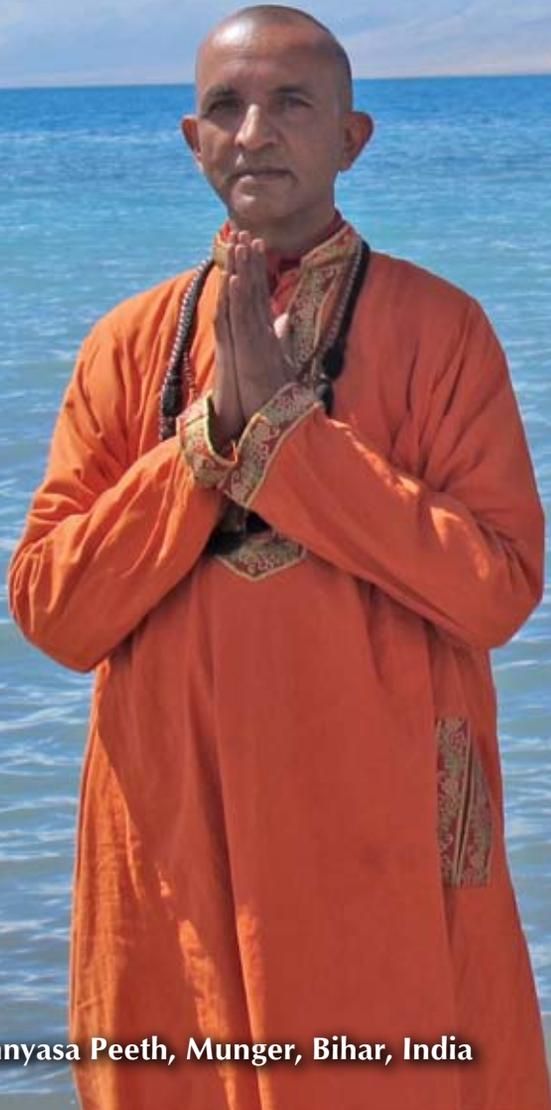


Satya ka Avahan

Invoking the Divine

सत्य का
आवाहन

Year 1 Issue 6 Nov-Dec 2012
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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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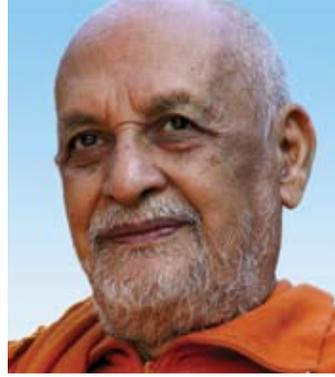
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Front cover: Swami Niranjanananda at Kailash-Mansarovar, 2012

Plates: 1-8: Glimpses from Swami Niranjanananda's Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage



SATYAM SPEAKS – सत्यम् वाणी

The way of God is such. God protects like a servant he who worships Him. The Lord of the universe and infinite plenitude has no pride. He does not even see how scandalous was the past life of his devotee. He looks not at his conduct or anything, not at his qualifications, nor his status, nor prosperity, nor learning. All that he sees is the devotion. That also to such an extent that He becomes the slave of slaves and applies himself silently to their service.

—Swami Satyananda

भगवान की रीति यही है। जो उनकी भक्ति करते हैं, उनकी रक्षा भगवान सेवक की तरह किया करते हैं। सकल ऐश्वर्य और जगत् के स्वामी में अहंकार है ही नहीं। वे तो यह भी नहीं देखते कि भक्त का पूर्ववृत्त कितना गर्हित था। वे न आचरण देखते हैं, न कुल, योग्यता, पद, वैभव या विद्या। अगर कुछ देखते हैं, तो वह है भक्ति। यहाँ तक कि वे भक्त के दासानुदास बनकर उसकी सेवा में चुपचाप लग जाते हैं।

—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

Descent of the Lord

Sometimes He shows a glimpse and goes away
Sometimes He descends to the realm of light and departs
Sometimes He descends to the subtle realm and recedes
Sometimes He descends to the earthly plane too
There is a wall between this plane and that
which has a very tiny cleft
That is the path he descends down from
and he is seen for real
But before his arrival
there is dawn of sattwa
Peace awakens, all influences cease to be
Illuminated beings come and make
the inner instrument pure
and full of devotion
At the end, together with the arrival of guru
the Lord verily descends
Those with closed eyes see
But those with eyes open
behold darkness before them.

—Swami Satyananda

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Call of Mount Kailash



In the early years of my sadhana at Rishikesh, I decided to see Kailash. Mount Kailash is in western Tibet. On 12th June, 1931, I started on a pilgrimage to that sacred place. We all had a dip in Lake Mansarovar and went around Mount Kailash. I walked the whole distance. There is no place on all this fair earth which can be compared with Kailash for the marvellous beauty of the everlasting snows. Of all yatras, the Kailash trip is the most difficult. It is called Mount Meru, the axis of mountains.

The deep significance of parikrama lies in the fact that the devotee considers not the physical aspect of the place, but the spiritual power it symbolizes and the divine presence that is manifested and felt through it. Through Sri Krishna's revelation in the Chapter 10 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, you will understand how much special places are saturated with the divine presence. By parikrama, the devotee drinks deep the divine atmosphere pervading the place and comes out of this spiritual path steeped in sattvic vibrations.

A pilgrimage like the Kailash trip is a sadhana for God-realization, as it causes *chitta shuddhi*, purification of the consciousness, and *nididhyasana*, deep meditation.

— Swami Sivananda

The Path of Kailash

If the world goes on pilgrimage, let it.
The worldly people
want satisfaction,
relief and change.
But where will you go?
Where is Dwarika,
where is Haridwar?
In brick houses,
enclosed in walls and temples
Or traffic-ridden alleys?
Or there, where your Lord resides?
Go, on the banks of Mansarovar
is Kailash.
There live Bhavani and Shankar.
From there originate,
Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati.
Those who traverse this path
encounter six holy places,
five confluences and all sages.
This path ascends upwards,
Neither a king nor a beggar has scaled it.
For it is like a razor's edge,
the path of Kailash.
I have been there,
I have had darshan of Mansarovar all alone,
I have seen the swans pick pearl.
Have you also seen it?
I am speaking of the other Kailash
Which is within all.



– Swami Satyananda

The Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra

*At the crest of Mount Kailash,
In the forest of wish-fulfilling trees
The koel chirps playfully, deer prance gracefully
Creating poetry, dancing in ecstasy
Om, Har Har Mahadev!*

In 2008, I handed over the mandate of Bihar School of Yoga to the third generation and freed myself of all organizational responsibilities. Then the question arose, "What next?" In July 2009, my guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, called me to Rikhia and gave me a blueprint of the coming twenty years, complete with specific instructions on the work that had to be undertaken and clear details of when, where and how that work would be completed.

Sannyasa, my inheritance

There is a story behind the mission that Sri Swamiji has entrusted me with. During the years that Sri Swamiji was performing panchagni sadhana, he lived the life of a recluse and dressed in only a loincloth. One day, after concluding the panchagni, he collected all his loincloths and handed them to me saying, "If someone asks you what you received as inheritance from Swami Satyananda, tell them, 'He gave me his loincloths as his inheritance'." An institution cannot be given as inheritance. An individual can work in an institution for some time, then the command has to be passed on to another person.

It was not to run an institution that I took sannyasa, but to experience the true meaning of sannyasa. Today people come to sannyasa with thoughts of becoming great, becoming gurus, having disciples. In the sixties and seventies when we came to the ashram, there was no such thought. We simply wanted to spend our lives as sannyasins. However, our guru gave us every opportunity to fulfil our desires and ambitions



through service to society. He believed that once one's karmas are exhausted, one can proceed on the path of sannyasa.

Sri Swamiji created a role for me to play in the drama of life. His loincloths represented renunciation and sannyasa, and this was my inheritance. In Munger, a yoga organization has been established, and in Rikhia a seva organization has been established. Swami Suryaprakash and the third generation look after the responsibilities of the yoga movement in Munger. Swami Satsangi has taken over the command of the institution in Rikhia. I told Sri Swamiji, "Just as you handed over the charge of the institution to me and left Munger, I seek your permission to do the same." "No," he said, "Perfect sannyasa life living in Munger. Establish Sannyasa Peeth, through which you may establish the higher principles of sannyasa in society." Yoga is personal sadhana, seva is selfless interaction in society and sannyasa is to cultivate spiritual awareness.

Sri Swamiji outlined a year-by-year plan for twenty years. This roadmap was created in July 2009, one week after Guru Poornima. In December of the same year, Sri Swamiji attained mahasamadhi. For one year after that, both Swami Satsangi and myself were busy with the rituals that, according to the tradition, one must perform for a siddha saint's attainment of mahasamadhi.

Sannyasa Peeth is born

By guru's grace, the first anniversary of Sri Swamiji's mahasamadhi marked the beginning of the Sat Chandi Mahayajna in Rikhia and the birth of Sannyasa Peeth in Munger. In 2008, I had told Swami Suryaprakash, "Now you look after Ganga Darshan. I am off." Swami Suryaprakash requested that, just as Sri Swamiji had given me five years to learn the ropes, I give him five years too. Therefore, I still reside in Ganga Darshan. However, on the banks of the Ganga a new establishment is slowly taking shape and my commitment to Swami Suryaprakash ends in 2013.

In 2013, Bihar School of Yoga will celebrate its golden jubilee. A World Yoga Convention is being organized to mark its culmination. All the students of Sannyasa Peeth are involved in this project.

In preparing the groundwork for Sannyasa Peeth, I chose the first activity to be sannyasa training: imparting the training of self-regulation, knowledge and experience that a seeker should have. Being initiated and wearing geru does not make one a sannyasin. To raise the spiritual energy through sadhana, to expand the intellect through self-study and observation, to renounce ambitions by developing surrender, to surrender to the will of God by developing faith,



and alongside to be endowed with both traditional as well as modern education, wisdom and science are the signs of a sannyasin. It is with this vision that in the year 2012 Sannyasa Peeth has initiated the three-year sannyasa training. One hundred and eleven people are participating in this training. The number represents Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Brahma is one, Vishnu is one and Shiva is one, which makes 111.

Growth of yoga

Prior to his mahasamadhi, Sri Swamiji gave me another mandate. He said, "Continue your work in yoga. The mandate I had received from Swami Sivananda applies to you as well: 'Yoga from door to door and shore to shore'. Nothing should impede the program of yoga development. Everyone knows asana and pranayama, but nobody knows yoga. Work for the expansion of the understanding of yoga." It is with this in mind that in the year 2010 the Satsang Series program conducted at Munger every month was conceived. In each Satsang Series one yogic concept is taken up, and its principles, practical applications and sadhanas are explained.

Pilgrimages

Alongside all this, from time to time I go on pilgrimages to those places where Sri Swamiji spent time in sadhana and worship. I spend three to four days performing anushthanas which take eight to ten hours each day.

The experiences at these pilgrimage places have shown me new dimensions of spiritual life. Initially, Guruji and God commanded me to propagate yoga, give discourses, training and satsangs on yoga. For forty years this was my life. I spoke on meditation, samadhi, kundalini and chakras. There was no practical experience, but I used to speak on every subject. Ever since I started going on these pilgrimages and involving myself in sannyasa sadhana, I have had deep experiences of these subjects.

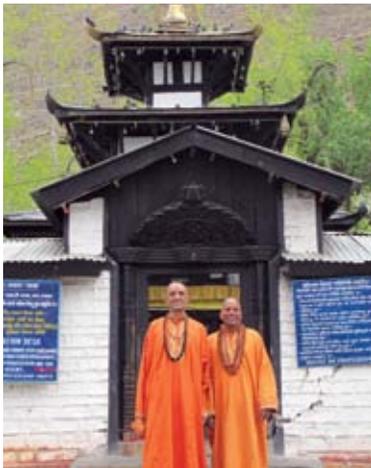
As part of this pilgrimage program, in June this year a plan was made to travel to Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar. The yatra was, in one word, amazing. It is a pilgrimage that brings you closer to your spirit and your God. It was an extraordinary, incomparable and remarkable journey. During this trip, incidents occurred that were clear examples of how God's grace can make the most difficult task simple and how tragedy can be averted.

The first stop: Muktinath

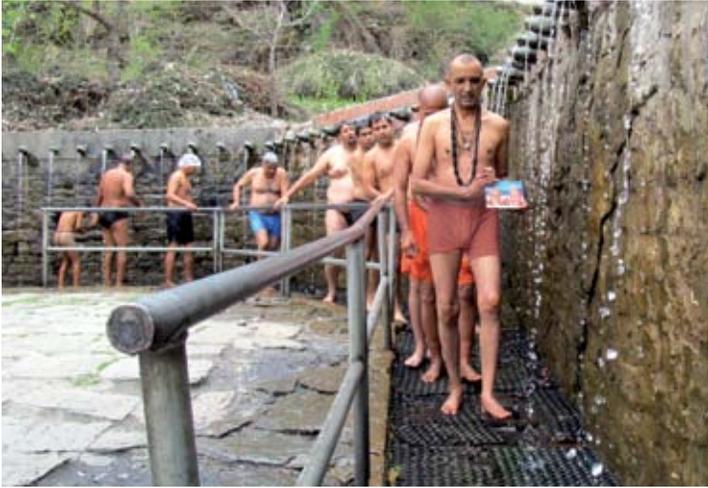
We were eight people in total, including Swami Muktananda, Swami Sivaraja and me. The trip began in Delhi. On 2nd June we flew from Delhi to Kathmandu. From Kathmandu we drove towards Pokhara to receive Lord Narayana's benediction at Muktinath. Muktinath is a place where Narayana is said to bestow liberation.

A six-hour car journey brought us to Pokhara from Kathmandu. Pokhara is a small town in the mountains where we spent the night, and the next day we took a flight from Pokhara to Jom-Som, right at the border of Nepal and China, and spent the night there. Jom-Som is supposed to be one of the most difficult airports in the world to land in, as it is between two mountains, and the gust of wind that blows through creates a strong wind tunnel. Airplanes fly only in the morning hours, from 6 to 10 am.

After a good night's rest at Jom-Som, the next morning we took a bus for a two-kilometre ride to the border of Mustang. From there we rode on jeeps to the base of the mountain on which Muktinath is situated. Finally, we were driven on motorbikes. Muktinath temple is where the sacred shaligram stones can be found. In the temple grounds, freezing cold water cascades from 108 spouts. You are allowed to enter the



temple only after showering under these 108 spouts. There are also two small tanks known as *Paap Kunda*, the tank of sin, and *Punya Kunda*, the tank of virtue, and a dip in each is mandatory too. I walked around to test the waters and as soon as I put my hand in, it turned blue! 'No I'm not going for this darshan,' I thought. Lord Narayana sitting inside the temple laughed and God's



will prevailed. Mustering courage, we took off our clothes, took the first step and then ran through the 108 falls like an arrowshot.

Three such rounds have to be taken. During the second round I said, "This time I am not doing it alone." I opened my bag, took out pictures of Sri Swamiji and Sivanandaji and said, "You called me here, so you may as well join me." I took out my Shivalingams and malas, and holding all these items in my hands darted through the dharas and the tanks.

Out of the freezing water, we entered the temple. There was nobody inside except the priestess. She asked us, "Where are you from?" We told her who we were, and she said, "Do whatever you want here, any kind of pooja or worship you choose to perform."

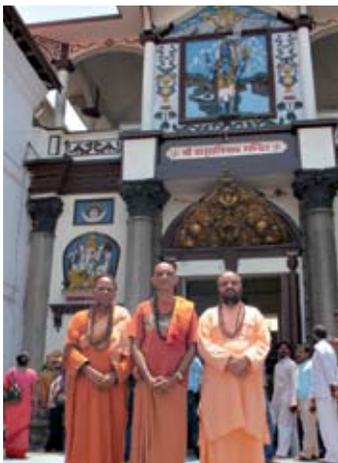
We had the entire sanctum sanctorum to ourselves. The statue of Lord Narayana is made of brass. Beside him are Bhudevi, Sridevi, Ganesha, Garuda, and statues of many other gods and goddesses. We placed the eight Shivalingams, photos and malas that we were carrying there. For thirty to forty minutes we sat in there and performed worship of the shaligram and Shivalingams, that is, Lord Narayana and Lord Shiva. Then we exited the temple.

According to tradition, as people exit the temple the priestess places a crown, known as 'crown of God', on everybody's head as blessing. Everybody received their blessing, but when my turn came she stopped. "No," she said, "I can't do it to you." "Why?" I asked. She replied, "You are a sannyasin and I can't give you any blessings." So I took the crown in my hands and placed it on my head. I blessed myself!

With the grace of the Lord upon us, we descended the mountain on foot. At the base, we huddled ourselves into the jeep and drove back to Jom-Som. The next day we journeyed onwards to Pokhara and from there to Kathmandu.

Stop two: Pashupatinath

We were in Kathmandu on 5th June, the day the special pooja is conducted at Ganga Darshan and Rikhiapeeth in memory of Sri Swamiji. I wondered what I could do to offer my respects. The conclusion was a visit to the Pashupatinath Temple, which is a Shiva temple. After completing three parikramas around the temple, we went in and asked the priests to perform abhisheka to the beautiful Shivalingam on behalf of Sri Swamiji. The Shivalingam stands about four feet tall and has four faces of Shiva on four sides. The empty top side represents the unseen, invisible face.



Pashupati means 'lord of animals'. It is Shiva who controls the animal tendencies within each of us. He is the ruler of the negative and tamasic qualities. By subduing these, he brings forth the sattvic nature.

Once the abhisheka was over, we took the prasada, and came out into the courtyard where I performed fifty-four malas of japa. Then we entered the temple once again. This time the pandits were

performing their abhisheka and *shringara*, adornment. Having witnessed that, we came out, did three more parikramas and prayed, 'We are going on this yatra. Please be with us.' Then we left the temple precincts.

Stop three: Tibet

The next day, we embarked on our Kailash-Mansarovar journey and reached Kodari border in Nepal. After clearing customs, we changed vehicles, boarded 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 caravan consisted of one truck and three jeeps. Having crossed the Nepali Kodari border and the Chinese Zhangmu border, the convoy headed for its first halt in Tibet, Nyalam.

This tiny village town is at a significant height. Normally all travellers spend two nights here to get acclimatized. We were fit enough and needed to spend only one night. The next morning we began our training in mountain climbing. The three-kilometre walk up and down the steep inclines and descents of the mountain was a real life example of the benefits of pranayama. Every hour, on the hour, we performed ten rounds of kapalbhati pranayama. That helped to generate energy, heat, stamina and strength, and to avoid all types of high altitude problems. We felt no dizziness, no shortness of breath, just perfectly normal.

That night in Nyalam, after the trek in the mountains, in the privacy of my room, I chanted the *Hanuman Chalisa*, invited

Hanumanji 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 got out of bed and did pranam to him. Then I 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 Haumanji, nor the large one, but human-sized. I was in the front seat and all the way through the journey I could feel his presence, sitting above my head on top of the jeep. It was an incredible feeling!

Our next stop was Sanga, a military camp. To get to Sanga you have to cross the river Brahmaputra. Tumbling down into India, the Brahmaputra gains in width and flow, but up in that little mountainous town it is only a small stream. Across the stream, we rested for the night.

As sleep pervaded the body, the mind was filled with thoughts that the next morning we were going to reach Mansarovar. Once again I prayed, this time to Krishna and Rukmini, "I invited you on this journey when I had come to Pandharpur, now you have to come with me." (*Avahan*, Sep-Oct 2012) Then I 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 beings: Krishna, Rukmini, Shiva, Shakti, Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji.

On the 9th, when I emerged from the hotel room to drive up to Mansarovar, another 450 kilometres away, I felt as if I was being crowded by all these celestial people. Swami Sivaraja, Swami Muktananda and Natwar Rateriaji got into the rear, and I was in the front. As I sat down I wondered, 'Where will all these people sit?' For a few moments I pondered, 'Where can I offer them an asana for the journey?' In that instant, my eyes

automatically closed and my heart opened. I could actually see this opening of the heart and I said to Krishna, “Come in”, and 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 he entered. 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! We started our travel towards Mansarovar.

At Mansarovar

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!

People call it Mansarovar, but the actual name is Manas Sarovar. The lake was created from Brahma’s mind, through his willpower, thus the name Manas Sarovar. Gradually, the original word got distorted and today the lake is known as Mansarovar. We started the circumambulation of the lake,





which is approximately forty kilometres wide, by car. Before starting the parikrama, we had darshan of Mount Kailash from the banks of the lake. Our first darshan! The guides excitedly

informed us that, so far in the season, nobody had yet had the darshan of Mount Kailash from Mansarovar; we were the first group to do so. God's blessings can never be predicted. 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. Then we washed ourselves as a gesture of purification and embarked on the parikrama.

Surrounding the lake, we saw many birds, 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. Many species of birds and swans surrounded the lake. While we were taking a photograph of the lake, we spotted two yellow swans in the middle of a flock of swans. A closer look revealed that they were in fact golden swans, the *rajahamsa*. According to myth, these swans can separate milk from water. Give them the two liquids mixed up, and they will drink the milk and leave the water out. Thus, we had darshan of the rare rajahamsa as well.

Mount Kailash rises over Mansarovar on one side and on the other side rise the Guru Mandala range of mountains. Mount Kailash is Lord Shiva's abode and Guru Mandala is where sadhus, saints and demigods come to invoke Lord Ashutosh. We also visited Rakshasa Taal, another smaller lake situated next to Mansarovar. Legend has it that Ravana performed his austerities here. The original name of the Lake is Brahma Taal. There is a story of creation in the Puranas. When Lord Brahma began his work on creation, he started

by creating the five *mahabhootas*, elements, through which formed the earth, planets and constellations. Then he created trees, fruits, flowers. Before creating living beings, he began to propitiate Lord Shiva by this lake. It was after receiving the grace of Lord Shiva that he created living creatures. Therefore, the lake's original name is *Brahma Taal* or the lake of Brahma. The atmosphere at Brahma Taal is extremely pure and inspires bhakti. The sight of Mount Kailash is spectacular from there.

On Lake Mansarovar itself is situated a small six-room mud lodge. After our visit to Brahma Taal, we rested there for the night. According to legend, on full moon nights gods and goddesses descend from the heavens to bathe in Mansarovar. The full moon had already passed on 5th June. We were discussing among ourselves whether or not we would have the divine sighting during the night. At 9.30 pm I ventured out to relieve myself. The lodge we were residing in was about twenty to thirty metres away from the lake. When I came out I saw that a few lights were dancing on the surface of the lake. All my co-travellers were indoors. I called everyone out 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. To photograph this amazing sight I went in to fetch the camera. In the meanwhile 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. The lights were captured on the camera and the photographs reveal that there is certainly the presence of special energies there, whether you call them supernatural or divine.





After an hour and a half, we returned to the lodge to rest. 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. The water is very cold and it is advised that no one should stay in beyond one or two minutes. When we bathed, we did not feel cold at all. For a long time we purified ourselves with the crystal waters of Mansarovar. The heart was aglow, the spirit bloomed.

After the 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, chanted stotrams and did japa.

During the havan, all the three sannyasins had the experience of 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 hand. 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. His broad hand rested on my head. 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 thought of 'Guru and God stand before me, at whose feet should I first prostrate; 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 held Sri Swamiji's hand and placed it first on my head. Over it I placed Swami Sivananda's hand and over it my deity Lord Ashutosh's hand. I immersed myself totally in this euphoric feeling. In this way, I received the loving blessings of three illuminated beings at Mansarovar.





Kailash parikrama

After the havan, we had breakfast and then travelled to the Kailash basecamp, Darchen. The Kailash parikrama begins from here. On reaching Darchen, we left our luggage at the youth hostel and crossed a glacier to have the first darshan of Kailash. After crossing the glacier, walking a rocky trail, we reached a spot from where Kailash can be seen upfront. To the right of Kailash is Nandi Mountain, made of black stone. To the left of Kailash is Ashtapada Mountain. It is believed that the first preceptor of the Jainas, Rishabhdeva, attained spiritual siddhi at Ashtapada. This is a famous pilgrimage for the Jainas. We sat down at this spot and spent a few hours in japa, dhyana and satsang.

While we were there, other pilgrims also arrived and started sitting down. In a short while, it became a gathering of about one hundred people who started asking about the importance of Kailash and Lord Shiva. We had satsang for about one and a half hours with them and then returned to the youth hostel to rest for the night.

That night, I woke up three times: at 12 am, 1 am and 2 am. Each time, I found that my whole body was trembling with a strange fear. I could not understand the cause. All three times,

a particular mantra was going on in the head – *Yamaroopi Mahadevo dakshinasyam sadavatu*. The mantra means, “May Lord Shiva, in the form of Yama, protect us on the south side.” The first time, I calmed myself and went back to sleep. One hour later, I was again wide awake, with the same fear and the same mantra. I went back to sleep again. An hour later, again I woke up, and again the same fear and the same mantra. I could not understand what was going on.

Next morning, I told the two sannyasins about the event of the night. They listened quietly. After breakfast, before beginning the parikrama, I called everyone to my room and invoked Lord Shiva. I wanted to know why the above mantra was repeating itself in the mind. I picked up my *Shiva Stotra Mala*. It spontaneously opened on *Mritasanjeevan Kavach*. Everyone chanted the kavach. I closed the book and opened it again. This time the *Shiva Raksha Stotra* opened before me and everyone chanted that stotra.

There are many stotras of Shiva, but the *Mritasanjeevan Kavach* is meant for attaining victory over death. After chanting the two stotras, I asked everyone, “Was the chanting all right?” One of our travel companions, Sri Natwar Rateria, wondered, ‘Why is Swamiji asking whether or not the chanting was all right. The chanting is done, and that’s that.’

After the chanting, we took off for parikrama of Kailash. We reached Yama Dwar, beyond which the walking trail begins. People do the parikrama on horseback also. In the past, pilgrims would reach Yama Dwar and pray, ‘Lord, bring me back safely.’ No one knew what would happen after crossing Yama Dwar. This is the place where Nachiketa waited for Lord Yama for three nights. Those who have read the *Katha Upanishad* know the story.

After circumambulating the temple, Swami Sivaraja and myself entered the temple. Inside, once our eyes adjusted to the darkness, we saw the heads of goats, yaks and even human skulls, hanging from the ceiling. It was as if we had reached hell. We spent a few minutes there and then came out. On



emerging, we hoisted the flag of Sannyasa Peeth at Yama Dwar. Then we waited for our coolie and horse. The coolies at that altitude do not carry more than five kilos.

I kept a few things in my bag which would be necessary for three days. The circumambulation of Kailash begins from Yama Dwar and the level of oxygen drops here. I was given an old, white horse. I climbed it and went ahead. The other co-travellers started following

slowly behind with their horses and coolies.

Two kilometres from Yama Dwara, I saw a shadow walking before me about thirty metres ahead. It was the shadow of a sadhu holding a trident in hand. Swami Sivaraja also saw this shadow. He came close to me and said, "Look, Sri Swamiji is walking ahead." I knew that the shadow that I had been watching for so long was none other than Sri Swamiji in the form of Shiva. With doubled enthusiasm and faith we went forward, and the shadow continued to lead us.

Six kilometres ahead I stopped for a snack. When the others reached, they asked, "Swamiji, do you know what happened with Natwarji?" I said, "No, I don't know." They told me, "Natwarji has been saved from death by a hair's breadth. The horse that he was riding 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 sherpas and coolies helped release 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." About fifteen minutes later, Natwarji reached us. I asked him, "What happened?" He said, "Nothing." I asked, "Any injury?" He said, "No, not even a scratch."

Here I realized why I had experienced that fear and anxiety during the night. Why we chanted the *Mritasanjeevan Kavach* and *Shiva Raksha Stotra*. I woke up thrice at night; thrice I became aware of the mantra that was in my mind. The horse dragged Natwarji thrice around the field, thrice it tried to kill him, but there was not a scratch on his body, no pain, nothing. The *Mritasanjeevan Kavach* and *Shiva Raksha Stotra* protected him. This is a direct experience of the grace and mercy of God.

Natwarji got on the same horse and continued his journey. Now the horse was very quiet and obedient. When an untoward incident was to happen, the horse in the form of Kaal dragged him over the field three times and tried to kill him three times. When the time of the incident was past, the same horse allowed him on its back and reached him to his destination.

Surprisingly enough, before embarking on this journey, Natwarji had shown me his chart. It indicated *akaalmrityu*, that is, untimely death could come to him at any time during this period. When I saw after the incident him I told him, "Now that the period of your death is over, you will live to be eighty-plus." Another point was that before our departure, I had instructed Natwarji's wife to light a deepak every day in her house for the success of our trip. On 11th June, the day of the incident, after three failed attempts and several burnt matches and fingertips, she was able to light the deepak.

The parikrama of Kailash begins from its south face. That is why the mantra *Yamaroopi Mahadevo dakshinasyam sadavatu* was going on in the head. This incident took place in the southern direction, and Lord Shiva in his grace and mercy saved Natwarji from all injury, pain and death.





The Kailash route begins from the south direction, goes towards the west and then the north. On the first day, we circumambulated Kailash from the south and went northwards. In the north is the first night halt. The speciality of Kailash is that when you see it from the south, the rocks and hills seem like stairs, windows and doors. It feels as if it is the residence of Lord Shiva. When you come to

the west face of Kailash, the rocks look as if elephants, horses, chariots, sages, celestial musicians, and so on are waiting in Shiva's court and worshipping him. When you see Kailash from the north face, it seems as if Kailash is made up of wave-like clouds.

After rest for the night at the north face, the parikrama resumes the next day. During this journey, one has to cross the Dolmala Pass, at a height of 5,722 metres. Here the level of oxygen is only four percent. Due to lack of oxygen, many people experience discomfort and even faint. When we reached Dolmala Pass, which is the nearest peak to Kailash, we picked up stones and earth as prasada, and at that highest point, hoisted the angavastra of Satyananda Yoga as a flag. If you ever cross the Dolmala Pass during your Kailash parikrama, you will find the angavastra of Satyananda Yoga fluttering in the wind. If you do parikrama of Yama Dwar, you will discover the flag of Sannyasa Peeth.

After descending from Dolmala Pass, the return journey begins. One cannot see the east face of Kailash. Towards the east is Gauri Kund which was frozen. Beyond Gauri Kund, one needs to cross a glacier. Next to it is Chunchula Kund and Bindu Kund, which are mentioned in *Shiva Purana*. This eastern side is believed to be the region of Mother Parvati,

where she, her children and attendants live. Here are also Ganesha Mountain, Skanda Mountain, Ashtamurti Mountain, and others.

After completing the Kailash parikrama, we returned to Darchen. After a good night's rest, the next morning I had another divine vision. Once again I experienced the heart opening up. Now that the parikrama was complete, each one - Krishna, Rukmini, Shiva, Shakti, Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji - came out, one by one. They all stood there and I did pranam and said, "What? Going away? 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 midair, 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.

The last leg

After our night stop in Darchen, we covered the 450-kilometre drive to Sanga in five hours. The next day, once again we drove 450 kilometres, and in five hours crossed the Dagmu and Kodari borders, and were back in Kathmandu.

The last night that we spent in Tibet, I prayed to Shiva, "This is my last night here and if I have received your grace, please show yourself to Swami Satsangi in Rikhia." And I went to sleep. The next morning I see an SMS from Swami Satsangi: "At three o'clock in the morning in meditation, I had a vision of Shiva and Kailash." It means that my prayers were heard.



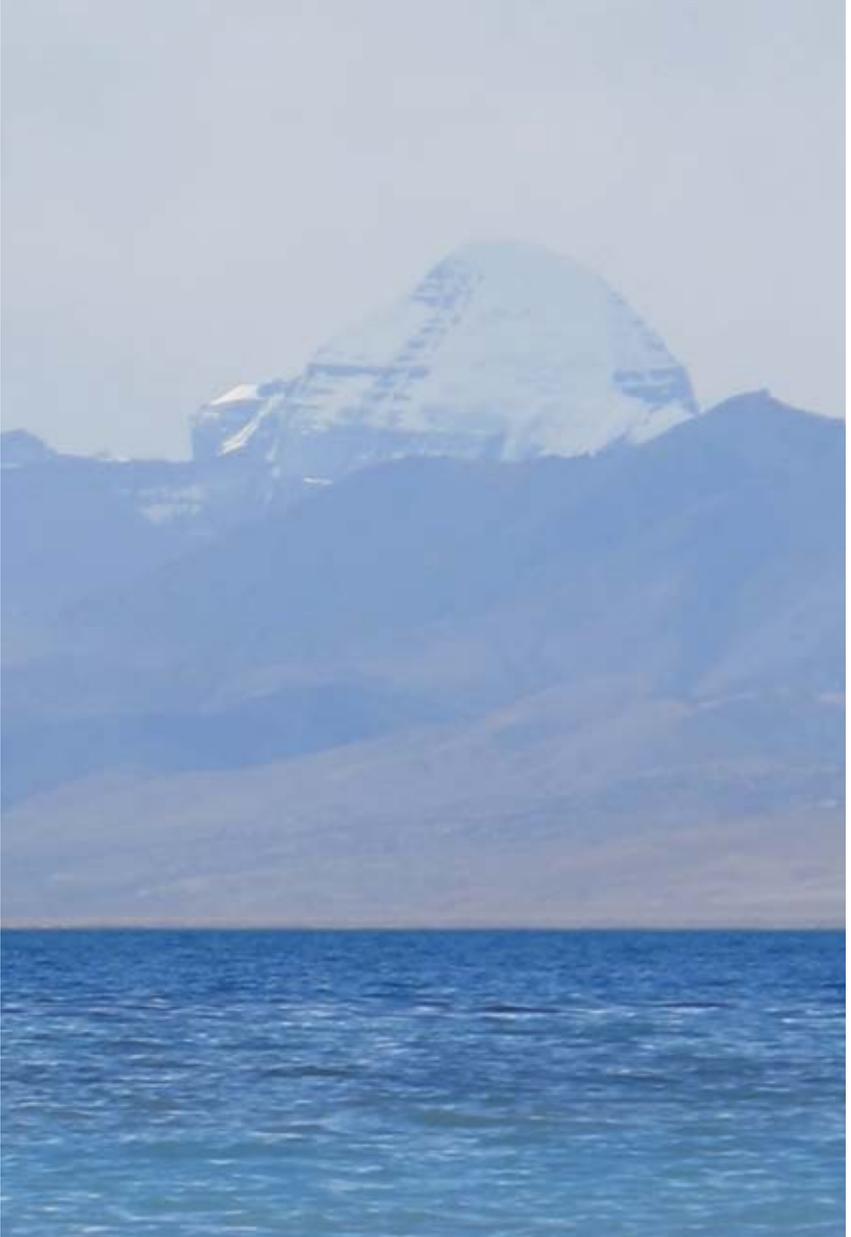
She also said, “My whole body was aching as if I had done the trekking myself.” Reading this, I felt humbled and bowed my head in reverence.

In Kathmandu, we returned once again to Pashupatinath Temple. This time we bowed our heads in thanks for the grace, blessings, assistance and support showered upon us. We had started our journey from Pashupatinath and it was only befitting that we ended it there. The circle was complete.

Today, having gone on this 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 the 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’. Whether we call him Christ or Shiva, or by any other name, that is only intellectual gymnastic. If one goes beyond it, then one can realize the power called 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 be blessed with in my life.

—Swami Niranjanananda





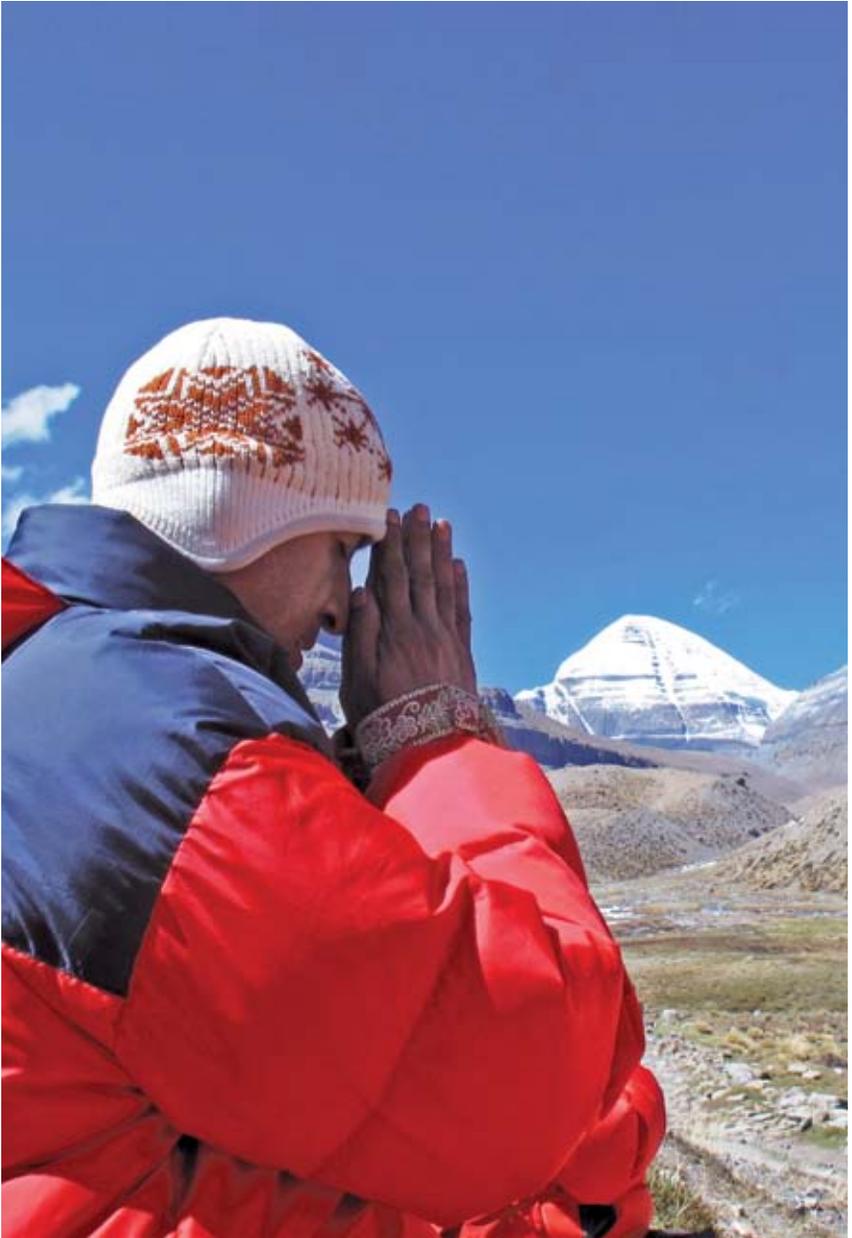
Kailash and Mansarovar



Japa on the sacred banks of Mansarovar



Brahma Sarovar (Rakshasa Taal)



Commencement of Kailash parikrama



Outside Yama Dwar, 'door of death'



Near Dolmala Pass, the highest point of Kailash parikrama



Nandi Parvat on the east face of Kailash



Culmination of Kailash parikrama

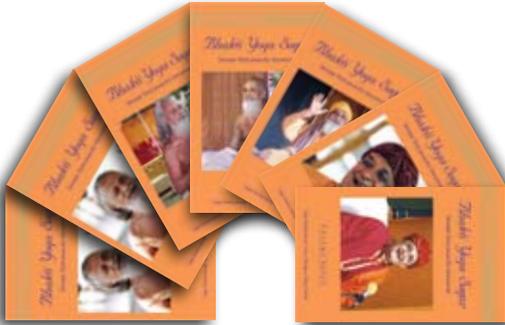


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Sannyasa Peeth, Munger, is pleased to announce that a series of satsangs will be conducted by Swami Niranananda Saraswati on a regular basis at Ganga Darshan and Sannyasa Peeth, Munger. Please contact Bihar School of Yoga regarding bookings and accommodation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

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<i>June 5–8</i>	Satsang Series
<i>Aug 1–4</i>	Satsang Series
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