

SATYAM TALES

An aim, an ity, a ness and a ment

Watchwords that spell success

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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An aim, an ity, a ness and a ment

“Can you please explain the meaning of this sutra to me, Swamiji?” Young Niranjan asked, placing a little booklet in front of Swami Satyananda who sat working on his desk. Swamiji was busy with his work, so Niranjan stood behind courteously, patiently waiting for his guru’s answer.

Swamiji finished the letter he was writing and then glanced at the booklet Niranjan had placed before him. He



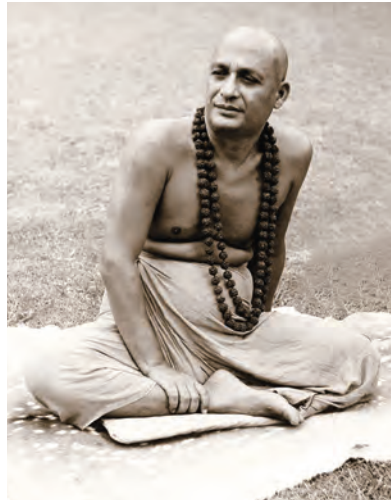
couldn't resist a quiet smile. The booklet was on the yoga sutras of Sage Patanjali, something he had been reading to little Niranjana while he had been in the state of yoga nidra the last couple of nights. Now that Niranjana was reading the same material in the waking state, he was assimilating the subject all the more thoroughly. With an air of serene satisfaction, Swamiji read the sutra that Niranjana had underlined.

Sa tu deerghakaala nairantarya-satkaaraasevito dridhabhoomih

"Hmmm," he commented, "this sutra highlights the prerequisites for attaining success in any sadhana, yogic or otherwise. In this sutra Sage Patanjali says that sadhana becomes firm and fruitful when it is practised for a long time with regularity and faith. Keeping this maxim in mind one can achieve success in all endeavours, outer and inner."

Saying this, Swamiji got up from his chair and walked to the lawn outside. Sitting down on the asana that Niranjana had hurriedly laid out for him, he sank into a deep reverie. To Niranjana it seemed as if he was minutely dissecting and analyzing the sutra using the fine scalpel of his intuitive intellect. He was not too far off the mark, for when Swamiji cleared his throat a few minutes later, he said something of great import, something that would become a guiding light for Niranjana throughout his life.

"Yet this sutra somehow fails to get to the root of the issue. The requirements for success that it mentions, viz., protraction, regularity and faith, are but outer manifestations of subtler inner qualities. Without these inner qualities, mere



observance of the external traits may not lead one to the desired goal.”

Niranjan was all ears now. Swamiji was about to shed light on a deeper aspect of the sutra which ordinary commentaries would never delve into.

“I won’t spell out those inner qualities for you Niranjan, for that is something you will have to discover for yourself,” said Swamiji, as if in response to Niranjan’s eagerness, and then seeing a wave of disappointment wash over his face, added with a reassuring look in his eyes, “Nonetheless let me tell you a story . . . about the river you just had your morning bath in.”

“You mean the Ganga?”

“Yes, the story of its wondrous descent to earth,” replied Swamiji with a smile, “a story that I once related to a dolphin and it changed her life completely.” (See Satyam Tale 3, *The Daredevil Dolphin* – Ed)

The mention of a dolphin added to the charm of the tale Swamiji was about to narrate. Niranjan settled himself in front of Swamiji, determined not to let this opportunity slip away or be disturbed by any ashram exigency.





And Swamiji began telling Niranjan the story in right earnest, beginning with the grand Ashwamedha yajna of King Sagara of the Ikshvaku dynasty. “When a monarch would conduct the Ashwamedha sacrifice, he would let loose a special ceremonial horse which would be followed by the royal army. The monarch would acquire total sovereignty over all lands that the horse roamed upon.

Capturing of the horse by another king implied a challenge to the authority of the monarch, and the issue would be promptly settled on the battlefield.

“It so happened that Lord Indra, king of the celestials, felt threatened by the growing power and prestige of King Sagara. The successful completion of the yajna would have made King Sagara a contender for the celestial throne as well. Impelled by a sense of jealousy and fear, Indra stole the sacrificial horse and tied it in front of Sage Kapila’s ashram in Patala.

“The sixty thousand sons of Sagara who had been escorting the horse searched high and low but couldn’t locate the horse. Finally their protracted search led them to Kapila’s ashram. The sight of the horse tied to a tree in front of the ashram angered them and they began abusing and cursing the sage. Their rude and haughty behaviour incensed the otherwise benign Kapila and in a fit of rage he incinerated them to ashes by a mere look.

“Eventually Anshuman, the grandson of Sagara and the nephew of his sixty thousand sons, found the horse in Kapila’s ashram and learnt about the tragedy. He placated Kapila who told him that the souls of his uncles would be



redeemed if the holy waters of the Ganga were to pass over their ashes.

“At that time Ganga flowed only in the celestial regions. Bringing her waters down to earth seemed a Herculean task. Neither Anshuman nor his son Dilipa were up to the challenge. It was only Dilipa’s son, Bhagiratha, who solemnly resolved to redeem the spirits of his ancestors.

“He began an intense tapasya to propitiate the Divine Ganga. Years of arduous austerities finally bore fruit when Ganga appeared before him and asked him his wish. When Bhagiratha expressed his desire that she descend to earth to wash away the sins of not only his ancestors, but all mortals fortunate enough to have a dip in her cleansing waters, Ganga retorted: ‘If all the sinners of this world wash their sins in my holy waters, where shall I wash the immense store of sins they deposit in my watery body?’

“Anyone else in Bhagiratha’s position would have been flummoxed by this question, but see how *sincere* and guileless Bhagiratha was, for he replied solemnly, ‘O Sacred Mother! Holy saints will also bathe in you and purge you of all sins, for Lord Vishnu, the dispeller of all sins, dwells in their hearts!’



“Ganga was quite pleased by Bhagiratha’s reply, but then raised another issue, more physical than metaphysical, ‘If I descend directly from the celestial realms to the mortal plane, the force of my current will wash away the entire planet. Lord Shiva alone is capable of withstanding the brunt of my descent. You must appease him if you are indeed *serious* about redeeming your ancestors.’

“Hearing this, Bhagiratha *committed* himself to another long period of arduous tapasya dedicated to Lord Shiva. Shiva was pleased by his penance and appeared before him. Bhagiratha requested his help in arranging Ganga’s descent to earth, to which Shiva graciously agreed. Straddling heaven and earth, he stood firm and tall ready to bear the



force of Ganga's torrent. With a terrific noise, Ganga descended on to Shiva's head. The haughty Ganga seemed determined to carry Shiva also to Patala!

"Shiva was enraged by Ganga's conceit and in order to quell her pride he trapped her in his matted hair. And that's where she stayed for many years, going round and round Shiva's head.

"Bhagiratha was *serious* about gaining salvation for his forefathers. He *committed* himself to austerities yet again to placate the angry Shiva. Shiva was eventually appeased and he allowed a tiny trickle to escape from his matted locks. That trickle landed on earth and became the terrestrial Ganga.

"Bhagiratha's mission wasn't over yet. Once Ganga had reached the earth, he had to lead her on her earthly course to where his ancestor's ashes lay. Crossing mile upon mile across varied topography, they reached the ashram of the great sage Jahnu, where Ganga, in another of her moods of wanton haughtiness, surged through the ashram, drowning it completely. The otherwise benevolent sage was so incensed that he drank up the entire Ganga!





“But Bhagiratha was steadfast in his endeavour. He made a *sincere*, heartfelt plea to the sage. The sage was pleased and he allowed the river to come out through his ears. Thereafter Ganga acquired the name *Jahnavi*, the daughter of Jahnu. This incident happened near present-day Bhagalpur, not too far from here, Niranjan.

“Bhagiratha marched on and finally reached the place where his ancestors had

been reduced to ashes by Kapila’s ire. Sagara’s sons attained salvation and Ganga emptied herself into a vast ocean at Ganga Sagara. Thus it was that through his sterling qualities, Bhagiratha not only won salvation for his forefathers but left a precious bequest for humanity for all times to come.

Saying this, Swamiji remained silent for a few moments as if he were watching the entire scene in his mind’s eye. Finally, he softly uttered a few verses:

*Yato bhageeratho raja tato ganga yashasvinee
Jagaam saritaam shreshthaa sarvapaapavinaashinee*

Wherever King Bhagiratha went, there followed the fabled Ganga, the foremost among rivers, the destroyer of all sins.

And then added, “That is how Ganga got the name Bhagirathi, for Lord Brahma blessed Bhagiratha with the following words:

*Iyam cha duhitaa jyeshthaa tava gangaa bhavishyati
Tvatkriten cha namnaa vai loka sthaasyati vishrutaa*

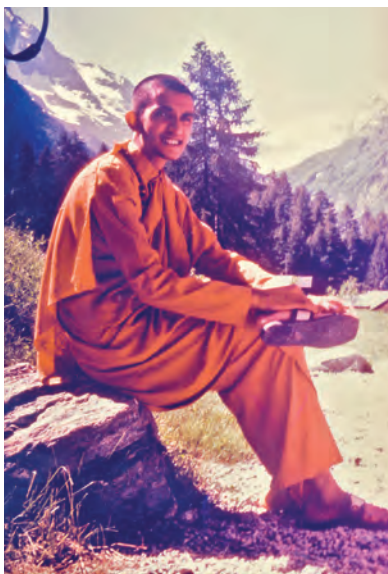
Ganga shall now be deemed to be your eldest daughter and will remain in this world bearing your illustrious name.

Turning to little Niranjana, who still sat wide-eyed, he said, “That was a rather long-winded answer to a rather straightforward question on a sutra of Patanjali’s, but as I said in the beginning, there’s more there than meets the eye. What that *more* is, you have to discover for yourself.”

After a moment’s silence he added in a resolute tone, “And you had better discover that, for you are to be the Bhagiratha of this age. Swami Sivananda and myself may have brought the yoga-ganga down from the Himalayan heights, but you are mandated to carry it to the doorsteps of the masses.” Saying this, Swamiji abruptly ended the conversation, got up and left, leaving Niranjana to ponder over the import of all that he had said.

Over the next days, months, years and decades, these words of his guru became the rallying point for Swami Niranjana for deeper contemplation on the path of sadhana, its prerequisites, pitfalls and true potentials. As he travelled across the globe, teaching and propagating the science of yoga, meeting people from all walks and stations of life, he closely observed their attitudes and attributes, trying to pinpoint what could make or mar one’s life. Even more so, he would analyze himself and try to observe his own strengths and shortcomings as a sadhaka. And whenever he happened to be near mountains, he would be reminded of Bhagiratha and he would begin assessing and analyzing himself to see if he shared the qualities Bhagiratha had.

He surely had those qualities, for in the coming years he proved himself more than equal to the task





that his guru had mandated to him. After taking over the reins of the yoga movement when his guru took kshetra-sannyasa, Swami Niranjan took the benefits of yoga to all sections and strata of society. Schools and colleges, medical institutes and research centres, prisons and drug rehabilitation centres, private and public corporates, police and armed forces, sports and academia – there was hardly any nook or corner of society where the light of yoga did not reach. The benefits of yoga were realized and appreciated by one and all.



Yet in his heart of hearts, Swami Niranjana was not satisfied.

People had confined themselves to the physical benefits of yoga. They were not ready to go further, to experience the transformative effects of yoga on the mind and beyond. The daring few who did venture to delve into the mind would hardly make any appreciable progress. How often had he come across people who would say, “Swamiji, I’ve been meditating for the last thirty years, yet I feel I haven’t made any progress at all.” The sad part was that it was true. Even after ‘meditating’ for any number of years, people couldn’t handle the slightest provocations or excursions from their limited comfort zones.

At times like these, Swami Niranjana would be reminded of Patanjali’s sutra about which he had quizzed his guru years ago. Swami Satyananda had been absolutely right. Something *more* than protraction, regularity and faith was needed to ensure success in sadhana. Otherwise why would people who had been faithfully and regularly meditating for a long time fail to see any improvement?

‘If these were the sole prerequisites for success in sadhana,’ Swami Niranjana would observe wryly at such times, ‘one’s heart would surely qualify for star-sadhaka status. Doesn’t it persevere in its lub-dup sadhana, faithfully and regularly, not just ten, twenty or thirty years, but one’s entire span of life!’

Another thing that bothered Swami Niranjana was the lack of a proper direction and aim in the sadhana that people practised. People dabbled with various tools and techniques of yoga without really understanding where they would lead them. More often than not, their dalliance with yoga was motivated just by the desire to fulfil their own immediate needs and aspirations. How could one develop *satkara*, faith in one’s sadhana, when one didn’t even know where the sadhana was meant to take them?

Over the years Swami Niranjana’s thoughts on the subject began to crystallize and take definite shape. All



that was needed now was the right occasion and the right forum to give proper expression to this ideology.

That occasion and forum turned out to be the World Yoga Convention, a grand event held in the city of yoga, Munger, in 2013 to commemorate the golden jubilee of Bihar School of Yoga, his guru's monumental contribution to yoga.

Some days after a yoga nidra induced download of the entire vision and plan for the convention (See Satyam Tale 13, *Dhoom-Dhaam* – Ed), Swami Niranjana once again lay down for a short session of his favourite relaxation practice. As his awareness descended into deeper and deeper realms, he heard the words of Swami Sivananda in his guru's voice: *"Have a definite purpose. Be determined. Be sincere. Be serious. Understand clearly and definitely what you are really aspiring for."* When his guru gave him the practice of yoga nidra as a child, he would often read aloud from Swami Sivananda's inspiring writings, and this phrase had been one of them. It had penetrated deep into his psyche, and had now germinated at just the right time.

When Swami Niranjana arose from his yoga nidra session, his mind was crystal clear. The last fifty years had been devoted to yoga propagation and that work was now over. People all over the world had gained some understanding and appreciation of the precepts and benefits of yoga. Yet they had only been flirting with yoga, practising and discarding it whimsically. They had been like children running and playing on the beach, afraid of getting their feet wet in the open sea. But to get at the beautiful pearls,



they would have to dive deep. That would only happen when yoga progressed from a practice to a sadhana, a lifestyle and a culture. That would be the charter, the mission, the vision of yoga for the next fifty years.

In order for yoga to progress from a mere practice to a sadhana and beyond, it was imperative that sadhakas realized the aim and aspiration of the yogic system they were following. And that aim was already clearly defined in the system itself. For hatha yoga, the aim was the balancing and uniting of the solar and lunar, the vital and mental forces. For raja yoga, it was the management of the *chitta-vrittis*, the mental modifications. For karma yoga, it was *atmashuddhi*, self-purification, *akarta bhava*, non-doership and *naishkarmya siddhi*, freedom from the binding fetters of karma.

Once the aim and aspiration was clear, the sadhaka then needed to cultivate the qualities of *sincerity*, *seriousness* and *commitment*. These would be the tools that the yoga sadhakas of tomorrow would use to hone and refine their sadhana to



a high degree of perfection, to climb the summit of yoga like agile alpinists, to break any and every barrier that stood in their way. These were the qualities that Swami Satyananda had hinted at almost fifty years ago, and now as Swami Niranjan sat assimilating the download he had received from his present yoga nidra, he began to fully grasp the import of his guru's words.

What were the lessons that shone clearly through the tale of Bhagiratha's marathon quest to bring Ganga down to the terrestrial plane? Bhagiratha had a clear aim and resolve, and he was sincere, serious and committed to achieving his aim. These three inner qualities, which helped him in reaching his goal, in turn expressed themselves as the traits highlighted in Patanjali's sutra.

Sincerity towards one's aim and resolve breeds *satkaara*, faith. How about seriousness, what does it breed? If a music student were to state that she was serious about her music, or a tennis player said he was serious about his sport, what would it imply? That they were regular in their respective practice. Thus, regularity is a natural outcome of seriousness. What about commitment? Swami Niranjan's thoughts went

back to the many people who had discussed their lives, careers and relationships with him over the years. The one word that came up often was commitment. What did it mean when people said they were committed to a relationship or a job? That they would make sure it lasted a long time. ‘That’s it,’ said Swami Niranjan to himself, ‘commitment naturally leads to *deerghkala*, long-lasting effort.’

All the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle had fallen into place. Swami Niranjan was absolutely clear about the future roadmap for yoga. In the run-up to the Convention he began to share his thoughts with those gathered around him and when the Convention began, it provided him with just the right forum to disseminate his ideas far and wide. At the conclusion of the grand convention, he gave a rousing call to all students, teachers and practitioners of yoga:

“Fifty years ago, Sri Swamiji proclaimed that yoga is the culture of tomorrow. That was five decades ago, and a time when nobody knew what yoga was. Now, fifty years down the line, after many sunrises and sunsets, after many moonrises and moonsets, we stand on the verge of witnessing that yoga has truly become a world culture. People across the globe, communities across the world, people



of all nations, caste and creed are turning to yoga for solace and peace – for their life, for their mind and for their spirit. Therefore, today we can safely say that the vision given by Sri Swamiji has been achieved, thanks to all of you. Yoga has indeed gone from door to door and shore to shore.

“Now the next mandate for all of us present here, and for all those around the globe who are witnessing this mega Yoga Convention, is to maintain the pristine purity of the tradition and the teachings. It is our duty and our dharma. We regularly need to clean our lamp, to avoid any accumulation of soot and dust on the glass, so that the light can radiate from that lamp and safely illumine the path for other travellers.

“In order to connect with the vision of the gurus, we have to be serious, we have to be sincere, and we have to be committed. With our sincerity, seriousness and commitment, we can live the vision of the seers and make yoga into a practical, applicable global culture which will bring light, inspiration, peace and life to all sections of human society. This is the message of this World Yoga Convention. Beyond caste, beyond creed, beyond religion, beyond dogma, it is a celebration of life, an understanding of the creative faculties of life, and a connection with joy and peace . . .”



SATYAM TALES 17





Satyam Tales

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

An aim, an ity, a ness and a ment is the seventeenth 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.

A seemingly innocuous question posed by Swami Niranjan to his guru on a sutra of Sage Patanjali results in an eye-opening answer and leads him on a lifelong quest to distill the essence of what it takes to achieve success in the motley endeavours and sadhanas of one's life. That quest in turn ends up setting the roadmap for the next fifty years of work in the field of yoga.

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 an achiever if you set yourself an aim and follow it with sincerity, seriousness and commitment.

—Editor

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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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