

SATYAM TALES

Following the Inspiration

To be with the divine

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



Satyam Tales

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Following the Inspiration is the fiftieth 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.

In this real-life story, we follow Swami Niranjanananda on his yatra to Mount Kailash and immerse ourselves in the beauty and sacred atmosphere of the Himalayas. Around every corner, from morning to night on this journey, he was inspired by Sri Swamiji and his eternal teachings. His presence was as tangible as the presence of the Divine in its many forms and expressions.

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. You too can bring Sri Swamiji's teachings alive by living them with sincerity and gratitude . . .

— 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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Following the Inspiration

I had heard the stories of my gurus' travels in the Himalayas since birth, and I was longing to embark on the same yatra and follow in their footsteps. And so I did. Eighty-one years after Swami Sivananda, I undertook the same pilgrimage. Accompanied by the presence of Sri Swamiji at every step of the journey, I was filled with experiences of a truly extraordinary nature and which are a continual source of inspiration for me.



On 6th June 2012, we embarked on our Kailash-Mansarovar journey from Kathmandu and reached Kodari border in Nepal. After clearing customs, we changed vehicles, boarded two land cruisers, four to a car, and took off. We had a Nepali and a Chinese guide, two cooks, two sherpas and two drivers. A truck and a jeep followed us laden with all our supplies: rice, dal, grains, vegetables, water, gas cylinders, cooking ranges, sleeping bags, tents and other necessary items.

Our first stop was in the tiny village town of Nyalam in Tibet. This town is at a significant height. Normally all travellers spend two nights here to get acclimatized. However, we were so fit that we needed to spend only one night. That night in Nyalam, after the trek in the mountains,



in the privacy of my room, I chanted the *Hanuman Chalisa*, and remembered Sri Swamiji and what he told us about Hanuman and even more about himself:

Hanuman is first in service and in strength as well as being a great and learned man, intelligent, well-educated and qualified. Rama is in his heart all the time. I chant the *Hanuman Chalisa* every day when I bathe. When I complete one hundred rounds of japa, I offer my prayers to Hanuman to free any innocent person who may be in distress.

I invited Hanuman to go on the journey with us, and went to sleep. The next morning when I woke up, what do I see? Hanumanji is standing by my bed. I instantly did pranam





to him and asked, “Are you coming?” He smiled and said, “Yes.” After breakfast, when we boarded the jeep, I saw him walk up and sit on top of the jeep. Not the small Hanumanji, nor the large one, but human-sized. All the way I could feel his presence, sitting above my head on top of the jeep. What an incredible feeling!

Our next stop was Sanga, another small town. As sleep pervaded the body, the mind was filled with thoughts that the next morning we were going to reach Mansarovar whose actual name is Manas Sarovar as the lake was created from Brahma’s mind, through his willpower. We started the circumambulation of the lake, which is approximately forty kilometres wide, by car. Before starting the parikrama, we had our first darshan of Mount Kailash from the banks of





the lake. The skies just opened up, a majestic blue sky with a white Kailash against it, earthy mountains below and the turquoise lake at our feet. It was a sight that will remain ingrained in the mind for all times to come. Right then and there, I folded my hands in humble submission to Lord Ashutosh. Surrounding the lake, we saw many birds, swans, animals, insects, and other living forms. There were deer and a variety of small creatures who would escape into their burrows at the sound of our car. While we were taking a photograph of the lake we spotted two yellow swans. They were in fact golden swans, the rajahamsa, who according to myth, can separate milk from water. If there is any lake in this world which I can say is a lake, after having seen so many all over the world, I would say it is the Mansarovar.





We also visited Rakshas Taal, a smaller lake situated next to Mansarovar. Legend has it that Ravana, meditated on Lord Shiva here. For Sri Swamiji, Ravana was not only a great bhakta or a demon king living on some faraway island, but he explained that Ravana was our own reality:

Ravana is within you and me, here and now, and we all have to deal with him and conquer this wicked kidnapper. Ravana, the demon king, has ten heads and twenty arms, and is extremely powerful. He lives in Lanka, the city of gold. This is not a myth. It is the reality within you and me and within everything. The *karmendriyas*, the five senses of action, and the *jnanendriyas*, the five senses of awareness, are the ten heads of Ravana. The ten senses each have two attitudes, positive and negative. That makes up the twenty arms of Ravana. The eyes can see good and they can also see bad. The nose can smell right and it can smell wrong. The ears can hear well and they can hear ill. Sita, the individual soul, has to be freed from the clutches of Ravana.

There is only one who can free her, and that is God himself. If you knew his telephone number, you could



dial him, and say, “God, I have been kidnapped here, please take me away.” But you don’t have his telephone number. I don’t know his telephone number, but there is a hot line between God and me. That hot line is *bhakti*, love, for God and for mankind at the same time. To love humanity is to love God. To love both humanity and God is complete love.

Ravana is in every one of us and our love will call out to God to make us free. There is yet another story related to this lake. The true name of the Lake is Brahma Taal, the lake of Brahma. When Lord Brahma began his work on creation, he started by creating the five *mahabhootas*, elements, through which came the earth, planets and constellations. Then he created trees, fruits, flowers. Before creating living beings, he began to worship Lord Shiva by this lake. It was only after pleasing Lord Shiva that he created living creatures. The atmosphere at Brahma Taal is extremely pure and inspires *bhakti*. From there the sight of Mount Kailash is spectacular.

We rested for the night at lake Mansarovar. According to legend, on full moon nights, gods and goddesses descend from the heavens to bathe in Mansarovar. The full moon though had already passed on 5th June. At 9.30 pm I

ventured out and I saw that a few lights were dancing on the surface of the lake. I called everyone and for about an hour and a half we stood by the lake watching the lights. The lights would come down from the sky, dive into the water, float on the surface of the water, and then ascend into the sky. One light started floating towards the people standing there. They felt as if someone was walking towards them with a torch. However, there was no one there. At about a distance of fifty feet, the light stopped, and after a while ascended straight up. I remembered that Sri Swamiji had the same feeling of a divine presence when he had been to Lake Mansarovar:

If one goes to the Himalayas and sits down, one is in peace, even if one doesn't care for God. The nature is enough to withdraw the mind. One doesn't have to go to God, nature itself will switch the mind off.





When we rose at three in the morning and went out, some lights were still playing in the water. At sunrise, we went for a bath in Mansarovar. The water is absolutely clear and you can distinctly see the stones and sand on the lakebed. For a long time, we purified ourselves with the crystal waters of Mansarovar. The heart was aglow, the spirit bloomed.

Absorbed in the image of Mount Kailash reflected in the lake I thought of Swami Sivananda who speaks of the mind-lake and the necessity to keep it clean and still, free of ripples



and waves, so that the reflection of the Divine can be seen. Sri Swamiji also described what we have to do:

The cleaner the mirror, the better the reflection. It is the mirror that has to be polished, not your face. If bhakti or love has to be expressed, then the easiest way is to look within. The inner mirror has to be cleaned. It is not necessary to have a pure heart to find God, but it is necessary to have pure feelings and sensitivity towards Him. Such sensitivity arises out of love. The aim of bhakti is to reduce personal whims, conflicts, disharmony, and so on, which tend to imprison and severely limit awareness. The aim is to make the mind a perfect reflector, a perfect mirror of experience.

After our bath we began a havan in a small pit next to Mansarovar. There is very little oxygen at that height. The flames just don't rise; they are bonsai flames! The height of the flames was at the most one and a half inch. We had about half a kilo of camphor and we poured all of it over the wood. With the little fire that formed from it, we performed havan to the names of Shiva, Devi and Guru while chanting and doing japa.

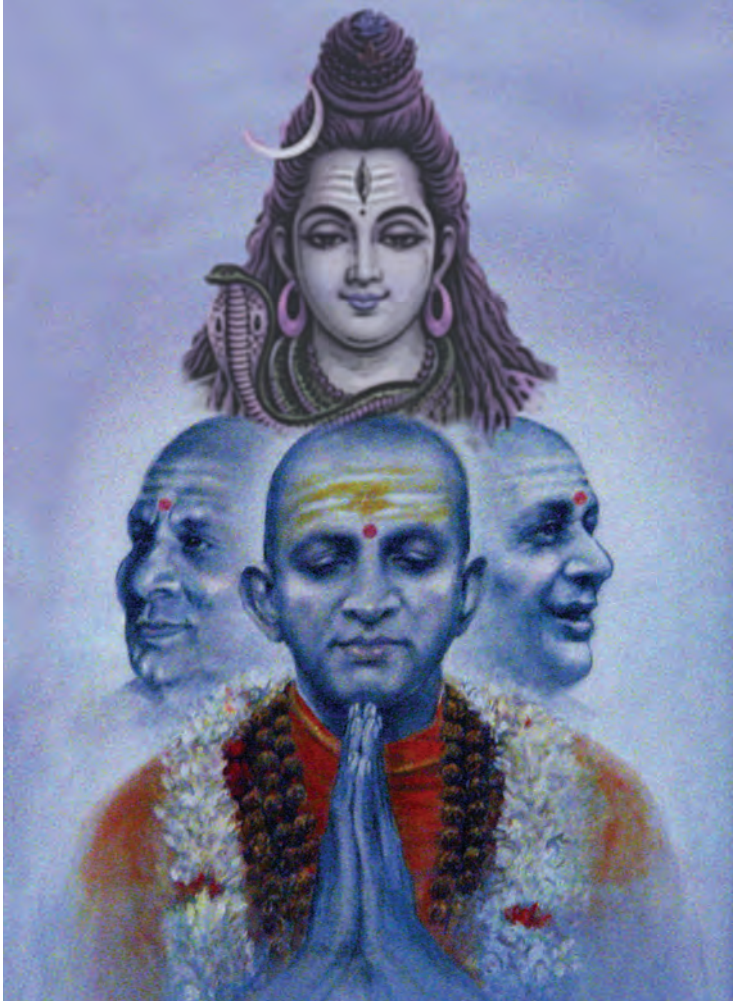




These bonsai flames brought up a memory of a bonsai that was not to be. Swami Sivananda had told Sri Swamiji in the ashram: “Satyam, you have worked day and night for the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh. If you remain here any longer, you will become a bonsai. You must leave this place now; it is proving to be too small for you. Spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore.” And that’s what Sri Swamiji did. He offered to those who came guidance and an understanding of how to find health and happiness in life. The Guru knew that the disciple was meant to become a might tree giving shelter and solace to all.

During the havan, the sannnyasins had the experience of a divine energy. We saw Adiguru Lord Shiva and our Guru, Swami Satyananda, wearing a tiger skin, with ash smeared on the body, dreadlocks flowing down the head and holding a trident, inspecting the havan. The experience of the presence of Shiva and Guru is indescribable.

When the havan finished, I sat with eyes closed. Watching Mansarovar, Shiva, Sri Swamiji and Kailash mentally, I did



pranam to all of them. As I was doing pranam, it felt as if a hand touched my head. Over it came a second hand and then a third. I actually felt the touch and the weight of the hands. Curiosity caused the eyes to open a little, and to my left I saw standing a twelve-feet tall Shiva. To my right stood Swami Sivananda and his hand was over Shiva's hand. In front of me stood Sri Swamiji, whose hand was over Swami Sivananda's hand. I felt a little strange, but also blissful. I felt strange as guru's hand was above and God's hand was on the head. With the feeling of 'hail the gracious guru, who brought me to God face to face', I raised my hand, removed

the three hands from over my head, and then I placed Sri Swamiji's hand first on my head. Over it I placed Swami Sivananda's hand and over it my deity Lord Ashutosh's hand. I became totally lost in this amazing feeling. In this way, I received the loving blessings of three special people at Mansarovar. I gave my thanks to Sri Swamiji who was my postman and had come to wake me up:

The scriptures, Upanishads and great men have said that devotion towards guru is devotion towards God. Everyone is ultimately connected with God. The real relationship is with God, not with the person who is in between. If someone sends somebody a letter through the post office, the postman delivers that letter. In the same way, the guru is only an agent. He comes in between for some time. The guru is somebody who comes and wakes you up, that's all.

Later, we moved on to Darchen, the Kailash basecamp, from where the Kailash parikrama begins. The next day, after I had an interesting and restless night, we reached Yama Dwara beyond which the walking trail begins. Knowing that both Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji had walked the same





trail filled me with great joy and I felt like walking in their very footsteps. Yama Dwara is the same place where Nachiketa waited for Lord Yama, as told in the *Kathopanishad*.

Of course, I thought of the little boy waiting three days and nights for Lord Yama, of his questions and the answers he received. I had spoken and written about him and his quest for truth. In my heart, however, there is only one Nachiketa and that is my Guru, Sri Swamiji, who for me is the ideal spiritual aspirant and the symbol of *vairagya*, detachment. When he left his home at the age of twenty, he never looked or went back. When he left his Guru's ashram in Rishikesh, he began his life as a wandering sadhu, alone and on his own. After twenty years of toiling to establish the mission of his Guru and fulfil the mandate given to him, he simply walked out of the gates of an institution, a movement and those he had lived with for many years, never to return. His final detachment was from the physical body and our planet

Earth, on a day and at a time he chose. On Satyam's 31st birthday, Swami Sivananda had already seen and declared:

Few would have such vairagya at such a young age. Swami Satyananda is full of the Nachiketas element. Yet any work that he takes up he will complete in a perfect manner. He does the work of four people and yet never complains. He is a versatile genius and a linguist too. Yet, he is humble and simple – an ideal sadhaka and nishkanya sevak. He is a pillar of the Divine Life Mission. May God bless him with health, long life, peace, prosperity and eternal bliss.

He was a true sannyasin all his life. He perfected vairagya, the path of sannyasa, and after having revived the system of panchagni sadhana which Nachiketa learnt here at Yama



Dwara, he passed the knowledge on to Swami Satsangi and me to uphold this sacred tradition of sannyasa. He also helped those who were more at the beginning than the end of the path. Where others write volumes and volumes on vairagya, non-attachment, detachment and attachment, often leaving readers more confused than before, he gave a practical explanation which could be applied and lived:

When you are angry, violent, terribly unhappy, what do you do? You struggle with yourself and come out of that situation. The struggle against the identification with the negative is the process of detachment.

This is my Guru, clear, down-to earth giving useful guidance to all. He also used the story of Nachiketa and Lord Yama shortly before his mahasamadhi. The kanyas and batuks of Rikhia enacted the play, and for days the sound of 'I am not this body, I am not this mind' filled the air, yet only he knew that he was preparing everyone for what was to come. With these memories, we hoisted the flag of Sannyasa Peeth as a tribute to Sri Swamiji and his vision for the future development of sannyasa.



The parikrama of Kailash begins from Yama Dwara and the level of oxygen drops. I climbed on an old, white horse and went ahead with one other swami. The other co-travellers followed behind with their horses and coolies. Two kilometres from Yama Dwara, I saw a shadow walking before me about thirty metres ahead. The shadow of a sadhu holding a trident in hand was none other than Sri Swamiji in the form of Shiva. He himself had described the growth of a bhakta, and following the shadow of the sadhu in front of me, I knew once again that Sri Swamiji had attained the ultimate goal:

As long as the devotee lives in the gross mind and on the gross plane, he considers himself different from God and he considers God different from him. When he grows in his devotion he begins to feel that he is a spark or aspect of God. Then, he begins to feel that God is in him. In the final consummation of bhakti, this distinction between God and devotee is completely lost. God and his devotee are experienced as one.

Shiva and Satyam had become one, so with doubled enthusiasm and faith, we went forward, and the shadow



continued to lead us. Further along the path, we stopped and waited for the others. They came on their horses and told us what had happened, “Natwarji has been saved from death by a hair’s breadth. His horse suddenly went berserk and Natwarji fell from the horse. One of his feet remained caught in the stirrup. The horse dragged him behind and galloped around the field thrice. Somehow the Tibetan Sherpa and coolie released his foot. When he was lying on the ground, the horse came back, stood on its hind legs and tried to hit him thrice. Everyone present there was shaken to the core.” When I asked Natwarji, “Any injury?” He said, “No, not a scratch.”

Then I realized what had happened to me that restless night before and why. I had woken up three times, shaking and experiencing fear, with a mantra going on in my head: *Yamaroopi Mahadevo dakshinasyam sadavatu* – “May Lord Shiva, in the form of Yama, protect us on the south side.” I did not know what to make of it, yet the next morning, before beginning our parikrama, I called everyone and we performed worship of Lord Shiva. We chanted the *Mritasanjeevan Kavach*, which is meant for attaining victory over death, and the *Shiva Raksha Stotra*. After the chanting, we got ready for our parikrama and took off.

Putting together the events of the night and the incident with the horse, I knew that the *Mritasanjeevan Kavach* and *Shiva Raksha Stotra* had protected Natwarji. This is a direct experience of the grace and mercy of God. I also understood why the mantra had been going on in my head. This incident took place in the southern direction, where the parikrama begins, and Lord Shiva in his grace and mercy had saved Natwarji from all injury, pain and death. As we mounted our horses and continued, I pondered about Sri Swamiji’s understanding and experience:

The most precious thing that humankind needs today is God’s grace. To be worthy of God’s grace, you must become aware of His grace. God’s grace is always

there. His grace falls on everybody at all times, but you do not realize it. To know what is beyond name and form, beyond the senses and intellect, the simplest and easiest path is to think about others. If one helps one's fellow beings even a little, God will most certainly shower His grace, because to worship others is to worship God. God's grace is the one thing that, if it is there, is present in every situation. Wherever there is grace in any work, in any house, in any family, there is always happiness and peace. That is why the ancient rishis and munis found the way to obtain grace.

During the parikrama, one has to cross the Dolmala Pass, at a height of 5,722 metres. Here the level of oxygen is about seven percent. Due to lack of oxygen, many people experience discomfort and even faint. When we reached Dolmala Pass, the nearest peak to Kailash, we picked up some stones and earth as prasada, and at that highest point, hoisted the angavastrā of Satyananda Yoga as a flag.





Just imagine, there at the highest point, under most difficult conditions, where everyone else wanted to get through as fast as possible, my heart was filled with thoughts of Sri Swamiji, and on that narrow path, with little air to breathe, I stopped to honour my guru. Hoisting the flag of Satyananda Yoga was a tribute to the magnificent achievement of Sri Swamiji. The yoga which Sri Swamiji predicted would change world events and become a world culture is unfolding now and coming true. Yet as much as this attainment, it is his utter humility that will inspire and remain with me, for he never took any credit instead he told us that it was God alone who did all:

After fifty to sixty years, towards the fag end of my life, I have realized that God is the doer and whatever has happened in my life is all due to Him. He made me do everything. Whatever success I have achieved in spiritual life has not been due to my personal effort or diligence. It has been due to God's grace. If I had not had God's grace, my life would not have been like this. How could an ordinary person like me, a man with limited knowledge, means and intellect, do and say all this? Only through divine will. God's will is operating. Through this process of realization, when the ego begins to diminish, you may not see God, but you certainly begin to perceive the divine will. Once you see the divine will, then you know that you have come slightly closer to God. The distance remains, but it will diminish by and by, kilometre by kilometre. One day the gap will close and you will merge with God.

That gap had certainly closed for Sri Swamiji. I bid farewell to the flag fluttering in the icy-cold wind and began the slow descent. I quietly repeated the poem Sri Swamiji had written to help us recognize God's will and working in everything:

You are the Instrument
Follow the path of spiritual life.
Let nature take its own course.
Let it be whatever it is.
Why worry about these things?
Why be anxious?
Leave everything to the Divine.
Who am I to do it?
He does everything.
He controls everything.
You think you are doing everything,
But it is not true.
Always know that you are the instrument
And He is the doer,
Whoever He is
Whatever His form.

With these thoughts I arrived back at the basecamp. I remembered that at Sanga, the night before we had reached Mansarovar, I had prayed to Krishna and Rukmini, "I invited you on this journey when I had come to Pandharpur, now you have to come with me." Then I had prayed to Shiva and Shakti and said, "Today we are going to have the first darshan at Mansarovar, so you also have to be with me." Then I prayed to Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji and said, "Without the two of you this journey is incomplete, so you have to be with me." As I finished the prayer, I could feel Hanumanji evaporate. No matter how much I tried to feel him, I could not. He had been replaced by a very strong presence of six people: Krishna, Rukmini, Shiva, Shakti, Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji.

That morning on 9th June, when I got into the car to drive up to Mansarovar, I felt as if I was being crowded by

all these celestial people. I wondered, ‘Where will all these people sit?’ In that instant my eyes automatically closed and my heart opened. I could see this opening of the heart and I said to Krishna, “Come in.” I saw him walk with Rukmini inside the heart. Then I said to Shiva, “Come in,” and I could see Shiva walking with Shakti, entering the heart. Then I said to Swami Sivananda, “Come in,” and I could see him walk and enter. Then I said to Sri Swamiji, “Please come in,” and I could see him! This was no hallucination, but a real feeling. Once he settled in, the doors of my heart closed. For maybe ten seconds I really felt heavy, as if a big weight had been placed on the left side of my body. After all, six people were trying to find their seat!

These six companions accompanied me throughout the days spent at Mansarovar and during the Kailash parikrama. They were with me seated in my heart. After completing the parikrama, and a good night’s rest, I had another divine vision. Once again I experienced the heart opening up. Each one – Krishna, Rukmini, Shiva, Shakti, Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji – came out, one by one. I did pranam and said, “I don’t want you to go. I want you to stay with me.” What followed was incredible. Krishna suddenly became a light hanging in mid-air; Rukmini became a light, Shiva became a light, Shakti became a light, Swami Sivananda became a light, Sri Swamiji became a light: six lights. Then these six lights became one. This single globe of light travelled towards me and came back into my heart. That was the most amazing experience that I have had on this journey, and Sri Swamiji’s words came alive within me:

God is in everyone. God is not outside. God is not far from you. You do not have to go anywhere to find God. There is no way to God. Don’t ask the way to God. He is in your heart. He is your soul. He is nearer than the breath, nearer than the mind, nearer than thought, nearer than prana. God is the nearest presence you can experience. The relationship with God is spiritual, deep, intrinsic and ultimately natural.

The last night that we spent in Tibet, I prayed to Shiva, “If I have received your grace, please show yourself to Swami Satsangi in Rikhia.” And I went to sleep. The next morning, I saw an SMS from Swami Satsangi: “At three o’clock in the morning I had a vision of Shiva and Kailash in meditation.” She also said, “My whole body was aching as if I had done the trekking myself.” Reading this, I felt humbled and bowed my head in reverence and was reminded of what Sri Swamiji had told us:

Only a person with the feeling of atmabhava, feeling for others the way that you feel for yourself, can reach God. The vision of God can be in a form or without a form; it can be in the form of inspiration and it can also be in the form of emotions. Arjuna saw Him in His awe-inspiring cosmic form. Some have heard Him in the tune of musical instruments, some have seen Him in the form of light and others have seen Him as something else.



With a smile I said to Sri Swamiji, “Yes, for Swami Satsangi that ‘something else’ was the vision of Kailash and walking with aches and pains in her body.”

Today, having gone on this unique pilgrimage of pilgrimages and having had the experience of devis, devatas, gurus and death, I can firmly say that God does exist. If ever there was a doubt in my mind, it has vanished forever. There is a higher power which can be made visible, which can become palpable and real, which can be seen and felt. That higher power is known as ‘God’. It will also not be out of place to say that I have had glimpses of that power, and it has been the most memorable, most life-transforming experience that I could ever wish for in my life.

I will continue to live my life in the footsteps of Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji and work on what Sri Swamiji calls ‘the adventure of humankind’:

For me, the entire existence, the whole creation that is seen and that is not seen, emanates from a divine principle. Organic, inorganic, living or dead, sentient or insentient, there is no point in the universe, as far as I know, which is devoid of this divine principle. Man is very fortunate because he is able to think about God, whereas other objects in this world are permeated through and through by a divine principle, but they are not aware of it. Man has become aware of it and he has been working on this adventure right from the beginning of human civilization.





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