

SATYAM TALES

A Star in Heaven, A Flower on Earth

A balyogi's first floral tribute to his guru



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



Satyam Tales

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

A Star in Heaven, A Flower on Earth is the thirty-second 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.

"Although my whole life is suffused with the memories of Swamiji, I wish to dive deep into the ocean of his personality and gather a treasure of priceless, invaluable gems, whose dazzling light will help you attain everything . . ." Manifesting this heartfelt wish, Swami Niranjan composed this touching tribute to his guru at the tender age of ten. First published in 1971 in Hindi, this collection of inspiring incidents and poignant conversations between a great guru and his ideal disciple is now being published as a Satyam Tale.

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. Perhaps you may also find a gem in Satyam's vast ocean . . .

— 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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A Star in Heaven ★
A Flower on Earth

Beloved Niranjan,

This book of yours is an invaluable one, a veritable Gita. It is the living image of the guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati (Bhagwan Vyas Dev) and the disciple, Niranjan (Sri Ganesha). I have the proud privilege of being the daughter of Sri Swamiji as well as being your Ammaji. I want to bless you but how, you are the very essence of Satyam, the truth. I wish that Gurudev will become the *sumeru* and you the thread which strings the *mala* together and blooms like a little flower above the *sumeru*.

Your blood, bone, marrow are mine,
The patterns of your mind too.
Your voice is mine, o radiant son!
And the halo of your pranas too.

The resolve in you is mine, so is the bounce in your steps
My son! My very essence is in you,
I am in each and every nerve and vein of yours.

You are a ray of light for the whole world,
You will dispel the darkness of the human race.
The only desire of the mother is this, my son.
May you become the vermillion on your Guru's forehead.

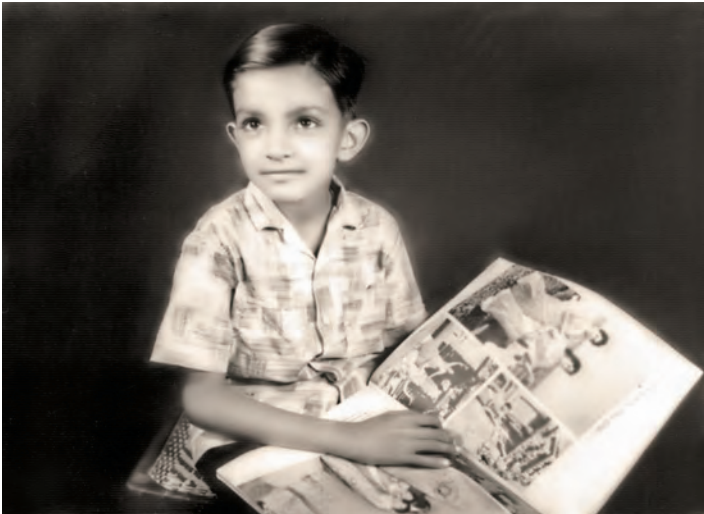
– Dharmashakti

PREFACE

My gurudev, the world-renowned Swami Satyananda Saraswati, had first come to Rajnandgaon on 6th June 1956. My father worked as a clerk at the local textile mill. Whenever Swamiji came he stayed at our home, from a few days to several months. Throughout the day officers and workers from the mill, women and children thronged the house and there was continuous satsang. Who knows which deep emotion inspired Ammaji to write down every word he spoke. Ammaji's almirah is full of notebooks which contain everything that Swamiji has spoken, everything he has written – anecdotes, articles, poems, letters – everything is there.

When I was a little child, Ammaji used to tell me things about Swamiji instead of inane stories. I would forget all my mischief and repeat them over and over again. Dadaji used to say, “Niranjan, you are just like a tape recorder. You only keep repeating stories of Swamiji!”

I started reading at the age of four, and would take out Ammaji's diaries, notebooks and letters and read each and every word. Ammaji would not object but she also made sure



that I did not mix up any of the papers. Watching Ammaji write, I also would sit down to write like her. She would show me and I would write in big, small, crooked letters. This is how my writing began. I would ask Ammaji, "What will you do with all these papers?" and she would reply, "When you grow up, make a building and call it 'Satyadham'. Decorate each room like a museum, with a collection of Swamiji's photographs, books and writings, and include all my writings about him as well. Make Swamiji's life story come alive. For you this is nothing less than the Guru Gita."

After the booklet 'An interview with Swami Satyananda Saraswati' was printed, Ammaji came to Munger and said to me, "Niranjan, I also have a lot of material on Swamiji's life, should it also be printed like this book?" I was very happy when she said that. Ammaji sought Swamiji's permission to print, to which he replied, "Why are you asking me? If you people wish to, certainly go ahead and print it."

I came to Rajnandgaon with Swamiji on 9th August and went through Ammaji's almirah again. Taking out all the books and diaries, I read everything and told Ammaji simply and innocently, "Please prepare everything that I have written first. All my work should be in my name and all your writings should have your name." I even told father, "Please print my book first." He replied, "Everything is only yours, my dear. Should both be printed with your name?" I said, "No, one will have my name and the other will be in Ammaji's name. Both will complement each other in portraying a wonderful picture of Swamiji."

I hope that devotees, disciples and acquaintances of Swamiji will like this book and derive many benefits from it. I pray to God for strength to present many such invaluable books to readers. This is just my first attempt.

I offer this book at the lotus feet of my beloved guru, on the sacred occasion of his consecrating 108 sannyasins for the welfare of the world. O Gurudev, this is your treasure, you have written it, you will have to accept it as your own.

— *Niranjan*

I

I arrived in Rajnandgaon with Swamiji on 9th August 1969 for a week-long program. Swamiji had first come to Rajnandgaon in 1956 and it was from here that his life as a wandering mendicant began. People who had met him earlier would come, recount their acquaintance with Swamiji which went back twelve years and consider themselves very fortunate for this privilege. Rajnandgaon being my birthplace, all my childhood memories came alive too. Each and every moment of this life, and even beyond, is suffused with memories of Swamiji, which I wish to write about even though my effort will be like offering a small flame to the glorious sun.

In today's times, we don't need venerable sadhus but loving sadhus who can show the way to those who are lost, someone who can care for the suffering multitudes and illuminate their path. In today's age, people who are struggling with life need such a swami who will become like a loving mother and say to them with confidence, "My children! Come with me, I will take you from darkness towards truth and light."



Swamiji is the inspiration and moving force behind the International Yoga Fellowship Movement. He wants to introduce yogic values and precepts to people all over the world, and demolish the walls of ignorance, misconceptions and orthodoxy that have imprisoned and stifled yoga.

Who does not know about Swamiji today! His message rings out from palaces to huts, in every corner of the world. I think that God took pity on man's ignorance and created a magic wand in the form of Swamiji which He is now wielding all over the world. I was unable to hold myself back either, and jumped into the vast ocean of this world to become a little magic wand myself.

People may laugh at my humble, little tales but it is through these very tales that I will relate the essence of Satyam. Although my whole life is suffused with the memories of Swamiji, I wish to dive deep into the ocean of his personality and gather a treasure of priceless, invaluable gems, whose dazzling light will help you attain everything!

II

I will begin with an incident that took place in October 1963. The work of building the Munger ashram had begun. Swamiji had planned to light an eternal flame on 18th January 1964 and to stay in the ashram for the next three years living the life of a Paramahansa. This was the last year of his parivrajak life and all his acquaintances had organized programs in their respective towns before he would embark on this new phase. A 5-day program had



been organized in Rajnandgaon as well. I was barely four years old at the time. Swamiji used to say to me, “Niranjan, I will not be coming here anymore. You come to Munger and then I will take samadhi.” I would become very happy and say, “Swamiji will take samadhi and become Niranjan and then I will become Satyananda!” People came to see him all day long. They would wait from early morning to take mantra initiation, knowing that Swamiji might not come again.

One day, a lunch and ladies satsang had been organized at Vinod chacha’s home. Swamiji reached there by 10 o’clock. We had also gone along. Ichchi (Ratna, my maternal aunt) was in the final year of her MA program. She said, “I need to study, I will not go.” But around 12 o’clock Meena didi persuaded her to come for lunch. Swamiji went to Taraben’s house for an hour after lunch. He was to visit two other places before returning for the ladies satsang. At 1 o’clock when Ichchi set off to return home with Bharati, I decided to go with them.

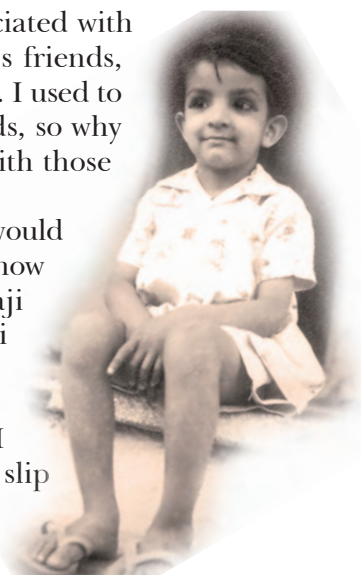
Our house had a verandah in front and rooms on both sides. One was Dadaji’s office, the other was the paper store. There was a backyard, rooms on either side and a high wall at the back. Ichchi opened the lock, and I ran in to look for my book. And there was Swamiji, fast asleep in the big room! I yelled out, “Ichchi, Swamiji is here!” Ratna and Bharati got frightened when they saw Swamiji, wondering how he had got inside when they had just opened the lock a few minutes ago. Swamiji just laughed and said, “Don’t tell anyone. People are so wrapped up in their own petty concerns, I thought I will come here quietly and get some rest.”

The ladies at the satsang got tired of waiting for him. It was past 3 o’clock and Kaki sent the servant to the petrol pump to make enquiries. Vinod chacha ran to see Dadaji at the mill. Ammaji came home at 4 o’clock and when she heard the whole story, she said, “Look here little one, nothing is difficult for Swamiji.” Then she phoned the petrol pump and Dadaji at the mill to tell them that Swamiji was at home.

I did not like going to the Bal Mandir or playing with the little children there. They would teach silly rhymes like,

‘Little baby, go to sleep’. I associated with older boys as well as my father’s friends, the clerks and officers at the mill. I used to consider these people my friends, so why on earth would I want to play with those little kids?

I began to think how nice it would be if Swamiji could teach me how to enter locked rooms. Dadaji would be at the mill, Ammaji would be busy with household and press chores, Ichchi would be busy with her studies and I could go to Bal Mandir, quietly slip away from there, come into the locked room and happily fall asleep there!



I would plead with Swamiji so many times, “Please teach me this magic trick!” But Swamiji would simply laugh it off. I would say, “Don’t let Dadaji or Ammaji come to know about it, tell it to me in secret,” and he would laugh even more. Then finally he would say, “Niranjan, these things are not taught. One day you will learn by yourself. Let me tell you stories about when I was your age.”

“When I was four years old, my older sister was six and we had been sent to the convent in Nainital for our studies. I was a very naughty boy. The sisters at the convent would patiently and lovingly try to persuade me not to play mischief. Like you, I also used to fly into a rage. My father had a gun, he used to say, “If you don’t listen to me, I will shoot you.” My father belonged to the Arya Samaj. During the holidays when I went home, he used to wake me up early in the morning and make me sit down for havan. Then mother would say, “Son, quickly go and offer water to Shivji, then go and put sindoor on Hanumanji.” I would say to myself, ‘I will listen to all of you now, but when I grow up I will only do what I want’.”

“Swamiji, what was your name then?”

“My name was Dharmendra, Dharmendra Singh Nayal.”

“Did you ever fight with your sister?”

“Never. My sister was very nice. When I troubled and teased people, she patiently explained why I should not do so. We would talk about how we would travel to many places in India and abroad, do all kinds of great work, start a printing press and bring out many books. We wanted to open hospitals to treat people for free and also make temples without any doors which would be open day and night to one and all.”

“What was your father’s name? Did he also work in a mill?”

“My father’s name was Shri Krishna Singh Nayal. He did not work in a mill, he was a police inspector.”

“Oh, that’s why he had a gun! I like police uniforms very much. Policemen catch people who do bad things, but you only do good work, that is why they have not taken you away. Swamiji, did your mother also tell you stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*?”

“My mother had no time for all that. She followed many taboos and strict rules. When she was cooking in the kitchen, we were forbidden from entering. Then Gandhiji came and after hearing his speeches, she was transformed. From then on a maid started cooking at our house. Mother stopped following all those strict rules and even gave up the purdah. She began to work alongside Gandhiji and even started picketing outside shops selling foreign-made clothes and liquor. Where would she have the time to tell me stories?”

“Swamiji, the police arrest people who make such protests and strikes, isn’t it? Surely the police would have taken her to jail for committing these crimes.”

“Of course, the police used to arrest her but did not put her in jail. They used to go and leave her in the jungle.”

“Swamiji, have you seen ghosts?”

“I have not only seen ghosts, I have even caught and befriended one. I will tell you the story another time. Now see, so many people have started arriving. I have to teach them how to practise neti. Go and bring a neti pot and hot water.”

I would keep asking Swamiji such things and he would answer me patiently. I loved Swamiji's geru robes as well. I used to wrap myself up in them and even dirty them in the mud sometimes. When he was giving satsang, I used to hide myself in his upper dhoti or kurta which was quite large. Sometimes when I crawled into his kurta it would tickle him and he would ask me to run off and play somewhere else!

Ammaji tells me that when I was just a month old, Swamiji came on his way from Bombay to Bhagalpur and stayed for five days. When he arrived, grandmother put me in his lap. He held me for two minutes, then said, "Take the baby from me, I might drop him!" There is also a photograph from that time. When I look at it now, I laugh so much!



III

When I had gone to Munger with Ammaji in July 1965, we celebrated Swami Sivanandaji's samadhi anniversary on the 14th, Guru Poornima on the 17th and Swamiji's birthday on 26th July. A fifteen-day yoga training camp was conducted in the ashram every month. There was a strict rule disallowing

children below the age of 14 to stay in the ashram. If any women came with their little children, they were to stay at the Dharmashala. When we arrived at the gate, Swamiji was informed that Niranjana had also come with Dharmashakti and whether the gate be opened for us or not.

Swamiji said, “Niranjana will stay in the ashram, not in the dharmashala. Open the gate.” By the time the gate was opened, Swamiji himself was there. I said, “Swamiji, we have come. Ammaji says that we have to stay in the dharmashala.”

“Niranjana, you will stay in my room,” said Swamiji, “Go and offer your pranam to the akhanda jyoti and quickly have your bath, then we will have our meal.”

Two other three-year old children, the sons of Savitri Gupta, Rajnandgaon, and Geeta Gupta, Raipur, had also come at that time. The three of us made a lot of noise and mischief! People coming for the evening satsang wondered how these kids had been allowed to enter the ashram. Swamiji told them, “Niranjana has to come here anyway, the ashram



gates are always open for him and because of him, the other kids also got the chance to stay here.” I was permitted to attend the classes too. I would sit on my asana and imitate others. I was also given a mala and a notebook. In the likhit japa class I would write ‘Ram-Ram’ and show it to Swamiji. In the nada yoga session, it was such fun to roll up the asana into a ‘horse’ and sit astride as if I was riding. And in the yoga nidra class, I used to fall fast asleep right away.

We had a little thatched hut for kriya yoga, with banana trees on all sides and

a grapevine over the roof. I'd say, "Swamiji, this is like the ancient ashrams of rishis. Why don't you keep two or three deer and a tiger as well?" and Swamiji would roar, "Three deer are already here and I'm the tiger!" We used to have such fun!

Ammaji and others had their kriya yoga classes in this hut. At that time, Swamiji would take me to the office and give me some envelopes to sort or count. I would quickly finish the job and run off to Ammaji, but he would call me back, seat me at his desk again and say, "Count how many times trains go by and the number of bogies in each train and tell me." There was a railway track behind the ashram and you could see it from the window. I used to watch carefully and keep telling him my counts. He would say, 'Hmm, Hmm' and keep doing his work. Sometimes he would tell me stories, like how he once fell down from a shrub and got stuck in the mud. Then he went home, got a shovel and dug himself back out! At other times he would tell me about the four priests from Mathura who rowed all night long but still found themselves at Mathura ghat in the morning. They had not untied the boat so how could they have reached Vrindavan!

On one such occasion, I asked him again, "Please do tell me the story about the ghost. Have you really seen ghosts?"

Swamiji started saying, "When I was studying, I had become very plump. Other boys used to tease me and call me 'Road Roller'. When I was 10 years old and had come home from school for the holidays, a swami also came there. He taught me some asanas and went away after giving me his yoga danda. I thought it was a magic wand. At that time, I came across a book about ghosts and spirits in the library. Along with a friend I decided to go to the cremation ground at midnight and try some of the mantras from that book. We would take the magic wand with us and there was nothing to fear. We thought we could summon a ghost who would do our bidding. But my father got to know about this and was very upset. He threatened to shoot me if I went out again at night.

"But we thought to ourselves, 'We will not abandon our sadhana. There is only a little bit of japa left, we will complete

it no matter what happens'. The next day, we went and brought ashes from the cremation ground. When everyone was asleep at night, we went to the roof and started doing those rites and truly, as the *japa* of the mantra reached its end, something strange began happening all around. The house started to shake. Grandmother and mother got really afraid, my little brothers started crying. Father started searching for us. We had locked the door to the roof. He was furious and called out, 'Open the door at once! Otherwise I will break down the door'. We had also become afraid by this turn of events. We couldn't think of what to do. We gathered all the ashes and threw them off the roof. As soon as we threw them, things calmed down and everything became normal again. Of course, father was very angry but eventually he cooled down as well. The tantric *sadhak* whom we had been consulting scared us the next day by saying, 'Why did you throw away the ashes? Now the ghost will be very angry and trouble you a lot'. I said, 'What harm can the ghost do to me?' But my friend got frightened by all this. Nothing happened to me but my friend



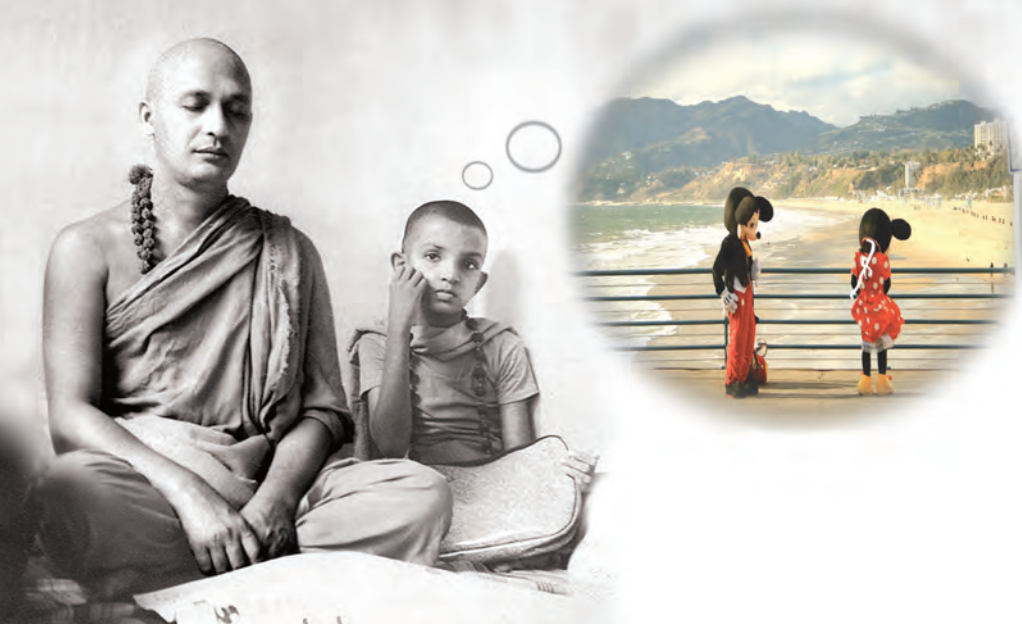
met with a sudden accident and broke his leg. In this way, I made friends with a ghost!"

Thus I spent time with Swamiji. Once he sat me down in front of the hall and taught me the *Mahamrityunjaya* mantra. 14th July was the nirvana day of Swami Sivanandaji. There were special *bhajans* and *kirtan* in the morning. At 10 o'clock there was *Narayan Bhoj*, a feast for the poor people of the town. About 200 beggars and destitutes were fed and each one was presented with a geru-

coloured kurta. Swamiji was very happy. He was serving food himself. I also was happy to contribute to this mahayajna, sometimes bringing water, sometimes fetching papads. All the people there looked like Shiva's attendants and Swamiji looked like Shiva himself, ensuring that no one should leave hungry. There was a grand satsang in the evening where Swamiji spoke about his guru's life and narrated many inspiring episodes.

On 17th July, Guru Poornima, people started arriving from 4 am to receive mantra initiation. There was a mountain of mangoes, bananas and sweets! Noticing that some of us were getting up to mischief, Subhadraji called us to the kitchen. We said, "If you give us a large mango each, we won't be naughty!" She did not want us to create any disturbance in the initiation and havan program, so bribed us with mangoes but pleaded with us not to go outside.

After two minutes, I went up to Swamiji with a large mango. I sat down next to him, started saying '*swaha*' and kept eating the mango at the same time. Swamiji looked at me and said, "It is not good to eat mangoes so early in the morning. Who gave you this?" I promptly told him that I got it from Subhadraji. Swamiji became quite upset with her, but I could not understand why Swamiji was unhappy about my eating a mango in the morning. At mealtimes, everyone got mangoes and sometimes, he used to even give me his share. I can easily eat 2 or 3 mangoes at a time, so why was he upset about it now? Later when I asked Ammaji, she explained that eating mangoes in the morning can cause stomach upsets, cough and cold. Swamiji cares for everyone like a mother does. I was surprised to hear that because he can surely be like a father, but how can he be like a mother? I kept on thinking about this and looked at his face again and again. Swamiji asked me, "Niranjan, are you thinking about something?" When I told him about my doubt, he laughed a lot. He said, "Did you see how I turned into a roaring tiger today? It was such fun, wasn't it?" I also laughed a lot, saying Subhadraji had also turned into a deer along with us, and in this way I started to get an intimate experience of ashram life.



IV

On the second Sunday of every yoga camp, the entire *Ramayana* used to be chanted from morning to evening. There would be a large pile of copies on a table. Whoever came would pick up a copy and sit down to chant. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the big gate would be opened and residents of Munger would come and join the chanting. When the hall filled up, people would sit outside. Arati was at 5 o'clock. Then prasad was distributed, followed by bhajan, kirtan and satsang. Those participating in the sadhana were given diksha booklets. A break of half an hour followed for refreshments while arrangements for screening films were made. The first film to be shown that day was 'The life of Jesus Christ' and then a film for children, 'Mickey Mouse'. That was a lot of fun. Rabbits, mice, cats and dogs – all wearing suits, shoes, tie and hat performed many antics and everyone laughed a lot.

Fifteen days passed very quickly and we made preparations to return to Rajnandgaon. Swamiji had already organized packed lunch for us. He explained everything about the journey to Ammajai and Savitri mausi. When it was

time for us to leave, Swamiji was at the gate and I asked him whether he would be coming with us to the station. Swamiji said, “Oh no, I cannot since I have taken a pledge not to go anywhere for three years. It’s been a year and a half since I stepped outside these gates. I don’t even feel like it, but today I do feel like going to see you off at the station and I find this restriction a little annoying.”

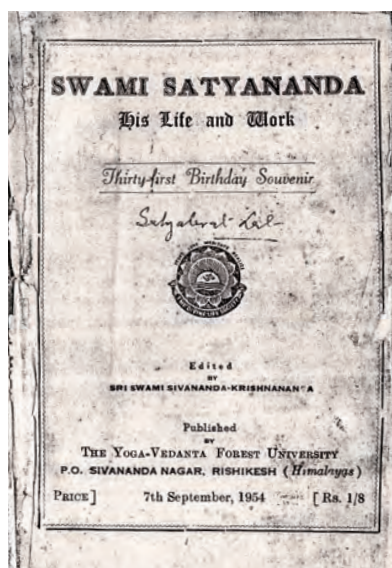
He told Ammaji and Savitri mausi, “One must always have a smile on the face while leaving the father’s home. You all have heard, learnt and understood many things and you have had lot of satsang with me. Always remember that duty is higher than sentiments. Never be swayed from the path of your duties and do not bring dishonour to your father’s name. Look after the children properly on the journey. Don’t forget your father’s home, whenever you wish to visit, the doors are always open for you. My blessings will always be with you. Go on now, travel safely and write to me once you have reached. Hari Om Tat Sat.”

We took his leave and came to the station. When the train left the station, we were looking towards the ashram. I had a feeling that Swamiji would certainly be watching out for us and sure enough, there he was next to the window, waving his hand! These might seem like very small things but when you realize their deeper significance, they seem endless. *Hari anant, Hari katha ananta*, Hari is endless and so are the leelas of Hari, this saying applies to Swamiji as well.

V

We only heard that Lord Rama existed,
we haven’t seen Lord Krishna either.
The greatness of Rama and Krishna
is revealed to us only through scripture.

We can see, hear and understand Swami Satyananda. We can learn something from him, attain something, and in the course of time someone like Tulsidas may manifest and compose ‘Satya-charit-manas’ one day.



And of course, in 1954 on the occasion of Swamiji's thirty-first birthday, Swami Sivananda had published 'Swami Satyananda – His Life and Work', a commemorative souvenir that spread the dazzling light of the precious gem, Satyam. I read this comment there – 'Generally, anniversaries are celebrated on the completion of fifty or sixty years but this new trend created by Swami Sivananda to celebrate the birth anniversary of a young

disciple just thirty years old foretells a bright future. A great guru and a fitting disciple, both are worthy of salutations!' This book is now a rare collector's item which is why I have a strong desire to present verbatim these two letters which were printed in that special commemorative souvenir. They were written by Swamiji's childhood friends, Shri Ashwini Kumar Pant and Shri K.C. Joshi. First of all, please see what Shri Ashwini Kumar Pant writes:

A Glimpse into the Literary Life of Swami Satyanandaji

Ashwini Kumar Pant

This incident goes back fifteen years when I was a student in the sixth grade at the Government Intermediate College, Almora. During that time, a few enthusiastic youth from the school had brought out a magazine called *Ma*. There were many beautiful stories, articles and poems in it, but the poems written by a student under the pseudonym *Hridayaheen* created a storm. People couldn't believe that such beautiful and powerful poems had been written by a

mere student. I was also drawn to literary pursuits in those days. I started contributing to the magazine and very soon a deep friendship developed between *Hridayaheen* and myself. *Hridayaheen* was none other than Dharmendra Singh Nayal, an outstanding student in the ninth grade.

After some time, Dharmendra started a new magazine, *Bharat*. Under Dharmendra's inspiration and encouragement, I also started a magazine called *Agragami*. Once the famous poet, Sumitranandan Pant came to visit his birthplace, Almora, and we showed him our magazines. He appreciated our efforts and suggested that it would be better if we all came together and brought out just one magazine. Dharmendra and myself considered the prospect of working together and brought out a collaborative magazine called *Agragami-Bharat*. Despite repeated requests, Dharmendra refused to become the editor and I was forced to take on the post. Though Dharmendra worked only in the capacity of an assistant, in reality the entire editing and publishing of the magazine was all his effort.

Our youthful enterprise impressed many people and we received a lot of encouragement. Pantji sent us poems written in his own hand! Dharmendra was the very soul of the magazine. He wrote many articles, stories and poems under the pseudonyms *Hridayaheen*, *Premi*, *Nirala*, *Wahi* and *Pallav*. Our teachers were amazed by his proficient writing in Hindi, Sanskrit and English as well. He had started composing poetry using different metres and styles of the Hindi language and achieved outstanding success in his endeavour. All who read these poems were full of glowing praise for them.

Around that time, a poetry convention was held in honour of the poet-laureate Sumitranandan Pantji. *Pallav* stole the show. Pantji said, 'This young boy's name will certainly shine in the world of Hindi literature.' Today Pantji's words have proved to be true. The young Dharmendra as Swami Satyananda is lighting up the skies of Hindi literature.

Apart from Hindi, Dharmendra had great love for Sanskrit and English. He had started writing in Sanskrit and was thinking of bringing out a magazine in English as well. Such proficiency in three languages at such a young age was unprecedented!

It was becoming increasingly difficult for Dharmendra to remain interested in mundane, meaningless classes of algebra and geometry at school and he took to occupying the last bench, writing poems or correcting articles for *Aragami-Bharat*. Often Dharmendra and I would wander off to faraway places while walking through the mountains. Sometimes, he would gaze in the direction of the distant peaks of the Himalayas and forget himself completely. Whenever I asked him about this, he would simply laugh and avoid the subject. Who could have known back then that he was seeking his luminous future in those lofty Himalayan peaks . . .

And then suddenly one day, Dharmendra left Almora and went away. Where and why? No one knew. Seven years went by and all that we had left was Dharmendra's memory. Whenever we remembered some incident from the time spent with him, the heart would grow heavy and the eyes fill with tears wondering about where and how he was.

By 1950 I was studying law at Prayag University. One day I received a letter out of the blue. The writer was enquiring about the last seven years of my life, saying that he would identify himself only after I had replied. For some time I was in a quandary, but then I suddenly thought of Dharmendra. The letter was signed 'Satyananda'. I was convinced that this Swami Satyananda was none other than my dear friend Dharmendra. I went berserk with joy. Sending my reply with the next post, my belief was proved right. Seven years ago the youth who had left Almora and disappeared from our lives was now the ascetic Swami Satyananda of Rishikesh. That bright young man had enthralled everyone in the little mountain town of Rishikesh by his brilliance and was working tirelessly to



spread the divine message of his esteemed guru, Swami Sivanandaji, all over India.

It is unnecessary to write anymore about Swami Satyananda Saraswati. His innumerable readers will be familiar with his exemplary sannyasa life. I have only made a feeble attempt to present a picture of his earlier life about which not many people know. It is my inestimable good fortune to have been blessed by the company of this great man during the formative years of my life.

Today his 31st birthday is being celebrated in Rishikesh and I offer my best wishes on this most auspicious occasion. I pray to the divine that Swami Satyananda be blessed with a long and healthy life. May he continue to spread the eternal, divine and benevolent message of his guru, Swami Sivanandaji, all over the world through his wonderful writings and speeches!

This letter of Shri Ashwini Kumar Pant bears testimony to the saying that the future of a luminary is visible right from the cradle itself. Now please read the second important letter penned by Shri K.C. Joshi:

A Tale from Fifteen Years ago

K. C. Joshi

When I was a student in Almora about fifteen years ago, I met a very unusual boy called Dharmendra. People used to call me *Nanu* in Almora. I had another friend whose name was Ashwini Kumar Pant whom we fondly called *Aami*. Dharmendra was always drawn towards writing and poetry. Many of his poems were published in several magazines. Well-known scholars and professors were very impressed and surprised by his grasp over the Hindi language. From childhood, he had a divine and meditative bent of mind.

Dharmendra's father was a police inspector. He had a younger brother whose name was Bhupendra. They used to live in the Nayal Kholi in Almora. In 1940, Dharmendra left Almora quite suddenly. Even after making many inquiries, we did not find out anything. For three or four months we kept wondering about his whereabouts, when one day I got a letter from him sent from the Veterinary Research Institute, Mukteshwar. I was unable to suppress the intense desire to meet my friend again and the very next day, I set off for Mukteshwar. I travelled fourteen miles and reached my destination. By god's grace I reached just in time as Dharmendra was about to leave for his village. It was called Gaj and was four miles from Mukteshwar. After two days, Dharmendra and I went to Almora together. He stayed with me at my home. Everyone in my family had deep affection and respect for him. He spent a day with us and then returned to resume his studies in bacteriology at Mukteshwar.

Just a month or so after that one night, Dharmendra made an unexpected visit to my house. When I asked him what the matter was, he said that he had decided to renounce everything. He stayed for four or five days and then one day he said that he was going to Rishikesh. Naturally, I was sad to be parted from my dear friend but perhaps it was god's wish. He gave me a photograph of himself before he left which I still have with me. After a few days I received a letter from

Dharmendra which he had written from Rishikesh. He wrote, 'Friend, this is my last letter to you. The next letter you will get from me after I have become a true human being.' He had also written this poem:

These songs carry my inner joy,
these rhymes echo with my loneliness.
Funeral flames blaze within these emotions,
madness courses through my mind and breath.

That letter brought tears to my eyes. For the next seven years, I had no news of him. Despite asking so many people about him, there was no information at all. In 1950 when Swami Sivananda was on his tour throughout India, I got a letter from my friend Aami saying that Dharmendra had become a disciple of Swami Sivananda and would be coming to Calcutta in September. I went to meet him in Calcutta and he had truly become a great human being! Looking upon his luminous divine form, my eyes shone with pride. I have read so many of the books that he sent me like *Arogya Jeevan*, *Sivananda Digvijaya* and others. Even today the divine form of Swami Satyanandaji is alive in my heart. That home was blessed in which he was born, that land is blessed where he grew up and of course, I am very blessed to have spent many years of my life with a living saint. May he live forever!



These two letters from Swamiji's friends transport us to another time and place altogether. I couldn't resist the temptation of sharing them in their entirety with all of you. Of course, the entire souvenir was full of stories about his achievements but I want to write about my experiences. Swamiji's guru-brother, Swami Jyotirmayananda writes: "The solemn skyward-bound *Homa* bird dropped three or four eggs into the void. They began falling. During the descent itself, little feathered birds emerged from these shells. Some flew up into the skies calling out, 'Mother! Mother!' and one set off towards the mortal plane to bring the message of eternal life. And he is Satyam – Swami Satyananda Saraswati."

What a beautiful description of Swamiji! He is like the fathomless ocean, revealing whatever form one seeks in him. For me he is mother, father, friend and brother rolled into one. I eat with him, sleep in his bed and at times even wrestle with him. Once in January, Swamiji was having his afternoon nap under a quilt. I was also lying next to him and telling him a story. After a while I would get restless, go outside



and then come running back to jump in the bed and snuggle under the quilt again. After having done this several times, Swamiji finally said to me, "Look here, Niranjana! If you are going to dirty my quilt with muddy feet, I will dirty your quilt as well." I found that so funny and laughed a lot! I told him, "Swamiji, your quilt and my quilt, both of them are yours." To that he replied, "I won't think of it as mine when I dirty your quilt with muddy feet!"

VI

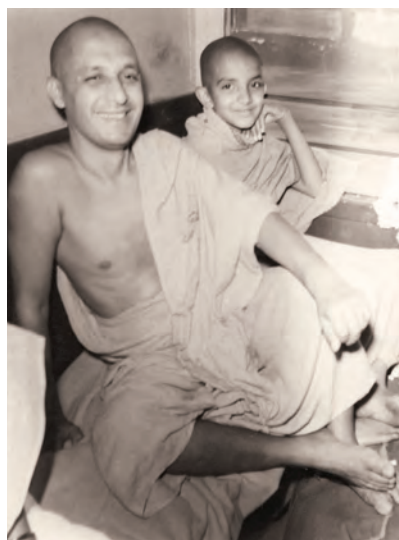
In November 1965, the second yoga convention was going to be conducted in Munger. I had already visited Munger in July that year and really wanted to go again but Dadaji said that children below the age of 14 would not be allowed. But soon we received a letter from Swamiji saying that Niranjana must definitely be brought to Munger with them and that's how I got to go! Swamiji used to keep me with him all the time though many people would be making remarks that he is only five, while our son is ten or twelve years old and yet wasn't allowed.

In the third yoga convention of 1966 Swamiji said something to the effect that he was going to take samadhi. I was very adamant and insisted that since Swamiji is talking about taking samadhi, Dadaji should definitely take me along to Munger. But he said, "Swamiji has to listen to all kinds of comments because of you," and so did not take me with him. When he got to Munger, Swamiji was very upset that he had not brought Niranjana along. He said, "Everything had been planned for him, even your accommodation had been organized in the dharmashala so that no tongues would wag."

I had not gone to Munger, so was simply sitting quietly at home. In the morning when the milkmaid came, she asked, "Niranjana baba, you didn't go? When will Swamiji come here? When will we have his darshan?" And then she began narrating a story, "About three years ago there was an outbreak of smallpox in my village of Motipur. When many cases started becoming serious, the villagers began doing bhajan-kirtan and offering worship to Devi. At that time, we all felt that if Swamiji came to Motipur, everything would become all right. We all begged him to come. He came, conducted havan and kirtan, told us stories of the Devi's greatness and grandeur, and from that very day, the fury of the disease abated and went away completely. Since that time, there has been no such problem in our area." Her eyes

misted up as she recounted this to me. Then she offered pranam to Swamiji's photograph and left.

In 1967, the yoga convention was planned in Gondia. I was very happy when I heard this because it meant that I would be seeing him soon. On the evening of 30th October, Swamiji's train was going to reach Rajnandgaon. Four compartments had been reserved for him since the participants of the nine-month teacher training course were also accompanying him as well as many disciples from Munger, Kharagpur, Tatanagar, Bilaspur and Raigarh. Swamiji was travelling out of the ashram for the first time after three years and crowds of people thronged to the stations to see him. Even at Rajnandgaon, the platform was completely packed with people eager to have a glimpse of him. The train finally arrived and came to a halt at the platform. When Swamiji came out of the compartment, the crowds surged forward in a huge wave as if Sri Rama had alighted from the Pushpak vimana in Ayodhya. Disciples, travellers who were alighting as well as boarding the train – everyone gathered there. The train remained there for forty minutes instead of the designated ten-minute halt. I quickly



greeted Swamiji with a *Hari Om* and getting into his compartment, sat by the window and watched all the fun from inside! Swamiji was distributing prasad to everyone, even the railway employees welcomed him. Distributing prasad at all the stations on the way, we finally reached Gondia.

The program started on 1st November. The participants were astounded by his work and by his lectures. The proceedings



used to begin at 4 am and during breaks for snacks and lunch huge crowds of people would come to meet him. Till midnight, people would be telling him about their physical and emotional problems, seeking remedies for their ailments. Swamiji would explain everything so beautifully that one could see them change from the very next day; they would be looking healthier and stronger.

VII

Before his first trip overseas in April 1968, Swamiji went to Rishikesh for fifteen days. He wished to have darshan of his guru's samadhi and receive his blessings. The nine-month teacher training course participants also went with him, so did Ammaji and myself. We reached Rishikesh on 3rd April where all arrangements had been made for us. A bus took us to the ashram and we were accommodated in the new building there. We had six rooms for our use. After putting away our luggage and having our bath, we all went with Swamiji to Annapurna, the dining hall. Swami Chidanandaji was travelling abroad and Swami Krishnanandaji was looking after everything in his absence. Swami Premanandaji was

the general secretary. His instructions were to have our meal after taking bath, then go up and meet everyone.

After our meal, we all went up to have darshan of Swami Sivanandaji's samadhi. Then we went to Vishwanath temple and later visited Swami Krishnanandaji and Swami Madhavanandaji in their kutirs. I was with Swamiji all the time and everybody kept looking at me with a lot of surprise and curiosity. Swamiji would introduce everybody but when it came to me, he used to say, 'He will introduce himself, talk to him directly.' Swami Krishnanandaji asked me, 'O ji, tell us your name' and they were Swamiji's words that came out of my mouth – 'Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Niranjan Saraswati!' Swami Krishnanandaji replied, 'Oh dear! I am so frightened by this long name!' Everyone was coming to greet Swamiji and were so happy to see him. They laughed a lot together. Then we went to see Swami Satyanandaji's old kutir.

Swamiji was telling us many stories about the days when he used to live there. We went to Vishwanath temple and next to it is a room with a statue of Swami Sivanandaji. From the window it looks as if Swami Sivanandaji himself is sitting there. We went further up to the kirtan hall where kirtan goes on throughout the twenty-four hours of the day. There is a huge statue of Saraswati and one of Swami Sivanandaji as well. Some people were doing kirtan and chanting the *Gita*. Bhajan, kirtan, chanting of the *Ramayana* and *Gita* are continuously done in that hall. Satsang is also held at specific times in the morning and evening. That evening the satsang was in honour of Swami Satyanandaji. Swami Krishnanandaji, Swami Madhavanandaji and an American swami, Mata Hridayanandaji, spoke first and then Swami Satyanandaji related many incidents from his ashram life.

There was satsang on the second day as well. Many people from outside the ashram had also come. On the third and last day, there was a special satsang to bid farewell to Swami Satyanandaji. Books and baskets of fruit and sweets were presented to him and we all received delicious halwa as prasad at the end.

On the 4th, we all went to have darshan at the samadhi. Every day an Australian swami, Karunanandaji, who was about 80 years old, used to play the *khanjari* and do kirtan for an hour there. We went to the press thereafter. I was very interested because in Rajnandgaon I have a 'Yoga Vidya Press' too. A compositor, Sevakram, told me about the different kinds of types and even showed me how automatic composing is done. Swamiji showed us a new machine which does all the jobs – printing, cutting, folding, everything. I thought to myself that I will ask Dadaji to bring a similar machine for our press as well.

Then we went to Swami Sivanandaji's kutir. We all felt something special there. We saw his chair, bed, meditation area, typewriter and his books too. Swamiji was telling us many anecdotes about his guru. I noticed that sometimes his eyes were shining brightly, sometimes they would be searching for something, at other times his throat would choke up and suddenly he would stare into the distance. Suddenly I felt as if Swamiji became Swami Sivananda and I became Satyanandaji. Swamiji was saying to me, "O Swami Satyanandaji, give the books to everyone" and I got startled . . .





Foreign ladies visit all the places unescorted and we had five Indian ladies with us. Swamiji told everyone, “Go and visit places by yourselves, see all the sights. If you have any problem, ask Dharmashakti. She has been here many times, she will show you everything.” I said, “Swamiji, I want to be with you.” He replied, “I have come here for a

special reason. I will attend to that. You go along and see all the places here. Ammaji will show them to you and tell you all the stories related to them as well.” We went to Lakshman Jhoola, Gita Bhavan, Parmarth Niketan, visited several temples and ashrams. We saw the whole of Rishikesh.

I would go around the ashram with Ammaji, and spend many hours in the press. Swami Dayanandaji would tell me about the press and Sevakram narrated many incidents from the old days about Swamiji. I heard many stories from Ammaji as well, and we would spend hours sitting together at the samadhi of Swami Sivanandaji.

The *Ardha Kumbha mela* began at Haridwar on 6th November. On the 5th itself, many people from our group had made plans to leave for Haridwar at 3 am the next morning. I asked Swamiji, “Will you go Swamiji?”

“I used to go to such places frequently,” he replied, “My guru would forbid me from going, in fact on those days he would give me special jobs, but I would do everything, whether it was some writing work or making prasad the night before and head out early in the morning. Once I lost my upper cloth when I got stuck in the crowds. Somehow or the other, I was carried along in the rush of people and reached the Ganga but when I was taking my dip, my dhoti

was trampled upon by someone and I lost it as well. For how long could I stay like that in the water? I thought, there is a group of Naga babas close by, perhaps if I joined them, who would notice another naked baba, but I had such trouble! Somehow I met an acquaintance and got clothes from him but when I returned to the ashram, Swami Sivanandaji was standing at the gate. As soon as he saw me, he said in Sanskrit, '*Satyam vastram dehi*', 'Satyam, give me clothes.' I fell at his feet and begging his forgiveness said, 'I have reaped the fruit of disobeying your orders, I will never do this again' and since that time, I have stopped attending the Kumbha Mela."

"Swamiji, weren't there other times when you did not listen to Swami Sivanandaji's instructions? Will you please tell me about that?"

"Swamiji was so innocent, just like Bholenath Shiva, and I was the ashram secretary. Someone would go and tell him, 'Swamiji, we want to visit Kedarnath and Badrinath' or 'We want to return to our homes but we do not have money for the tickets, we need sixty rupees and two blankets' and Swamiji would immediately say, 'All right, ji. Go and take it from Swami Satyananda.' I used to get angry that not only do these people come and stay in the ashram, have their meals here but then also make demands for clothes and blankets and money. I would ask them, 'Where do you want to go? I will arrange the tickets for you.' When they did not get the money, they would go and complain to Swami Sivanandaji and he would call me and ask, 'Why didn't you give them the money? Please give it to them now!' And if I started to say something, he would just say, 'O . . . m'. Swamiji's 'Om' would shut me up. Then he would tell the person, '*Arrey bhai*, this swami is just a boy. Go wherever you want to and take the money for the ticket from him.'"

"Swamiji, were there as many people as there are today in the ashram in those days? Did you have to bring a lot of rations and provisions? Now there are almost three to four hundred people who eat here."

“Even in those days, there were three to four hundred people. Provisions used to come in trucks and vans. Sometimes there was neither any money in the ashram, nor in the bank. We would get very worried about arrangements for the next day’s meal. When we went to Swamiji, he used to say, ‘Don’t worry. The One who provides will send what we need. It is He who worries about everyone’s meal, not me or you.’ And he would start singing kirtan and from nowhere, for sure, money and provisions would arrive.

“Once the situation was very dire and there was absolutely nothing. By the evening, we were terribly troubled. Finally, we went to Swamiji. He said, ‘Don’t you have faith in Rama? Sing bhajans, strengthen your faith’. Around 6 pm, a car drove up to the ashram and a lady got out. She expressed a desire to have darshan of Swamiji. We told her, ‘Mataji, it will not be possible to see Swamiji now. Please rest for sometime, you can see him during the satsang at 7.30 in the evening’. She became very sad and pleaded with us, ‘Swamiji, I will have to leave right away, I only wish to have his darshan. I beg of you with folded hands . . .’

“I felt very sorry seeing her tears and hearing the desperation in her voice, so I went and knocked on Swamiji’s door and conveyed her request to him. For a minute he closed his eyes and was quiet, then he said, ‘Go and bring her here’. As soon as she came, she fell at Swamiji’s feet and placed a cheque for Rs. 10,000 there. After sometime, she wiped her tears and said, ‘Swamiji, I have come from Delhi, my husband was Captain . . . Before he breathed his last, he told me to come and offer you ten thousand rupees and attend to other expenses only after that. Please bless him so that his soul may find peace and solace. Now, I have to return. Everybody will be waiting for me,’ and she left. Swamiji was overcome with emotion and did soulful kirtan. Then handing me the cheque he said, ‘Go on, make halwa for prasad. And Mr Secretary, develop stronger faith! The Lord knows everything.’ We went to Rishikesh straight away, brought all the provisions and in this manner the kitchen

continued uninterrupted. Even at that time, three to four hundred people used to have meals here.”

“Swamiji, you used to bring water from the Ganga and manage all the kitchen work as well, isn’t it?”

“Yes Niranjan, I have done all kinds of work. To start with, I was given the duty to do kirtan in the Akhand Kirtan Hall. I used to sing there day and night. When I got tired, I used to lie down but kept on singing, *Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare*. Sometimes while sitting, walking around, sometimes while playing the harmonium or cymbals, I kept singing all the time. Later I would clean the dishes, fetch water, cook. When others would get water from the Ganga, I would go out to gather flowers and bael leaves from the forest, and when I woke up at 4 am I would single-handedly carry 60 to 70 buckets of water from the Ganga and fill up the tank. Those times were so joyful!

“Swamiji, there is a toilet with cane matting outside your kutir. Was it also made by you?”

“Once during the Ardha Kumbha mela, Swami Chidananda saw a leper who had sores all over his body. Feeling pity for that poor man both of us wrapped him in a gunny sack and brought him to the ashram. We started



looking after him and giving him medicines. Swamiji gave the money for medicines and we were told to take care of him. We used to apply the medicines on his body, bathe him, shave him, clean his bedpan, everything. I used to do everything, but it was hard for me to go far away and dispose his waste. Then I had an idea. One day I put up four bamboos, tied cane matting all around and told the leper that he could use it as a toilet and spare himself the ignominy of having a sannyasin picking up his waste. He was very happy. This has been around since that time, it comes in handy. No one has removed it.”

“Swamiji, you must have worked very hard in the yoga museum also, isn’t it? How did you think of such wonderful things?”

“It was all Swami Sivanandaji’s inspiration. Even I myself did not know how I used to do all those things. I would get the inspiration from within and throw myself into it day and night. No matter how tired I would be, just looking at Swamiji used to inspire me so much and I was able to complete the most difficult of tasks. Working in the yoga museum used to make me feel as if I was compiling a living photo album.”



“Swamiji, when was the first time you saw Swami Sivanandaji and what did he say to you?”

“When I first came to Rishikesh, I went to the Kali Kamalivali ashram. Once Swamiji had also come for satsang there. When he saw me, he called out, ‘Hey, boy! Come here.’ I went up to him and for two minutes he just looked at me, then he said, ‘Come and meet me at Sivananda ashram tomorrow morning.’ I liked him so much that the very next morning I went to see him. He asked me to sing a bhajan for him. The Akhand Kirtan Hall had just been completed at that time. I was the first one to do duty there.”

“Swamiji, in those days sannyasa was not given to young people, then how did you convince Swami Sivanandaji to give you sannyasa?”

“Oh ho! You have started asking serious questions now! Well, the rule was that householder life came first and then sannyasa followed. After getting their children married, people would retire to places like Haridwar, Rishikesh, Uttarkashi, Mathura or Vrindavan and engage themselves in bhajan-kirtan. Swami Chidanandaji, Krishnanandaji, Poornabodhanandaji and myself thought that by taking sannyasa in old age and doing some japa, meditation and



sadhana before dying, people only benefit themselves. We decided that we would take sannyasa now, while we were young, so that we could walk the path of sadhana and do something for our society, and add a few chapters to this scripture of peace which Gurudeva is writing. What can one expect from someone who is like a book with tattered, worn-out pages? We requested Swamiji, 'Instead of giving sannaysa only to old people, who sit for sadhana only to leave their bodies soon after, please give us sannyasa as well'. And he said:

O Traveller! Consider everything thoroughly
Before you embark on this path
On which there is neither respite nor rest.
Bearing the burden of life upon your shoulders
You have to travel far, far ahead.

"Initially, he tried to put us off but eventually he had to give in to our earnest request. Now you will find young sannyasins at Sivananda ashram who are graduates and excellent karma yogis taking care of the work at the press, hospital, studio, post office, everything.

"Niranjan, you have started asking all kinds of weighty questions! Come along now, it is already time for satsang."

And we both went up to the hall. I was not content yet. There was so much to tell Ammaji and to know from her what I should ask about next, I was so eager to hear all that. I went and found Ammaji and both of us began to talk.

VIII

On the morning of the 6th, many people went to Haridwar, even the elderly granny staying in our room. Ammaji and some other ladies were also planning to go. I was also getting ready to leave when Ammaji forbade me. When I was adamant and not willing to listen to her, she told her friends, "There is quite a chilly wind blowing. I will come with Niranjan in an hour or so, you all go ahead." I kept on insisting that I wanted to take a bath so she finally wrapped

a shawl around me and said, “Come, let us go for a walk.” We wandered along the banks of the Ganga and came close to Swami Sivanandaji’s kutir. There are many boulders and it is also quite deep in that place so people do not bathe there.

I love listening to stories and kept plying Ammaji with many questions. When I looked in the direction of the kutir, I saw a bright light near the desolate riverbank. I ran ahead and then came back to tell Ammaji, “I can see Swami Sivanandaji’s light! Come quickly!” I took hold of her hand and pointed in that direction, “Look, there it is!” She said in a soft voice, “That is not Swami Sivanandaji, it is our Swamiji.



He is meditating.” Then as we walked on she told me, “On many occasions, when he used to give mantra to aspirants a similar light would emanate from Swami Sivananda’s face. Swamiji must be meditating upon his guru, this light could either be from his meditation or from Gurudev’s blessings.”

Ammaji went on, “Both the guru and the disciple are great. Gurudev’s mortal frame has taken samadhi but his disciples are filled with his spirit, which shines on their path and lights up their journey.” I could not comprehend what she was saying, and just looked towards Swamiji and that light. I kept on asking Ammaji. She told me, “In May 1959, we had organized a sadhana camp at Bhagwati chacha’s village. There were seven of us. Our sadhana would start at four in the morning. The meditation session used to be held in a large hall. One day at around 4.30 am, I had a strange experience during the meditation. I opened my eyes in fright to see a bright light streaming out of Swamiji’s body. It was exactly like the light you just saw. I went on looking at it and do not know when it went out. After that, for several days I was unable to sit down for meditation, nor was I able to complete my mantra sadhana.

“After that camp, Swamiji went to Mount Abu. Then in July he returned and went to Bandha Bazaar, four days before Guru Poornima. It had been decided that he would spend Chaturmas at a farm in Bandha Bazaar. Early morning on Guru Poornima, your father and I went there by bus. We had taken the necessary pooja and prasad items with us. The journey was slow; we finally reached Bandha Bazaar by 11 o’clock. When we got to the farm, we knocked on the door of Swamiji’s little hut. He had commenced a special sadhana for two months. He would spend the entire day alone in sadhana, have a light meal in the evening and then give satsang. That day the door had been shut since morning. When he heard sounds coming from outside, Swamiji asked, ‘Is it Satyavratji?’ Opening the door he said, ‘I knew you would come but you took a long time getting here. Have you had lunch?’ Your father replied, ‘Swamiji, first pooja, then we will have prasad’.”

“Swamiji said, ‘How much puja will you do! Okay, let’s go to a Hanuman temple close by where we can sit in peace’. The three of us went up there. While we performed pooja, Swamiji sat with his eyes closed in meditation. We also decided to meditate but my eyes simply refused to close! Then I saw the same kind of light again. I even showed it to your father. As we looked at it, it seemed to come closer. I felt afraid. I shut my eyes but still the brilliance was unbearable. I covered my eyes with both hands. When I came out of that trance-like state, your father was saying, ‘Bring some water and serve food to Swamiji’. When I opened my eyes, Swamiji was laughing! We both ate after Swamiji had finished. Then we spoke for some time and returned to Rajnandgaon.”

“How old was I at that time?” I asked and Ammaji laughed, “Niranjan, perhaps Swamiji was looking for you in that light. That incident took place in July 1959 and you were born in February 1960.”

IX

I used to read all the stories from the *Kalyan* magazine and my grandmother would tell me tales from the *Bhagavat Purana*. There are many episodes when the gods are forced to take birth in human form either because of a curse or to fulfil some mission. They incarnate and perform all activities like humans. King Janaka might have looked like a bhogi to people of the world but in reality he was a great yogi. Our gurudev, Swami Satyam is



also like that. Is the Sivananda Ashram of Bihar School of Yoga in Munger anything less than a palace? But he chooses to live in a small room underground.

Regardless of how much milk is received at the ashram, all he wants is a cup of black tea with some lemon. No matter what delicacies are prepared, he just has a couple of rotis, a little dal, rice and some vegetables. And if everything is mixed into one bowl, even better! He only has one meal a day. The righteous Rama and the diplomatic Krishna were all right for their time and place, but in today's selfish Kali Yuga Swamiji has presented yoga in an easy and accessible form, like a veritable Ganga for body and mind. He is Bhagiratha, Rama and Krishna rolled into one. This is what I have understood in the time I have spent with him. There is no difference between man and woman, the difference lies in the eyes of the beholder. Swamiji only sees the precious living soul within the body, that's what is important to him.

Whenever Swamiji explains something, he does it with full self-confidence. Everything he says is from his own life experiences. Whatever Swamiji says with complete



self-confidence gets indelibly etched in the hearts of those who hear it. No matter what doubts or problems people might bring to him, they always receive an answer which gives them peace of mind. Like the pictures of ancient ashrams of rishis with lions, deer and all creatures living together in harmony, you can see a similar picture of today's age at the Sivananda Ashram, Munger. Indians and foreigners, men and women, all do sadhana

together, have their meals and wash their plates together, they even wake up early and have their bath at three o'clock in the morning. What you see in the ashram is a living embodiment of the saying, *Jaat paat poonche nahi koi, Hari ko bhaje so Hari ka hoi* – Without a care for caste or creed, those who worship the divine belong to the divine.

Swamiji does not distinguish between Indian and foreigner, man and woman, family and strangers. His eyes only see the soul within each. When he lived at the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, he spent days and nights translating Swami Sivanandaji's books into English and now his days and nights are spent in understanding and explaining the human mind. His time is spent in research and experiments on how people can practise japa, meditation, asana, pranayama, bhajan, kirtan, diet-control and fasting to attain physical health and mental peace leading to the experience of inner bliss. Renowned doctors and surgeons are astonished when they come to his laboratory but leave in jubilation, holding the key to success in their hands.

Aspirants from all over the world come here. To conduct research on yoga they learn asana, pranayama, japa, meditation as well as imbibe all aspects of yoga with faith and confidence. They listen to the *Gita* and *Ramayana* with faith and devotion. They learn Hindi and Sanskrit and chant their guru-mantra in the prescribed manner. Listen to one incident which took place in January 1969.

The ashram inmates would have morning class from 3 to 8.30 am, then tea and breakfast, another class from 9 am to 11 am, then lunch and rest, the next class from 2 pm to 4 pm followed by the evening meal. At 6 pm there used to be satsang for all during which there were question and answer sessions, and after 7.30 pm either japa and meditation or rest. If people wished, they could sit around the havan kund and chat a little. People spoke about themselves and their families, about sadhana, they even cracked jokes. All kinds of subjects were covered. One day about 60 to 70 people were sitting around the havan kund and on the adjacent



lawn. The discussion was about Krishna. One foreign lady asked in great astonishment, “Swamiji, Sri Krishna was a yogi but how come he also had 16,108 queens? How could he be the *pati*, husband, of so many queens?”

Swamiji explained that the word ‘pati’ did not only mean husband but also protector. Like the president of a country is called ‘*rashtrapati*’, the person responsible for the

country. When the demon Bhaumasura was about to sacrifice these helpless princesses in his greed to attain siddhis, Krishna came to their rescue. But they were totally helpless. Krishna gave them food, clothing, shelter and all the means necessary to carry on with their lives, he took complete care of them. He can be called protector or *swami* or *pati* but not husband. Like all you people are here in the ashram now, I am the person who is responsible for everything, you have all entrusted yourselves to me, I am the one imparting knowledge and teaching to you, I protect you, which means that I am your *pati* or *swami* but not your husband! The person conducting a *sabha*, meeting, is a *sabhapati*. He is not the husband of the meeting. A small misunderstanding can create a lot of confusion and chaos!

Every word uttered by Swamiji gets imprinted in the heart. Looking at everything that he does, one is amazed. There is no *sadhana* in yoga which he has not perfected. A myriad *siddhis* and *vidyas* adorn his feet like yantra vidya, tantra vidya, mantra vidya, vak-siddhi, drishti-siddhi, gandha-siddhi, but Swamiji has never made an exhibition of these accomplishments. Yes, he may certainly employ them

for the benefit of mankind unmindful of any strain or strife to himself. Let me tell you one more thing. If you want to know more about Swamiji, then try to lay your hands on a special issue of *Kalyan* magazine published about thirty years ago in 1940. It carries a small article on him – read it and judge for yourself.

I have told you so many things about Swamiji, and I will do so in the future as well. Don't think of this as

merely a fairytale. Read it with the spirit of a pearl diver, dive deep into the depths of this ocean called Satyam and glean its treasures. The Ganga-like Satyam-river is flowing free and fast, you are welcome to draw water from it. Now I will relate a special story.

Once the king of the devas, Lord Indra, wanted to disrupt the austerities being undertaken by three ascetics and chose to distract them by the performance of the kenchuli dance. The *apsaras*, heavenly dancers, began their performance and slowly the apsara Urvashi began to disrobe herself. She had barely taken off the first garment when one ascetic spoke up, "Stop this dance!" Urvashi promptly remarked to the other dancers, "See, his austerity has been broken." Then she removed the second article of clothing and another ascetic called out to Indra, "Put an end to this disgraceful dance!" Urvashi said, "His austerity has been broken too." Eventually Urvashi had disrobed completely and kept dancing till she was exhausted but the third ascetic, Muni Markandeya was totally absorbed in watching the dance. He exclaimed, "O Dancer! Now that you have removed the covering of clothing from your body, you



should take off the skin and flesh which covers your body as well. You will look so beautiful dancing in the bare sheath of bones!” The austerity of this ascetic remained unbroken. Could it be that Muni Markandeya has manifested in the form of our very own Swami Satyananda? It is difficult to renounce wealth, to renounce beautiful women is even more difficult, but it is most difficult to remain unaffected by name and fame. The young man who had set off in search of Sundaram-Sivam taking a pledge to walk the path obscured by darkness, difficult to follow and sharp as a knife, with unflinching courage, eventually became Satyam.

Sundar Narayan Shastri writes that Swami Satyam is a perfect image of his guru. The same delight in playfulness, the same smile, the very same life of total dedication is seen in him as was in Swami Sivanandaji. Yet there is no trace of ego in him. Each morning he would go to have darshan of his guru and such incredible effulgence would spread all around. He would stand there like a perfect reflection, as if the full moon of autumn was mirrored in a calm, shining lake. In that moment, he would look just like a little child – a most unique moment!



The perfect disciple of a perfect guru has created ashrams dedicated to his guru in so many places. Lighting the eternal flame there, he is spreading the glory of his guru all over the globe. Secret sadhanas like kriya yoga have been made easily accessible to people by Swamiji. Those obscure practices which were only practised in the confines of caves by sannyasins have been brought out and taught to hundreds. I remember when I had come to Munger for the very first time with Ammaji in 1965, Swamiji would give initiation into kriya yoga in the thatched hut called 'Kriya Yoga Kutiya'.

After Ammaji and others in the course had received their instruction in kriya yoga, Swamiji instructed them that they should not make any written notes on what they had learnt. They were not to ask anyone about it nor talk about it either. If it was difficult to find a private space, they were to cover themselves with a sheet and then do the practises. I was very surprised. When I asked Swamiji about this, he said, "These are the rules which govern kriya yoga. I did not teach this to anyone while Swami Sivanandaji was alive. On 14th July 1963 he dropped his mortal coil and attained nirvana. Only after this I began to teach kriya yoga to people."

Then Swamiji started to laugh. When I asked him the reason, he said, "There are many sadhanas that I literally snatched from Swami Sivanandaji." I could not understand what he meant. He explained, "There were some sadhanas which Swamiji did not teach us. But he used to practise them in his room and I would do my sadhana in my room. I used to merge myself into him and learn these secret sadhanas."

I asked him, "But he must have surely sensed what you were doing?"

Swamiji replied, "Of course, he knew everything. If he did not want me to learn those secret sadhanas, he would never have allowed me to make that connection with him. Perhaps it was his inspiration that made it possible for my mind to make that connection or he chose to join the lines of contact for me to become a medium of his power. As the disciple's sadhana deepens, he grows ever closer to the guru.

The guru and disciple might inhabit two bodies, but their souls are one. Such true gurus and disciples are very rare in today's age. Swamiji did such great work in complete ease, but look at me, I have to run hither and thither."

Saying this, he laughed aloud. Then he became serious and started pondering over something. I recalled that on Diwali we had burst many crackers. Swamiji was very happy, many people had gathered there. Someone remarked that there was so much gaiety and brightness in the ashram because of Niranjan, to which Swamiji had said, "God told me that I will not give you a son but I will certainly give you a disciple." And a feeling arises in my heart that like Satyam was for Sivam, that is exactly how Niranjan is for Satyam.

I have told you so many stories, now it is time for me to conclude this book. If you are interested, I will keep trying to present more such books for you.





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