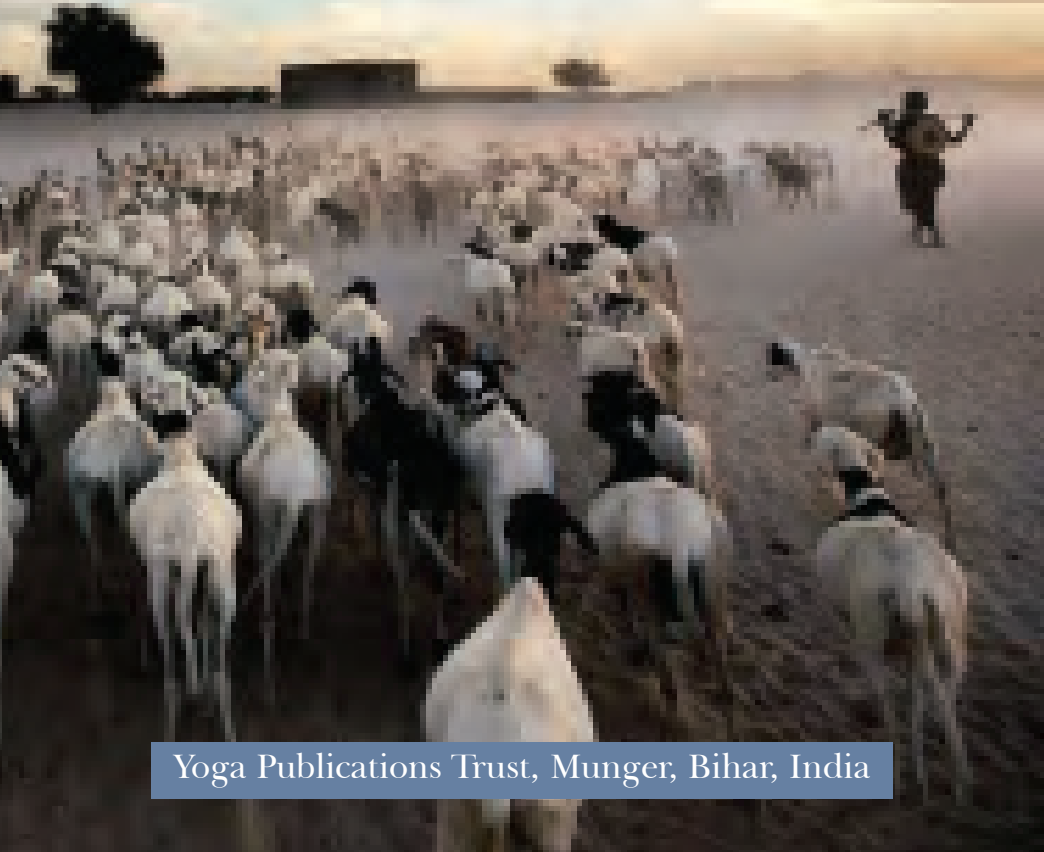


SATYAM TALES

The Gift of Peace

A precious bequest



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



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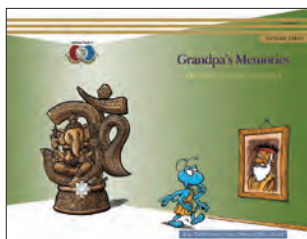
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The Gift of Peace

One sunny winter afternoon, Swami Niranjan took a group of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal children to visit Satyam Vatika, the historic garden of Satyam at Ganga Darshan. Some of the children ran along the tiled paths, others were hovering around Yoga Drishti, the new black cube, wondering what it was all about. Others took their own good time, moving slowly from panel to panel, looking at the pictures and reading the text.

Suddenly, in the quiet of the afternoon, the voice of a little girl was heard calling out, “Swamiji, Swamiji, come here, come here. How can you do this?” Swamiji went over to the girl. They were both standing in front





of the panel, which showed Sri Swamiji sitting on an outcrop, his gaze fixed on his beloved Ganga meandering through the plains. The text of the panel read:

If King Karna's age demanded gold, this age demands peace, shanti inside, shanti outside and shanti everywhere. The one who can distribute shanti, the way of peace, is the Karna of today, and I shall say openly that now I sit on this throne and that to offer peace has been my desire.

“So what is it you don’t understand?” Swamiji asked the girl, who instantly replied, “Swamiji, you can distribute and offer gold and sweets, but how do you do that with peace?”

Swamiji smiled and walked on, pondering how to satisfy the child’s inquisitive nature. He sat down in front of the black cube, leaning against the sun-warm wall. One by one the children gathered around him, and once they had settled comfortably, Swamiji began to speak:

When Sri Swamiji left the ashram in Rishikesh, his guru, Swami Sivananda, gave him the mandate to spread yoga ‘from door to door and shore to shore’. With this in mind, Sri Swamiji started his years of wandering around India. For nine years he travelled the length and breadth of the



country to find out how he could fulfil his guru's command. He was learning about people, their lives, dreams, pains and pleasures. He met the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the famous and forgotten. He watched and listened, ever attentive, ever aware of his guru's wish.

Wisdom of the mango tree

One day just before the sun was about to set and after many hours of walking on hot dusty roads, Sri Swamiji decided to spend the night in an orchard under a beautiful big mango tree laden with fruit. He spread his dhoti on the ground, picked three mangoes and enjoyed every bit of the sweet juicy fruit. The night fell quickly, and he was at peace with himself and the world, looking up at the stars above him and feeling one with the infinite space and immediate nature around: the buzzing of the last insects, dogs howling in the nearby village and the sound of the first night owl.

As he was listening with eyes gently closed, he suddenly became aware of an unusual sound – the trees who gave him shelter were talking. A young mango tree which was carrying fruit for the first time that year, asked the old stately tree,

“Why do people come to eat our fruit? They take our leaves for their pooja at home, they cut our branches for firewood, and on a hot day or a cool night they seek shelter here. We never do any of this; we don’t even eat our own fruit. It is not fair.” The old tree smiled and replied gently, for had he not asked the same question many years ago at the same orchard? “I will tell you a story that my father told me when I was young and felt the way you do now.

“Once upon a time in a small village, there lived a boy who liked to carve out of small pieces of wood the sign of ॐ. When he had made a bagful of wooden ॐ he would walk to the next town and sell them to a friendly shopkeeper. On one such business trip he lost an ॐ and was naturally upset and disappointed. On his way home he looked out on the road hoping to find the lost ॐ.”

The old mango tree stopped and felt the evening breeze caressing his leaves. Then he continued for he did not want to test the patience of his young attentive listener.

“The boy would never know the story of his ॐ, but I will tell you what happened. Half way between the village and the town, the ॐ had fallen onto the road where it was lying, but not for long. A girl on her way to school found it, wiped off the dust and held it tightly in her hands. Once she reached school she proudly showed the shiny ॐ to her friends and then put it away in her desk. The



children learnt and played, laughed and enjoyed the day at school. At the end, ready to pack her bag to go home, the little girl found that the ॐ was no longer in her desk. She cried and asked everyone but no one knew anything. The older girls quickly consoled her; the bell had rung, and the children had to leave to

reach their homes before nightfall and so they scattered in small groups to their villages.

“In one group of boys there was a bit of agitation, for among them was the ૐ thief. His friends asked to see it and half sheepishly, half boastingly he pulled it out of his bag. ‘So what are you going to do with it?’ they asked. ‘Oh, I don’t really know,’ was the silly answer. ‘I might swap it for something useful,’ but really he just wanted to get rid of it, feeling more than uneasy, even a bit scared of being found out and known as a thief. There was a moment of hesitation as the boys were thinking if they wanted the ૐ and what to swap it with. One boy pulled out a red toy car from his pocket and another a not-so-new water pistol. After short deliberation, the deal was struck: ૐ against toy car. Before reaching the village, the car owner, pleased with himself and feeling safe, asked each of his friends to promise silence and secrecy – just in case.

“The boy with the ૐ hid the wooden symbol in his bag and started to think about what to do with it. Somehow he could not really forget its origin. At home he went about his chores, restless and uneasy, wishing he had kept his car. He didn’t want anyone to know and ask questions. He only half listened to the family talk about this and that, the day’s events, the village gossip and the neighbour’s daughter being sick with cough and cold.

‘Yes, that’s it,’ thought the boy. As soon as he could leave the house he went next door to see his friend and playmate. With a big smile and a “get better soon” he gave her the ૐ and left, feeling again good and happy.

“The girl held on to the ૐ the whole night, embracing the warmth of friendship. The next day, she was up and about. She placed the ૐ on the pooja table next to the pictures of gods and goddesses. Her mother brought a few flowers from the garden and together they sat quietly in front of the small family altar.”

“You see,” the old mango tree said, “one can do so many things in one day: losing and finding, stealing and dealing,

keeping and giving. Happiness, however, is only found when you offer something, for it makes you free. You don't have to hide anything, you don't have to scheme or worry. You know, we are so fortunate because throughout our whole life we only give and people admire us for our selfless generosity."

"Now I understand," said the young tree meekly, "Thanks, I will not grumble any more and give all my fruit gladly to whoever comes, but now I am so tired. Good night."

"Good night," replied the old tree. Both shook their leaves one more time and went to sleep.

Sri Swamiji remained awake, thinking about the story the mango tree had told and the truth of it. He remembered his guru, Swami Sivananda, who was like a generous mango tree, for he could not help but give, give and give



to whoever came to him. There under the starlit sky, Sri Swamiji knew that he too would live like this. His guru's mandate meant that spreading yoga had to be a gift, and nothing short of it. He recognized in the story of the mango tree the teaching of Swami Sivananda that, "only he who lives for others truly lives."

The next morning, he thanked the trees for their hospitality, picked a few mangoes for the journey and set out on the dusty road.

Swamiji stopped and looked at the children. "More, more, tell us another story Swamiji," the children pleaded. So Swamiji resumed the story of Satyam's wandering years.

Fluffy dogs and many questions

After many weeks of travelling on foot, by train and bus, Satyam reached a town on the shores of the sea. He walked along the beach until he found some rocks towards the end of the sandy stretch where to settle for a few days. For hours he sat in front of those rocks with eyes closed listening to the sound of the waves, or with eyes half open gazing over the infinite expanse of water. He was alone and undisturbed except in the evening when townspeople came for a stroll along the beach. Busy with their own affairs, they did not notice the sadhu or even venture as far as the rocks, except one evening.

On the third day, as Satyam was preparing to watch the sun set, two fluffy little white dogs came suddenly charging at him, pulling at his dhoti, jumping up and down, and behaving as if they had found a long-lost friend. Securing his dhoti, Satyam asked, "What do you want?" "Play with us, play with us," was the instant reply. So Satyam picked up one of the small sticks he had gathered earlier in the day to cook his evening meal, and threw it as far as he could towards the sea. In pursuit of the stick, the dogs tumbled over each other, tried to bark and run at the same time, and with pride in their eyes delivered the wooden stick at Satyam's feet. "Again, again," they demanded.

After about the eleventh round of the same game, a young man appeared in front of Satyam along with the dogs. "Please come and see my master. We have been calling the dogs but they don't listen. They are so happy playing with you, maybe if you come they will follow you."

Satyam obliged, and the young servant with the two excited dogs walked along the beach until they met the master, a middle-aged man, sadly overweight, sitting in a large cane chair. He greeted them with a big smile. "It seems you've become friends with my dogs. They don't usually take to strangers. Come and sit with me."

Satyam sat down on the warm sand and the two men started to talk about this and that, from politics to philosophy and almost everything in between. Young Satyam was a brilliant speaker who knew to combine the wisdom of scriptures and saints with his own understanding of modern-day times. Besides, he had the skill to enthrall and inspire his listeners no matter how reluctant or stubborn they were to begin with. The dog owner was no doubt impressed and aware that he had met someone more than exceptional.

"You are a clever chap. Why are you wasting your life and brain wandering around the country as a sadhu? You could do so much more. If you want I'll give you a job. I own a newspaper in town and we can always use fresh talent. Do you write as well as you speak?" Satyam replied politely, referring to his duties as translator, editor, writer and manager of the press at his guru's ashram in Rishikesh, which was well known to the man. "Say no more. Having lived with Swami Sivananda is the best reference anyone can have these days. Look here, what's your name?" "Satyam." "This is my card. Come and see me tomorrow at 10 am in my office and we can discuss further." With that he waved the servant and driver, who lifted him to the car. The dogs followed obediently knowing that they would see Satyam again the next day. Satyam returned to his rocks, lit a fire and put a few rotis on it. After having eaten he walked along the beach, a lone orange-clad sadhu under the vast sky.



At 10 am, Satyam stood in front of the newspaper office and was immediately taken to the owner where he was greeted by two fluffy white dogs barking, jumping up and down, trying to pull at his dhoti. “Sit down Satyam,” the owner greeted him. “You see what the doctors do to me, all this medicine on my desk, the whole day I am taking these pills and those drops . . .” “That’s not true, he is cheating the doctors, he always forgets to take his medicine and then throws them away,” barked the dogs from under the

desk. “And they put me on a diet, saying eat this and don’t eat that.” “But he doesn’t follow any instruction and eats whatever he likes and so much of it,” came the doggy answer. “Exercise, they want me to exercise, you know how much time I spend in exercise?” “Not a minute, he doesn’t even walk from his chair to the car, you saw it yesterday. Satyam, watch out!” came the fluffy response.

“This office is a lot of work and headache: if we write about people, they complain, if we don’t write about people, they complain. My staff wants more money and less work, everyone wants a better position and nobody is content. They fight with me and they fight with each other. Is it a surprise that I am stressed and sick?” He did not really want an answer, but nevertheless a short reply was given with a bit of barking from under the desk. The two dogs were not sure how to get Satyam’s attention – should they provide him with correction information or keep pulling at his dhoti.

“Satyam, let me be frank, I offer you a job as my right-hand assistant. Go look around the offices and press. Here is some money, buy yourself some real and normal clothes and come back tomorrow.” The dogs started to dance in wild dervish-like circles, thrilled to know that Satyam would be with them from now on. “See ya, see ya,” they shouted. Satyam left the envelope and the money with the receptionist, went straight to the train station and boarded the first train – never to return.

As he sat down, comforted by the rhythmic rolling of the train, he went through the events of the last day asking himself many questions: If this was the state of affairs of people, their lives and health, what could be done? What could he do? How could a nobody like him, an unknown and penniless sadhu help anyone? What had he to offer? He was not a doctor like Swami Sivananda nor a famous guru or saint with lots of money and disciples, so what was he to give to people?

With these thoughts Satyam’s journey continued and destiny was the destination. After years of criss-crossing the

Indian subcontinent, Satyam had met many people and made friends here and there. Some were so taken in by him that they asked him to speak at functions, give programs and share his knowledge. They contacted him wherever he was and sent money or a train ticket or sometimes even a plane ticket. Travelling by plane was quite an adventure in those days, and surely not many sadhus had the opportunity, but Satyam took all in his stride: a ride on the back of an elephant, trains, cars, boats and the many roads.



At the palace

Once on his way to give a program in a big city, a passenger about his age sat down next to him squeezing himself into the narrow airplane seat. “Oh dear, I just made it,” he started, “I hope you don’t mind if I talk a little, it’s been tough, really tough.” Without waiting for a reply or permission from Satyam, he continued. “You know I just got out, I had to, you know what I mean – a kind of ‘now-or-never’ situation.” Satyam didn’t know, but it didn’t seem to matter.

The young man went on, “You know,” again Satyam didn’t. “Three years I worked for the Maharani, three long years. You know the Maharaja and Maharani?” This time Satyam did know. “He is a wonderful man and looks after his people truly like a loving father. He and the Maharani had been childhood sweethearts and their marriage was no surprise to anyone. Everyone was looking forward to this couple being at the helm of state affairs: kind yet with clear ideas, modern yet respecting tradition. You know what happened?” Satyam didn’t. “To cut a long sad story short – it was a disaster. Almost from the day of the wedding the princess changed completely. A normal happy-go-lucky young woman turned into a monster. Yes, a mad monster.

“She would not leave her husband alone. She followed him wherever he went, wanted to know all about his activities. Nothing mattered to her other than her husband, the prince. She stopped seeing her friends, she stopped going to shops but had shopkeepers come to the palace, she even stopped going to the temple for pooja. She lost all interest. First people thought it was just the way she expressed her love, but in the end all came to the conclusion that her behaviour truly went over the top, especially for the poor husband. She cooked for him, bought presents for him, made herself beautiful for him. Everything she did was for him and him alone. She kept herself busy the whole day long just to please her husband. They had two lovely children, a boy and a girl, but even they could not distract her attention away from the husband, and servants and nannies had to look after them. After five years the old Maharaja died and the prince became the new Maharaja. This is where I come into the picture.”

Looking out of the window, Satyam enjoyed the bird’s-eye view as the plane flew over hills and fields, rivers and towns. He kept listening to his neighbour who rambled on in the same frantic manner. “I am a private detective, you know. I am not a bodyguard, people don’t know what’s what and mix everything up. Bodyguards are just muscle men, no brain. Anyway, as the new Maharaja became more

involved in matters of the state and had to travel to many parts, the Maharani secretly hired me. As a private detective I accompanied her husband when he was away from the palace. She told him I was to be 'just around', but the sad truth is that I had to spy on him. He is such a decent fellow, doing his duty with such simplicity and dignity, yet miserable, for he does not know what to do with his wife and her strange behaviour. He still loves her but she makes life so difficult for him, he feels like a prisoner in his own palace. He knows that people feel sorry for him and behind his back they call her the 'mad Maharani'.

Three long years I stayed. She paid well and I had a good, comfortable life. I can't complain. I did my job: I reported to her that there was nothing to report. Her husband went to gatherings, met with people, ate alone, worked late into the night, never went out for entertainment or fun. She did not believe me, and believe it or not, last month she hired another private detective to spy on me. When I found out I said to myself, 'Enough is enough,' and here I am." Satyam turned his head away from the window – sure enough, there he was. "Now I'll get myself a nice place, start a new career, make a lot of money and then let's see where life will take me. There is nothing one can do for crazy people like that. What do you think?"

The plane landed and Satyam was greeted by his friends. The program in the big city was a beautiful occasion for a handful of people to meet the little-known sadhu who shared his knowledge in the most unassuming, modest way. However, in Satyam the last



question of the private detective was still alive waiting for an answer: Was there really nothing one could do? Could he not do anything for people who were unable to find balance and peace in life? What could he do to help the Maharani and cure her madness? What could he do to help the Maharaja overcome his loneliness and despair? What could he do to help the private detective find an aim in life? After all, meaning and not money would give him what he was really searching for. Satyam needed a system, a philosophy, teachings and methods so that he could reach out to more than just a few friends. His guru's mandate was not forgotten and the yearning to fulfil it grew with every year of wandering. In his search for answers and direction, Satyam turned to Lord Mrityunjaya, his ishta, for help.

Swamiji stopped here remembering his own visits to Lord Mrityunjaya in Tryambakeshwar. He sat lost in memories of his guru when the sound of "More, more, Swamiji, pleeeeeease!" brought him back to Satyam Vatika and the children's eager faces around him. So he continued sharing another moment of Sri Swamiji's life.



Time in the village

One evening, tired after a long day's walk, Satyam was invited on a bullock cart. The farmer motioned him to jump on and enjoy the ride. "You're a lucky fellow," he started, "No worries, no family, you are a free man. I have a wife who is never content, and a lazy son who gambles and drinks. Last month, we even had the police come look for him. My two daughters are waiting for me to marry them off soon. They spend the whole day in front of the mirror trying to look more beautiful and attractive.



Their expectations are high, too high for me. My neighbour has two sons, three times more land than I have and his brother has a shop in town. Of course, my wife is always nagging. What am I to do? We just make ends meet and if anything is ever left, I must put it aside for my daughters. I am angry all the time. When I sleep it's a miracle, for most nights I am awake planning, worrying and just twisting my brain in all directions. Sometimes I don't want to go home because I can't face another argument and more bickering. That's why you are a lucky fellow, you have no family, none of all this, just yourself to please. A life without worries must be like heaven."

The farmer's lamentations had brought the two to the tiny hamlet and Satyam was invited to spend the night there. He helped the farmer to unyoke the two bulls and then joined the family for the simple evening meal. The villagers had learnt about the sadhu who had come and

slowly gathered around the farmer's house. They came with questions, requests for guidance, they came with wounds, injuries and broken hearts. Satyam listened in silence. He had no medicine, no eye drops, no bandages. He had no money to spend, no dowries to give to brides, no cattle to distribute. What advice could he give? 'Maintain cleanliness' when there was little water in the village. 'Eat well' when all were struggling to have one meal a day. Satyam knew that the villagers were living by the strength of their faith alone, and now this faith had brought them to see the sadhu. In their hearts they knew that a man in search of truth would know the answers to their questions, tell them what to do and light the candle of hope.

Satyam wanted to help, but that night he did not know how to guide the village people. So Satyam told stories of Sri Rama, the hardship and struggle he had to face in his life and how in spite of all trials and tribulations he never left the path of dharma. He explained why to this day Sri Rama is an ideal of righteousness. The villagers sat in rapt silence, listening to the tales of Sri Rama and Sita. They felt inspired, comforted, maybe even encouraged to live a little bit like Sri Rama.





After some time, Satyam asked the schoolmaster for a harmonium which was readily brought. He sang kirtan right there on the veranda of the farmer's house surrounded by the villagers. The sound of music filled the air and their hearts. The aches, pains and sorrows were forgotten and all was well. When the last villager had gone home, Satyam spread his dhoti on the veranda, sat down and waited for dawn to come. His intention was to leave the village with the first rays of the sun. However, the villagers had discovered in the wandering sadhu an opportunity not to be missed. They gathered before dawn in front of the farmer's house and patiently waited for Satyam to open his eyes.

The moment he sat up he was presented with an offer, or more of a plea: the villagers said they would give him a small hut at the far end of the village where he could do his sadhana all day long, and in the evening he could meet the villagers, talk, sing and tell tales. Satyam accepted and spent the next few months with the simple folk, learning about their dreams and their reality.

The farmer's nagging wife arranged for his meal once a day, so that every day another family cooked for the sadhu. The lazy son was told to use his beautiful deep voice and learn kirtan. Satyam did not hesitate to show the two daughters a few steps and moves of Bharat Natyam. He was an expert dancer himself and once performed for the incredulous villagers who had never seen a wandering sadhu and accomplished dancer put into one person. The farmer's daughters practised and picked up the art quite quickly. Of course, they stumbled and fell over, and the villagers had a good laugh, but in their heart they were delighted to see the old art of dance enter and enrich their village life. They enjoyed the beauty of movement and expression and watched the tales unfold through the grace of hands, eyes and body. The daughters were forever beholden to Satyam.



As the family had found opportunities to be involved in creative pursuits and learn new skills, there was less fighting and more contentment in the house. In the beginning, some of the villagers made fun, especially of the lazy son who stayed away from his drinking and gambling buddies. However, once he joined Satyam in singing bhajan and kirtan, they stopped and let themselves be carried away by the voices of the two young men. They knew better than to mock, for were they not given moments of pure joy every evening? They knew that the sadhu had brought change to the village and were deeply grateful.

Satyam spent the daytime in sadhana, and in the evening he came out to meet the villagefolk. He shared his understanding of human nature and life, guiding with an asana here, a story there, and always with yet another bhajan. To this day people remember the sadhu who came one night and stayed to show them how to live their lives in a better way, how to find and make peace.



Sri Swamiji travelled for many years, looking into the hearts of people, until one day he arrived in Munger. Here, on the ancient hillock of King Karna, Sri Swamiji knew what he wanted. He wanted to be generous like the mango tree, like King Karna and Swami Sivananda. He did not want money, power, name or fame. He wanted to give freely and generously. His search came to an end and born was his teaching, his message and mission: his unique yoga, the gift of peace.

With these words, Swamiji ended. Basking in the last rays of the winter sun, the children were quietly engrossed in the stories. Swamiji broke the silence, “You see, this ashram is not just buildings and gardens. It is an offering of Sri Swamiji to his guru, Swami Sivananda. It is like him saying, ‘Guruji, you wanted me to teach and spread yoga, here it is for you’.

“He showed us how to be healthy, free from worries and full of contentment. He told us how to be at peace with ourselves and others. Sri Swamiji gave us the tools to live in peace, inside, outside and everywhere. Through his teaching he offered and distributed peace. Do you understand now what is written on the panel? One can give peace in the same way as one gives gold and sweets, and Sri Swamiji showed us the way to do so.”

The children looked at Swamiji with eyes full of love and gratitude. It was getting cool and Swamiji invited them to the kitchen where a lovely dinner was waiting. One by one they left Satyam Vatika, thinking of ways to find peace and distribute it all around.

SATYAM TALES 10





Satyam Tales

Commenced on the occasion of World Yoga Convention & BSY Golden Jubilee, 2013

The Gift of Peace is the tenth in the series of *Satyam Tales* depicting the life and teachings of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Through the medium of these simple narratives, we hear the voice of Sri Swamiji inspiring all, irrespective of age.

Swami Satyananda's years as a wandering mendicant brought him in close contact with all strata of society, and that is how he developed an acute understanding, sensitivity and empathy for the human condition. This tale follows him on some of his experiences and adventures through dusty roads, deserted beaches, plane rides and neglected villages, wherefrom his life's mission eventually crystallized.

This story is a delightful read for children, adults and old alike. It is an invaluable message for those engaged in the world and for those seeking the spirit. This journey is your journey, these challenges are your challenges, and this victory is your victory. It is a story that will touch your heart, give you joy, hope, conviction and, above all, faith. Yes, you too can gift the priceless present of peace to people around you.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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Please note:

- This collection of *Satyam Tales* is dedicated to our masters, Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati and Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati, and is the vehicle to bring their spiritual and yogic teachings in an understandable and applicable form into the lives of individuals throughout the world.
- *Satyam Tales* will be exclusively published by Yoga Publications Trust to ensure the accuracy and correctness of the teachings and the context in which they are being presented.
- *Satyam Tales* is a loving offering to all the children and the future generations of the world to remind them of their true nature and inspire them to explore and enhance their own potential.
- We invite all aspirants to share these tales with your group and if you have some tales of your own, we request you to contribute as well. You can also publish these tales in your own language, fulfilling the conditions of YPT, for which you may contact:

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