

SATYAM TALES

The Crew

For the welfare and happiness of many



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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And his open-heart surgery

The Crew

Dear Reader,

Here I am, still at Ganga Darshan. Last time I wrote I was telling you a bit about myself, how I was ‘programmed, downloaded and printed’ and how I had a wonderful time with Swami Niranjan and the World Yoga Convention 2013 (see Satyam Tale 13, *Dhoom-Dhaam* – Ed). My story ended with my initiation and Swamiji’s sweet request: “I would like you to stay and be with me.” Has anyone ever refused any of those sweet requests or has anyone ever had a choice with him? But that could be another story. Of course, I said ‘yes’. I was totally thrilled, thinking that he had another magic event in mind and wanted my cooperative input. I was wrong and an altogether different challenge lay ahead of me. After my account of the World Yoga Convention, Ganga Darshan was flooded with thousands of letters and emails, the odd fax and desperate phone calls. They had just one message: ‘We want to know more about the Yoga Convention!’

Swamiji heard about this curious flood of pleas and told the administration to do something about it. So, the Human Resource Department (to some it still is the good old karma yoga department) had nothing better in mind than to create a new department, namely, the POCO-Convention-Seva Department, better known as the POCO-Seva Department. It is not really a major contributor to the ashram activities. I am the only sevak, and the only mission is to provide

information on the historic and unique World Yoga Convention.

Here I am, doing my seva, answering the hundreds of questions about people and places, about Sanskrit and science, and of course about yoga. Everything was about yoga: from the name to people's interest to every single activity. However, Swamiji said shortly before the grand opening that it was not a yoga convention at all, but a 'celebration of life' and Swami Satsangi added, "It is not just a convention; it is a life-changing event." So, one says the World Yoga Convention is not about yoga, the other says it is not a convention, and I am left to make some kind of sense out of it all and convey it to the keen readers of Satyam Tales.

Not an easy job, you agree. The one word Swamiji and Swami Satsangi did not question was the 'world' bit, for that would have been really difficult. The world was present in Munger, and for five days Munger became a world of its own. As to the non-yoga-convention-but-life-changing-event-and-celebration-of-life, I think it best to take you back to the spaceship, the triple-dome pandal, on the Polo Ground in Munger. There I introduce you to the crew, the people who





stood on the bridge with Swamiji and Swami Satsangi. You read about them, their work, their ideas and experiences, and then decide for yourself what you want to call it. These speakers are the fifty years of Bihar School of Yoga. Their unwavering loyalty, their creativity and dedication helped make the Bihar School of Yoga what it is today: a great place of learning and inspiration for those in search of a life lived in peace and contentment.

Swamiji honoured them in front of the whole world when he said, “The people seated on the stage have dedicated themselves to propagating the vision and the mission of their beloved guru, who inspired them to connect with the luminosity within and to bring this spiritual awareness into the lives of everyone. This first generation is happy and proud to pass on the baton of yoga to the future generations with a request and a prayer: run your relay race of yoga with dignity, with purity, with sincerity, with commitment. Make us proud that the heritage and the inheritance of the rishis, of our paramguru Sri Swami Sivananda and of our guru Sri Swami Satyananda, is alive within us all. It is this inheritance, this heritage that will be shared with everyone with whom



we come into contact.” This is how Swamiji felt and still feels about the people who have been travelling with him for so many years.

On any mission, be it on planet Earth or on a spaceship out in the cosmos, crew members have various tasks assigned to them, ideally according to their talents and skills. There is the diplomatic corps: the politicians and administrators, who manage many kinds of relationships, ranging from local to interstellar. The care-team looks after the wellbeing of the mission’s population, and with wellbeing we mean their head, heart and hands, for the Bihar School of Yoga advocates an integral and holistic approach in every undertaking.

So if you are ready, allow me to introduce you to the core care-team: number one of course is the mission’s psychiatrist. Every trip needs a shrink, yogic he may be but still a shrink. Second requirement, a fitness trainer or coach. Bodies need to be exercised with or without gravity, within confined or infinite space. Third, we have the teaching staff to help the children learn more and in a better way. Then we have the mission’s philosophers, the research team and the lifestyle counsellors. These glorious crew members lived the experience of decades of yoga. They have come from all corners of the world and their personal mission has taken them around the globe many times. They made Swami Sivananda’s mandate to take ‘yoga from door to door and shore to shore’ their own and thus followed in the footsteps



of Sri Swamiji. Now they want to share their life's experience with the next generation as they themselves keep travelling yogically for the welfare and happiness of many.

The psychiatrist

Dr Rishi Vivekananda is the man looking after the quirks of the spaceship population. Not always a straightforward task. On Earth people have head and heart trips, but out there in the vastness of unlimited space these little mental, emotional ripples are magnified a million times. Therefore, it needs a special kind of yogi-doctor to tackle the problems on board. His choice of practising in space is based on a long association with flying, airplanes and air hostesses. Here is his story:

“When I left Australia in 1977, I had a dhoti, a kurta, a head of hair and that was it. I got into the airplane and Swami Niranjan shaved off the head of hair. Of course I shaved off his too. It was a funny little scene actually. Both of us went into the toilet together, and there were two air hostesses looking at the two of us strangely as we walked in, seeing these two men walking into the toilet together. Within about five or ten minutes, us two young men walked out and we were both completely bald. The hostesses just stared at us.”

His real flight, however, is the flight of yoga. Yoga provides the answers he does not find in the so-called science of mental medicine. He loves to tell of his findings: “With yoga we can evolve the quality of the mind, the quality of our



thinking, attitudes and opinions, and eliminate our bigotries. We can evolve the qualities of the emotions. Instead of those anxieties, tensions, angers and such feelings, we can evolve the quality of emotions right up to enormous, outgoing love such as the masters have and give us. What was once dissension is now cooperation; what was once unhappiness is now happiness; what was once rejection is now acceptance, love and compassion.”

That is his yoga side, yet he is equally passionate and up to date with the latest scientific research. His interest was once neuroplasticity, a science which promises that the brain can be moulded up to the age of ninety-five. Nowadays, he is diving deep into the subject of epigenetics which promises that not only the brain but even genes can be moulded and changed by yoga. His fascination is contagious when he tells us that: “Not only does yoga change our ongoing mind and attitudinal state, it also changes our brain, it changes our genetic activity, and it might well change the life of our offspring.”

This is quite something, isn't it? These crew members know their stuff inside out and wherever they look they see yoga, in one form or the other, but always for the good of the people. Next you meet the coach. He will make you fitter than a fiddle and win all the gold medals you ever dreamt of and much more.

The coach

The coach is not some would-like-to-be-charming-body-building-fitness-club-muscle-man. No, he is a real doctor and what a sportsman he was – in his younger days, a national water-polo champion in Serbia. Dr Swami Mudraroopu wants to help modern sport with yoga and he knows how to do it. This is what he says: “The yoga that has been applied in society as Sri Swamiji used to tell us, is not yoga that will just make the body look better, or make us feel better, but yoga that will make us better people. This yoga is not an abstract concept, but something real and efficient, a tool that we can use to improve the quality of our lives and transcend our limitations.”

Sport has always seen the challenge of transcending limitations. It is all about records and being the best and the fastest, lifting the heaviest weight and jumping the highest. But did you know that some yogasanas are difficult for these sportspersons who chase records and hope to get gold medals? It is unbelievable but true. Just read what the coach has to say: “Even simple asanas like shavasana (now if that's not an easy one!) or vajrasana become challenging for some of the high-end





sportspersons. Apart from rectifying the postural imbalances, research findings have proved that through asana, a fine-tuning of precise motor skills is achieved, the sense of balance and coordination is improved, and the risk of injuries is seriously reduced.”

I always knew that you can't beat yogasana, not that I am an expert but I have been around Ganga Darshan for a while. I have seen what they are and what they can do. The coach, however, has more cards up his tracksuit sleeve. He knows that yoga can give the state which sportspersons achieve only occasionally and more by luck and chance. “The most intriguing area in sports is the state of being called ‘the zone’, ‘the flow’, ‘the second wind’, or ‘the last burst’. It has been defined as an alternate state of being that sportspersons sometimes enter where previously unavailable resources of the body and the mind become available to them, and they go on to achieve high, and sometimes astonishing, results. It is a state of being in which action itself becomes the aim, where there is no consideration of rewards or achievements,

the pleasure is purely derived from the action itself. From this description I think we can recognize that it is a yogic state of being which sportspersons are accessing.”

So these medal-chasers experience yoga without knowing it and without knowing how they do it. No wonder Dr Coach wants to help out and show the yogic way of training with which sportspersons can create this state for themselves whenever they want. Maybe the not so distant future of sport will look like this: before every race a bit of *Om* chanting, a swift yoga nidra, a touch of antar mouna and . . . whatever you want is yours.

On the yoga spaceship only occasional friendly competitions are carried out, more for fun and as a social get-together. This doesn't exclude that the coach puts his expertise into practice and allows the participants to surprise themselves. More serious is the training of children on board. Let's see how this is being handled.

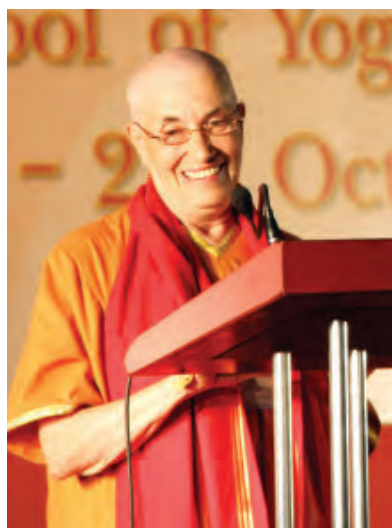
The teaching staff

The expert is Swami Yogabhakti from France. She has worked for over forty years taking yoga into classrooms around the world. 'Research on Yoga in Education' is her brainchild and Sri Swamiji's, of course, who told her to use yoga to enhance learning and the innate potential of schoolchildren. This, she said, is what they do for these little ones: "The first thing is to develop attention and attentiveness, the capacity to feel the air in the nostrils, to feel the clothes on their body, to feel their buttocks on the chair. Starting from these bare facts, they can then feel the joy of living."



This ‘feeling’ is just the beginning, for at the end of her journey there is a truly cherished dream: “I really believe that through this link with the modern world and yoga, something new will evolve in society. When the systems of education are improving – and they are going to improve slowly but surely through the introduction of yoga in all countries – the world will become less violent, less fanatical. This is what I am dreaming of and I am sure that you also have this vision.” Everyone in the pandal agreed for everyone wants a better world, wants peace and harmony.

Swami Yogabhakti continues to work and strive to make this dream a reality. Others pursue the same goal, with the same methods of yoga, with the same dedication and love. Rishi Arundhati from Canada can look back at a forty-five year history of teaching yoga to children, in schools, homes and shelters. YES, yoga works, is her motto and movement, also known as ‘Yoga Education in Schools’. She knows children inside out and their love for stories. Here is one she likes to tell:



“One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, ‘My son, the battle is between two ‘wolves’ inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.’ The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, ‘Which wolf wins?’ The old Cherokee simply replied, ‘The one you feed.’”

So, do feed the Good and you will win the battle of life, even if you have left school. Another member of the teaching staff is fully involved in feeding the Good and showing his students how to do it. In the area in and around Mumbai, Swami Satyakarmananda has created models for 'yoga and youth' and exports them around the world. He explains what his group does: "From a total of thirty-one completed projects, eight have won international acclaim, and we have worked out fifteen projects titled 'Multidimensional Application of Yoga for Youth'. So far we have successfully conducted 61 camps, wherein 4,538 members of the young



generation participated. We carried out research also, which was presented at numerous conferences." Swami Sivananda would be really proud and pleased. He had the same idea, for he said many decades ago: "Young people must have contact with yoga. They will attain peace through yoga and spread it throughout the world."

Swami Satyakarmananda is terribly busy with these youth programs, but he still has time and energy to teach yoga to fire fighters, prison inmates, sportspersons, tribal communities, traffic police, pregnant women, computer operators, the differently-abled, the mentally challenged, musicians and young executives. Of course, he can't do this single-handedly and he doesn't have to, for he is not alone: "About two hundred devoted people are working with me and nobody gets paid. They are simply coming with the intention of service, sacrifice and surrender."

This is what Sri Swamiji always wanted, combining the spirit of seva with the teaching of yoga. He wanted to keep

the teaching of yoga pure. Yoga teaching is not a profession or a business enterprise, no, it is seva to humankind. All crew members have imbibed and lived that inspiration with heads held high. What beautiful role models they are for the children, youth and adults they teach!

The research team

The research department on board is not idle either. Swami Sannyasananda from Australia, investigates telomeres, control centres on genes; epigenetics, it has been mentioned before as one of Rishi Vivekananda's pet passions; chronobiology, the study of time and rhythms, also known as the modern version of swara yoga; and neurocardiology, which is the study of the relationship between the head and the heart. Yoga has truly left the hidden Himalayan caves



and conquered the sceptical, doubting, questioning minds of scientists around the world, thanks to Sri Swamiji.

Swami Sannyasananda remembers: “When I met Sri Swamiji, what struck me most was that he spoke of the science behind yoga. He said, ‘Yoga is a science. You are the scientist; your body is the laboratory; and your life is the experiment.’”

The same idea is the driving force behind the research work of Dr Swami Nirmalananda, long-term resident at Ganga Darshan and director of the Yoga Research Foundation: “Sri Swamiji’s legacy of yoga, the Yoga Research Foundation, continues to spread the experience of yoga, both for those involved in conducting the studies by analyzing the data and seeing the results, and for those upon whom the research is conducted, through measuring the experience within themselves. It is an inspiration for us all to become sadhakas of self-study, using the laboratories of our very own bodies and minds.”



The philosophers

There is no end to investigating the effects of yoga on the body and mind, and no end to the encouraging results which open avenues to more and more applications of yoga in people’s lives. A totally different kettle of yogi are the thinkers, or as they prefer to be called: the philosophers. They span worlds and dimensions, or lokas, in one breath, in the next they mix and match the most ancient mythology with the twenty-first century. Here is a tiny taste of the universe of Rishi Vasishtha from Canada: “Sri Swamiji



sitting in satya loka, splits himself from what represented Ardhanarishwara, Shiva and Shakti, into two. They sit to his right and left; the one on the right is Shiva and the one on the left is Shakti, but we know them better as Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi. Sri Swamiji says, ‘You will have to do the work when I am gone. When I leave this job, you carry on.’”

How about one more trip along the thoughts of an amazing mind? Professor Upendra Baxi, the senior-most crew member spoke on the nuances of sight and *divya drishti*, the divine sight: “*Divya drishti* is difficult to define, although it may safely be said that it includes more than sight, and that it is different from mere sight, insight, farsight or outsight. It is more akin to vision, but it is also more than envisioning . . . The thought occurs: Is tyaga the best way to attain divya drishti?”



Another crew member looks at us in a slightly different manner. He is rooted in the 'here and now' and the management of this most intriguing moment. Swami Anandananda from Italy wants to help people live a better life with just one word: "What makes the Satyananda Yoga tradition special is the fact that it teaches, emphasizes and encourages the use and application of awareness. If you read our 350 or so



odd books and listen to all the CDs, the yoga nidras and the meditations, you will hear many, many times the word 'awareness'. Ask, 'What am I doing? What am I doing now? What am I experiencing now?' Then that approach and attitude will be useful in: 'Where am I going? Where am I coming from? What is my direction?' It will bring about an awareness of your aim in life, awareness of your dharma, awareness of what is your role, awareness of what is appropriate."

The lifestyle consultants

There must be really something special in that little word 'awareness' if it can do all this. I'll have to ask Swami Niranjana, for he very much likes everything to be appropriate in life. That is also the reason why he advocates a yogic lifestyle as part of the tradition. Yoga is not only to be practised, it has to be lived; and to tell people how to do so, he invites experts to share their ideas and experiences.

One such expert is Swami Sivamurti from Greece, whose latest mission is to bring Swami Sivananda's vision of a divine life back to life. To do so she uses the

Song of 18 ITIES. She is not campaigning for just one word like Swami Anandananda, but for eighteen words or qualities which make life divine. The person who lives these qualities lives appropriately, saintly and divinely. She says: “The ITIES adjust the way we think, the way we talk, the way we act. They change our negative and emotional reactions to people, events and things. We cannot change people;



they are as they are. We cannot change events and circumstances that come into our lives, but we can change the way that we respond to them. So the ITIES are responsible for changing our attitudes and transforming our attitudes from negative to more positive.”

One example is adaptability, which is at the heart of Swami Sivananda’s teaching. Swami Sivamurti says: “Here we learn to adapt, adjust and accommodate . . . We learn to adapt to people, adapt to events, adapt to circumstances as they come.” This is the secret, or maybe one of the many secrets of smooth-sailing through life. That is why the catchy phrase ‘go with the flow’ is so popular. Don’t block, hinder or obstruct the flow of life, just adapt, adjust, accommodate.

Swami Muktibodhananda from Australia uses another approach to reach the same goal of leading a harmonious and peaceful life. She says we have to learn to listen to the messages of the chakras: “If we can understand how the chakras are expressing and sending messages, which enables us to express, to respond, to react, and to think, then we will gain a deeper understanding, and in this way, we will evolve our awareness.”

So the task is to know the chakras and develop them to the best of our ability. For example, if you want to increase the healing power of swadhisthana chakra then you have to laugh, but more than just once a week. Swami Muktibodhananda tells us how to become good laughers: “Children laugh four hundred times a day. Adults don’t. Laughter improves the immune system; it boosts the T-cells.



Even if you are not seriously laughing, just going ‘ha-ha-ha-ha’, the brain does not know the difference. What you do is you breathe in quickly through the nose and go ‘ha-ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha-ha’. Four hundred times takes only twelve minutes.”

Why don’t you try and let me know how your swadhisthana chakra and your laughing skills are doing? These chakras are really interesting and Sri Swami Satyananda spent a lot of time exploring their many aspects and then wrote beautiful books to help others with their explorations. Like everything he taught, there is a method, a system and a roadmap so that no traveller gets lost. Chakras are alive in our tradition, and I’ve already told you about kundalini’s 5D-journey through the chakras in the KAC, the Kundalini Awakening Centre.

One of the crew members, Swami Pragyamurti from London found the same chakras even outside of India on another continent: “In various caves in Southern Africa there are yantras and mandalas. In their depictions, there is the symbol of the kundalini serpent, exactly the same as ours in yoga, which takes us from the depths to the highest



heights through the chakras. In Africa, the chakras are also symbolized by animals, the same animals that we use in the Indian system: antelope, elephant, crocodile, deer. They are all there in Africa. We are connected and this goes back thousands and thousands of years.”

For her, connection is the key to giving a worthwhile purpose to one’s life, no matter if life is lived in London or Africa, with the sick, imprisoned or disabled. Swami Pragyamurti does not only mean the intercontinental chakra connection. There are other facets in a person’s life that need connecting. One connection is between the components of a person’s being, such as body and mind. The other connection is between people and people. This is how she describes her untiring effort to connect: “I have discovered in my work in the prisons that many people have a very limited connection between the body and the mind. Sometimes I can say, ‘Breathe in and raise your right leg,’ and for half the students, the left leg comes up. Through the practice of yoga nidra, people are able to rebuild a connection between their bodies and their mind, and what they are doing with their body and their mind.”

For her work of connecting people with people she is begging everyone to help her, for it is such a tremendous undertaking and everyone's support is required and welcome: "I would request all of you, when you are chanting your mantras – Gayatri mantra, Mahamrityunjaya mantra, Shanti Path – please be generous. Extend your heart to touch my students, all students, all of our fellow human beings in the most desperate conditions, striving, trying, and hoping where there is so little hope. Please, please be generous with your love."

That's it. It is all about love. For without love there would be no Bihar School of Yoga, no Satyananda Yoga, no World Yoga Convention and no Golden Jubilee. These fifty years have been an expression of love and proof of the power of love. The driving force behind every saint, rishi, muni and master down the ages has been nothing but love for humankind. If the desire to alleviate suffering had not been there, why would anyone have done anything? When Parvati asked Lord Shiva to help the people who were suffering, it was because she cared and loved. He taught his pashupata yoga because he too loved and cared. This love is the same that thrives in the hearts of the mission members on stage in the triple-dome spaceship. Sri Swamiji said again and again that yoga is just the means; the purpose is to wipe the tears from the eyes and bring a smile on the face of our fellow beings.

The crew members had found their individual ways of doing so, following the example and inspiration of Swami Sivananda, Sri



Swamiji and Swamiji. Their dedication is unparalleled and an example and inspiration for those who wish to follow them. Swamiji concluded the World Yoga Convention and I end my tale with his plea to all readers:

“Our gurus were our Rama, and we the first generation sannyasins, were the monkeys. We did the bidding and helped build the bridge to fulfil the vision of Rama. Now as the future generations walk upon that bridge, it is our request and prayer that you maintain the bridge in its pristine glory and purity, so that when our masters walk again on this hallowed earth, they see that the light they had lit so many years and centuries ago still continues to burn bright, and still gives light to all the travellers. This is our wish.”

And my wish too.

Hari Om
Anandam
(aka Dhoom-Dhaam)



SATYAM TALES 16





Satyam Tales

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

The Crew is the sixteenth 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.

In this story, Dhoom-dhaam returns to tell us the details of what transpired within the portals of the triple-dome spaceship in Polo Ground. He provides a riveting description of the work, ideas and experiences of the people who have worked in the field of yoga for the last fifty years, and highlights the altruistic and selfless nature of these sincere, serious and committed 'yoganauts'.

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 be part of a crew working for the welfare and happiness of many.

—Editor

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Published by Yoga Publications Trust

First edition 2015

Printed at Aegean Offset Printers, Greater Noida

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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