

Satya ka Avahan

Invoking the Divine

सत्य का
आवाहन

Year 1 Issue 4 July–August 2012



Sannyasa Peeth, Munger, Bihar, India



Hari Om

Avahan is a bi-lingual and bi-monthly magazine compiled, composed and published by the sannyasin disciples of Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati for the benefit of all people who seek health, happiness and enlightenment. It contains the teachings of Sri Swami Sivananda, Sri Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda, along with the programs of Sannyasa Peeth.

Editor: Swami Yogamaya Saraswati

Assistant Editor: Swami Sivadhyanam Saraswati

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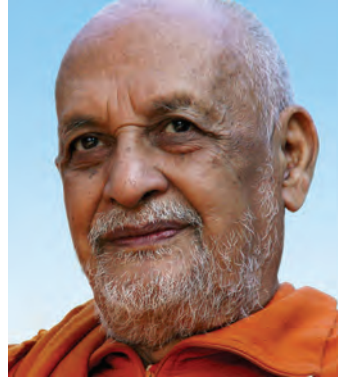
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Front cover: Guru Pooja

Plates: 1–3: Swami Niranjanananda and Swami Satyasangananda, Goa 2011; 4–5: Sri Lalitha Mahila Mahasamajam, Tirueengoimalai, Tamil Nadu; 6–8: Guru Poornima 2011, Paduka Darshan, Munger



SATYAM SPEAKS – सत्यम् वाणी

My blessings are always with you and within you. You can feel me and my good wishes in the very soul of your being. You can commune with me during meditation. You can materialize the guru and God in flesh and blood wherever you want and whenever you want.

—Swami Satyananda

मेरा आशीर्वाद हमेशा तुम्हारे साथ है। तुम अपनी आत्मा की गहराइयों में मेरी उपस्थिति, मेरी शुभकामनाओं को जरूर महसूस कर सकते हो। ध्यान में उतरकर तुम मेरे साथ वार्तालाप कर सकते हो। तुम जब चाहो, जहाँ चाहो, अपने गुरु और इष्ट का साक्षात् दर्शन कर सकते हो।

—स्वामी सत्यानन्द

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न तु अहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवं। कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनां आर्तिनाशनम् ॥

"I do not desire a kingdom or heaven or even liberation. My only desire is to alleviate the misery and affliction of others."

—Rantideva

Declaration of Freedom

Whatever may seem to bind or limit you,
Declare yourself free from it now.
There is nothing in the outer world,
No person, no condition, no circumstance
That can take away the freedom
Which is yours in spirit.
Instead of wishing that you were free
To live your life differently,
Accept the truth that right now
You are free.
Free to change your thinking,
Free to change your outlook on life,
Free to be all that you long to be.
Make this a day of freedom,
Spiritual freedom.
Declare yourself free from anxiety and fear,
Free from any belief in luck or limitation.

—Swami Satyananda

Contents

- 2 The Soul's Gymnasium
- 3 Perfection
- 4 The Glow of Grace
- 6 Appearance during Arati
- 8 Flight of Devi
- 10 Footprints on Sand
- 13 Shiva's Snake
- 15 Guru's Grace

The Soul's Gymnasium



Trial is a crucible into which nature throws man whenever she wants to mould him into a sublime superman. There can be no strength without suffering. There can be no success without suffering. Without sorrows, without persecution, none can become a saint or a sage. Every suffering is meant for one's upliftment and development. Calamity is a blessing in disguise to instil power of endurance and mercy in the heart and turn the mind towards God. Suffering augments the power of endurance, mercy, faith in God and removes egoism. To develop the positive virtuous qualities these karmic visitations come in one's life. Everybody is a product of his own karma. Understand this and develop inner strength. Come what may, march on boldly and be a hero. There is a great future for you. Walk in the path of righteousness. No harm will come to you. May the divine flame grow brighter in you.

– Swami Sivananda

Perfection

Perfection, which you seek after, is a spiritual pinnacle of the soul; it is not just material. If your mind remains unruffled, if lower appetites don't trouble you, if you meditate regularly, if the past doesn't interfere with your present stage of head, heart and hands, if you are regular in japa and kirtan, if you have implicit faith in your guru and God, and if you consider God as your eternal and inseparable companion, then alone can you reach the



summit of perfection. Perfect social behaviour, of course, provides us with the conditions wherein we can fully experience the joy of spiritual perfection.

You are successfully marching towards perfection. I visualize it vividly. May you keep the zeal of sadhana ever fresh!

Never should you miss japa, kirtan and meditation. Never should you fail to feel the presence of God within you. God is not *only* nirakara. He is not *only* an abstract reality. He is like you and like me as well. He is as well sitting by your side. He is a healing doctor and a loving partner of life. You must strive to see him this way, and seek His grace. Guru and God are *one*. Both of them move like ordinary mortals and help their devotees. Remove your mental screen of avidya and dispel the inertia; you can move His heart.

— Swami Satyananda

The Glow of Grace

Date: May 2011

Occasion: Swami Niranjan's Pilgrimage

Location: Thirueengoimalai



In May 2011, Swami Niranjan made a pilgrimage to the Lalitha Mahila Mahasamajam in Tamil Nadu. Having been in Hyderabad after visiting Sri Sailam, he took a short flight to Chennai, and then drove from there to Thirueengoimalai. This town is situated near Musiri in Trichy district and sits along a small river which is a tributary of the Kaveri. Accompanied by Swami Sivarajananda, he spent three days at the Samajam.

On a hilltop in the vicinity of the Samajam stands an ancient temple that has an emerald Shivalingam enshrined in its *garbhagriha*, sanctum sanctorum. It is said that Sage Agastya, in the form of a bumble bee, has been coming to this temple

every night from time immemorial to worship the emerald Shivalingam. Swamiji had a special darshan at this hallowed temple.

At the Sri Lalita Mahila Mahasamajam, the primary shrine is a temple dedicated to Sri Yantra where only females are permitted to enter. The temple was established by the founder of the institute, Swami Advayananda Saraswati, disciple of Swami Sivananda Saraswati, and guru of Mata Sri Vidyamba Saraswati, head of the Samajam. It was in these sacred precincts that the yoginis and Swamiji would perform the daily worship, abhisheka and havan of Sri Chakra.

On one day, the guru, Sri Vidyamba Mataji performed poorna abhisheka on Swamiji, after which he was told to enter the temple to participate in the rituals inside the garbhagriha, along with the yoginis. As he sat before the Sri Chakra, a shift took place whereby he entered into a transcendental state, a kind of samadhi. All solid matter was rendered resplendent and turned into luminous bodies of white light. The pillars, the people, the yantra, the statues, the motifs on the walls, all were seen as brilliant light without any solid matter. He sat in this state of pure luminosity as the ceremony continued. After four hours, it was over. As Swamiji rose up, he noticed that his body felt no tension, stiffness or discomfort, despite being completely immobile for half a day. The hours that had elapsed felt like twenty minutes. He emerged from the sanctum sanctorum in a totally introverted state, and people approaching him for conversation were requested to be silent. For the next couple of days, he lived within a cocoon of light. While this event took place several kilometres down south, back in Ganga Darshan at Vyasa Peeth of Satyam Udyan, the deepaks before the images of Durga and Guru burnt day and night, without being tended to.

Returning to Chennai, Swamiji visited the ashram at Cholai and conducted a satsang for devotees in Chennai before taking the flight to Kolkata and journeying back to Munger. ■

Appearance during Arati

Date: 6th May 2011

Occasion: Akshay Tritiya and Commemoration of Sri Swamiji's Bhu Samadhi

Location: Satyam Udyan, Ganga Darshan



On the 6th of May 2011, Swami Niranjan was in Rikhiapeeth to participate in the Akshay Tritiya pooja. At Ganga Darshan, the sannyasins were conducting the monthly program in Satyam Udyan, for the first time in Swamiji's absence.

After the conclusion of the abhisheka of the Sri Yantra, the Devi is dressed and decorated to the chanting of Devi stotrams. Finally, arati is performed. The final part of any pooja, the hands are placed in front of the heart in a universal gesture of prayer as camphor lights are waved in reverence in front of the deity, the flow of sentiments connecting the worshipper and the worshipped being at their most powerful.

At Satyam Udyan, this arati is always magical. Today as well, as the gathered crowd of worshippers places their palms together, an experience of union and devotion ripples through.

As the hands are united at the heart centre, so too are the flames and the Devi by this ancient ritual.

It is also the last chance to see the Devi for the evening. Once the arati concludes, She will be taken back inside Sri Peeth where She resides, and the door to Her home will be shut. Everybody witnessing the event knows they will not see Her again for another month. More poignant for being fleeting, the beauty of these last moments is indescribable.

In the ancient texts and scriptures it is said that celestial beings from other realms and dimensions are drawn to auspicious events, due to the purity and beauty of the sadhana being performed. They come to watch and participate, but generally people are not aware of their presence.

Yet, on this evening of Akshay Tritiya, a photo was taken at the time of arati. In front of the Sri Yantra are the white flames of the camphor. In front of the flames a presence is clearly seen, a human form with folded hands, offering worship to the divine. Ethereal in appearance, it was not a sannyasin or devotee, for no such person stood before the Devi at that time. It seems someone special came on this special day to join in the pooja, and the camera once again captured their presence. ■



Flight of Devi

Date: 5th June 2011

Occasion: Commemoration of Sri Swamiji's Mahasamadhi

Location: Satyam Udyan, Ganga Darshan

The summer is at its peak and the temperatures are soaring in anticipation of the monsoon to come. We are in need of a reminder of showers of grace. Today we honour Lord Shiva at the Akhara, in remembrance of Sri Swamiji's attainment of Shiva consciousness on 5th December 2009. Preparations are in place for the monthly abhisheka of Yogishwar, the lingam of Shiva Peeth.

Swami Niranjan performs this aradhana and it is an awesome sight to see his graceful figure beside the great, black lingam. There is a closeness in his relationship to Yogishwar that is almost brotherly and it is with careful, precise moves that are also infused with a lightness and spontaneity that he adorns the lingam. Although he has performed this act countless times, there is something fresh and new to this experience each time.

Yogishwar is bathed, painted and wrapped in beautiful flowers and a grass garland. He radiates luminescence and in his light we are elevated in spite of the heaviness of the evening air. We chant stotras honouring Lord Shiva, and as Swamiji waves the lights before the lingam in the final act of arati, we are inspired by this momentary brush with transcendental consciousness and almost forced to look up towards the celestial heavens.

Much to our surprise and delight, a snow white owl is flying above, gliding across the mango orchard, straight towards Shiva Peeth. Parikrama begins and it becomes apparent that this bird is following our course, encircling the grounds of Satyam Udyan in an airborne parikrama. It circles three times

and then quietly flies into the darkness of the night. The program ends and in silence we rejoice in the surreal beauty of this event, for it is totally out of the ordinary for an owl to enter a crowded space, much less one flooded with lights and music. However, this was no ordinary owl and surely she had something to share with us.

Swamiji reminds us that the owl is Ma Lakshmi's vehicle and it is from this goddess of prosperity that Sri Swamiji received a blank cheque, so that he could fulfil his sankalpa to bring peace, plenty and prosperity to all. On this special night of Guru Remembrance, the presence of the owl was an indicator of the power of a sannyasin's sankalpa, infinite in scope and everlasting.

It is due to the grace of the guru that we have the opportunity to come together at this divinity-infused place for the monthly occasions, to grow in our experience and understanding of love and devotion. While Satyam Udyan is the place of Swamiji's sadhana and he is gracious to share these sacred grounds with us, it is still an akhara, a training ground for those of us who wish to develop ourselves as sannyasins, under his care and watchful eye. ■



Footprints on Sand

Date: June 2011

Occasion: Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi's Pilgrimage

Location: Goa



As the summer scorches most of north India, down west the first showers have come, heralding the lyrical days of monsoon. The balmy air of Goa is readying itself to welcome two cherished children of Mother Earth: Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi.

This is Swami Niranjan's first visit to Goa and he is very eager to see the place where his guru, Sri Swami Satyananda had spent some time after leaving Ganga Darshan in 1988. On that occasion, Swami Satsangi had accompanied Sri Swamiji and she is returning to Goa after twenty-three years.

The place the swamis choose to stay in is a little cottage at the far end of a resort hotel, directly in front of the sea. Set upon a mild elevation with an open patio in front, they

have a clear and wide view of the monsoon sea. Swami Niranjan spends most of his time here, gazing out at the water and doing his sadhana. Swami Satsangi joins him, when free from her sadhanas, and they chant mantras and stotras together.

One evening, around sunset, they go for a walk to the same beach that Sri Swamiji used to walk along every day that he had stayed in Goa. In the past two decades the landscape has changed a great deal. A portion of the beach at the far end of the cove is closed to the public since it is no longer safe. Nevertheless, they find their way there and Swami Satsangi reminisces about 1988. She used to feel amazed at how far out into the sea Sri Swamiji swam. He would spend time chatting with fishermen and one day he returned from his swim to tell them that something was not quite right in the water. The next morning there were thousands of fish found washed up on the shore . . . She also speaks of how Sri Swamiji would spend the afternoons on the beach without any shade above him nor any mat to sit on. Perhaps he was rehearsing and preparing for the arduous panchagni sadhana that he successfully performed later in Rikhia. However, at that time it was baffling to see him spending hours in the blazing sun on the unbearably hot sand!

Swami Niranjan listens to these anecdotes with a look of wonder in his eyes. At one point he stops walking and looks down at the sand. Turning back to look at his footprints on the beach, he exclaims with undiluted joy and childlike delight, "I feel I am walking in Paramahamsaji's footsteps!"

Sri Swamiji had written letters to Swami Niranjan from Goa in 1988. In one of them, he had written about *kachi kadi*, a traditional Goan dish that he relished. Swami Niranjan enquires about it and the hotel is delighted to prepare a traditional vegetarian Saraswat Brahmin meal with this dish as the highlight. Kachi kadi is called 'sol kadi' in Goa and is a light tangy soup prepared with the juice of sour plums and coconut milk – and Swami Niranjan so enjoys it!

The duo also pay obeisance at a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, called Ghaghreshwar Mahadeva, established about two hundred years ago when a Shivalingam was found in a pond near the temple. The legend associated with this temple says that once upon a time, Lord Shiva came and danced here, dressed as a woman and wearing a wide, flaring skirt. The word for skirt is ghaghara, hence the name Ghaghreshwar Mahadeva.

The two swamis visit the shrine of Devi Shantadurga in Betim. Shantadurga is the most worshipped form of Devi in Goa and there are temples and shrines dedicated to her in almost every village and town. Shantadurga is called 'shanta' Durga because the only time there was a disagreement between Shiva and Vishnu, no one could intercede to make peace. That was when Devi assumed this form and took Vishnu by her right and Shiva by her left hand, pacified the two and reconciled them. Goa is one of the few places in India where followers of Vaishnava and Shaivite sects worship at the same temples.

Swami Satsangi is reminded of the time when she spent pre-dawn hours until it became light at the pier in Panjim, along the Mandovi riverfront, chanting the *Saundarya Lahari* and doing swara sadhana. Sri Swamiji had dropped her off there and had driven on to Mumbai while she waited to take



the airport shuttle bus from the pier to the airport a few hours later. Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi spend some time along the waterfront looking out over the Mandovi river. They can see the old fort at Aguada across the water which is near the area they had spent the last few days.

At the airport, Swami Niranjan says that he is delighted to have visited yet another place where Sri Swamiji had spent some time after leaving Ganga Darshan in 1988. ■

Shiva's Snake

Date: 6th July 2011

Occasion: Commemoration of Sri Swamiji's Bhu Samadhi

Location: Satyam Udyan, Ganga Darshan

When the gates of Satyam Udyan open on the 5th and 6th of every month, it is a warm welcome to all Ganga Darshan residents and guests to participate in the remembrance of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda. Through the ancient rituals of Shivalingam and Sri Yantra abhisheka, Swami Niranjan connects us with the cosmic Shiva and Shakti, and with Sri Swamiji, our greatest inspiration.

Since their inception, these poojas have drawn visitors from all walks of life, from all over India and the world. As this tradition grows, so does the energy around Satyam Udyan, and we are never sure who will be next drawn into its field.

Occasionally, a guest arrives who leaves a lasting impression on us all and serves as a reminder of the great and magnetic force of guru. On the 6th of July, 2011, one such visitor arrived, and although he came late and unannounced, he stands out as one of the most memorable surprises we have had at the Akhara.

Swamiji had just completed the Sri Yantra abhisheka and Devi stood before us in Her golden glory, laden with flowers and jewels, emanating the benevolent and graceful perfection of the Mother. Vibrations of sacred mantras lingered in the still night air, awakening the deep, collective longing for connection with the Cosmic One. Swamiji stepped back and took his place in the havan peeth as everyone began chanting the *Mahishasuramardini Stotram*, a verse in praise of Durga Ma, remover of difficulties, dispeller of darkness, endowed with unmatched beauty and grace.

Amidst the drumming and chanting, a majestic presence could be felt by those tuned in to the secrets of nature. There



was a movement in the shadows just north of Shiva Peeth. A sannyasin on duty next to the peeth stepped back just as a jet-black, metre-long snake emerged from the lawn and slithered past his feet and on to the path, heading toward the candle-lit entrance. Reaching the doorway, to the amazement of those who noticed, the snake paused in trance-like suspension

before the Shivalingam inside, then began to move in a clockwise direction along the stone pathway around the peeth structure. The concerned sannyasin approached Swamiji, who sat only a few metres from the incident, and asked him what to do. Swamiji nodded and quietly replied, “Nothing. Just watch.”

So everyone watched, as the snake braved the noise and the crowd, carrying on with his slow parikrama with fixed determination. Around and around he moved, as Swamiji sang *Satyam Chalisa*, forty verses celebrating the life and teachings of Sri Swamiji. Led by Swamiji, it is always with great enthusiasm and spirit that it is chanted, a full outpouring of love and devotion. The snake appeared to have joined in the spirit of the *Chalisa*, for he continued with his procession until the very last verse. Then, without creating any disturbance, as if in respect for the place and the pooja, having had the darshan of his Lord, he slipped back on to the lawn and into the darkness from whence he came.

Upon the conclusion of the program, Swamiji shared with everybody the news of the evening’s surprise guest, and reminded us that the snake is a great devotee of Lord Shiva, who adorns himself with serpents just as Krishna is adorned with jewels. It is indeed unusual for such a solitary creature to enter a crowded and noisy place, but perhaps the attraction was too great. Overcoming his natural conditioning, he came to pay obeisance on this special occasion. Such is the power of pure devotion, of one who longs only for the darshan of his Lord. And such is the auspiciousness of these sacred poojas that they continue to draw the very essence of nature. ■

Guru's Grace

Date: 15th July 2011

Occasion: Guru Poornima

Location: Ganga Darshan and Paduka Darshan

On the morning of Guru Poornima, 2011, in the early hours before sunrise, a tired and weary sannyasin rose from her short night's sleep and made her way to the Yoga Vidya kitchen, a newly constructed building on the campus of Ganga Darshan Ashram. It was not quite 3:45 am, the ashram was hushed and dark, and she walked alone with only the light of the full moon accompanying her. Though she hardly had the mind to consider the day's significance, it would be clear to her later on that the blessings of guru had been with her right from the very beginning.

She had arrived early to prepare tea for a handful of sannyasins who would soon be departing for Paduka Darshan for the morning Durga Havan, the opening worship of the daily sadhana. She lit the gas flame under a large pot of water and as the fire roared, the swami stretched her tired body in preparation for what was to be the last of several unimaginably busy days. This Guru Poornima program had demanded more of her than all her many years in the ashram put together, and she stared out into the dark morning in utter amazement at the sheer force of energy she had needed to summon in order to perform her duties. From the days leading up to the four-day program, people had been pouring into Ganga Darshan in droves, expected and unexpected guests from all four corners of India and the world come to participate in this auspicious event and pay their respects at the lotus feet of guru. What had been planned as a quiet program for ashram residents and a few hundred visitors had ballooned into a festival for thousands, a Maha Yajna of celestial proportions, and Ganga Darshan was



filled far beyond maximum capacity, some 1,500 men, women and children in need of shelter, bedding, water, food, prasad . . . The small team of ashram sannyasins and residents had been toiling tirelessly to accommodate the guests' many needs, and it was only by guru's grace that they had made it to the end. Of course, they still had one more day to go, the biggest of the entire program, and success would only be measured by their willingness to surrender to His every will.

Returning to her work, the sannyasin added loose tea to the now boiling water. Suddenly a chill moved up her spine and she sensed that she was no longer alone in the dark kitchen. She slowly turned around and started at the presence of an elderly man on the other side of the stove. Perched upon a wooden stool, spine pencil-straight and strong, he was staring deeply at the pot of boiling tea, paying no mind to the swami before him. He was dressed in the classic Bihari manner, his simple white kurta and dhoti freshly washed, a thick shock of white hair neatly combed atop his head. Legs gingerly crossed and hands folded upon his knees, he had about him a kingly air that belied his simple appearance. Recovering from her surprise, the swami glanced at the clock on the wall and saw that it was not yet four, far too early for anyone to be visiting the kitchen, and she wondered from where and how

this old man had come. Curiosity quickly turned to irritation as the sannyasin imagined more guests invading her precious moment of peace, demanding this and that hours long before the 6 am breakfast hour.

Staring straight at him she asked in stern voice, "Baba, what do you want?"

He did not answer, did not even acknowledge her, but continued staring into the pot of boiling tea.

Turning to hide her growing frustration, the sannyasin added sugar to the pot and again asked, "Baba, do you want something?"

Still no answer, but she saw that he had picked up an empty tea cup and held it firmly in his hand, his arm stretched out in expectation of immediate service. Incensed at his arrogance she said to him in a voice loud and clear, "If you want tea, come back at 6 am for breakfast. This tea is for sannyasins only!" He didn't budge from his spot and in an effort to control her growing rage she quickly walked out of the area.

A thousand thoughts flooded her head all at once as she shuffled about gathering items for the breakfast feeding frenzy. Who was this strange old man? What was he doing in the kitchen at this untimely hour? Buildings were still locked, the ashram gates had yet to open to outside guests, so how was it that he had come? And why was he so righteous? Why didn't he talk? Didn't he understand that she had very important responsibilities to tend to? How in the world was she supposed to get anything done in the face of such interruptions? Then she looked at the calendar hanging over the bins of grains, the image of Swami Satyananda staring right at her. "Guruji," she thought, "what is the meaning behind all of this?" She glanced at the date. Oh yes, she remembered, a very important day, the holy day of Guru Poornima. Of course it was very early, *brahma muhurta*, a most auspicious hour when the spiritual energies are at their peak; strange events were bound to take place. Without taking time to understand the nature of this particular event she understood that somehow this was not a

normal situation, this old gentleman was not a normal man, that surely he had some kind of message for her.

She ran quickly back to where she had left him, and there he sat, his back to the pot of tea, his gaze on the footpath outside the nearby window. She looked upon him with amazement and a strange kind of joy and renewed reverence for his indwelling divinity filled her being. She carefully poured a steaming cup of the sweet tea and handed it to him, head bowed in respect.

“Baba, chai,” she said softly, and without so much as a look, a smile to acknowledge her presence, the old man took the cup from her and raised it to his lips with the attitude of a lord being served by a petty nobody. This set off a new wave of anger and frustration in the sannyasin and she quickly turned to leave the arrogant old man to his tea. She gained control of her breath, and again remembering the date, the spiritual significance of this particular time of the morning, she stopped in her tracks. The irritation she felt just a moment ago turned quickly again to excitement as she felt with growing certainty that this man was someone very special. Who he was, she could not say, but she knew she must put aside her frustration and treat him with respect. She turned and re-entered the kitchen, the early morning light casting a purple hue on the spot where the old man had been sitting only two minutes before. She looked around the room but he was nowhere to be found. She looked out the window but he was not on the lawn, nor was he walking along the cement footpath. As suddenly and quietly as he had appeared he was gone, the chai cup resting on the window sill, the only trace of his fleeting presence. She stared into the empty cup and again thoughts flooded her mind. How had he managed to drink the boiling hot tea in such a short time? Where had he gone? Had her behaviour offended him? Would she ever have the chance to apologize for her insolence? What was the significance of this early morning visit?

An auspicious occasion to be sure, this particular Guru Poornima was even more powerful for being held along the banks of Mother Ganga at Sannyasa Peeth in Paduka Darshan,



a place rich in beauty and alive with the magnetic energy of our guru heritage. Minutes away from Ganga Darshan, Paduka Darshan is a special place, for it was from here that Sri Swami Satyananda launched a worldwide yoga movement that would fulfil his guru's mandate and spark the flame of spirituality in the lives of millions. Newly established by Swami Niranjan as the place from which he would honour his own guru's wish to see the sannyasa tradition brought to the forefront of modern culture, guru is a palpable and magnetic force here. The four days of the program were long and packed full of worship, pooja, satsang, song and spontaneous outbursts of heartfelt love and gratitude for guru's greatness, which as the glorious presence of Swamiji reminded us, spans the ages and exists beyond space and time. In spite of the many surprises that continued to pop up from one minute to the next, the program itself flowed seamlessly as if guided by a higher, benevolent force.

Half the day had passed, the sun was beginning its westward decent, and the swami was now overseeing the cleanup of the kitchen after a lunch period that had lasted over three and a half hours. A brief moment of peace settled over



her as she thought of the busy day, of the countless mouths that had been fed, and with great timing and efficiency. It was no small feat, but the program had gone off without a glitch and she momentarily basked in satisfaction for having made it so close to the end. Eyeing the many pots that filled the wash area to the ceiling, she summoned up the last dregs of energy to carry on with the final phase of the day's work, which would last well into the evening hours. Suddenly, somebody rushed into the kitchen announcing an urgent call for the sannyasin, and as she slowly made her way to the back gate phone, she wondered in irritation what could possibly be so pressing.

The call was from another sannyasin, whose charge during the program had been to coordinate the practical facilities within the ashram, organizing water storage, controlling the in-and-out-flow of guests, managing the mealtimes to ensure that food supply and service met the heavy demands. What he told her made her heart stop. Apparently there had been an error in her calculations, and although lunchtime was well over and not a single person was waiting to be fed, there remained two topias, enormous cooking pots, full of khichari – enough to feed well over a thousand people. This of course was an impossibility; in the face of so many mouths to feed

there was no time to prepare so much extra food. Enough leftover for one, two hundred people is normal, but so much extra? No, it must be a mistake on his end. She tried in vain to argue her point; apparently several people had confirmed the existence of the leftover food, and with a trembling hand the sannyasin replaced the receiver to the phone and silently cried out to guru for assistance.

Once again questions flooded her mind. What was behind this strange occurrence? What was she to do with so much leftover food? What would the administration and Swamiji say to her, a swami who is supposed to be aware and in control? How would she be reprimanded? How could she ever make amends? She called her assistant and he received the news in disbelief. Surely they were both tired to the bone and overworked, but he could not imagine how either one of them could have made such a grievous oversight. Before they could manage to take in the full scope of the situation, a man arrived with Hanuman, the ashram's electrical lorry, and announced that he had been sent to collect the khichari for distributing to the poor. With horror that struck to the core of her ego she led the man to the place where he could collect the untouched pots of khichari.

The topias were an ominous presence as they stood side by side in the vast, now empty feeding area. The kitchen swami lifted the large aluminum platter that covered one of the pots, and prepared herself to come face to face with the biggest mistake of her lifetime. What she observed was the third surprise of the day, as she stared into an empty topia, the pot spotlessly clean as if it had never been used. With utter confusion she turned to the next pot and lifted its heavy aluminum lid. Again, she looked into a vast void, not a trace of food to be seen. Thinking she must be looking into the wrong pots, momentarily setting aside the question of why two, heavy empty pots had been dragged to the service line in the first place, she and her assistant scrambled to check all of the other pots, all of which were not only empty, but miraculously scrubbed and cleaned though they had not yet been taken to



the wash area. Surprise. Relief. Confusion. Wonder. All these emotions struck the sannyasin at once. And for the first time all day, as the gold sun was quickly retreating into the horizon, she remembered the curious incident with the old man in the wee hours of the morning.

Recalling the event to her assistant, she was struck with a powerful sense of certainty that the two incidents were related, and that there was, in the bizarre experiences of the day, the presence of Divine intervention, though she could not imagine what their significance could be. She touched her hand to her cheek and was suddenly overcome with a deep sense of satisfaction as a coolness flooded her entire being. Though she was tired to the very roots of her hair, the feeling of exhaustion was gone in an instant and she was filled with an energizing sense of joy, hope, love, bliss. Of course, this was no mistake, not the report of the excess khichari nor its mysterious disappearance. It was a massive, open-handed slap, a firm kick, the jolt she needed to look back into the deeper meaning of the old man's visit. She thought back on the many strange incidents that had peppered the ashram since the beginning of this unprecedented festival of remembrance and understood that guru had been kicking and slapping, kissing and caressing everybody all week, playfully reminding us all of his ever-presence and love.

As for this man, she knew for certain that there was nothing ordinary about him, just as there is nothing ordinary about the fullness of the moon or the greatness of guru. In those precious hours before dawn, said to be the most potent period for spiritual development, he had mysteriously appeared, and

just as curiously he had vanished. The sannyasin fell to her knees in overwhelming gratitude as she realized with utmost certainty that this man, come as a king to receive her humble service, was Guruji himself offering her the blessings of his trust and faith, his protection and love. Laughter, like water trickling from a mountain stream, rose out of her and she practically danced through the final hours of her long day's work, the great mystery solved, the presence of guru carrying her like a feather blowing in the breeze.

A year later, tears well up in this swami's eyes as she recalls this series of events, which strengthened her conviction that guru is ever-present and continues to answer the call of our deepest prayers. In worship and service of the guru one serves all, the rich and the needy, the great and the small, and one is always rewarded with the incomparable blessing of his guiding light on the unpredictable path of higher consciousness. ■

All those sannyasins who have shaved their heads or are initiated, listen to this carefully. A sannyasin cannot be a symbol of enjoyment – he can never be that. A sannyasin is not a consumer. He is a trustee. Sannyasins are always rich, they are never poor, but their riches do not belong to them. Whatever we get, we keep in a trust. That is the trust of society, and nobody has the right to breach that trust.

—Swami Satyananda





You guide my soul,
You are the wind in my sails,
You are the rudder,
the anchor and the harbour
when I need to be safe,
As I surge smoothly on,
toss and turn about,
stop or spin,
round and round
upon the sea of life –
You guide my soul
Towards Itself.

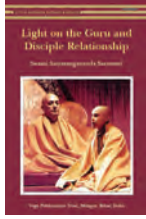
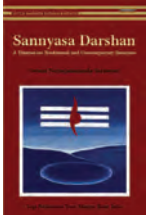
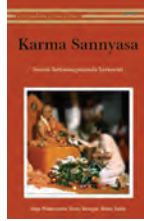
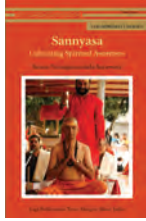
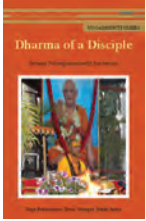
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Naukaahitaabhyam gurubhaktidaabhyam.*



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—Swami Satyananda Saraswati



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Satsang Series Program 2012

Sannyasa Peeth, Munger, is pleased to announce that a series of satsangs will be conducted by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati on a regular basis at Ganga Darshan and Sannyasa Peeth, Munger. Please contact Bihar School of Yoga regarding bookings and accommodation advice. Dates are given as follows:

Aug 16-19	Satsang Series
Oct 17-20	Ashwin Navaratri Satsang Series
Nov 8-11	Satsang Series

Sannyasa Peeth Events 2012

Jan 28-Jan 2015	3 Year Sannyasa Training Course
Sep 8-12	Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna



World Yoga Convention 2013

Bihar School of Yoga will celebrate its Golden Jubilee with a World Yoga Convention which will be held in Munger from 23rd to 27th October 2013.

If you think you can contribute effectively and efficiently towards the convention, please contact the ashram.

For more information on the above events, contact:

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