

SATYAM TALES

Diggaja Returns

To relearn the a-b-c of discipleship



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



Satyam Tales

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

Diggaja Returns is the twenty-fifth 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.

Kareesh, a celestial elephant has been designated the successor of the current diggaja, Vinayaka, but instead of instilling a sense of commitment and responsibility in him, the elevation has gone to his head and made him vain and conceited. Knowing that pride has its downfall, Kareesh's master sends him to his guru-bhai in Ganga Darshan, Munger for some much-needed lessons in service, humility and, above all, discipleship.

This story is a delightful read for children and adults 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 ably walk on the path of discipleship . . .

—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.
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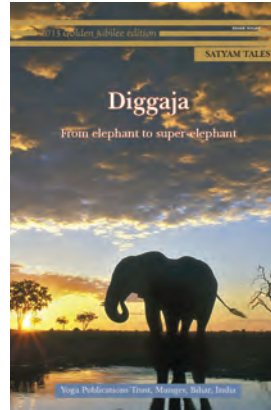
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Diggaja Returns

The title of this memoir may sound like a Hollywood sequel, but let me make it clear at the outset that I am not the Diggaja you may be thinking about. You can call me a Diggaja-in-waiting, but that's about as close I get to the title.

Allow me to make things a little less murky. My Master is Vinayaka, the grand elephant you've encountered before (see Satyam Tale 1, *Diggaja* – Ed), and I, Kareesh, happen to be his foremost disciple. As mentioned in that first Satyam Tale, Airavata, the Diggaja of the eastern quarter, had taken my Master under his wings. When Airavata got into a bit of trouble and had to relinquish his position (I won't delve into details for I'm not a gossip-monger), it was but natural that my Master got elevated to that role.

I was apprenticed to my Master at a very young age. Being the smartest, ablest and fittest among all my fellow disciples, it was no surprise that I



became my Master's favourite. And when he was elevated as the Diggaja of the eastern quarter, it was clear in elephant-circles that one day I would be his successor.

Naturally all this turned my head, although I didn't realize it then. I turned into a haughty know-it-all, who snubbed his lesser-gifted guru-bhais at the drop of a hat. Had my haughtiness been limited to my guru-bhais it might have been excused as one-upmanship tantrums that always crop up amongst peers, but when I started doubting, nay, even questioning my Master, I had crossed a line.

Pride has its fall, that's the lesson I was bright enough to draw from the Airavata episode (whose details, as mentioned before, shall not escape my lips), but apparently not bright enough to see the very same flaw within myself.

My kind and compassionate Master tolerated my tantrums for a while, patiently trying to teach me through subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Of course, I was oblivious to what he was trying to instil in me and it must have been my elephantine thick-headedness that prompted him to hatch a plan that led to the events you are about to read.

One fine day, we were out on a morning stroll, when my Master suddenly stopped and said, "You know Kareesh, I've been thinking about your future . . ."



My ears perked up. ‘Is this going to be a pep-talk on my upcoming successorship?’ I wondered, gleefully imagining the envious looks on the faces of my guru-bhais.

“... and I think right now a sabbatical is what you need,” he said quite resolutely.

“A sabbatical!” I spluttered, my fantasy rudely punctured, “For what? Haven’t I already learnt all there is to learn?” I asked rather insolently. What I didn’t say aloud was that the prospect of someone else stepping into my shoes while I was away was not very pleasant either.

“I may have taught you all I know, but that doesn’t necessarily mean you’ve assimilated it all. Sometimes a change of surroundings is most helpful in order to take the leap to the next level.”

“Exactly what kind of ‘surroundings’ do you have in mind, Master?” I asked warily.

“Now don’t you wrinkle your long nose when I say ‘human surroundings’. Remember Swami Satyananda, my earthly mentor who made me what I am today? Swami Niranjana, his successor, is a very warm-hearted and caring guru-bhai. I’m sure a few weeks in his ashram will do you a world of good. If human intervention proved crucial to my spiritual breakthrough, perhaps it may be of some help to you too.”



Suffice it to say that it took a great deal of coaxing and cajoling to get me to agree. The next thing I knew we were at the gates of a place called the Bihar School of Yoga in a sleepy little town by the name of Munger. As we crossed the inter-dimensional barrier that separated the celestial and terrestrial dimensions, my Master transformed me into a chubby, brown, earthly elephant and himself into my mahout.



I was expecting a rousing welcome and a comfortable, five-star stay at the ashram. Little did I know what my Master had telepathically pre-planned with his guru-bhai. After an agonizingly long wait at the gate, and innumerable queries ranging from the details of our prior correspondence to our aadhar card number, we were finally let in. Swami Niranjan happened to be walking around the ashram premises



right then, and we were led straight to him. After a jovial welcome, he took us along on a little tour of the ashram.

At the end of the tour, he asked my Master if he could have a ride on me. To my dismay my Master instantly agreed. Swami Niranjan nimbly climbed up and planted himself comfortably behind my Master. It was his way of setting the ground rules and letting me know who was the boss.

After a short ride, my Master jumped down. I looked at my Master with pleading eyes. I didn't want to be left at the mercy of these hideous humans. His eyes were twinkling as he said, "I'll be off now, Kareesh. Make the most of your stay at your chacha-



guru's ashram. I've taken away most of your celestial powers so you can't throw your weight around. Be a humble disciple and imbibe as much as you can."

"Can I at least keep my cellphone with its Universal Roaming?" I pleaded.

"So you can text and tweet all day long? No way, my boy! In any case, haven't you seen the No-Mobile-Phone signs all over the ashram?"

"But what if I need to talk to you?" I beseeched.

"The need won't arise. Your chacha-guru will take very good care of you."

"Absolutely!" said Swami Niranjan with a twinkle in his eye, "He can participate in all the activities that my sannnyasins engage in."

"What if there's an emergency?" I asked desperately.

"You can always make a trunk-call, Kareesh!" Swami Niranjan quipped with a wink. My Master winked back, waved good-bye and was gone in a trice.

"The first thing, Kareesh," said Swami Niranjan, sizing me up, "would be to get you some decent digs." Turning to one of the sannnyasins accompanying him, he said, "What would be something suitable for our new guest, Swami Atmamaitri?"



The swami in question brought out her room allocation charts, but search as she might, nothing suitable was found. "Single rooms – out of the question, doubles and triples – still too small, halls – need

staircase access,” she was mumbling aloud, “... the only viable option would probably be...”

“The garage,” said Swami Niranjan decisively. And that was it.

I was feeling rather morose while Swami Atmamaitri was escorting me down to the garage. I had expected to be treated at least like royalty, if not divinity, and to be shackled in a garage was quite a let-down. Little did I realize that it was only a taste of things to come.

“What was your name again?” she asked, more to cheer me up than anything else.

“Kareesh,” I said, with the greatest gravity and dignity I could muster in the circumstances.

“Krish! That’s so cool. Our very own desi superhero has the same name. His Bollywood movies are absolutely...”

“It’s not Krish,” I retorted with some irritation. The image of myself in a mask, cape and tights à la comic-book-superheroes was quite embarrassing to say the least. “It is Kareeeeeeeesh,” I intoned, really drawing out the middle vowel, “Kari and Ish, that’s how this word is derived in Sanskrit, which means...”

“Lord of the curries, isn’t it? We should have you in the kitchen right away dishing out savory curries,” exclaimed my escort with a giggle.



I gave up. First the lowly lodgings and now this cruel mutilation of my refined name! The odds were stacked against me. Nonetheless I replied just to keep the record straight, “It’s actually Lord of the Elephants . . .” My voice trailed off as I realized I was hardly a lord of anything right now.

We had reached the garage by now. It had been a long day and all I wanted to do was crash for the night. But for some unexplained reason, we just stood outside and kept waiting. “Is something the matter? Lost the key or something?” I finally piped up.

“No. Just waiting for Airavata to be moved out so you can move in.”

The name of my grand-master instantly brought me to attention. It was only when the ashram driver sauntered over, opened the garage and I heard the sound of an engine revving inside that I realized what my grand-master’s namesake was – the ashram car.

“Make yourself completely at home,” said Swami Atmamaitri, showing me around my lodgings after the car had roared off. “Swami Satyamurti will get some hay tomorrow and make your digs comfy and cozy. Let me know if you need anything else.”

I let out a few quick snorts from my trunk, to clear the exhaust fumes and also to let my escort know what I thought of the place. Then I added haughtily, “I’ll be fine. I can make myself as small and light as I please. Not to mention as big and heavy too.”

The look on her face showed precisely what she thought of my claim. I decided to show off my *anima* and *mahima* powers a little, the ability to transform myself to minute as well as gargantuan proportions. I brought the image of a tiny ant to mind, focused intently upon it and whooosh! I was tinier than the tiniest ant now.

“Can you see me now?” I asked haughtily.

“Of course, unless you want me to close my eyes,” came the cheeky reply.

I tried harder. “How about now?”



“Just the same, except now you have a river of sweat running down your head and trunk.”

I ignored the comment and tried with all my might. “The anima should definitely work now,” I muttered.

“I don’t know what you’re trying to do Kareesh, but the constipated look on your face clearly says what you really need now is a yogic enema!”

The sarcasm wasn’t lost on me. I gave up.

“Well Kareesh, looks like most features in your psychic software are disabled at the moment,” she said in a tone that was part consoling, part condescending. “Let me tell you what we do around here to make ourselves small and light – guru bhakti and seva.” She let the words hang in the air for a few moments. “Good night Kareesh, see you at the office tomorrow for your registration.”

The next morning I had my bath in the pond adjacent to the ashram and after breakfast I showed up at the Ganga Darshan Office. An elderly, bespectacled swami who couldn’t stop giggling, lined me up against a wall and brought out

a camera. “Smile Kareesh!” I just raised my trunk to hide my face. The camera flashed, and a few minutes later I had an ID badge hanging down my neck. “Yeah right,” I said to myself, “As if someone could forget who I am.”

Next stop – Karma Yoga desk. The lady in charge was rapidly scanning through her Karma Yoga slots wondering where to fit me in. Finally, she handed me a skills assessment form to fill out, more to buy time than anything else.

I glanced at the various checkboxes. Cooking, gardening, editing, typing, carpentry, electrical . . . I was tempted to tick all boxes, but after last night’s fiasco with the anima siddhi, I decided that discretion was the better part of valour. I ticked one little box – gardening, for I love to be outdoors.

Thus my seva in the ashram started in the gardening department with Swami Satyamurti. I started by carrying logs of wood and other heavy loads and soon graduated to other things. I could quickly pluck mangoes from the tallest trees, level uneven ground with a few stomps of my feet and best of all, water the entire main lawn in a jiffy with my inbuilt



sprinkler. That was loads of fun, for I would drench any and everyone who came within spraying distance, especially the children of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, the Children’s Yoga Fellowship. And they would try to get back at me with hosepipes and assorted paraphernalia.

I would really look forward to these Holi-days, for that’s what the ashram inmates started calling these occasions.

The holidays soon came to an end though. With the onset of summer and the subsequent shortage of water in the ashram, water-rationing was put into effect. Watering of lawns and trees was put on hold. One day after a stroll through the parched lawns, I bumped into Swami Satyamurti. “Won’t the grass die before the summer is over?”

“Not if I can help it. It’s time to implement Plan B,” he replied.

“What is Plan B?”

“The backup plan,” he half-whispered.

“And what exactly is that?” I asked somewhat impatiently.

He just signalled me to follow. Soon we were standing atop a big cement slab. He bent down and lifted a big manhole. “Here’s all the water we need for the lawns and more.”

I sniffed suspiciously. The odour was quite offensive to my refined olfactory sense. After all it was a soak-pit where all the waste water from the drains and bathrooms ended up. I raised my trunk, snorted in disgust and walked away haughtily. Surely they didn’t expect me to ingest that yucky stuff and sprinkle it all over the lawn! All of Satyamurti’s cajoling and pleadings fell on deaf ears.

As I was stomping off the scene, a swami who happened to overhear the commotion came alongside and started up a casual conversation. “So, how are you finding life in the ashram, Kareesh?” he asked cheerily.

‘Stinking,’ I thought to myself, but for courtesy sake managed a polite, “Oh, quite all right, thank you.”

“You are fibbing,” he chuckled, as if reading my thoughts, then noticing my embarrassed look, changed the topic, “What about Swamiji?”

“What about him?”

“What do you think of him?” Then seeing my rather blank look, he added, “Haven’t you interacted with him at all?”

“Not really,” I said, “Apart from the day I arrived, haven’t really interacted with him. Just saw him during a couple of satsangs, that too from far away, as they usually seat me at the back. To be frank I find him a little intimidating.”

“Perhaps because he is a stickler for discipline. This is what he expects and demands from his disciples, that they may evolve and grow into better human beings. According to him, ‘The word disciple is a very straightforward word. One who is disciplined is a disciple and one who is not disciplined is not a disciple, just a follower. Their following stops after some time

because they are not disciplined. And he who is disciplined is the disciple who follows the path that the guru has walked upon.' Swamiji means each and every word that he says. His own life after all is the very definition of discipleship."

I was judging the last remark on its merits when the swami surprised me again with his uncanny understanding of my thought-processes. "You may think this to be the hyperbole of an overzealous disciple, but let me narrate a little incident and then you are free to judge," he said.

"This happened many years ago, when Sri Swami Satyananda was still living in this ashram. Someone reported that the septic tank of one of the buildings was overflowing. When Sri Swamiji went there to have a look, he found many sannyasins there. They were all watching but no one was willing to do anything about the situation.

"Turning towards Swamiji, Sri Swamiji merely uttered 'Niranjan'. That was all it took for Swamiji to take off his



hat, kurta and vest, gird up his dhoti and jump into the overflowing tank. From there he started passing bucketfuls to the others standing at the edge and soon a human chain was rapidly emptying the contents of the tank.

“Recalling this incident many years later in Rikhia, Sri Swamiji acknowledged that Swami Niranjan’s instant and decisive response had taken even him by surprise. Of course, when the work was over, Sri Swamiji himself gave Swami Niranjan a thorough cleaning with a hosepipe!

“An ordinary disciple merely carries out the commands of the guru, but one who is attuned with the guru enough to anticipate his wishes even before they are articulated and to carry them out even though one finds them loathsome and surpass even his expectations in their execution, is an extraordinary disciple indeed.

He let me ponder over these words for a while and then producing a little booklet from his bag, he asked, “Have you read any of these Satyam Tales, Kareesh?”

“Only *Diggaja*, which Master used to keep on his mantlepiece.”

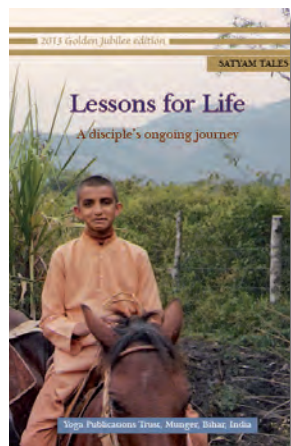
“In which case, you might want to read this,” he said, handing over the booklet to me. “It has quite a few inspiring insights into the life and character of Swamiji.”

“*Lessons for Life*,” I read the title aloud.

“Hope you find some useful lessons yourself, Kareesh. Hari Om and goodbye for now,” the swami left with these parting words.

Needless to say, my interest had been aroused. All day long I pondered over the septic tank incident and as soon as I had a chance, I read the booklet as well.

The next morning, Swami Satyamurti was surprised to find his cherished lawn wet and watered, and a nearby soak-pit, dry and empty . . .



I was now eager to get to know Swamiji better. I had heard people say that this ashram was like a *kalpataru*, a wish-fulfilling tree which fulfilled any sincere wish you might have. When an opportunity presented itself for the fulfilment of my own wish, I realized that the statement was not merely hearsay but the truth.

“Have you ever practised hatha yoga, Kareesh?” Swami Atmamaitri asked me the next morning. Noticing my somewhat puzzled look, she added, “Or in your case, should I say hathi (elephant) yoga?”

I smiled at the pun. “Not really. The only kriya I know is Gaja karma kriya, also known as the Ganesh kriya.”

It was her turn to give a perplexed look. I proceeded to explain the mechanics of ingestion and expulsion of water in this kriya. When I offered to demonstrate it for greater effect, she waved her hands in alarm and exclaimed, “I’m sure you are an adept in this kriya, Kareesh, but there’s no need to demonstrate it physically in the middle of the main courtyard of the ashram. Anyway, Swamiji is starting hatha yoga classes for sannyasins next week and you are most welcome to attend.”

That was my first chance to observe Swamiji from close quarters. I was surprised to see him conducting the classes himself, starting from the very basics and then

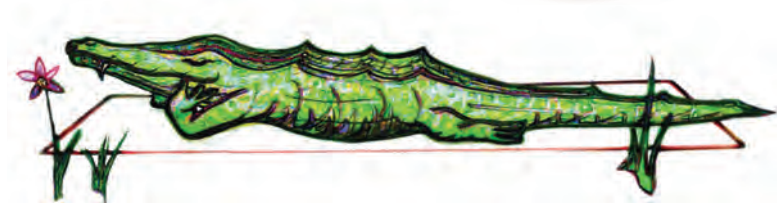




slowly progressing to more advanced techniques. What's more, he would demonstrate many of the postures himself. His style of teaching was so engaging and his interest in the subject so infectious, that very soon I found myself



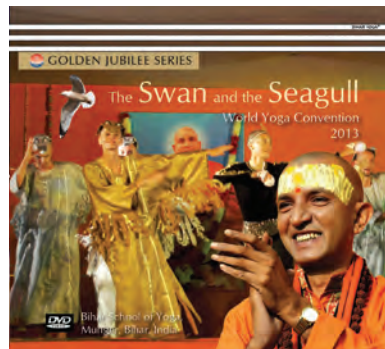
attempting postures like the headstand which I would not even have dreamed about. I was also pleasantly surprised to learn that many of the asanas were named after different animals, and while performing them I would imagine those animals in my mind's eye. The only



practice named after us elephants was the kriya mentioned previously, which was deemed too advanced for the group and so I couldn't get a chance to show off.

The theme of starting from the basics seemed to pervade Swamiji's teaching in particular and his entire approach to life in general. When we watched *The Swan and the Seagull*, a cute little DVD produced by sannyasa trainees on his life, it ended with him paraphrasing the first flying instruction of Jonathan Livingston Seagull to a newbie seagull, "Let's start from the basics."

That's exactly what he did when he introduced nada yoga in the morning hatha yoga class. He called for a harmonium to be brought, and then started intoning the very first note "Sa . . ." Now I had been exposed to top-of-the-line celestial music. In fact, on



my morning and evening strolls around the ashram, I would walk with my headphones blaring the latest hits of my favourite band, 'The Gandharva Gayaks', in my ears. I found the thought of going back to *swara sadhana*, practising the basic notes, rather unbecoming for a music connoisseur like myself.

Swamiji must have read my thoughts, and possibly others who were thinking along the same lines. He stopped the practice midway and said, "There's no oomph to your voices. Either you are half-dozing, or you find this useless. Have you heard the story of the king and the sculptor?"

All faces perked up at the mention of a story. That was a teaching device Swamiji was adept at using, choosing just the apt story to illustrate the point at hand.

"Once upon a time, a wealthy king wanted to learn sculpting, so he went to a sculptor of repute. "I am a great admirer of your work," he said, and many of his courtiers nodded in agreement. "I wish to learn this great art."

"Yes, I can teach you," said the sculptor, "Let me see some of your paintings."

"No, no, not painting," said the king. "Sculpture. I want to learn the art of sculpting."

"Of course, of course. But painting is the preliminary training for the visual arts. Let me see some of your work."

"Well, I have not painted at all."

"Hmm, I see. Well, I can teach you that, I suppose. Let me see you dance."

"Dance? What has dance got to do with it?"

"Surely one who wishes to portray the human form would have studied its graceful movement."



“I do not dance.”

The sculptor was taken aback. “Very well, I will teach you some dance, also. Bring your instrument.”

The king began to falter. “Instrument? What instrument?”

“Look, I have indicated the importance of the study of painting and dance to sculpting. Surely you know that dance is done to music of instruments? How could you expect to dance without knowing something about instrumental music?”

The king admitted that he didn’t know the first thing about playing an instrument.

“Well, no matter. I will teach you. Sing something.”

“I can’t sing.”

“You can’t sing! You come here expecting to learn the fine art of sculpting and you cannot sing? Doesn’t the study of all art begin with singing? We have much work to do. Let’s see, we shall start with the note Sa . . .”

There was a slight pause as Swamiji let the story sink in, and then pumping the harmonium he launched into a deep-throated Sa. The response from his audience, myself included, indicated that the story had done its trick. The



lesson had been well and truly learnt. Or so I thought, until I saw him look straight at me. The look in his eyes seemed to say that I had to start from basics with something even more basic. Only later would I realize what it was.

“Swami Krishnapriya!” Swamiji called out at the end of the class, “Kareesh fancies himself to be quite the artist. See if you can utilize his skills to design artwork for the upcoming ashram pamphlets and brochures.”

“Hmm,” I thought, “I’ve never mentioned about my drawing and painting skills to anyone here. Wonder how he found out about that.”

After breakfast and morning cleaning, Swami Krishnapriya set me up with a canvas and easel in one of the ashram gardens. “Let’s see you draw something from your own imagination,” she politely suggested.

“A subject of my own choice?”

“Absolutely.”

It didn’t take me long to choose my subject. Holding a brush in my trunk, I quickly began to put on canvas the ideas floating in my head.





Swami Krishnapriya was watching me with great curiosity. Obviously she'd never seen an artistically gifted elephant before. Soon the theme of my drawing started to become obvious and she made a face. "Are you drawing yourself?"

"Yes, with a bunch of my favourite flowers."

"And you couldn't think of anyone else that you admire and adore the most."

"Why, that would be me again!"

"You are such a narcissist, Kareesh!"

"Not any more than you selfie-taking humans," I retorted defensively.

"I'm not getting into an argument with you Kareesh, but I'll say this much," said the frank swami, "Too much self-indulgence can be self-destructive for a spiritual aspirant. Why, look at Swamiji, his nature is the total opposite. At every step he puts his guru's name, mission, sankalpa – everything before himself. It used to be such an uphill task for me to put his picture on the cover of an ashram book or magazine. He would always suggest a picture of Sri Swamiji or Swami Sivananda instead.

"Speaking of Swami Sivananda, his spiritual songs bring out the ideals of spiritual life and discipleship very lucidly, something Swamiji alludes to very often in his satsangs. Listen to the *Song of Sadhana*, which Swamiji was

commenting on the other day,” she said, as she took a *Siddha Prarthana* book out of her bag and flicked through its pages. When she found the page she read out a few lines:

Self-sacrifice, self-surrender, self-denial.
These are the different ways to slay this egoism.
Selflessness, self-restraint, self-purification,
Self-analysis, self-introspection, self-examination,
All these will lead to self-realization.

With these parting words she left me with my paints, brush and canvas, but my introspective thoughts were painting a totally different collage on my mind’s canvas . . .

While spending time in the Akhara, I got to know the diverse fauna inhabiting the place. There was Handsome Hari





and Awesome Aryaman, the faithful canine companions of Swamiji in his arduous panchagni sadhana. There was Drashta, the quick-tempered cockatoo, and quite a few parrots too. I became particularly friendly with Tejas, and through these fellow creatures, I got to know many more facets of Swamiji's persona, and I came to admire and respect him that much more.

Soon we were participating in the Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. I was happy and excited, because after Ganesha, it is Narayana who is my most favourite deity. Maybe I like him because he came to the instant aid of an ancient ancestor who got into a sticky situation with an alligator, or perhaps because he is yoga nidra's originator, a practice I've been experimenting with and enjoying a lot lately.



During the yajna proceedings, I witnessed first-hand the remarkable reverence, faith and devotion Swamiji has towards his grand-guru Swami Sivananda and his own guru, Swami Satyananda. Each and every thing was done in their name, every act and offering was dedicated to them. They may have shed their mortal coil, but in Swamiji's heart they were well and truly alive, more so than normal living

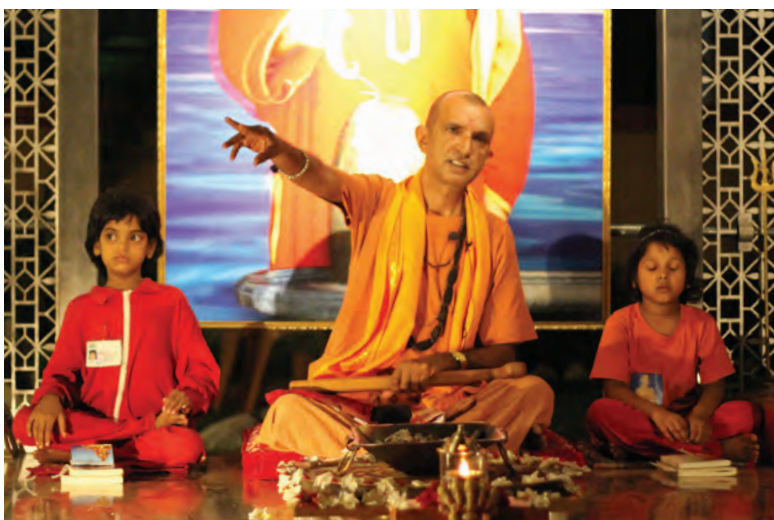


beings. I remembered Tejas's recounting of Swamiji's pilgrimage to Kailasa and Manasarovar. Swamiji had taken a picture of his gurus that stayed with him throughout as a symbol of their presence, even through the dips in the icy cold water of the Muktinath temple!



In his satsangs, Swamiji repeatedly pointed out that ego and arrogance are one of the biggest hurdles in spiritual life and illustrated it with the story of Durvasa, Indra and Airavata, wherein Durvasa offered a garland to Indra who haughtily tossed it to Airavata, who not knowing any better trampled it under his foot (I'm just paraphrasing Swamiji's words, I would never gossip about the Airavata episode, as you know very well by now). Indra had to pay dearly for his pride, and the moral was obvious. Except to me, who was lost in his own fantasy world. Even when Swamiji talked about the Narayanastra Yajna and said that the purpose of this astra was to help an aspirant surmount the barrier of ego, the words just glided away like oil on water.





My bubble finally burst, thanks to Swamiji's persistent efforts. In a Guru-Bhakti Yoga program held soon after, Swamiji was quite blunt and scathing in his remarks, which seemed directed straight at me:

"Today, after performing Rudrabhisheka as we commemorate the day when Sri Swamiji attained mahasamadhi, I started to think about one quality of my master which inspires me the most.

That is discipleship. There are two types of disciples in the world: one who has his own agendas and the other who has no agenda of his own. The people who have their own agendas associate with their guru for a limited time, extract whatever they want to extract from the guru, and then go their own ways to fulfil their ambitions and needs.

There is another group of people, who have no agenda of their own, but who simply live for the sake of living with the guru. They make the vision of the guru their own vision, the agenda of the guru their own agenda, and they become one with the guru tattwa, over a period of time, as they identify more and more with the vision and mission of the guru.

Decide, look at yourself and find out in which category do you fall: person with no agenda, or person with their own personal agendas."

The personal power behind those words was such that it forced me to look at myself objectively. The truth was plain to see. I fell squarely in the second category. Swamiji continued on:

“When Sri Swamiji came to live with Swami Sivananda, he and the group of disciples who had gathered around Swami Sivananda were people who had no agenda of their own, who just wanted to live in the presence of the master and surrender their life to their master. Do you know what the meaning of surrendering life is? Surrender your ambitions, surrender your youth, surrender your needs, and identify only with the vision, the needs and aspirations of the guru. That surrender is not easy for it makes you lose yourself completely. You are finished, and the only thing alive in your memory and mind is the guru.

A group of disciples who came to Swami Sivananda lived that kind of life. They became the foundation stones of the Divine Life Society, and propagated the vision and the mission of their master. Swami Sivananda initiated hundreds and thousands, but only a few names stand out for they were the ones who did not have a personal agenda, but were committed to spread the light, as guided and instructed by their guru. Sri Swamiji was one of them and that is the



type of discipleship he lived. He was not attached to anything, no comfort, no luxury, no post, no position.

There is another group of people, the so-called disciples, who have their own personal agendas. Some become disciples for they see yoga and ashram as an opportunity to launch their careers in life, who want to take training, become sannyasin, karma sannyasin, then go back and establish their own ashrams and centres. In the garb of selfless service to humanity, they live their own ambitions. They use yoga, ashram and guru as their launching pad to become established in life. There is no intention of even identifying with the vision or mission of the guru. Many people fall in that category today."

My heart was thumping, there was a lump in my throat and my eyes were moistening. Somewhere along the path of discipleship, I had acquired an agenda of my own – that of successorship, and I had allowed it to overshadow all that was positive and uplifting in my nature, what had brought me to my Master in the first place.

I compared myself with Swamiji. A few anecdotes that I had read in the *Satyam Tale*, *Lessons for Life* came to mind. How Swamiji had gotten an offer of admission at Oxford at a very young age, or how he was on the verge of setting up a big ashram in USA when Sri Swamiji called him back, and yet he had not allowed these to become his personal agendas, rather he sacrificed whatever personal ambitions he may have had at the altar of his guru's mission.

"There are people who want to be propped up and given post, power and position. They fight with everybody for respect and tell people, "I am a senior. Give me your respect." Those people are guided by their ambitions and ego, and want to be supported. They want to be told, "You are this, you have this authority, you have this power, you have this position," without even being capable of maintaining the dignity of the post they want to be propped up. They expect the ashram and the guru to provide them that opportunity and post, where without having any ability and maturity of their own, they wish to be recognized and worshipped by all as somebody great.

Who then is a real disciple? One who corrects and rectifies his own mistakes in life, and tries to become better every day, to become

better at every step that he or she takes, rather than falling prey to the whims of the mind, desires and passions. There is a constant effort to improve which is lacking in the personalities of disciples today.

As long as you have your personal agenda, don't call yourself a disciple. You are only an opportunist in the garb of a disciple, like a donkey in the garb of a tiger. The real disciple identifies with the spirit of the guru and lives that spirit.

Sri Swamiji was one such person who identified and lived the principles, the teachings and the spirit of his guru. And that is my sankalpa, therefore I call him my guru. You call him your guru because he is nice to you, but I call him my guru because he is the inspiration for me, to become like him. It is that memory which I hold most dear in my life."

It was clear I was a failure as a disciple. I needed to start from the very basics all over again. And as I looked at Swamiji, looking for inspiration and guidance to be able to walk this path, he gave three practical sutras which from then on became the a-b-c of discipleship for me.

" . . . And there are three requirements of a disciple. Set aside your ego, number one. Set aside your intellect, number two. And apply your senses and your body to do the work of the guru. These are the three sadhanas of a disciple . . ."

If any sincere aspirant pursues these sadhanas with seriousness and commitment, he will not just walk but fly on the path of discipleship . . .



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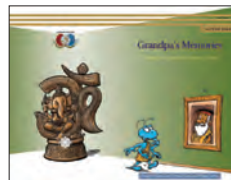
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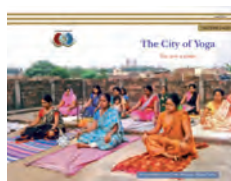
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