

SATYAM TALES

The Daredevil Dolphin

Making a leap of faith



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



Satyam Tales

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The Daredevil Dolphin is the 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.

This is the story of a dolphin who travels up and down the river Ganga with her school of dolphins. Sadness and, above all, fear cast a shadow on her life, until one day she meets a young sage who teaches her how to face one's fears and recognize them as nothing but mind-made illusions. Once she is able to put the teaching into practice and vanquish her worst enemy, she is known as the daredevil dolphin and becomes a guide and inspiration to the dolphin community.

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 become fearless like the dolphin *Gangaputri*.

—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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The Daredevil Dolphin

There is nothing in this world that comes anywhere near the joy of swimming. The exhilarating feeling of gliding swiftly through all three dimensions that God created is something that never loses its novelty or beauty for me. Often, when I look towards the shore and see terrestrial creatures plodding about, I wonder if they realize the enormity of the sacrifice that their prehistoric ancestors made when they chose land over water as their habitat of choice. One entire dimension less to move in! In moments like these, I turn my gaze upwards and when I see a swan or an eagle flying, I feel reassured about the intrinsic potential of life to regain





lost freedom at all cost. Our avian cousins did not allow themselves to remain confined to terra firma. Over a period spanning thousands, perhaps millions, of years they forged and fashioned the best known invention of all time – wings.

I look at my flippers and realize it will take aeons before they will become strong enough to sustain flight. I'll have to remain content with the occasional big leaps I make across the waves when I surface to draw in air through my blowhole. As my simian friends tell me, if I persevere with my leaping lessons, one day I may be able to leap like Hanuman from shore to shore!

The span of the Ganga here in Rishikesh is of course nothing compared to the ocean that Hanuman leapt across aeons ago. It is only beyond this point that the boisterous Bhagirathi, tumbling down the Himalayas, first begins to slow down and widen into a meandering course through the plains. Here, in the foothills of Rishikesh, one gets the best of both worlds. Fast, fun-filled cascades and whirlpools, together with broad, gently-flowing sections that one can glide through noiselessly. I must say, life as a gangetic dolphin is as good as it gets, something to be seen to be believed . . .



Talking of sight, many zoologists consider us to be sightless and hence our nickname, the blind river dolphins. It's true that our tiny eyes lack the lenses common to other animal eyes and our eye openings are even tinier, but it must be kept in mind that our habitat is mostly muddy river water, and our retarded eyesight is perhaps an evolutionary strategy to economize on unnecessary functionality. Instead of sight, we have learnt to rely more on sound; using clicks and their echoes to construct a sonic image of the underwater world.

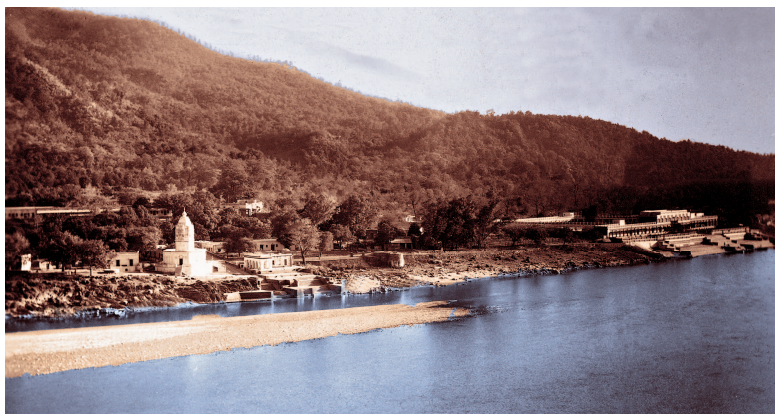
Nonetheless, when scientists dismiss us as blind animals, they are missing the point. Most of the images we see may be blurry and out of focus, however the occasional well-formed image that materializes on our retinas is something we treasure. It becomes a memory that lasts a lifetime. Like that image over fifty years old, yet fresh and vibrant, as if it were only a moment ago. The image of a man they called Satyam.

Yes, I am more than fifty years old. An oddity in a species with an average lifespan of thirty to thirty-five years. Yet I am more alert and active than dolphins half my age. No wonder the dolphins that know me call me the *dabang daadi*, the gung-ho grandma. I wasn't always like that, however. Rather,



I was quite a wuss, even by the modest yardstick of our timid species. That was until I met Satyam.

I still remember that year vividly. It had been an unusually hot summer, and our rag-tag school of two dozen or so dolphins had migrated upstream as far as Rishikesh. The vibrations of that little town nestling in the Himalayan foothills were quite different from other downstream towns and cities that we desperately tried to steer clear of. Later, I would learn from Satyam that it was due to the spiritual adepts, masters and gurus, whose mere presence lent the place a verve, vibe and vitality uncommon in other places.



It was a full moon night and I was cavorting around in the cool waters with my husband, Garo. We had unwittingly come quite close to the bank when Garo called out, “Watch out Ganga!” A small, lithe figure splashed into the water a few feet away from me. I quickly swam away and observed from a distance as the swimmer began to swim cross-stream with fast, powerful strokes. “What is this fellow doing at this hour?” I wondered. Something about the man ignited my curiosity and in spite of my natural timidity, I followed him at a distance.

The man reached the other bank, turned around and headed back. I was tailing him all along. After a couple of crossings, he headed towards a rock jutting out in the river. Clambering up the rock he sat down cross-legged. When I next looked in his direction, I saw him motionless atop the rock, with the rising moon right behind him. It seemed as if the moon was bending down from the heavens to lend its halo to this monk, who sat motionless, totally oblivious to the favour. That image was indelibly imprinted in my memory.



I observed the activities of the young man over the next few days, and this seemed to be his daily routine. A late night bath and swim in the Ganga, followed by hours of deep meditation on this solitary rock. There was something unique and distinctive about this monk that set him apart not only from the countless pilgrims who thronged the ghats of Rishikesh but also his fellow monks. I was soon about to discover the extent of that uniqueness and distinction.

One night I was in a particularly haughty mood. Seeing the monk atop his pet perch, a rather mean thought crossed my mind. “Hey Garol!” I whistled aloud, knowing he was swimming somewhere in the distance, “Come, let’s play leapfrog around monk’s rock.” The game involved swimming in a tight circle with each trying to leap over the other as many times as possible. Needless to say, it raised a big racket. I wanted to test the monk’s tenacity and sincerity.

I never got a chance to carry out my test though. “No Ganga, I don’t think it is proper to leapfrog around the monk while he is engrossed in his meditations,” came the



reply almost instantly, and it had an odd resonant quality, as if the whistle was coming from all directions at once.

“Strange!” I thought, “Garo is usually the first to suggest and carry out such pranks.” Later that night when I accosted Garo and teased him about his sudden bout of sympathy for the monk, he flatly denied having heard my call, let alone having made such a reply.

“Wonder who mimicked Garo,” I pondered, “There weren’t any other dolphins around at the time. Could the monk have . . . No! How could that be possible?”

The very next day I realized that not only was it possible but very plausible. It was just one of the many talents that the young monk possessed.

The next morning I saw him come for his early morning bath in the Ganga. That morning he decided to swim a while as well. I followed him, not too far behind.

Usually we dolphins stay clear of humans. Only in captivity do we come in close contact with them, performing stupid stunts and tricks for a morsel of fish. But this man



had a strange aura about him that attracted me against my wishes, so to speak. As if he were bestowing unconditional *abhayadaan* – total protection and freedom from fear.

“So nice of you to heed my advice last night, Ganga,” a strange voice boomed inside my head. Before I could make head or tail of it, it added, “By the way, didn’t your parents teach you the proper etiquette in the presence of sadhus and sannyasins?”

My mind froze with embarrassment. I didn’t realize that he had slowed down and was now swimming almost beside me, until I heard his belly laughter, “Ha, ha, ha! Just kidding. I don’t really expect human standards of behaviour from frolicsome fish.”

How he could laugh and swim at the same time was a grave mystery to me, but graver still was the downright insult thrown my way. To be treated below humans was bad enough, but to be referred to as one of those air-headed water-gulping cold-blooded egg-laying fish! It was the height of disgrace.

“Hey mister! Wait a second. Firstly, I’m not a fish, but . . .”

“Satyam’s the name,” he cut me short.

“Fine. Then let me make it very clear to you Mr Satyam, that I’m not some wimpy, cold-blooded fish but a warm-blooded, self-respecting mammal.”

Again he cut my sentence mid-way, “Yeah, I know, a cetacean belonging to the species *Platanista gangetica*; a far cry from much more evolved primates like us, if I may say so.”

Satyam’s insights into taxonomy and zoology intrigued me. It was only later that I fully realized the extent of his knowledge about flora and fauna of all kinds. When asked, he mentioned a short stint at some Veterinary Research Institute by way of explanation, but I knew his knowledge sprung from a source much deeper. During our very first encounter however, I was in no mood to take things lying down.

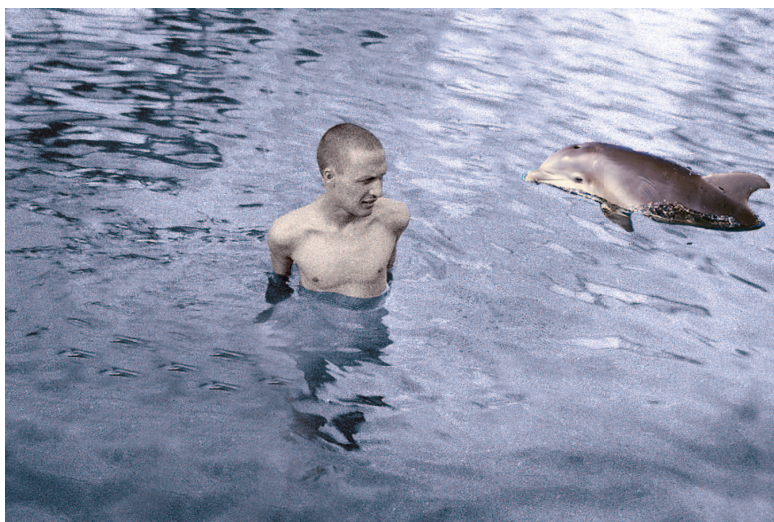
“I beg to disagree, Mr Satyam,” I said somewhat vehemently, “Our faculty of intelligence should not be underestimated. If you use the yardstick of brain to body

weight, we rank amongst the highest, even higher than you and your fellow monkeys. Just because we lack those dexterous limbs that you call hands, doesn't mean we are total bozos in the intelligence department . . ."

Again I was interrupted by Satyam's full-throated laughter. He had clearly enjoyed the spirited defence I had put up on behalf of not just my species but the entire cetacean order, which in my humble opinion, is quite an elite club including not just us dolphins and porpoises, but those gigantic, majestic beings these humans call whales.

"Well, it was nice talking to you Ganga, but now I must head back. I've a busy day ahead of me," saying so, Satyam turned around and quickly swam back towards the shore.

"Wonder what he does that keeps him busy all day," I muttered. Over the next few weeks, I got to know that and more. It became almost a daily routine to accompany Satyam on his nightly swim and listen to his thoughts and opinions on everything under the sun. I don't know if 'listen' is the right word, for most of our communication didn't involve speech at all. It was something subtler, that only Satyam knew how to do.



I found out all about the ashram that Satyam lived in and his wonderful master, Swami Sivananda, for whom Satyam had the greatest respect and devotion. I also learnt about his job at the ashram as the press manager.

“So what exactly do you do in the press?” I asked somewhat naively the first time.

“Print books,” came the terse reply.

“And how exactly do you do that?” I persisted, to which he responded with a rather detailed description of the entire book production process, explaining everything from typing to composing to proofing to printing to binding. In fact, so thorough and precise was he that I felt confident enough to start a Dolphin Publishing House if the need ever arose.

The press was clearly Satyam’s passion, and prison. That’s where he locked himself up for the better part of the day, and night as well. Once, when I had asked how many hours he slept, he had replied curtly, “Three.” Even that was probably an exaggeration. Once he had casually remarked that he could not sleep if the sound of the press machines did not hum in his ears. What wonderful devotion he had to his guru’s work and mission!



When Garo was in a good mood I would tell him about my encounters and silent talks with Satyam. He would listen attentively and let me be, but he never swam along to meet him. The other dolphins of our school knew nothing about the monk on the rock and never noticed my absences around sunset when I went to see my friend.

Satyam's devotion and dedication was once put to the test by his guru. Need I say, he passed with flying colours. That day I noticed Satyam swimming in the late afternoon, instead of his usual twilight hour. I went up to him and said, "Hello Satyam, nice to see you here at this hour."

"*Om Namo Narayanaya!* Good to see you too, Ganga."

"Finished your press work early?"

"On the contrary, I have a full night's work ahead of me."

"How come?"

"Guruji has thrown a challenge."

"What kind of challenge?"

"To produce a complete book in a single night."

By now I knew enough of the book business to know this was impossible, and I said so in no uncertain terms.

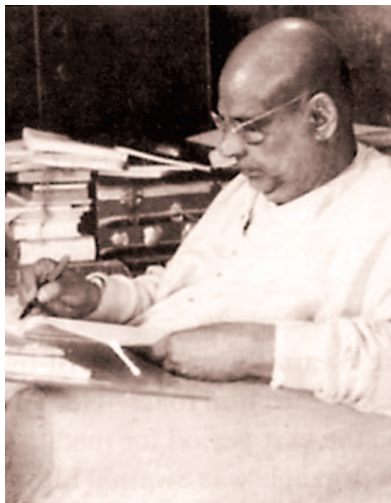
"Nothing is impossible, Ganga. Certainly not if the guru's sankalpa and grace are behind you."

I pondered over his statement for a while and then asked, "So when does the race begin?"

"Right at sunset. That's when Swamiji will finish writing his manuscript and hand it over to me. And the challenge is to give him the finished book by sunrise."

"Shouldn't you be at the press now, making all necessary arrangements?"

"Everything's arranged. No point in making myself



and others tense with the anxiety that waiting naturally entails. So here I am, relaxing myself in the lap of Mother Ganga.”

We swam together in silence for a while. As the sun began its descent towards the western horizon, Satyam turned towards the shore.

“Best of luck, Satyam,” I called out as he reached the bank and climbed up the steps. He turned around, waved back and then quickly disappeared from view.

For some weird reason I decided to keep vigil as well. All night long I heard the din of the press as Satyam and his press-workers rose to the challenge. And lo! As I swam below Swami Sivananda’s kutir at the crack of dawn, I heard the sound of rapid footsteps approaching. Just as Swami Sivananda came out of his kutir chanting *Om* loudly and proceeded for his morning bath in the Ganga, Satyam stepped up and placing two copies of the finished book in his guru’s hands, prostrated at his feet. The silence and beauty of that poignant moment was interrupted only by the sound of a conch from Vishwanath Mandir (and my own joyous whistle).

When I caught up with Satyam a few days later and congratulated him on his achievement, he brushed off the accolades as easily as he swept aside the waves lapping about him. For a self-abnegating persona like Satyam, adulation is anathema indeed. It was only with great difficulty that I could pry some of the details from him. Swami Sivananda had been so happy with his cherished disciple’s devotion, dedication and commitment that he bestowed the title of *Press-stambh* – ‘Pillar of the Press’ – upon him.

That was an idyllic summer indeed. The days spent in Satyam’s company shall forever remain fresh in my memory. He told and taught me so many things that when summer ended and the rains began, I didn’t want to go downstream with the other dolphins. Somehow I managed to convince Garo and the others to stay on until the end of the rainy season. There was one help I badly needed from Satyam.

I had been meaning to ask Satyam about this for quite some time, but somehow never managed to bring up this subject so close to my heart. One evening when I was swimming with Satyam, I decided to bite the bullet.

“Satyam, can you help me with something?”

“If it’s within my limited means, sure.”

“I’ve been wanting to have a baby all this time but . . .”

“Shouldn’t you be discussing this with Garo instead of me?”

“No, no, what I mean to say is that I’ve had babies but they . . .” A lump in my throat prevented me from finishing my sentence.

“But what?”

“They didn’t survive,” I finally managed to blurt out.

Satyam stopped swimming. “Why not?” he asked.

It was difficult for me to dredge up those painful memories, but nonetheless I made a brave attempt. “It all began a few years ago when a *gharial*, a Gangetic crocodile moved into our calving grounds. He calls himself *Ghatotakacha* but we just call him *Ghatiya*. Instead of his usual diet of fish and other small aquatic animals, the cunning, old fellow has begun to prey on our young, defenceless babies. He sneaks up from behind, usually when the mother dolphin is nursing its calf and not so alert, and snaps up the baby. I’ve myself lost two babies to the vile monster.”

“Why doesn’t your school of dolphins gang up on *Ghatiya* and chase him away? There is great strength in unity.”

“We river dolphins are not very gregarious. Our school is just a loose-knit community of independent individuals. Besides, we are all too timid and fearful to risk our necks in





the face of Ghatiya's scary jaws, especially since he has caught on to our poor vision and exploits it to the hilt."

After what seemed like an eternity, Satyam finally spoke in a grave tone, "There's nothing much you can do in this situation."

"Why not?"

"The gharial is invincible. He is the *vahana*, the vehicle of Ma Ganga after all. *Paani mein rahkar magar se bair theek nahin* – It's unwise to pick a quarrel with a foe like that. I'd suggest finding another place for calving and nursing your babies."

Satyam's deadpan statement infuriated me, "What! Leave the place where we have been born and brought up for centuries all because of a silly, senile gharial. Vahana or no vahana, he is the one who has to go, not us."

A faint smile appeared on Satyam's face. It was only later that I would realize that Satyam had already begun preparing me for the task that lay ahead of me, but at that moment, his smile appeared mocking.

"Our poor babies are mercilessly massacred and you feel no sympathy for us! Don't you have a heart!"

"You're right, I'm *hridayaheen*, the heartless one. *Mera bandarwa ka kaleja hai* – My heart is like the monkey's who leaves it on top of his tree . . ."

The reference to this bedtime story about a monkey and the dreaded crocodile made matters worse. I was really fuming at Satyam now.

"If you set your mind upon something and channel all your energies into it, including anger and aggression, there's

nothing you cannot achieve, Ganga.” With this enigmatic remark, Satyam turned around and swam away.

I realized these were not mere words when I witnessed an interesting incident a few days later. Satyam was taking a bath in the Ganga when another man came to the ghat and started making derogatory comments against Swami Sivananda. Satyam was incensed. He immediately jumped out of the water and rushing towards the man started pummeling him with blows. The man was no weakling either. Soon the two were wrestling and rolling on the sandy banks of the Ganga. Luckily, there were a few other people around who managed to separate the two. Satyam was in no mood to let the man off easily. He insisted that the man apologize for his insulting behaviour.

The other man was a very good swimmer and in a fit of rash pride said that he would apologize only if he was beaten in a swimming match. To this Satyam immediately responded, “Fine, whoever crosses the Ganga a hundred times first wins the contest.”

Both dived into the river together and the contest began. I knew Satyam was a good swimmer. How many times had I seen him swimming with only one hand or deliberately heading towards treacherous whirlpools! Still, crossing the Ganga a hundred times was no joke. That too in the rainy season . . .

I followed the duo, hoping better sense would prevail and the contest would be called off. But no, the contest went on and on, lap after lap. After fifty or so laps, the man was totally exhausted and collapsed on the bank, but to my great dismay and greater concern, Satyam kept on going. Only after he had completed one hundred and eight crossings did he end his marathon swimming session!

It was plain to see what anger and aggression could achieve if it was constructively channelled.

The next evening, as he was seated again on his majestic rock, I approached him and said, “I hope you are okay after all that exertion, Satyam. I don’t know about you, but



my lower back is definitely sore from all the swimming and leaping I did to keep you in sight all the time.”

“For your condition, I’d normally prescribe a backward bending asana like shalabhasana or even better, matsyasana, but knowing your disdain for all things piscean, I’d recommend makarasana instead.”

The last word made me cringe. Any mention of alligators and crocodiles always brought up painful memories of losing my precious babies.

“You are heartless indeed, Satyam. How would you know the pain of nourishing a life for ten months in your womb and then see it snatched away mercilessly . . .” I couldn’t finish my sentence owing to the emotions wrenching my heart.

“Go on cringing and cowering all your life,” he said in a stern tone. “Nothing will change. If you really want to do something about your problem, learn to overcome your fear first.”

“How?” I managed to ask amidst sobs.

“By facing it. Fear of the unknown brings no gain. If you hide from your fear, it will assume monstrous proportions,

but if you can look fear squarely in the face, lo and behold, it will melt into oblivion. This is what I've practised in my own life and this is what I can pass on to you."

"As a child, when elders used to scare me with stories of ghosts and ghouls hiding behind dark doors and almirahs, ready to pounce upon me the moment I misbehaved, do you know what was the first thing I did? I would go and look behind the very same places, to convince myself of the falsity of their statement and nip that fear of the unknown right in the bud. At an age when most children seek the safety of their parents' laps after nightfall, I would visit the local shmashan, and do practices I had read from a book. Later, when I came in contact with a mysterious yogini, who introduced me to the vast realm of tantra, I would walk to her cave in the middle of the night through a dense forest without even the comforting presence of my hunting rifle. Little by little have I thus whittled away at that debilitating instinct we know as fear."

"What you say may be true, Satyam, but how can I even think of meeting Ghatiya face-to-face, when he is bigger and stronger in every department. Not to mention those scary jaws and that tough, impenetrable hide."

"Ghariales may have tough hides on the top but their underbelly . . . that is another story altogether."

"Surely you're not suggesting fighting him. I've no sharp claws or jaws . . ."

"Where there is a will there is a way, Ganga. Never forget that Nature has provided you with everything that you need to fight and win your battles," said Satyam nonchalantly and then began humming some verses. He was clearly in an expansive mood and I did not want to bother him any more with my troubles. I was about to swim away but something about the verses struck a chord in my heart and I couldn't resist asking, "What are you singing, Satyam?"

At my request he burst into a soulful melody:

*Shishumaaroragaganairmeenairapi cha chanchalaih
Vidyubhiriva vikshiptairaakaashamabhavattadaa.*



Looking at me he said in a tone laden with emotion, “This verse is from the Ramayana, where Sage Vishwamitra is recounting to Rama and Lakshmana the descent of the Ganga from the heavenly realms to the locks of Lord Shiva and then down to the earth. This particular verse speaks of the countless dolphins, water snakes and fish tumbling down with the waters of the Ganga with great speed, like shards of lightning lighting up the entire sky with

their dance. If the gharial is the vahana of Ma Ganga, you are one of the first creatures to have responded to her avahan and come down with her. You have as much right to live in her waters as the gharial. Don’t you feel that connection with Ma Ganga?” he asked with genuine passion. A moment later, he added, “But how could you? Your name isn’t proper . . .”

“Why? What difference does a name make anyway?”

“A name isn’t merely something to address you. It is meant to connect you with your inner qualities, your purpose in life. With a name like yours, how can you look upon Ma Ganga as the devi, the divine mother? No, from now on I shall call you *Gangaputri*, the daughter of Ganga.” He then began to recite many more verses from the episode of Ganga’s descent and soon he was totally oblivious to the outside world.

I slowly swam away, lost in thought myself. “No, Satyam is definitely not heartless. He has the soft, sensitive heart of a poet, which can turn to steel when needed.” I felt I had somehow been given a golden key to unlock my latent potential, to develop my dormant faith.

The rainy season had ended and we finally decided to leave Rishikesh and travel downstream. It was our last night

in Rishikesh. As I swam towards Ananda Kutir hoping for one last goodbye meeting with Satyam, I noticed something unusual in the atmosphere. It was the seventh day of September; and there was a special celebration going on in the ashram. I knew that the next day was Swami Sivananda's birthday and we had chosen that auspicious day for our departure. "But what's going on tonight?" I wondered.

As I neared the shore, and began to hear the orations, a joy and a thrill swept through me. This was a special ceremony to felicitate Satyam on his thirty-first birthday. As speaker after speaker heaped him with accolades, I could imagine poor Satyam squirming under the unwanted attention and adoration. Yet, this was important and essential. The beauty and grandeur of Satyam's nature and character needed to be highlighted so it may inspire countless others.

The master of ceremonies invited a certain Swami Omkarananda to shed some light on Satyam's multifaceted personality. At a certain point in his speech I heard him say, "... the only amusement and the only recreation he allows himself are, lying in repose and an occasional swim in the river Ganga, the first pointing to the seriousness of the spiritual purpose he has set before himself and the



quiescent condition he creates to contemplate it, and the second shows us his gentle regard for the health and strength of his bodily being, the obedient instrument and servant of his evolving and self-expressive Spirit. A mind luminous with great thoughts, a temper permeated with an ethereal nature, Swami Satyananda is a nascent immortal Spirit fluttering its wings within the cage-like framework of his frail form, in anticipation of taking a Shelleyian Skylark's flight into the transcendental realms of spiritual experience . . ." I nodded my head. The speaker couldn't have expressed it any better.

During the course of the program, Swami Sivananda conferred upon him the sacred title of 'jnana-yajna-upabhr̥it', and a special birthday souvenir was presented to him. As the presenter read out a few lines from the opening page of the souvenir, I realized for the first time the true splendour and greatness of the man I had been so casual and carefree with. "Herein is the picture of a young man who, moulding his life on the pattern of an upanishadic rishi, has, by dint of the intensity of his aspiration and the pertinacity of his application, won for himself an immortal place among the galaxy of great and glorious spiritual geniuses . . ." My troubles and problems seemed so tiny and trivial in the vastness of Satyam's majestic personality. I now had full faith in him, and myself too.

When the program ended with full-throated cheers of "Long live Satyanandaji!" it was past midnight. As I turned around to head out into the river, I froze for an instant. Right in front of me was a big, yellow-coloured, roundish creature. Compelling fear gripped me, and my first instinct was to dive below the surface and escape. Right then, Satyam's words rang in my ears, "Fear of the unknown brings no gain. Learn to look fear squarely in the face." I decided to do just that. I charged straight at the yellow object, but wonder of wonders, the moment my long, pointed beak came in contact with it, it exploded into nothingness. My god! I had been frightened by a frivolous balloon that had floated down to the river from the birthday celebrations! Together with relief came a flash

of insight. Yes, Nature had indeed given me the weapon I needed to fight and win my battle.

Early the next morning, I met Satyam as he came down for his morning bath. I felicitated him on his wonderful birthday celebration the previous night, but he brushed that aside. I asked him to convey my pranams to Swami Sivananda on his birthday, and then paying my respects to him and thanking him profusely for all that he had shared and taught, I turned around. As I was swimming away, I heard him whistle in a high-pitched note in a peculiar way. “Call out for me with this whistle, Gangaputri, and I’ll always answer your call. Goodbye and Godspeed. And never lose faith in yourself.” These were the last words I heard from him.

EPILOGUE

This is how my life story appeared in Dolphin’s Digest a few years ago. But in the face of persistent letters from fellow dolphins wanting to know how I dealt with Ghatiya the gharial, how I earned my daredevil-dolphin nickname, if I ever met Satyam again and so on, I decided to overcome my usual reticence and pen down this epilogue to my story.

We migrated down to the plains from Rishikesh on 8th September 1954. The following spring I gave birth to a





plump, baby boy, and as per Satyam's instruction, named him *Gangeya*, the son of Ganga.

Our worst fears came true when Ghatiya showed up in the neighbourhood not too long after. He had already snapped up two other calves when I finally decided to take the bull by its horns. One morning as I was feeding Gangeya, I noticed Ghatiya's long snout some way off heading in our direction. "Ah, so you have set your evil eyes on Gangeya this morning! This time I'll not take things lying down."

I gently pushed Gangeya aside and weighed my options. Doubt and fear were closing in on me from all sides. Suddenly, Satyam's inspirational words coursed through my mind and the incident with the big balloon played itself out in front of my mind's eye. Instantly, all doubt disappeared and was replaced by an iron resolve. I began swimming straight towards Ghatiya.

This was the first (and last) time that Ghatiya was seeing a dolphin charge at him. Until now, he had only seen them run helter-skelter away from him. For a few crucial moments he froze, utterly perplexed. That was all I needed. A few metres away from him I drew in a deep breath and dived under. When I was directly beneath him I turned straight upwards, the way we do when we want to leap out of the water.

My beak hit Ghatiya's underbelly with tremendous speed and it ripped apart, somewhat like the balloon the other day. It was not a pretty sight, and suffice it to say that Ghatiya didn't survive long after he received that mortal blow. An

hour later we saw his carcass floating on the river, and life for me was never the same again.

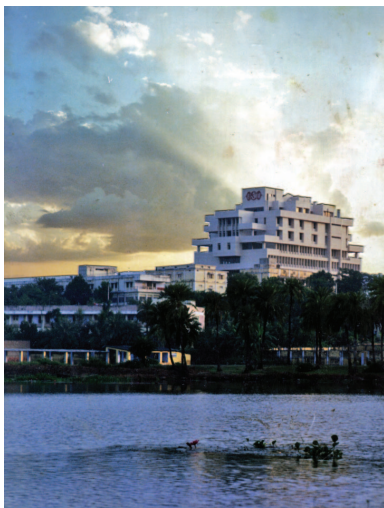
As news of my daredevilry spread, I became the unquestioned leader of not just my school but almost the entire dolphin population up and down the Gangetic basin. In succeeding years, I became the rallying point for all issues related to the wellbeing and safety of the entire dolphin population. I could put to good use the teaching of Satyam received in the holy waters of Ma Ganga, and in my small way, I was able to help him in his mission to spread yoga 'from shore to shore'.

When Gangeya was a year old, I took him to Rishikesh to get Satyam's blessings. There I learnt that he had left his guru's ashram and become a parivrajaka. I was a bit disappointed, but then I consoled myself with the knowledge that Satyam had a much wider arena to work and serve in.

Years rolled into decades. In the mid-eighties, I was fortunate to have Satyam's darshan once again.

I was paying a visit to the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary, the first dolphin sanctuary of its kind set up between Sultanganj and Kahalgaon in Bihar. On the way I was passing through a section of the Ganga that turns northwards and then loops back south. There I felt Satyam's magnetic presence quite strongly. As I passed a little hillock with a tall building atop, I unwittingly called out in Satyam's trademark whistle. And lo! A reply wafted back from the top of that building. Satyam told me to come to Kashtaharni, one of the local ghats, the next morning.

Satyam seemed older and graver from his Rishikesh



days. After all, he was now shouldering the responsibility of a worldwide yoga movement he had initiated years ago. Yet, the lovely smile and the full-throated laughter had not changed one bit. Satyam enquired about my wellbeing and that of my rather large family tree. He gave me a few more personal instructions and told me to put them into practice diligently. “I may not be here much longer, but we shall definitely meet once again in this lifetime,” he said as we parted ways.

He was right. The next time I visited Munger, the headquarters of his yoga mission, I found that he had left everything in the hands of his worthy successor, Swami Niranjan, and embarked on the next phase of his life. All through those years I missed his uplifting insights and able advice. Then, almost a couple of decades after our last meeting, I got an urgent psychic summons from him. He asked me to come to Rishikesh as soon as possible. I wasn’t too far away and got there in less than a day.

The next morning I was rewarded with Satyam’s darshan on the very same ghat I had first seen him almost fifty years ago! It was a poignant reunion. Words were superfluous in this meeting of souls.

Now I know that the relationship between master and disciple spans not only months, years and decades but lifetimes as well. As I enter the twilight of my present lifetime, I eagerly look forward to another lifetime in the loving, joyous company of my true friend, guide and Master.



SATYAM TALES 3

