

SATYAM TALES

I am a Sannyasin

A life of service and dedication



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



Satyam Tales

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

I am a Sannyasin is the thirty-fourth in the series of *Satyam Tales* depicting the life and teachings of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Through the medium of these simple narratives, we hear the voice of Sri Swamiji inspiring all, irrespective of age.

A chance encounter with a charismatic sannyasin implants the seed of inspiration and willpower in the mind of a young woman. That seed germinates in the course of time and inspires her to walk on the path of selfless social service even in the face of great resistance and opposition. Traversing the narrow lanes and bylanes of life the young seeker finally accepts the sannyasin as her guru and dedicates herself wholeheartedly to the path of sannyasa.

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, children of fortune always end up finding what they have lost.

— Editor

© Bihar School of Yoga 2020

Published by Yoga Publications Trust

First edition 2020

Printed at Thomson Press India Ltd., Faridabad

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:

Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger, Bihar, India 811201

Tel: +91-6344 222430, Fax: +91-6344 220169

I am a Sannyasin

Shivering in a thin worn-out blanket, I sat huddled in a dark street corner while the night glittered with the bright lights of Divali. Though the entire city was aglow, here was this dark desolate piece of earth which silently bore my burden. The harder I tried to light damp matches in vain, the louder my sobs grew. Perhaps I was the only one abandoned by this city, all the other children of fortune were immersed in the joys of life. The atmosphere was vibrant with festive lamps, colourful sparklers and the sound of fire crackers. Smoke drifted towards me carried on the cold breeze of the night and my heart was so shattered that my life breath seemed to rise up with the smoke. I could see everything falling away behind me and the darkness of my mind grew greater and greater, spreading all around. I was leaving this earth and slowly going above . . .

The train jerked to a halt and brought my dream to an abrupt end. But this end was a new beginning for me. The seed sown in my dream took root within my mind, slowly growing into a plant, yet the plant only bore thorns and the agony in my heart grew more and more. It was me shivering in that torn blanket, wasn't it? Is that how I would meet my end? I had seen the bitter truth of loneliness, disappointment and a life bereft of meaning, and this was watering the plant growing inside me now. Mother had passed away two months ago, but it felt just like yesterday that she was handing me my lunch box, sending me off to college. When I returned in the evening, she was no more. I

was tormented night and day by the undecipherable mystery of where and how death takes one away with a sudden stroke.

My brother had taken a leave from his job overseas and had to return in a month or else he would lose his job at the hotel. Within this month, he wanted to ensure that I was married off. Neither could he take me along with him nor was he able to leave me here all alone. He was lost in the glitter and glitz of foreign lands and it didn't matter much to him whether I was in agreement with his plan or not. I couldn't help feeling that if mother was still alive, things would be different. It wasn't for nothing that she had been so enthusiastic about my getting a college education. Though mother was not able to study, her father had started a school for girls on their ancestral property in Mathura. Today it was in a dilapidated condition. Grandfather and mother's dream lay locked up in a miserable box. Now I was consumed by the fear that my life should not end up like a doll locked into a similar box. This tornado of thoughts whirled madly in my mind and I looked out of the window, gazing into a vacuum.

I don't know whether these thoughts went on for two minutes or two hours. Suddenly the train was at Haridwar



station and a radiant youth clad in guru robes entered the coach along with a few other people. He came and sat down right in front of me, waving goodbye through the window to the people who had come to see him off. For a moment it felt as if I was enveloped in the gentle glow of his energy and all my tumultuous thoughts turned silent. When he turned his smiling face towards me, I couldn't help wondering that despite

covering themselves in expensive jewellery and clothes, most people did not manage to look beautiful and here was this person just wearing simple geru robes yet looking as charming and attractive as a divine being!

We were approaching Dehradun and I got busy gathering our luggage to disembark. But my attention was constantly drawn towards that unusual young man. The train came to a halt and we were about to get off, when he called out, "Don't forget your purse!" I turned back to look. I had been so lost in my thoughts that I had left my purse on the seat. As I picked it up, my brother remarked, "Just as well that these are decent folk, otherwise it would have disappeared."

That impressive youth spoke up, "Oh, it's no bother at all. Children of fortune always find their lost treasure." I smiled to myself. Who was this person with such unique ideas? Then I felt as if he knew all about my dream and had even read my thoughts. Lowering my eyes, I got off the train as he laughed on . . .

It had been many years since we had visited our maternal aunt's home in Dehradun. I remembered the days of our childhood when Uncle used to drive us to Mussoorie in his car. There we would play in the snow, sit around the fire in a circle and sing songs, my aunt would cook delicious treats and then all of us cousins would dive under one large quilt for the night – such carefree, fun-filled days. If only our adult life could also be so joyful . . .

We arrived at their home and were warmly welcomed. Sweets had been prepared and Aunt presented me with a beautiful red saree. Everyone told me to wear it immediately. It was only later I realized that my arrival there, all the preparations, the gift of the red saree were for a specific purpose. The family of a prospective groom was coming to 'see' me and my brother had kept quiet about this throughout our journey. He knew that I would not have agreed to come had I known about it earlier.

A hot argument ensued. I was very clear about what I wanted. Neither was I ready for marriage, nor did I have any

need for it. My brother created a huge uproar and turned the whole house upside down – “How can an unmarried girl manage life all alone? Will she ever have a respectable position in society? Because of your stubbornness we will lose all good offers of marriage and you will end up with a bad reputation. If you have any love for our dear departed mother, get married to this well-heeled boy.”

I quietly picked up the saree and locked myself into a room. No one was going to listen to me. Everyone here was well educated and quite modern, yet unable to accept that this girl does not wish to get married. I had just finished college, I had plans for my future, about working for society. I was not at all interested in getting married to someone with a good job and just keeping house for him. Marriage, children, a posh house or fancy cars had never held any charm for me. Perhaps non-attachment is such a rare quality that people cannot understand it. I wanted to do something worthwhile with my life. It was my grandfather's and my mother's dream, I had to wipe the tears of this sorrow-filled world. My brother would say, “Drop these daydreams and do as you are told!” Maybe I was too modern for this society and would have to abandon my way of thinking, my aspirations and my goal.

I got ready and came out in front of the family who had come with this marriage proposal. What I really felt like doing was stuffing all those sweets into their mouths but I behaved properly, like a girl who was all set to be married. Then a discussion about me commenced in my very presence. “Which of these delicacies has she made? Does she know how to sew and knit? Is she well-versed in household work, cleaning and all that?” I wondered whether these people were here to look for a daughter-in-law or a housemaid? Then they wanted to know about my education. This time cutting my brother short, I spoke up, “I have finished college and wish to study further and do some useful work for society. Nowadays girls' colleges have also opened up.”

As soon I said these words, there was pindrop silence. The groom's family simply stared at me in disbelief. A girl

who spoke her own mind and expressed her wishes in such a forthright manner was unacceptable. After an interminable silence, the boy's mother said, "This much education is more than enough. We want a daughter-in-law who will look after the home and not go gallivanting around." My brother smiled ingratiatingly and answered, "Everything will be exactly as you wish." The groom worked for a prestigious firm and my brother did not wish to lose a 'good match'.

Then something happened which my mind could just not accept. The talk turned to dowry. It was as if I had been made to stand up in the marketplace and a bidding price was being negotiated. The boy's family was adamant about a certain figure and my brother was pleading with them to reduce the amount. Finally, they settled on a mutually acceptable figure and I left the room, feeling completely ashamed. Tears rolled down my face and in my heart I felt that if mother was alive, she would not have allowed this to happen. And where was the money for such a huge dowry going to come from? In total helplessness, I cried out in prayer, "God, wherever you are, please come here now and show me a way out."

After the boy's family had left, my brother and aunt were very happy. Everything had been finalized and the engagement was to take place in two days. Seeing my tearful face, my brother gave me a hug, "Just you wait and see. After the wedding everything will be fine." All I could do was stare at him dumbstruck. Who knows when his mind and mine had drifted so far apart that now we were like strangers to each other. He could not even make an attempt to see things the way I did.

Then he said, "Open mother's white bundle." This was her special legacy. She had spent her whole life saving up money to fulfil the Mathura dream. It was with this unfulfilled wish that she drew her last breath.

"How could you even think about it? It had been decided that we would not touch it for anything apart from her dream. I will certainly not give you the bundle."

My brother retorted, “Look here, her dream has also gone to the other world along with her. Tomorrow morning you better hand it over, otherwise all our efforts to get you married will go in vain.”

Whenever the divine sends trials and tribulations our way, he also gives us the strength to fight and overcome them. Where was such strength, such courage coming from? Now it was not just about me and my marriage. It was also about mother’s dream and her honour. And it was my self-respect and honour as well. Why should I pay any heed to such a brother who had thrown away all care about right and wrong, who had nothing but contempt for his mother’s last wish?

My god was with me and my commitment to the right path was unshakeable. All doubts and dilemmas fell away. The words of the man clad in geru echoed again and again in my mind, as if the moving train was calling out a message, ‘Children of fortune always find their lost treasure’. Now I understood what he meant. My self-confidence and resolve which had been blown away by the recent storms in my life returned to me with renewed strength. Perhaps this is why we face difficult situations in life.



Now I had absolutely no need for anyone’s assistance. Remembering God, I prayed and made a strong resolve for the future. I packed up a few belongings and taking mother’s legacy with me reached the station. I never thought I would have the courage to run away like this. But at that time, there was nothing but bravery, strength and a fierce fury in my heart. I was breaking out of old restrictions to reach new horizons.

The station was deserted except for two or three people who were staring at me. Seeing a young woman all alone at that time of the night was certainly unusual. My heart was beating wildly and all I could think of was how I could get away from there as soon as possible. A train came and halted at the platform. Without looking left or right, I scrambled onto it. Now was it just coincidence or some divine plan made for me? This train was heading to Mathura! I realized this when a passenger remarked that by sunrise the train would reach Mathura. That convinced me that I had the hand of God protecting me. Running away from home in a flash, finding a train to Mathura – this was how the second chapter of my life began.

June 1957

In Mathura, I went straight to my maternal uncle's home and told him the whole story. I knew that he had a modern and open-minded outlook. He gave me shelter as well as encouragement to move forward in life. He said that if my brother came, he would handle matters and I would not be forced to do anything against my wishes. Of course, my brother did arrive but once he saw that he couldn't convince Uncle, he returned to his job abroad.

My high-flying philosophy may have been all right, but the ground reality was another matter altogether. I had mustered up courage to reach Mathura, but in the blistering heat of June this town was giving me nothing but trouble and difficulties. The school building stood in ruins and needed major repairs. The few girls who had enrolled were now either tending to household chores or had been married off. There was not a single teacher in sight. And the biggest difficulties came from the local municipality. I had to take permission for every little bit of repair work. I lost count of the number of times I had to visit their office. The word spread that a girl had left everything and come to fix and re-open an old school. Laughter and mockery followed me wherever I went. Many times I thought to myself, "There

is such indolence, narrow-mindedness and bad behaviour in this place. Is this the Mathura where once Sri Krishna lived? The *Gita* is chanted everywhere but where is the ideal of selfless service? What kind of deceit is being run in your name in this world of illusions? Where are you, my Lord?’

With these thoughts ringing loudly in my mind, I wandered through the streets of Mathura. Suddenly I heard a voice. Some people were sitting on the other side of a large tree at Vishram Ghat and I began to listen with rapt attention to the words being spoken:

This heat of Mathura comes from the sighs of desolate gopis, the curse of Rishi Durvasa, the crimes of the tyrant Kamsa and the hissing of the countless cobras that reside here. The whole world is but a reflection of Mathura. All the pathways in this chimerical world are nothing but the lanes and by-lanes of Mathura. As soon as you step onto them, you are buffeted by the hot winds of life’s vagaries. Mathura is a metaphor for your spiritual journey. It is a symbol of cruelty, anger, subjugation, selfishness and sorrowful separation. There is no place for the heavenly bride-to-be, Radha, here. Widen the narrow paths of your Mathura, broaden your perspective and only then will you be blessed with a glimpse of Radha-Krishna.

Perhaps that is why Krishna left Mathura and set up Dwarka. There is no question of narrow selfish interests, separatism or unsuitability in Dwarka. O Lord! take us to Dwarka then, make us into Dwarka, establish Dwarka within us so that we see you in every form, so that you may enter through every door and not be stopped by selfishness, delusion or tyranny. Make us broad-minded and large-hearted that we may embrace everyone in our fold. Change our vision so that we only see the positive side of actions deemed unworthy and sinful by society. Give us the strength to understand and forgive the mistakes of our friends. Instil in us the magnanimity of the Ashoka tree that gives shade equally to all people seeking it. Make us like the silvery moonbeams that fall equally on all. Take us away from Mathura and into Dwarka.

It was like finding an oasis in the midst of an endless dry desert. Searching everywhere, I finally found my Krishna.

When I went to the other side of the tree and had darshan of this Krishna, it was the very same geru-clad person I had met on the train! I understood that this was no mere coincidence but divine providence. I seated myself at his feet and simply gazed at him. A girl who could not be controlled by anyone was suddenly experiencing the birth of deep surrender and dedication within. Until then I had never even

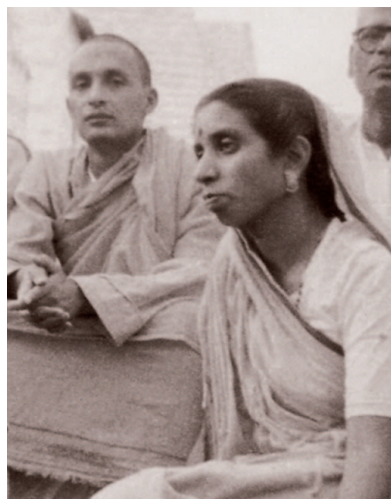


thought about the word ‘Guru’, had never imagined that someone would give direction to my life, show me the path from Mathura to Dwarka.

He was sitting with his eyes closed and all the days I had spent stumbling and struggling through the streets of this city flashed before my eyes. I had wished to create a revolution but did I have the capacity to see the positive in the negative? Did I have the strength to understand mistakes? Could I really offer shelter to others? The life of this sadhu seated in front of me was nothing short of a great revolution, but was I prepared to face the thorns on the path to the little revolution which I wished to create? He opened his eyes and again I saw that gentle, heart-stealing smile. His gaze spoke to me as if he had already read my entire life story.

“Without asking you have filled me with the light of your wisdom,” I finally blurted out overcoming my hesitation.

“Consider it to be the light of devotion. May your mind become like the city of Dwarka. When the sublime thoughts of your mind emerge in the form of action, may they manifest through the doors of this city,” the sadhu said in a solemn voice.



“Who are you? In this ordinary age of today, you seem quite extraordinary!”

He laughed and said, “I am Satyam.”

A lady sitting nearby whose name was Basanti spoke up, “In reality, he is Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram.”

She was absolutely right. Someone who can show you how to see Dwarka in Mathura would surely be endowed with these wonderful qualities.

“So the heat of this town doesn’t suit you?” he asked.

“Well, I have set off on the journey but the path is difficult. I have to start each day with renewed courage.”

Assessing my situation, Satyam said, “What can I say to you? How can I make you understand what you really are? You are the mother, giver of life, the embodiment of shakti. The universe has manifested from within you and it will dissolve within you in the end as well. There is nothing that you cannot achieve. March ahead with a holy resolve, everything you want will keep happening of its own accord.”

Someone much more divine and elevated than me was seeing me in the form of the Mother. All the doors of my mind were shutting down and the doors of the heart were opening up. For the first time, I understood what devotion meant. Externally everything was quiet while there was a deluge of emotions within. There were no more questions left, no desire to learn anything more. I was just imbibing the bright light which was in front of me. Then Satyam sang a beautiful Devi bhajan which had us all enraptured.

As he left, he said to me, “Whatever good work you set as your goal, see your Lord in it and run towards it like a bereaved soul. Work with all your heart and soul but with the

spirit of non-attachment. Now the upliftment of women will replace the years of injustice.”

These words filled me with new hope. There was nowhere else to go but forward. And so in the midst of the same people and situations, I started work with fresh enthusiasm. I wouldn't rest until the job at hand was complete. I spent whatever money I had in repairing the school. I visited the homes of all the girls from Mathura and nearby villages who had attended the school earlier. Most of the girls had either been married off or were engaged to be married. The others were busy doing household chores. The option of gaining an education seemed like a futile prospect to them. I went to each home and patiently explained how an educated girl could transform the whole family. Whether a woman worked at home or outside, she was the true pillar of family values and was the one who really propagated culture.

In some homes they drove me away without even letting me step inside, “You will just spoil our daughters.” On a day when I was fortunate, the entire village would come and listen to what I had to say. Anyway, when ten girls finally turned up at the door, my school started its journey. There was no money to pay for teachers so I taught all the subjects myself. After classes, I would teach them some Kathak dance and sometimes we would sing kirtan to the beat of a drum and cymbals. Occasionally, people nearby would also join in. When the villagers came to collect their daughters, they would feel very happy to hear the name of God being sung.

Then something very interesting took place. Impressed with a girl who had been to school and had received an education, a very good family asked for her hand in marriage. This news spread like wildfire and many more people started sending their daughters to the school. Regardless of the reason, the school gained momentum and began to run well. From ten to twenty, twenty to thirty, the work kept on increasing and it was not possible to do everything alone anymore. Funds were non-existent, so I began looking for social workers and volunteers.

I started with my cousin Nidhi's college. Addressing the students there, I requested them to help in the upliftment of poor children by teaching them. The college students met me with great enthusiasm and some of them even agreed to help. They would come in turns and offer their service in the spirit of karma yoga. My ideal was Satyam and I knew that the seeds of my progress had been sown by him. Of course, there were problems and difficulties everyday but I would overcome them too. My goal was to uplift these girls from the deprived and backward sections of society, and help them move forward in life.



During this time, I stayed in touch with Basantiji through a regular exchange of letters. I was very happy to hear that now she was 'Dharmashakti', the first disciple to receive initiation from Satyam. She would regale me with stories of Satyam's parivrajak life and convey my greetings and salutations to him. In October 1958, I went to Nandgaon and met Satyam during the Navaratri Durga festival. I was delighted to be present when Satyam was victorious over those arrogant pandits in a scriptural debate. For over an hour, I was mesmerized by his brilliant and irrefutable answers to all their questions with appropriate references from the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, *Gita*, *Ramayana* and other scriptures. Eventually those learned pandits had to concede defeat. But what impressed me even more than all this spiritual philosophy was his simple, direct and down-to-earth satsang:

Today's world is only interested in running after glitter and glamour, pomp and show. So much so that they make their gods and goddesses also part of this superficial drama. You spend more than ten thousand rupees on elaborate arrangements for these functions and feel very pleased about it, but Mother does not care for it at all. All Her children are alike in Her eyes. She wishes everyone to come together and share their bounty with each other. Thousands of rupees are wasted on worthless show while living Durgas face rejection, insults and poverty today. My Durga wanders the streets in tattered clothes, labours hard all day, cleans the dirt of the city but is shunned by society. Mother is saying to all of you that she does not like all this wasteful, superficial drama and is telling you to do something for these Durgas instead.

If anyone could give a direction to my feelings and thoughts, it was Satyam. My stubbornness, love, resolve, anger, limitations – he had strung them all in one garland. The girls whom I was attempting to help were verily living Durgas, weren't they? The awakening and emancipation of women is God's work. Receiving Satyam's blessings, I strengthened my resolve even more. I hoped to plant the seeds of a vast tree that would provide shelter to all the downtrodden and impoverished women. This message of Satyam had to be spread far and wide and many more people had to participate in this divine mission. Satyam too said to me in a grave tone, "Immerse yourself in your work with renewed energy and vigour. You have a lot to accomplish."

Over the next two years, I worked ceaselessly with my small team throughout Mathura and the neighbouring villages to create awareness and take this mission forward. Industrialists, journalists, social workers and others offered their support and finances also began to come together. We were able to construct a big building for the school now and gradually people from all the neighbouring villages sent their daughters to be educated there. Within three years, we had a good team of teachers and about three hundred girls were registered on the rolls of the school. The government felicitated us for our work in the field of women education and upliftment. These beautiful little Durga-like girls were

now on the path to progress and the five years of tireless work felt like a blessing from the divine.

By now, my cousin Nidhi was actively involved in the administration of the school and I had an inkling that my path would take a different turn soon. Though I was quite satisfied with the school's progress, many other questions had begun to come up in my mind. After the grain has ripened, it has to be harvested, the field has to be tilled again and depending on the weather, new seeds have to be sown. The weather now was wintry and a feeling of non-attachment was slowly growing in my heart. "Who am I and whatever I am, why am I so? How do the seeds of duality, struggle, desire and satisfaction sprout in the mind?" I remembered Satyam a lot and felt like simply flying to his side.

Once I had a dream in which Satyam was a golden swan flying free above a gurgling, fast-flowing Ganga and was calling out to me. But I did not have wings and couldn't follow him. Slowly Satyam started disappearing from view and I ran on behind him, stumbling and gasping . . .

I wrote a letter to Dharmashaktiji expressing my innermost feelings and relating this dream. Soon came her



reply, "Well, you better go and meet Satyam right away. I think your time has come."

With an eager, earnest heart, I went to meet Satyam in Rajgir in October 1962. It was a beautiful place with charming hills, waterfalls and caves. I reached just in time for the evening satsang where I had darshan of Satyam. He had that same innocent expression and child-like smile! There was a beautiful little boy sitting on his lap. The glow within that

radiant child was just like Satyam's. Later I learnt that he was Dharmashakti's son, Niranjan, who had been born through Satyam's sankalpa.

Satyam noticed me from afar and said with a mysterious smile, "It was ordained that you would come to Rajgir today!" I was unable to fathom the meaning of what he said but certainly felt something special. Over the last five years my faith and belief in Satyam had deepened and now the feeling of devotion was quite different. I had not met him for a long time, nor had I spoken to him or had any communication either but there was an undeniable deepening of intimacy. It was like the meeting of Krishna and Arjuna, when the meandering stream finally reaches the ocean. As if reading my thoughts, Satyam said:

Where the guru and disciple are united on all planes, where there is no perversion or distortion in their relationship, there all the divine energies and powers awaken. Love should be deep and extraordinary, yet remain pure and sublime. Just as electricity drives both the broadcasting and the receiving instrument, so does the feeling of true love animate both guru and disciple. If you have such closeness with the guru, then go well beyond the milestone of dhyana. Listen to every message that I send. Understand this concept and act on it. Immerse yourself in dhyana and remembrance. Continue to flow forever and ceaselessly in the same current.

Guru, the first encounter with this word was like a magical revelation. Satyam had given words to all the inexpressible feelings that I was experiencing. I was the receiver and he was the incredibly powerful broadcaster. With a heart full of gratitude and devotion, I approached Satyam with folded hands and asked, "Would you please accept me as your disciple?"

He did not delay in initiating me. I received my guru mantra from him and instruction on how to perform japa. In the years to come, I was to understand the depth, power and influence of both guru and mantra. After the initiation, my guru said:

Practise non-attachment. Unrest is just an imagination of the mind. Involving the mind with everything is worldliness. Let life flow the way it is, remain in bliss. You do not have to do anything, the divine will do everything. You are like a machine. The clouds of ignorance will be dispelled and the light of understanding will dawn. May one form and one name be indelibly etched in your mind forever.

For me, that name was Satyam and the form was of his eternal flame, which was now alight within me. Thereafter everything happened in the most natural manner. Devotion grew of its own accord and attachment with worldly affairs gradually reduced. The mind was slowly rising above the dualities of success and failure, profit and loss. It felt like a form of guru's grace. When did it come and till the field? I had no idea. Now all I wanted was Satyam to guide me about the seeds I should be planting here for the next harvest. To which he said, "Perform karma yoga with the goal of self-purification and let the river of life flow on. No power will be able to sway you from walking on your destined path."

Just like my coming to Rajgir and receiving initiation was a mystery to me, this was something similar. Nevertheless, I was sure that whatever he had in mind for me was absolutely appropriate and I had no need to know what it was at this point. In the evening I went around Rajgir with Dharmashaktiji. She told me many inspiring episodes from Satyam's life and even showed me a diary of all his satsangs. Then she said, "Just as there is a fixed time for a person's birth and death, it is the same with meeting the guru and receiving initiation. You have found your guru, now begin your life anew."

She went on to tell me as to how Satyam knew ahead of time who would be a part of his mission and the role they would play. He was very keen on furthering the work of women's emancipation. This was a dream that he had first shared with his sister when they were mere children. An orthodox and narrow-minded society had stifled his sister's high aspirations. After she passed away, Satyam decided to pick up this gauntlet himself.

Returning to Mathura, I got involved with my social work again. This time the test was of a different kind which challenged my courage and discrimination. My uncle and his family had taken me in and given me shelter and support, but my modern ideas, my vairagya were also threatening to their way of life. My uncle had begun to say that now I had done enough social work, it was time to get married and raise a family.

Weren't the little devis for whom I had worked so hard part of my family? People usually have two or three children, I had filled up my family with so many village girls. I had no need or ambition to get married. Don't women also have the right to awaken their spiritual consciousness? When they dedicate their entire life for the benefit of society, does that have no value? I realized that I was not being accepted by the very society to which I had given my all. Uncle and his family were growing further and further away from me. No more feeling of oneness, nor any right or privilege. I thought maybe I had said something wrong, just my lifestyle cannot possibly be the cause of their estrangement.

One night when I sat down for japa of my guru mantra, Satyam's words echoed within, "Practise non-attachment.

Unrest is just an imagination of the mind. Involving the mind with everything is worldliness. Let life flow the way it is . . ." The mind was turning away from the outer world. Whatever satisfaction I had derived from my achievements was gradually vanishing. For the first time, I was examining my flaws and faults under the glare of a microscope. I began to see how the mind, intellect, memory and ego can create



upheavals and illusions. What use of creating revolutions outside but not within oneself as well? Everything appeared dead and meaningless apart from my guru's words. I had a deep desire to go back to him again.

But what was all this? After my initiation, I had felt that it was a new beginning. With guru's grace, I experienced peace and contentment and I was sure that I would never stumble through dark alleys again but I was right back there. I also realized how unstable and fickle the nature of the mind is. I thought, 'If Satyam was here what would he have said to me? He would have ticked me off and told me to take responsibility for myself. He has lit the lamp, but it is my job to ensure that the oil always remains filled!'

I gained a new understanding of self-reliance, when one has to let go of the dependence on one's own mind and ego as well. Then the ground levels off and one doesn't go on climbing over hills and mountains in vain. A new chapter opened up in life and I was able to watch myself, my desires and satisfactions from a distance, like an impassive witness.

Meanwhile, things were getting more and more difficult and strained in my interactions with uncle's family and there were questions about my lifestyle as well. Why had all my attempts to improve things failed? The answer to this question eluded me, but now I wanted to invest my precious time in efforts to expand my consciousness. My interest in yoga and spirituality had increased a great deal. After sometime I chose to move out of uncle's house and started to live alone in a small room near the school. I would finish my day's work and spend time by myself. The practice of japa and dhyana had become sacred to me.

A year passed by in this manner. I was beginning to get a glimpse into what self-purification really meant. Whatever was happening was being guided by the divine. Then a most unexpected thing happened. I was getting ready to set off for school one morning, when I saw my brother standing in front of me. All these years I had neither seen him nor even exchanged a single letter. A wave of affection rose up in my

heart. I looked carefully at him, he seemed older and more mature now. He was looking at me with similar feelings. Old differences and hurts had received the healing balm of time. Holding back his tears, he said, "I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw your school! I thought you had gone and ruined your life, but you have given a life of hope to so many poor girls. I am so proud of you and I am sure mother is too!"

He had certainly matured with age and now was the general manager of a big hotel. He told me that he had kept in touch with uncle and had been getting regular updates from him, but he had been so angry that he did not want to even see my face! Then he started to tell me about life in the West, the freedom and independence people enjoy there and how one doesn't have to suffer the taunts of narrow-minded people nor answer their mocking questions.

"Now I am able to understand your lifestyle and philosophy. You are not made for this orthodox, constricting society. Come with me and start your life in a new open environment. You will not want for anything there."

What a temptation! And that too from the same brother I had run away from seven years ago. But now I had a great responsibility and there was no suitable person to manage the running of the school. Nidhi was not yet capable of managing everything on her own. But there was another girl, Anjali, who worked with her and was very hardworking and efficient. I had thought that when I am ready to take the next step in my journey, I will entrust things to both of them. I told my brother, "I would love to come but I am not yet ready." He did offer some protests but left after a while.

Another week went by. Then in the late hours of a bitterly cold night, I heard someone knocking at my door. I opened it to find a frightened Anjali standing there, clutching some files in her hand. I realised that something was amiss but when she told me the whole story I was speechless with shock. She had brought the accounting files for the last few months with all the transactions and other details. Nidhi was looking after financial matters and I had blind faith in her.

I never asked for any accounts nor felt the need for it. But there were gross financial irregularities and a lot of money was disappearing from the institution. Anjali told me how she had started suspecting foul play and quietly began keeping an eye on Nidhi. I knew where we were receiving funds from but I had no idea where and how they were being spent. Then I started to think it over – where had uncle's new house and car come from? I had involved myself so completely in what I was doing that I had not paid any attention to any of this.

I sent Anjali home and had the locks opened in the school office. All night I pored over papers and files and everything was crystal clear to me. When Nidhi came to the school next morning, I had already prepared her resignation letter. It was not an easy task for me, she was a close family member and had been my associate for so long. She offered excuses and explanations, cried and yelled as well, but I stayed firm and strong. It was important for the institution and necessary for her too. Things deteriorated further and uncle's whole family was up in arms against me. It was the most disappointing day of my life. I realized how the noose of greed and temptation ties itself around people's necks, even those very people who were family and with whom I had lived for six years.

They went to the press and tried to make all kinds of false accusations and allegations about my character and work. I remained silent because I had gone numb inside. But often silence is mistaken for an admission of wrongdoing. The Mathura newspapers had a new scandal to print and they made much of it, splashing it on the front page. I consoled myself with the thought that even Sitaji was subject to the ordeal of fire, and I am just an ordinary woman of Kali Yuga.

I got to see the sordid side of life. I was totally fed up with everything and many times I wanted to run away and hide in a forest somewhere, far from the clamour, hatred and greed. How much I thought of Satyam that day! I prayed with an anguished heart, 'Only you can show me the way now.' Neither could I abandon the institution mid-stream nor did I wish to stay on here. I shared my feelings with Anjali. What

followed could only have happened through guru's grace. She contacted a reputed charitable organization who were happy to take on the running of the school and expand its operations as well. Their proposal and plans were in keeping with my initial intentions and Anjali was actively involved in everything. I had faith in her but once bitten, I was twice shy.

I prepared all the legal documents myself and ensured that there were provisions to keep the functioning of the institution completely transparent. The list of governing body members was drawn up and plans for the next five years were finalized. I had finalized my own plans and phoned my brother. I told him the whole story and expressed my wish to go abroad. I wanted to live a quiet life somewhere in peace, away from society. He promptly agreed to my wish and started the process to get visas and tickets for me, while I completed all my formalities here.

I was wondering what, when and how to tell Satyam about all this when I received a letter from Dharmashaktiji on behalf of Satyam. The letter had come from Munger and I had been called there immediately. It also said that I should make arrangements to spend at least fifteen days. Perhaps this would be the last time I would see Satyam in India – with this thought in mind I set off to see him in Munger.

January 1964

No matter how much I write about this chapter of my life, it will not be enough. I had packed up my belongings and made all the preparations to join my brother abroad. I was eager to have darshan of my guru as well. In January 1964, I set foot on the historic, holy



land of Munger. This was where once the great king Karna of Mahabharata fame had lived and it was here that Satyam, following his guru's mandate, had taken on the role of a Paramahansa and established the Bihar School of Yoga. He had taken a vow to stay within the ashram for the next three years.

This time around, the meeting with my guru took on a much deeper significance. It really felt that he could read my mind, he knew about every challenge that had come my way. I prostrated myself before him and told him about my plans to go abroad. He did not say anything except that he was starting a fifteen-day yoga course and that I should participate in it. I did feel a little strange that he did not say anything else at this time and I was unable to figure out what was going on in his mind.

This experience of ashram life was a very different and novel one. Such purity and guru's company! Participants from many states had come for this course. All the sessions were conducted personally by him. The first class would commence with *Om* chanting at 5 in the morning. He taught us asana and pranayama, then after breakfast we chanted the



Gita and the Upanishads.

There was yoga nidra at one o'clock followed by karma yoga and then dinner at 5 pm. All these things were new to me and being in Satyam's presence like this was in itself amazing! There was so much love, so much purity here and its source was Satyam himself. He was like our mother and father, brother and friend. He would wake up everyone early in the morning and leave only after we were all

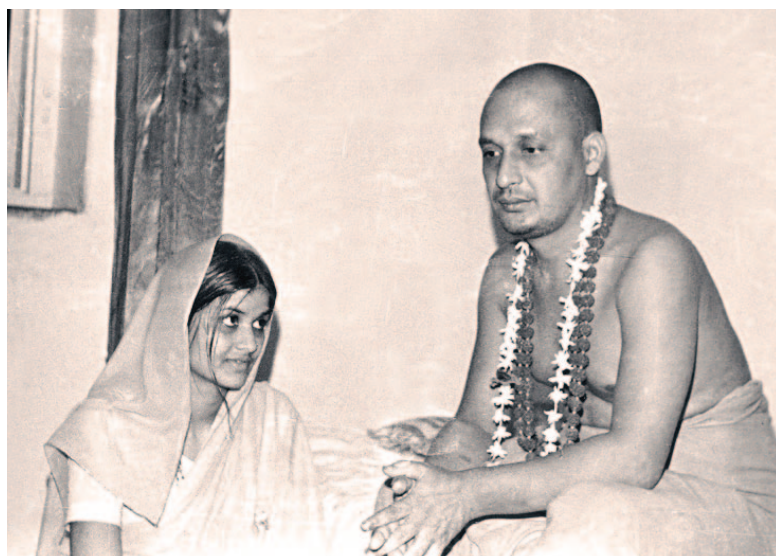
asleep. Was he a simple sannyasin, a magician, a yogi or Sri Rama, who knows?

A few days of this simple life had already begun to create changes in me, as if all the burdens of the mind were getting lighter each day. One day during yoga nidra, I felt as if Satyam was holding my hand and leading me ever forward. The simple daily tasks of karma yoga made the mind even lighter and filled me with the spirit of service.

In those days, there were many misconceptions about yoga. People thought it was a secretive practice done in Himalayan caves by ascetics. But it was so simple, effective and practical and Bihar School of Yoga became its best example and propagator as well. Keep the body healthy with asana practice, make it fit for staying still so that you could sit in meditation for long periods of time. Then pranayama practices allowed one to tap the immense source of pranic energy which in turn awakened the states of pratyahara and dharana within. The system of yoga nidra which comes from the tantric science of nyasa took one from relaxation to deeper states of meditation and samadhi. I had learnt so much in a few days. It had been ages since I had experienced such enthusiasm, energy and joy.

The one who had called me ‘a child of fortune’ at the very first meeting and had been a source of inspiration and strength through every difficulty was certainly doing something to my inner mind and self. I said to him once, “The way in which you guide me, inspire me and fill my life with treasures is a real mystery!” He replied, “Yes, after all I have to prepare you to meet your path.” I thought, ‘I will be going abroad soon, perhaps that is what he is preparing me for.’

Fifteen days passed by in the twinkling of an eye. The time to leave was nigh. Satyam asked me to stay on for another day. The next day Dharmashaktiji called me early in the morning and took me to the Jyoti Mandir. Satyam was standing there, looking intently at the eternal flame he had lit in memory of his guru, Swami Sivanandaji. When I



reached there, I felt exactly like the day I had received my mantra initiation. The entire hall was suffused with light and I was moving towards Satyam with a strong and deep feeling of devotion and dedication. He said:

Your life is one of complete sadhana and it is your destiny to surrender each and every cell of your being to the service of the divine. Take a vow of service and embark upon the path of sannyasa. The day your sadhana gains fruition, consider history and society to have become sanctified. There is no other path meant for you. You have a lot of work to do now.

At any other time, there would have been a million questions in my mind – ‘What is sannyasa? Am I made for this path?’ Satyam’s influence was such that my mind was totally one-pointed and absorbed in the waves of shakti flowing within and around me. There was no question, no doubt. Satyam had been preparing me for this moment!

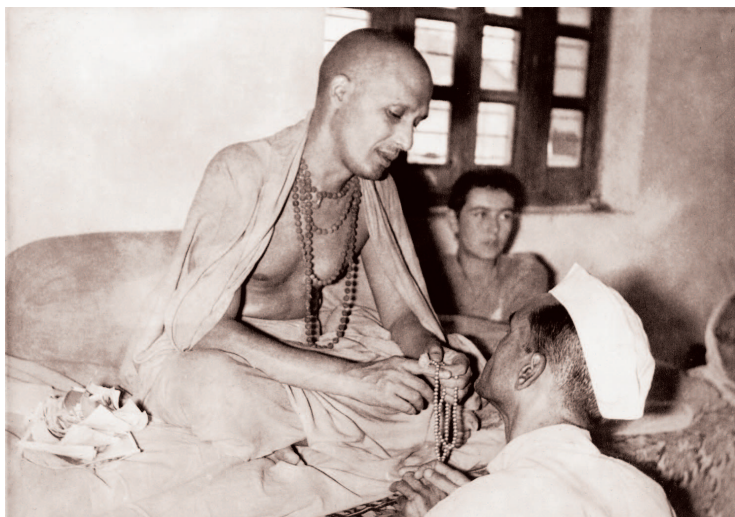
What was left to say or do then? I tore up my ticket and unpacked my belongings. I was coloured in geru, became a ‘Saraswati’ sannyasin of the Dashnami tradition. Saraswati is

the goddess of wisdom, intelligence and speech and these are the spiritual qualities and goals of us sannyasins of the Saraswati order.

Over time, the true meaning of sannyasa gradually revealed itself to me. Sannyasa begins with the guru-disciple relationship. Guru is not only a teacher but is the central focus and fulcrum, the master-key of a sannyasin's life. The darkness of ignorance in the disciple's life cannot be dispelled except with the light of the guru. The guru purifies the disciple in his own way and prepares her for the spiritual path. On the path of sadhana, the disciple first performs karma yoga and seva which helps her play out her karmas. Over time, this bond becomes an internal one and then regardless of where the guru might be, his vibration is always active and alive within the disciple. The guru tattwa cannot be described in words, it belongs to the realm of pure experience alone.

Inspiring me for the life ahead, Satyam said, "Be fearless, fight through every situation like a brave warrior. This path is strewn with a myriad thorns. A sannyasin also faces trials and temptations. Every person has to go through attraction and repulsion, even a sannyasin has to face them. Becoming victorious over *kama*, *krodha*, *mada*, *lobha*, *moha*, *matsarya* – desire, anger, arrogance, greed, delusion and jealousy, is the goal of every sannyasin. Sometimes it will seem as if the goal is close at hand and then one stray thought makes you realize that there is a lot of work to be done."

My paramguru, Swami Sivanandaji used to say, "A real sannyasin is the only mighty potentate on this earth. He never takes anything, but gives and gives. One real, capable sannyasin can change the destiny of the whole world." With this attitude and feeling, I joined Satyam in his mission of worldwide service. The small town of Munger in Bihar became the epicentre of yoga propagation throughout the whole world. People from India and overseas began to come here with all kinds of problems and troubles. Someone was going through mental turmoil, another suffered from physical



illness and others came in search of spiritual knowledge and guidance. Gururaj had a lot to give to each and every one.

Women and sannyasa

Yes, in those days women sannyasins were not fully accepted in society and we had to face a lot of opposition. This was in the sixties when only men took sannyasa in Indian society. For a woman to come to this path was very unusual and rare. But in reality, when we look back to the beginning, Lord Siva's first disciple was Parvati and so it was a woman who was the first one to receive the teachings of yoga. Gururaj used to say very often that if women were to leave the world, it would become as dead and dry as a desert. No fragrance, no colour, no beauty, no smiles, there would be nothing left.

Once on our travels with Swamiji, a few of us women sannyasins reached an ashram. The sannyasins there objected to women being initiated into sannyasa. In response to that, Swamiji began giving examples of several women saints and sannyasins of India. During the anushthana of offering oblations to the rishis, the names of three women rishis are included as well – Gargi, Pratitheyi and Maitreyi. In Satya

Yuga, Parvati had received initiation into tantra, in Treta Yuga Sri Rama conferred spiritual knowledge upon the renowned bhakta Shabari. In Dwapara Yuga, the ascetic Sulabha astounded King Janaka and his court with a glimpse of her spiritual wisdom and power. Later the Buddhist period was quite revolutionary when the doors of spiritual life were open to every woman. In today's times, Swami Satyananda is bringing in such a revolution.

When the great medieval saint Mirabai was refused an audience with the Vaishnava saint, Jeev Goswami, she sent him a message, "I was under the impression that there were only women in Vrindavan and the only man was Giridhara Gopala. But today I have learnt that there are other men here as well." Hearing her words, Jeev Goswami was ashamed and the doors were opened to Mirabai.

In a similar manner, after hearing Swamiji's flawless and convincing explanations the head of that ashram was also forced to admit that when Siva has been incomplete without Shakti since time immemorial, spiritual philosophy would also be incomplete without the presence of women amongst the fold. In our culture, the first place of honour has always been given to women, whether it is the duo of Radha-Krishna, Sita-Ram or Gauri-Shankar.

Swamiji began initiating women into sannyasa in the sixties, and from here the revival of the tradition of female sannyasins began in the modern age. In Swamiji's opinion, women are sincere, hardworking, obedient and trustworthy. That was why along with men, he also trained women and placed them in responsible, important positions.

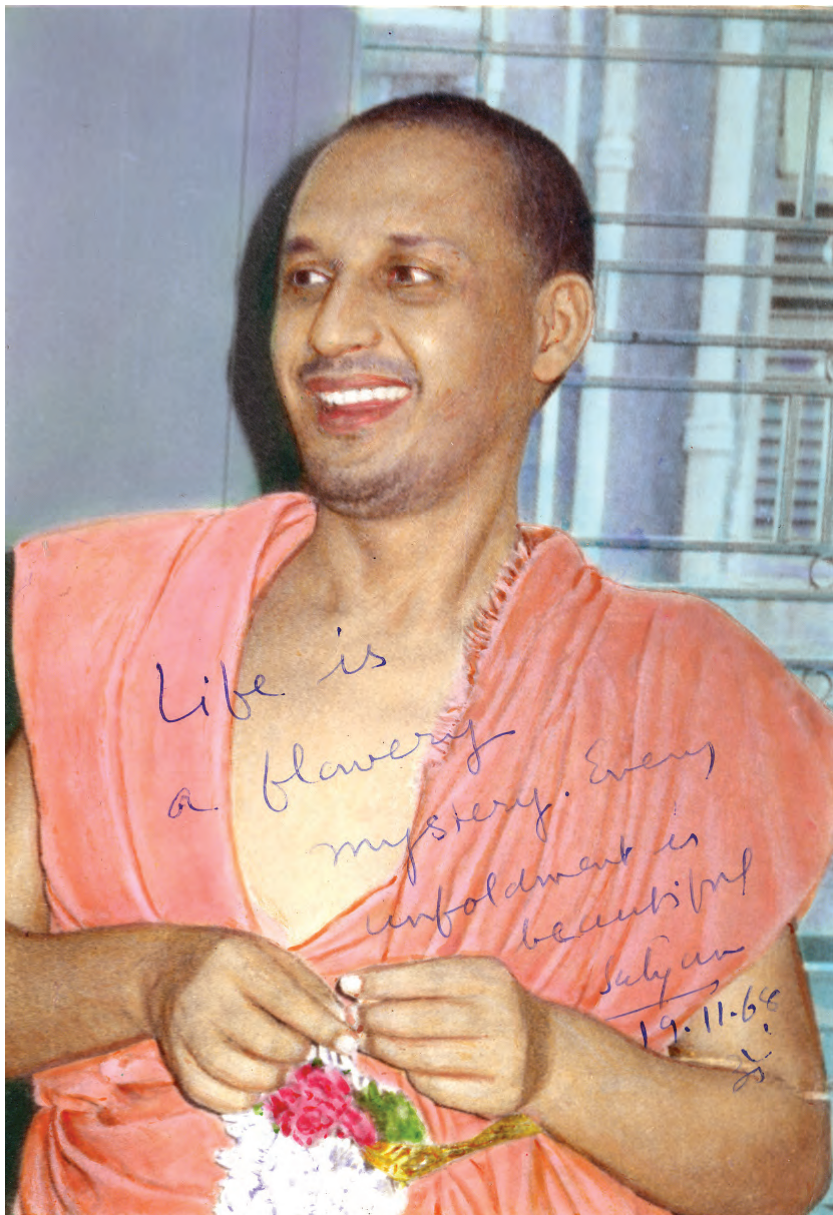
Guruji's very first spiritual experiences were received from a tantric yogini, Sukhman Giri. His first disciple was a woman, Swami Dharmashakti, and so was his first sannyasin disciple, Swami Atmananda. Women have been at the forefront of his mission since its inception. He often said that the main contribution to his mission has come from women.

In the coming years, devoting myself to guru seva I began to understand the true purpose and meaning of

sannyasa. A thousand births in royal families pale in front of one life as a sannyasin. I am so fortunate to have received such divine company and blessings. The path of seva is the only true path, everything else is mere worldly illusion. Struggling through the narrow, winding streets of life I have emerged as a sannyasin and purified my life and given it real meaning. The only goal ahead now is to carry on along the path shown to me by my guru and try to live like him – a simple, carefree and joyous life . . .

Let my life go on as it is,
In the direction it yearns to follow.
Keep your knowledge, your philosophy, your spirituality,
Your science, your social conduct, your religion.
Let my life flow splendidly as a child's,
I am a bird of the open sky, I am the perpetual stream of nectar,
I am the eternal, blissful peace, I am the effulgent star of joy.
Away with sorrow and pain! Their fetters have been shattered.
Where are the thorns on my path? It is decorated with flowers now!
I am a sannyasin! I am a sannyasin!!





Life is
a flowery
mystery. Every
unfoldment is
beautiful
Satyan
19.11.64
S

SATYAM TALES 34

