisheks will happen. This year it is more on an experimental basis. When we started off with our Hanuman Chalisa or Lakshmi-Narayana yajna, ten, twenty people, fifty people came, and every year more and more people kept coming.

There is another nice news. When the decision to do Satyam Poornima was taken I said to Swami Satsangi, "I need a Shivalinga from Rikhia." She asked me, "Which one?" I said, "The one from Sri Swamiji's room in Tulsi Kutir." It was the Shivalinga I had kept on his lap when he was in samadhi. So she said, "I hope he will come back." I said, "Yes, we will do one thing – after every Sat Chandi, we will bring Shivaji to Munger to be at the Satyam Poornima, then he will participate in my panchagni and after the panchagni we will take him back to Rikhia. Every year he will become like the Chalantu Mahadev, the walking Shiva, and who knows, maybe one hundred years later there might be a yatra of Shivaji from Rikhia to Munger."

2

From Yoga Poornima to Satyam Poornima

25 December 2020



The city of yoga celebrates Satyam Poornima. Satyam Poornima is the celebration of the birthday of our master Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He was born in 1923 in a small village in the district of Almora, in the Himalayas. When he was born people did not register births or deaths

the way it is mandatory now for everyone. In those days no note, no record was kept of when people died or when people were born. So we did not know when the birthday of Sri Swamiji was. For many years, people speculated and chose different dates to celebrate his birthday according to their convenience, however it was never the actual date.

In 2006, I had gone to the village where Paramahamsaji was born and I asked the elders of the family if they had any remembrance, record or even an astrological chart of Paramahamsaji's birth. They said that in a village they did not have that facility or tradition, but they remembered that he was born during the Margashirsha poornima in 1923. That was the first indication of the day he was born, the full moon of Margashirsha in 1923. The full moon of Margashirsha in 1923 fell on 23rd December night. So knowing the day of his birth according to the tithi, we celebrate his birthday on the full moon of every December.

When we found out the birth date, we requested Sri Swamiji to allow the devotees to celebrate his birthday. First he said, "No, you have not celebrated it so far. Why should you celebrate it now?" But then he gave his permission. The first Yoga Poornima was celebrated in 2008 at Rikhiapeeth in the presence of Sri Swamiji. In 2008 and 2009, for two years we had the physical presence of Sri Swamiji during the celebration of Yoga Poornima, celebrating the birth of his physical body. Then he attained Mahasamadhi in 2009, and we continued with the tradition of Yoga Poornima at Rikhiapeeth. Every year I used to participate in the Sat Chandi and Yoga Poornima celebrations, along with Swami Satyasangananda. This year also I had gone to Rikhiapeeth for the Sat Chandi program and I was planning to be there for Yoga Poornima as well, like all the other years. At the same time, there was a yearning in my heart that when the time is right an indication will come when we can celebrate his physical birth in the form of Yoga Poornima in Munger.

This indication came on the first night of the Sat Chandi Mahayajna. The yajna had concluded for the day, and we



went to our rooms at night to rest and sleep. In my sleep I had a dream, and in the dream I saw a flowing river. On the banks of the river, there were twelve Shivalingas and one Naga sannyasi with matted locks was offering water with kalash to each Shivalinga. In the background there was chanting of the *Rudri*. The sadhu was performing the abhishek with kalash, going from one Shivalinga to another to another to all the twelve with the sound of *Rudri* floating in the air. That was the dream. I woke up and I wondered, ‘Why the dream?’ Then I realized this was the indication that I was waiting for to start Yoga Poornima in Munger – the river was the Ganga, there were the lingas and the Naga sadhu was the sannyasin. This came like an indication and permission, “Now you can perform Yoga Poornima in Munger.”

When I met Swami Satsangi I spoke to her about the dream, and instantly she agreed, “Yes, it is about time. Twelve years Yoga Poornima has happened at Rikhiapeeth and now things have to start in Munger as well.” Then she asked me, “What name will this function or celebration have?” I said, “Sri Swamiji himself gave the name Yoga Poornima for Rikhia symbolizing the attainment of yoga in the life of a person who rose from a normal human being



to become the siddha of the highest calibre. In Munger we will call this function Satyam Poornima since it is dedicated to the descent of our master in our life.” She agreed wholeheartedly to the whole concept and idea.

When I came to Munger, nothing was ready and I mentioned something to the chief of the Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal who said, “Swamiji we will help in organizing, preparing and in assisting during this celebration.” For the last three days these people have been coming to Paduka Darshan, preparing everything, decorating everything, organizing everything and getting it ready to be the first celebration of Satyam Poornima in the City of Yoga. The sannyasins had a restful and pleasant time. It is with great joy and pride that today, along with the eminent citizens of Munger and along with the members of the Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal, we are celebrating the first Satyam Poornima on the grounds of Paduka Darshan as a joint effort and collaboration of Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger, and Sannyasa Peeth, Munger. It is with gratitude that we offer our humble pranams, prayers and invocation to Siva and Satyam. They are the inspiration and motivation; with Shivam, Satyam and with the Shiva Aradhana for Satyam, let us make our lives Sundaram, beautiful.

3

A Guru's Miracle

Swami Gyansiddhi Saraswati



On Thursday, 24 December, I had gone to Sri Nivas at 4.30 in the evening to prepare Paramahamsaji's room for the night. As soon as I entered his room, I had a feeling that something was different. As I reached out to lift the rug at the foot of his bed to be able to clean the area, I was

stunned; it was soaking wet! I started thinking – neither has there been any rain over the past few days, nor was there any source of water right in the middle of the room. I scanned every inch of the room, everything was totally dry and there was not even a drop of water anywhere. Moreover, the water under the rug looked fresh, clean and crystal clear. If it had been there for some time, it would have been a little dirty and perhaps the colour from the rug might have also been visible or it might have been dry all around except for a wet patch in the centre. However, the whole area under the rug was full of water. It was not as if the water had dripped into the room from somewhere outside. The rug was also completely dry on the top.

I checked Paramahamsaji's bed, it was totally dry. I patted the upholstery on his arm chair; there was not even a hint of dampness, let alone any water. I was at a loss and called another swami. She was surprised and came to see for herself. When she asked me if it could be a leak through the roof, I said that even in the heaviest of monsoon we have never seen even a drop of water come into this room.

We tried to take photographs of this extremely extraordinary sight but had no success. All that was seen in the pictures was a flickering tubelight!

Both of us started thinking – the first Satyam Poornima anushthana was going to commence tomorrow. Could it be that Paramahamsaji was giving us darshan in the form of the *jal tattva*, the water element, on the eve of this special anushthana?

It was only yesterday that Swamiji shared a dream with us that he had after the first day of the Sat Chandi Mahayajna. In his dream, he saw a Naga sadhu performing abhishek to twelve Shivalingas on the banks of the Ganga. Taking it to be a sign and accepting it as a divine mandate, he decided to celebrate Satyam Poornima to commemorate the birthday of his guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, with the abhishek of twelve Shivalingas along the banks of the Ganga at Paduka Darshan in Munger.

Until today I had only heard about miracles and now for the first time I saw with my own eyes how the divine energy of the guru materializes to give us a tangible experience of his presence.

Then a question arose in my mind, ‘What was the significance of the darshan in the form of jal tattwa?’ Different qualities of the water element flooded my awareness: water gives life and protects life; even on the most scorching summer afternoon, water bestows refreshing coolness; water is pure and transparent; water cools and quietens every kind of heat.

The most significant quality of water is that it always flows. As a river or a stream, it flows without rest until it reaches its goal and merges with the sea or ocean. No obstacle or block can stop its flow. Instead of confronting and fighting with the rocks and stones along its path, it merely flows around them and finds the way to its destination.

This is a quality which we all can imbibe in our attempt to progress on our chosen path.



4

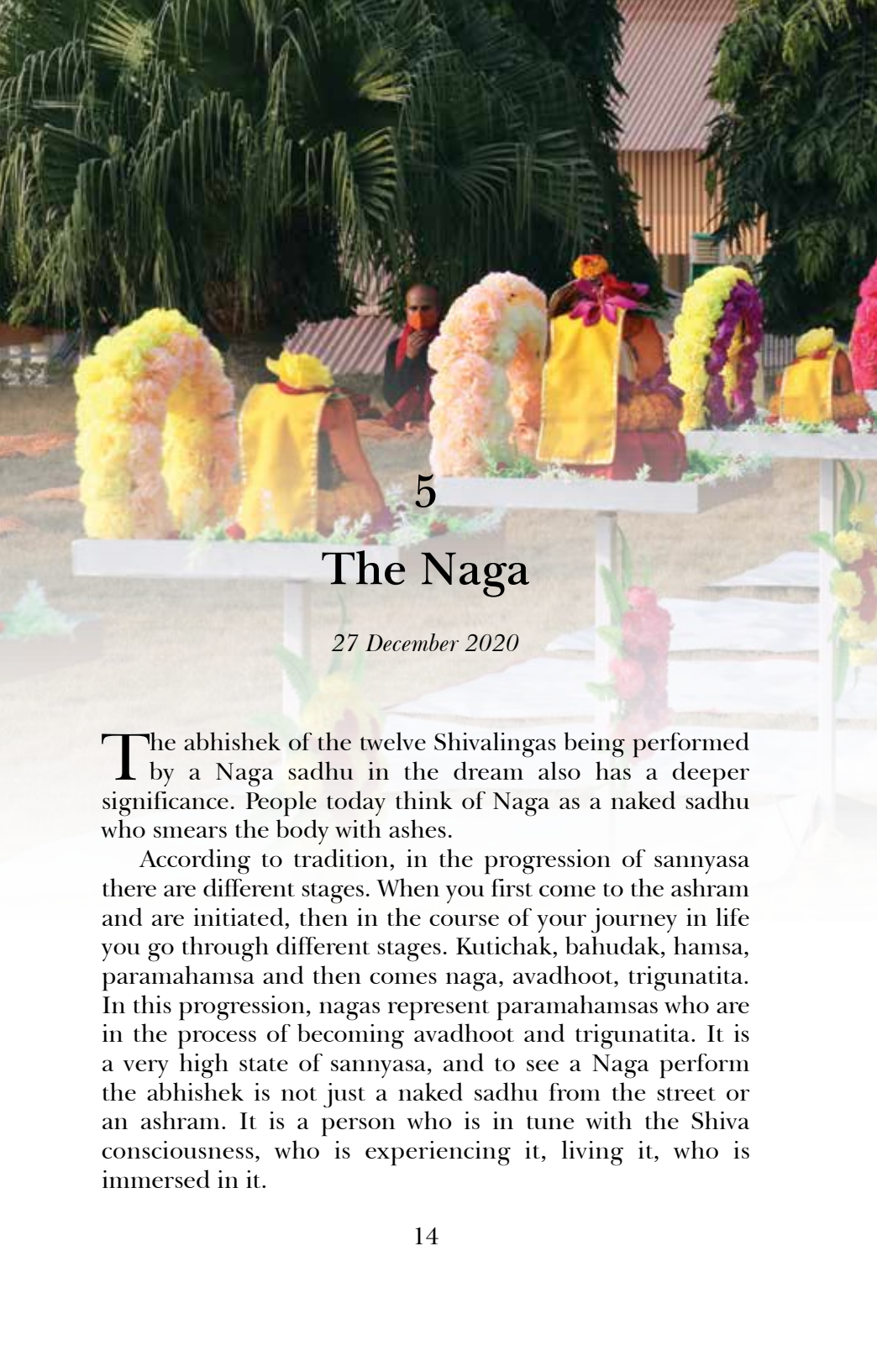
Back in Vedic Times

26 December 2020

Welcome to the second day of Satyam Poornima at Paduka Darshan, Sannyasa Peeth, Munger. The invocation and the abhishek of the twelve Shivalingas began here yesterday to mark the beginning of Satyam Poornima. Today also the abhishek is being performed to the chanting of *Rudri* and the vedic mantras. The abhishek of the twelve Shivalingas is a special moment in time.

Shiva is, of course, the greatest of the yogis. Shiva is an energy which represents effulgent consciousness, the transcendental nature. The replica of that transcendental Shiva nature is the Shivalinga. Since time immemorial, the way to invoke Shiva's grace and energy in the Shivalinga has remained unchanged. The way and method in which the abhishek is performed with the chanting of mantras is possibly the same manner, the same mantra and routine that our ancestors performed during the vedic times. The mantra and the procedure has not changed.

The chanting of these mantras have not changed, it carries the same energy, the same devotion, faith, the same aspiration that the vedic seers had when they invoked the grace of Siva. I am sure, and I have heard from people who were present yesterday, that the feeling here is of simplicity, beauty, happiness and peace. This is the nature of Shiva, who brings auspiciousness in the lives of people.



5

The Naga

27 December 2020

The abhishek of the twelve Shivalingas being performed by a Naga sadhu in the dream also has a deeper significance. People today think of Naga as a naked sadhu who smears the body with ashes.

According to tradition, in the progression of sannyasa there are different stages. When you first come to the ashram and are initiated, then in the course of your journey in life you go through different stages. Kutichak, bahudak, hamsa, paramahamsa and then comes naga, avadhoot, trigunatita. In this progression, nagas represent paramahamsas who are in the process of becoming avadhoot and trigunatita. It is a very high state of sannyasa, and to see a Naga perform the abhishek is not just a naked sadhu from the street or an ashram. It is a person who is in tune with the Shiva consciousness, who is experiencing it, living it, who is immersed in it.



The whole concept of the river Ganga representing purity, twelve Shivalingas representing the transcendental consciousness and the Naga representing the human journey from material to transcendental in the tradition of sannyasa is a unique and beautiful *sanket* or indication for the commencement of Satyam Poornima in Munger.

We are blessed to receive the blessings of Mother Ganga and we are blessed to receive the blessings of Lord Shiva. We are blessed to receive the blessings of the gurus and the guru parampara, who represent the naga nature, the nature which is immersed in the transcendental nature. This is the significance of the dream as I understand it.

6

Ma Ganga and Shiva

Sannyasi Sivadhara



We celebrate the first Satyam Poornima in this most auspicious, divine and sublime setting of Paduka Darshan. The seed of this anushtana revealed itself to Swami Niranjananandaji in a dream at Rikhiapeeth in which he saw twelve Shivalingas on the sandy banks of the Ganga. They were being worshipped with abhishek by a Naga sadhu who was pouring water from twelve pots or kalash onto this row of twelve Shivalingas. This seed manifests in material form on the banks of the river Ganga here in Munger, the seat of Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth and Sannyasa Peeth, the first and third missions of Sri Swamiji. It takes this form as the celebration of Satyam Poornima, the celebration of the fullness of the purity that we experience in the life of

Sri Swamiji, truth, bliss, joy and auspiciousness. The scene was of a Naga baba on the sandy banks of the Ganga and it has a very deep significance as the relationship between Ma Ganga and Shiva, manifesting as Satyam and Sundaram.

Ma Ganga represents the ceaseless flow of purity meeting its dissolution in the ocean. This flow of purity is what nourishes and nurtures all physical existence on Earth. Before Ma Ganga descends from the heavens, she swirls around in the matted locks of Shiva and then descends upon Earth. Shiva represents pure consciousness and the manifest form of that consciousness is the Shivalinga. The worship of twelve Shivalingas represents pure consciousness along the banks of the Ganga which nourishes and nurtures us all for eons. She has been the benevolent witness of changes that have happened over time and continue to happen.

What is the significance of this river, the purity of the river and the Shiva consciousness to our lives? The vision and mission of the masters of our tradition, Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda, is also like the river Ganga. The relationship that Swami Satyananda had with the river Ganga is a very deep one, starting with his time spent in Rishikesh with his master Swami Sivananda. He also had a deep and significant experience at Gangotri which then comes flowing down and manifests in Munger. This river of inspiration, this river of blessings is our Ganga, which nourishes and nurtures our spiritual journey and our spiritual life.

The celebration of Satyam Poornima is an opportunity to dive deep into this divine river which flows ceaselessly and will continue to flow, manifesting the vision and mission of truth, auspiciousness and beauty, Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram. It is our opportunity and responsibility as well as great privilege to be present here at this first invocation and first celebration of Satyam Poornima. May we strive to make ourselves capable recipients of this grace, to be able to dive deep into this divine river and become part of this beauty, vision and mission.

7

Wandering Shiva

29 December 2020

Today we come to the conclusion of Satyam Poornima, which has been an incredible event for those who are participating and witnessing it. For me also it has been an incredible experience of pouring twelve kalash of water on twelve Shivalingas. This event of Satyam Poornima is closely connected and linked with the Yoga Poornima celebrations at Rikhiapeeth. You may say that they are connected because the dates are the same, or that the worship of Shiva is the same, however that is not the actual connection between Yoga Poornima and Satyam Poornima.

The connection between these two celebrations are two Shivalingas, one has come here from Rikhia and the other one, which is in Munger, is the brother of the Rikhia Shivalinga. These two Shivalings had come to Rikhia before the samadhi of Sri Swamiji and after his samadhi we had placed these two Shivalings on his lap. Afterwards one Shivalinga was brought to Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger, and the other was kept in the room of Sri Swamiji at Rikhiapeeth. Swami Satsangi very graciously consented to allow the Rikhia Shivalinga to come to Munger for Satyam Poornima, and the Rikhia Shivalinga will go back to Paramahamsaji's room after the completion of my panchagni sadhana.

This Shivalinga is the walking or the travelling Shivalinga moving between Munger and Rikhia during the celebration of Yoga Poornima and Satyam Poornima. In that manner,



the presence and the shakti of Sri Swamiji is also here. We can all experience it and feel it. This is also the beginning of a tradition for future generations to know and to follow the connection between the three centres of Yogapeeth, Rikhiapeth and Sannyasa Peeth. They are the three expressions, missions and visions of our master Sri Swamiji through which the teachings of our Paramguru Swami Sivanandaji are spreading to humanity for their upliftment at all levels.

Today is the birthday of our master Sri Swami Satyanandaji and I welcome you all to Satyam Poornima to celebrate this unique event in history with us. It has been a very heart-touching aradhana of Satyam Poornima with the abhishek of twelve Shivalingas.

I would like to express my gratitude to the pandits of Munger Shivalaya, who have come and performed the aradhana of Satyameshwar these five days. I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal who have given this aradhana a manifest form through their untiring effort. I convey my happiness to the participants, to the citizens of Munger who have offered their bhava to this aradhana, for just as Ganga flows, their sentiment has also flowed. I would like to thank everyone else, the residents, the sannyasins for being the support and inspiration behind this beautiful Satyam Poornima. Finally, we pray to God and to Guru to give us the strength and positivity to face the challenges that are going to come our way in the coming year.

8

Impressions



I watch Swamiji perform pooja to the pictures of Swami Sivanandaji and Paramahamsaji and then his abhishek to the Shivalingas, as always meticulous attention to every detail of worship. One can only behold reverentially. Every idol, icon, picture truly enjoys receiving pooja from our Swamiji because of the bhava with which only he can perform it.

I leave with a full heart and happy tears, contemplating on the qualities of water that can be incorporated for a more meaningful life.

I remember Paramahamsaji saying something like this in a satsang in 2008, “None of you are here because you want to be or you planned it, or because I wanted it. It is because He wants it! Yes, none of us should forget about grace.

—*Sannyasi Niranjani*



This is not just the abhishek of twelve Shivalingas but the rays of blessings of guru and Lord Shiva which are falling on each and every one, those who are connected with guru and those who are not. I felt the love and care of guru and Lord Siva for everyone, those who are in the ashram and those who are not in the ashram. No matter what the situation is out in the world, the blessings of yajna and abhishek will reach everyone and all will find the way and light in the deep darkness. A bhajan someone sang is ringing constantly in my ears: *Jayati jayati Jai Satyananda, Jayati jayati Jai Satyananda!* for it is Swami Satyananda who is present here in the form of beauty, love and knowledge.

—*Sannyasi Satkirti*

Simple Soft Superb
Spectacular Splendid and Sublime
Satyam and Sivam were
definitely present because
Sundaram was undoubtedly experienced

—*Sannyasi Vasundhara*

Colourful, powerful,
Full of life,
Being seated in a circle close to Ganga,
Great and uplifting.
Shiva,
Peaceful and smiling.
No intellectual understanding
Just merging with . . .

—*Jignasu Vidyasagar*



The atmosphere had a transcendental quality: the colours, the light, the arrangements as if we were entering another dimension which belonged to Shiva as auspiciousness. Swamiji's warm welcome and blissful face and smile inviting us to see everything and be a witness.

The warmth and the elements: earth/grass we were seated on; the water of the Ganga and abhishek; fire of the sun bringing light and life; air as gentle cooling breeze, out in the open, no closed walls; space, the sky as our ceiling, limitless, expansive and giving a sense of timelessness. Waiting for the aradhana to begin gave the mind time to prepare, to become calm, to drop worries and concerns, to become quiet, open and receptive. The whole time Swamiji, calm, peaceful, smiling and welcoming, organizing everything with clockwork precision with what seemed to be the power of thought. And all the actions proceeded from there.

A feeling of happiness, peace, bliss within and that was visible on the faces of other witnesses around me also! Thank you, Swamiji!

—Sannyasi Vijayashakti

9

Satyam Poornima – In the Fullness of Time

Sannyasi Sivadhara



When a magical event unfolds like a beautiful bud opening up to the gentle rays of the sun, nourished by glistening dewdrops, and revealing divine design in its simple grandeur and majesty, the heart is full and the mind stops. Eternal gratitude and deep reverence towards god and guru reverberate within while we gaze on in speechless awe at the privilege of being present on such a special occasion, bathing in its pure peace, joy and light.

The first Satyam Poornima, from 25th to 29th December 2020, was celebrated along the banks of the Ganga at Paduka Darshan, Munger, thirteen years after the first Yoga Poornima dedicated to Sri Swami Satyananda's attainment of the fullness of yoga and to commemorate the day on which he was born – 23rd December 1923 – was celebrated at Rikhiapeth.

Swami Niranjan had long held the hope of celebrating Sri Swamiji's birthday in Munger, his karma bhoomi, and received permission to do so in an incredible dream on the night after the Sat Chandi Mahayajna had begun in Rikhiya on 16th December 2020. The dream revealed twelve Shivalingas being worshipped with abhishek by a Naga sadhu who was pouring water on each Shivalinga from clay kalashs to the chanting of the *Rudripath* along the banks of a river. Such is the power of a disciple's dedication and love for Guru that an ephemeral image transforms into tangible form, manifesting as a magical event within a few days of its being revealed.

There is a sense of coming full circle and the beginning of a new journey all at the same time: Paduka Darshan was called Anand Bhavan when Sri Swamiji spent chaturmas here in 1956, the very first time he set foot in Munger; Swami Sivananda bestowed his final benediction and blessings upon his beloved Satyam in this very place. As the seat of Sri Swami Satyananda's third mission, Sannyasa Peeth, this hallowed ground plays host to the first Satyam Poornima and fulfils the longing of his successor and disciple to celebrate his master's birth in the place where the yogic journey began.

The five-day program commences on 25th December, and concludes on the full moon day of Margashirsha, the *tithi* of his birth according to the lunar calendar. This coming together of the sun and the moon was also seen during the closing arati each day as the glowing red ball of the sun was slowly slipping below the western horizon and a pearly moon came up earlier than usual in the east to catch a glimpse of this most beautiful worship.

Yet another element of synchronicity is seen as the invocation of Shiva to celebrate the birthday of Satyam started on a Friday, the day dedicated to Devi worship. The perfect balance between core elements creates a space for such an event of immeasurable depth, eternal bliss and beauty to manifest. The significance of the number thirteen echoes through several aspects of this program. It is thirteen years since the first Yoga Poornima was celebrated at Rikhiapeth; thirteen Shivalingas receive abhishek and alankara during Satyam Poornima, twelve Shivalingas along the banks of the Ganga with the thirteenth one being Satyameshwar Mahadeva, keeping a benevolent eye over everything from his peeth; before being established in Sannyasa Peeth and receiving the name 'Satyameshwar Mahadeva', this magnificent Shivalinga was the thirteenth in a set of Shivalingas which arrived unannounced at the ashram one day. Twelve of them were of a similar size and were established as the jyotirlinga peeth at the Akhara at Satyam Udyan while 'Sadashiva', as Swamiji referred to him at the time, graced the panchagni vedi till the time he came home to his rightful place at Paduka Darshan.

The word for the number thirteen in Hindi is *tera* which also means 'that which is yours'. Everything that is offered to guru and god is only what we have received from them, reflecting the saying *tera tujha ko arpann*, 'we dedicate to you that which is yours'. Full circle again . . .

During the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna earlier this year, Swamiji had given us the message to develop positivity, balance, organization and restraint as the prasada of the yajna so that we may truly experience the grace of Sri Narayana and Lakshmi in our lives. All four qualities came together in an incredibly beautiful symphony, filling the air with joy and peace, lightness and bliss all through Satyam Poornima. Deep conviction in positivity, firm commitment to expressing balance, determined and dedicated effort towards organization and an adherence to restraint were expressed in every aspect of the program.



Quietly sincere and tireless seva was offered by members of the Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal – from the beautiful floral decorations to meticulously arranging everything for the abhishek and assisting Swamiji with smooth, perfect coordination. The pandits from the Sivalaya temple in Munger chanted the *Rudripaath*, conducting the worship of Satyameshwar Mahadeva inside the peeth as Swamiji offered abhishek to the twelve Shivalingas on the lawn outside and sannnyasins dressed and decorated them before Swamiji performed arati and pooja with indescribable grace and devotion. Swamiji personally welcomed and seated sannnyasins and guests all around the amphitheatre.

Respecting the requisite protocol of the Covid pandemic situation, all the participants wore masks and maintained social distancing while Swamiji, the sannnyasins and Yuvas wore gloves while performing pooja. There was a smooth flow of participants arriving at the program venue and performing parikrama before leaving the premises.



Sannyasins chanted mantras during the havan and their stotras blended with the pandits' *Rudripath*, ending with arati. Everything became part of a single seamless flow, blending together and creating a beautiful ballet that could only have been choreographed by a master.

The setting was perfect. Coming into the amphitheatre through the 'rainbow', there was a distinct experience of entering a different *loka* – *Shivaloka*: Ganga Ma flowing gently in the background, Swami Sivanandaji and Sri Swamiji showering their blessings upon everything from photographs that truly came alive with Swamiji seated next to them, the palm trees around the lawn swaying in a delicate dance to melodious chanting, an unusually warm December sun and eagles circling overhead, swooping low every now and then as if to have a closer look at the row of twelve Shivalingas on their pedestals in the centre of the lawn.

Each of the Shivalingas had a distinct personality and came together in an amazingly harmonious and comple-

mentary manner, different expressions of what is essentially the same element. Every evening they went back into Satyameshwar Peeth, which glowed all night in the light of their deepaks, waiting to emerge the next day for abhishek and alankar.

There was also a fine balance between the tattwas with the tangible and intangible presence of the jal tattwa manifesting in myriad ways. The first experience was of a magical darshan Sri Swamiji himself bestowed on the eve of the program in the form of pure, crystal-clear water which appeared in his room at Ganga Darshan. Warm rays of the sun were shining down upon the ground where we were seated, along the banks of the gently flowing Ganga. A steady flame during the daily havan burnt bright, undisturbed and unruffled by the breeze, as if the proximity and presence of the water calmed the fire.

Sri Lakshmi and Narayana along with Krishna and Radha in their peeth were wearing raiment reflecting deep blue water glistening with silver, while Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji watched over us from an ethereal azure space. As the copper path of the setting sun reflecting upon the surface of the river slowly faded, a translucent pearly moon was already high in the eastern sky, its cooling rays spreading a satin sheen on the water. With hearts full, eyes misty with tears of joy and heads held high in humble pride for the privilege of being present at this magical celebration.

Swamiji had guided every single movement of this symphony, each note ringing perfectly true and clear in love, devotion and joy. It was indeed a privilege to have participated in this momentous occasion dedicated to our beloved Sri Swamiji. Let us honour him by endeavouring to walk firmly ahead along the path he has shown us to bring truth, auspiciousness and beauty into our lives and share the gifts we have received in abundance with everyone around us.

May we become tiny little drops in this beautiful river, the divine mission and vision of our masters which flows ceaselessly with the inspiration of Sivam, Satyam and Sundaram. *Jai Ho!*

Satyam Poornima 2021

Sannyasa Peeth, Munger



10

Dedication

15 December 2021



Today we are welcoming all of you to Satyam Poornima being held in the City of Yoga with the participation of the citizens of this city, participation of the Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal, the youth fellowship, participation of Bihar School of Yoga, the Yogapeeth, and Sannyasa Peeth. This year is the second celebration of Satyam Poornima in Munger. The first event of Satyam Poornima was celebrated last year,

in the year 2020. And the year 2021 is the second year of celebration. It is a very special time because for many years we did not know the birth date and the birthday of our Master, Sri Swami Satyanandaji. And in those days, in 1923, no official records were kept, but only notations in peoples' homes, in their notebooks, for the purpose of making horoscopes.

When Sri Swamiji left his home, he left his past life behind him, and did not remember or recall, like many people of those days, when his birthday was. In the course of his life, many people, many sannyasin disciples, many devotees chose a date and celebrated his birthday on their chosen date. Some people celebrated his birthday for many years in July. Some people celebrated in August. Some people celebrated in October. Some people celebrated in November. Some in September. And in this way, each devotee, each sannyasin disciple chose a date according to their choice, possibly because it was their birthday also at that time. And each wanted to show that they were born on the day of their Master. We don't know the reason, but everybody celebrated on different dates.

Only in the year 2007, I came across a piece of paper recovered from the home of Sri Swamiji which I had visited; and on that piece of paper his birthday was shown as the full moon of December, 1923. And full moon of December in 1923 fell around the period 25th December. So with this date in hand, we requested Sri Swamiji to allow us to celebrate his birthday and he readily agreed. He said, "This birthday, I can accept, because this is according to my memory. When I was born there was snow all around." That can only happen in December and January. There won't be snow in June, July or August. So he confirmed the date of Margashirsh Poorima, and we called it the celebration of Yoga Poornima.

For two years Sri Swamiji participated and celebrated Yoga Poornima with us, and then he attained Yoga Samadhi. The celebration of Yoga Poornima continued every year, and it continues even today. When twelve years of Yoga

Poornima had passed, last year in 2020 I had a dream, and in the dream I saw the banks of the river Ganges, twelve Shivalingas on the banks of the river Ganges, and one Naga sannyasi bringing water in a clay pot from the river and doing the abhishek on each of the twelve lingas, with twelve bowls of water. That gave me an indication that Sri Swamiji was giving an instruction to celebrate this Yoga Poornima in Munger. And here the same thing manifested naturally and spontaneously – the twelve Shivalingas, the sannyasi and the banks of the Ganga.

The presence of Guru and God

Before the commencement of Satyam Poornima last year, an incident happened. In the evenings, we prepare the room of Sri Swamiji in Ganga Darshan, where he stayed, while he was here. Last year before the commencement of the program, a prayer was made, “Give an indication if you are satisfied with this celebration of Satyam Poornima in Munger”. And sure enough he gave his indication. Next morning when sannyasins went to his room, they found a pool of water in the middle of the carpet, and nobody knows where the water came from. There are no taps, there was no bucket, there was no mug. The water was fresh, as if recently poured. That was like an indication that the abhishek had the blessings of Shiva and Guru both. And then we had this fantastic first Satyam Poornima in Munger.

This year too, this morning, for the second Satyam Poornima, an indication came of divine grace and participation and blessings. This also happened in the room of Sri Swamiji at Ganga Darshan. Sri Swamiji’s bed is placed north to south. Beside the bed is an almirah. On top of the almirah are the images of Hanuman, Shivaji and Ganesha, who are facing west. Now Shivaji has come here for *abhishek*. So only Hanumanji and Ganeshji were left. Ganeshji said, “Listen, this is Shivaji’s program, my father’s program. So I will just stay behind the scenes, I won’t come to the front.” So he stayed put. Hanumanji said, “This is the program of my



aradhya, Shiva. This program is being held to commemorate the birthday of another devotee of Shiva, Satyam. I should offer my respects to Shiva and I should offer my blessings to Satyam.” Saying this, he took off the crystal mala which was around him, rolled it and placed it in front of his own statue. Then he turned to face the bed, and behind the bed is the Ganga.

So this morning when people went there, in the room . . . of course there was some anticipation as to what we might see today . . . and everything looked very normal, until the gaze went up to Hanumanji and Ganeshji. Ganeshji is straight, but Hanumanji is turned. The mala which was around his neck, is in a bunch on the floor. He is looking at the bed of Sri Swamiji. This was also a beautiful indication that Guru’s grace and God’s grace are always there for those who are devoted, faithful, true and sincere, and open in mind and heart. So let us open our heart and mind to derive the maximum from Satyam Poornima.



Who is Swami Satyananda?

People relate to him and associate with him in their own manner. Some say that he was a disciple of Swami Sivananda. Some say he was the propagator of yoga. Some say he was a sannyasi and renunciate. Some say he has earned a lot of name and fame, has many ashrams, travels around the world, has many disciples . . . In this manner people look at the outer life that they see of a person. Very few people are able to look at the real life that the person has lived and led, and acknowledge the journey of that person. After all, it is the journey which is important and inspiring. One can reach the destination . . . , yet it is the journey and the effort which are inspiring. The experiences of the journey, constitute the memories of this journey which we undertake.

I would like to dedicate this Satyam Poornima to the accomplishments of our Swamiji. His accomplishments are unique and we shall be looking at them during this event. The sentiment with which he has lived his life, tells a great deal about him. When he left Sivananda Ashram with the mandate of Swami Sivanandaji, his master, to spread the message of yoga from door to door and shore to shore, he travelled around India and developed close association with people who later on helped him fulfil his mission and assisted him in his journey. To those people he mentioned in 1956, “I don’t know that I will be able to spread the message of my Master like Swami Vivekananda did, but that is my cherished dream and ambition. I want to spread the teaching of my Master to every nook and corner to help suffering humanity through asana, pranayama, kirtan, bhajan, satsang and seva.”

This was the sentiment he had in 1956. His cherished ambition, desire and dream was to spread the teaching of his Master. That became the foundation for his paths of karma that he followed in his life. There were many paths of karmas that he followed. When I had gone to Kedarnath in 2012, I met a sadhu there. When he knew that I was disciple of Swami Satyananda, he said to me, “You do not know how lucky you are. Swami Satyananda is a person who has lived every karma defined by the *shastras*, scriptures, and who has lived every dharma defined by the *shastras* and scriptures.” This is how the enlightened people in India see Swamiji. A person who has gone through every karma and who has lived every dharma as prescribed in the tradition and scriptures.

If today people ask me, “What have you learnt from your association?” I will definitely say that I did not learn yoga or meditation from Swami Satyananda, but I learned living from Swami Satyananda. He taught me how to live. He taught me how to live, and I am living it. And to such a person this Satyam Poornima is dedicated.

11

Life of a Sannyasi

17 December 2021



Welcome to the third day of Satyam Poornima. It has been an uplifting and inspiring event, and it has allowed us to connect with the shakti, the energy of Shiva and Guru. Shiva and Guru are not two different things, but represent the transcendental and the higher awareness in a body. Shiva is the transcendental consciousness and Guru is the higher awareness in a body. So there is hardly any difference between the two. The people who represent that highest awareness are the sadgurus. The term is sadguru, the Guru who is established in truth and who propagates truth.

Since time immemorial in the lineage of sannyasins throughout India, there has been a lineage of enlightened masters who have come from time to time and guided humanity. The future generation noticed the accomplishment of such people and were in awe of the accomplishments, as something beyond the normal human capacity, something created by divine grace or by the spiritual power of the Master. People see the accomplishment and identify with that, but they fail to see the intention and effort that the person has put behind that accomplishment, commitment and sincerity.

What is your relationship

I had asked you a question, “How do you view your relationship and association with Swami Satyananda?” It would be quite evident by now that we all look at the enlightened being, the Guru, the Master through our own lens. If I come to the place of my Master with the intention to learn and teach yoga outside, then for me the Master is a yoga propagator, a yoga teacher. I learn my yoga from him or her and then bid good-bye. I go out and establish myself. A person who is identifying with yoga as a tool to make a living, will always see Guru as a yoga teacher only, and nothing beyond that.

A person whose nature is social climbing will come to the Guru’s ashram to see who comes and who goes. Which influential person, which rich person, which business person comes and then tell them that, “I have now taken initiation from the Master, I am your Guru brother and I am going to visit you. I will come to Bombay, Bangalore, London and Greece, and come to your house, and when you visit my country, you come and visit me.” In this manner, a relationship of friendship and business begins between the disciples of the Master, because they are only looking for any opportunity to exploit in life and possibly to earn more in life. That is a stark reality.

Some people will relate to the master as a spiritual preceptor who guides them in spiritual life. They will

listen to the instructions, say how beautiful and unique the words are, but find themselves incapable of following the guidelines given by the Master. Some people come to the Master because of the name and fame. Some people come to compare. Some people come to learn. Some people come and say, "Wow, such a big ashram. I can also do it!" Whatever the relationship may be of the individual with the Guru, it is always very much a self-oriented relationship.

That is the difference between a disciple and a person who considers himself to be a disciple. Discipleship is not being initiated into a tradition, a mantra, community, philosophy or teaching. Discipleship is the effort to immerse oneself in the energy, in the spirit of the Master and God. Master and God demand that surrender from us. It is the surrender of ego which can take many forms. Once you are able to surrender, crookedness disappears and innocence manifests. When crookedness of the mind disappears, one becomes a disciple. As long as there is crookedness in the mind, change does not happen. You can put stinky water in a bottle, put the cork, close the bottle, put it in the river Ganga and leave it there for one thousand years. Will that water get purified? No! Even after thousands of years if you remove the bottle and remove the cap, the stench of the water which you have put inside will be intolerable.

That happens with ego in the life of a disciple. The ego blocks and covers the openness of the heart, mind and spirit. Once the ego is dropped, innocence and simplicity prevail, and that is the beginning of true discipleship. There is no choice, there is no ambition and there is no desire. Complete surrender to the flow of the river: 'Let the current of the river take me wherever it wants to take me.' Then true discipleship is attained. Prior to that, we are all trying to fulfil our own ambitions using the tools that the teacher has provided us with. In the garb of service, we are trying to make our own life and our own living. There are many people who associate and relate with the Master in this manner.



However, there are some people who live a different life to the normal or common person. In the people who lead a different life, the mind and the intention of the mind, heart and the expressions of heart are totally different to the normal, common and mundane. We are talking of Sri Swami Satyanandaji, who is my Master and an illustrious disciple of Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who is another great luminary of the last century.

In 1956 Swami Satyananda received the mandate of his Guru, Swami Sivanandaji, to spread the message of yoga from door to door and shore to shore. With this mandate Swamiji left the doors and shelter of Sivananda Ashram and his Guru. He was given a mission and as he left the ashram, Swami Sivananda who was watching him go, said to people around him, "There goes my true successor who will bring the light of Siva to the world."



After leaving Sivananda Ashram, Sri Swamiji travelled the length and breadth of India for nine years as parivrajaka mendicant. In 1963, he came to Munger and established the Bihar School of Yoga. The Bihar School of Yoga became the focal point of yogic renaissance in this modern age. This much people know. Very few people know with what sankalpa, thought and desire Sri Swamiji wished to accomplish the mandate given to him by his Guru.

When Sri Swamiji left Sivananda Ashram, he needed a base and he came to Rajnandgaon, in the central part of India. There he had two people who were initiated by Swami Sivanandaji in mantra, but the teachings of Swami Sivanandaji had not come to the central part of India because of the Hindi language. All the disciples of Swami Sivanandaji either spoke Tamil or English. Swami Satyanandaji was the only North Indian at that time in

Sivananda Ashram with command over English, Hindi and Sanskrit. He was a linguist too, because he very easily picked up the Guru tongue, the Tamilian language. Many times the Tamilians would be confused because he would speak Tamil in fluent Tamil accent, then he would be speaking in Hindi, then in Sanskrit, and they would be looking at him asking, “How do you know such good Tamil, Hindi, English and Sanskrit?” Madhya Pradesh was the Hindi region, and Sri Swamiji was invited. Swami Sivanandaji had said, “When Swami Satyananda leaves the ashram he will come to the Hindi locality and be there with you.”

Parivrajaka life

Swamiji came to Rajnandgaon and made that his Head Office. From there he started to travel across the length and breadth of India. While he travelled, he would study the needs of the community and society. He would analyze the social, economic, physical, mental and psychological suffering and pain. He would teach people asana and pranayama, bhajan, kirtan and satsang, and guide them in seva; then he moved on. As he moved on, he used to give instructions, “When I come next time I will teach you more. Till then you carry on with what you have learnt.”

In 1956 itself, Sri Swamiji mentioned to his close disciples, “I do not say that like Swami Vivekananda, I will be able to spread the spiritual mission of Poojya Gurudev, Swami Sivananda, but this is my only ambition. My ardent desire to spread the spiritual mission of Poojya Gurudev has taken shape and I have to move continuously ahead in this direction. I want to make the lives of oppressed and poor people better by bringing spirituality through asana, pranayama, bhajan, sankirtan, seva and satsang.”

When people met Sri Swamiji during his parivrajaka times, he met every strata of human society. People were guided by him to develop and build up their own lives using the tools of asana, pranayama, meditation, seva, mantra, sadhana, yajna – everything that traditionally is part of a

sannyasin's life and ashram culture. These are all parts of a sannyasin's life and ashram culture. Sri Swamiji further said, "I am a parivrajaka, a wandering mendicant, moving here and there, spreading the message of yoga among people. I teach them yoga, but when I meet them again after four or six months, I find that they have forgotten everything. So, I explain again, but I have been thinking of ways to inspire them. I think there should be a magazine for them so that when they forget, they may read and remember what I have told them. It would be excellent if this type of magazine were published."

This thought was expressed by Swamiji during one yoga seminar which he gave in 1962 in Rajgir, Bihar. He told a group of people, "I have been travelling everywhere for so many years and I find that people forget what I have told and taught them." In the month of June during the yoga seminar Swamiji said, "I have thought about two magazines in a simple language. We will publish in Hindi and in English simultaneously. My mission is to promote and propagate *yoga vidya*, the knowledge of yoga. Therefore, the magazines will also be called *Yoga Vidya* in English and Hindi. The printing press will also be called Yoga Vidya Printing Press." This indicated that this whole idea and aspiration had only one focus – the propagation of the knowledge of yoga. It was not a printing press to publish any book to make a living, but dedicated specifically for the publication of the magazines and yoga-related books.

Then in the India of the 1950s and 1960s when there was nothing available, people said to him, "Swamiji you want to publish the magazines, but we have no idea of how to go about it. You will have to guide us because you have the basic understanding and the knowledge of how the printing process actually works. You have set up and managed the press in Sivananda Ashram. You have published books of Gurudev Swami Sivananda. You know where the machines can be found. You know where paper can be procured, and where we can get the typesetters and typesets." Sri Swami sat

down with this group of people and made a list of two small treadle machines. “One machine will be for the magazine only and one machine will be for the books only.” Swamiji got these two machines from a far-flung place, for it was India of 1960.

He then taught everybody how to do typesetting, how to proofread, print, stitch, cut and perforate. He taught them the A-B-C of printing. He placed the machines himself so they would follow a sequence. He said, “The typesetter will be placed here, the manuscript will be here, the proof will be read there, the printing will be done there, the binding and collating will be done over here, and the final product will be put out there.” He set up the entire system and the first magazine of *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* was published in the month of January 1963.

Exactly one year later, in the month of January 1964, Bihar School of Yoga came into existence in Munger. So, the magazine is an earlier creation before Bihar School of Yoga. This magazine became the medium through which Sri Swamiji was able to fulfil the mandate of his Master, to spread yoga from door to door and from shore to shore. The first issues of magazines were sent free of charge to all the yoga practitioners who had met Sri Swamiji during his padyatra. In 1963, it was the first magazine in the world dedicated to the subject of yoga. There were other magazines on spiritual life dedicated to philosophy and general talks on morality and ethics. The first magazine which came out solely devoted and dedicated to yoga and the spiritual life experienced through yoga, was the *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazine.

People sent articles of their own experiences and some compiled satsangs that Sri Swamiji had given during the padyatras, and in this manner, the magazine began. In the early days, it had few pages, and slowly the pages kept increasing. Today this magazine is one of the best magazines on yoga in the world. It is available free of charge in Satyam Yoga Prasad. There is a *Yoga* magazine and a *Yoga Vidya* magazine App. The *Yoga* magazine App is in English, and

people from ninety-six countries read the *Yoga* magazine by downloading the *Yoga* App. People in eighty-three countries read *Yoga Vidya* in Hindi by downloading it from the *Yoga Vidya* App. It is one of the best magazines carrying the teachings of Swami Sivanandaji and Swami Satyanandaji, the classical yoga, research into the yogic sciences and practices, and the theory and the practical application of yogic principles.

This journey, which today we are seeing as the culmination of imparting the yogic knowledge door to door and shore to shore with the use of the magazine, was the first accomplishment of Swami Satyanandaji when he thought of how to spread the teachings of his Master and how to fulfil the mandate that was given to him. We do not realize the struggle and the intent of the individual behind the scenes, however once you realize it, you will know that there is not a single spot of ego or arrogance anywhere, only an awareness of how to fulfil the mandate given by the Master. This makes Swami Satyananda a unique individual. This awareness, commitment, surrender, drive, determination and clarity represent the nature and quality of Sri Swamiji. That is who he was as a man. That is who he was as a sannyasin.



12

Developing the Mission

18 December 2021



Sri Swami Satyananda's intention was to spread the spiritual teachings of his Master to uplift the poor and downtrodden with a clear statement, "I shall do it with asana, pranayama, sankirtan, smarana and seva." In this manner he kept the focus of the mission given to him by his Master, Sri Swami Sivanandaji, and travelled the length and breadth of India. During the course of his travels, he came across many cross-sections of people, some highly intellectual and intelligent, some totally illiterate – he met all strata of society.

He lived with them, understood what their difficulties and problems were, and taught them some practices.

In the course of time, he felt a need to inspire people to continue their spiritual and yogic disciplines by means of a magazine. He stated, “With this magazine, I shall spread the knowledge of yoga, *yoga vidya*. The magazines which will convey the knowledge of yoga vidya shall be known as *Yoga Vidya* in English and Hindi. The press where it will be published will also be known as the Yoga Vidya Printing Press.”

The entire focus was on propagating the message of yoga vidya and maintaining the inspiration for people to follow the path of yoga vidya. It was in the 1960s that this establishment of the Yoga Vidya Printing Press came into existence. The India of the 1960s was different to the India of today. The machines had to be acquired from far-off cities, typesets had to be acquired from different cities, and a simple and but effective printing press was set up with two treadle machines – one for magazines and the other for books. Two typesettings, one in Hindi and one in English, one perforating machine, one stitching machine and one cutting machine, which was all manual and not electronic at that time.

Sri Swamiji taught everybody how to compose, how to proofread, how to print, how to collate, how to create a book. The publication of the *Yoga* and *Yoga Vidya* magazines started in January 1963. They became the medium to carry the teachings of yoga from door to door and shore to shore, which was the vision or mission given to Sri Swami by his Master, Swami Sivanandaji.

Manifesting the mission

After establishing and training people in the art of printing, Sri Swamiji came to Munger in 1963 and laid the foundation of Bihar School of Yoga. Bihar School of Yoga was inaugurated on 19th January 1964. With the inauguration of the Bihar School of Yoga, a motley group of people came to Sri

Swamiji. It was not a highly intellectual group – one was a barber, one was a widow, one was a child – myself, one was a college student. So a motley group of people appeared in front of Swamiji. I am sure that Swamiji must have looked at us thinking, “So these are the people that I am going to depend on.” In the course of time, he started setting up the systems of the ashram, in the old Bihar School of Yoga. It was only one building without a boundary wall. The place where Sri Swamiji used to stay was an ancient ice factory; it was not even a proper room, yet it was in that ice factory that Sri Swamiji started the Bihar School of Yoga.

We lived with him and enjoyed our time with him, yet Sri Swamiji had a vision and a mission to fulfil. He left for a world tour in 1968, four years after establishing the Bihar School of yoga. Before he left in 1968, he told the then Secretary of the ashram, Sri K.K. Goenka, “When I return, there will be an interest of people wanting to learn yoga, and we should have proper residential arrangements for them.” The tour of Sri Swamiji lasted three and a half months and he gave instructions, “When I am gone, a three-storey building has to be made, and it has to be completed in three months’ time.” Sri Swamiji left for the world tour to meet with people, inspire them to follow the spiritual and yogic path, and invite them to visit India to learn yoga. His international tour generated a lot of interest.

In Munger under the inspiration of Swamiji, the motley group of six people – the barber, the kid, the student, a widow, a businessman and an elderly person, took up this tremendous task of completing the three-storey building in record time of three months, which is still standing tall near the old ashram. When Swamiji returned, the Secretary of the ashram, Sri K.K. Goenkaji, was quite nervous, as to whether Swamiji would approve the building or not, for Sri Swamiji had eyes for the smallest details. Sri K.K Goenka went to Swamiji and said, “Swamiji, the work is complete. Would you like to come and look at it?” Swamiji looked at him and said, “Yes, but why are you looking so tense?” So

K.Kji said, “Swamiji, I hope it is to your satisfaction and we have not committed any mistake in the construction of the building.” Sri Swamiji looked at him and said, “You should know that Swami Satyananda is always happy,” and all the stress, anxiety and tension left.

So we had a hall, a kitchen, a three-storey building, the old ice factory, which was the room of Paramahamsaji, and we were ready to welcome people. The first course that happened was a nine-month teacher training course. In 1968, many people from European, American and South Asian countries came to Munger to learn yoga. It was for the first time that the land of Munger saw foreigners with blonde hair and blue eyes walking the streets. It was a sight to see. The entire town of Munger was following the arrival of people from different countries to this little tiny place of ashram.

Sri Swamiji in his far-sightedness decided to create yoga training tools. He used to give the classes to us and gave us each a notebook and a pencil. At that time there were no pens. It was only pencil and ink pen or nib pen. Whatever he used to instruct, we had to write it down in our diary notebook. We had to draw the asanas that he taught us, we had to note the instructions, and in this way he used to observe us – our limitations, our capacities. He inspired and guided us to reach the perfection of the practice by allowing us to discover what the shortcomings were in our own practice. In this way he trained the motley group of people.

Our notes became the foundation for the creation of the first publication, *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*. In this course, he also taught all the other aspects of yoga, which became the foundation of this Bihar Yoga tradition, in the form of *Dynamics of Yoga*, the *Kriyatmak Yoga* book. These two books represent the teaching of yoga that Sri Swamiji gave for every individual in society, and it was an integrated yoga. *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* was the first book on yoga covering the five subject of asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and shatkarmas. In the *Kriyatmak Yoga*, he gave



us the teaching in yoga nidra, ajapa japa, antar mouna, chidakasha dharana, covering the stages of pratyahara and dharana. This became the foundation for the development of Satyananda Yoga.

Einstein had a great insight and brain. He could put his knowledge in the form of a sutra: $E = MC^2$. In this sutra he saw the entire science and theory. However, if he comes to teach us, will he tell us $E = MC^2$? Or will he come down to the level where we can understand his complex theory? He will come down to our level. We cannot go up to his level. Sage Patanjali wrote the *Yoga Sutras*. They were his writings in the form of sutras, which only he understood. Nobody else understood the sutras, until he explained them. Even today, people are speculating what the meaning of this sutra or that



sutra is. It is not practical, it is philosophical for the sutras are short forms of expressing a large sentence, or the context of an idea.

Swami Satyanandaji who was the Master himself could write books on yoga. He could also write them in the sutra form, which only he could understand, however, he did not do that. He chose the students. The book *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* was written by people who were practising under his guidance and undergoing the training under his supervision. The book contains their personal experience. In a class some people have identification with the physical body and they identify with the experiences of the body. Some people intensely identify with their pranic experiences and others with their mental experiences.

Sri Swamiji watched each and every one, for he used to ask us questions, we used to answer. We used to ask questions, he would answer. He knew exactly what people were looking for when they were practising an asana. Therefore, in *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* you find that the people who can only focus on the physical body, for them this much is there. For those people who can go one step more into their pranic experience, another group of awareness and visualization is there. For those who can go into the psychic dimension, another benefit, sequence, contra-indication, concentration, breath awareness – everything is given.

Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha is applicable for everyone, no matter what your interest may be, as no other book in the world covers the topics as this book does. Many books only treat asana. Many yoga teachers only publish books on asana. In 1960, the book which presented the integral yoga covering asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, shatkarma, and also the practices of pratyahara and dharana, were developed as yoga training tools for people in society according to their level of understanding, and not as per the projection of the Master or the teacher.

Sri Swamiji inspired other people to write books. Imagine, people coming from abroad, who are culturally incompatible. They are asked to write a book, without knowing anything about yoga, the spiritual traditions of India, the culture, techniques or the practices, yet they are guided every step of the way. They write the books and it is published in their name. Everybody thinks, “Oh, it is this person who has written the book. He must know a great deal.” They themselves get bloated for they think, “I have written the book and my name is inscribed here. This is my work.” They fail to see that the teacher, the Master, has to come down from his level to their level, to inspire and guide them to understand something basic.

Swami Sivanandaji transmitted the knowledge of yoga in five minutes to Sri Swamiji, before he was leaving the

ashram. A person, who can understand and experience the entire yogic process in five minutes, is not like you and me, is not an ignorant fool or idiot. And that person has to come down to our level to inspire, guide us and encourage us, so that we are able to understand the process of yoga ourselves, and become the medium to spread that teaching. Einstein had to come down to the level of a high school student to make him write a book on the subject of the high school, which is only applicable for that high school.

Step by step

He had to work with people of different levels of intelligence, of different levels of ambition, desire and expectation, different caste and creed, different social strata, nationalities and culture. He inspired and encouraged everyone. The biggest achievement of Sri Swamiji was that he came down to our level and taught us at our level to experience the yoga in its true form. We could not rise up to his level. He wanted us to rise up to that level, yet our limitations stop us.

In 1969, he started the sannyasa training course for three years, for which 108 participants came. They were trained into sannyasa and yoga for three years. I was a member of that training. We practised asana for eight hours from morning till night, one entire month, and perfected every asana in one attempt. We practised pranayama for one month, morning, afternoon, evening. Only pranayama, made notes and kept them. We practised mudras and bandhas for one month – made notes, experienced and kept our notes. In this manner, the sannyasa training course was the effort of Sri Swamiji to create yoga training tools and teachers, who with their own experience could go out into society to propagate this vidya.

In 1972, the printing press was established in Munger. The magazines were being published in Rajnandgaon, in the Yoga Vidya Printing Press. The early compilations of Sri Swamiji's satsangs and lectures, like on the *Bhagavad Gita*, samadhi, the *Yoga Sutras*, and small satsangs booklets were



published by the Yoga Vidya Printing Press in Rajnandgaon. They had their hands full for in ten years' time, from 1963 to 1973, the subscriptions came into the thousands. There were thousands of subscribers to the magazine, and the press was in full-on activity. Resources and yoga training tools were being developed. *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* is a syllabus developed by Sri Swamiji. The sequence and the

progressions are defined there. In Munger, the printing press was called Ashram Graphics. It was developed in 1971 and 1972, again in a small manner, with treadle machines, with typesetters, a stitching, perforating and cutting machine – basic equipment, which were hard and difficult to acquire in India.

1973 was the Golden Jubilee Convention of Sri Swamiji's physical body, and of Swami Sivananda's fifty years of renunciation. The press started publishing books on yoga – the forward bending asanas and their benefits; backward bending asanas and their benefits; standing asanas and their benefits; inverted asanas and their benefits. The propagation of yoga started in this manner. There are many people present here today who were witness to that process, who have been here for the last thirty or forty years and have seen this process happen; they have seen the press, worked in the press and composed in the press. When I came I used to work in the press, I was a composer.

We all contributed with our seva; it was our joy as we were learning and deriving the benefit of it. It was the beauty of Sri Swamiji's nature to allow each one to flower, develop and grow in their own manner, at their own pace, in their own style while making sure that the systematic training and teaching and the correctness and the intention of the teaching always remained intact. Today you find books written by many different sannyasins who are not the Masters. If they had that much knowledge they could write twenty more books, but they cannot.

It is the inspiration of the Master which allows the individual to grow. One should learn to acknowledge and honour it for it leads to a better, deeper and positive connection with the guru tattwa. It also allows you to recognize where you are in your relationship with the Master. This was the nature of my Guru, he always kept himself at the back and allowed others to come forward, he inspired everyone to ensure that they became the right carriers of the yogic and spiritual wisdom, and that was his achievement.

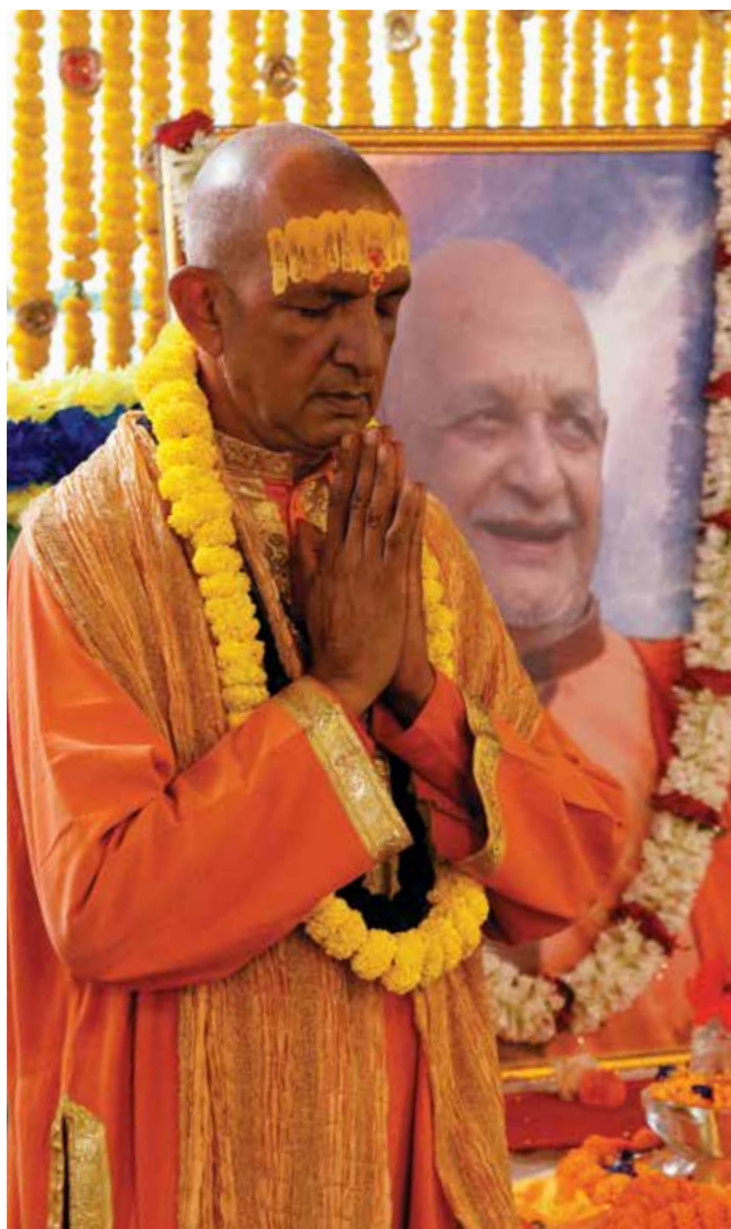
He realized the level of each person's intelligence and utilized that to bring out the best within everyone. Can anybody do that today? A person who can do this is truly committed to a mission and following a vision and does not care for his own personal name and fame. If you analyze it, it represents a nature, a personality which is pure in intention in the heart and mind, and whose only intention is to serve and bring the wisdom which can be utilized to enhance our life in a better, positive, constructive and a creative manner. Today I can say, "I did not learn yoga from Swami Satyananda, I learnt how to live for I watched how he lived, and. I wish to walk that path as long as there is breath in my body." That is fulfilment, generosity and grace, not self-projection.

We know that Swamiji has worked to uplift whole communities and when time comes for an award, he said, "My work is done *Hari Om Tat Sat*," and left. He did not look to rewards as his accomplishments, but at what he had been able to do to help as his accomplishment; to such a Master a big *Hari Om Tat Sat* and *Jai Ho*.



Satyam Poornima 2022

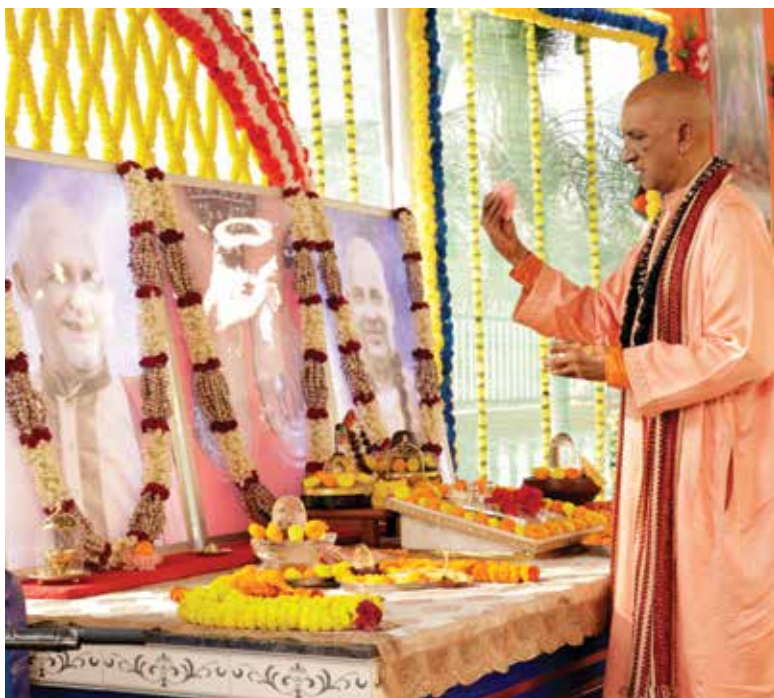
Sannyasa Peeth, Munger



13

The Dream

4 December 2022



Welcome to Satyam Poornima, the celebration of our guru, Swami Satyananda's birthday, which according to the lunar calendar falls on the full moon of December every year. Until 2020, no celebration was conducted in Munger,

and we all used to go to Rikhia for the celebration of Yoga Poornima.

In 2020, I had a dream during the Sat Chandi Mahayajna in Rikhia. One night, I saw a river bank, possibly the river Ganges. On the sandy shore of the river were twelve Shivalingas and one naga sadhu, a sannyasi, filled a pitcher from the waters of Ganga, and then came to pour it on the twelve Shivalingas. In the background was the chanting of *Rudri*. When I woke up I wondered what was the significance, the meaning of this dream? When I was questioning myself about the dream, somebody spoke to me in my mind. I don't know who. The words which I heard in my mind were, 'Now celebrate the birthday beside the river Ganga in Munger.'

I told Swami Satsangi about the dream and said, "It is a mandate and I will have to go to Munger and organize the program for the fulfilment of this mandate." When the Sat Chandi Mahayajna was complete, I came back to Munger. We had four days to organize the whole program. Those four days were filled with inspiration and happiness. In 2020, the first Satyam Poornima program was held at Paduka Darshan, and every year, there was some indication of the auspiciousness of this program.

You are going to witness in the invocation the abhishek of the twelve lingas which are present. I am sure that if you immerse yourself in the vibration, feeling and spirit of these proceedings, you will feel a soft, gentle and positive transformation taking place. Of course you have to connect with bhava and not with intellect. *Bhava* means sentiment which allows you to experience, whereas intellect will ask many questions out of curiosity. It is good to have questions, yet it is also good sometimes to immerse and experience the energy, feeling and vibration.

14

Our Inspiration

4 December 2022



Welcome to Satyam Poornima, the celebration of the birthday of our guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati. This year is the 99th year of his birth as he was born in 1923. When we look at his life, we find that it has been divided into five different chapters. The first chapter of his life, from the age of one to twenty, was at home. The second chapter was from twenty-one to forty, spent with his master, his guru, Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh. The third chapter of his life, from the age of forty-one to the age of sixty, was in Munger,

dedicated to fulfil the mandate that his guru had given to propagate yoga from door to door and shore to shore. The fourth chapter of his life lasted five years, from 1983 to 1988, and this time he gave me. The fifth chapter of his life from 1988 to 2009, he lived as a sadhaka, a tapasvi, a Paramahansa sannyasin, performing austerities and tapasya and inspiring people to live a spiritual life.

In these five chapters of our guru, Sri Swamiji, people only know his life as a yoga master where he did a commendable job. When he started with the mandate of yoga, nobody knew what yoga was. The field was clear and in the decades of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s up to 2000, the yoga as propagated by him in the world was accepted without any opposition by all countries across the globe, for it was practical, scientific and connected to our own lifestyle, without any imposition of so-called spiritual concepts.

Sri Swamiji was clear – yoga is not a religion, rather it is the stepping-stone to spiritual life. People think yoga to be a part of some religion; it is not. Religions always say, ‘Believe.’ Yoga and spiritual life always say, ‘Discover within yourself.’ If there has to be a distinction between religion and spirituality, I would say this is the main difference. Religion says, ‘Believe’ and spiritual life says, ‘Discover.’ Yoga is the stepping-stone to spiritual life as it enables one to discover and connect with the positive nature within oneself, and express the positive qualities of life, rather than live life – take birth, be educated, get a job, create a family, get a pension at the end, and then die happily.

This is the trend the whole world is following without any deviation from it. Interests might be different from time to time. Hobbies can be different from time to time, yet the lifestyle as laid out and followed throughout generations – take birth, be educated, get a job, raise a family, get your old age pension and then die – is the same.

What comes in between as a hobby is our different interests, which are there maybe for one year, six months, two years, ten years, then it changes and we move onto

something different. Therefore, there is no connection of ourselves with our own inner self or spiritual life. To fill that spiritual vacuum, we look outside. However, if yoga becomes a part of human life expression, then spirituality is an integral part of this yogic expression of life.

Yoga

Sri Swami Satyanandaji taught us in a scientific, practical and pragmatic manner. He introduced us to yoga as a subject to deal with the health of the body, peace of the mind and restraint of emotions. When these three things are achieved, positivity sets in and keeps developing and expanding, until not a trace of negativity can be seen by the person who is experiencing the positive. That is the achievement of the person who is spiritual. Sri Swami Satyanandaji propagated this yoga globally for people to make it a part of their lifestyle and discover their own positive nature. Not as exercise or meditation, but as an integral part of their daily life routine.

Then before 2009, he made proclamations that in the new millennium, yoga would recede to the background and bhakti would become the subject of research and application in the 21st century. We see that happening now, for until the decade of 2000, yoga was part of everybody's lifestyle, and people were accepting yoga as a lifestyle. After 2000, with the emergence of hundreds and thousands of yoga teachers in every village, town and city of the world, the brand of yoga and not yoga became popular. When we were active in the scene of yoga, there was no branding.

There were maybe three or four groups which belonged to Swami Sivananda, like Swami Satchidananda, Swami Vishnudevananda, Swami Venkateshananda, Swami Satyananda. Whoever was teaching yoga across the globe, came from the same tradition of Swami Sivananda, with the exception of B.K.S. Iyengar and maybe a few other hatha yoga teachers. While the teaching of Swami Sivananda was being propagated through yoga, yoga was a lifestyle for every



practitioner and aspirant. When yoga became a commodity, people started to teach yogasanas, maybe ten, fifteen asanas for fitness under the name of yoga and a different brand. In this way yoga again was confined by the teachers from lifestyle to the practice of physical postures only.

Today there are possibly more brands of yoga than the actual postures of yoga. People say that there are 72,000 yoga postures, yet nobody has counted them. In all the yoga literature there are about three hundred postures, yogasanas. They are the actual asanas. There are about six hundred brands of yoga, double the number of asanas! Cold yoga, hot yoga, aerial yoga, water yoga, dog yoga, every type of yoga is available in the market. The interesting bit is that people who teach the ten postures claim that these ten postures will



make you spiritual because they are yoga. They will give you mental peace, physical health and spiritual enlightenment. That does not happen! Sri Swamiji said that yoga would go to the background, and it has happened, the lifestyle has gone to the background, and each one is teaching ten different yogic postures here and there under a different name. The second thing he had said was that bhakti would be the main theme of the coming age.

What is bhakti? People think of bhakti as devotion which is always associated to God. One has to be devoted to God to express devotion and live bhakti. That is a rudimentary understanding of bhakti, and it is not bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga is not the yoga of devotion. It is the yoga of clearing the blocks of emotions, feelings, sentiments, intentions, and

experiencing the purity of sentiments and emotions inside. When the purity of sentiments and emotions, thoughts and feelings is experienced, one is connected to positivity. That connection is to positivity or to the unnamed God; God is nothing but an experience of the luminous positivity, in whatever form you can have it.

So why is bhakti necessary for us? Today, we are so caught up in the turmoil of the material world that our mind is not calm, still or quiet anymore. It is disturbed, fragmented, agitated and dissipated. What has caused this? The environment and social media for they divert our attention and focus. Our attention and focus moves fast when we are looking at things, when we window-shop on the net. Through the net there are ways, one can understand the profile of an individual and push information or objects which the person is attuned to and likes. The mind is engaged by something which is outside, and on an average a person looks at their mobiles at least sixty to seventy times a day. Not only the messages, but everything under the sun from Facebook, to Twitter, to Instagram, to whatever else there is.

The mind is completely engaged; the awareness and attention from the surroundings disappears. You can know how much awareness people have when they are talking on their phone. You ask them something and they simply shake their head and say, 'Yes.' They don't even listen to what you are saying. Their response is automatic. People suffer from FOMO – fear of missing out. What did I miss? People suffer from different psychological challenges when somebody does not push the 'like' button on Facebook. It is a challenge to one's own narcissistic view that they have about themselves. How come this person does not 'like'? Social media has become the cause of mental and emotional distraction today.

What you see in America, you see in China, in India and in Europe. So the ambitions and desires of everyone keep on increasing day by day. Imagine that a labourer in Munger is watching the same thing that a person in America is watching. What is the level of their ambition and desire?

Can they ever achieve what they see by the means they have available to them at present in their life? Frustration and aggression sets in. Desire and ambition become prominent and one loses the focus. One is not able to concentrate.

Bhava

Previously, we used to teach meditation; now asking people to sit for fifteen minutes is a task. To sit for five minutes quietly is a challenge for people to do. Nobody can sit for half an hour anymore. People cannot even sit for five minutes to relax and quiet down. They are all on edge. Previously people could observe their thoughts and correct them. Today, everyone is bombarded by so much of information that there is no way they can balance the thoughts anymore. Always a reaction has to happen without any input of wisdom, for nobody is thinking. This is the reason why there is *ashanti*, lack of peace, everywhere for a confused, distracted, dissipated mind will never experience *shanti*, peace.

Therefore, learning how to manage the *bhava*, the sentiment, the intention, the clarity of mind, the feeling, the emotion becomes the main theme for the coming days, for we need to keep our sanity in life. This was what Sri Swamiji said. If we look at Sri Swamiji's life, we can see an example of a person who has attained this *bhava*. When I look at the life of my master, I can easily say that in his life we see this *bhava* in its effulgent form: the sentiment, emotion, feeling that he had for his guru, and for the mission and vision that his guru gave him. He remained true to it all the time without bringing himself, his ambitions or desires into play. Few people can achieve this in life.

Due to the purity of his intentions and *bhavas*, he developed the capacity to do the right thing at the right time, *patrata*. He had focus, a *sankalpa*. I see in him his capacity, his purity and his determination. These three qualities make Swami Satyananda a *sannyasin*. You may also have that capacity, purity of intention, a *sankalpa*, yet there

is no focus in it, no hook which connects you, your intention, your effort with that which is positive, appropriate and correct.

These three qualities are important in the life of any spiritual aspirant. How can we develop our capacity? How can we develop our mental and inner clarity? How can we make our intention and feeling appropriate and correct? How can we live our sankalpa? Sri Swamiji has lived it in a beautiful manner throughout his life. I am going to focus on this in the coming days to change the idea that Swami Satyananda was only a yoga teacher.

The yoga chapter in his life was only twenty years out of eighty-six, from forty-one to sixty when he worked in Munger. Munger is his *karmabhoomi*, the place where he worked to materialize and manifest the mission to propagate yoga from door to door Swami Sivanandaji had given to him. Munger is also known as the *yogabhoomi*, as from here we started the propagation of yoga, and then the light of yoga spread around the world. Now people may have forgotten us, as many decades have passed, yet nobody can deny that the light of yoga was spread from Munger to the whole world.

When 177 countries gave their approval to celebrate the International Day of Yoga, the Prime Minister of India said that it was simple and easy for the Bihar School of Yoga had already done all the footwork. People knew what yoga was, and therefore 177 countries accepted it without any objection because they knew that yoga was good for the body, good for the mind and good for self-expression.

The yoga chapter is just one small chapter. Sri Swamiji lived his life as a sannyasin. The attributes of a sannyasin's life inspire us today. Not the practice of sun salutation that he taught, but the knowledge that he gave us on how to be detached from the influences of life, how to keep our focus and how to keep our cool – that is the inspiration. We shall be looking at the different teachings of his life to understand who is a sannyasin.

15

Chapters of Life

5 December 2022



Sri Swamiji's life was divided into five different chapters. In the first chapter of his life, from birth till the age of twenty, he was in his hometown studying, looking after the farm, managing the sprawling estate of his father, and looking after the needs of the family while his father and mother were busy working. In the first chapter of his life, he

went through inner awakening. Sadhus and sannyasins who used to visit his hometown told his parents that your child is experiencing the state of samadhi. This was an indication that the spiritual awakening started within him right from the early age.

This can only happen to a person who has been a yogi in previous lives and who has taken birth with a specific mission for this life. When the time and environment is appropriate, the samskaras which are lying inherent and dormant in everyone are awakened. These *samskaras* or impressions, the ones which express in life, become the landmarks of a person's journey from birth till death. Swami Satyanandaji could not intellectually understand what was happening, yet he was experiencing what he had achieved in his previous life. In his previous life, he had achieved the pinnacle of spirituality; and in this life, the journey continued.

At home, he met a yogini who taught him everything about chakras, kundalini, ida and pingala, meditation, yoga and tantra. She was well-versed in these subjects. She found that this young person, whose age might have been sixteen or seventeen at that time, was able to grasp the highest secrets and the complex understanding of spiritual life in a simple and easy manner. She recognized the spiritual quality and strength in this young person and guided him to find a guru who could lead him further in spiritual life. In the first chapter of Sri Swamiji's life, we see his connection with spiritual life and the awakening of spiritual experiences and samskaras.

The second chapter begins in his guru's ashram where he lived from the age of twenty-one to the age of forty. This period is also a special period for it indicates total surrender to his master in every respect – in thought, word and deed. The first chapter was spiritual awakening and the second total surrender which was evident from the moment he laid eyes on his guru, Swami Sivanandaji, and bowed before him. Sri Swamiji speaks of that experience in a tender and gentle manner, "When I placed my head on the feet of my master,

when I bowed before him, my mind became still. There were no questions. All the agitations of my mind became still, and I knew I had found the master I was searching for.”

Milarepa

When Sri Swamiji told him why he had come, Swami Sivanandaji just said one sentence to him, “Work hard and you will be purified. The covering of light will be removed and the light which is within you will shine.” This one sentence prompted and launched Swami Satyananda on the path of total dedication and surrender. He never looked back, but launched himself in hard, physical work. He did not participate in any of the satsangs, lectures or classes. He continued to work as an administrator, as editor of the books and magazines, as in-charge of the printing press, as secretary to the ashram, as assistant to Swami Sivananda, as kitchen-in-charge, as cleaning-in-charge, as mantra-in-charge. There was no role that he did not play in Sivanandashram. He never showed an interest to follow his desire to participate in any satsang, or in any class of yoga or Vedanta that Swami Sivananda would conduct. He was so focused on that simple instruction of his master.

If you put yourself in that position, you would definitely have thought, ‘I did not come here to work this hard. I came here for my spiritual advancement. Maybe this person, this guru is not the appropriate one. I should go and find somebody else.’ A similar incident had happened once upon a time in Tibet. You have heard of the Tibetan yogi, Milarepa. When he went to his master to learn the spiritual sciences, his master said to him, ‘Build me a house.’ In those days, houses were made of rocks, not of cement, mortar, bricks and wood. In Tibet you do not find wood as there are no trees. It is just a desolate, barren place. This young aspirant, Milarepa, built the house from stones, carrying one stone at a time. Upon the completion of the house, the master came and said, ‘I don’t like the view from here. I want this house to be shifted to the top of the mountain, stone by stone.’



So, Milarepa again shifted, stone by stone, the whole hut from the base of the mountain to the top of the mountain. When the house was constructed, the guru came again and said, 'You know it is a bit windy and cold here. This is not a suitable location. Maybe the bottom of the hill is always

better as it will provide protection. Shift this hut to the bottom of the hill.' Again, painstakingly, Milarepa moved each stone and rebuilt the hut. Guru came and said, 'No! Not good! Maybe the top of the mountain again, as I have a better view. You make high walls so that the wind does not affect my stay.' Again Milarepa started carrying rock by rock, piece by piece, trudging up the mountain.

One day while he was carrying the load of heavy rocks on his back, the guru came and said, 'You lazy person, walk faster,' and gave him a push. Milarepa could not keep his balance. He staggered and fell down a precipice. As he was falling, all he could remember was that he was unable to fulfil the command of his master, that he had not made the hut as he had demanded. He did not think, 'I am going to fall and my body will be splattered across the stones.' As he fell, an invisible hand came, supported him and lifted him up again. That invisible hand placed him in front of his master. The master told Milarepa, 'Milarepa, today, you have become greater than me.' It is a famous story. Milarepa did not crave for the classroom teaching of the master. His only desire was to fulfil the wishes of the master, and his karma yoga made him greater than his own master.

Surrender

We see the same trait, nature, zeal and conviction in our guru, Swami Satyanandaji. He went headlong into work without questioning. There were challenging and difficult times. In the 1940s, in the mountains there were no facilities. The sannyasins had no money, no shelter, no blankets or clothes, and yet they lived happily, working with joy to fulfil the mandate of their master.

There are many incidents and stories of his life, which indicate his total surrender and dedication, some funny as well as some tender, heart-touching ones as well. Whatever may be the story, whatever may be the incident, one sees clearly that there was no distraction or deviation in the mind of Swami Satyananda in relation to what his guru had told

him. There were many people, many disciples who would go to Swami Sivanandaji and say, 'Swamiji, I want to go on a yatra. I want to go to the Himalayas, or I want to go to some other ashram and study something.' Swami Sivanandaji would always say, 'Yes.' He would never stop anyone. The only person who did not ask anything was Swami Satyananda, and that indicated a life of total commitment, surrender and dedication to the guidelines that his master had given him.

For twenty years he lived working in all capacities, yet his master knew exactly what was happening to him internally. He was being cleansed, he was being purified. The extra bits of stone were being removed from the rock, so that the inherent statue could show its beauty. Swami Sivanandaji was the sculptor and he removed the extra bits of stone that hid a beautiful statue in a rock until Swami Satyananda emerged. The result of this purification was that Swami Sivanandaji was able to transmit and transfer all his power and knowledge in five minutes by shaktipath to Swami Satyananda. Swami Satyananda became a replica of Swami Sivananda. At that time Swami Sivanandaji gave him the mandate, 'Now, you go out and propagate yoga, as that is the need of society. That will be your guru dakshina – what you can give me. Through yoga spread the message of health, peace and prosperity.' With this mandate Swamiji left and began the third chapter of his life.

The third chapter was travelling around the country to assess the needs of people and how yoga could help them. After travelling around the country, he settled in Munger and created a yogic renaissance in the world. He became a living embodiment of yoga in this time and age. This period of his life, the third chapter, shows the *sankalpa shakti*, the drive and determination that he had to fulfil the mandate of his guru. His guru had also told him that, 'Once you are free from the debt to your guru, you will be free to follow the path of sannyasa.' Sri Swamiji worked day and night, nationally and internationally, to establish yoga as a way

of life, as a practical and scientific subject, away from the trappings of philosophy, religion or religious connotations. In his time and age, yoga became a global name. This third chapter represents his sankalpa, the age of sankalpa, determination.

The first chapter was spiritual awakening, the second was total dedication and the third chapter was total determination. The fourth chapter was at my request. I asked him for five years of his time and he willingly said, “Yes.” He gave me five years, and I call that period, the time of love. He had a destiny and Swami Sivanandaji had told him, “You came to me at the age of twenty. You will be with me till the age of forty. You will work for yoga till the age of sixty. After that you will work for the universal consciousness, with a universal vision, until the age of eighty.” Swami Sivanandaji had given him eighty years, and Sri Swamiji also said, “Yes, my life is divided in twenty-year cycles, and I am going to live for eighty years.” When I asked him for five years of his time, why did he give them to me? Because of love, and because of love he was changing his destiny as well by giving five extra years to me. I call that the period of love.

Only then did the fifth chapter begin, the twenty-year period from 1989 to 2009, when he worked with a universal mission, not for yoga but for the upliftment of humanity and a society which was suffering. Although the world thinks of Swami Satyananda as the master and propagator of yoga, it was only a twenty-year period of his life. For the remaining time, he lived like a sannyasin. In one of his early poems, he said, “The sankalpa of my life is to serve, to love and to give, and to live like a sannyasin.” Yoga became an aspect of service because of the mandate of his master, and what he was giving to everyone. In the poem, *Sankalpa*, Sri Swamiji writes:

I know that I am untouchable to the forces
As long as I have a direction, an aim, a goal:
To serve, to love, and to give.



Strength lies in the magnification of the secret qualities
Of my own personality, my own character,
And though I am only a messenger, I am me.

Let me decorate many hearts
And paint a thousand faces with colours of inspiration
And soft, silent sounds of value.
Let me be like a child,
Run barefoot through the forest
Of laughing and crying people,
Giving flowers of imagination and wonder
That God gives free.



Service

As a sannyasin, his first sankalpa was to serve. There are many people in the world who want to serve, be useful and contribute for the betterment of the human society, yet they lack the *bhava*, the correct sentiment, correct feeling, emotion and inspiration. It is our raga, our self-awareness, self-esteem, self-projection that motivates us to do something without changing ourselves internally. In English, there are many words to define bhava – sentiment, emotion, feeling, softness or gentleness. In reality it is a condition, a state, a mood of the mind, which is positive, harmonious and

untainted by the shades of ego and desire. When ego and desire do not exist, the true bhava of purity and positivity envelops the mind. It is that condition of purity and positivity, which Sri Swamiji lived all his life.

Those who have known him can vouch for it – he lived a life of purity and positivity. That bhava engulfed and enveloped his thoughts, his mind, his behaviour, his rationality, his efforts to help overcome the suffering in all and in many different ways, not only through the way of yoga. This bhava, this condition of mind, was not diverted or distracted by the desires and ego that people have. We are all affected by our own desires and egos.

There is a disciple who took sannyasa, and after a couple of months said, 'You know, I do not like the food here.' He left the ashram because he did not like the food. Where is the dedication? Where is the commitment? After leaving the ashram, he went and joined the Hare Krishna movement for they give sumptuous meals. The point is that we all get affected by our desires. We all get diverted by our egos. In the life of a disciple, this is the biggest challenge – how to manage desire and ego. Surrender is not easy for anyone, and for people surrender becomes dependency, which is again not surrender. Dependency is not surrender. Surrender is oneness, the feeling of oneness, and not dependency. People become dependent, 'I will do as my guru says.' However, even that does not happen. Dependency is many times translated as emotional attachment. If dependency has become the cause of emotional attachment, how can there be surrender?

Surrender is not binding oneself to an emotion or a feeling, it is becoming one with the object of surrender. When we go to the temple, church or mosque, we pray to somebody whom we consider superior, divine. At that moment, our prayers come from the heart. We do not know to whom we are praying, we have never seen God, yet the idea that God 'is' and we have to pray and we have to allow His will to be done is something that we all do at a certain

time in our life. Not only the God-fearing people, also atheists can surrender – not necessarily to a religious icon but to an idea. They can surrender their life to the fulfilment of an idea or aspiration.

Swami Satyanandaji was able to maintain his equilibrium and not be tempted by desires or ego expressions. They became the basis of his expression, commitment and participation in life. He perfected this bhava, developed and cultivated different bhavas. When he was with his master, he said, “I was his servant and he was my master. That is the relationship I lived with him. People can live different relationships with Guru or with God. You can say that He is your friend and have a relationship of friendship with Guru and God. You can say He is your father or mother and express those sentiments towards Guru and God. Whatever bhava or mood comes to you, you can connect through it with Guru and God. I chose to be a servant and my Guru to be the master.”

This idea he lived all his life. Never did he project himself, saying, “I have done this. I have achieved it.” Even in the last days of his life, he said, “I have been able to accomplish everything with the grace of my Guru.” He never said, “This is what I have achieved,” but “I have accomplished what I set out to accomplish due to the grace of my Guru.” He never had a projection of ego or arrogance. He never believed that he was capable of doing anything if the inspiration and input of the master was not there. He lived that idea, philosophy, bhava throughout his life. He followed the instructions of his guru to the letter without the manipulations of desire and ego. This is the life he lived in Munger. Therefore, Munger is known as his *karmabhoomi* and his *samarpanbhoomi*. *Bhoomi* means land; *karmabhoomi* means the land where he worked; *samarpanbhoomi* is the land of dedication, where he dedicated himself to fulfil the mandate of his master.

The master had given him the mandate to propagate yoga, so the application of yoga in society to help and

uplift humanity became his service. Bihar School of Yoga is the product of that service – the application of yoga for the upliftment of humanity. It was not saying, ‘I shall teach hatha yoga, raja yoga or bhakti yoga’, but, ‘I shall teach yoga for the development of the faculties of head, heart and hands’. If you are able to develop the qualities and faculties of head, heart and hands, your life is made. That was the focus of his work and effort in Munger. This was ‘to decorate many hearts and to paint a thousand faces with colours of inspiration and wonder’, as stated in his poem. That was the need of society. The result is of course the Bihar School of Yoga, the renowned institute of excellence in yoga.

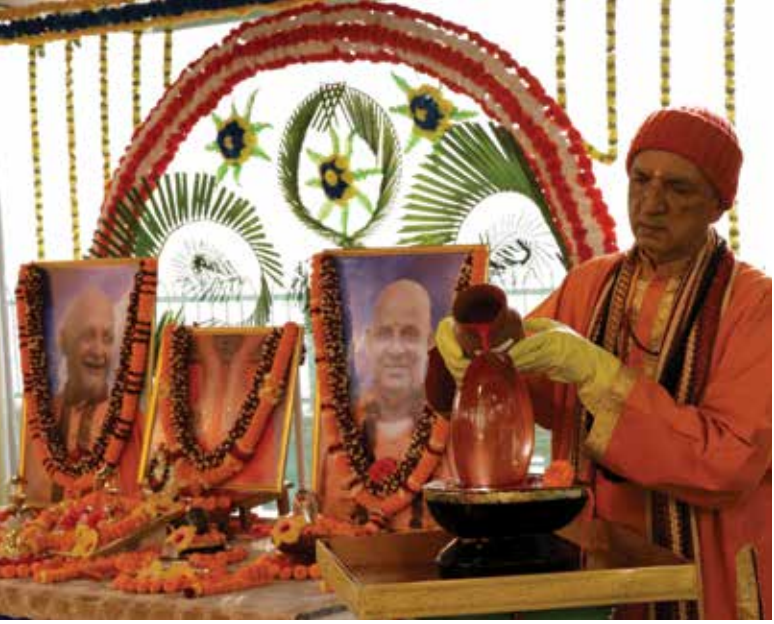
When he fulfilled the mandate of his master and knew he was free from the debt, he started receiving mandates from other sources too – God. He said many times, “I hear voices, I hear commands and I am sure that these are the commands of God.” The relationship which he developed with God was the same – master and servant, or Let Thy will be done. The instructions given by the divine were implemented and followed as well. In the books *Bhakti Yoga Sagar*, he made it clear that he lived and followed the mandates of the divine and implemented them. The result of this implementation is Rikhiapeeth, where the three cardinal principles of Swami Sivanandaji’s teachings, Serve, Love and Give, were lived. There he also revealed a definite and defined path of bhakti to purify one’s sentiments, feelings and thoughts.

Nor shall I let the value
Of divine inspiration and being be lost.
My rainbow-coloured bubble
Will carry me further than beyond the horizon’s settings,
Forever to serve, to love, and to live
As a sannyasin.

16

Serve, Love, Give

7 December 2022



Sri Swamiji had three sankalapas which have guided him, his life and his journey through life, right from the day he came in contact with his master, Swami Sivananda. The first lesson which he perfected in life, and the first aspiration which he wanted to accomplish in life was seva. *Seva* generally translates as selfless service, however, seva is

done in a manner where you are connected with the person for whom you are doing the seva.

Sri Swamiji had asked his guru, Swami Sivananda, “What am I expected to do after sannyasa? Am I to change my lifestyle? Am I to change my habits? What am I supposed to do?” Swami Sivanandaji had told him that, “Nothing is going to change. The only thing that will happen is that you will be given an initiation. That initiation is being given to you in trust so that you will succeed in your exams which you will have to give throughout your life.” That is the role of sannyasa. Sannyasa is like receiving the degree before you complete the education. The guru places his trust in the initiate and hopes that this person will complete the journey and be qualified to be known as a sannyasin. This is where most people slip and fail. After taking initiation, they think, ‘Oh, now I have become this.’ They lose the vision of their path and identify with ego and self-esteem, thinking that they have become something different, greater than before, and are now sannyasins.

This type of thinking is nothing but an expression of one’s own ego, without doing anything. Swami Sivanandaji told Sri Swamiji, “Nothing is going to change. You will continue to work in the same manner that you have done before – look after every need, every department, every person and every action of the institution.” Then Sri Swamiji said to him, “Well, if I have to do all this, then I can go back home and do it there. If there is not going to be any change in my routine, in my lifestyle, in my activity, then why take sannyasa? I will go back, live at home, look after the property, look after the family, and do the same work.”

Seva

Swami Sivanandaji said, “No, there is a difference. You can work at home, and you can work in the ashram. Work is work in both places; what changes in each place is your attitude, awareness, conviction, creativity and intention. At home, if you work, you will identify with success and failure. You will

confront your raga and dwesha. You will face difficulties and you may give up. If you work in an ashram, then whatever you do, the underlying thought is 'I am only a sevak. Success and failures belong to the guru. From my side, I can only perform in the best, most creative and most positive manner that I can. The outcome is not for me to be elated or sad about, because I am only fulfilling my role, my duty, my *kartavya*, my obligation. Beyond that, there is no other attachment to that *kartavya*, obligation."

I want to tell you through this story that seva begins when you offer your action to either God or Guru. Unless that surrender happens in the action, action does not become a seva, it remains a karma. Swamiji learnt this lesson from Swami Sivananda, when he said, "You are not involved in an action, or the outcome of the action, the result of the action. You only have to express your creativity." That is the first lesson in selflessness where you have to leave behind your own aspirations and only focus on expressing the creative energy in you. The more you express this creative energy and the less you identify with yourself, there is diminishing of the selfish or the self-oriented nature and cravings. You become more generous and selfless. As you become more generous and selfless through service, you develop natural love.

Sri Swamiji went through this whole process while he was at Sivanandashram. The positive, constructive, helpful mood or inspiration is known as the *bhava*, the positive condition of the mind. To maintain a positive condition of the mind is quite challenging. How many times during the day are you aware of the positivity in you? How many times during the day do you observe your critical assessment or negative judgement about other people? The difference is staggering. The positive can be little; the criticism, the negative or the ill-speech can be much more than the positive. To maintain the awareness of the positive and the connection with the positive while you are performing the action is known as seva. There is a lesson to be learnt in that, for seva is not just service. It is the connection and recognition of the spirit in

each one. You are serving the spirit, not the person. That is the difference. Sri Swamiji further says in the poem *Sankalpa*:

I am an invisible child of a thousand faces of love
That floats over the swirling sea of life,
Surrounded by the meadows of the winged shepherds,
Where stillness of divine love and beauty
Rain in the spring and bloom at midnight
Summer's warmth of softness.

He is talking of love which is the second aspiration of a sannyasin, and this love is always connection with the positive. We take love to be something different. We think of love as an emotion; however, it is a mood, a state of mind, a condition of mind, not an emotion or a feeling. People, who are caught in the web of the mind and senses, associate all the qualities with mind and senses. Compassion, kindness, love are mental expressions. Our definition of the positive is limited to the conditionings of the mind and the senses. In the situation where love is limited by the mind, we see it as a support that somebody is giving us. We see love as an encouragement, an emotion or a feeling, which ultimately leads to dependency. Therefore, love binds, it does not free a person. For us love becomes an emotional dependency or attachment with somebody. That is the result of the expression of love within the confines of our many dimensions of mind – the gross, subtle and causal.

To love everyone

There are people who say to me, 'I want to love everyone.' I wonder what they mean by that? They want to hug everyone? They want to tell everybody, 'I love you'? They want to look you in the eyes and say, 'I love you'? How does that person express love? If you say you want to love everyone, how will you do it? You may say that you can express your love through kindness, through sympathy or by shedding some tears. People have different opinions and ideas on how they want to experience and give love. Sometimes it



can be sensual, sensorial or physical. Sometimes it can be mental and emotional. It never goes beyond that. The love that Swami Sivanandaji lit in the life of Sri Swamiji and the indication that Sri Swamiji has given to us is that love is the connection to positivity.

The positive connection always has to be maintained. The scriptures on bhakti state clearly that you should be able to renounce or leave behind anything that is obstructing your positivity, calmness, peace, joy and happiness. The scriptures also say that if your husband, wife or any family member is an obstruction, be ready to leave them. There is no attachment. In front of your destiny, aspiration and goal, there cannot be any distortion, deviation or distraction. Shun everything and everyone, both the near and far, if they are obstructions to your happiness, joy and fulfilment. This is the statement of the scriptures. You can imagine how hard-hitting this sentence is, for nobody will understand it nor anybody will follow it. This is the truth. We are all caught up in our attachment.

Love is not an expression of somebody standing in front of you and you looking at the person's face say, 'Oh, how nice.' That is how it begins. You like somebody who you feel is good and positive, and you develop a friendship with the person who you think to be good, positive and happy. That relationship and association develops into love. Then you fall and crash in love. When the real nature of the other person comes out, where does that love disappear? After some time, there is total opposition to the person whom you loved for so long. Is that real love? Or was that an expectation for a fulfilment of your desire or aspiration, which you were hoping somebody would help fulfil? When that desire is not fulfilled, there is rebellion and love goes down the drain. In our society, you see this situation arising every day. People fall in love, then they grow in hatred and ill-will. Then again they fall in love, then again grow in hatred and ill-will. This seems to be the journey of life.

Spiritual precepts and masters tell us that love is a state of mind, a condition of mind, not a feeling or emotion. The most ridiculous statement is 'I love everyone.' That never happens. You can never love everyone, for your mind, senses, desires and nature does not allow you to do that. You may want and desire it, yet you will not achieve it. Therefore,

love becomes an outcome, a natural expression of the person, as they become more and more selfless. The mind, mind-set and mentality changes from being self-oriented to being oriented towards others. Love manifests in the real sense when you are selfless. Then it is like the sun, shedding its light equally on everyone.

When you are self-oriented or selfish, you want to grab everything. If you see the person you love smile at somebody else, instantly there is jealousy and doubt. Funny doubts creep in and they change the whole perspective vision and perception of love and relationships. This is always in relation to oneself. In spiritual life, concern and care extends to everyone.

A child's love

When Paramahamsaji was at home, he used to manage the property and he became close to the workers and labourers of the property. He discovered that they had a lot of suffering. Of course for their work, they used to get payment, however, in their life there was a lot of suffering. He always thought, 'How can I help these people overcome their sufferings and shortcomings?' People needed to go to hospital which in those days were controlled by British doctors. Indians were not allowed in the hospitals. In those days Sri Swamiji used to say to his sister, "When I grow up, we will have a hospital where there are no doctors, but anyone who comes is being treated."

He used to see people make a beeline for temples to pray to God to help overcome their suffering. Many times temple doors would be closed. He would tell his sister, "I want to make temples without doors and walls, where everyone can have easy access and do whatever they want with the God they adore in life." These are little sentences. They were not imagination or fantasies of a boy; they were based on reality. This was an expression of his love for the people who were not given treatment. Hospitals should be open to everyone. Doctors should treat everyone. Why are the doors of temples



always closed, when God's door is open to all 24/7/365? Much later in his life, he accomplished it. I am giving you an example that this love does not begin with me and you. This energy of love encompasses everyone who comes in the shelter of that energy.

Swami Sivanandaji gave him lessons in seva and love. There was a labourer, a patient suffering from leprosy. He came to the ashram for treatment, and Swami Sivanandaji told Swami Satyanandaji, "Go and help him." Swamiji goes to the patient and starts to clean his wounds. While he was cleaning the wounds of the patient, the patient abused him, swore at him and kicked him due to the pain. At that time Sri Swamiji threw down everything that he had in his hands, medicine, cloth and Dettol. He went to Swami Sivanandaji and said, "You look after your patient! I have had enough. I am trying to help him, and he is abusing me, shouting at me, spitting on me and kicking me. You look after your God! I am going!" And he started to walk away.

Swami Sivanandaji called him back and said, “Listen, you are looking at a patient who is in pain, who is suffering. You are cleaning his wounds. That is painful, and he has every right to kick and abuse you, but do you have the right to leave him in pain and suffering? You are leaving God who is in that person. God is also suffering with that person, and you are ignoring the God. Cultivate atmabhava, see God in him.” Sri Swamiji stopped in his tracks. He came back, apologized to the patient for leaving him and served him till he became alright.

Living a connection

One sentence by Swami Sivanandaji was received by Sri Swamiji, ‘God in that person is suffering. You are leaving the person because he is abusing you, but you are not able to see within that person what is happening.’ The moment Sri Swamiji realized this, he developed love for the Divine who was within that patient, and with new zeal, conviction and faith he went back, served him and helped him become well. This is also an expression of love. It is not only change of thought, it is also connecting with something soft, gentle and positive inside, which allowed him to accomplish the duty that was given to him by his master.

Similarly, in Munger, when he related to people who used to come to him. There was a female doctor. She used to work in one of the hospitals in Munger. Once she came to Swamiji with a huge boil on her foot. She said to Sri Swamiji, “I can’t walk. I am in a lot of pain.” Sri Swamiji looked at the doctor and said, “Don’t worry about it. You will be alright tomorrow.” Then he left on a tour to Orissa where there was a yoga convention in Bolangir. By the time he reached the state of Orissa, Sri Swamiji had a huge boil on his foot, and the boil on the doctor’s foot had disappeared.

When Sri Swamiji came for the convention, he could not walk up the steps because of the boil on his foot. For the first time in his life, he was carried up. Nobody knew what had happened. Only he knew that he had taken the boil and the

pain of the doctor, so that the doctor could continue to serve the patients without any break. Did this happen just to show that he was powerful and could accomplish this? Or did he do that for he had in mind that if she falls sick, she will not be able to see the patients who come to her door? This is also an expression of that love, not towards one person, but towards all.

Something similar happened in Rikhia. When Sri Swamiji was in his Panchagni sadhana, he used to live alone with two or three sannyasins and nobody was allowed from outside. It was a completely isolated environment. One day in the month of June, before the onset of monsoon he got up from his sadhana, called Swami Satsangi and told her, "In a nearby village there is a woman, who has lost her home and family today because the house has burnt down. Locate her and make all necessary arrangements for her and her three kids. Right now she is sitting under a tree without clothes, food or shelter. Find her." It took a week, because the sannyasin had to go from village to village to find out whether such an incident had taken place.

After a week, Swami Satsangi found the exact situation that Paramahamsaji had described in a village about twelve kilometres away. The lady with her three kids was sitting under a tree with nothing to wear, nothing to eat, no shelter to provide them with comfort. The house had burnt down and the husband had died in the fire. How did Sri Swamiji, who was sitting twelve kilometres away without any news or information, doing his sadhana, get up and say to a sannyasin, 'You have to do this'? He heard the cry of pain and suffering that emanated from the heart of this poor woman, 'Somebody help me! I have lost everything. I have lost my husband. I have lost my house. I am all alone. Somebody help me!' He heard this cry of the heart in his sadhana, and he sent people to locate her and help her. Is this a siddhi or a connection of universal love, connecting him to everyone?

Atmabhava

Even after his samadhi, Sri Swamiji has been very active. There was a couple in New Zealand and the lady was expecting. She went to the doctor who told her, “You have triplets in your womb, but only one will survive. Two will die. Because of the position, we need to do a caesarean now to save at least one.” She said, “Give me a day.” She went home, prayed to Sri Swamiji and went to sleep. In her dream, she saw Sri Swamiji who was smiling and saying *Hari Om Tat Sat* three times. She knew that she was going to have triplets.

The next day she went to the doctor and said, “I am ready. You can do whatever you want to do.” The doctor said, “Only one is going to survive. Two are going to die. Are you mentally prepared for it?” She said, “I am because I know that all of them are going to survive.” The birth took place. All three children have survived and are about seven years old today. This could also happen because of a connection of love, not because of thinking, ‘My Guru is close to me and he listens to me.’

Like this we see Sri Swamiji active, reaching out to people through his love. People feel and experience it. The culmination of love that he had for people happened in Munger and Rikhia, as he was already effulgent and radiant. In our own understanding earlier, we had not seen, and only when we saw, we realized. However, though many have seen, not all have registered. I was lucky enough to register it, and therefore, I can say with conviction that the culmination of his life was love. It started with seva, service, and it culminated in love. His period of five years in Munger was the period of love. I don’t have to say much about it for it is a private and personal affair. I can vouch that this was an expression of his love. The same we see culminating in Rikhia. After giving five years of love, he simply walked out without any emotional attachment and emotional feeling – free as a bird. He had fulfilled his dharma.

He came to Rikhia where he followed the mandate which he heard, ‘Give your neighbours the same facility I have

provided you with.’ That started the outreach and help to the local community. Even today the local community does not see it as help but as the love of Sri Swamiji for them. They acknowledge it saying, ‘We thank you for your love’, and not, ‘Thank you for your help, support and kindness’. He gave the procedure of how to cultivate this divine love, beyond the carnal, emotional, intellectual and mental. He said, “Cultivate atmabhava.” *Atma* means self, *bhava* means awareness of the condition. Atmabhava is the ability to see yourself in others. Just as a mother cannot bear the suffering of her child, for she sees herself in the child and the child within herself. They may be two bodies, yet the bhava is the same. The emotion, sentiment, feeling is the same. The same mother can witness an accident of another child and not be affected by it, yet see a scratch on her son’s arm and be affected by it.

This is an example of our connection with those we call our own. If your son and his friend go for a drive in a car, have an accident and both end up in hospital, you will gravitate towards your son and not towards your son’s friend, even if your son is slightly injured and the friend is more injured. You will feel more sorry for your son. You may express your sorry to the other person saying, ‘I am really sorry’, yet the sadness which you feel will be more for your son than for the other person. That is the connection, yet we have this connection with few people whom we consider our own – my blood, my flesh, my family. In the life of a spiritual aspirant this is not my blood, my flesh, my family. It is God’s blood, God’s flesh and God’s family. What is the colour of God’s blood? Red. The skin colour may be different, everywhere the blood is red. There is no white, green, blue or orange blood. It is the same colour in everyone. The ability to see the divine within oneself and in other people is *atmabhava*, which is for the purification of feelings, sentiments and emotions, and to create a universal, open and divine mood. That connects you with everything. Sri Swamiji said in *Sankalpa*:

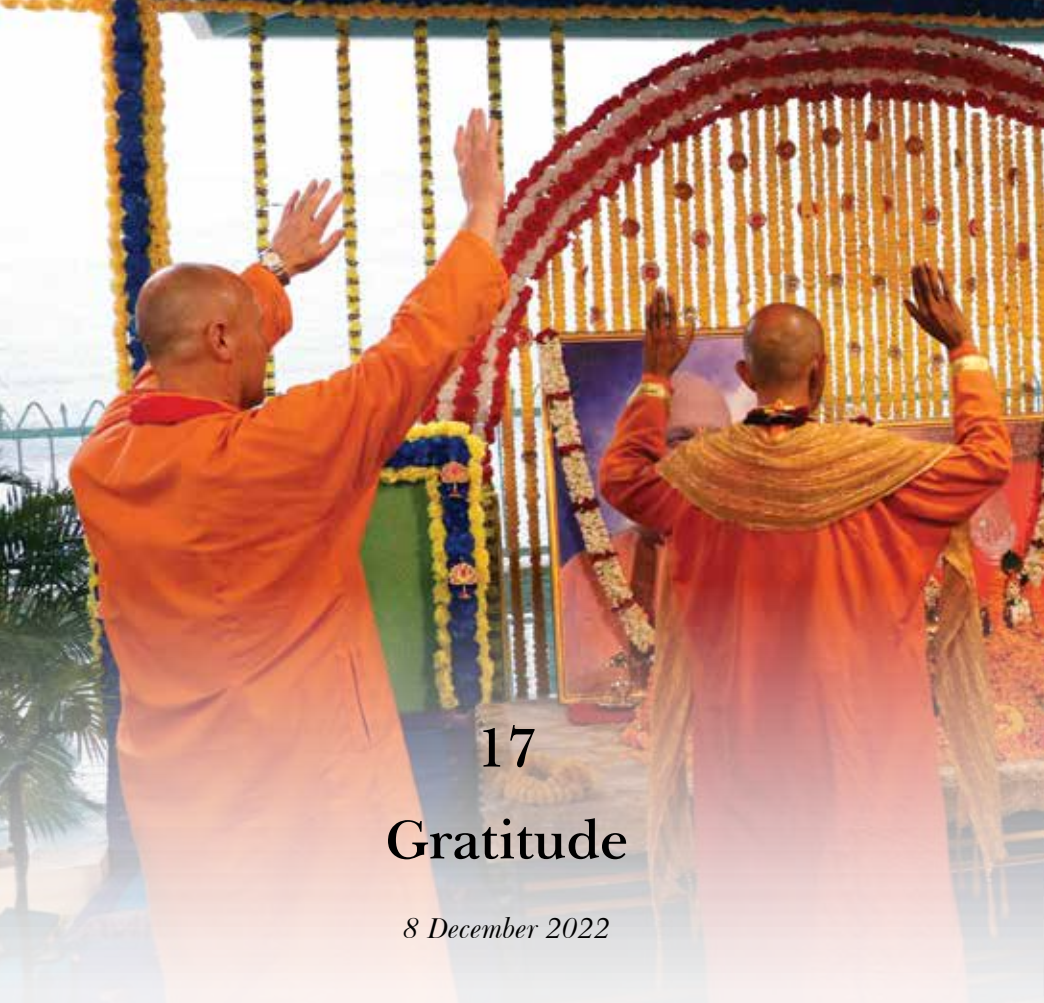
Often I pass to the place
Where there is no separation of the sun and moon,
But where eternal light spreads a carpet
Of sparkling reflections of itself
Within the hearts and eyes of all,
Even those who are blind to see.

This is the concept of atmabhava. That 'eternal light spreads a carpet of sparkling reflections of itself' is the divine light, the godly light. The reflection of that is in the heart of everyone 'within the hearts and eyes of all, even those who are blind to see' for we do not see it, we are all blind, yet the spirit, the luminosity is there. We just do not have the vision to see it.

Where sweetness has no taste,
For it is the essence of all beings,
And where teardrops water flowers of happiness
And pass into brooklets of experience
And then to the open sea.

This is the vision of love of Sri Swamiji.





17

Gratitude

8 December 2022

At the conclusion of Satyam Poornima, it is with gratitude that we bow our head in respect to the spiritual luminaries, who have guided and inspired us to discover a better person inside. That was the purpose of Swami Sivanandaji's teachings – to live a divine life. The method he gave to live the divine life was through service, through love and through giving. Sri Swamiji maintained this focus all the time. He was involved with yoga only for twenty years. What about the remaining time of his life? What did he do? He lived as a sannyasin. He says, "It is my ardent wish to spread the teachings of my master everywhere." Yoga was an order, it was a command, it was a mandate. So, he fulfilled it.



Then he lived the teachings of his master. He introduced everyone to the teachings, which enable us to purify our mind, sentiments, emotions, karmas, and to become useful to human society, to do divine work, and to live a divine life filled with positivity, inspiration, joy and peace.

This is the expression of the positive qualities in life. That was the vision of divine life that Swami Sivanandaji had, and that was the life Sri Swami Satyanandaji lived. That has been our inspiration and our teaching.

18

Impressions

10 December 2022

The flow

This was my first time to attend this program. I was looking forward to participate. Thinking about it, the word that comes to my mind is flow, to flow. We were very close to the Ganga, slowly flowing. The flow of the Ganga was reflected on the whole program in Paduka Darshan. There was flowing of water of the abhishek done by Swamiji for each of the twelve Shivalingas with twelve jugs of water. So a lot of water was flowing.

The three hours of the program were just one smooth flow. Suddenly, from 1.00 o'clock in the afternoon it was 4.30 or 4.45 in the afternoon, and I don't know how it reached. Then there was the main flow of the abhishek and Swamiji's satsangs. There was the invisible flow of his love for Sri Swamiji, and the flow of Swamiji's love for all of us, for everything surrounding him. There was the flow of information, specification, knowledge, explanation that he included in the satsangs. Everything was flowing. There was also the flow of Sri Swamiji's grace flowing through Swamiji and reaching all of us.

The whole program was quite simple, in the style of Sri Swamiji. Sri Swamiji would be doing things in a very simple way, and it would be as if nothing was really taking place, but a lot was happening. I am very grateful and happy for having

been able to attend, participate and be a witness of this event of Satyam Poornima. Thank you Swamiji for allowing this.

I look forward for more, for I know that slowly each year, a little bit, a little bit, Satyam Poornima will grow. That is the flow into the future. For there was also the flow of time, past to present and from present to future. I wish all of us, whoever is here to be in that future, whatever and whenever it is. So thank you Swamiji.

—*Swami Ananadananda, Italy*

The magic

First of all, I want to thank God and especially Guru for making it possible to participate. Swami Anandananda said that it was a very simple, very fluid event. For me it was a great secret. I know that all these teachings and events are not known to us ordinary people. There is a big secret behind all this. We can see the surface, but what is happening deep inside, we don't understand. I feel that there is some magic. All of life is magic, but the people who make this magic are our gurus.

It is very interesting to witness this special program because of the Shivalingam. We think that we know what is Shivalingam, but this time, I was thinking, 'What is the meaning of this famous Shivalingam?' It is something that can pass through our consciousness and remove our ignorance, but it is a very slow process. That is why for the moment we are only witnessing. We are satisfied to be in the presence of Swamiji and the vibration. So I also want to thank you Swamiji for this opportunity.

—*Swami Shruti Gnana, Bulgaria*





The seva

I was very fortunate to see the preparations for the yajna. I could follow day by day the building of the pandal. It was a very interesting process, and it went efficiently and with ease. Day by day, the pandal became more beautiful and at one point I said, 'Okay, this is done, this is ready.' Then the next day, something was added to the beauty, and it became more beautiful, and it continued like this until the last day.

I also had the good fortune to shift the Shivalingams to the venue, and I can tell you Shiva Consciousness is very heavy. My seva was with Swami Satyamurti in the garden. There the beautiful garlands, malas, were made, and the local women did it so beautifully. It was amazing to see their skill, their knowledge and their zeal to prepare all the flowers for the program. Swami Satyamurti said it was like a flower factory, as thousands of flowers were prepared daily.

The program was beautiful. It was really special for me, because I think it was my second program which I could see, watch and sit still. Swami Anandananda and Swami Shruti Gnana said that it looked very easy and simple, yet it was really complex. It is a complex science to invoke any energy. For me, Swamiji was like Shiva himself doing the pooja and invocation.

I had only one wish, one secret desire when I came – to be in one temple with Swamiji. And I got it. Swamiji created a beautiful temple, a sacred place, and we were there all together.

—*Swami Bhaktananda, Hungary*

The blessings

*Poornamada poornamidam poornaat poornamuchyate
Poornasya poornamadaya poornamevaavashishthyate*

Om is the symbol of all returns, all the cycles, all the rhythms that make existence possible: the representation of the limit between different orders of existence and the origin of their manifestation; an instant when creation does not yet exist and yet has already begun.

Satyam Poornima is a living embodiment of what this expression illustrates. There were only four days to prepare for the first Satyam Poornima. The grace of the gurus and Shrivji and Ganga Ma made it possible with the help of the Yuvas of Munger. I thought, this is perfect, nothing could be better. In the second year, it was better!

This year of the third Satyam Poornima, which also marks the beginning of Sri Swamiji's Centenary year, has been perfect in a thousand ways. It began on the 4th; 4th, 5th and 6th of every month being Guru Bhakti Yoga; on the 7th we invoked the blessings of Kartikeya and on the last day Lakshmi-Narayana, who are the caretakers of Sannyasa Peeth, were invoked.

This kind of planning proves that everything has already been planned by those who love us, care for us and include us in their creation. As Swami Anandananda was saying, it was a flow and it is a flow and it will always be a flow. Starting from Gangotri, passing by Rishikesh with the blessings of Swami Sivananda, coming down to Munger where Sri Swamiji received the last blessing from his guru,

the last darshan of his guru, exactly where we were sitting. This cannot be planned by mere mortals and it is very empowering and extremely humbling to know that we are, each one of us, a part of this magic.

Along with it comes the responsibility of the privilege to belong – which is to Serve, to Love and to Give. As Gururji has said, if we can imbibe even one drop from that endless river which flows all the time for everyone, we will be able to begin to thank the Source from which we all come and the one to which we will all return.

This has been something that took place in Munger and it has been an epicentre of incredible magic that was felt all over the world. I would like to end with an expression that has come from some people who are physically quite far away and yet, in more ways than one, closer than we can ever imagine:

On 8th of December 2022 we celebrate the Joy of many things

The Joy of Us, the Joy of Love with all the songs He sings

Sri Chandra started the morning off with her light across the skies

From Bihar, India to all over the World is how Her energy flies

The Sun is up next, lighting the way for what is yet another one of our many, many days.

We get to share all His glory

And write a chapter in His story

Of Love and Life and the gift we've been given,

The story of His Great Love energizes the way we live.

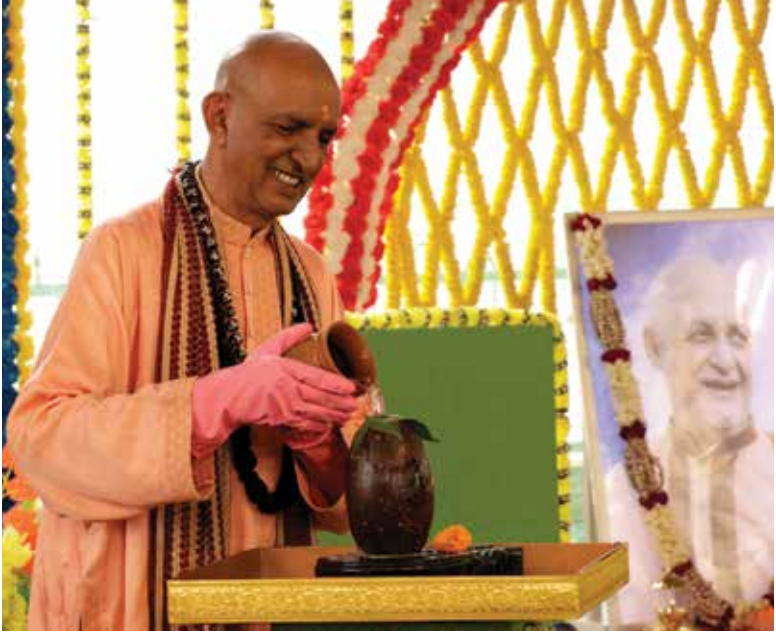
We've learned that Patience And Understanding Love

Is the energy to serve

Provided by Him.

We give them all back and pray that we will deserve

More Moons and Suns to guide our path.



And may His great supportive smile
Keep shining our way and energize our efforts to go
the extra mile.

We sing:

May his Love remember us always
and that we may dance to join His Rays
May our hearts remain connected to the Light that
lights our Ways
May we weigh the weight of Patient Love and never
gain a pound
May we dance with you forever, Swamiji, and hear only
the sound
Of Om Namah Shivam Satyam Sundaram!
Jai Sri Swami Satyananda!
Jai Gurudeva!

—Sannyasi Sivadhara

19

Shiva Tattwa

10 December 2022



Listening to the impressions of people has led me to think what Satyam Poornima represents. The whole journey of Satyam Poornima begins with a dream. This dream I had in 2020, when I had gone to Rikhia for Sat Chandi Mahayajna. Every year I went to Rikhia during the Sat Chandi Mahayajna and stayed until the end of Yoga Poornima. It was a fifteen-day period. That year, I had a dream one night. In the dream I saw a river bank, with a wide, gentle and deep flowing river. Beside the river bank

on the sand, twelve Shivalingas were placed, at a distance of about four to five feet. One Naga sannyasi used to go to the river, get an earthen jar full of water, come back and pour it on the different Shivalingas. In the background was the chanting of the *Rudri* mantras. This was the dream.

When I woke up, I kept seeing the vision in front of my open eyes. I told Swami Satsangi that I felt this to be an indication that Yoga Poornima also had to be celebrated in Munger. The river represents Ganga. Beside the river Ganga where Sri Swamiji spent his youth in Rishikesh and his mid-period in Munger, I saw twelve Shivalingas and one sannyasi doing abhishek to these twelve Shivalingas. I am inspired to return to Munger after Sat Chandi. Swami Satsangi said, "What will you call the event?" I said, "I will call it *Satyam Poornima*, the full moon of truth, the poornima of truth. Our Guru was born on the full moon day of December, in 1923."

Back in Munger, we had four days to organize everything. I prayed to Mother Ganga to make all the abhishek water disappear. As soon as the abhishek was done, the water simply disappeared. It was absolutely dry in that area. So we had our first Satyam Poornima. Sannyasins were doing the chanting and havan. Everything was done by the residents of the ashram. That was the time of lockdown, so in 2020 we were only about twenty-five, thirty people.

Shiva

Satyam Poornima represents a transcendental mind. The moon represents mind and the full moon represents the transcendental mind. The transcendental mind is a part of the attribute and quality of Shiva, for Shiva is known as the Supreme Consciousness, the all-pervasive, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent consciousness. There are different symbols associated with Shiva. We see him bare-bodied, covered with *bhasma*, ash, matted hair, snakes around his body, water flowing out from his locks on the head, living in graveyards or in high mountains, always in contemplation and meditation, *samadhi*. That is the figure of Shiva which



people have conceived of as Supreme Consciousness from the very beginning. One can explain the symbols behind it and understand it.

Another representation is that of a Shivalinga. From the spiritual and yogic perspective, the Shivalinga represents the gross consciousness, the one made from rock. Then we have Dhumralinga, which represents the subtle body, and the Jyotirlinga which represents the causal body, and we have the Param Shivalinga, which is the fire image of Shiva. It is said that Shiva in the all-pervasive nature divided itself into eight different categories or forms. Five became the *panchabhuta*, the elements earth, water, fire, air and ether. Two became the sun and moon, and one became inherent in all the jivas, in all of creation where it got absorbed – five elements, the sun and moon, and life. These are the eight attributes of Param Shiva.

On earth, the transcendental Shiva is defined in the Shivalinga. It is a peculiar stone. It can only be found in one place in India, in the Narmada river. In South India too, one finds these deep dark Shivalingas made from absolutely black granite stone. These are the only two types of

Shivalingas available. God created the earth, gold, diamonds, silver, platinum, jewels, all in form of rocks and solid matter, and gave them to everyone to use and enjoy. He himself resided in ordinary rock, that lie on the ground and nobody even notices. That is the all-pervasive nature of Shiva. Shiva is life, and life means consciousness, progression of consciousness, on a scale of one to hundred. Life is nothing but progression of consciousness which people call evolution. Along with evolution, there is sometimes involution to devolution. Sometimes we take ten steps forward, and sometimes we take one step forward and three steps back. Today, society is in the process of moving one step forward and going three back. There is forward progression and backward regression, both happening at the same time. It is not a continuous and constant progression of evolution.

This energy of Shiva in the Shivalinga comes alive. Quantum physics describes that you can infuse life in an inanimate object by connecting with it with your mind. According to the theories of quantum physics, if you bring any rock from the road to your home, place it on an altar, offer a flower every day, good words every day, wave a light every day, that stone will come alive in the course of time. It will commune and communicate with your mind. The energy and consciousness of that stone will become alive. Quantum physics is saying it today, yet all cultures have discovered this a long time ago. Looking at an image, worshipping it, adoring it, connects your consciousness with the one inherent in the image. If the consciousness inherent in the image is negative and destructive, you will become negative and destructive too. If the consciousness in the image is positive and constructive, you will also reflect positivity and constructiveness. If the consciousness in the stone is transcendental, you will experience that in many different forms.

On the 8th after Guru Pooja I said, “Allow the holy spirit, the cosmic spirit, to come in.” I am one hundred percent sure many of you were expecting some type of earth-shaking

experience. Maybe the appearance of some form or figure in front of you. That was the expectation, yet if you had only opened your heart and accepted whatever was to come, maybe even relaxation was the descent of the spirit in you. The peace that you felt would be the descent. The happiness and joy that you may feel would be the descent. The fullness that you can feel would be the descent of the cosmic spirit, the Shiva element, not necessarily in the form created by the mind and mental expectations.

Sthitaprajna

This Shiva element has helped billions throughout history who have connected with that tattwa. Miracles have happened. People have come back from the dead. People have been protected from death. People's lives have been transformed. There are innumerable stories which tell of the connection with the Shiva element and what happens afterwards.

Seven generations ago, Shiva appeared in front of a person, Appayya Dikshitar, and said, 'I will be born in your family after seven generations.' After seven generations, in the same family, as per the prophecy, Swami Sivananda was born. The indication and the prophecy of his birth was made seven generations ago. Who can predict what will happen in seven generations? The human mind cannot predict what will happen tomorrow. The human mind cannot predict what will happen tomorrow, yet the divine can say, 'After so long, this will happen.' The divine is omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. The element is alive and people have experienced it. In the Shivalinga, it is the most concentrated form of energy. Every piece of iron is not a magnet. In order to become a magnet, the poles all have to face in the same direction. One can create a magnet by hitting a piece of iron with a hammer over and over again, until the poles change their direction. In the same manner, this Shivalinga has the element and energy of Shiva in it. With abhishek and mantras that benevolent energy is awakened.



In India you will find Shiva temples, practically at every street corner, one small cubby hole with a Shivalinga. People give that due respect. Religions have distorted the spiritual understanding and sentiments, yet those who still follow the path of spirituality, know the validity of invoking the Shiva element. It is that consciousness which we try to achieve and attain in life, to become a *sthitaprajna*. *Sthitaprajna* means stable in life, one who is stable in life. Krishna was asked a question, 'How can you tell if somebody is stable in life?' He answered, 'There is no difference between that person and you. The only difference is the other person who is stable in life has controlled his *raga* and *dvesha*, attachment and repulsion, association and repulsion.' Raga and *dvesha* are the two conditions of mind, like day and night are the two conditions of the planet. It does not change. It is always night and day, night and day, as everything is making it happen that way. In the same manner, with the mind it is always raga and *dvesha*, raga and *dvesha*, there is nothing in between. Nature makes it happen that way. There are short spans of time where we can maintain objectivity. It is hard to maintain objectivity for a long period of time. Most

of the time we fluctuate between raga and dwesha. A person who is free from raga and dwesha and has attained *sanyam* in his life, control or restraint over the senses and mind, is a person who has stable wisdom and a stable life. This is what we experience in the Shiva aradhana as well.

Yoga is one aspect which we teach, and with the grace of God and Guru, the Bihar Yoga tradition is a well-established tradition for body, mind, emotions and spirit. This is the need of the society today. In the ashram, along with yoga, we also have an association with spiritual life, and that is the component of the gurukul tradition. Spiritual life is something which has to be discovered, the possibility within has to be discovered. An effort is made. Some people can ignore the effort and some people can seriously make the effort, but the guidelines and instructions are there. If you choose to fight, it is your choice, but the guideline says, 'Be patient, help everyone and smile.' If you choose to puff up your face, look angry and scream at everyone, that is your choice and your shortcoming. You cannot blame gurukul for allowing it to happen. You are allowing it to happen due to your own shortcoming and incompetence.

Sahayoga

The guidelines are there, yet how much in spiritual life we are able to follow these guidelines to maintain our positivity and helpfulness is an individual's choice. The final culmination of the Yoga Chakra which has six yogas is a seventh yoga. The Yoga Chakra has hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga as the practice-oriented yoga, and karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga as the expressive yoga. There is one more, *sahayoga*, to carry all together. Every yoga has to culminate in sahayoga, not in samadhi.

In Patanjali's time, the world population was one tenth of what it is today. So he did not need to speak on sahayoga, yet today as the number of aspirants increases, sahayoga becomes the most important yoga, to maintain sanity, a system, harmony and discipline. That is the gurukul



component. The introduction to spiritual life is the discovery of the symbols that exist within one's consciousness – the yajnas, the abhishek, the intent all activate these symbols within our consciousness. They open up a door; they lift a lid of a closed container and whatever is inside comes out. Mantras play an important part. They are not something that have been here for fifty, one hundred, or two hundred years. The same mantra, the same tone and the same pitch has been used by our ancestors, without change they have come down from generation to generation. The mantras, the tune and music to the mantras are original; there has been no change. Before the chanting of every mantra during the invocation, there is an instruction given at the end – in which chanda you have to repeat the mantra, in which meter you have to sing the mantra, and that meter, the *chanda*, never changes. It was possibly created by the first worshipper. The first worshipper chanted in the chanda, which has been carried forward until today. We are repeating today exactly the same form of the mantras which have given benefits to other people. If one is open enough, they will enter the body, mind, spirit and will create miracles in life.

Human beings make themselves too complex, yet we are not complex people. We just have to allow things to happen and be participants in it, then we begin to see the beauty that surrounds us all the time. If we become too complex, what should happen naturally and spontaneously will never happen. We will consciously block it from happening. Therefore, Jesus said, 'In order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, you have to be innocent like a child'. This means become less complicated, more simple in your awareness, interaction and understanding with the world. Do not create confusions and complications. That is also a sound yogic advice.

Abhishek of twelve Shivalingas represents the twelve jyotirlingas. And twelve also has a number significance. Jyotirlinga means lingas which are luminous by nature; their energy is awakened. That energy need not be awakened; it is already awakened. The first Shivalinga made out of stone is known as Shivalinga. The second one made out of smoke is dhumralinga, the third one made out of light is jyotirlinga, and the fourth one made out of fire is the Arunachala Shivalinga, the first manifestation, the first Sivaratri.

For yogis, the attainment of the Shiva nature is the goal. Sri Swamiji attained it. His samadhi was something incredible. He did not go because he was sick. He was hale and hearty. He did not die in a hospital bed, like some avatars who spend months in hospital before leaving their body. He just knew his time had come. He sat down in a meditative pose and told the sanniyasins, "I will be leaving my body now." He called for some water, drank a few sips of Ganga jal. He called for Tulsi leaves and put them on his tongue. Then he did his mala of guru mantra, and after that, he folded his hands to his guru and expressed his gratitude, 'Thank you for being my guru and guide, and keep on guiding me in my next life also.' He prayed to God, 'I am ready to come,' then he chanted *Om* and with the chanting of the third *Om*, he left his body. That is the attainment of samadhi, when one consciously, wilfully leaves the body with

such a beautiful sentiment – doing the mantra, thanking the guru, thanking God for the opportunities given, and saying, ‘I am ready. Take me,’ with the chanting of *Om*.

Is this possible for any person to do? No. We read in history books about people who used to attain samadhi, yet we have never seen it. Seeing him do it in such a simple, easy and smooth manner indicates his own mastery and command over his pranas, his mind, senses and over the spirit as well, telling the spirit, ‘Now you are free. Leave the body.’ This can only happen if somebody has a connection with the Shiva element. If you are connected with the mind, it is not going to happen. Personally I have had the experience of the Shiva element. I believe and I am convinced that God exists and gurus also exist on different planes. In the plane where we are living, we are more aware of the gross and sensorial, rather than the inner and transcendental. From time to time, somebody can have a momentary glimpse, yet beyond that the mental conditionings and the environment do not allow us to go through that transformative process. Those who can are known as siddhas.



Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



Before his mahasamadhi in 2009, Sri Swami Satyananda gave a final mandate to his spiritual successor, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati: “Cultivate the lifestyle of creative expression and bring the tradition of sannyasa to the forefront of modern culture.” This mandate took the form of Sannyasa Peeth, an institution dedicated to instilling spiritual qualities that allow an individual to live a creative and positive life.

In 2020 during the Sat Chandi Mahayajna at Rikhiapeeth, a dream revealed to Swami Niranjanananda the form and purpose of Satyam Poornima, a five-day celebration to commemorate the birth of Sri Swami Satyananda in 1923: At Paduka Darshan on the banks of the Ganga, the invocation of Shiva through abhishek of twelve Shivalingas was to be the medium to invoke and connect with the Divine.

This first volume of *Walking the Luminous Path* is a collection of satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda during Satyam Poornima held in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The unique nature of this anushtana, dedicated to Sri Swami Satyananda, and the tradition of Gurus throughout the ages comes alive through these special satsangs. They create a portal of perception that evokes the tangible experience of being in the presence of divinity and receiving the flow of grace which nurtures our lives.



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