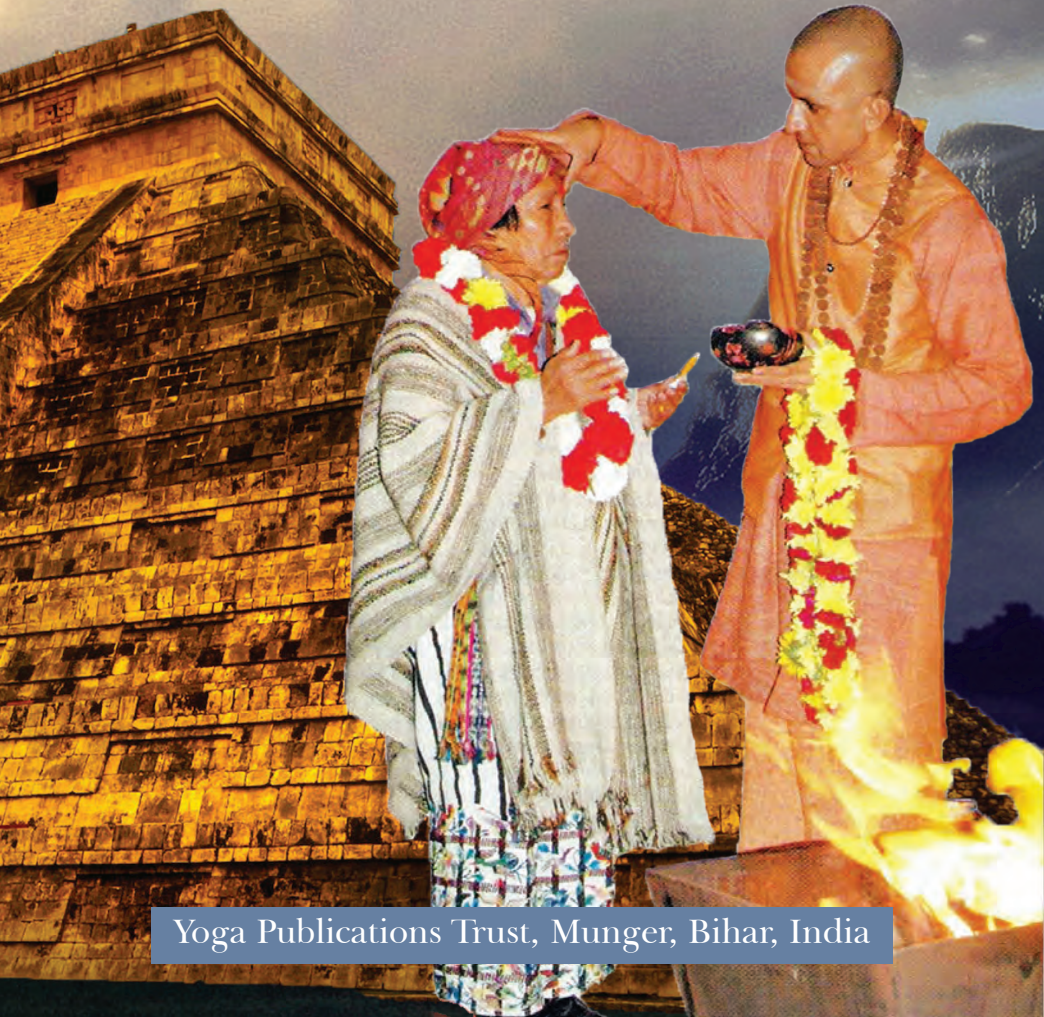


SATYAM TALES

The Yogi and the Maya

Renewing an ancient bond



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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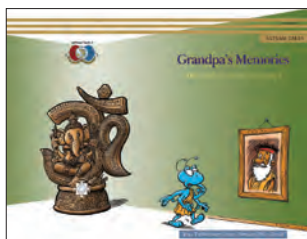
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The Yogi and the Maya

I am *Agni*, the all-pervasive and potent fire element in this vast creation. I also happen to be the presiding deity of the sense of sight. I have other roles and names as well, far too numerous to enumerate here, and not very relevant to what I am about to relate either. Yet there is one name, *Jataveda* that I should mention, for it is this name which lends authority to my words and credibility to my claims. Simply speaking it means the knower of every created object and being. In my subtle, all-pervading form, I watch over each and everything. There are no secrets hidden from me, and in moments of doubt the wise ones take recourse to me and do *agni pariksha*, invoking me as the eternal witness and arbiter.



I don't wish to sound boastful but nonetheless let me mention that I've been instrumental in many pivotal events, both earthly and celestial. I was the one who ferried Shiva's fiery energy to the river Ganga, where it manifested in the form of a dazzlingly radiant boy, Kartikeya, who eventually led the devas to a decisive victory against the oppressive demon, Tarakasura. It was I who brought forth the divine kheer for King Dasharatha at the culmination of his putreshti yajna, leading to the birth of Sri Rama and his valiant brothers. I could go on describing my exploits but I think I've made my point.

Having furnished this background information about myself, I am ready to relate my story. I hope that you won't bother yourself unnecessarily about its provenance or trustworthiness; for I stand as my own proof.

Starting a story is always tricky. One is never quite sure where to begin. This is especially true for this tale, whose origins are shrouded in the mists of the past and whose various threads are tightly intertwined like strands of delicious spaghetti.

Talking of spaghetti I'm reminded of a wonderful meal which is still fresh in my memory, although it happened many millenia before. And it is from this meal that I shall begin my story.

Many thousands of years ago, there lived a king named Shvetaki in the land of Bharatvarsha. Once he decided to conduct a hundred-year-long yajna. What a taxing affair it was for all concerned! The poor priests conducting the yajna were so badly afflicted by all the smoke and soot that they couldn't continue any further. Finally the king had to invite Rishi Durvasa to complete the yajna. As for me, I succumbed to dyspepsia and dysentery from all the ghee being poured into my bowels. My gastric fire, pardon the pun, was all but extinguished.

With a pale face and an emaciated body I approached Lord Brahma, the Creator for advice and assistance. He suggested a change of diet as the quickest remedy. "High-

protein, low-fat,” that’s what he said. He even recommended the name of a fast-food joint where I could gorge on the choicest flora and fauna. It was Khandava vana, a dense forest on the banks of the river Yamuna.

As luck would have it, the forest was the domain of Takshaka, a chieftain of the Naga race, who was chummy with Indra, the lord of the devas. Each time I attempted to send my flaming tongues through the thick jungle, Indra would get wind of it. Sending an army of clouds armed with lightning and thunder, he would quickly douse what little blaze I had started.

Dejected by my repeated failures I finally approached the only mortal who I knew could definitely match Indra. It was his son, Arjuna. When I approached him in the guise of an old brahmin, he was sporting with his bosom buddy Krishna in the waters of the Yamuna. I related my sad plight to him and beseeched his help. Arjuna vowed to help me in my quest to consume the Khandava forest, no matter what the cost. Except there was a little hitch. He was here on holiday and he didn’t have any weapons.

That was something I could easily fix. I called my buddy Varuna, the lord of the waters, and he was happy to oblige. He presented Arjuna with a formidable bow called Gandiva and an inexhaustible quiver of arrows besides other assorted arms and ammunition, not to mention a speedy divine chariot. Arjuna boarded the chariot, strung his bow, tied the quiver to his shoulder and was ready to face any adversary. Krishna got on to the charioteer’s seat and throwing a mischievous glance in my direction, he chuckled, “Bon appetit, Agni!” and promptly sounded Panchajanya, his famous conch.

I needed no further prompting. I had barely started on the appetizers section of the menu when Indra’s hordes began to swarm all over the sky. Soon it was densely overcast, with brilliant flashes of lightning and roaring peals of thunder trying to outdo each other in intensity and ferocity. Arjuna was ready and waiting. Taking full advantage of his



newly acquired quiver, he let loose an unending flurry of arrows into the sky. Soon a watertight umbrella of arrows was created in the sky and no matter how much the clouds thundered, not a single drop of water reached my leaping flames.

Now it so happened that a denizen of Patala (an ancient name for a land on the opposite side of the globe – Ed) was caught unawares in this conflagration. His name was Maya and he was in the Khandava forest on vacation, enjoying the hospitality of Takshaka, his generous host.

Seeing my roaring flames sweep through the forest, incinerating everything that lay in their path, Maya realized he was quickly being trapped on all sides by the inferno. His host had gone away to Kurukshetra and he was now on his own. He tried a few magical spells to douse the flames but to no avail. Escape seemed the best course of action now, and that is what he did. Without thinking twice, he jumped into a stream that was flowing nearby.

The forest turned into a marshy grassland and the stream meandered sluggishly through that region. Maya swam ashore, only to find that he had emerged from the frying pan straight into the fire. At the edge of the forest stood Arjuna, discharging deadly arrows at any creature that dared escape from the forest.

One thing Maya had learned early on was the magnanimity and high code of conduct of the warrior class of this land. An Aryan warrior was duty-bound to offer

protection to any and every one who sought it. In the current circumstances Maya did the wisest thing. He prostrated headlong before Arjuna and begged for mercy.

Arjuna was no exception to the kshatriya code. Raising Maya from the ground Arjuna granted him unconditional safety and hospitality. With a gentle pat on the shoulder he sent Maya to rest in his nearby campsite, and promptly got back to his barbecuing business.

For many days and many nights Khandava burned on, until I was fully satiated. The forest had been reduced to a heap of smouldering embers, and I had fully regained my lustre and luminosity. I hadn't enjoyed myself so much in ages. The last occasion that came to mind was Hanuman burning up the entire city of Lanka with his blazing tail. What a blast that was!



I approached Arjuna and Krishna in my dazzling celestial form and thanked them profusely for their help. Offering Arjuna some very exquisite gifts, including the mighty aagneya-astra, I took my leave. Soon thereafter, Maya also approached the pair with folded hands. “Your royal highness!” he said, addressing Arjuna, “I am deeply indebted to you for sparing my life. I am a master architect and builder; I offer my humble services as a token of my gratitude.”

Prince Arjuna refused to accept his services. “I haven’t done you any favour; I just fulfilled my obligation as a kshatriya. Yet I don’t want to hurt your feelings. Why don’t you offer your services to my friend Krishna?”

Maya turned expectantly to Krishna, who remained silent for a while and then said, “If you are indeed a master architect as you claim to be, why don’t you build a royal court for King Yudhishtira, the elder brother of Prince Arjuna and the sovereign monarch of this kingdom? A court that would surpass all others in beauty and grandeur, whose wonders none could ever replicate!”



Maya gladly accepted the suggestion. It was an assignment after his own heart. In a short span of fourteen months, he created an architectural marvel. The court complex was surrounded by lush green gardens and shady trees of all sorts – mango, lichi, neem, banyan and peepal. Little streams meandered through these gardens, filling up little ponds and creating little cascades along the way. Swans and cranes sported joyfully in these beautiful ponds.

The pillars, walls, ceilings and arches of the court were intricately carved with the most exquisite sculptures and inlaid with priceless, sparkling jewels. In the centre of the complex lay a beautiful pool, a masterpiece in itself. The pathways leading to it were made of highly polished crystal. Even experienced artisans could be duped by the extremely dexterous juxtaposition of crystal and water. It needed a very keen eye to tell the difference.

One such fellow who got duped was Duryodhana, a cousin of the Pandavas and crown prince of Hastinapura. His humiliating fall into the pool and the resulting taunts thrown his way by Draupadi and Bheema triggered a whole chain of events that led to the exile of the Pandavas and eventually culminated in the great Mahabharata war many years later.

The details of this tragic war are well known and I will not digress in that direction. The Pandavas earned a Pyrrhic victory and Yudhishtira was crowned the king at Hastinapura. Soon thereafter, Krishna returned to his capital, Dwarka.

Maya had shifted to Dwarka when the Pandavas had lost the game of dice and had been forced to go into exile for thirteen years. The social, political, economic and, above all, human losses engendered by the war had gravely affected Maya. Besides the millions of soldiers killed, millions of women widowed and millions of children orphaned, there had been a mass exodus of talented people who still owed allegiance to the Kaurava side.

Approaching Krishna at an opportune moment, Maya expressed his innermost sentiments, “My lord, in a short

span of eighteen days this war has unravelled and destroyed what took centuries, nay millennia to build. The once thriving civilization of Bharatvarsha is now lying in a state of despair and ruin. Your Yadava kingdom with its flourishing capital of Dwarka is the only surviving bastion of Aryan culture. How long it will last, I dare not speculate.” Perhaps he already had an inkling of the doomsday-drowning that lay in store for Dwarka a few years hence.

Krishna remained silent as Maya continued, “My native land never had a civilization of such grandeur and glory, which is why I migrated to Bharatvarsha many many years ago. Now that there isn’t much left here in the name of civilization, I seek your permission to return to my homeland and spend my last days in peace there. Bless me that I may keep walking the path of dharma you’ve so graciously shown me.”

Krishna’s eyes were gazing into the distance. After what seemed like an eternity, he turned his gaze to Maya and spoke in a reassuring tone, “My blessings are always with you, Maya. Upon returning to your native land, you will become the progenitor of a civilization that will be named after you. It will scale new heights in various arts and sciences. The skilled architects and sculptors of your civilization will preserve through their inscriptions, sculptures, structures and other works of art, all the ancient knowledge you’ve so thoroughly imbibed here.”

“Take the knowledge of agni back to your people, especially the science of yoga, yajna and other fire rituals. Practice, perfect and preserve this science for future generations. Many thousand years later, one of your descendants will meet a yogi from the land of Bharatvarsha, and when the two of them will ignite the sacred fire together, at that auspicious moment, our combined energies will reunite with the agni tattwa and illumine the entire spiritual sky. That shall be a moment well worth waiting for . . .”

With that parting instruction, Krishna bade an emotional farewell to Maya. He had arranged for a special vimana to

take his dear devotee and friend back to his homeland. The vimana had a striking shape, that of a plumed serpent. No wonder when Maya landed in his homeland (the present-day Yucatan peninsula – Ed), he was hailed as a celestial being with magical powers, which he indeed possessed. Maya brought great prosperity and renown to his civilization. His people made great advances in art, architecture, mathematics and astronomy. Over the course of time, he came to be known as *Kukulcan*, the feathered serpent, one of the major deities of the Mayan civilization he founded. Even neighbouring cultures like the Toltecs and Aztecs venerated him, calling him Quetzalcoatl in their native tongue.

Over the course of time, a city called Chichén Itzá was founded in his honour. Dominating the centre of Chichén is the Temple of Kukulcan (nowadays often referred to as *El Castillo*, the castle – Ed). This step-pyramid has a ground plan of square terraces with stairways up each of the four sides to the temple on top. On the days of the spring and autumn equinoxes, at sunrise and sunset, the corner of the structure casts a shadow in the shape of a plumed serpent





along the west side of the north staircase. On these two annual occasions, the shadows from the corner tiers slither down the side of the pyramid with the sun's movement to the serpent's head at the base. At times like these I'm reminded of Krishna's promise to Maya and I anxiously await the day it will materialize.

Now I leap over many millennia in my narrative, to the 5066th year of the Kali Yuga to be precise. A young

sannyasin was lighting a lamp in a little-known town in the land of Anga. As I manifested in the form of a tiny flame before the young swami, I could clearly make out that he was not a run-of-the-mill sadhu but someone special. He had just inaugurated a small yoga ashram that went by the rather unassuming name of Bihar School of Yoga and he was now dedicating it to the sacred memory of his guru by lighting an akhanda jyoti. His devotion to his guru was admirable indeed. To fulfil the guru's mandate of spreading yoga from door to door and shore to shore was this sannyasin's sole passion and preoccupation now.

Through that bright little akhanda jyoti I began observing this sannyasin day



in and day out. His thoughts, words and deeds were in total harmony with each other, and never wavered from his goal. He started conducting yoga classes, first in the little ashram and then in villages, towns and cities all over the country and soon the whole wide world. His message and mission spread like wildfire over the entire globe.

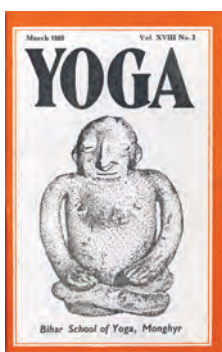
Soon, a little boy named Niranjan came to live with this sannyasin, who was fondly addressed by his devotees as Satyam. Satyam and Niranjan were inseparable, like father and son. The deep spiritual samskaras, burning dispassion and innate purity of the boy immediately caught my attention. Seeing him seated beside his guru performing havan, I began to wonder whether he could be the yogi hinted by Krishna. My suspicion was strengthened when I met Aniketaa, the boy's guardian angel over a cup of coffee (see *The Ancient Astra* – Ed). Not only did she share wondrous insights into the boy's nature and character, she also revealed the extraordinary circumstances of his birth.

At the tender age of ten, Satyam dispatched Niranjan to live in different countries and cultures, imbibing and assimilating the best that each had to offer, and sharing his wisdom and knowledge with everyone he came in contact with. Over the next few years, Niranjan ended up living in different parts of Europe, Latin America, Australia and North America.

Satyam himself travelled to Latin America for the first time in 1971. What a warm welcome, what a rousing reception he received there! As if the people had been eagerly awaiting his arrival all this while. People from all faiths and all walks of life were attracted to him like moths to a flame. Besides meeting, teaching and interacting with people, Satyam showed particular interest in visiting archaeological sites and examining ancient relics that hinted of an old yogic-minded civilization. So much so that when young Niranjan came to live in this part of the globe, Satyam directed him to pursue further research in this area. Following his guru's mandate, Niranjan meticulously



documented evidence highlighting the rich yogic heritage of South American and Mesoamerican cultures. He studied the Mayan scripture called *Popol Vuh* and drew parallels with yogic and tantric scriptures. He gathered many pictures and photographs as well, many of which were published in the ashram monthly journal, *Yoga*.





I still remember the confidence and charm that this young boy exuded during his stay in this part of the world. He was at ease with everyone, be it people on the street or the high and mighty. Once, in Colombia, he asked his hosts to arrange a meeting with the country's president. His hosts were taken aback by this rather uncommon request. A boy not even in his teens expecting to meet the head of state! Nonetheless they passed his request along. And to their great surprise, the president agreed to meet an unknown, young boy from India!

In his meeting with the president, Niranjana told him that he was interested in exploring evidence of ancient yogic cultures in this part of the world. Quoting extensively from the Indian scriptures, he explained that modern-day Latin America was the *patala-loka* spoken of in the Indian tradition, that was the place Arjuna had visited during his travels, that some remnants of that era must have survived till now . . . and he went on and on in this vein. The president may or may not have believed him, but he was certainly impressed by his pluck and self-confidence, so much so that he wrote a letter asking the local authorities to extend all possible help to the young boy. Niranjana went on

to visit several ancient archaeological sites and museums in Colombia, from where he gathered many photographs and other evidence of a pre-Columbian yogic culture in Latin America. Events such as these began to presage the prophecy that only I was privy to.

Years passed. Satyam recalled Niranjan from America and appointed him as the President of Bihar School of Yoga. Satyam had fulfilled his guru's mandate, in letter and in spirit, and now it was time for him to move on. Renouncing all his achievements and accomplishments, he embraced kshetra sannyasa donning the garb of a mendicant once again. He visited all the major pilgrimage centres of Bharatvarsha and finally settled in a little, secluded village called Rikhia. There he began higher vedic sadhanas, including the rigorous panchagni sadhana. It was then that I really became intimate with Satyam. Besides a faithful dog



by the name of Bholenath, I was the sole witness to Satyam's long and arduous sadhana. Many were the hours that we spent in each other's silent company, giving and receiving at many different levels. Satyam had by now fully mastered the fire element, my very essence, and all my secrets were like an open book before him.

In the course of time, Satyam started the annual Satchandi Mahayajna at Rikhia, reviving an ancient tradition. At one of the Satchandi yajnas, I heard him say: "Fire was the first form of God that man realized. Prior to that, he was ignorant of time, he was ignorant of space, he was ignorant of everything. He only knew how to sleep, how to be afraid, how to create progeny, how to eat, nothing beyond that. He had no knowledge, no jnana, through which he could connect himself to the things around him. The first real day was when man connected with something beyond



himself, with fire. Thus the day our ancestors connected with agni, millions and millions of years ago, is an immortal and unforgettable day for us. Therefore, the *Rig Veda*, the most ancient book of the Hindus, begins with the word agni – *Agnim ide purohitam*. The first mantra, the first word, was not Om but agni, which means fire.” Yes, Satyam definitely knew me inside out by now, and it was a privilege to associate with such an evolved being.

Then in 2005, Niranjana travelled to Colombia for an international yoga convention. It was there that Krishna’s words finally came true. Monday, the 23rd of May was for many a day like any other, but not for those who attended a very special ceremony near Bogota, in which representatives of two ancient spiritual traditions, the yogic and the Mayan, got together for the first time in many millennia.

In fact, that day was replete with cosmic coincidences. Not only was it the *Poornima*, the full moon night, but it was the special Buddha Poornima, the day when Buddha attained enlightenment. Moreover, that night the sun aligned with the Pleiades in the constellation of Taurus in an event that marked a very important cycle for the Mayan culture, as these are fundamental stars in Mayan cosmology.

As Buddha’s nirvana day was being celebrated worldwide, in a little country house near Bogota, a long-awaited encounter was taking place between Swami Niranjana, the custodian of the paramahansa tradition bequeathed by Swami Satyananda, and grandfather Cirilo Pérez Oxjal, spiritual leader of the Quiché Mayan tradition and president of the Council of Indigenous Elders of America. Two fire ceremonies were performed here which in my opinion represented not just an encounter between two ancient cultures, but a historical and transcendental event for entire humankind.

Grandpa Cirilo, who is named Wakatel Utiw (the wandering wolf) in Quiché Mayan, started the celebration with Tohil, a solar fire ritual which is even older than the first Mayan pyramids. Different articles were tossed into a circular fire surrounded by flowers, as a tribute to Mother Earth for

her myriad gifts. The grandpa offered amongst other things biscuits, chocolate, colour candles and incense. As I consumed these offerings, my mind went back to that feeding frenzy in Khandava vana many millennia ago which had started off the Mayan connection in the first place. Time seemed to stand still, the stillness suddenly broken by the deafening song that all nearby birds burst into as the offerings were fully consumed. It was an auspicious moment indeed.

The ritual also had the aim of purification, for I am the ultimate purifier. I consume everything transforming it into





pure ash. Everyone present at the ceremony was welcome to throw any real or symbolic objects into me with the aim of cleansing and purification. And for that reason, the grandpa held several babies and walked with them around me.

The turn for the yogic fire ritual came at 6 pm that day. Swami Niranjan with a few other fellow sannyasins sat around a havan kund wherein he invoked my presence.



After the fire had been lit, Swami Niranjan began chanting ancient mantras and pouring oblations at the end of each mantra. After the chanting of mantras was completed, people approached the fire with flower offerings and received the prasad of the havan. In the meantime, the full moon was starting to appear over the horizon. At that auspicious moment, Swami Niranjan offered a flower crown to grandpa Cirilo and anointed his forehead as a mark of respect. Grandpa Cirilo, his eyes moist with emotion, whispered, “In our sacred books it had been prophesied that one day the fire from the east would meet the fire of the Mayans, fire secrets would be exchanged and the spirit of two ancient civilizations would be reunited. Today that prophecy has finally come true.” And with this the sacred fire ceremony symbolizing the grand reunion came to a fitting finale . . .

EPILOGUE

“What was the purpose of this meeting between Swami Niranjan and grandpa Don Cirilo? What was the reason for this sudden approach of such distant traditions as the yogic and the Mayan? Why do yogis respect the Mayas?” These have been some of the questions on the minds of people who saw, heard or read about this quiet little encounter.

Last year, when Swami Niranjan, following the footsteps of his illustrious guru Satyam, undertook the gruelling panchagni sadhana, it marked the





beginning of a very intimate and personal relationship between the two of us as well. It was on such a day, as I blazed all around Niranjana, literally embracing him with my flames, that we had a little telepathic exchange on this subject and Niranjana asked me to reveal to the world the little bit of ancient history hidden behind this episode. And that is why, O gentle reader! you have this little book in your hands . . .



SATYAM TALES 11





Satyam Tales

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

The Yogi and the Maya is the eleventh 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.

At the end of the Mahabharata war, Krishna asks Maya, a peerless architect and designer to return to his homeland in Central America, and propagate the science of yoga and yajna amongst his people. He assures Maya that many millenia later a yogi from Bharatavarsha would come to his land and reunite the spirit of the two ancient civilizations. In the twentyfirst century, Krishna's prophecy finally comes true.

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 ignite the agni, the flame of inspiration in yourself and your near and dear ones.

—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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