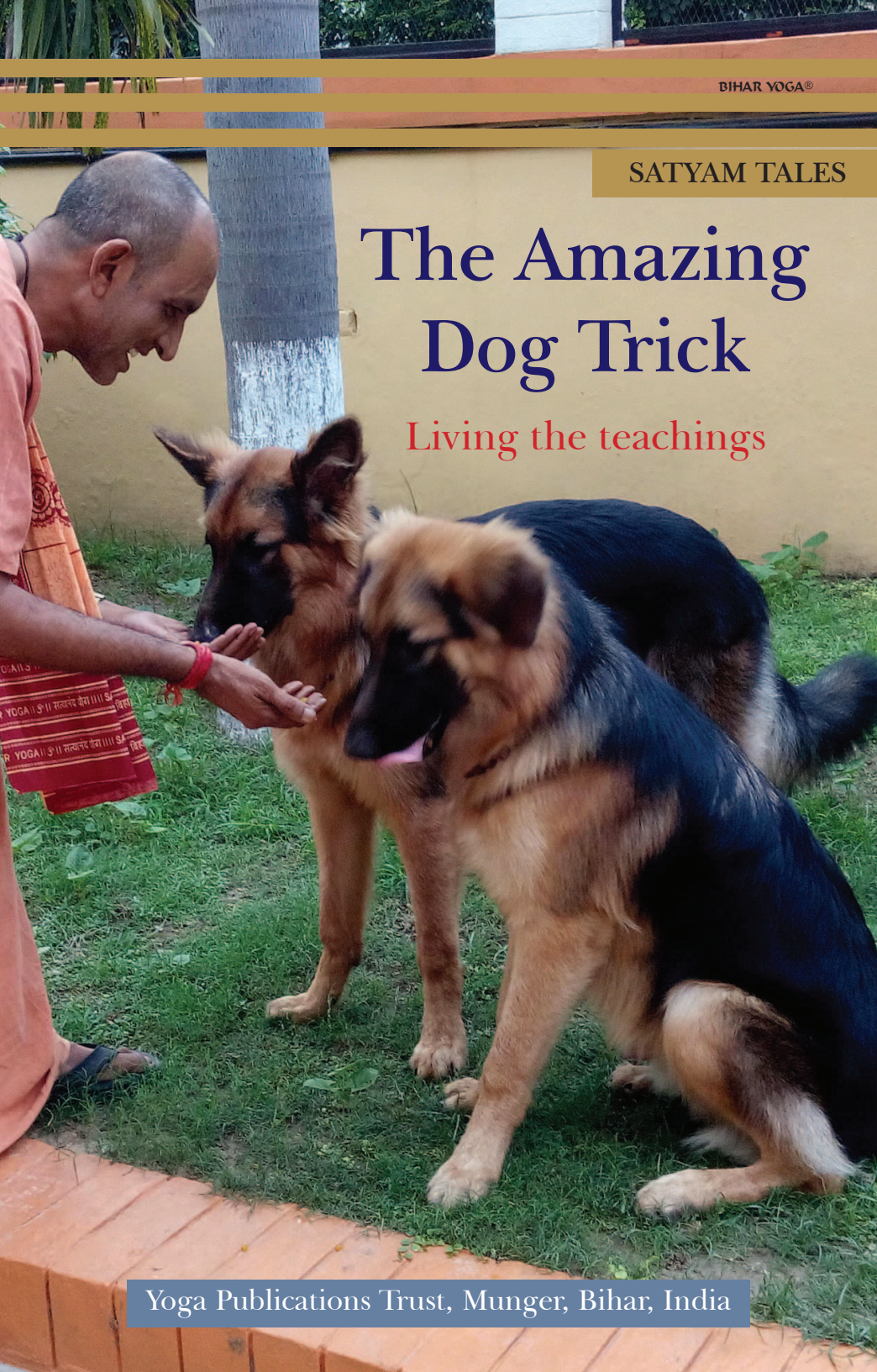
SATYAM TALES

The Amazing Dog Trick

Living the teachings



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

SATYAM TALES 23



Satyam Tales

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

The Amazing Dog Trick is the twenty-third 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 hypertensive man cures his malady when he uses the simple, yet extremely effective yogic technique of pratipaksha bhavana. He goes on to apply this principle, which he calls the dog trick, to other problems and situations, not only in his own life but also in the life of fellow human beings. By living the teachings of the masters, he finds the peace and happiness that had eluded him all along.

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 apply the amazing dog trick in your own life!

—Editor

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Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2017

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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The Amazing Dog Trick

"No, it is better if a young person writes for the young. As they say, *samujhe khag khag hee kai bhasha*, a bird can follow the language of a bird alone."

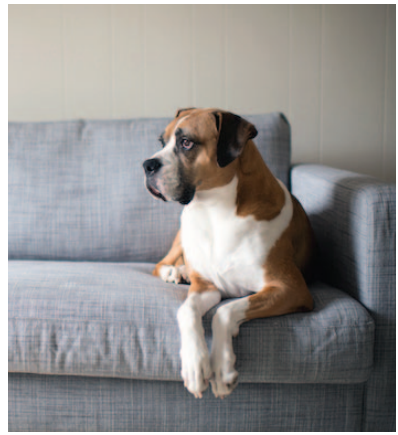
"But it all began with your trick with the dogs."

"No, it was you. You were always late and that's why . . ."

"But I told you that I was never late, remember? So you begin and then we can write it together. It will be our story."

"All right then. So let me begin our tale with how Swami Niranjan tells my story:

Once a person came to me and said, 'Swamiji, I am suffering from hypertension.' I asked, 'Do you remember the cause of your hypertension? How did it first start?' The man said, 'Yes, I remember. I retired six months ago and one day at my son's home I was sitting on the sofa, having tea and reading the newspaper. My daughter-in-law, who was in a foul mood that day, was vacuum-cleaning the room. I heard her mutter under her breath, 'My father-in-law sits like a lazy dog on the sofa all day long.' I did not say anything to her, but I still carry the pain and hurt of that statement in my



heart. I am sure that is the cause of my hypertension. Swamiji, what yoga practices can I do for curing my problem?'

I asked, 'When she said that you sit like a lazy dog on the sofa, what kind of dog did you picture in your mind?' He said, 'Oh a street dog, of course.' So I told the man, 'Your hypertension is not because of what your daughter-in-law said, but because of the image you created. You saw yourself as a skinny, one-eyed, three-legged, flea-ridden dog with open sores all over the body.' He replied, 'Yes, that's true. I see myself like that kind of dog. What yoga can I do?'

I said, 'No asana or pranayama for you. The only yoga practice that will help you is to change the type of dog.' He stared at me, thinking that I must have gone crazy, so I continued, 'Look at my two dogs, Hari and Aryan. They are five-star dogs. Food served on time, room with AC, when they travel, only AC; a devoted staff around the clock to look after their every need and whim. Aren't they gorgeous? See yourself as a third fabulous Alsatian, and I guarantee your hypertension will vanish.' The man looked at me, looked at the two dogs, then at me again and with a deep sigh he said, 'All right Swamiji, if you think so.'

Six months later, he returned. I had forgotten about the dog bit and only remembered our meeting when he said, 'Swamiji, your trick worked. I don't have hypertension anymore and I feel as happy, valued and loved as your two dogs. Thank you so much.'





Now this is Swamiji telling the story, and I am that person with hypertension whose story Swamiji tells. I am sure you know the story well. It has gone around the world many times and has been told in many languages. I often wondered what 'lazy dog' sounds like in Bulgarian or Korean. Swamiji loves to tell this story, especially the description of the street dog which he accompanies with exaggerated gestures of scratching and limping. Once when I was in the audience, he told the story in such great detail that everyone was just rolling with laughter.

I am telling you this not for you to have a good giggle, but to let you know of what happened after the story, something even Swamiji does not know.

I had gone to Ganga Darshan to tell Swamiji that I had cured my high blood pressure due to his yogic advice. After I thanked him, I gave Hari and Aryan, always on their Master's side, a wink, so to say from five-star dog to five-star dog. They acknowledged with a bit of a knowing bark, and I took my leave.

Once settled in the train, my first question was 'So what now?' If you are able to transform a flea-ridden, one-eyed, three-legged street dog into a majestic Alsatian, and as a side effect normalize your blood pressure, then it is only natural

to ask yourself 'What next?' Looking out of the window and hoping for inspiration or just an answer, I prepared myself for a long, uneventful journey home.

Donkey – so what!

Slowly my attention was drawn inside the compartment to my fellow travellers. A small boy, about six or seven years old, was crying, his heartbreaking sobs were shaking his frail little body. "You always say that I am as stupid as a donkey. But I try my best, it just takes time sometimes. And I am not a donkey." The father of the little donkey looked rather sheepishly at us trying to hide his embarrassment. "It is true, he is trying hard, and maybe I have to be a little bit more patient. But as parents we only want the best for him."

We co-travellers silently nodded consent or at least acknowledgement of his excuse. My heart went out to the little donkey-boy and I contemplated: 'Should I or should I not?' We had another eight hours ahead of us, sharing this space and each other's company. 'Should I risk tension, arguments or even a fist fight? Should I step in and show the boy a trick or two?' I looked at the impatient father and closed my eyes. The image of Hari and Aryan appeared instantaneously, barking an unmistakable, "Go for it!" And that's what I did.

"What's your name?" A sniffly "Vivek" was the reply. "What a beautiful name you have! You know you should not be upset about being called a donkey. Donkeys are wonderful animals. You are just thinking of the skinny, bony, limping, flea-ridden donkey roaming the streets and being beaten up with a big stick by people. The truth is donkeys are smart animals, smarter than we are, for they know when it is worth fighting and when it is better to keep quiet. Have you ever seen a donkey which is angry and kicks people?" The boy nodded.

"Donkeys are very special; their silvery, grey coat is simple but so elegant, not flashy like a tiger's or a zebra's. Their big furry ears hear and understand everything. Oh, and those



big, black eyes! They see right through you with so much love. They are the most hard-working, patient and humble animals and should serve as an example to all of us. So don't be ashamed, instead know that you also have these good donkey qualities and learn to use them."

The boy smiled and so did his father. I silently gave a sigh of relief – 'no fist fight'. I closed my eyes, sent a 'Thank You' to Hari and Aryan and gently went to sleep.

It must have been after a good hour that loud voices from further down the coach pulled me back to the train's reality. Some commotion and shouting was going on. "Can't you see the two bottles under the seat, you lazy dog?" Obviously the sweeper was at the receiving end of a passenger's irritation. The boy looked at me wisely and with a big grin across his face. Yes, he got it and he would be just fine.

Discovering the trick

Back home my real journey began, my yogic journey. For now I wanted to know: Positive things make us happy, and negative things make us unhappy. If we replaced that which makes us unhappy with something that makes us happy, we would be all right. But we don't. So where's the catch?

I started reading books on yoga by Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and Swamiji. Somewhere in those pages the answer stood out clearly. It was called *pratipaksha bhavana* – replacing something negative, disturbing and destructive with something positive, uplifting and constructive. There were so many pairs of opposites, like the 18 ITIES of Swami Sivananda which are the good qualities which have to replace the bad ones: serenity for grumpiness, simplicity for complicatedness, tenacity for whimsical flirtiness, generosity for stinginess.

Wherever I turned in my spiritual reading, there were examples of pratipaksha bhavana like: don't lie, tell the truth; don't steal, give to others. It seemed to be the most common basic yoga trick and it had worked wonders with the dogs.

One day I came across Swamiji's description of our six companions: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada* and *matsarya*, or passion, anger (in all its sneaky ways and forms), greed, delusion, pride and envy. Those six make who we are and stay with us from birth to death. It is up to us to make them friends and use them appropriately or have them as enemies and let them run the show of our lives.

I decided to start with krodha, for I am an easily irritable person. I had to do two things: practise bhramari pranayama at the first sign of irritation and replace the irritation with forgiveness. Sounds easy, doesn't it? Nothing compared to . . . you know what I mean. I identified the first cause of my regular irritation: the newspaper. Well, not the actual newspaper, but the newspaper boy who was always late, and made me wait. However, the moment I thought of him and my daily vexation, the whole idea of pratipaksha bhavana seemed unreal and a bit crazy.

One of the few pleasures of a retired person is to have a slow morning with a cup of tea and a newspaper. I was denied this simple pleasure because of this good-for-nothing neighbourhood newspaper boy. And I was to forgive this lazy chap – impossible! Forgive this rascal who throws my newspaper on the verandah whenever it pleases him – never!

Part two

That's what he thought, yet here I am standing near the steps to his verandah waiting for him to come. It is true what he said. For one year, all I heard was "Late," "Late again," or a heavy, deafening silence, until one day it was a kind of would-like-to-be friendly "Good morning." I almost fell of my bicycle in shock and terror. I thought he must have pushed the wrong button and got the wrong playlist. Next day, comfortable silence; and thus the weeks passed with "Late," "Late again," silence and "Good morning" which I learned to answer with an equally friendly "Good morning to you, Sir."

Then another bombshell exploded, "What's your good name?" I managed to mumble a "Santosh, Sir," and sped off on my bicycle. Shortly after came the third shock, he appeared on the verandah – a kind, elderly, yet not old, gentleman. We looked at each other, smiled, I handed him his newspaper and rode off. From then on we met occasionally and briefly talked about this and that: the weather, sports, politics (neighbourhood, local, state, national and international) scientific discoveries and other varied topics, or he would ask about school and how I was getting on with my studies.

He also told me about his retired life, his family, yoga and Swami Niranjan, his guru in Bihar. One day he said, "Today I am very happy because my yogic anger-management worked. You know for one year your tardy delivery of the newspaper irritated me. I was angry at you for always being late, but see, thanks to yoga I am now enjoying a chat with you." He showed me a picture of Hari, Aryan and Swami Niranjan, then he told me about the different kinds of



dogs and about pratipaksha bhavana. For a split second, an alarm light flashed. I admit I took an intense look at him, yet no trace of dog hair, wet-black nose or furry ears (up or down) could be detected. No, he was fully human, so the dog trick must be something else, I thought.

He said that I reminded him of a story from the life of Buddha which Swami Niranjan liked to tell:

Once a man stood before Buddha and started to abuse him left, right and centre. After he had vented his anger and his throat had gone hoarse from yelling, he became silent. Now Buddha said, 'Can you answer a question of mine?' The man said, 'What?' Buddha said, 'Imagine you are a guest in somebody's house and you go with a gift in your hand. You offer the gift to the man of the house, and he does not accept it. What do you do?' The angry man replied, 'I take back the gift.' Buddha said with a smile, 'Exactly. I am not accepting any of what you have given me. I am returning your gift of anger to you.'

"You see, Santosh, I don't mean to say that you are like Buddha, but you too never reacted to my angry words and



so the anger kept coming back to me. On Akshay Tritiya, an auspicious day to make positive resolves, I decided to deal with my irritable nature which I showed not only towards you, but also towards family members and friends. I can say that I have replaced anger with understanding and forgiveness, maybe not completely but say 77%. So I am happy today."

I was flattered enough to muster all my courage and finally say what I had to say, "Sir, you never told me at what time you wanted your newspaper. When I came at eight, you said "Late," at nine "Late again," at ten "Late." Maybe that's why I did not respond." He looked at me utterly bewildered, stunned and finally broke out into a loud roaring laugh, "Yes, you are right, Santosh, absolutely right." From that day on I called him 'Uncle' and yoga became our favourite topic.

Of theory . . .

It is true I became fond of this newspaper boy. He was a fine youth, always respectful, eager to learn and good humoured. I gave him a *Surya Namaskara* note book I had received from the ashram and he presented me with a demonstration which was not bad at all. I told him about trataka to increase his concentration and bhramari to calm his mind should he feel agitated or restless.



"Uncle," he asked me one day, "do I have to wait for the next Akshay Tritiya to do a pratipaksha bhavana?"

"No, not at all. You can start anytime. What's up?"

"There is this boy in my class and he has everything. Yesterday he even came with a scooter to school. He wears new clothes all the time, he has lots of friends and the teachers also like him. I know

I am full of envy. Even at night I think about him. He never talks to me, or only in a haughty way. I feel he has everything and I have nothing. Can you teach me the dog trick?"

I looked at my little friend not knowing what to say. For a few moments I was transported back to my youth – yes, I knew the poison of envy and jealousy: he was a classmate at college and later a colleague in the same company; he had everything and I felt I had nothing or at best second choice. One day he left for America and slowly left my mind and life.

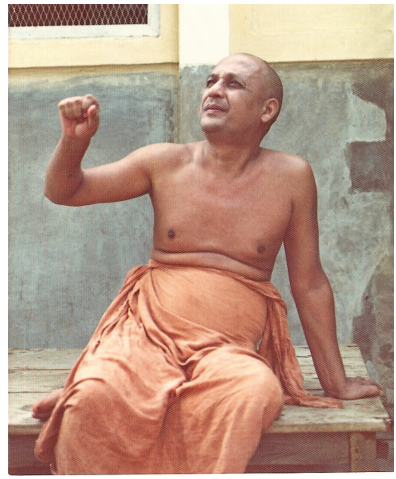
The honest request of Santosh however brought back vivid images, the sleepless nights, the pain and frustration of envy. "I know what you mean, envy is a nasty thing. I also was envious of a classmate long time ago, but I never learnt to deal with it. So I can't help you, but let me see if I can find something in the yoga books for next time."

The next time we met, I had a few notes ready to share with him which I hoped would inspire us to deal with this destructive feeling of envy:

Swami Sivananda: In this world jealousy is the chief enemy of peace. It assumes the form of petty-mindedness and creates a great deal of havoc and mischief. He who has eradicated all forms of jealousy through the development of a magnanimous heart, atmabhava and enquiry into the nature of the Self, is the happiest and most peaceful man in the world.



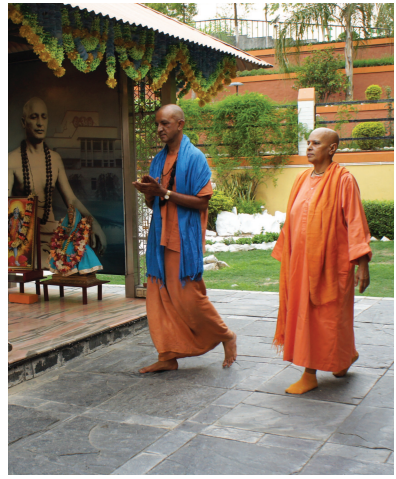
God has created every human being in this world with some conveniences and some inconveniences. See good in everything, have a contented life and enjoy peace and bliss. When there is only one all-pervading Self in all beings, how can one be jealous of another? How can one exploit another? How can one hate another?



Swami Satyananda: Jealousy is darkness. It is the outcome of petty-mindedness. It is so unnecessary that it gives you nothing but restlessness of mind. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali there is this meaningful sutra (1:33): When you see a happy person, you should make him your friend. When you see an unhappy, miserable person, you should feel compassion. When you see a person doing good, virtuous acts, you should be glad. When you encounter a scoundrel, ignore him.

Usually you are jealous of people who are happy and prosperous in their lives. That is your natural reaction. However, according to yoga, you should make them your friends so that their happiness becomes your happiness.

Swami Niranjan: The way to overcome *matsarya*, the feeling of envy and jealousy, is to develop happiness, *prasannata*. Be happy for what you are and for what you have. At the same time, be happy for what others have and are.



Swami Satsangi: Use jealousy constructively. If I draw a line on a piece of paper and tell you, 'Look, you have to go beyond this line, you have to go higher than that', then what are you going to do? You have two options: either you erase that line or you draw a longer line and go beyond. If you are jealous of a person or of something the person has accomplished, try to do better. That is the struggle and achievement.

Santosh listened carefully, eager to find the trick that would put an end to his pain. “But how to do it? I have an envious heart, not a magnanimous one. And I am not happy.”

“Santosh, I don’t know. These are ideas given by masters and scriptures, but we have to find out for ourselves how to do it. Look, I will be away for a month. My wife and I are doing a yoga training for retired people at our ashram in Bihar. I will think about how to get rid of envy, but you also try out methods and ways. When I come back we can compare notes.” With these vague words I left my friend behind.

The Vanaprastha Sadhana Satra was amazing: from morning until night we were busy with class and satsang, chanting and cleaning, sadhana and seva. One month no leisurely cup of tea and no newspaper! Swamiji proposed a new way of living life and I liked it. We were a group of 27 elderlies with lots of aches and pains, yet with even more good

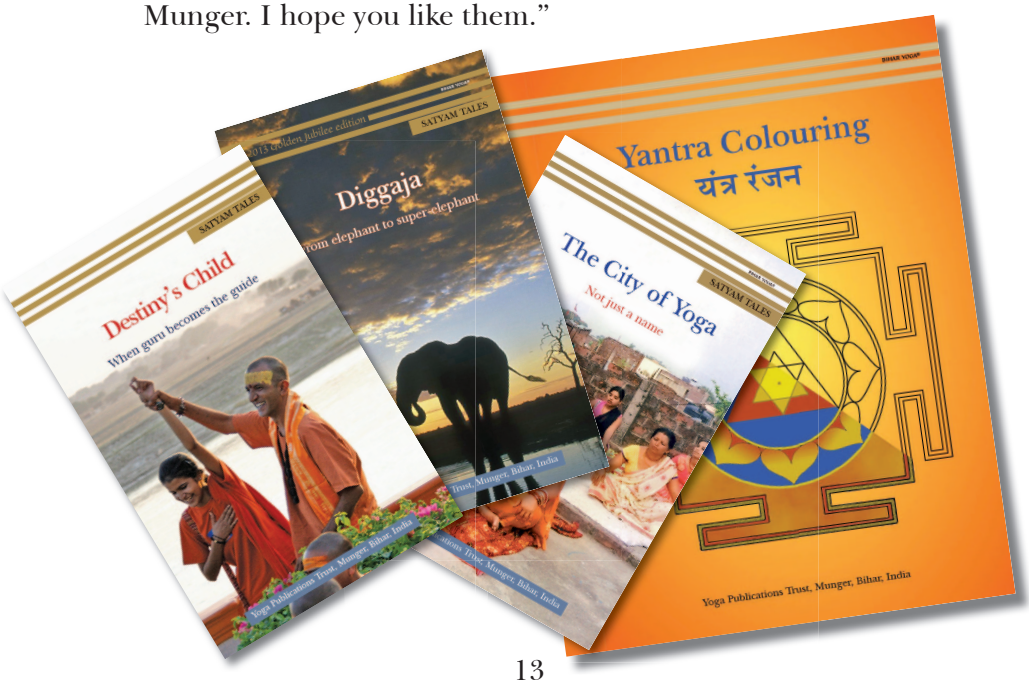


humour. We enjoyed the opportunities offered every moment of the day: the up and down, the running and waiting, the hot sun and cold water, the teaching and the learning.

It was on the fifth day, that I felt there was something familiar about one man in our group, yet I could not place him anywhere. He also looked at me as if he knew me, but it was not easy to get to know each other. We were busy and when we were not busy it was mouna time. However, here and there we put in a few questions, and it turned out that he was the classmate and colleague gone to America more than thirty years ago!

. . . and practice

I was really happy to meet Uncle after his yoga training in the ashram in Bihar. He brought me a beautiful yantra colouring book, a box of colouring crayons and told me a little bit about yantras. Then he said, "Here are some *Satyam Tales* from the ashram. One is about an elephant, one about a very special girl and another one is about the children of Munger. I hope you like them."



Then he wanted to know how things had been for me. My month had been the same as every other month, but with one big difference. I was at home with my family, I went to school, I did my rounds of newspapers, and I made a new friend.

"Do you remember about the boy in my class who I envied so much?"

"Yes, I do. What happened?"

"He had an accident with his scooter and broke his leg. In the beginning, the other boys went to see him with the work we did at school and our homework, but soon they stopped. One day, our teacher asked me to take an assignment and pick up some overdue homework. I felt so uneasy. I was not happy that he had an accident but I did not feel magnanimous either. And now to go to his house when he had not once asked me to come . . . it was so hard, but I had to do what the teacher said.

"When I arrived at his house he was also uneasy, but then he was happy that someone was visiting. We had a good time and made jokes about some of our teachers. He asked me to come again, and I did every day for two weeks until he came back to school. When I saw something he had and I didn't, I just said to myself, 'Santosh, be happy for him and be happy for you. No more petty envy.' You know Uncle, with every visit my envy left a little bit more. We got to know each other: our likes and dislikes, our fears and dreams, our doubts and hopes, our strengths and weaknesses. We became best of friends.

"So your dog trick worked again: replace what you don't want with what you want and all will be well. Now I am able to be happy for what he has and I am happy for what I have. And you? Did you find anything to help you with your old jealousy?"

Next time we met I gave Uncle two of my coloured yantras and he told me about the man who was the same man he had envied so much thirty years ago. They had lived together for one month, laughed a lot, broken the ashram discipline of keeping silence to share the past and make plans for the future. They had become friends, and living

again in the same town they wanted to encourage each other and maybe others to lead a yoga life like vanaprasthis. They had many ideas, including chanting of stotras and bhajans, scripture reading and discussion, yogasana and meditation class. His new friend had a big house and wanted to turn one room into a yoga room.

Then he said, "Santosh, do you want to hear my favourite story from this yoga training? Swami Niranjan loves to use stories as a teaching."

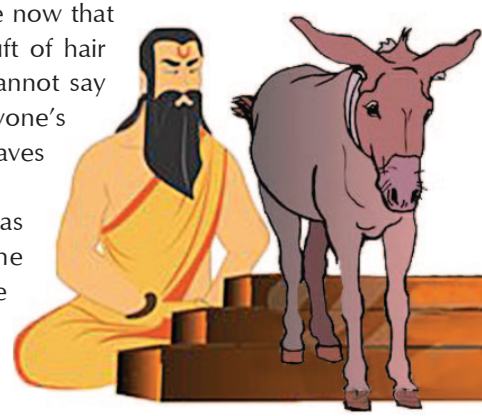
"Uncle, would I ever say 'no' to a story?"

Once an aged swami was passing through the market. A mischievous and arrogant merchant called the swami and asked him in jest, "O Swamiji, please tell me which is superior – your beard or the tuft of hair on the tail of a donkey?" The swami did not say a word.

Five years rolled by and the swami was on his death bed. He sent one of his disciples to fetch the merchant, who was duly brought to him. The swami said, "My dear friend, now I can give you a definite answer to the question you asked me five years ago. My beard is superior to the tuft of hair on the tail of a donkey."

The merchant, who had put the question in jest, was now much perplexed. He asked, "O venerable swami, why did you not give me an answer then?"

The swami replied, "Now that my life is about to depart from the body, there is no chance of me doing a wrong action. There is no chance of me having a downfall. Up to this time I have lived a pure life, so I can boldly state now that my beard is superior to the tuft of hair on the tail of a donkey. We cannot say anything definite regarding anyone's character until the last breath leaves the body."



The arrogant merchant was struck with wonder when he heard the wise words of the swami. He prostrated before him and apologized for his indecent and rude question.

I also liked that story. I wanted to remember it and not judge anyone. I wanted to be open and see only the good in people, like Swami Satyananda. He always found at least one good quality in people even among many shortcomings. I thought of the old swami who could look back on a pure life. I wondered: if I make an effort to be good, practise and live good qualities, then this whole business of pratipaksha bhavana will be so much easier and maybe one day I won't even have to do pratipaksha bhavana at all . . .

"By the way, I really liked the Satyam Tales you gave me. Did you ever meet the Diggaja? And those BYMM children? Are they real or only story-fantasy?"

"Oh my dear Santosh, they are very real. During my vanaprastha training these children did everything: chanting and kirtan, havan and pooja, yogasana and dance. Their presence was pure delight. They combine impeccable discipline with the most natural joy."

"Why don't you write a *Satyam Tale* about your yoga and your life and the dog trick? There are so many things you could tell people . . ."

And that's how our story ended and began . . .



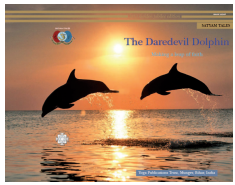
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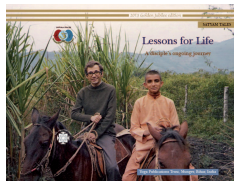
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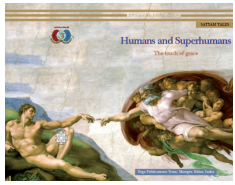
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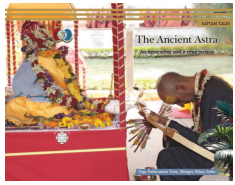
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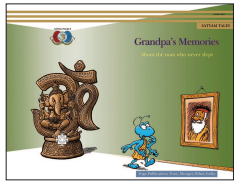
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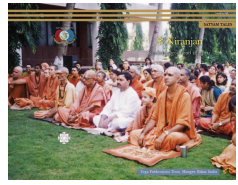
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12. Om Niranjan
Realizing godhead in guru



13. Dhoom-Dhaam
Program, download and print



14. Sodium and Potassium
The play of Kamala and Kali



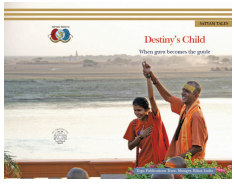
15. Spike the Hedgehog
And his open-heart surgery



16. The Crew
For the welfare and happiness of many



17. An aim, an ity, a ness and a ment
Watchwords that spell success



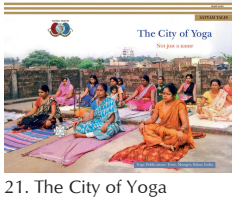
18. Destiny's Child
When guru becomes the guide



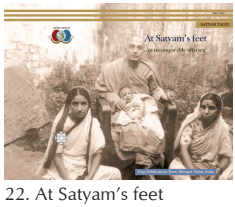
19. My Friend Namrata
Not just a blade of grass



20. A Ray of Joy
That lit up the earth and sky



21. The City of Yoga
Not just a name



22. At Satyam's feet
An incomparable offering


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