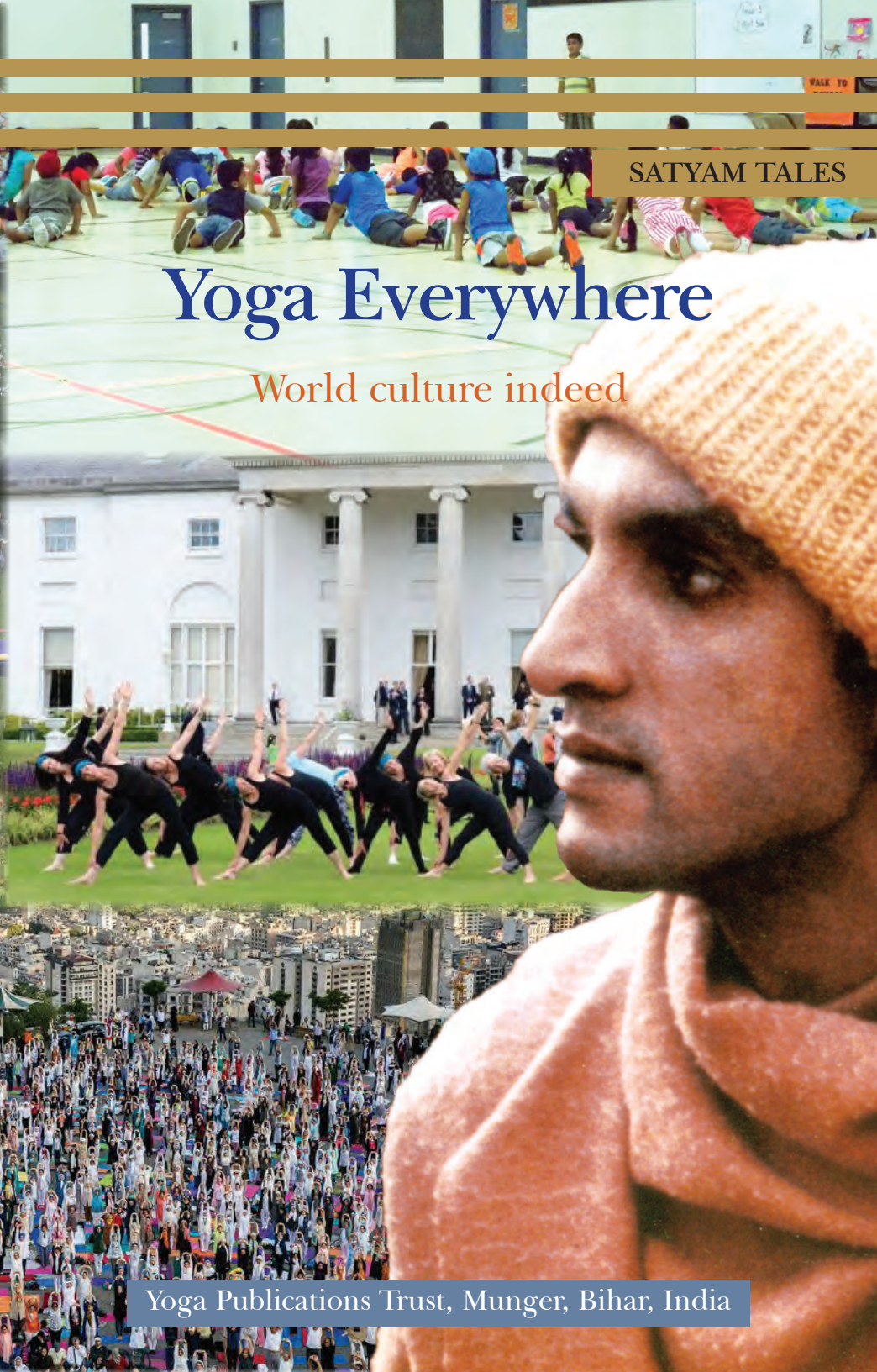




SATYAM TALES

Yoga Everywhere

World culture indeed

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



Satyam Tales

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

Yoga Everywhere is the twenty-sixth 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.

Ravi thought that his new life as a just-retired journalist from Patna would give him the freedom to do whatever he felt like. However, destiny took him to a small mountain village where he became a crucial actor in the program of the International Day of Yoga. Enjoying every moment of it and relishing the connection to the Bihar School of Yoga and Swamiji, he knew that his new life would be a life of yoga.

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 connect to the teachings of yoga wherever you are . . .

— 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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Yoga Everywhere

Here I am, finally a retired man, happy, content, eager and keen for the new chapter of my life. First thing I packed my bag and went to see family in England. It was good to be with them and reconnect, talk about the good old days which shaped us and gave us everything we needed, and speculate a bit about the future. I moved on to Paris and then went up into the Swiss Alps for a brief holiday.





Along with lots of Chinese and some other Indian tourists I visited the famous, beautiful and spectacular sites, lakes and mountains of the Alps. After ten days or so of roaming around, I decided, before returning to Patna, to stay in one village and relax, or chill as people say now. I chose a small hotel and thoroughly enjoyed the views and the fresh mountain air.

On my last day, as I went for my early morning stroll I noticed some commotion on the village square. It was being blocked off for the traffic. The garden beside the small church was covered with blankets. A handful of people were busying themselves with obviously some kind of preparation. Maybe a village fair or the weekly market or a new tourist attraction?

Back at the hotel for breakfast, I could also sense excitement and an unusual rush. Heidi, the young waitress, did not ask if I wanted another cup of coffee or more of this and that, instead she asked, “Are you also coming?”

I in turn asked her, “Where?”

Honest, frank and truly surprising came her reply, “Don’t you know, it’s the International Day of Yoga, 21 June, the longest and brightest day of the year.”

‘You must be joking!’ was all that came to mind, yet decades of professional training enabled me to control myself, and I did not blurt it out at my breakfast table. Besides she was not joking at all but in her kind, friendly manner continued, “You can use one of the blankets from your room. We don’t mind.”

I managed an equally friendly, “Thank you,” got up and went to my room. Sitting down on my bed I wondered if I was dreaming – where on earth am I? Bihar or Europe? Munger or mountain village? Khushi or Heidi?

Only the sight of the towering mountain assured me that I was where I thought I should be. Having learnt from past experiences (see Satyam Tale 21, *The City of Yoga* – Ed), I rolled up the blanket, put it under my arm and as I left the hotel I gave Heidi a big smile. More surprises were ahead and waiting for me at the village square. In front of those blankets, which I now noticed were bright orange, were placed three tall, garlanded pictures of Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and Swamiji. I took a deep breath of fresh mountain air, and another one, and then another one.



“Hari Om, how nice to see you. Are you on holidays?”

“Yes,” I mumbled. The young woman in geru who was in charge of the IDY function must have recognized me from one of my visits to the ashram in Munger. She explained to me the program and the logistics. “I live here and teach yoga. Some of my students are helping me to get everything ready. It’s the first time I am doing this kind of program. I am a bit nervous. Would you mind assisting me a bit?”

Could I possibly refuse? “What do you want me to do? I don’t know much yoga. Actually I don’t know anything.”

“What’s your name, I’m sorry I forgot.”

“Ravi.”

“Oh yes, of course, Mr Ravi, the journalist. I think there will also be some tourists. Maybe you can help if they have questions. Maybe you can do the Shanti Mantra and Shanti Path. It would be great if you did it in real Sanskrit with the right pronunciation. Maybe you could sit next to me.”

How could I possibly refuse? “And what is your name?”

“Yogagiri.”

So, Yogagiri and I sat down on orange blankets, next to the three pictures of inspiration. Slowly locals and some tourists entered the village square, blanket or mat rolled under the arm. They were guided by Yogagiri’s students



and neat, tidy rows filled the square. I had a flash of an image with BYMM children in red track suits doing the same, far away in Munger, yet I felt in spirit they were right here with us. Of course I was not just a bit nervous, I was terrified. I closed my eyes, begging for help, strength and the wisdom to do the right and appropriate. I saw Swamiji surrounded by a group of BYMM children.

Everyone gave me a big smile, a thumbs-up and a silent encouragement of ‘You can do it’.

The clock struck ten. Yogagiri and I looked at each other – ready to begin. She welcomed the 80 or so people assembled for the International Day of Yoga, and then spoke about yoga and the tradition she represents, about the masters and their teaching. I didn’t understand a word she was saying as it was in a language which was neither Hindi nor English. Nor did the tourists, including a few families from India, but everyone listened attentively. Then Yogagiri turned to me and with a smile whispered, “Your turn Ravi, Shanti Mantra.” I cleared my throat, invoked the help of Swamiji and the image of the BYMM children wondering, ‘How do they do it? How can they be so calm and composed, while here I am, a retired journalist, nervous and jittery?’

I was scared. What should I do? Should I laugh or cry? I suddenly realized that these were not only my words, but the words I had read in an article in the *YOGA* magazine. Garima, a teenaged BYMM girl had written beautifully of her experience teaching yoga:



I got scared. What should I do? Should I laugh or cry? Then I remembered Swamiji saying, “Complete the work assigned to you with sincerity and commitment. Whether you fail or succeed, you just do your karma. Leave the fruit of karma in the hands of God.” This teaching of Swamiji gave me new energy and I put all my efforts to complete the task. I knew that I may not be totally successful in this, but I would not be unsuccessful either.

From the bottom of my heart I sent a ‘Thank you Garima, I will do as you did’ message, and inspired by this wise, brave-hearted BYMM girl, I finally said in English, “We will begin with the chanting of *Om* three times.” Fortunately, I had the full and loud support of Yogagiri, her students and the handful of Indian families, gathered on the village square. I could tell they were more than a little surprised to be chanting Sanskrit mantras in this mountain village.

Then Yogagiri pushed a piece of paper in front of me, whispering, “Here’s the IDY program. Can you do the three mantras please?” As she explained about the sankalpas

Your Program for the International Day of Yoga 2018

From 6 am to 7.30 am, people will gather on the rooftops, verandahs, courtyards and other open spaces of their homes and community centres and do the following practices:

1. Kaya atisayam with a focus on: experiencing balance and harmony in body and mind.

Mantra

2. Shanti mantras:
Om saha naravatu: ‘Saha nra bhunaktu,
Saha veyam karamaham,
Tejavinavardhemaasau mas yidhisauvalai
Om shanti, shanti, shanti.’
3. Mahamityajaya mantra with sankalpa for finding, energy, power, maturity and strength (11 rounds):
Om byambakam jagadmahe sagandham padmadutam,
Uttarakamya bandhani rephamapagaya murtit
4. Gayatri mantra with sankalpa for wisdom, inner clarity, intuitive knowledge and learning (11 rounds):
Om indrabau eva tatavavivaryajay
Bhago devasya dhimahi dyo ya nah prachodayat
5. 32 names of Durga with sankalpa for overcoming distress in life; experiencing peace and harmony (11 rounds):
Om durg durgahamini durgapadmindri. Durgamachetnadri
durgasakthi durgajidhi
Durgatathangi durganani durgamipahi durgamityadri
durga dityakadavinali
Durgam durgamlok durgamitmasorini durgandipapadi
durgamendi durgamidi
Durgamulassamhridi durgamachyutabhinai. Durgamoh
durgamgi durgamitmasorini
Durgamulassamhridi durgamachyutabhinai. Durgamgi
durgam durgam durgamini
Durgamini durgam durgamini
Durgamini durgam durgamini

Asana

6. Tadasana (9 rounds)*
7. Triyak tadasana (9 rounds)
8. Kati chakrasana (9 rounds)
9. Shavasana**
10. Pada sanchalanasana, stage 2 (9 rounds)
11. Natarasana (9 rounds)
12. Chakri chakrasana (9 rounds)
13. Vayu mihlasanasana (9 rounds)
14. Vajrasana (with abdominal breath awareness, 1-2 minutes)
15. Malar asana (9 rounds)

Pranayama

16. Sheetali/sheetkan pranayama (10 rounds)
17. Nadi shodhana pranayama 1:1 (10 rounds)
18. Bhramari pranayama (10 rounds)

Yama-niyama

For a few minutes each, contemplate on and develop the yama of *manahprasad*, or happiness, and the niyama of *japa*.

19. Manahprasad: This yama was introduced on IYD 2016. To what extent have you been able to practise this and what have been the effects? Observe your mental states over the last few days and identify moments when you were truly happy. Connect with the energy and positivity of those moments and try to bring yourself into that state now. Strive to increase the duration of this state each day. If you are still in a state of unhappiness, try to find its underlying cause. Identify the negative, limiting quality in yourself that it reflects. Next, focus on the opposite positive and uplifting quality and try to strengthen it to become happy.
20. Japa: We are connected with the senses and sense objects all the time. Japa becomes a method to disconnect the mind for a little while and connect with something different. The connection between your mind and the senses and sense objects is broken. In that break, you direct your attention and



of the practice, her students distributed sheets with the three morning mantras: Mahamrityunjaya mantra, Gayatri mantra and the 32 names of Durga. This is truly a wonderful morning sadhana that Swamiji has given to all. With the same support of, what I shall henceforth call ‘my support team’, and the sincere attempt of the other participants we all filled the mountain air with the sound of rejuvenating mantras.

Yogagiri took over for the practice of yogasana – tadasana, tiryak tadasana and kati chakrasana, the famous TTK start of the day. It was funny to watch the Indian families. The moment they heard the name of the asana, they started practising, while the others waited patiently for the instructions and the much needed demonstrator. I marvelled at how much yoga is actually in the heart of every Indian, that without hesitation they know what is what.





After the prescribed nine rounds, as they were all lying down to a well-deserved shavasana, there was suddenly some hullabaloo at the back. A large group of Chinese tourists were arguing with their tour guide. “Mr Ravi, could you please find out what is happening,” whispered Yogagiri. The problem was simple – the tour guide wanted to continue and follow the schedule of the tour while the group unanimously wanted to stay on in the village square and join in the yoga session. The group won. They spread their shawls and towels and sat down happily and eager to do yoga. The tour guide was busy on the phone desperately rescheduling the tour. I returned to my place next to Yogagiri and thought of Sri Swami Satyananda who had made the famous proclamation more than fifty years ago:

Yoga will emerge as a mighty world-culture and change the course of world events.

About the world culture there was definitely no doubt any more. Proof, if necessary, was here in this remote Swiss village where between fifteen to twenty nationalities did yoga voluntarily and with great interest and joy. About the change of world events, time will tell. For once yoga becomes an integral part of people's life, when it moves from yoga practice to become a yogic lifestyle, then people's way of thinking and behaving will and must change for the better, towards a more harmonious, balanced and peaceful experience of the beauty of life.

Yogagiri's students demonstrated the asanas, and as I watched them, again half my mind was in Munger with the children of BYMM who would now be demonstrating in their red track suits with ease and perfection. I wish I knew some of their names, and decided that on my next visit I would make an effort to learn more about them.

We continued with *pada sanchalanasana*, the cycling practice, and *naukasana*, the boat posture. What a sight those hundreds of legs moving more or less wildly in the air! Everyone was making an effort and trying to do it right. Those who did not understand the instructions just kept watching their neighbours. The Chinese tour guide had come back and took on the role of interpreter guiding his flock through the various asanas. Goodwill and sincere eagerness was the mood of all.

This was demonstrated beautifully during *chakki chalanasana*, churning the mill. Everyone shifted, moved forwards or backwards so that there would be no bumping into each other. A lot of giggling and laughter told us that they were having a good time. This was followed by some moaning and groaning as they were asked to do *vayu nishkasana*. Squatting was a challenge for many and for others it was the stretching. Looking at these keen practitioners, I identified with their struggle knowing that I could not do it any better. Therefore, another resolution took shape in my mind, 'Ravi, get yourself into shape and onto the yoga mat', which I had bought many months ago but not yet inaugurated.

Vajrasana seemed less of a challenge, while *marjari asana*, the cat posture, was a delightful exhibition of every type of cat. Again the shavasana was well appreciated, and some extended it happily into a silent or snoring nap. How relaxed, comfortable and trusting the people must be that they are ready to follow instructions, give their best and then let go. Was it yoga, Yogagiri, or something else that held this village square together? I don't know.

As I watched the peaceful faces I noticed a young man moving around, camera in hand. The local newspaper man had come, determined not to miss the occasion and to deliver a good story. 'Yes, my friend, you are on the right track here', I wanted to tell him. I am sure he knew. Being young and a journalist he must have been at the pulse of time and things. He must have known what Sri Swamiji had proclaimed:

Today, if there is one word that rings around the globe, if there is one idea that is acceptable to people of different philosophies, political thinking and national status – it is just yoga!

Of course he would not miss this magnificent opportunity on the tiny village square in the mountains.

It took many repetitions of 'Hari Om, please sit up' until the last person was taken out of his slumber and shaken by kind-hearted neighbours. Hissing and giggling was the outcome of the practice of sheetali and sheetkari. Probably most people had never tried to roll their tongues. Watching each other, sometimes using their fingers to help form the hollow tube they were asked to make, they tried, laughed and gave up. The Indian participants did well, and again I thought they must somehow know about all this yoga. Somewhere in their collective subconscious there must be traces, remnants of this extraordinary culture which they now rediscover.

Nadi shodhana was duly announced by Yogagiri and demonstrated by two of her students, but frankly speaking as my eyes caught peoples' fingers flicking, heads turning, eyes watching, I wondered what they were doing. Were they

really closing and opening nostrils, were they counting their breaths, were they aware of each inhalation and exhalation? I didn't know but I knew that on this sunny morning it did not matter, for something else was much more important to them. They were led to discover yoga and themselves in a most benevolent, gentle and peaceful manner. They were made to experience that yoga was so much more than physical exercise, or stretching and twisting. For many this first step taken in a small village high up in the mountains far away from home will always be an unforgettable experience and memory to cherish and nurture. For me it will certainly be so.

“Mr Ravi, can you please do the meditation in English?”

“What!”

“It is all written in the pamphlet I gave you.” This one I would have to definitely refuse, I thought, yet the face of Swamiji appeared in front of me with a group of beaming faces of the BYMM children. ‘All right then’, I said to myself, thinking of Swami Sivananda who smiled at me from one of those fantastic panels all around the ashram at Ganga Darshan:



A timid aspirant is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path.
 Courage overpowers fear and timidity. If fear is conquered,
 one is on the road to success.

I also remembered that he had said something about a ‘roaring lion’ but I was not too sure about it. I took a close glance at the pamphlet while Yogagiri was already way into the meditation of Swamiji’s lifestyle yama and niyama. I

read and reread the beautiful and clear guidance to the meditation. With a sigh of resignation, a prayer and plea for help from Munger and a strong, unshakeable resolution to attend a training at Ganga Darshan immediately upon my return to India, I sank into a reverie. Suddenly the sound of *Om* pulled me out of my, what Swamiji would call, ‘an unnecessary head trip’. Talk about universality, *Om* is magic, no matter if it echoes up in the Himalayas chanted by sadhus, or at the banks of Ganga Ma chanted by BYMM children and yoga aspirants, or here in this village chanted by a motley group of locals and tourists.

Yogagiri ended the chanting of *Om* with “Hari Om Tat Sat, please end the practice and gently open your eyes.” She looked at me and gently nodded. I was on. “Hari Om, we will now do the same meditation in English. So for those who have just done the practice with Yogagiri, you can do it again and deepen your experience. For the others please get ready to follow my instructions. Please close your eyes and become comfortable in your sitting posture. Keep your hands on your knees or on your lap. Your back is upright and straight yet without any tension.” Honestly, I couldn’t believe I just said all this. I looked at Yogagiri to make sure I was not dreaming. She just grinned at me happily and encouragingly.

“*Manahprasad* means happiness. Observe your mental states over the last few days and identify moments when you were truly happy. Connect with the energy and positivity of those moments and try to bring yourself into that state now. Strive to increase the duration of this state each day. If you are still in a state of unhappiness, try to find its underlying cause. Identify the negative, limiting quality that it reflects. Next, focus on the opposite, positive and uplifting quality and try to strengthen it to become happy. Take your time.” While the people took their time, I took a deep breath and emptied a glass of water which Yogagiri handed me.

“Now we come to japa. This year’s program has been designed keeping the theme of mantra in mind. A conscious and sincere effort to integrate mantras into one’s

yoga sadhana and lifestyle will transform the state of one's own mind and unlock its dormant potential. We are connected to the senses and sense objects all the time. Japa becomes a method to disconnect the mind for a little while and connect with something different. The connection with the senses and sense objects is broken. In that break you direct your attention and awareness towards discovering your inner nature, and that is where you find peace. With this aim in mind, practise *Om* chanting for five minutes remaining fully focused on the sound of the mantra. Also make a resolve to practise mental japa of *Om* or your guru mantra whenever you can during the day. Now we will repeat the practice of *Om* chanting.”



For another five minutes Yogagiri and I guided everyone and *Om* went out beyond the confines of the village square, beyond the snow-capped mountains and I am sure it joined, merged and became one with all the chanting of *Om* around the world. It was an amazing, uplifting feeling and experience as my whole being was alive and vibrating with *Om*.

Yogagiri continued with the program of the International Day of Yoga as given by Swamiji. A pratyahara practice of ajapa japa was followed by a short yoga nidra. Then I ended with the Shanti Path in which everyone joined in reading from the paper they had received. We thanked everyone for their wonderful participation and wished them a good, happy and yogic day. We got a long and loud applause. Slowly, almost reluctantly, the people stirred and started to leave. Some came with questions and Yogagiri and I simply referred them to the Bihar Yoga website.

One of Yogagiri's students came up to us, breathless with excitement, "108, exactly 108 participants with the Chinese group." What to say – could it have been any other number? Yogagiri invited me for lunch, but I had to pack and catch my train. "Thanks for everything, Mr Ravi. I don't know how I would have managed without you. It was just perfect that you were here today, don't you think so? I will see you in Munger the next time I visit."

"No, I have to thank you, Yogagiri, for letting me be a part of this wonderful program. Yes, I hope to see you in Munger. Hari Om." Our looks said more than our clumsy words.

Once in the train I pulled out the yoga program and read Swamiji's introduction:

The science of mantra is an incomparable gift by the Indian seers to the world, for in no other culture will you find such an elaborate system of mantras. They are the medium through which, by understanding the connection of one's life with Nature and the Supreme Reality, one can act in accordance with Nature and make the effort towards self-evolution. Mantra is defined as *mananat trayate iti mantrah* – as the power, force or energy through which one is able to liberate the mind from its obsessions. Many people see mantras as religious words or try to understand their literal meaning, but in essence the mantra is a sound vibration, and in mantra yoga one needs to identify with the vibration as much as possible. It is for this reason that mantras are always repeated, not just chanted once. When the mantra is sustained for a period of time, and you merge your consciousness in the feeling, chanting and articulation of the mantra, and begin to identify with the vibrations that you are creating while chanting the mantra, then you begin to experience what is called mantra meditative awareness, and attaining this awareness should be the aim of sincere yoga aspirants.

I closed my eyes to relive the *Om* chanting of just a few hours ago and then I moved to all the mantra chanting I had witnessed and participated in at Munger.

Overwhelmed by the extraordinary world of yoga vidya and its rishis, saints and sages, I thought of Swami Sivananda who had brought together yoga as an integral approach to improve the quality of life of every individual and the human community. He gave the teaching of head, heart and hands, of serve, love, give, yet above all he gave us the possibility to experience our birth right – to live the divine life.

Yoga is not something that is completely divorced from daily life. On the contrary, yoga and daily life must be made to merge into each other.

Swami Satyananda spread this teaching around the world to every nook and corner. Tirelessly he carried his guru's mission and message past the confines of caste and creed, religious and political systems.

For worldwide propagation of yoga, the cooperation of every individual is essential. The times are changing very fast and yoga will be accepted as one of the necessities of life, for yoga is the culture of tomorrow.





And Swamiji? He no longer needs to travel around the globe. He is taking yoga back to its origin, purity and dignity so that the true purpose can be attained by all aspirants – to live the divine life here and now.

The practice of yoga is not for the selected few but for all alike. Yoga is the social need of today. If we are sincere in our commitment to yoga, the subtle changes which take place can alter the whole society. If we make an effort to experience inner spiritual harmony the whole world can change. The purpose of yoga is just one: to show humanity how to worship life.

This morning I had witnessed the 1st and 2nd chapters of yoga – the chapter of propagation which made yoga a household word in every country on the planet, and the chapter which Swamiji is giving to every man, woman and child. Yoga will cease to be a random practice but become a sadhana with a definite goal and a lifestyle to express the Satyam Sivam Sundaram inherent in everyone. On the two wings of sadhana and lifestyle, yoga will develop into the world culture of tomorrow which Sri Swamiji had spoken of so many years ago.

Sitting in the train, I knew that I need no longer speculate about my future. I got out my phone and selected one of the training programs at Munger to participate in. As the landscape flew by I said good-bye to the mountains, to Europe and my holidays, and a heartfelt *Hari Om* to my new life of a sincere, serious and committed yoga aspirant.

Available *Satyam Tales* Titles

1. Diggaja
From elephant to super-elephant

2. Mystics from Moon
A journey through space

3. The Daredevil Dolphin
Making a leap of faith

4. Lessons for Life
A disciple's ongoing journey

5. Great Escapes
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15. Spike the Hedgehog
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16. The Crew
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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

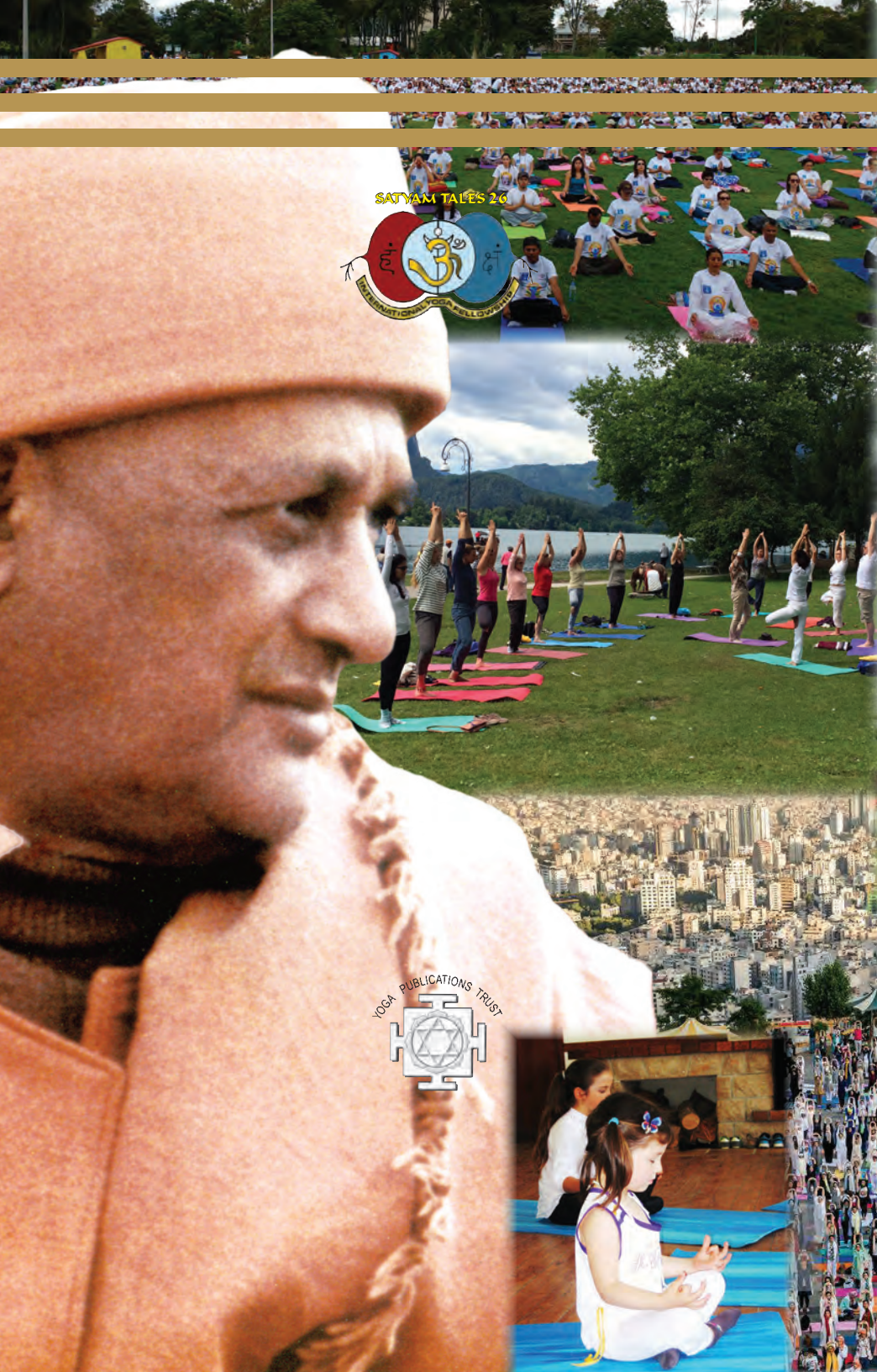
22. At Satyam's feet
An incomparable offering

23. The Amazing Dog Trick
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24. Glory to a Rishi
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25. Diggaja Returns
To relearn the a-b-c of discipleship



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