

Satya ka
Avahan

सत्य का
आवाहन

Invoking the Divine

Year 1 Issue 5 Sep-Oct 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.

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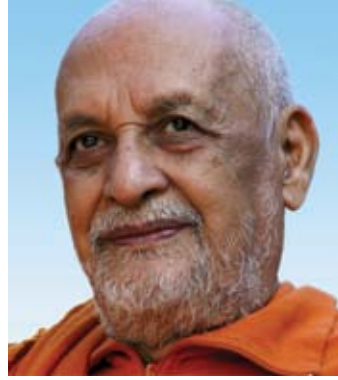
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Front cover: Sri Lakshmi-Narayan Mahayajna 2011

Plates: 1–3: Swami Niranjanananda, Somnath 2011; 4: Sri Lakshmi-Narayan Mahayajna 2011; 5: Swami Niranjanananda & Swami Satyasangananda, Kamakhya 2012; 6–7: Swami Niranjanananda, Pandharpur 2012; 8: Swami Niranjanananda, Somnath 2011



SATYAM SPEAKS – सत्यम् वाणी

Look after your faith. Let your mind rest. Let the intellect sleep. Let egoism, old beliefs and sentimental devotion wear out. Many ideals, blessings, inspirational urges and divine mandate urge me to remind you: “Be awake within, stand straight within, go forward within.”

—Swami Satyananda

अपनी श्रद्धा को बढ़ाओ। अपने मन को विश्राम दो, बुद्धि को नेपथ्य में जाने दो। अपने अहंकार, अपनी पुरानी मान्यताओं और कुण्ठाओं को मिट जाने दो। मेरे भीतर उमड़ते दिव्य विचार, संकल्प और आदेश तुम सब को एक ही बात कहने के लिए प्रेरित कर रहे हैं— ‘आंतरिक जागृति बनाये रखो, भीतर ले जाने वाले मार्ग पर निर्भीकता और दृढ़ता से बढ़ते चलो।’

—स्वामी सत्यानन्द

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न तु अहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भविम् । कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनां आर्त्तिनाशनम् ॥

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

—Rantideva

Message to the Sadhaka

In fact the power is in you.
What you need is confidence
And a little practice.

Even now you have that power,
Though it lies unseen.
Realize that power
Through direct intuition.

Within you is the wisdom.
Dive deep, go in,
And you will realize that pearl.

Let the form become abiding
And awareness perpetual,
Then you will see the Light.
Form will become conscious;
This is the symptom of progress:
This is the key.

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When Idols Come Alive



The God in you has the power to awaken the latent divinity in an idol. Regular worship and other modes of demonstrating your inner feeling of recognition of divinity in the idol unveils the divinity latent in it. This is truly a wonder and a miracle. The picture comes to life. The idol speaks. It will answer your questions and solve your problems.

For a devotee the image is a mass of *chaitanya* or consciousness. The devotee actually beholds the Lord in the idol. He draws inspiration from the

image. The image guides him. It talks to him. It assumes human form to help him in a variety of ways.

The image of Lord Shiva in the temple at Madurai, in South India, helped the woodcutter and the old woman. The image in the temple of Tirupati assumed human form and gave witness in the court to help his devotees. The idols in the temples of Pandharpur, Palani, Kathirkama, and so on, are powerful deities. They are *pratyaksha devatas*, verily gods. They grant boons to the devotees, cure their ailments and give darshan. Wonderful lilas are associated with these deities.

Image worship is not contrary to the view of Vedanta. It is rather a help. When one advances in meditation, the form melts in the formless, and the devotee becomes one with the formless essence.

– Swami Sivananda

Inner Voice

The inner voice comes in a language which is spoken and heard inside. It is not necessarily the language that you speak. For instance, there was a princess in ancient times suffering from leprosy. She went to two great physicians who prescribed some medicine and a particular way of life. While she was practising that, she heard a voice, and that became the richa or sloka of the Vedas. She did not know Sanskrit or Brahmi or anything of that sort. In the same manner, revelations came to others in different languages.



The voice which is heard at different levels of consciousness is different. Sometimes it is heard in a language which you speak or in a language which you do not speak, but in which it is supposed to be preached. For example, I am sitting here and I get a revelation in the German language. It means that my preaching should be in the German language. In the highest form of consciousness a voice is heard. It is a voice that has no language. You may call it a voice or simply an expression. If it is heard in the form of a language, you do not know if you are hearing it in English or in Sanskrit. I remember a few experiences many years ago. I heard something, but I did not know whether I heard it or saw it, whether it was language or picture.

– Swami Satyananda

Somnath Sojourn

Date: September 2011

Occasion: Swami Niranjana's Pilgrimage

Location: Somnath, Saurashtra

*In an ancient town
In the state of Junagarh,
Rests a Shiva temple,
One of the twelve jyotirlingas.*

*O Lord Shiva, O Lord Somnath,
I take refuge in Thee.
Thou art unborn,
Thou art formless.
Thou art the Supreme Brahman,
Thou art the Lord of Lords.
To Thee
I offer my worship.
Hail Shiva! Hail Rudra!
Om Namah Shivaya.*

Somnath Temple stands on the shore of the Arabian Sea in Saurashtra, in the south-western corner of Gujarat. It is an ancient place of pilgrimage, a confluence and collection of sites relating to the solar and lunar dynasties, and the Shaivaite and Vaishnava traditions. On its grounds once stood a sun temple at par with the beauty, grandeur and greatness of the sun temples in Konark and Mathura, and it is here that Chandra, the Moon, performed great penance to Lord Shiva in the form of Vrishabhdhwaj Shankar to remove the curse of darkness imposed upon him by his father-in-law, King Daksha. The Lord appeared before him in the form of a bright flame and, pleased with Chandra's penance, he removed the curse and created the moon's cycle of waxing and waning in fifteen-day periods.

The gods were overjoyed with the Lord's generosity and built Someshwar Kund with the wish that he would remain in their presence forever. He agreed, and established himself there in the form of a jyotirlingam, the symbol of pure, illumined consciousness. Of the twelve existing jyotirlingams, Somnath is considered to be of foremost importance, for this lingam is *swayambhu*, or self-born, and it is said that to merely glance upon it is enough to destroy the entirety of one's sins.



It was here that Swami Niranjan came for his anushthana and pilgrimage with Swami Sivaraja in September 2011. On the afternoon of the day of arrival, they went to have darshan of Sri Somnath, and to find a place where the anushthana could be performed unhindered. Somnath is said to be as old as creation, and it hosts two Shiva temples, the original purported to have been built in pure gold by the Moon himself. It was destroyed by invader Mahmood Gazni in 1025 seventeen times for its affluence, and for the next several centuries the temple was continuously assailed by invaders. It was rebuilt each time until finally, in 1783 Ahalyabai Holkar, a great Shiva devotee, constructed a magnificent temple using stones from the older temple for its foundation, and this stands today as a stunning testimony of her enduring devotion and faith. Beside this older temple is a magnificent newer one, built by Sardar Vallabhbai Patel after Indian independence. Visitors year-round are drawn to this new temple, which houses the Sri Somnath lingam and offers a stunning view of the sea. Swamiji chose the sanctity of the older site for the performance of his anusthana, his daily mantra sadhana.



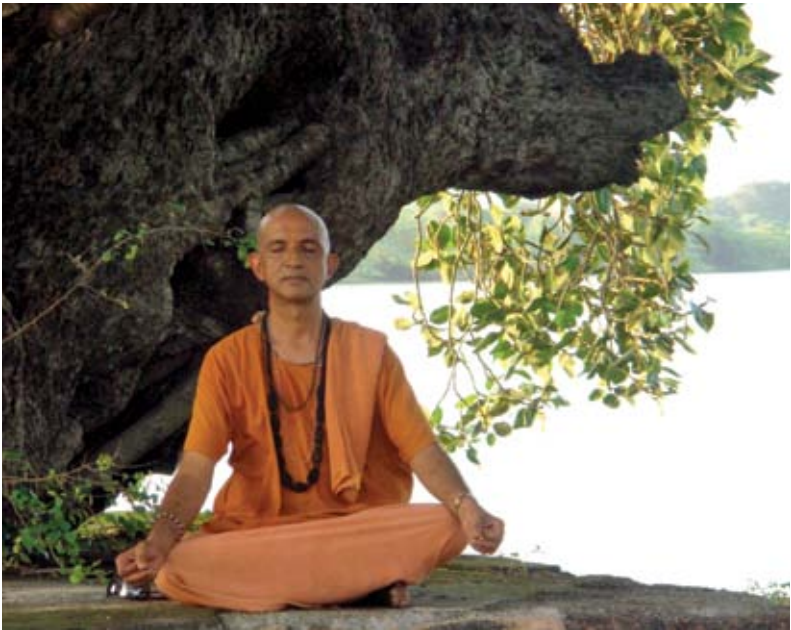
For three days Swamiji and Swami Sivaraja would rise early in the morning and walk to the Holkar temple, where they would perform an elaborate pooja. Afterwards they would climb up to the first floor where, above the shrine in a secluded room there rests another, less-known Shivalinga. Here Swamiji would sit for his anushthana, after which Swami Sivaraja would join him in performing a Rudrabhisheka. They would then visit the new Somnath

temple to witness the daily arati and have darshan of the jyotirlingam after shringara. The days passed smoothly and pleasantly, and both the swamis enjoyed taking in the rich energy of their sacred surroundings. On their final day, they performed a Rudrabhishek in the new temple after which Swamiji took a walk along the beach that stretches out before it. Looking out on to the sea, he suddenly had a powerful vision of the Somnath Shivalinga, luminous and bright as the sun, emerging from the waters. At the same time he saw the full form of his guru, Swami Satyananda, walking along the beach a short distance from him. Sri Swamiji was also gazing at the emerging Shivalinga, his hands pressed together in a humble pranam. For some time Swami Niranjana was lost in the ecstasy of witnessing the presence of both his gurus, Lord Shiva and Sri Swamiji, and he also bowed in pranam, seeking their blessings and in thanks for the successful completion of his anushthana.

Following their momentous visit to Somnath, Swami Niranjana and Swami Sivaraja visited the nearby Bhalka Tirth,

where Sri Krishna received a fatal arrow of a hunter in his foot and left his mortal coil to ascend to his dimension. The vibrations of the place were very powerful and upon visiting this site, Swamiji was again lost in experience, as he relived the events leading to the Lord's final ascension.

The area around Somnath is a convergence of three great rivers, the Hiranya, Kapila and Tripti, and is a tirtha where thousands come annually to offer their prayers and bathe in the holy waters. Before leaving, the two swamis visited the Hiranya River. Beside its banks there is a cave where the elder brother of Sri Krishna, Balarama, left his mortal coil before taking his true form of Sheshnag and returning to the nether lands. They visited this cave and then, surrounded by the wealth of timeless devotion, sat in meditation under a tree beside the river, and experienced the tranquillity and the history of their hallowed surroundings. Their yatra a success, they departed from Somnath and set out on their journey back to Munger, infused with blessings of supreme grace. ■



Invoking Lakshmi and Narayana

Date: 8th–12th September 2011

Occasion: First Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna

Location: Paduka Darshan, Sannyasa Peeth



If you wish to receive the guru's blessings, then you must follow his instructions to the letter.

– *Swami Sivananda*

In late 2009, shortly before attaining mahasamadhi, Sri Swami Satyananda gave final instructions to his chief disciple and successor, Swami Niranjanananda. Swamiji was to begin preparations for the next phase of his life, which would require him to gradually step out of the public eye and into a life of relative seclusion. He was to now focus on sadhana and anushtana, and on his role as a sannyasin. In 2013, just as Sri Swamiji had done in 1989, he would walk away from Bihar School of Yoga to establish a new life for himself someplace else. However, Swami Niranjan would not be wandering

mysteriously and alone as Sri Swamiji had done. In fact, this plan would not even require him to leave the town of Munger. He would only be going a short distance from Ganga Darshan, to the small, peaceful plot of land along the western banks of the Ganga called Paduka Darshan. It was at this very place that some fifty years earlier Swami Satyananda had practised higher sadhanas and sown the seeds for what would become a worldwide yoga revolution. Paduka Darshan would become Swami Niranjan's new home, from where he and a select group of individuals would carry out Sri Swamiji's final mission: to cultivate the lifestyle of creative expression and bring the tradition of sannyasa to the forefront of modern culture.

Paduka Darshan has always had about it the lasting vibratory energy of Sri Swamiji's saintly presence. Offering an extraordinary darshan of Mother Ganga, it is surrounded for miles by unfettered, natural landscape. For some years now, it had been left to bask in its quietude, perhaps in preparation for the special role it would play in the future. Surveying the land in 2010, it was clear to Swami Niranjan that in order to properly honour his guru's wishes, Paduka Darshan would have to undergo a major renovation. Thus, in spite of a full schedule which included monthly public satsangs, intense personal sadhana and pilgrimages throughout India, he set to work, teaming up with expert architects and designers to bring about the necessary changes. By mid-2011 Paduka Darshan was completely transformed. Every aspect of the redesign – from the lush landscaping to the magnificent new yajnasala, to the glistening glass-etched Guru Yantra that rises dramatically above the River Ganga – stood as testimony to the power of a disciple's single-minded devotion to his guru.

The first event the ashram hosted in its new avatara was the Guru Poornima celebration in July. An average person might have been satisfied with this tremendous accomplishment, but Swamiji knew his task was not yet complete. The grounds of Sannyasa Peeth still needed to be officially consecrated, and on this point Sri Swamiji's last words had been very specific: "The



residing deities of Sannyasa Peeth will be Lord Narayana and his consort Ma Lakshmi, and to receive their blessings, an annual yajna must be established at Sannyasa Peeth in their honour.”

Never before in recent history had the town of Munger witnessed such a yajna. This was to be a landmark event to mark the beginning of a monumental movement, and each step would have to be flawlessly executed. Nevertheless, Swamiji wanted a quiet start and he merely hinted that a yajna honouring Lakshmi and Narayana would be held from 8th September 2011, the birthday of Sri Swami Sivananda, to 12th September 2011, the sannyasa birthday of Sri Swami Satyananda. The message spread by word of mouth and what was to be a small and understated event turned out to be a gathering of thousands. The opening day was the auspicious day of Ekadashi and the concluding day was the holy day of Poornima. On the first day, the *Bhagavad Gita* was chanted in honour of Sivanandaji’s beloved Lord Krishna, and on the last the *Sundarkand* was chanted for Sri Rama, whom Sri Swamiji loved the most. Such favourable conjunctions denoted celestial blessings and what was witnessed during these five days drew

forth the munificent powers of nature, God and guru in an astounding cosmic ovation of grace and approval.

The schedule for the five-day event included *aradhana*, worship, and celebration from sunrise to sunset. For the period of the yajna, Swamiji's sankalpa of the year-long Durga havan was shifted to Paduka Darshan and every morning, for two hours, sannyasins of Ganga Darshan masterfully chanted the *Durga Sahasranama* and sacred stotras. The yajna itself was masterfully performed by pandits from Tryambakeshwar, the seat of Lord Mrityunjaya, Sri Swamiji's ishta devata. The days were filled with the chanting of mantras, stotras and kirtans, sacred ceremonies, endless offerings of prasad and ecstatic celebration that provided a palpable experience of the divine presence to all who participated in this momentous occasion.

In a satsang during the yajna, Swamiji said, "Many people have been asking what is the purpose of Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna, since we belong to the Shaiva tradition as sannyasins, and our ishta devata is Lord Shiva and ishta devi is Mother Shakti. As per the visible tradition of sannyasa we are the followers of Shiva and Shakti. Therefore, the question is being asked, how come Sannyasa Peeth is conducting a ceremony to invoke the grace of Narayana or Vishnu, and Lakshmi, his shakti?"

"You have to remember that sannyasins do not belong to any sect, tradition or religion. Sannyasa is an independent tradition, which accepts the belief, faith, culture and tradition of all different aspects of society and civilization. In our sannyasa life, we are the followers of Shiva and Shakti, but our greeting is always that of Narayana. In Ganga Darshan we say, 'Hari Om'. Hari is one of the names of Vishnu. In Rikhia we say, 'Namō Narayana'. It is the greeting of Narayana. Throughout India, whenever sannyasins meet, they greet each other not with 'Om Namah Shivaya', but with 'Om Namō Narayanaya'. Why is this so? If we look into ancient history, which has now become mythology, we find that there are three aspects of divinity or God. 'G' stands for generation and it represents

the quality of Brahma the creator, the power which has the ability to create, manifest, generate, to begin something new. 'O' stands for organization and this represents the quality of Narayana, as he is the organizer of the created universe. He is the indweller of each and every life form that exists in this created universe. He is the sustainer; he is the supporter of this creation. We are alive because of the power of Narayana within us. It is because of that force, that power, that we are able to perceive and experience nature, the world, the cosmos and the universe: the visible and the invisible. 'D' stands for destruction, represented by Shiva.

“In order to nurture, sustain, protect and develop, the shakti of Narayana, Lakshmi, comes into play. She brings prosperity and peace. If there is no prosperity in life, there is no peace in mind. If you don't have anything to eat for a couple of days, your pockets are empty, there is no bank balance, will you have peace of mind? Even to nourish and sustain your body, you are dependent on the grace of Lakshmi. Lakshmi is the giver of wealth, not only material and external, but also mental, emotional and spiritual. The complete fulfilment, prosperity, peace and bliss that you experience in life is because of the grace of Lakshmi. Therefore, these two forces are being invoked in this yajna at Sannyasa Peeth.”

From the early hours of the event, as the yajna was commencing, Mother Nature offered many signs that the cosmic forces were indeed present and pleased. During the procession of the murtis of Sri Narayana and Lakshmi, a massive eagle appeared and performed a sweeping parikrama of Sannyasa Peeth before settling on a nearby peepal tree to observe the ensuing worship below. The eagle is the vehicle of Lord Narayana, and Vishnu is said to reside in a peepal tree. Moments later, two large deer, male and female, were spotted walking along the banks of the Ganga just below the yajna-shala. Never before had deer been seen on the plains of Munger, but their surprise presence favourably suggested that Lakshmi had also been inspired by the reverential devotion,



for she is the embodiment of all graceful qualities. Moreover, as Lord Shiva is the greatest devotee of Lord Narayana, it came as no surprise that snakes visited the pooja area daily.

Swamiji has told us that the divine often speaks to us through the elements, and water, in the form of rainfall, was a propitious voice, accenting several significant moments throughout the program. As the murtis entered the poojasthal on the first day, a gentle sprinkling fell from the sky. There was even a moment when rain fell simultaneously upon Ganga Darshan, Rikhiapeeth and Sannyasa Peeth, the head, heart and hands of Satyananda Yoga, an indication of the intrinsic harmony that flows between them. On the day that Swami Satsangi arrived to the program a spray of rain fell forth, the clouds parting as she entered the gates of the Akhara in Ganga Darshan to reveal a perfect, welcoming rainbow.

The most unforgettable message of grace during the whole event came on the morning of the 12th, the final day of the yajna and Sri Swamiji's sannyasa birthday. Since his departure from Ganga Darshan so many years ago, it has been a tradition to make a bed for him in his former room in Sri Niwas. This day



was no different. The following morning, the room was found disturbed, the pillows moved and the sheets ruffled, his slippers scattered by the door as if they had been quickly kicked off. His presence was so palpable that it raised the hair off one's skin. It was a message loud and clear that Sri Swamiji had come to give his blessings for a job well done. This event also inspired the conceptualization of *Avahan*, as narrated in the first issue of the magazine.

As the closing mantras vibrated throughout the land, the force of the yajna drew a stirring response from the River Ganga herself. Her waters began to visibly rise and swell, like a mother's heart bursting with love for her beloved children. This continued for two days, her waters growing and swelling, before settling back down to normal levels. For centuries she has witnessed only destruction and neglect along her banks, and now, with the performance of this ancient ritual of sacred yajna she was redeemed.

This inaugural Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna was a masterful, magical, mind-and-heart-expanding experience. All thanks to Swami Niranjan, whose perfect devotion to guru won the blessings of everlasting light and love, which he kindly and graciously shared with all present. The incarnation of Sannyasa Peeth is complete, but of course Swamiji has many more plans in the stirring. The work has already begun, and it is with much enthusiasm and anticipation that we share in this new undertaking of his, which will undoubtedly continue to receive the blessings and approval of his beloved Guruji and the cosmic forces. ■

Yonipeeth Darshan

Date: January 2012

Occasion: Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi's Pilgrimage

Location: Guwahati, Assam

According to legend, Sati immolated due to the insult meted out to her by her father. At this, Shiva entered into a crazed frenzy with his wife's charred body strewn over his shoulder. Vishnu intervened with his discus and Sati's body was dismembered into sixty-four parts that were scattered across the earth. These places are known today as Shakti Peethas, holy places for the worship of Devi. Of these sixty-four peethas, the most sacred is the Kamakhya Temple, for it is here that Sati's *yonī*, or reproductive organ, is believed to have alighted.

In January 2012, Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi set out on a pilgrimage to Kamakhya Temple. It is near the city Guwahati, along the Brahmaputra River in the north-eastern state of Assam. The spiritual history of this ancient land, known long ago as Kamarupa, is richly influenced by many different faiths, customs and beliefs and has been fertile soil for tantric worship since ancient times. In their visit to this auspicious site, the two swamis sought to have darshan of the Divine Mother and to seek her holy blessings.

They travelled from Kolkata to Guwahati, and after settling into their accommodation went for darshan at the Kamakhya shrine. The temple rests atop Nilachala Hill, about 800 metres above sea level. It is believed to be the place where Shiva laid his grief-torn body





after Sati's death, and where Sati, in the form of a yoni, came to reunite with her beloved. When she landed, the mountain turned blue like the Nilkanth. The original temple is said to have been built by the gods themselves. What stands now was constructed in 1565 by King Narayana and his brother Chilaris. It offers some of the finest examples of sculptural art in Assam, celebrating the creative divine in the feminine form. Deities are also depicted, though curiously there is no image of Shakti inside the main body of the temple. Devotees come day and night to offer worship, and it is believed that the mere act of touching the sacred yoni will purify one's soul. There is unanimous testimony of the powerful magnetic quality of the land, and of Kamakhya in particular.

Having made a tour of the temple grounds, the swamis made arrangements to perform a special pooja the following day, then retired to their rooms. Early the next morning, they returned to the temple to conduct their paths and personal sadhanas. Thereafter, they performed an elaborate kanya pooja with nine kanyas from the temple. After washing the feet of the young virgins and offering them gifts of new clothing, they commenced with the pooja, in which the purity and innocence of the kanyas is used as a channel to invoke the creative powers of Devi. Honouring her benevolence and goodness

through elaborate ritual and mantra chanting, they in turn invoke the Divine Feminine. It was a powerful pooja and the cosmic energy of Mahamaya was tangible. At one point Swami Niranjan experienced a divine vision. In it he saw a great, luminous yoni from which emerged the shining and resplendent figures of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda, their hands raised in blessing. Swamiji remained absorbed in the splendour of this



vision throughout the rest of the pooja, experiencing the light and love of Devi and guru in everything around him.

At the conclusion of the pooja, the duo visited the sanctum sanctorum, a cave deep within the temple where at last they had darshan of the revered yoni. She is stunning to behold, draped in rich silk and heavily adorned with beautiful, fragrant flowers and jewels. To Swami Niranjan's great astonishment this was the exact image of the yoni he had seen in his vision, though until that very moment he had never laid eyes upon her. He took this to be the blessing he and Swami Satsangi had sought, a clear sign that through the grace of guru their heartfelt devotion had received the loving approval of the Divine Mother. With great thanks in their hearts, they performed a havan in the temple premises, offering the gift of this divine munificence out to the world.

Having paid their respects and received darshan of Devi, Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi bid farewell to Kamakhya and made their way back down Nilachala Hill, observing the bounty of nature surrounding them. They remained entranced by the cosmic unity they had been a part of, and with the love of Devi in their hearts they returned to Munger and Rikhipeeth respectively, to share the power of this love and continue the work of their divine missions. ■

Call of the Flute Player

Date: April 2012

Occasion: Swami Niranjan's Pilgrimage

Location: Pandharpur, Maharashtra

Swami Niranjan has taken the time since Sri Swami Satyananda's mahasamadhi to visit and perform special anushthanas at many different places of pilgrimage around India. His travels have taken him to places linked with Sri Swamiji's life: to jyotirlingas, shaktipeethas and other siddhabhoomis. Pleased with his devotion to his guru, Lord Krishna once sent him a message, "I am waiting for you. Come to me. Ask and you shall receive." (*Yoga*, July 2011) At the time, Swamiji was so consumed with responsibilities that he bid Sri Krishna to wait. The months passed, and while the memory of that moment remained in Swamiji's thoughts, he could not seem to find time in his busy schedule to properly respond. It seemed, however, that the Lord was becoming restless. Exactly one year after his first appeal, he called again. This time he would use no messenger service; instead, he used the direct dial facility. On 31st March 2012, exactly one year after the first message, Swamiji was in Rikhiapeeth, the tapobhoomi of his guru. It was the night of Ashtami, during Chaitra Navarati, when he heard the sweet voice. "When are you coming?" it called out with crystal clarity. The flute had been played. The heart strings strummed. Now, Swamiji could wait no longer. The next day was the auspicious occasion of Ramnavami. As he stirred from his sleep, he finalized the plans for his trip. It is no wonder that Krishna is known as *chitchor*, the thief of hearts.

This call had come from the famous temple town of Pandharpur in southern Maharashtra. Pandharpur sits along the banks of Bhima River, known locally as Chandrabhaga, as at this point the river curves, its shape resembling that of the

half moon. The city is a famous pilgrimage place for devotees of Lord Krishna, drawing millions annually who come to pay their respects to Lord Vitthal, a most benevolent aspect of the Lord. It is said that at this place long ago there once lived a man called Pundalika, who was so infatuated with his beautiful wife that he lost all sense of duty and service. Wherever he travelled he carried his young wife on his shoulders, leaving his



ageing, infirm parents to walk slowly behind them. This went on for years, all the while Pundalika believing himself to be a great devotee of the Lord, until someone pointed out to him that his parents were being horribly abused and neglected due to his blind passion and lust, and as one's parents are the embodiment of God, his devotion was, in fact, a farce. Suddenly aware of his ignorant ways, Pundalika repented, and from that day on served his parents with the fullness of his love and attention, the name of the Lord constantly pouring from his lips.

Upon witnessing this great transformation, Lord Krishna was delighted, but in his mischievous ways, decided to test him. In the form of Lord Vitthal, he showed up at Pundalika's doorstep and called out, "Pundalika, I have come to see you." At that moment Pundalika was engaged in massaging his parents' feet. He called back saying, "Who are you?" "I am Krishna," said the Lord. Pundalika answered, "I am busy serving my parents right now. Please wait a little." Lord Krishna asked, "How long do I have to stand here? It's hot, the sun is beating down in full force, my feet are burning." Pat came the reply, "Until I am done looking after my parents. You will have to wait. Here is a brick. Stand on it to protect yourself from the baking earth." Saying this, he pushed a brick towards the door and continued serving his parents.

The Lord stood upon the bricks, teasing Pundalika that it was not correct to ask Him to wait, but the man did not come out to greet Vitthal until he had finished serving his parents. In truth, the depth of his fidelity pleased the Lord to no end and he blessed Pundalika for his focused devotion, for to see God in one's duty is the highest attainment. The Lord then declared that he would continue to wait there until everyone followed Pundalika's path. On that very spot where Vitthal waited for Pundalika, stands the Vithoba Temple, in which the image of Lord Vitthal stands on a brick, hands on his waist, as if even today he waits patiently for his devotees.

A year ago, Swami Nirmalananda, a sannyasin at the ashram, had gone to Pandharpur for Lord Vitthal's darshan. With folded hands in the inner sanctum sanctorum, she had said a silent prayer, "Lord, may your grace always flow in Swamiji's life." Hardly had the words formed on her lips that a clear voice rang in her ears, "Arre, whatever he wants, he shall have. All he has to do is come and ask. I stand here to fulfil the wishes of those blessed souls whose hearts overflow with pure devotion, and fulfil them I do." It was only fitting that Swamiji would take with him the swami who had first remembered him to Lord Krishna! On the morning of April 7, both guru and disciple left to meet the Lord in Maharashtra.

The journey took almost two days. Yet, anxious to have the Lord's darshan, they went to visit Sri Vitthal the very evening they arrived. Swamiji, who the Lord himself had invited to his abode, chose to get in line with the rest of the crowd and wait humbly for his turn to pay his respects. Letting go of name, fame and status, he stood at God's doorway purely as himself - 'Niranjan'. Mysterious are the ways of God, however, and a temple representative arrived and whisked Swamiji away through a special entrance that led straight to the sanctum sanctorum. Maybe Mother Rukmini, impatient to meet her son, had sent this blessed soul Swamiji's way. Once inside, Swamiji sat rapt in meditation at the lotus feet of the Lord, soaking in every aspect of the His abode and letting it seep into the

innermost core of his being. Tears of devotion flowed down his cheeks. With both hands on his hips, Sri Vitthal looked at Swamiji, as if to say, "How long you took. I tired of standing here waiting for you."

Perched on his brick, Sri Vitthal is an enchanting picture of grand splendour. Head, chest and shoulders bathed in cool sandalwood paste, Devi Rukmini's golden, star-like, fair-skinned beauty reflected in his yellow dhoti, he dons a golden crown on his head, fish-shaped earrings in his ears, and wears his beloved tulsi mala around his neck. Lord Vitthal had first waited for his devotee Pundalika and today he stood there waiting for Swamiji. Bringing head and hands down on the Lord's feet, Swamiji gave his heart to the Lord for safekeeping. Panduranga, pleased, took hold of the heart and gave Swamiji the tulsi mala he wore around his neck as prasad.

In the precincts lies another temple dedicated to Devi Rukmini, Sri Vitthal's divine consort. The murti of her form is an exquisite expression of feminine grace and beauty. Reflecting the azure brightness of the Lord, she stands draped in a peacock-feathered sari, her upper body embalmed in





fragrant sandalwood paste. Swamiji stopped here next and offered his worship to Mother and she stood before him, joyfully receiving the love of her precious son.

Having had his darshans, Swamiji next set to work selecting the location for the anushthana he would begin from the next day. When all the arrangements were in place, Swamiji returned to the circuit house where he was staying. Back there, his mind kept drawing back to a recent conversation he'd had. It seemed that Pandharpur was not only home to the famous Krishna temple, but there was also a Kabir Math in the area, a memorial to the great 15th century mystic and poet. Enquiries were sent out, but it seemed even the residents of Pandharpur did not know of its exact location.

On the next day, as the sun rose over Pandharpur, Swamiji went to have darshan of and seek the blessings of Lord Vitthal before beginning his anushthana within the temple precincts. He emerged from his sadhana full of peaceful joy, and that afternoon brought news of the location of Kabir Math. It was an adventure through the ancient city, and winding down narrow pathways they finally reached the much-awaited destination. The place is very plain to look at, but peaceful and clean with strong spiritual vibrations that clearly indicate that it is an awakened ground. The story is well-known. When Kabirdas left his mortal body near Benaras, the Hindus and Muslims fought over which community the saint belonged to. They could not come to a consensus on whether to bury or cremate him. Upon lifting the cloth that covered his body, they found only bael leaves, tulsi leaves and flowers. The mortal frame had disappeared. The Hindus took the bael leaves and made a memorial to him. The Muslims took the flowers and made a grave. His son Kamal came to Pandharpur, taking with him



the tulsi plant, the symbol of purity and devotion. Around this sacred plant he built a memorial to his saintly father. Kamal himself was a realized being, and upon completing the memorial he buried himself alive, about fifteen feet from his father's samadhi. In this manner, father and son, guru and disciple, remain together eternally. For three days, from the early afternoon, Swamiji performed anushthana at the holy grounds of Kabirdas' samadhi. A photograph was taken of Swamiji during one of these periods of worship and in it, though in fact he bears no physical resemblance to Sri Swamiji, he is the exact image of his guru in his early years. It is as if Swami Satyananda has embodied Swamiji, as if he and his most beloved disciple have become one!

During *brahmamuhurta*, the early hours of the morning, Lord Vitthal is woken up to the unbroken singing of bhajans, heralding another glorious morning. Auspicious mantras and stotras are chanted while he is bathed and consecrated with the sixteen formal rituals. He is then carefully draped in fine cloths and ornaments, shown his reflection in the mirror, given a breakfast of clarified butter, and worshipped with incense and the arati. Exquisite rangoli patterns in a rainbow of colours are made in the courtyard to welcome him to the new day. On

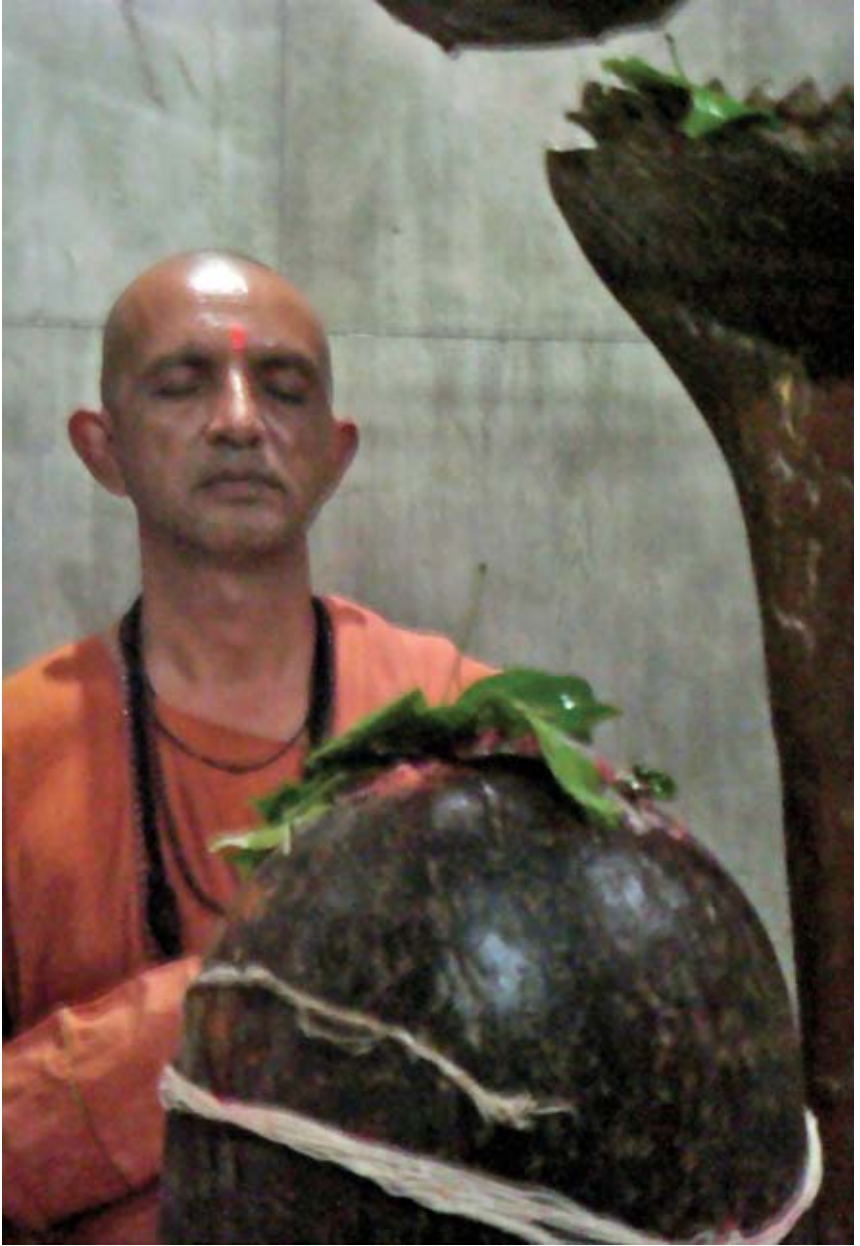
the day of their departure, Swamiji and others were blessed to have the first, early morning darshan of Lord Narayana. They attended the *kakad arati*, the first arati of the day, received their final blessings from the Lord, and thanked him for this long-awaited reunion. For a full two and a half hours Swamiji sat with his gaze fixed on Lord Vitthal's feet and drank in the form of his beloved. The sight of this unfathomable and captivating relationship between guru and Govinda was an extraordinary and thrilling experience for those who accompanied him. The epitome of love and compassion, Lord Vitthal smiled down upon Swamiji, gently bathing him with his grace. Eyes brimming over with tears of gratitude, Swamiji soaked himself in that river of bliss. It was difficult to tell whether Govinda was being consecrated or guru . . .

Just before exiting, when Swamiji did his final pranama, the head priest unexpectedly removed Lord Vitthal's angavastra and janeyu and draped them over Swamiji's shoulders. As it is a strict rule at the temple that the Lord's clothes are not to be given to anybody, the priest must have been motivated by an inner calling. Strange indeed are the workings of the Lord.

*Falling for intense love, I have seen God change his ways.
Forgoing his own honour, he maintains his devotee's honour
always.*

Swamiji's final stop before parting was a visit to Mother Rukmini. He took in the glory of her darshan and received an immediate response to his prayers. As he knelt at her feet in solemn surrender, another priest at the temple suddenly broke into song, "May all desires be filled." With Mother's unfailing blessing in his heart, Swamiji and Swami Nirmalananda returned home.

Back at Ganga Darshan, Swami Nirmalananda asked Swamiji, "How was the trip?" Swamiji quietly replied, "Lord Vitthal kept his promise. He gave me everything I asked for and much, much more. Then I asked him to come with me and he replied: "Where there is truth, there Krishna resides!" ■



Shiva aradhana, Somnath 2011



*The place where Krishna and Balarama left the earthly plane,
Somnath 2011*



Swamiji at the ancient, submerged Somnath temple, 2011



Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna 2011



Kamakhya aradhana 2012



Pandharpur anushthana 2012



Paduka and tamera of Kabir, Pandharpur 2012



Shiva aradhana, Somnath 2011



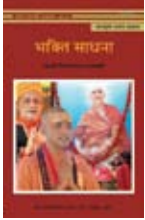
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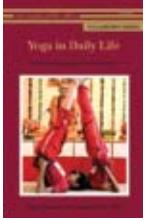
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New Yogadrishi Satsang

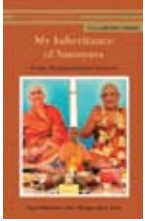
In the year 2010, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati began a special series of discourses in Munger titled 'Yogadrishi (Yogavision) Satsang Series'. In these discourses, Swamiji imparted unique perspectives on diverse aspects of yoga and the spiritual sciences.



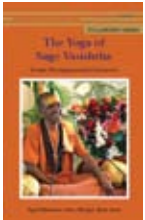
In *Bhakti Sadhana*, Swamiji gives the scriptural descriptions as well as practical sadhana methods of bhakti. The collection of satsangs is an invaluable gift to every aspirant on the path of bhakti.



In *Yoga in Daily Life*, Swamiji speaks on the purpose of yoga in one's life and the practical integration of the various systems of body, mind and spirit. He also gives a detailed description of the yoga capsules that everyone can include in their life.



My Inheritance of Sannyasa delves into the origins and development of the sannyasa parampara, describing the lives, inspirations and teachings of eminent gurus and sages, including Dattatreya, Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda.



In *The Yoga of Sage Vasishtha*, Swamiji selects the key discussions from the treatise and explains how this ancient work provides fresh motivation and positivity to manage the challenges of daily life, while cultivating spiritual wisdom.

For an order form and comprehensive publications price list, please contact:

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Sannyasa Peeth Events 2012-2013

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:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Jan 28 2012-Jan 2015</i> | 3 Year Sannyasa Training |
| <i>Oct 17-20</i> | Ashwin Navaratri Satsang Series |
| <i>Nov 8-11</i> | Satsang Series |
| <i>Mar 5-8 2013</i> | Satsang Series |
| <i>Apr 12-15</i> | Chaitra Navratri Satsang Series |
| <i>May 3-6</i> | Satsang Series |
| <i>June 5-8</i> | Satsang Series |
| <i>Aug 1-4</i> | Satsang Series |
| <i>Sep 8-12</i> | Lakshmi Narayan 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:

Sannyasa Peeth, c/o Ganga Darshan, Munger, Bihar 811201, India

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