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BIHAR YOGA®

SATYAM TALES

Great Escapes

Memoirs of a guardian angel



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Great Escapes

They call me Amartyaa, the immortal one. To be honest, I am not really immortal, but with a lifespan of a little over 300 million human years, that appellation, in my humble opinion, is quite justified. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about the time duration I've mentioned. It just happens to correspond to a *manvantara*, the lifespan of a Manu. A particular Manu reigns for seventy-one mahayugas, and each *mahayuga* comprises of the four great epochs: Kali Yuga, Dwapara Yuga, Treta Yuga and Satya Yuga. Kali Yuga lasts 432,000 years, Dwapara Yuga twice that much, and so



on. If you would care to work out the math, you'll get the figure I've quoted.

It is not my intention to bog you down with numbers though. I put forth this piece of information that you may get a proper perspective about me. I am a female member of a class of celestial beings called the *vidyadhara*s, who normally have little direct contact with humans. Together with other celestials like *devas*, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *apsaras*, *kinnaras* and *siddhas*, we help in the smooth running of the *akshara prashashan*, the cosmic government. As *vidyadhara*s, our main role is to preserve and perpetuate *vidya*, knowledge, of every kind, yuga after yuga. Other than that we perform a few secondary roles as well. It is in the context of one such role that this memoir has reached your hands.

This memoir pertains to a singularly distinguished individual that I had the great honour and privilege of knowing. Each *vidyadhara* is expected to watch over the welfare and evolution of a certain number of humans. One could say that we act like a protective sister or a big brother towards our wards. Or you could call us 'guardian angels', a term by which many like to address us.



Irrespective of what you may call us, our job is to keep a watchful eye over your life's trajectory and through certain ways and means, more covert than overt, ensure that it doesn't deviate too much from the dictating parameters of your destiny. If you happen to land yourself in a sticky situation, we might just lend an invisible hand to pull you out.

Without unveiling all my secrets, let me just say that

many a time what people call an astonishing miracle or a wonderful stroke of luck in their lives is nothing but a tiny intervention on our part. Nonetheless, even while intervening, we always follow our prime governing directive: *Intervene only when absolutely necessary, and that too in a way that renders the intervention totally undetectable.*

There was something unique and special about this person in question from the very first day. By ‘very first day’, I mean the moment I got his dossier from my boss. All his vital statistics suggested a great store of merit acquired from lifetimes past, and hinted at greater glories in the future. I often coin a nickname for those of my wards who stand out from the crowd. I liked to call this one ‘the great escape artist’. So good was he at extricating himself from the stickiest of situations that he hardly needed my helping hand at all.

We get our wards’ dossiers just before the time of their birth in the mortal dimension. I usually pay my first visit when they begin to crawl and walk around. It is then that they gain the ability to put themselves in danger. Yet there was something grand and noble about this new ward of mine that made me alter my *modus operandi*. I also had a few other wards in that part of the Milky Way whom I hadn’t





visited for a while. This is how I ended up being on planet earth right at the time of this laddie's birth.

It was the full moon night of the sacred month of Margashirsha. From up above the Himalayan hills, I was watching the human drama unfold down below. As the midnight hour approached, I was pleasantly surprised to find that I wasn't the only one presenting a 'guard-of-honour' to the newborn. The shimmering silhouettes of various other celestials were impossible to miss. I sneaked

up behind Tilottama, an apsara I knew quite well and whispered "Good Evening!" into her right ear.

"Holy Surabhi!" she shrieked and whirled around in fright. As recognition dawned, she gazed at me with glowering eyes and admonished, "Never do that again, Amartyaa! You almost scared me to death."

"Oh my! I couldn't even scare a fly," I cooed, fluttering my eyelids the way apsaras do coquettishly when enticing an unsuspecting ascetic, and then added in a somewhat graver tone, "What brings you to these parts anyway?"

"Uh oh . . . nothing special . . . I mean, just usual . . . business." It was plainly obvious that the celestial damsel was fumbling for an excuse whose degree of lameness increased with every moment she spent searching for it. Finally she sputtered, "Just came down to celebrate Christmas, Amartyaa, that's all. It's Christmas Eve on this planet tonight, did you know that?"

"Christmas Eve? Yeah right," I rolled my eyes, "You should get the navigational system of your vimana inspected,

Tilottama. You've landed at least fifty degrees off course. If you really came to celebrate midnight mass, that is."

"What do you mean?" she countered, "Do you think that Christmas is celebrated only in the West? No, my dear Amartyaa, the orientals also celebrate the Messiah's birth, perhaps with a much more sattwic ritual than the glitzy affair Christmas is rapidly becoming in the West."

"That may very well be true, my dear Tilottama, but that is definitely not what you are here for. Someone special is being born again on Christmas Eve and you are here to witness that sacred event tonight, right? Come on now, spill the beans," I chided and then added, "This lad happens to be my future ward, you know."

"Oh really? You should have told me earlier," she replied sheepishly, like a naughty kid whose mischief had been discovered. "This boy is indeed special, Amartyaa. I happened to overhear what guru Brihaspati said of him to Lord Indra. That's why I decided to come here tonight."

"And what exactly did Brihaspati say to Indra?" I pursued like a relentless detective.

"Sorry, but that's classified information," she replied resolutely. Her voice carried a slight tone of guilt though. She had already revealed more than she should have.

"*Sham nah indro brihaspatih*," I muttered, hoping to invoke the benediction of the pair in question and pry out the tantalizing secret.

It didn't cut much ice with Tilottama. She just looked away.

Looking back at the downcast expression on my face, she tried to cheer me up, "If he's your ward, you'll learn everything sooner or later anyway, Amartyaa. Why don't you enjoy the suspense while it lasts? Now if you'll excuse me, I have to prepare the flowers."

To a prosaic, scholarly person like me, showering of flowers seems like a fluffy ritual shorn of any practical value. It must be admitted though that when done right, it is indeed a pretty sight. Especially when they use the gorgeous



parijata flowers from Lord Indra's very own personal garden. The parijatas, however, are meant only for the chosen few . . .

Shortly after midnight, the baby we were all waiting for finally made his appearance on the human stage. At that moment, I saw the unimaginably pretty and maddeningly fragrant parijata flowers tumble down the sky. Then and there I knew that my gut feeling about my new ward had been right on target.

No kids on the elevator

I paid much more frequent visits to him than I normally would. Not that he needed help or assistance in any way, but I just liked being around him. His parents had named him *Dharmendra*, the epitome of dharma. Had they somehow intuited his future role in establishing dharma upon earth?

From early childhood, Dharmendra was a lover of nature. He found nature truly mysterious and awe-inspiring. The cheery blossoming of flowers and their subsequent wistful wilting was an unexplainable wonder. Early sunrises were a joy to behold and so were the silvery moonlit nights. 'Who is behind all this?' he would ponder for hours at a time. His parents' answers never satisfied his curiosity, rather they only strengthened his resolve to get to the bottom of all this mystery.

I had my first inkling of Dharmendra's supramortal capabilities when he had barely turned six. I had come to this part of the galaxy for some important business and on my way back decided to pay planet earth a visit. I sped through



the subtle realms and in a trice I was at Gaj, Dharmendra's ancestral village nestled in the mountains of Kumaon.

Even before I got there, I sensed something was amiss. Dharmendra was lying prone on the ground and his family members were all crowding about him. There was no obvious sign of either seizure or injury. On the contrary, Dharmendra bore a very serene expression on his face. As I looked down upon the scene, trying to unravel the possible cause, I was taken aback to see none other than Dharmendra floating towards me!

To be precise, it wasn't Dharmendra's physical body, but his subtle self. Nonetheless, it was so unexpected that I didn't size up the situation immediately. In a natural inquisitive reflex I asked, "Who are you?"

Instead of meekly revealing his identity, he boldly marched up to me. He stood straight in front of me, hands firmly planted on his waist. "First tell me, who are you?"

"They call me Amartyaa," I blurted almost immediately, as if commanded by a superior.

“And I’m Dharmendra. Nice to meet you. By the way, where are we? The look and feel of this place is quite unfamiliar.”

The revelation of identity startled me. I took a closer look. “Oh my God!” I muttered to myself, “It is Dharmendra indeed. How on earth did he manage to wilfully disassociate his subtle, astral self from his gross, physical frame, at such a tender age? If it’s a freak misadventure, let me make sure the misadventure ends quickly. Otherwise one never knows which loka or realm he might drift off to in his astral body!” I shuddered to think of the consequences if he failed to return to his physical body.

“Dharmendra!” I said with some urgency, “I don’t know how, but you’ve managed to hitch a ride on an elevator meant for service personnel only. Plus, you’ve gotten off on the wrong floor, the astral floor. Now you need to go down to the physical dimension and back into your body. Pronto. Do you understand?”

Dharmendra just stared back at me with a curious expression on his face.

“Look kiddo!” I continued, “I don’t know if you realize the soup you are in. I’d definitely call this experience of yours an OOPS.”

“OOPS?”

“Yeah, an Out Of Physical-Body Situation. Tell me how you pulled this stunt off in the first place.”

“I have no idea what you are talking about Amartyaa. All I did was lie down on the floor to relax my whole body. I had just finished relaxing my toes, when the next thing I knew I had floated up and bumped into an antsy aunty like you.”

I ignored the unflattering remark and mumbled to myself, “Hmmm, so the situation was spontaneously created. That makes it a SCOOP, which can be very dangerous for someone so young and innocent.” With so many good-for-nothing spirits prowling about in the astral suburbs, I winced to think what may befall an innocent spirit who crossed their path . . .

“Okay Dharmendra,” I said, looking him in the eye and holding both his shoulders, “Now you listen to your nice angel aunty and do exactly what she says. Close your eyes, chant the mantra *Rama* for protection from astral thugs, and visualize yourself going down the elevator. When you open your eyes you’ll find yourself back in familiar surroundings.”

“What is this elevator that you speak of again and again, angel aunty?” Dharmendra asked innocently.

“It is the elevator of consciousness,” I replied and began to elaborate, “The elevator on which your consciousness ascends to higher and higher realms.” Seeing Dharmendra’s blank look, I backtracked, “Okay Dharmendra, forget the elevator if you don’t understand it now,” and then muttered under my breath, “although I’ve a sneaking suspicion that’s what you’ll ride upon in a majestic, seven-storey building you’ll build one day.”

He latched on to the last statement and asked, “What building aunty?”

“Forget the elevator and forget the building too, Dharmendra. Just chant the name of Lord Rama and imagine you are sliding down the long, long tail of Hanuman. Can you do that for me?”

A broad smile appeared on his face at the mention of Rama and Hanuman. I could see him visualizing Hanuman’s long tail in his mind’s eye.

I hustled him back into the elevator, metaphorically speaking, and pressing the ground floor button, quickly closed the door. I breathed a deep sigh of relief as I saw



him disappear from view. When I saw him wake up on the floor below, rubbing his eyes in dazed wonder, I knew the trick had worked.

I decided to reinforce this bit of positive programming for Dharmendra's own good. I 'inspired' a wandering sadhu by the name of Swami Nityananda to tell Dharmendra pretty much the same techniques about returning from any further 'oops misadventures'. I would still find him gallivanting about on the astral highway every now and then, and I would hover around to make sure he was safe and sound. "*Honhaar veervan ke hot cheekne paat*," I would say to myself on such occasions, "This precocious child certainly has a promising future ahead of him." Those were his first great escapes that I was a witness to, escapes from the limiting confines of the physical sheath . . .

Child's play

At an age when children play with toys and trinkets, Dharmendra was toying with guns and goblins. As a seven-year-old boy, Dharmendra had once asked Swami Nityananda about black magic and secret spells, ghosts and goblins. Swami Nityananda used to carry a small stick in his hand. "Is this your magic wand?" Dharmendra had asked,



to which the swami had replied, "This is my yoga danda, but you may have it if you want." Dharmendra was extremely happy to receive this precious 'magic wand' from the swami.

At the age of ten, Dharmendra managed to lay his hands on a book on tantra. Together with a neighbourhood friend, he studied the book thoroughly. The two of

them decided to investigate the techniques outlined in the book. In the meantime they also met a tantric baba nearby. They would meet the baba frequently and ask him about the practical aspects of tantra.

Soon they began their tantric sadhana. After a few days, they decided to go to the cremation ground to perfect their mantra. With the magic wand in hand, the two of them would go to the cremation ground, telling each other, "The magic wand is with us, what is there to fear? The power of our mantra will subdue any ghosts around. Then we will make them do all our daily chores." I couldn't resist a smile at such moments. Tender innocence coupled with steely courage, what a mixture indeed!

Somehow Dharmendra's father got wind of his nocturnal adventures in the cremation ground. He was very annoyed and warned Dharmendra, "If you dare step out of the house, I will shoot you."

'I can't leave my mantra sadhana half-way,' thought Dharmendra, 'I have to finish it at any cost.' The two friends decided to bring the ash from the cremation ground and finish the sadhana on Dharmendra's rooftop. The next morning they brought the ash and placed it in a flowerpot on the roof. At night, when everyone had fallen asleep, Dharmendra tiptoed to the roof. From the terrace of the adjoining house, his friend also jumped over. Soon they began completing their unfinished business . . .

As their sadhana reached its culmination, bizarre things began to happen. Little did the children know that they had unleashed forces way beyond their comprehension. I had seen this daring streak in Dharmendra's nature right from the age of six, which is why I would always be around during adventures of this sort.

Soon the whole house was shaking. Dharmendra's younger brother began to cry and his mother and grandmother got very frightened. His father began searching for him, but he was hiding on the terrace and the terrace door was bolted from the outside. Dharmendra's

father was growing angrier with each passing minute. "Open the door," he yelled, "otherwise I'll break open the door and shoot you." The entire atmosphere had become dark and eerie. Dharmendra's friend jumped over to his own rooftop and disappeared from view. Dharmendra's father was by now screaming at the top of his voice. Dharmendra threw away the ash and the other pooja articles from the roof and opened the terrace door. As soon as he threw away the tantric objects, the atmosphere became normal and peaceful.

The next day, the two boys went to the tantric baba and told him the entire story. "Why did you throw away the ash that had been charged by the mantra? Now the ghost will definitely be annoyed and do something nasty to you," he said in a scary tone.

Dharmendra couldn't be frightened so easily. "Bah," he scoffed, "what can the ghost do to us?" He was right. With an aura suffused with courage and an 'angel aunty' like me to back him up, the ghost dared not come anywhere near him. The friend was not so lucky. Not only did he get scared, his guardian angel wasn't very obliging either. As chance would have it, two days later he met with an accident and broke his leg. I don't know if Dharmendra realized at that young age how narrowly he had escaped a similar fate.

Shortly thereafter, Dharmendra began helping his father to manage the family estates. With his father's rifle slung across his shoulder, he would travel through the fields and jungles, either on horseback or on foot, supervising the various farming and cattle-rearing activities. It was on one such occasion that he made another of his notable escapes.

It was getting quite late that day and Dharmendra was still some way off from his village when he abruptly stopped in a little rocky clearing to relieve a full bladder. He dismounted from his horse, climbed up a crag and let the pressure ease.

Unknown to him, a tiger was sleeping below the rocky outcrop, right under the path of the descending stream. He was not at all pleased at being awakened so rudely. With



quick leaps and bounds, he climbed up the rocks and was soon only a few feet away from Dharmendra.

For a second their eyes met, and exchanged knowing looks. The tiger bared his teeth and roared loudly. The sound of that blood-curdling roar zipped through the ether and reached my distant ears. I immediately excused myself from a lecture that I was conducting for some trainee vidyadharas and raced to the scene.

By the time I reached there and sized up the situation, Dharmendra had raised the rifle to his shoulder and steadied his aim. The next instant I heard two simultaneous sounds – the roar of a leaping tiger and the report of a rifle, and the very next instant, the sound of two bodies falling.

Dharmendra was lying unconscious on the ground. The tiger was lying dead at his feet. As I stood marvelling at Dharmendra's courage and presence of mind, I heard the strains of a plaintive, sonorous melody. I looked towards the source of that sound. From the dead body of the tiger, an ethereal figure was rising, lute in hand.

"That's what I call 'going with a bang'," I quipped, hoping to cheer up the freshly-deceased spirit. The spirit smiled and strummed a few more notes in quick succession.

“That’s the first time I have seen someone play a requiem for themselves,” I added. The dexterity and elegance of the lute player was a telltale sign of his identity. “How did a gandharva like yourself end up as a tiger though?” I asked.

The gandharva was in no mood to tell a story. Music was his passion and it showed from the gusto with which he was playing. It was quite understandable, considering the years he must have spent as a tiger, where the only music to be created was growls, snarls and roars.

“Oh the usual,” he finally said matter-of-factly, as I waited patiently for an answer. “Rubbed a rishi the wrong way, who cursed me to become a tiger. When I earnestly begged forgiveness for my wrongdoing, he consoled me by saying that one much greater than he would one day slay me and liberate me. The music I am playing now is not a requiem for myself, but a paeon to the boy who has culminated my curse. It’s my great fortune indeed to have died at his hands.”

He played on for some more time and then blessing Dharmendra, he said, “May this boy excel in music and dance the way I do. May he live long!” Taking one final look at Dharmendra and bowing to him, the gandharva ascended to his native realm and disappeared from view.



It was quite dark by now. I didn't want any wild animals prowling about Dharmendra's inert body. By now the village-folk were out looking for him. I attracted them to this place and made sure they found him. They were quite surprised when they reached the scene. They roused Dharmendra back to his senses and carried him on their shoulders, hailing him as a great tiger-slayer. As for the tiger, he was also carried back on the shoulders of two men, slung on a pole. His skin later served as Dharmendra's asana during the tantric sadhanas he performed with a certain yogini, but that is a story for another day.

Far from the madding crowd

By the time Dharmendra blossomed into a handsome youth, he was managing the vast family property all by himself. His family had begun pressurizing him to get married to a girl he had been betrothed to in early childhood. 'Will the fetters of family life chain this bird of the open skies?' I wondered as I silently watched the unfolding saga of his life from up above.

I need not have worried. The intense *vairagya* and *mumukshutva*, the burning dispassion and yearning for the truth that had been simmering in his heart burst forth one day. It was an opportune moment. His mother, an active participant in the national freedom movement, was in prison again for her 'subversive' activities. A mother's tears can be quite hard to tear oneself away from. Bidding adieu to his father, Dharmendra cut the ties that bound him to home and hearth in one fell swoop. I smiled as I saw the bird escape from its cage to seek out its destiny.

The bird had to search for an able master and guide first of all. I kept a watchful eye over him for the next few months as he roamed the countryside on this quest. He was now on his own in the big wide world, and he would encounter quite a few interesting specimens of humanity. At one place, he met some aghori tantrics who tried to lure him into their group. Dharmendra had always been interested in tantra, so he decided to play along and see what he could learn from these



fellows. In a few days the tantrics realized that this young man would not stay long. He knew some of their secrets by now and would soon try to escape from their clutches.

“Let us offer him as a human sacrifice to our deity,” they decided, “No one will suspect foul play and we will acquire occult powers in the bargain.” They meticulously planned all the details of the sacrifice and organized a special event for the purpose. They lit the sacrificial fire and sat around it. Together with the chanting of mantras, they were wining and dining as well.

Ever since Dharmendra had joined these tantrics, I had been hovering around. There was something fishy about these tantrics from the very beginning. I had dropped a couple of hints to Dharmendra, but they had gone unnoticed. Now I sent an urgent psychic message to Dharmendra, “Get out. Now!”

This time it worked. Dharmendra got this funny feeling that he must run away then and there. The door in front of him was always kept locked, but today, by chance or design, the tantrics had forgotten to take the key. Dharmendra saw the key dangling from the lock. He mentally prayed to his

ishta and, throwing one quick glance at the tantrics, quickly stepped out the door. Locking it from outside, he headed straight for the railway station. A train was pulling out of the platform just then. Without thinking twice, he boarded it. I breathed a sigh of relief. It was a close shave once again.

Soon Dharmendra ended up in Rishikesh and met his destined master, the venerable Swami Sivananda. Over the next twelve years, Satyam, for that's what he was christened by his guru, single-mindedly followed the instruction his guru had given him on the very first day: "You do not have to bring in the light. The light is already within you. Work hard and you shall be purified." Labouring day and night in his guru's ashram, Satyam removed whatever little karmic dross remained on his otherwise spotless and splendid personality, and was soon shining like a radiant jewel.

Swami Sivananda had already divined his dear disciple's grand destiny. After twelve years, he sent him away from the ashram with the mandate to spread the message of yoga and divine life from door to door and shore to shore. The light



hidden in a corner of Rishikesh was now about to escape and illuminate the whole world.

Satyam established his headquarters in Munger, a little town on the banks of the Ganga and from there initiated a global yogic and spiritual renaissance. Like a whirlwind he visited each and every corner of the globe, planting the seeds of satya and dharma wherever he went.

Outwitting dangerous dacoits

I remember another one of Satyam's great escapes from this era. Satyam and a few of his disciples were travelling by road in the forests near Ranchi. It was late at night. Suddenly a group of a dozen odd, armed dacoits appeared from nowhere and stopped the car. Everyone else in the car was scared to death, but Satyam remained calm and equipoised.

The leader of the dacoits had figured out that Satyam was the leader of the group and had placed the barrel of his gun on Satyam's chest. His finger was cradling the trigger, itching to press it. I had reached the scene by then, more to watch the fun than to make sure Satyam was safe. I had seen enough of Satyam's prowess to know that he was perfectly capable of taking care of himself, and others.

"What do you guys want?" Satyam asked casually.

"Give us everything you have, and run away from here."

"Fine. We will leave the car here as well, but do any of you know how to drive?"

They all shook their heads.

"Then what will you do with the car?" Satyam asked.

"Fine, we won't take the car, but all your money."

"How much money do you want?"

As the conversation progressed the dacoits started getting restless. One of them said to the leader, "Why are you wasting your time talking to this fellow? Just shoot him. We'll take whatever he has in his car."

The dacoit chief nodded. His finger wrapped around the trigger. Yet no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't pull the trigger!

“What are you doing? This is no time for jokes,” his accomplices exclaimed, much alarmed.

“I don’t know . . . for some reason . . . I can’t . . .,” the dacoit chief stammered, “I just can’t fire the damn gun.”

“What nonsense! Move away and I’ll do the needful,” one of the other dacoits said in exasperation.

The chief tried to move back but was unable to pull the barrel off Satyam’s chest. It seemed to be stuck there!

“Arre! Why don’t you back off?” his fellow dacoits asked.

“I can’t even move back,” replied the chief, his face drenched with perspiration.

The dacoits realized they were not dealing with an ordinary sadhu. They looked at each other, threw away their guns, fell at Satyam’s feet and begged forgiveness.

Satyam just smiled. He must have done something, for the chief could now move his gun again. He also fell down at Satyam’s feet.

“You fellows are not professional dacoits, just bumbling amateurs,” said Satyam, grabbing a gun and aiming at a



mock target. He sounded like a concerned father admonishing his errant children. “If you really want to be professionals then shoot first and speak later. If you can’t do this, then better give up this profession. It’s too risky for you.”

All the dacoits promised to forego this ‘line of business’ and adopt some honest means of earning their livelihood. Satyam on his part not only forgave them, but also invited them to his upcoming convention in Rajnandgaon.

I still can't resist a smile when I remember this incident, and in particular, the expression on the dacoit's face as he tried with all his might to shoot Satyam but just couldn't.

Renouncing renunciation itself

For twenty years, Satyam worked like a bulldozer, clearing away the clutter and debris of outmoded ways of thinking and living, and laying the foundation of a much more refined yogic culture. He had finally accomplished his guru's mandate of making yoga a universally-accepted culture. He had created a sweeping worldwide yoga movement under the umbrella of the International Yoga Fellowship and erected a grand monument of yoga under the auspices of the Bihar School of Yoga. Sometimes I wondered how his future would unfold. Would he choose to rest comfortably upon his laurels and let the trappings of fame and fortune, the natural accompaniments of any grand undertaking, enmesh and entangle him for the rest of his days? I soon realized how naïve it was of me to have even entertained such a foolish thought. Satyam was made of a different metal altogether, as he proved his mettle once again.



One fine day, which happened to be the 8th day of the 8th month of the 88th year of the century as per the common calendar of his era (a date that humans would denote by 8.8.88), he left all that he had created and became a wandering mendicant once again. I had seen people renounce the path of pravritti to enter nivritti, but here was someone renouncing nivritti itself!

The significance of the numbers wasn't lost on me either. Having perfected the eightfold yoga of Sage Patanjali and having acquired the eightfold siddhis, Satyam was now renouncing everything and proceeding on a pilgrimage through the eight cardinal directions in order to perfect the higher eightfold yoga of Sage Sivananda. The eight diggajas, the guardians of the cardinal directions, had come all the way to salute and welcome him, as he set upon his circuitous pilgrimage through the siddha teerthas of Bharatvarsha.

Satyam had made a successful escape once again, this time from the snare of *siddhi* and *prasiddhi*, the entrapment of success and fame. He was indeed an *unmukta gagan ka panchhi*, a bird of the endless sky.



The final escape

After a year of pilgrimage and rigorous sadhana, Satyam received a divine mandate on his guru's birthday (8.9.89 in human lingo), to proceed to Sati's *chitabhoomi* for the next phase of his life. Satyam settled in Rikhia, an impoverished village near Deoghar, and over the next twenty years, became the nucleus of another path-breaking social and spiritual transformation. He perfected his guru's mandate to 'serve, love and give' and inspired countless others to imbibe this 'yoga of the heart' in whichever way and whatever measure they could. He resurrected the ancient tradition of yajna as a tool for deeper transformation, both at the individual and social level. Rikhia became a shining example of the magic that the sankalpa of a selfless sannyasin can bring about.

Satyam had accomplished all that had been envisaged in the blueprint of his life. Having reached the pinnacle of Shiva consciousness, he didn't desire *moksha* or liberation for himself, rather his only desire was *dukha taptanaam aartinaashanam*, removing the suffering of others. The day he received a re-entry visa to planet earth from the Intergalactic Immigration Department, he made his final departure.



Sitting in padmasana, with the name of God on his lips and the memory of guru in his heart, he raised his pranas up to the crown of his head and chanting the blessed mantra *Om*, executed with great finesse his final escape. Satyam's conscious samadhi was a direct demonstration of a statement that I had heard Lord Krishna say to a princely warrior by the name of Arjuna more than 5,000 human years ago:

*Sarvadwaarani sanyamya mano hridi nirudhya cha;
Moordhnyaadhaayaatmanah praanamaasthito yogadhaaranaam.
Omityekaaksharam brahma vyaaharanmaamanusmaran;
Yah prayaati tyajandeham sa yaati paramaam gatim.*

“Having closed all the gates of the senses, confined the mind in the heart and fixed the life-breath in the head, engaged in the practice of concentration, uttering the sacred mantra *Om* and remembering Me in his heart, he who departs from the body, attains to the goal supreme.”

As I saw Satyam's dazzlingly luminous spirit ascend from the mortal dimension, I looked about in awe and amazement. The astral sky was ablaze with the radiant forms of countless celestials. Devas, yakshas, gandharvas, kinnaras, vidyadharas,



apsaras, nagas, rishis, munis and siddhas of every hue and sort were saluting and showering every conceivable flower upon a being who had transcended all limitations and achieved complete perfection.

My eyes chanced upon Tilottama amongst the multitude of celestials gathered there. She looked at me and smiled. Perhaps she had also remembered an occasion we had shared in similar circumstances. She dipped her right hand in the basket she was carrying and stretched it out in my direction with a knowing look. I smiled back, shaking my head from side to side. I didn't need parijata flowers from her today. I had brought my own supply. If there was anyone in the universe who deserved to be anointed with parijata flowers, it was Satyam. In my long long life, Satyam had been a ward like no other. The flowers fell freely from my hands, like the tears from my eyes, leaving me wondering, 'Was he really my ward, or was I his ward? Or was he my life's greatest reward?'



SATYAM TALES





Satyam Tales

Great Escapes is the fifth in the series of Satyam Tales depicting the life and teachings of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Through the medium of these simple narratives, we hear the voice of Sri Swamiji inspiring all, irrespective of age.

Amartyaa, a guardian angel, keeps a vigilant eye on her beloved ward, Satyam, watching with awe and admiration (and sometimes lending a helping hand) as Satyam escapes from various shackles and situations to fulfil his grand destiny. These miraculous escapes trace the life of Satyam from early childhood to the final, wilful liberation of a perfected yogi. The ward had outshone his guard, ready to join the ranks of celestial beings.

This story is a delightful read for children, adults and old alike. It is an invaluable message for those engaged in the world and for those seeking the spirit. This journey is your journey, these challenges are your challenges, and this victory is your victory. It is a story that will touch your heart, give you joy, hope, conviction and, above all, faith. Yes, you too can learn to escape from the fetters that keep you in bondage.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

BIHAR SCHOOL OF YOGA



1963–2013
GOLDEN JUBILEE

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