

# RIKHIA AGAMAN

All Roads Lead to Rikhia - Consecrated Land



Rikhiapeeth, Jharkhand, India



# RIKHIA AGAMAN



Swami Satyananda Saraswati  
100 Years of Spreading Peace, Plenty and Prosperity  
1923 - 2023 and beyond

*With kind regards, ॐ and prem*

Amrit Lahari - Waves Of Nectar Series

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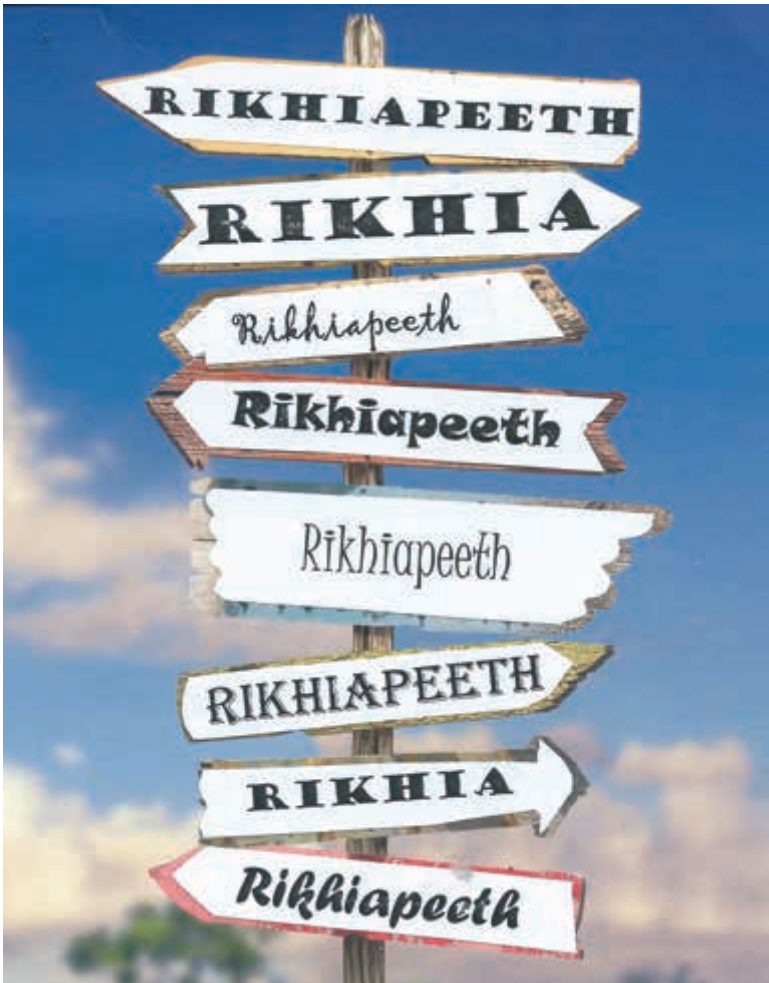
‘Rikhia Agaman’ is an offering to Paramguru Swami Sivananda and our beloved Pujya Gurudev Swami Satyananda.

It is compiled and published by the sannyasin disciples, devotees and well-wishers of Paramahansa Satyananda, as a part of nishkam seva, selfless service.

Rikhia Agaman is produced to share the life, teachings and inspiration of Swami Satyananda, whose light blazed on earth from 1923 to 2009 and beyond.

# RIKHIA AGAMAN

All Roads Lead to Rikhia



Rikhiapeeth is situated in a remote village, twelve kilometres from the renowned temple town of Deoghar, Jharkhand. It is the tapobhumi of the great spiritual luminary and exponent of Yoga, Paramahansa Satyananda, who is renowned world-wide for his specialised and unparalleled contribution to Yoga, Tantra and the spiritual sciences.

Rikhiapeeth is where Swami Satyananda lived the life of a Paramahansa Yogi, for twenty years performing long and arduous yogic sadhanas before taking Maha Samadhi here in 2009. In keeping with the yogic and spiritual legacy he left behind, the sprawling ashram has evolved into a vibrant epicentre where serious yoga lovers and sincere spiritual seekers from all walks of life, can experience the peace, harmony and true joy of living a Yogic lifestyle.

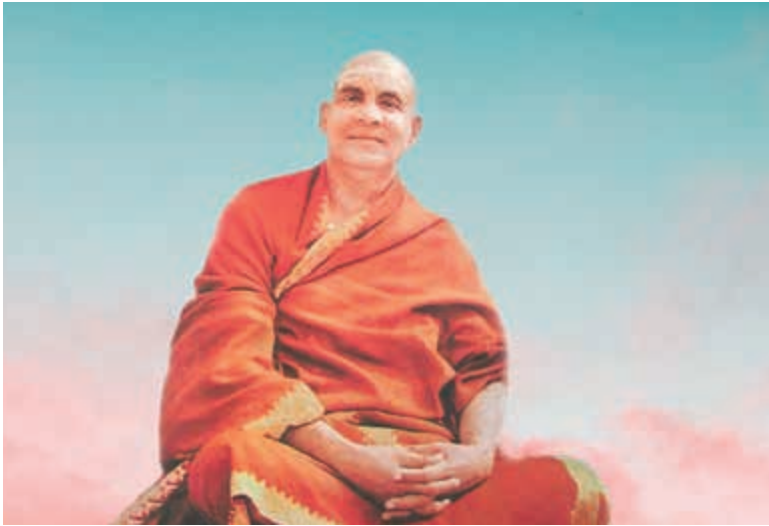




Ideal for those who wish to live yoga rather than just practise it, Rikhiapeeth caters to sincere aspirants looking for a wholistic approach to Yoga. Rikhiapeeth has also been the centre for the relief activities of Sivananda Math and Sivananda Ashram. Under the umbrella of these organisations the ongoing activities vary from Yoga courses, Yoga sadhana retreats, Yajnas, Discourses on Yoga, Tantra and Philosophy to extensive seva (service) of the rural communities. Swami Satyasangananda, the Peethadhishwari of Rikhiapeeth, guides its multifarious activities which are based on the teachings of Swami Satyananda and his Guru Swami Sivananda.

The uniqueness of Rikhiapeeth also lies in the fact that it is set in a pure, serene, rural environment which lends fullness to the yogic life emulated here. A great place to simply detox and inhale Yoga while being of service to others.





## Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh is the inspirer of the Bihar Yoga tradition. A great spiritual luminary of the 20th century, Swami Sivananda developed yoga as a practical, integrated subject which everyone could apply in their lives. He wrote hundreds of books and articles on yoga and spirituality to maintain and introduce yogic values in the minds of the general public. His emphasis was on bringing the spiritual and yogic teachings to all without distinction. Embodying the spirit of service to humanity, he inspired and guided thousands of spiritual seekers to practise yoga and lead a divine life. Swami Sivananda inspired research into the ancient traditions to investigate the benefits of yoga for the development of the human personality, thus instigating the integration of traditional yogic wisdom with modern scientific knowledge. His eightfold path: serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize, be good, do good, became a roadmap for spiritual aspirants worldwide. Today his light spreads far and wide for the spiritual upliftment of everyone, everywhere.





## Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Swami Satyananda Saraswati, was entrusted by his Guru Swami Sivananda with the mission of spreading yoga from door to door and from shore to shore. Swami Satyananda Saraswati became the foremost inspirer of yoga in the 20th century. In 1963, he founded the Bihar School of Yoga to impart yogic training to all. He authored many major texts on yoga, tantra and spiritual life, which are now accepted as textbooks in schools and universities throughout the world. A modern day sage and visionary, he established yoga as part of mainstream society, making the ancient systems of tantra and yoga accessible to people of all faiths and nationalities for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual evolution. In 1988 he renounced his mission, and in 1989 he came to Rikhia to live the life of a paramahansa sannyasin. With the sankalpa of peace, plenty and prosperity for all, he performed long and arduous yogic sadhanas, thus inspiring sannyasins and householders in their spiritual journey to develop a universal vision. In 2009, he wilfully entered into Maha Samadhi at midnight on the 5th December and merged into Siva consciousness.



## Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

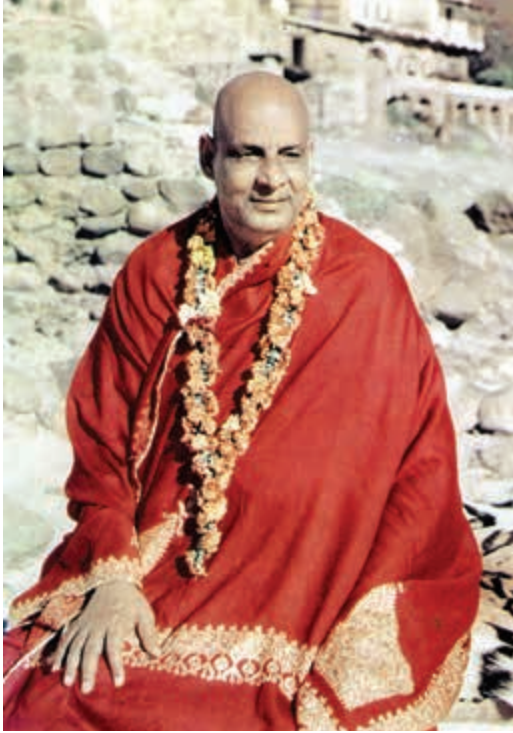
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati continues his Guru's mission of spreading yoga around the world. He joined the Bihar School of Yoga in 1964 at the age of four, and as President guided the activities of BSY from 1983 to 2008. Initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin at the age of thirty, he was anointed preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda by the leading luminaries of the sannyasa tradition in 1993. Author of many classical books on yoga, tantra and the Upanishads, Swami Niranjanananda toured extensively nationally and internationally. Swami Niranjanananda is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. In 2008 he relinquished the presidency of the Bihar School of Yoga and all institutional responsibilities. Before his Maha Samadhi in 2009, Sri Swami Satyananda gave Swami Niranjanananda the mandate to explore the sannyasa lifestyle and to revive and expound the classical yoga vidya. In 2017, he was awarded the third highest civilian award of India, the Padma Bhushan, by the President of the Republic of India for meritorious work in yoga.



## Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati, also known as Swami Satsangi, is the Peethadhishwari of Rikhiapeeth as appointed by Swami Satyananda. From the age of twenty-two, she experienced a series of inner awakenings which led her to her Guru, Swami Satyananda. She was initiated into the Dashnami tradition of sannyasa on 6 July 1982 at Ganga Darshan, Munger. Thereafter she travelled extensively with Swami Satyananda on his tours in India and abroad which gave her immense exposure and contributed to her development into a scholar with deep insight into the yogic and tantric traditions as well as modern sciences and philosophies. A truly inspirational teacher and gifted writer, Swami Satyasangananda is the author of major texts on yoga and tantra. As the Peethadhishwari of Rikhiapeeth, she received the mandate from her Guru Swami Satyananda to implement Sri Swami Sivananda's three precepts of serve, love and give and she works tirelessly for the material and spiritual upliftment of the local community. She travels nationally and internationally carrying the light of her Guru's teachings to all.

## Offering



In humility we offer this compilation of teachings and memories on the historic moment of Rikhia Agaman to Sadguru Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated Pujya Gurudev Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.

## Dedication



गुरु गोविन्द दोउ खड़े, काके लागूँ पाय ।  
बलिहारी गुरु आपनो, जिन गोविन्द दियो मिलाय ॥

— कबीरदास

Guru and Govinda are both before me, whose feet shall I venerate first? Undoubtedly I shall choose my Guru, thanks to whom I was introduced to Govinda.

— Kabir Das



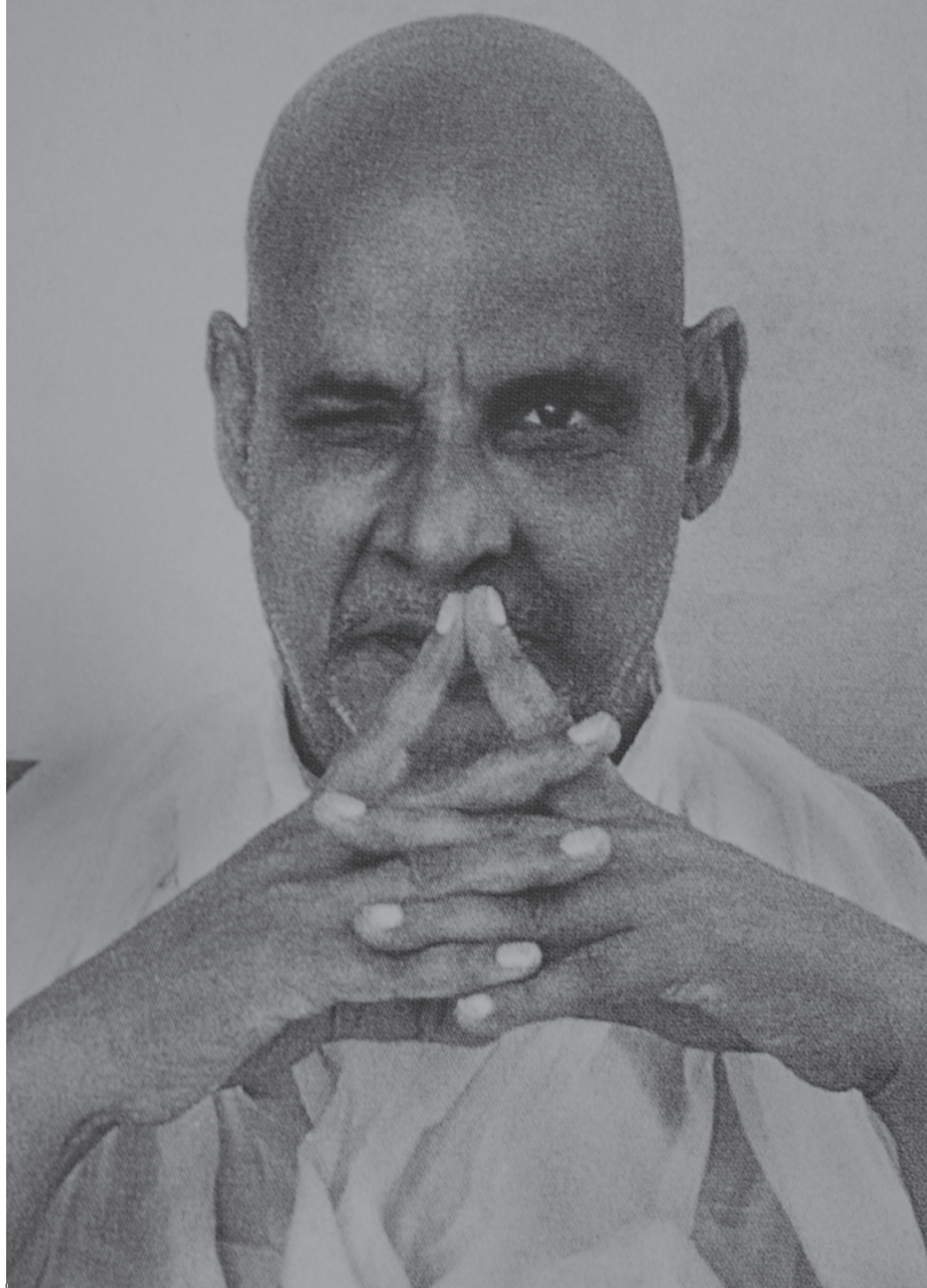


Rikhia is consecrated land as each and every inch has been blessed by the touch and gaze of Swami Satyananda.

- Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati

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# My Guru Has Shown Me the Path

My Guru has shown me the path  
He desired my body,  
I gave it to him unflinchingly.  
He asked me for my prana,  
I offered it unhesitatingly  
He said, "Will you give me your mind too?"  
I replied, "It is yours forever."  
I was left with nothing,  
Empty and desolate.

The dark blue sky, dotted with stars, and the moon,  
That was all I had now.  
Then all at once  
The sun burst upon me with a song.  
The restless ocean bathed me with its waves,  
The thundering clouds burst upon me with rain,  
The snow white swan danced before my soul.  
My Guru came to me once again.  
He said, "Will you give me the samskaras you have collected  
life after life?"

I looked into his deep brown eyes,  
Into the dark and deep abyss of his being.  
For what seemed aeons, he stood before me.  
Everything else began to dissolve before my eyes.  
To melt and fade away.  
There was unity within and without.

It is the grace of my Guru,  
He who has extinguished my being  
And absorbed me into himself.  
My Guru has shown me the path.

- Swami Satyananda Saraswati -





# Preface

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati  
Peethadhishwari, Rikhiapeeth

In Vedic tradition everything is based on 'Muhurat', the exact time, the exact moment when something happened. And Rikhia Agaman, the exact moment when Swamiji arrived at Rikhia, when Swamiji set foot on this soil, is enacted on 23rd September every year at Rikhia, since Swamiji took Maha Samadhi in 2009. We consider that moment a very significant, precious and sacred moment or muhurta in the span of time. Because when Swami Satyananda first set foot here in 1989 his destiny began to lead him to a very important moment of his life. Of course it changed the destiny of this place, but even Swami Satyananda's destiny was revealed to him here.

It was here he discovered his relationship with God. In fact you can say that all he used to speak about was Bhakti. Bhakti became the epicenter of Rikhia. That is the seed that Gurudev sowed in Rikhia. So when we celebrate Rikhia Agaman we are nurturing that exact moment, when the seed of bhakti and the person to saturate it with prana, entered this land. Swamiji lived here for a span of twenty years and in that time the spiritual energy that he poured into that seed, is what Rikhia is basking in even today.

Rikhia Agaman is a tradition of Rikhiapeeth. Rikhia is derived from the word Rishi. In Sanskrit you can replace Kha with Sha or Sha for Kha – so Rishi became Rikhi and Rishiya became Rikhiya.

Rikhia Agaman means the arrival of a Rishi to the land of the Rishis. At one time Rishis may have lived here because this was all forest. Sannyasins and sadhus like to live in forests with nature. So Rikhia Agaman is the arrival of a Rishi. Rishi is a seer, a Rishi is a scientist. A Rishi has a vision and a Rishi is able to manifest that vision.

Swamiji's vision was peace, plenty, prosperity – happiness, peace of mind for all, and that is what he manifested here. The dire state of the neighbours of Swamiji was transformed into one where they could live peacefully, happily, without insecurity and fear, and this is the most significant transformation. Of course houses were built and means to earn livelihoods, to have food every day, to be able to get their daughters married, to send their children to school. All that happened, but the main thing that Swamiji gave them was hope and a chance to dream, a sense of security, a sense of peace. That is the transformation that happened with the arrival of Swamiji at Rikhia.

Rikhia Agaman signifies Swamiji's arrival here every year. We lead him in at that exact moment, at 12 noon, midday. I take the car out, I sit in it because I was the privileged one who arrived here with him in 1989, and I have with me Swamiji's beautiful picture in which he looks so alive. And exactly at 12 noon the gates open and we drive in and Swamiji steps out. Then he is accompanied with bells, conch, damaru, dhuni, and all the sacred items that were part of his life at Rikhia. Then showing Swamiji the entire ashram by walking through each and every spot which he himself envisaged and which he himself walked through, we place him and worship him, we sing for him and we dance for him – this is the beauty of Rikhia Agaman. Connecting with a very important moment in time when a great soul set foot on this land.

Namo Narayan



This land has a destiny. Like each of us has a destiny, the land also has a destiny, and that destiny unfolds at the right time, at the right place, at the right moment and by the right person. Just as it did for Rikhia by Sri Swamiji setting foot on this land.

- Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati



# PART I

Rikhia Agaman





# Following God's Mandate

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

I am a book of many chapters, and each chapter begins and ends somewhere. Though there is a break between the chapters, there is continuity as far as the story is concerned. The chapters break but the story continues.

In 1947, my Guru, Swami Sivananda said, "You have arrived at the railway station three hours before the train is due to arrive, so you will have to wait on the platform for three hours. The train will not arrive before time." I asked him when these three hours would be completed. He replied, "In forty years. Don't go into a life of seclusion where you suppress your mind, thoughts, passions, hatreds and worries. Express them. After forty years, when your mind is completely calm and quiet, and you have experienced all the phases of life, then go into seclusion."

He told me not to bother about formal sadhana, instead he advised me to go on working selflessly for forty years. He told me that my path would reveal itself to me very clearly after forty years. Thus, in 1988, forty years later, I left Munger ashram and found my path.

## **A Promise to my Ishta Devata**

It was at Trayambakeshwar in 1963 that the chapter of my life which led me to Munger and the propagation of yoga was first revealed to me. It was also at Trayambakeshwar where I made a sankalpa or promise to my Ishta Devata in

1963 to return and seek further enlightenment, renouncing all I achieve or accomplish in the propagation of yoga.

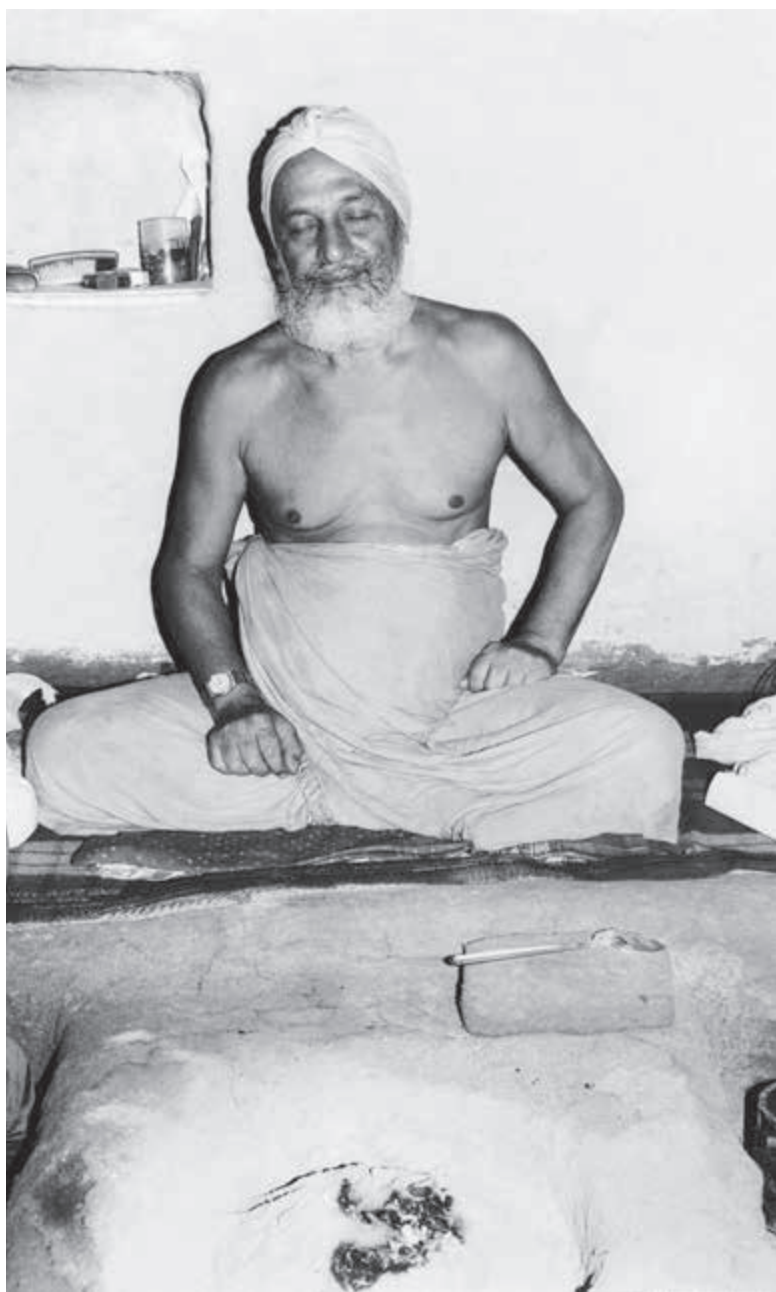
### **Fulfilling a Promise**

In 1988 I left Munger and visited a number of Siddhapeethas. I had made a promise that when my work for the propagation of yoga was over, I would leave. Not because of vairagya, I have great faith in my Guru and his guidance.

Finally, in the monsoon season of 1989, I arrived at Nasik, which is near Bombay. Sannyasins are not supposed to move around during the Chaturmas, for a minimum of two months during the rains. That is a rule I had never followed; this was the first time I followed it.

About thirty kilometres from Nasik is Trayambakeshwar, the source of the river Godavari, where there is the jyotirlingam of Siva. I went to have darshan of Lord Mrityunjaya and sought his permission to spend two months of Chaturmas there. A strange coincidence brings me back after so many years to the same place. His Holiness Mahant Shivgiriji Maharaj, the chief of Juna Akhara at Trayambakeshwar, invited me to stay at Neel Parvat, the very same place where I had stayed twenty-six





years ago. I have chosen to stay in a 'goshala' at the foot of Neel Parvat, in a small room eight foot by eight foot, representing everything ancient in structure, purity and simplicity.

One of the swamis came to meet me and began to cry, "How can you live like this?" Because he had formerly seen me living in air conditioned rooms. Also a man came from Barcelona with his wife and she asked, "Why do you live here? Why can't you stay in a hotel in Mumbai and practice?" I replied, "Then how will I have darshan of Trayambakeshwar?"

I am alone. What shall I do here? All around me rise the Brahmagiri hills from which the Godavari descends and flows on to the eastern sea. While I meditate under the gular tree outside my kutir and await his next command, I am inspired and intoxicated by the wondrous beauty of these Sivalingam shaped mountains on all sides. I am the bird of the vast expanse of the sky. The Hansa has flown away.

### **A New Chapter Begins**

The Chaturmas sadhana which I did, from 14th July to 14th September 1989, was to find out certain things and I received two messages: one on 18th July 1989 (Guru Purnima) and the other on 8th September 1989 (Swami Sivananda's Birthday). The first was what I should do and the second was where I should do it.

On the 18th July 1989, during Guru Purnima vrat, in the evening I sat down and said, "Lord, I have come. All my duties are over. I am empty and unemployed. I have nothing to do with yoga, with preaching, or with anything else. I am a sannyasin, a free bird. I have no more missions to perform."

What should I do next? I want your guidance! My sadhana was over. I wanted direction. Why should I decide?

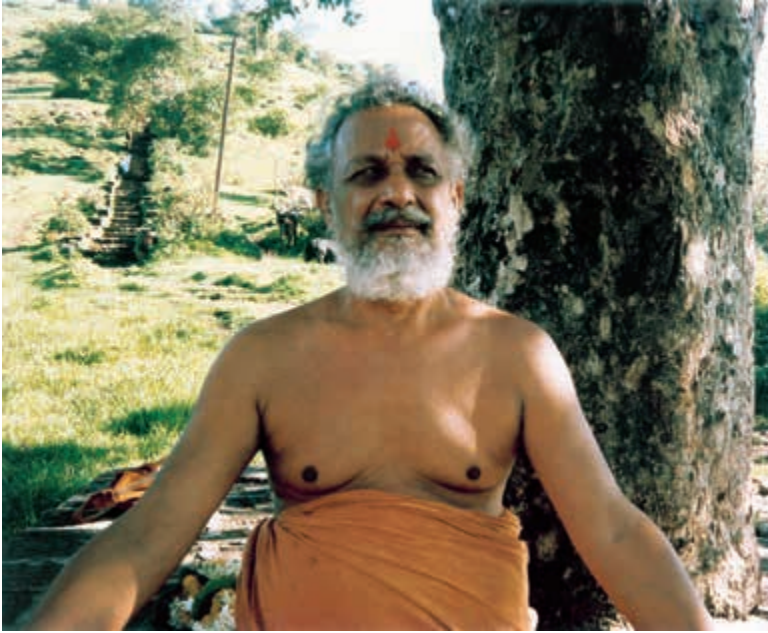


# The Hansa Has Flown Away

The hansa has flown away  
Soaring with its wings spread  
Across the infinite sky.  
It is searching for its ultimate abode  
Since many yugas.  
Knowledge it has received in abundance  
From the jnanis of the world.  
Grace and blessings from the divine too.  
Still today it is restlessly flapping  
Its wings in search.  
Looking down at its own creation  
Of the three worlds  
Etched across the horizon,  
Yes, it is flying high  
And flying ceaselessly in search,  
Witnessing the world down below as leela  
Alone, all alone, in the infinite sky  
My soul is flying to unite with its beloved.

- Swami Satyananda Saraswati





I was alone. I sat down in the middle of the night, and gradually my mind sank and I lost consciousness. Then a storm came, a cyclone, thunder, rain, and lightning. I experienced it all within me. Within or without is all the same, it is just a concept. I am talking in terms of time and space. I am not talking in terms of the body or the individual.

“Twenty-one thousand six hundred times” was the sound that came. “Perfect the unbroken awareness of your Guru mantra with every breath and beat of your heart. That is your mission now.”

Later, when I came out of that state, I knew what I had to do. I had no difficulty in understanding this. I started the sadhana from that day. I have heard my Guru’s command; I heard those commands which are beyond the mind, which are in the depth of my consciousness. I heard them when I was not even aware of my own existence.

So here began the next chapter of my life. Just as I gave my whole self to the accomplishment of His previous command to 'spread Yoga from door to door and shore to shore' I also plunged deep into all that was required of me to perfect my new mission. The past is dead and gone. Human as I am, I may travel back into the past and circumstances may compel me to accept associations with those with whom I had interacted before. That too is His will. But my personal endeavours will be to break away from the past and fulfil the mission given to me by Lord Mrityunjaya.

### **God's Mandate**

On 8th of September, the birthday of my Guru, a question which was haunting my mind from time to time was answered. Where do I fulfil my next mission?

I could not decide where to stay. I had many options - one was Gurushikhar at Mount Abu, another was at Gangotri, where I was offered a cave, a kutir in Kedarnath. The swamis at my Guru's ashram also offered to keep me with them, and many others. Many people invited me, but I was unable to decide where I should go. So, I reserved my decision until the direction was made clear to me.

On 8th September, the birthday of Swami Sivanandaji, I woke at about two o'clock in the early morning, made a little tea, took my bath and sat down. The sky was quiet, the translucent rays of Ashtami were shining through the small windows of my kutir, and I found that I was once again enveloped by a strange light. There was total quiet and then there was a huge storm with lightning and thunder. This storm happened internally, not externally. My mind sank again. I gradually lost consciousness. At 4 am the shrill voice came saying: "Chitabhumao" - Go to my burial ground, the smashan bhoomi. The command was clear.

Chitabhumao means cremation ground. That was all, burial ground. Chita means burning of the body and bhumi means

ground. At once, I understood the meaning of what I had heard. It was a clear instruction that I was to go to a cremation ground.

In India, in the Vedic mythology and in the Puranas, particularly in the Siva Purana, there are references to two cremation grounds. One is at Varanasi, known as Siva's smashan bhumi. The other is this entire area of Deoghar which, in our scriptures, is referred to as Chitabhumao, which is considered to be the burial ground not of Siva but of Sati. Deoghar is the second tantric seat after Kamakhya, which is located in Guwahati, Assam.

When the voice uttered the word 'Chitabhumao', I also saw the property very clearly in a vision; the building, the trees, everything as clearly as on a television screen. There have been so many other instances which I have attributed to my super mind, higher mind, deeper mind, greater mind or whatever you wish to call it. But now I did not make that mistake. That was my God who guided me. He had guided me from childhood.

He gave His mandate and it was going to happen. I did not even worry about how it will happen. I had the feeling that I am a servant, I do not have to worry. I do not have to be anxious. If He gives me an order I will do it, then things become easy. The servant does not have to worry. He just has to carry out his orders. A servant has no accountability, no responsibility. He just has to do his duty and not think too much. Not only in the path of sadhana, but in life also, man has no choices.

So, I did not choose Rikhia. God gave me this place. I had never thought of this place. I did not leave the ashram and decide to come here by my own choice, nor am I doing anything by my own desire.



This place is very near to Munger; I wanted to go away from Munger where they would not even get the faintest whiff of my scent.

I have only to say:

*O Lord, let Your wish prevail  
And let You be all in all.  
As long as there is life and blood in the veins,  
Let Your Self be the subject matter of my speech  
And let the search for You be the goal of my life.*

### **Following the Mandate**

On the 8th September 1989, at about seven o'clock, while I was boiling my tea, Swami Satsangi arrived all the way from Munger with Prasad of Guru Purnima, and I described to her what I had seen. The first instruction I gave her was to find the place for me.

I gave her a glimpse of what I had seen and described its setting and surrounding topography and told her, "You don't have to stay here. Go back immediately. Go, there is a place near Deoghar. Please go there and find it." I didn't have to worry, I just told Swami Satsangi. She left barely three hours after her arrival, in search of the place of my description.



I had given her a broad idea of the chitabhuma, which is a very large area. Who could find the shirish and palash trees that I had seen in the vision, in an area the size of Deoghar? She arrived in Deoghar and stayed in a hotel where she resolved to consult a knowledgeable priest the next day and try to find the spot with his help.

Luckily the next morning at Baba Baidyanath, she met Giridhari Panda who is the priest of the nearby Harlajori temple. She described what she was searching for and he took her to Rikhia. The land he showed her matched exactly what I had described. On the very same day, the owner had also decided to sell this property. So, He tells me to go there and He tells him to sell. This is not a coincidence. I have had many occurrences like this in my life.

At that time Rikhia was like the forgotten land. Barren and pure. Simple and divine. Swami Satsangi was led to the land ordained for me by Siva and she immediately recognised it as the place and she had the land registered the same day.

### **A New Chapter Begins**

On 12th September 1943, I shed all that belonged to my poorvashram - the name, the caste, the gotra and many more things including coat and pants to don the guru robes. It was on this day, at Rishikesh by the banks of the Ganga, that my Guru Swami Sivanandaji gave me Paramahansa diksha of the Dashnami Sannyasa Order.

Forty six years later, on 12th September, 1989, by mid-afternoon I was informed that barely two days after her departure, Swami Satsangi had located the exact setting as I had described to her, in Baidyanath Dham at the smashan bhoomi of Sati, for my further mission.

On the 14th, I received the news that the property had been acquired and I could leave Trayambakeshwar. I was far away in the south-west of India.

Things happened on their own. That evening I performed the poornahuti for the fulfilment of my prayers and the revelation of a divine place and a clear cut path, just as Bihar School of Yoga and Ganga Darshan had been revealed to me twenty-five years ago in the same place by the same Lord Mrityunjaya.

### **Instructions to Devotees and Disciples**

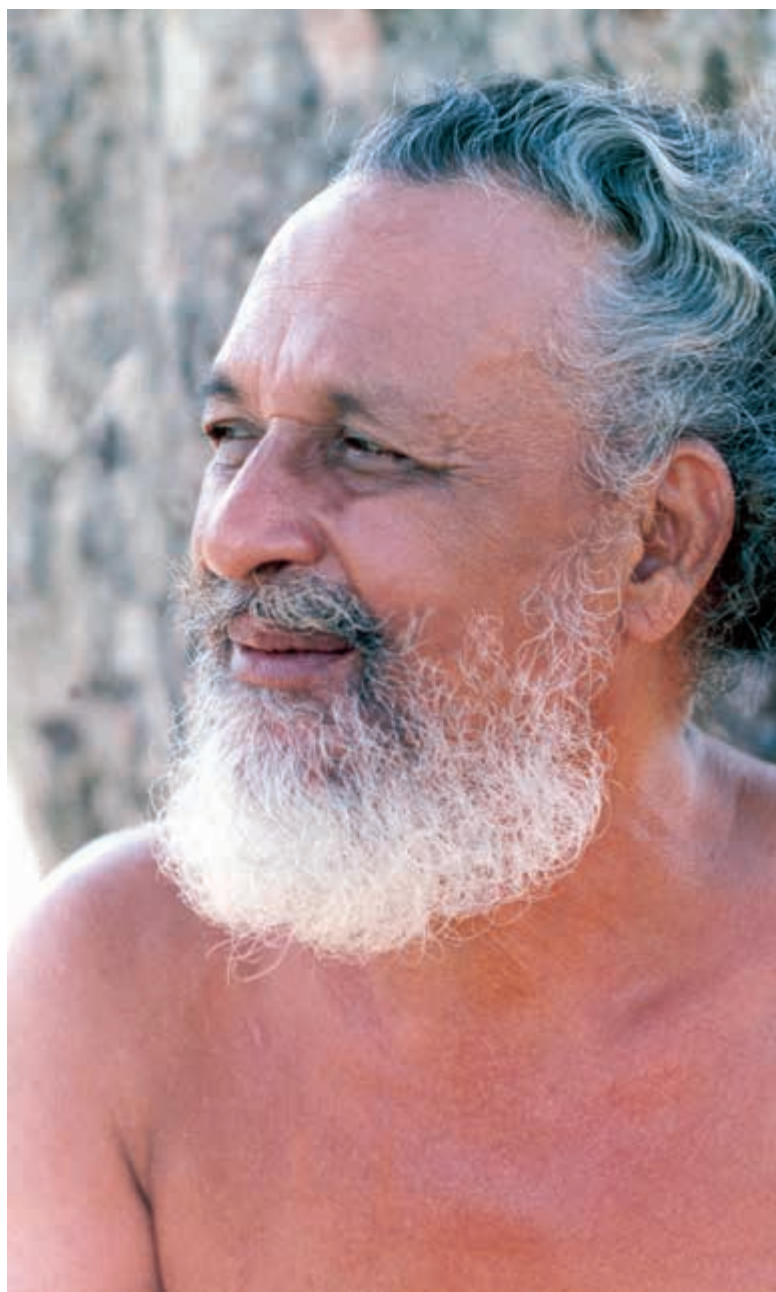
On realisation of my path ahead I now wish to make it clear to all of you associated with me in the past that I am dead and will continue to live in the smashan bhoomi of my Ishta Devata until he has some other command for me.

There are four stages in a sannyasins life - first with guru; second as a mendicant; third do his own work; and fourth be free! I have fulfilled the other stages and now am at the fourth. Now do not seek me out or hold me back. Even if you know where I am, do not hold me back.

Gurudev's inspiration is stirring within me. I will consider myself free from his debt only when I have filled the hearts of millions with his teachings and, anointed them with the most sacred dust of his lotus feet. I have set forth and will keep walking on the path to the final destination of absolute truth and unforgettable beauty.







## **Rikhia Agaman**

I arrived here in Rikhia on the 23rd September, 1989 at twelve o'clock, midday. It was the day of the equinox, when everything is in perfect balance; day and night are both exactly twelve hours long.

On such a day, I set foot here at exactly midday. Was that auspicious moment a coincidence? A few days after I arrived I was standing here in the centre of the land when suddenly a twelve-foot-long geru coloured serpent appeared at the far end and it circumambulated the entire property and disappeared into a bush just where I was standing. I dug my trishul at that very spot and I said, "I shall light my dhuni here." When God gives His command, you have to tune in and be able to understand. I named it Maha Kaal Chita Dhuni - the original one.

When I came to this place there was nothing growing here, it was barren. After I had been here for ten days, the work commenced. Astrologers have indicated in my horoscope that wherever I go, I will construct houses.

Things become so easy that you do not have to think or struggle. When it is God's will, everything is easy. When it is man's will, then you have to struggle. You can only attune to God's command when you stop thinking.

It is strange that I came to Rikhia, leaving all other places. Did I know about the existence of this place? I was given the address not by man, but by God. I am, and have always been, a man of resources. So why stay here in Rikhia? I could have had a very good cave in Gangotri where a helicopter could have just dropped all my things from Delhi. It would not have been at all difficult for me. God gave the command and so it happened that way. I have been sent here for a specific purpose.

## Living for Others

I wanted to retire and live quietly in solitude. I did not want to meet anyone, and even now I do not want to meet anyone. The whole world can complain about me. I do not mind. Initially disciples used to scale the walls and come in uninvited also. That is why I keep Bholenath. Everyone here has been stamped by him.

So now, to live only for others should be the dharma of Swami Satyananda's life. Since the day this thought came to my mind, I have achieved the aim for which I left my home, fifty or sixty years ago.

*I am the continuous flow of nectar,  
I am completely quiet, blissful and eternal,  
I am a luminous star of bliss.*

I did all sadhanas, I did everything. I read a lot, travelled around the whole world, saw all the temples of Christians, Muslims, Iranians and Parsis, but now here at Rikhia I have received His order and I am meant to work for others, not for my own spiritual salvation.

I realized that knowing the Self is necessary to keep oneself disciplined, without any craving for name and fame, or even for doing service and helping others. There is a difference between the feeling of service and the feeling of the Self. If I am hurt I feel pain, that is natural, but do I also feel pain if you are hurt?

We are all selfish, not selfless, and the path to God proceeds from selflessness. Generosity doesn't proceed from selfishness. There is only one way traffic on this route. Whatever spiritual path we follow, it must be a path of selflessness, and this has been said in all the scriptures.

This is atmabhava, not charity. Seeing everyone in oneself and oneself in everyone is the highest attainment of Vedanta:

‘Atmanipashyanti bhutani’ which means seeing the Self in all and all in the Self as one Brahman. This has been written in the Gita, Upanishads and Vedas and the rishis and munis have said the same thing. Atmabhava means to feel the experience of others as my own experience. The sorrow and sufferings of others, the death of somebody unknown to me, the problems of families who are strangers to me, are all felt as my own.

This is God’s mandate and my Guru’s teachings which have blossomed and manifested in Rikhia.





# Humble Beginnings

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati

Rikhiapeeth had a very humble beginning. It was started from scratch. There was nothing here of the 21st century. No roads, no electricity and no shops. We used to draw pure and clean water from the well as there were no taps. We used to eat on leaves. That beautiful palash tree, with orange flowers, used to grow just besides the dhuni of Swamiji, we just had to break some leaves and eat on that. The dhuni was lit in the early morning and Swamiji would remain at the dhuni all day doing his japa.

There were many things to do and we were busy all day. When there was nothing else to do, there was always the grass weeding. I have pulled out weeds for days at a time; so much so that when I used to close my eyes I used to see only weeds of all different types which I had been digging out the whole day. I told Swamiji that when I close my eyes I can only see weeds, he said, "Your dhyana is becoming perfect!" Even in that there was a lesson, every little thing was a lesson and in that lesson was hidden a miracle, it was a beautiful time.

It was simple village life. Rising early and starting the daily chores. I had to prepare bhasma for Swamiji to apply in Panchagni. The bhasma was prepared by burning and collecting the residue 11 times. Also special balls of cow dung were prepared with different herbs to burn in the dhuni.

At that time the most precious thing at the Akhara was wood. We had to collect stacks and stacks of wood for the



daily Panchagni. Every morning the entire area of Swamiji's Panchagni was smeared with 'lipai' of cow dung, making it fresh and clean for the day.



Almost the first thing that Swamiji did was to plant trees. Rikhia land is ideal for trees, they grow so fast here. The Rudraksha, Sivalingi and Gular trees were planted for Siva in his pooja area, which are still standing tall today. The Karanja tree was planted for Kali next to the Akhara. The Pipal tree was planted for Hanuman near Raghunath Kutir. Tulsi was planted near the well for Narayana. Worship of the trees with Ganga jal and incense were part of the daily ritual.

Soon Rikhia became Vedic bhoomi and we started living in the Vedic era following the tenets of Karma, Bhakti and Gyana Yoga. Simple living and high thinking!



# Deoghar - The Abode of Siva An Ideal Place for Swamiji

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati



Deoghar which is also historically known as Baidyanath Dham, is mentioned in the Siva Purana, which relates it to the Treta Yuga, the era of Lord Ram and Ravana. Narad Muni in his description of Baidyanath Dham to Hanuman describes it as the only place where Lord Siva grants boons to each and every person whether deserving or undeserving, sinner or saint. The name 'Deoghar', which literally means 'home of the Gods', is a modern name.

The climate at Deoghar is dry and congenial and this place is considered a health resort due to the good air and environment. Perfect for the sadhana Swamiji was to embark upon.

### **Baba Baidyanath - Lord of the Doctors**

The central figure around which everything revolves at Deoghar is Baba Baidyanath, the Jyotirlingam of Lord Siva. Carved out of a single rock, its magnificence and power draws lakhs of people to Deoghar for worship all year round. The word baidya means 'doctor', nath means 'chief', so you can say that he is the Lord of the doctors.



Baba Baidyanath heals all the ills of life, whether physical, emotional, psychic or spiritual.

Swamiji used to say that Baba Baidyanath is the civil court of Lord Siva, and Basukinath, another awakened shrine quite close to Deoghar is the criminal court. You understand that in the civil court cases take many years to file and then be processed. In the criminal court action is taken very fast. It means you make a prayer here it is certainly fulfilled at the appropriate time.



Swami Satyananda at Basukinath, 1989



Swami Satyananda at Basukinath, 1989

# Temple of the People

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

## **Shravan Mela**

During the month of Shravan, which falls during July and August, the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor walk barefoot 104 kilometres to Deoghar from Sultanganj, which is situated on the banks of the Ganga. Millions of people, old and young, men and women, come here on foot.

They fill a kalash with Ganga water at Sultanganj and carry it here on their shoulders. It takes them three to five days to reach this place and during these five days, they dress like sadhus and live like sannyasins. They are householders from different stratas of society - men, women and children, rich, poor, happy, unhappy as well as people suffering mentally and physically.

They carry the kalash of Ganga water on their shoulders and they never place it on the ground. Throughout the journey, they repeat the mantra, Bol Bam, Bol Bam, Bol Bam, Bol Bam. When they arrive in Deoghar, they enter the temple and pour all the Ganga water on Lord Siva.

This tradition has been going on for so many centuries that, with the amount of water poured on it for so long, the Sivalingam has flattened, as if it were thumped into the earth.

Some people also prostrate at every step of the journey. Doing namaskara, they prostrate on the road and pray



with each step throughout the journey until they reach the temple. It takes a long time, maybe a few months for them to reach here. People suffering from incurable diseases take this observance. This is austerity, or tapasya, perhaps it is like a purgatory.

Man has made so many mistakes in his lifetime. In order to eliminate the karma, he undertakes many forms of austerity and this is one of them. This type of austerity, which is known as prayaschit, is a part of the Vedic dharma, and it is found in Christianity as well.



Swami Satyasangananda performing puja at Baba Baidyanath, Deoghar



Swami Satyasangananda performing aradhana at Sri Vidyapeeth, Deoghar

### **Cremation Ground of Sati**

This is the cremation ground of Sati. When Lord Siva was crestfallen at the death of Sati, he began wandering from place to place, carrying her dead body. As he moved about, the different parts began to drop away. In one place her hands fell, in another her legs, somewhere else her eyes. In the end, only her chest, where the heart is located, remained with him, and this was cremated by the people here. That is why this place is also called the cremation ground of Sati, “Chitabhuma”, and is venerated as one of the sixty-four shaktipeethas.

Due to this incident, the environment here is permeated with the shakti of Bhagavati. Perhaps this place is special because it is an important shaktipeeth as well as a seat for one of the twelve Jyotirlingams of Lord Siva. Deoghar is an important seat of both Siva and Shakti. They are eternally present here and their influence is all pervading.



**Deoghar is the cremation ground of Devi, the place where her heart fell millions of years ago. It is also the birthplace of a new Devi. The message for the awakening of women will go out from here.**

### **Panchagni**

Usually Panchagni is done in burial grounds, that is the usual law and system. According to the traditions in India, there are two places that are known as burial grounds. One is Deoghar and another is Varanasi. That is also called Chittabhumau and this is also called Chitabhumao. This is the burial ground of Sati and that is the burial ground of Siva. These are the two places where Panchagni has to be done.

It is said that Sarada Devi performed Panchagni tapasya. In history even many women have performed Panchagni. Parvati, of course, you can say is mythological. Sarada is historical.





### **Legends of Deoghar Temple**

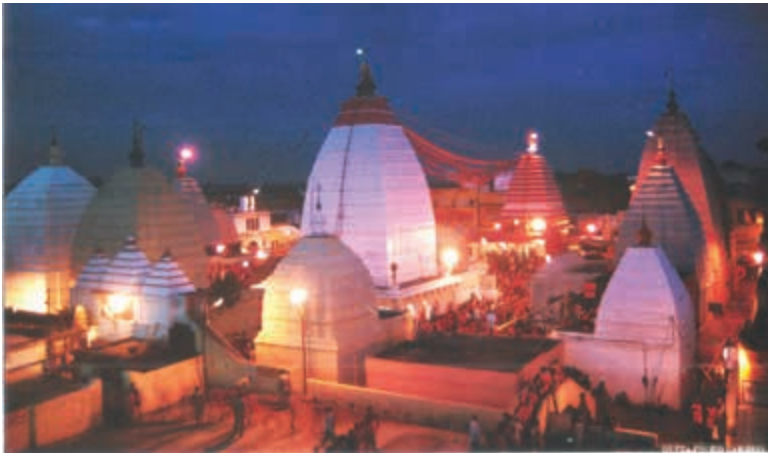
The legends about the Deoghar Siva temple are various. One legend is that in the Treta Yuga the demon Ravana, King of Lanka, propitiated Lord Mahadeva and wanted him to come over to Lanka. Mahadeva did not agree to this prayer but told Ravana that one of the twelve emblems of His divinity, Jyotirlingam, would be quite as effective as His presence and that he may take it away on the condition that there should be no break in the journey and the lingam would not be deposited anywhere on the earth. The condition was that if the lingam was put anywhere on the earth in the course of the journey, it would be fixed to that spot forever.

The legend says that Ravana agreed to this condition, took the lingam and started the journey to Lanka. The Gods dreaded

the effect of the lingam being established at the seat of a demon king. A ruse was devised by Varuna, the God of the waters, entered the stomach of Ravana and the demon had to descend to earth to relieve himself. Later, Vishnu, in the garb of an old Brahmin, appeared before Ravana, after his descend to the earth, and began to converse with him. Ravana requested the Brahmin to kindly hold the Jyotirlingam for a few minutes so that he could relieve himself. Lord Vishnu readily agreed to it and, as soon as Ravana turned his back to relieve himself, he left the Jyotirlingam on the spot and vanished.

When Ravana came back, he found that the Jyotirlingam was firmly fixed to the earth and realized that a trick had been played on him. He tried every possible way to remove the lingam but failed to do so. He made his obeisance to the lingam and daily he used to come from Lanka and worship the divinity.

The spot where Ravana came down to earth has been identified with Harlajori, about two kilometers from Rikhia and the place where the lingam was deposited is known as Deoghar.







# Village Life: Santhal Pargana

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



When I came here in 1989, it was a desolate place. There was nothing growing, not even a tree, shrub or bush; it was all stones. The people living in my neighbourhood had no hope for the future.

Deoghar is a land of Santhalis. Just as there are different tribes in Madhya Pradesh and other states, similarly, the native tribe here is Santhali. Rikhia is the tribal area of the Santhalis. This state was once called Santhal Parganas. The Santhalis are the indigenous tribe, the original residents, and they still live here today. They have a great culture.



The Santhalis are simple and nice people. Their king wasn't a Santhali; he was a follower of Vedic religion, like Rama, Krishna, Harish Chandra and others. Baba Baidyanath Dham is a Santhali temple, but the Ganga water is brought from Sultanganj, which is outside the Santhali jurisdiction. This is regarded as a symbol of unity, because Sultanganj falls within the territory of Anga. People bring Ganga water from there and offer it here. The priest here comes from Mithila. All this is a symbol of unity, what you call equanimity.

Santhals are the largest tribe in Jharkhand. The word 'Santhal' is derived from two words; Santa meaning calm and peaceful and ala meaning man. In the past, the Santhals were leading a nomadic life. Gradually they came to settle down and establish agricultural communities. Santhals lead a community life which is cohesive, organic and unified. Santhalis love dancing. Dancing is in their blood. They have oral traditions and songs. Rituals play an important role in their culture.



The Santhalis are my neighbours. They are good people who suffer from ignorance, illiteracy, helplessness and disease. They are poor but loving; they have big hearts and small bank balances. I know the villagers for eight to ten kilometres around me, and they do everything for me. My neighbours have been associated with the Akhara since its inception, and over the years have worked ceaselessly to construct the ashram.

When we started the construction, the Santhalis cleaned up the entire area before building began and plastered it with mud and cow dung. They are adept at using indigenous materials, and have a very good technology. We call the masons vishwakarmas, divine architects, because they have given us so much assistance in constructing the ashram. The local people also look after the horticulture and gardening, and all live within a radius of a few kilometres from the ashram.



Another surprising thing is that every building you see in the Alakh Bara has been constructed by local people residing within a two kilometre radius. Swami Satsangi has not even called anybody from Deoghar. The electricity, carpentry, civil engineering, preparation of land and planting the trees has all been done by them. Of course, they are being paid for that. We have local people who can construct anything. This kutir where I live, which is constructed entirely out of mud with a thatched roof, is an environmentally friendly house.



We utilize the services of the local people for digging excavation, installing pipes, brick laying, electrical fittings, welding, plumbing, carpentry and many other types of work. They maintain and service the vehicles, tractors, truck, cycles and motor cycles, even the UPS. We do not hire artisans or mechanics from the cities. Everything from painting to electrical work is taken care of by local artisans.



The Santhals are intelligent and skilled, honest and hardworking, but very independent. They are known to be simple, and peace-loving. Mostly they rely on physical labour for a living. They do not pilfer or shirk work. Because of their character the quality of their work is superior, neat and clean. We never have to worry whether or not they will turn up when required. That is why we hold them in high esteem. My arrival has made a substantial change in their destiny.





### **Village Life**

All around me there are villages. They like me very much, because they find that I am even poorer than them. This is a great solace to them, because they at least have one dhoti, but I do not even have that. I can live with them in much the same way as they live themselves. However, if I were to live with them like a rich man, then they would be jealous of me. We have established a relationship with these rural people.

The inhabitants of Rikhia are innocent and simple folk. In fact, we are like one family. They bring chapattis and vegetables for me. Whenever they do Kali pooja, they bring Prasad for Bholenath. Right now, they are engaged in harvesting paddy. Out of the paddy they will make flat rice and offer it at Deoghar temple. It is an age-old tradition to offer it there, since I have come here, they first offer it to me. I get quintals of flat rice.





The women of the villages are very sweet, they have environmental control, without being taught or told, they use branches of the trees and cow dung for fire.

When you are in a rural area, wherever you are, you should think about living a very natural life. A good life, smooth life, but you should also think of generating wealth for the people around. That is a very important part, a very important contribution to the society. I do not consider my work as charity, because these people are like my family.

When I go for a stroll to the villages, the people watch out for me and the children say good morning. If they miss seeing me, the children start shouting at their parents, "Mummy, Papa, Swamiji has gone past." It is not because I give them anything. Love is reciprocal. When you give love, you receive the same amount of love in return. If I ignore you, you are bound to ignore me too.



# Ode to Mrityunjaya

Om Namo Narayanaya

O Lord Mritiunjaya!

I have worshipped you

As Kaal Bhairava with one tattwa

As kaamakshi with five tattwas

As Vishnu with flowers, fruits, water and milk.

In many forms, in many ways

And in many places

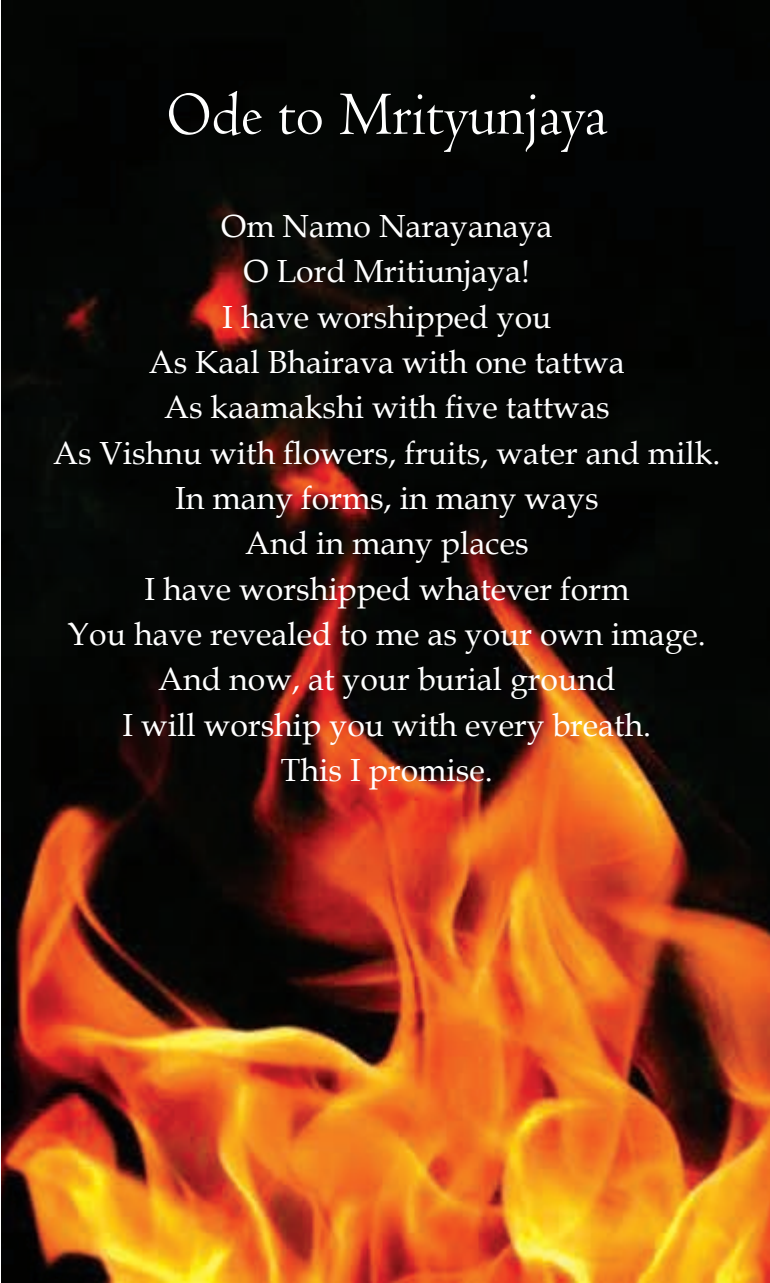
I have worshipped whatever form

You have revealed to me as your own image.

And now, at your burial ground

I will worship you with every breath.

This I promise.





# Rikhia the Tapobhumi: Panchagni

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

After coming to Rikhia I asked, 'What sadhana will one do at this age?' The age for sadhana is eight to thirty years. What sadhana will a person of seventy years do? I did whatever God inspired me to, and that inspiration came from my inner being, not from my mind. It came from my innermost being and that is why I listened to it. I heard the voice with my own ears. From inside it told me what to do and I did that. The instruction was given like that. I hardly can believe it even today.

This only happens by the grace of God. Why me? I had a lot of weaknesses - desire, anger, greed, ego and attachment. These are the five fires inside the subtle body which dry up the being of a person.

To avoid these fires and to face these fires are two different things. I did not avoid them; I faced them and faced them well. I faced them strongly but sometimes I felt as if I would slip. A person who can face these five inner fires, he alone can face the five external fires. Otherwise a sadhaka doing Panchagni sadhana commits suicide because thereafter one really does not survive. The best way to die is in Panchagni sadhana. It really isn't necessary to get your head cut off, just do Panchagni.

I am scared of heat, I can't tolerate it and I had my room air-conditioned in Munger. I am uncomfortable if the

temperature goes beyond twenty or twenty-one degrees. So I lost hope of surviving when the mercury touched ninety degrees. But somehow I survived.

I made a resolve to do Panchagni sadhana for five years. It can also be done for seven years. During that difficult period, I used to sit in between the fires, one fire, two fires, three fires, four fires, five fires. A fire to the left, a fire to the right, a fire to the front, a fire at the back and a fire above. Four fires were lit with wood and the fifth was the sun. So, I had to face five fires and these five fires that I am talking to you about are external. I was surrounded by external fires that were burning around me from sunrise to sunset in the hottest months of the year. In addition, there was the fifth fire which was the hottest of all – a hydrogen fire. The sun is hydrogen, so hydrogen fire.





### **The Five Fires**

The five external fires represent the five inner fires, the inner state which we all have to face. That too I have faced during my lifetime. I think you too are facing it, but perhaps you lose the battle by falling sick. Do you know what the five internal fires are? Kaama, desire; krodha, anger; lobha, greed; moha, attachment; mada, pride. These are the five fires raging inside all of you, and you are doing Panchagni without knowing it. The fire is raging within you. We are all burning.

### **Purification through Panchagni Tapas**

The world of action is the world of maya, and maya will put her imprint on each and everyone, without any expectation. So I had to wash and cleanse the black patches of karma. How could I do this? For a sannyasin the way of purification is Panchagni tapas. Panchagni means 'five fires'. The fifth fire is the sun overhead, it is a very difficult tapas.

I was scared of Panchagni because I could not bear even one fire. For me 25 degrees Centigrade was too high a temperature. Although I could easily tolerate the cold, even as low as 3 degrees Centigrade. I could remain naked even in Denmark, but heat I could not tolerate. I had to decide whether or not I could do the Panchagni tapas, the five fires authority. I thought that if I faced the five fires and could not bear the heat, then I would become dehydrated and sick. Then another thought came to my mind. Tulsi, a type of basil, is the best medicinal plant, so I chose Tulsi to be my presiding deity, my Ishta Devi, and I started practicing pooja, worship, of Tulsi, according to the tantric system. I decided that Tulsi would be the presiding deity of the Akhara and then I started practicing Panchagni.

It is a tapas of five years. One day the temperature went up to 90 degrees Centigrade. Can you imagine how hot 90 degrees Centigrade can be? The normal temperature was 50 to 60 degrees. In the cold season, when I started the fire in the morning, I would begin the sadhana with a temperature of 35 degrees and then smear my body with bhasma, holy ash. The bhasma intensified the sensation of heat, along with the feeling of bliss.

I faced the five fires from sunrise to sunset, from 14th January, Makar Sankranti, to 16th July, Karka Sankranti, from Capricorn Solstice to the Cancer Solstice, during the summer only, not during winter. There was one fire to the North, one to the South, one to the East, one to the West and the fifth fire was the sun above. When the wind blew sparks I would get black marks all over my body, so I put bhasma to protect it. I prepared a special bhasma, called Maha bhasma, which I made with cow's ghee and treated eleven times with many herbs. Honey and other things added to it. I would apply in the morning. I used no oil and ate only once a day.

I was able to do it only because of the blessings of Tulsi. I prayed to her for one thing only. I said, "Keep me fit, that's all, nothing else," because I did not want to miss this anushthan, even for one day, and I did not miss it. It is not with pride but with gratitude that I say, since I have come here I have not missed even one day of whatever sadhana I have undertaken. I am not a young man, I have snowy beard, but I can sit for ten to twelve hours without any problems, no pain in the joints, no diabetes, no blood pressure, no angina, no headache, no cold or fever. This is all the miracle of Tulsi. I didn't pray to Tulsi for money, an ashram, magical arts, erudition, siddhis or yogic powers. I prayed only for health and fitness.

The first year I started the fire outside. The next year I took it in four directions: east, west, south and north. I am in the centre and the sun is overhead. Nobody can come into the compound at that time. If anybody comes and meets me, it is a violation. In the beginning it was difficult, because people used to come and bash at the gate, and I would have to come out and meet them. Finally, Bholenath came into the picture. He sits in the mandap, and if anybody comes, he gives me warning. Then he goes for him, and that person leaves very fast. Now nobody comes.

### **Celestial Fires**

I had to decide how many years I would practice this Panchagni sadhana, for five years, twelve years or for life. I decided on five years and made a sankalpa. After this, the internal fire is extended.

From Capricorn to Cancer, I have to be beside the fire all the time. This is because the external fire ultimately takes the form of a celestial fire. First, it is called the external fire, then it becomes the internal, consumed fire, which is a high energy. If I am successful, it will become the celestial fire. What is celestial fire? Celestial fire and yoga are the same.



When you perform yoga practices like pranayama, you develop that celestial fire within your body.

This is a very ancient practice which all cannot and should not try to do; it is not permitted. When desires become weak, when passions become very weak, when you don't want anything from anyone for any purpose, and can manage just with one meal and little sleep, then you can practice this sadhana.

The temperature rises daily from sixty degrees to seventy degrees Celsius. The human body can stand such heat for one day, one week or possibly for one month, but for years together it is not possible. You would die of dehydration or some other problem, but I did not die!



One day, the temperature rose up to ninety degrees Celsius. I have a thermometer which is also used in the bread oven. That day the wind was blowing. Sixty degrees is normal. In the early morning when the sun rises, it is thirty degrees. So from sunrise, I seat for three hours, then take a bath. Then again at midday, I sit when the sun is descending.

Throughout this period of sadhana, I have been very healthy. I believe I will continue to be healthy, because my Guru said, "Unless you have worked out your karma, do not practice. Wait for forty to forty-five years." From 1947 to 1989 is forty-two years. My main sadhana is awareness of the breath, and synchronizing the mantra with it. All the time there is constant awareness of the breath, synchronized with the mantra, mostly seated in this posture. I can also recline, keeping the yoga danda in this posture and keeping this little friend, the mala, with me all the time. She is my life partner; that is the main thing. My ultimate aim is non-stop awareness of mantra and breath, for twenty-four hours, from four o'clock in the morning of one day until four o'clock in the morning of the next day; 21,600 breaths, mantras. I always pray:

*"O Lord, do me this one favour.  
When the breath stops, let my last word be Your name".*

In 1990, in addition to Panchagni, I added another sadhana. I undertook to complete one hundred and eight lakh (10,800,000) repetitions of the mantra of my Ishta Devata. This took me three hundred days, and I worshiped Tulsi daily.

### **Rules for Panchagni Sadhana**

There are rules regarding food. During that period we take more liquid diet, more salt and sugar. The food should be sour and cooked with onion, garlic and ginger. You have to prevent dehydration, otherwise when you sit in sixty degrees Centigrade your body loses water and dehydrates.

The main rule is that you are not to meet people. Complete solitude is required. Special bhasma or ash is prepared and applied. Such bhasma is called Maha bhasma and is made of pure cow dung cakes and reeds.

It may be done from childhood or later on in life. At an older age there is more risk to life involved. When a sannyasin enters the paramahansa stage he has to do this sadhana, although not all do. If I had not wished to do it, then I would not have done so. It is not compulsory but, in a sense, Panchagni is the knowledge of atonement.

However intelligent a man may be, if he goes into the coal pit he will have black marks on him. I cannot say that I have come out untainted. Therefore, I had to do Panchagni to cleanse myself. Everyone has to do penance. I did it for more than five years. Now I will sit in bliss.



# Darshan Purnima – Paramahansaji's Supersonic Flight Take Off

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati

A few months after Sri Swamiji's arrival in September he commenced his sadhana of Panchagni. The vedis were made and the wood stocked up. Sitting there in kaupeen under the open skies smeared with bhasma the Paramahansa was beginning his flight into the limitless Akasha. The fires were lit early morning just before sunrise and he remained there till sunset immersed in Naam Smaran, remembrance of the Guru mantra.

Before entering his life of total seclusion he sent out an open invitation to devotees, disciples, friends, admirers, to have his darshan while he sat in Panchagni. That was his way of saying goodbye. He called it Darshan Purnima. The darshan started at 6 am when the gates of Paramahansa Alakh Bara opened to the sound of the Damaru, to dispel the tamas and the Shankh to invoke the Sattwa. These were the sacred symbols of Paramahansa Alakh Bara.

Devotees thronged in large numbers and the never ending line extended almost up to Deoghar. In a single line they filed past his Panchagni vedi offering their Pranams, love and devotion. It was a never ending line and at dusk when Swamiji rose from his Panchagni and we closed our gates there were still devotees turning up hoping to have darshan.

It was a highly charged atmosphere that day. In total silence devotees walked through Paramahansaji's tapobhumi bowing before the Trishul in front of his Panchagni. That day the sleepy villages of Rikhia came alive with people from all over the world.

Everyone collectively observed Mouna. Offerings were not accepted and devotees had to enter empty handed. It is only when you are empty that you can be filled with grace! At the departure gate as devotees went out they received the Prasad of bhasma and read the sign with Sri Swamiji's Aadesh "Phir mat Aana - Don't come again."

From then on for nine long years the Tapasvi Paramahansa remained in Naam Smaran amidst the fires.









## Sankalpa of a Paramahansa

Peethadhishwari Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati

Hansa means Swan and Paramahansa is the Great Swan. According to legend if you give a mixture of milk and water to a Swan it can accomplish the rare feat of sifting out the milk from the water. A Paramahansa too can sift the real from the unreal, the seen from the unseen, the manifest from the unmanifest, thus rising above the mire of duality. A Paramahansa truly abides in the Self. For even while interacting with the external world a Paramahansa's gaze is turned inwards.

A Paramahansa dwells in the state of awareness which has transcended opposites. Night or day, hot or cold, praise or insult, love or hatred, wealth or poverty, friend or enemy, youth or old age, success or failure, joy or sorrow, good health or disease, society or seclusion, knowledge or ignorance, do not bind a Paramahansa.



A Paramahansa is simultaneously aware of both external as well as internal events and experiences, having complete control over both dimensions of awareness with the same intensity, focus, clarity, attention and memory. In other words, even in the deepest state of meditation, a Paramahansa can know the minutest detail of what is happening externally. One can easily say that a Paramahansa is one who has mastered the dual awareness.

The sadhana of a Paramahansa is Endurance. He endures abuse, censure and anger without reacting, responding or being affected by it anyway. He is free from the six waves of desire. He is free from the notion of being superior or inferior. He does not judge others. He is Sat-truth, chit-consciousness, ananda-bliss.

Ordinary mortals desire only for themselves or for those who belong to them. But a Paramahansa desires only for others. Even the fruits of his endurance a Paramahansa does not accumulate for himself but distributes to others in the form of blessings.

In the world the Paramahansa is most rare. If there is one he is ever pure. He is the veda purusha, or one in whom knowledge flows freely. He is ever contented. He does not bow to anybody. He is free from goal or no-goal. He is detachment personified.

This is the life Paramahansa Satyananda lived at Rikhiapeeth. The fruits of his endurance of the five fires he did not reap himself, but distributed freely and lovingly to his world family and especially to the impoverished and needy in the surrounding areas of Rikhiapeeth. Only a Paramahansa like him can have such a large hearted sankalpa.



# Swamiji's Constant Companion

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati



During his Panchagni sadhana, Swamiji had a constant companion at Rikhiapeeth and that was a beautiful German Shepherd Alsatian. Dog is the vahan or vehicle of Bhairava and as Panchagni is smashan sadhana in which Bhairava has a strong presence dogs have to be present as a part of the sadhana.

He remained with Sri Swamiji all the time. Besmeared with bhasma he too used to sit in Panchagni beside Swamiji all day. Nobody could go near, he would not allow anyone close. The only two people he would allow were Swami Niranjan and me. He was magnificent, he looked so royal. Whenever anyone came to Rikhia they first thought of Swamiji and then they thought of him, is he anywhere around?

In fact he was a most auspicious creature, a Godsend. The distribution of clothes and essential items to the villagers by



Sri Swamiji was done through Bholenath Readymade Store, which believe it or not was this wonderful dog's creation. It was always full! When we had distributed everything, I would go there and check that it was completely empty, to inform Swamiji that we have distributed each and every thing to the villagers. By evening there used to be another truckload and it used to fill up again immediately. And it is like that until today, the Bholenath Readymade Store is always full. Even today the grace is flowing – that is how auspicious Swamiji's companion was.

He was the most loving, loyal, dutiful companion of Sri Swamiji. He was a witness to Sri Swamiji's Panchagni and remained by his side in tapasya. Sri Swamiji said, "Dogs are amazing disciples, they are loyal and obedient, and have a perfect blend of opposites. They can be lazy and then alert within a second, they can be loving and gentle and fierce as well. They are greedy but if refused they are content as well. They are 24/7 on duty! They have only One Master!!!"

Today he is still enshrined near Swamiji's Samadhi Sthal and even today roams the Akhara protecting us all. We all love him very much and always will.

# Constant Companion

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



During Panchagni I had a pedigree Alsatian dog, a breed which is kept in an air-conditioned room during summer, but he was living with me within the heat range of Panchagni. He used to sit in the Panchagni with me.



When I used to sit for long hours in Panchagni, with temperatures soaring to 100 degrees Centigrade, he used to sit by my side. He never left my side, no matter how hot or uncomfortable it was. He used to smear himself with bhasma, wear a rudraksha, and sit with me. You can say that he was a witness to the Panchagni sadhana I did in Rikhia.

The presence of a dog is essential in Panchagni. It is a necessity because the dog is the vehicle of Bhairava. Just as the vehicle



of Siva is Nandi and the vehicle of Vishnu is Garuda, in the same way, in the tantric tradition a dog represents Bhairava. He represents that aspect of tantra which is esoteric.

You see, every sadhana is both exoteric and esoteric. The exoteric is what you can comprehend with your eyes, ears, nose, touch and taste. To comprehend the esoteric, one has to have a different eyesight, a different nose, a different hearing, a different sense of touch and taste. There is a lot taking place in the different spheres that exist immediately around us, but we cannot comprehend that because we do not have the ability. Dogs have a sixth sense. They can immediately pick up higher frequencies. Therefore, the presence of a dog is mandatory in higher esoteric sadhanas such as Panchagni.

In the tantric tradition, Bhairava represents an inner state of experience, and the dog is the vehicle of Bhairava. What do I mean by inner state? Happiness is an inner state, sorrow is an inner state, meditation is an inner state, samadhi is an inner state. What about the dreams you have at night? They too represent an inner state. The inner state is a position which you take at a particular time of your life. Sometimes you are happy, sometimes you are not. In other words, your thoughts, feelings, emotions, dreams, perceptions, understanding, all signify your inner state at that particular moment. In the same way, Bhairava is a highly refined esoteric inner state of being that is experienced when the mind transcends the barriers of time.

Hindus worship Bhairava as God. There are special temples made for Bhairava, and he assumes different forms: Kala Bhairava, the destroyer of time, Ananda Bhairava, the blissful Bhairava, Unmatta Bhairava, the intoxicated Bhairava, Vijnana Bhairava, the Bhairava of specialized knowledge.

The literal meaning of Bhairava is the howling sound that the dogs make. Sometimes, at night you hear dogs howling loudly. That is what Bhairava means. Bhairava is an inner



state of being in spiritual life where you produce a sound without knowing it or hearing it. Sometimes, you cry out in dreams, don't you? Many times you cry out loud in dreams, but you don't know that you are crying. So, what do you call it? Bhairava.

In the same way, in meditation when your awareness pierces through the veils and enters subtler dimensions, it encounters the sound of howling, wailing or barking. There is no one in your room, but you can distinctly hear the sound of a dog. So, in tantric esoterism, the dog represents Bhairava and during Panchagni, which is a smashan sadhana, it is essential to represent Bhairava. Therefore, I kept a dog.

He came to me for the Panchagni and the day my Panchagni sadhana finished, he left his body the same night. He just came, put his head on my lap and departed. There is a Samadhi, a tomb for him here at Rikhia because I remember him. I should remember him because he was my companion.

# Sri Panchadashnaam Paramahansa Alakh Bara

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati



In the early days this place was not known as Rikhiapeeth. Sri Swamiji called it Paramahansa Alakh Bara which literally means the invisible home of a Paramahansa.

First of all there were no roads and even if visitors made it here they found the gates closed as Sri Swamiji was in sadhana. Villagers were in and out but as he had renounced Gurudom and all associations of the past even disciples could not enter as he was entering into the life of a Paramahansa, and his sadhana of Naam Smaran. It truly was an invisible home.



A little while after Sukhman Marhi came up on the opposite side of the road and much to the joy of devotees a Darshan Manch was made for them to climb up and have a glimpse of the tapobhumi.

The Sri Panch of Paramahansa Alakh Bara are enshrined at the front gate. They are Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Ganesh and Bhavani. The kalash is for Brahma, the conch for Vishnu and the trishul for Siva, Bhavani and Ganesh are enscripted as yantras on each side. That is how they are represented at the gate which stands tall at the entrance.



As the saying goes -  
*"Sada Bhawani dahini  
Sanmukh rahe Ganesh  
Panch Dev raksha kare  
Brahma Vishnu Mahesh."*

The tenets or four pillars of Parmahansa Alakh Bara given by Sri Swamiji, are tyaag - renunciation; samarpan - surrender; shraddha - faith; atmavishwas - firm belief in oneself. A Paramahansa is one who can separate the real from the unreal, one who can rise above duality, one who sees all as equal. Sri Swamiji received the diksha of Paramahansa at a very young age from his Guru who told him that he would live the life of a Paramahansa later in life. His Guru's words fructified at Rikhia.

On entering the Paramahansa life Swamiji donned the black kaupeen or loincloth and black became the dress code of the Akhara. He kept the yoga danda a symbol of his vows of austerity and sadhana. He grew his hair and smeared his



Maha Kaal Chita Dhuni, 1990



Parna Kutir, 1990

body with bhasma. He ate from the khapar which is made from the shell of a coconut. He stayed in the open at all times, day or night, summer or winter.

Then he lit the first fire, which he called the Maha Kaal Chita Dhuni. There the tapasvi sat in hail, rain or storm immersed in mantra. Seeing the frequency of rains and stormy conditions a small open thatched shed was made for him just behind the dhuni so that his sadhana would go undisturbed beside the fire.

A small thatched kutir, Parna Kutir, was made to stock wood and essential items that were needed for sadhana. Parna Kutir was destined as the place that would later become his Samadhi. It is as if even now laid to rest beside the Maha Kaal Chita Dhuni he is still immersed in mantra.

Each morning at 4am when it was still dark the sound of Sri Swamiji's damaru would be heard which signalled he was seated in sadhana. He would be up much before that bathing in cold water and preparing for the long hours of sadhana which he did each day. Gradually Paramahansa Alakh Bara transported itself to the Vedic times and truly became the land of Rishis.





Rikhia, 1989

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Parna Kutir and Akhara, 1990

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Akhara, 1991

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# Paramahansa Alakh Bara

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Paramahansa Alakh Bara is a sannyasa ashram, although not only sannyasins live there. In grihastha or householder ashram, everyone lives according to their social background, but those instincts should not enter the ashram premises. All ashrams in India follow the rules of the gurukul tradition. People of all faiths and castes can come. If you come to the ashram, live by its rules. Whether you come for health management course, sannyasa course, as a guest, detective or thief, you will have to observe the decorum of the ashram.

The time is coming when the ashrams in India will be filled to capacity. India will become a place of shelter and security for people from the West. A global market is being opened in India. When it is completely open, large number of brilliant young people will come. Their culture and mentality is changing.

The ashram is the best place for foreigners to live; they find a detached community, an opportunity to do kirtans, bhajans and sadhana, work to do and food to eat. In the past, ashram rules were framed for Indian society, but now they need to be re-framed for a global society. The rules in Paramahansa Alakh Bara are for a global society. The growth of society should now centre around the ashrams. The twenty-first century will be the century of sannyasins and ashrams. We can foresee this and you should all be ready for it.

I have established an Akhara which is for universal brotherhood. No distinction of caste, colour, religion, or of gender.

Alakh Bara means invisible boundary and in fact the traditional ashrams were Alakh Baras in remote places where there was absolutely no access to the public, very much like this place. Later on they became integrated with society and were known as ashrams but the tradition is of the invisible house where higher spiritual sadhanas can be done undisturbed and uninterrupted.

In the sannyasa tradition there are seven acharyas. They accepted the Paramahansa Alakh Bara as a new order which would give people the concept of the highest vedic principles of tyaga, vairagya, sadhana and so forth, without any effort. Without Sri Swamiji even desiring it the Alakh Bara came to be recognized as the eighth order of sannyasa. It is definitely changing the concept and the tradition of sannyasa more and more and I feel that Paramahansaji is just being an example of how far a person can go in spiritual life.

- Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati





# Tulsi: The Presiding Deity

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

The first feature of our Akhara is the worship of Tulsi. The second feature of this Akhara is the recitation of Ramacharitamanas. We preach only Tulsi puja and daily chanting of the Ramacharitamanas for forty minutes. In Munger I was a yoga teacher, but now I am starting a new tradition of worship and devotion.

This is the Paramahansa Sampradaya, in which worship of Tulsi for health is a must. Health is the first need of every human being, whether a beggar or a millionaire, a sannyasin or a householder. This is not what Satyananda is preaching, but the teaching of the scriptures. One way of attaining sound health is by worshipping Tulsi, the queen of all medicinal herbs.



When I came here, I installed Tulsi in a shrine and put her in charge of the good health in the Akhara. You do not even have to eat the leaf, just pray to her for sound health. I decided to make Tulsi the Ishta Devi, presiding Goddess, of this place. I planted Tulsi here and she is the ruling Goddess of this place.

I only made one sankalpa when I came here. Please let me not be ill and it has been granted. I have not been ill even one day since I have been here. An illness would have caused a break in the sadhana. Therefore I made Ma Tulsi the Ishta Devata of the Akhara. Just as a married woman maintains ties not only with her husband, but also with other members of the family – someone is her brother, another is her nephew – in the same way, Tulsi is Devi Ma, Mother Goddess, to me.

My Guru mantra is different, my favourite God is Rama, and I worship all of them. I do not have any difficulty with that. I do not think too much or become too intellectual. Tulsi is the Devi Ma of this place for the simple reason that I want to remain healthy.

I have never been ill in my life. I have never had a cold, cough or fever. I have never taken medicine although I have knowledge of all the medicines. Now, I do not wish to miss even one day of my sadhana. If I have a cold and cough, I will not be able to perform my sadhana, and my anushtan, my resolution to practice, will be broken.

Tulsi is the symbol of health. She is the mother of all medicinal plants. I pray to her only for health. Even if I die I will not be bothered, but falling ill, calling the doctor, taking medicine all the time is not good for a sannyasin. That goes against his stature. I am not at all afraid of dying – everyone has to die one day, no one can escape that. Death is certain, though sickness is not. It is not necessary that we must fall ill.



Now the question comes up, if you eat only once a day, if you eat pure and natural food, wake up and bathe on time, how can you fall sick? I have seen so many sattwic people who not only fell ill, but died of cancer. Even if they do not eat spicy food, eat pickles, drink tea or coffee, they fall sick and take medicines all their lives. So I thought to myself, "You will not find any difference in spite of your sattwic life until you receive blessings. There is no guarantee that you will remain healthy only because of your sattwic life."

This is the reason why I established Tulsi as the presiding Devi of Rikhia when I came to this place, and started her worship according to the rules. Whether Tulsi is effective or not. This depends on our faith.



It is necessary to have Shaligram along with Tulsi, but we did not have a Shaligram. I said, "That is fine. We will bring Tulsi and Shaligram will come on itself." Soon after we received bags of Shaligram. A stranger sent them from Nepal, and a sackful has been stored. I understood then that the resolution of worshipping Tulsi was the right one. There was only one problem before me – I should not miss even a day of my anushthan.

I feel that the genetic build I inherited from my parents is excellent. I am a very good genetic specimen. I have never been ill. I have written many books on various illnesses and I know a lot about medicines. Yet I have never experienced



illness myself. Earlier, even if I felt a bit unwell, it would not make much difference to me. I would just rest and fast and be fine again. However, here I could not miss even a day of sadhana. That is why I selected Tulsi Devi.

I could have chosen Ganesha, Chandi, Siva or any other God or Goddesses. What was most important for me was not to get a cold, cough or headache for even a day, and that is very difficult at the age of sixty-five. It would be even more difficult for a man who has always led a five-star life. My room was air-conditioned with automatic temperature control. I cannot tolerate heat at all. I could not bear heat over twenty-five degrees. However, nothing happened to me during Panchagni. No dehydration, no fever, no dysentery. I used to get sound sleep. Through God's grace, I used to sleep in the open on a cement platform. I wanted excellent health and Tulsi is the symbol of good health. She is the queen of all medicinal plants. I used to worship Tulsi and blow the conch every day before sunrise and before sunset.

### **Mother Tulsi**


Tulsi is a botanical plant. It is basil. Each plant has got some property which is known to the pharmacists. Tulsi has got many properties. Tulsi has got a property to resist disease. Chemically-based antibiotics are also used for the same purpose, to counteract disease. In India Tulsi is considered to be the killer of all pains and diseases and to be the most important of all plants and herbs.

Indians have cherished the Tulsi since time immemorial. Tulsi is a very sensitive plant. The green and black Tulsi are the most prominent varieties. In Greece it is planted before each house. This is their tradition. It is similar to ours. They also put the icon of Christ near it, but this is common only in the countryside. Not in the cities. They make a small parapet and plant it. You can also see this in Thailand, where they even put it in coffins.



Tulsi is the presiding deity of the Paramahansa Alakh Bara. And Akhara is a special place of sadhana. Every Akhara has its own special deity and here Tulsi, the queen of medicinal plants, is the Ishta Devi.

On 23rd September 1989, when I first arrived at Rikhia, a large geru coloured snake perambulated around the property and disappeared. I realized that the spot where the snake had vanished would be the place for my dhuni, or sadhana fire, so I ignited my dhuni there and it is smouldering even now. Then I made a small shrine for Tulsi near the well, because Mother Tulsi is the presiding deity for the Akhara because Sri Baidyanath is the civil surgeon and Tulsi, is the best of medicinal plants. She is the head of all the departments of pharmaceutical flora.



I had thought about what the biggest obstacle to my sadhana could be. I am a man of truthful heart and robust, sturdy body. Once I decide something I am fully committed to it and my determination in anushtan never falters or flags. But interruption can come from physical sickness like coughs and colds. This is the dharma of the body. Old age and sickness can bring me down from a five star level to a no star level.

So I prayed to Tulsi for sound health at the beginning of my Panchagni and anushtan sadhanas, "Mother, from today you are the health minister of this Akhara. I am embarking on a very difficult task in this period of my life and I need to be free from disease." I did not want to miss even one day of the anushtan. And I did not miss it. I say this with gratitude, not pride.

Panchagni was an austerity of five years, and I was able to do it only because of Tulsi's blessings. I have remained in perfect health. Although the temperature during Panchagni sometimes reached 90 degrees Centigrade, never once did I become dehydrated. Since I started worshiping Tulsi for good health she has blessed me with perfect fitness. This is the direct result of Tulsi worship.

All the ornaments that I give to the newlywed girls of the locality belong to Tulsi. They are offered to her first and foremost. Whenever you give a golden bracelet, nose ring or hair ornament, you are in fact offering it to Tulsi as she is the owner of this property. Everything is first dedicated to Tulsi and then later presented to the young brides. For an intellectual, Tulsi is just a plant, but for me she is a Devi.

### **Worship of Tulsi**

I worship Tulsi twice a day, I do it regularly and I like it very much. Such worship does not require a good intellect, but it requires a good heart.

One who has neither a good intellect nor a good heart, know him to be a poor, deprived person. One who has a good intellect but no heart is like a fancy sweet shop where the sweets lack sweetness. What can you really do with high intellect? Do you love your wife with your intellect or your heart? Is hate for your enemy intellectual or emotional? Love, hate, mercy and lust are all manifestations of the heart, not the intellect.

You can say, "The world was created, there is matter, therefore, there should be God." Your approach may be epistemological, theological or ontological; all these approaches are intellectual. God is. You can't prove it and you can't disprove it. You may believe it or not. Nobody is forcing you to believe that God exists. The best thing, therefore, is to make God a matter of heart. Spiritual life, sadhana, bhakti or God are matters of the heart, not the intellect. You can approach them easily with the feeling of faith. When you want to write books, use the intellect, but when you want to feel for yourself, the heart is best.

That is why I worship Tulsi twice a day. I made her the Ishta Devi, the tutelary deity of my Akhara. There is only one prayer I submit to her, "Keep me healthy as long as I practice spiritual life. The moment you see there is something wrong and that I have moved away from spiritual life, take this body away." What is the use of this body? It is a 1923 model and there are many later models. I am putting this in a witty way, but I am speaking from my heart.



# Tulsi

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati



The Tulsi puja established by Sri Swamiji continues daily at Rikhiapeeth

Soon after Swamiji set foot on Rikhia soil, this barren land which was full of all kinds of weeds, rough grass, stones and dried cracked mud, began to sprout Tulsi. And the Tulsi that manifested was Shyam Tulsi, the Tulsi with the dark bluish hue which is found in Badrinath - Shyam Tulsi. All over this land, all over the property, the Shyam Tulsi began to spring up. Swamiji took that as a blessing and made Tulsi Ma the Ishta Devi of Rikhiapeeth.

Then Shaligram arrived, which is the symbol of Vishnu and is found in the Gandaki River. Each year 'Tulsi Vivah' was performed by Sri Swamiji, a simple, beautiful and sanctifying ritual of the wedding of Tulsi with Shaligram.

Sri Swamiji would say that Tulsi is 'Aushadhi Ki Rani' the queen of healing herbs. Before starting his sadhana Sri Swamiji took a sankalpa before Tulsi Ma and prayed to her for uninterrupted Panchagni sadhana which he did for nine long years here at Rikhiapeeth.

He performed Tulsi puja each morning and evening. It is one of the purest rituals one can imbibe and follow. In the morning he would bathe the Tulsi with Ganga jal and offer incense and in the evening deepak and arati. Then the sound of Sri Swamiji blowing the conch would resound in the air and in avahaniya mudra he would offer his prayers. Purity filled the air around us!!



Swami Satyasangananda during Tulsi Vivah, 2020

# Ganesha

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Ganesha is my Gurubhai. Once a boy was selling images of Lord Ganesha made of clay. Swami Satsangi purchased one and showed it to me. The same day three more images of Lord Ganesha were received from Delhi, some made of ashta dhatu, eight metals and some of stone. Then I realized that this had some great significance. So all four idols of Lord Ganesha were installed here in Ganesh Kutir, where Lord Ganesha resides. Then I thought, since Lord Shankara cannot come, he has sent his son, Ganesha. Lord Siva is my Ishta Devata and I am his devotee, thus Lord Ganesha is my Gurubhai. Lord Siva told me that he could not come as he was too busy, but he was sending his son and my Gurubhai.



He told me further to serve him well, since he is not like his father. Lord Siva is unconcerned about his comforts. He takes ganja and is always in an avadhoota state. You cannot clean the place when he is around. On the other hand Lord Ganesha is tip-top and likes to eat well. Ever since he arrived, my way of thinking has entirely changed. I have to serve Lord Ganesha and so I have to prepare nice food now. Khichari is a thing of the past. Now someone comes to prepare puris, parathas, halwa, cake and chocolate for him. Lord Ganesha is very fond of modaks and the deity who is fond of modaks gives us prosperity in return. Lord Ganesha has a big belly and without a big belly you cannot enjoy all this.

Since it is a question of keeping Lord Ganesha happy, I have to keep that bhava, that feeling, that whatever he wills I do. I have often heard the voice of the Lord. I have received many things in my life on hearing such commands. One of the reasons for my success can be attributed to that.

When I propagated yoga like a bulldozer in the West and had the scientists shave their heads, it was possible only because I knew where to go and where not. I always received full instructions from Him.

Ganesha is the auspicious manifestation of Siva. Each devata has its manifest and unmanifest side. Parvati's parents disapproved of Siva and opposed the marriage. She performed the Panchagni to marry him. Ganesha is her beloved son, born of her. Since Ganesha came here we named this Kutir, Ganesh Kutir. This Kutir is made of mud. I live 4 months in this Kutir and 8 months in the open.

I keep one Ganesha here which I have named Ganesha Ramani, because Ramani signifies the people who live around me. In the kitchen is Ganesha Bhattacharya, because there are many Bengalis in this area and Bengalis like sweets a lot like Ganesha. In my bedroom is Ganesha Iyer, because my Guruji was an Iyer and Ganesha Ali who represents unity.

Since Ganeshaji has come here, there has been an improvement in our diet. Now delicious food is being prepared here. Someone from Dhanbad brought a trekker load of basmati rice, so for months together we have eaten basmati rice. Since Ganeshaji likes to eat good food, he has made arrangements for himself. However, we are the ones who eat it. For us, it is prasad. Today a new Ganesha has come from Italy, a dancing Ganesha. Ganesha is the embodiment of total knowledge. Kartikeya, the other son of Lord Siva, was an ordinary person, but Ganesha is learned. He enjoys studying, reading and writing. He worked as Vedavyas' steno in order to write the entire Mahabharata epic.

I worship Ganesha, bathe him and give him food. I give him new cloths every year. At the end of the winter I will remove them and give him summer clothes. The clothes I have taken off him I will give to some of you. Every year if you come,



I will give you more. This cloth is not for any purpose; it is just an icon. Just keep it in the place where you do pooja, worship, or where you meditate, or where you keep your holy book, whether it is the Bible, the Koran, the Ramayana, the Guru Granth Sahib or any other book. Just keep it there. It is an icon, it is auspicious and it will remove so many of your problems.

Often there are no problems but we feel that there are. Although there are problems, the ones we see are not the real problems. But still we always feel problematic. Everything is a problem for us. God doesn't come for that. Sometimes a child cries and cries, but the mother does nothing. Only when necessary will she say, "Hey", and take charge. In that way, God too definitely removes our problems when needed most.

My father was an Arya Samaji and did not worship statues. My Guru was a Vedantin. He used to say, "Aham Brahmasmi," and there were no statues in his ashram. But my



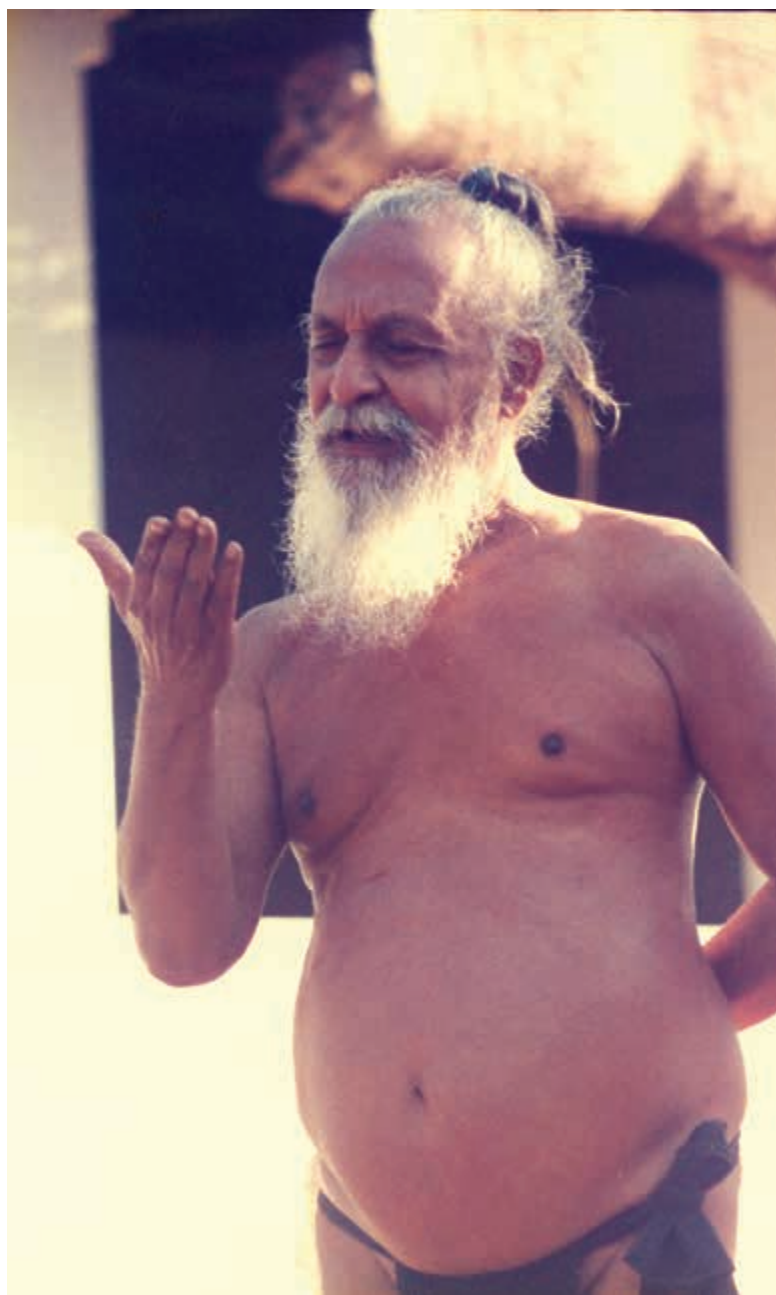
life became such that I had to worship them. Lord Ganesha came to me and said, "Even if you do not accept me, I am your guest." How can I not accept him? Within twenty-four hours a statue of a Madrasi Ganeshji, another Bengali Ganeshji and yet another Muslim Ganeshji arrived here. Now what alternative did I have but to worship them? But since I do not know pooja, I only offer agarbatti, incense stick, to each of them. After that a big change occurred in my life.

God came to me as a super washing machine. Lord Ganesha came to me as a washing machine and transformed me into a sheet of cloth. Now I am clean after being washed.

Ganeshji is my Gurubhai, Guru brother, and it is a privilege for me to live with him. He is my Gurubhai because I am a worshipper of Sivaji, and Ganesha is his son. We are both bhaktas of Lord Siva. Ganesha is such a big man, such a great person. This is why I am telling you that I stay with Ganesha, just as you may tell me that you stay with the Prime Minister or the President. It is high level talk - I am a guest of Ganesha. Am I not a great man?



Ganesh Kutir, Rikhia 2020



# Ganesha lives at Rikhiapeeth in Ganesh Kutir

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati

Here in Rikhia, at the Tapobhumi of Gurudev, Ganesha is the most important, because Guruji installed him here. He is Gurudev's Gurubhai. For twenty years Sri Swamiji did the worship of Ganesha, and this continues till today. He even built Ganesh Kutir for him, so we have a house for him. Since then Ganesha kept arriving and now we have an army of Ganeshas.



Swamiji used to say, "Ganesha stands for good food, comfort, luxury. Ganesha is always wearing silk dresses, you will always see him dressed well, in satin and silk. And he loves laddu and good food. From the day that the worship of

Ganesha started here in the Akhara, our kitchen changed. Before that we were only eating khichari, but as soon as Ganesha came, idli and dosa, pulao and puri started coming in, and it happened on its own. So I knew that Ganesha wants to come."

### **Ganesha Fulfils the Needs of His Devotees**

Ganesha is very playful. So it was good to welcome him to Sri Swamiji's Tapobhumi and have him around. He effortlessly removes all that obstructs the path in a most playful and joyous manner. This he did at Rikhia by fulfilling the needs of Sri Swamiji's impoverished neighbours. Not only did he fix our kitchen and menu, soon the villagers started receiving food, clothes, houses, medicines and even opportunities to earn a living.

What are the needs of the people of Rikhia? Food, medicine, clothes, warm socks, shoes. Swamiji used to say, "They don't need chocolates, they don't need candles – these are for spoilt people. They need the basic necessities." Sri Swamiji thought about them every day, that was his main concern. Whenever I met Swamiji he would say to me, "The children must have shoes, socks, warm clothes, school uniforms, pens and notebooks." That is all he used to talk about. He included everyone in his thoughts and by the grace of Guru and Ganesha the lives of the villagers began to improve.

We believe that Ganesha is a part of our ashram and that he lives here with us that his how intimately we feel his presence. On 21st September 1995 we woke up in the morning and were flooded with the news of Ganesha drinking milk all over the world. I ran to the fridge to check the milk that was kept there for Sri Swamiji's dog and found the whole bowl empty. Ganesha did not wait for us to offer him some milk he simply opened the fridge and helped himself and left a thank you note!

The Ganeshas which Sri Swamiji installed at Ganesh Kutir are most special as Paramahansaji himself performed their prana pratishtha and worshipped them daily waking them each morning with Ganga jal, incense and arati. This tradition continues even today.







Ananda Utsav, annual worship of all the Ganeshas of Rikhiapeeth



# Rikhia is my Airport

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



I have left Munger now and settled here. This is my airport. My aircraft will fly away from here. I have not come here from my own desire; I was asked to come. The villagers have accepted me with love. There are no mosquitoes here. It is very peaceful. At night you can experience absolute silence and stillness. There is very little electricity and it is disconnected at night. Everyone is asleep by eight o'clock.

I left home and never turned back. I left my Guru's ashram and never went back. I left Munger and never went back. One

day I shall leave this place and never come back. I do not have the habit of going back. I have never practised looking back. What is the use of looking back? How many times have I been born? How many parents have I had? How many times have I enjoyed pleasure and borne sorrow? How many friends and enemies have I had? Where are they now? Whom should I search for? Even in this birth how many friends have I had? Where have they all gone?

Life is transitory. You have to forget the past. If you don't, then eventually one day everything will be sealed in a crypt by itself. Sometimes when you have a deep connection with someone, it manifests again in a later birth in some form and a little bit of interaction takes place. Apart from this, no one is related to anyone in this world. We come with a gust of wind, meet on a shore and then separate to go our own ways. We are all guided by the winds of karma. Therefore, I have maintained a steady attitude in life. I accept the fact that people meet me and then go away. A sadhu is nobody's friend. When offered a smoke, he shares a puff and then slips away.

Even a donkey leaves his footprints behind. Yes, a Guru is a donkey and the disciple is a dog. Their natures are akin to the donkey and the dog. The donkey leaves footprints behind. I am also leaving behind an impression or two. They are memories, footprints in the sands of time.



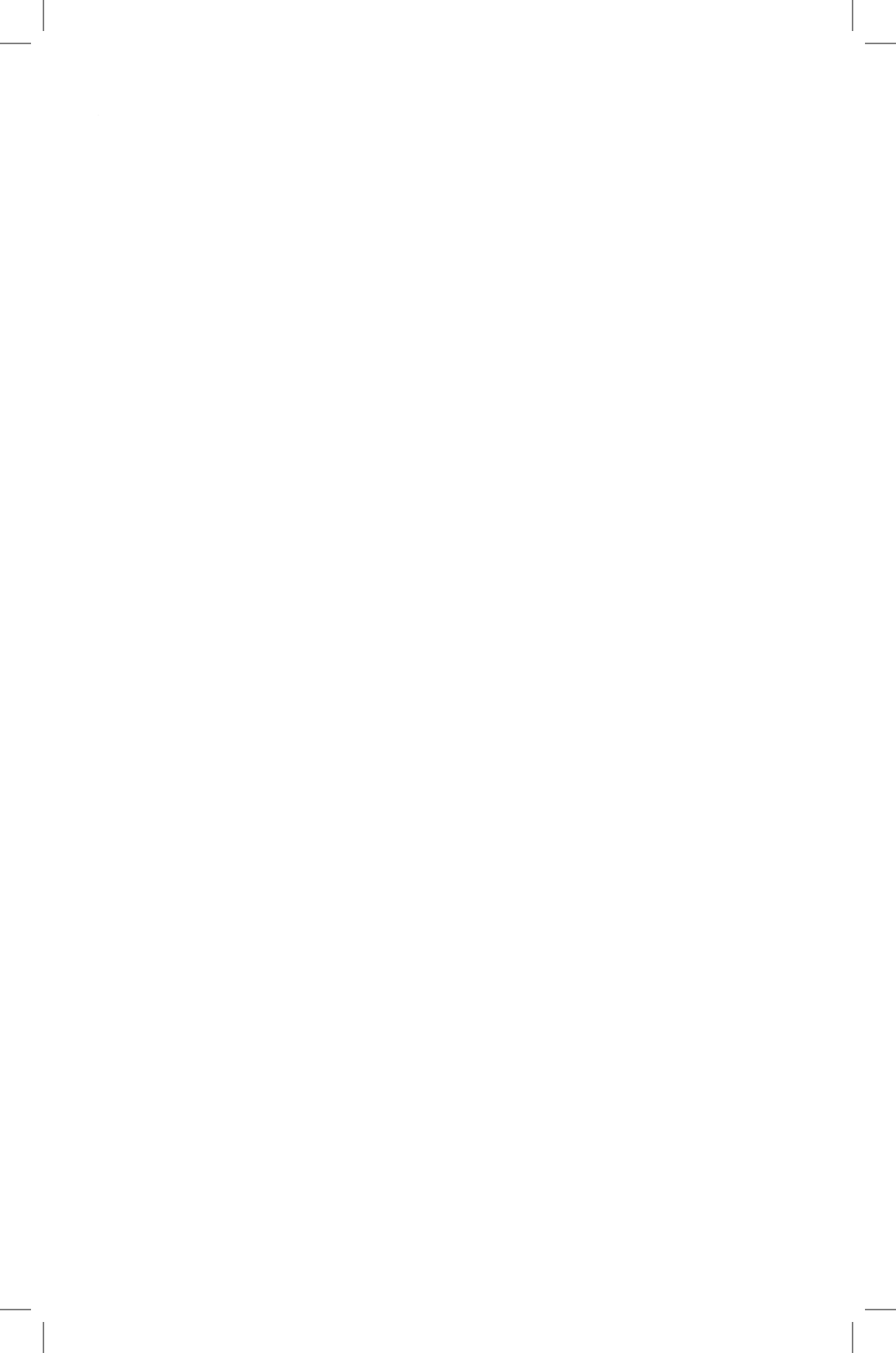




# PART II

## Feasting on Memories

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati  
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati





# Feasting on Memories

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati

When I arrived with Swami Satyananda at Rikhia, an obscure village in Jharkhand, I felt if I was slipping back into the 16th century - no roads, no electricity, no phones, no newspapers, no cars, no busy streets, no hospitals, a few dilapidated schools looking desolate with only a few ragged unkempt children, wearing torn and tattered clothing.

That was the Rikhia we entered on 23rd September 1989. Swami Satyananda had chosen this place for his life of seclusion according to a mandate he had received while performing austerities at the jyotirlingam of Siva at Trayambakeshwar near Mumbai. Soon after he arrived, Sri Swamiji plunged into a sadhana and undertook the sankalpa of performing many arduous practices such as Panchagni and mantra anusthan.



It was during this time that our neighbours began knocking on our door for help, they were hungry, they needed medicines, shelter and clothing. The very basics that we take so much for granted were unavailable to them. We started helping them in whatever way we could and help started pouring in. Our work began in full swing when, in 1995, Swami Satyananda, accepting that as the will of God, gave us the green signal to start this work in earnest in an organized and systematic manner, with the attitude of an aradhana, or worship of God in living form.

### **Rikhia Transformed**

Today, when you see the same place and the people, especially the children, you may not believe the condition they were in hardly ten years ago. They would qualify perfectly for a before and after advertisement if you know what I mean! How did it all happen? The very same children, who at that time did not have the confidence to look you in the eye and answer a simple question like what is your name, today are at the helm of the Rikhia ashram, speaking wonderful English, designing the ashram calendars, conducting all multifarious programs, singing soul stirring kirtans, conducting yajnas with perfect intonation of Sanskrit mantras which would make even a pandit sit up and listen. It all happened because Sri Swamiji stepped into their lives and changed their destiny forever by showing them how to dream.



### **Reliving the Memory**

Swami Satyananda came into the lives of everyone like a full force gale, and he lifted everyone up. That was Swami Satyananda, and on each 23rd September we relive that experience of his coming to Rikhia, and the more alive that experience of reliving becomes, the more you will feel his presence. This is a way of elevating your mind.

We are reliving the memory of a great soul, a great force, a great energy, and if you are able to rejuvenate that experience, if you are able to relive it in its entirety with the same richness, with the same tapestry, with the same ambience, with the same colours, with the same flavor – the smile, the look, the walk, the voice, the words – then that richness of experience will elevate you. It is a very rich level of experience. If you can recreate and relive something you have experienced before in its totality, that is dhyana, that is meditation. At least that is how I understand it, and how Swamiji explained it.

This is a moment for us to forget about ourselves entirely and remember that force, which touched our lives in such a profound way that we are not the same as we were before it touched us. So we pay our obeisance, our gratitude to that force. This is the level of feeling that we should all have at this moment – gratitude and surrender. Gratitude, surrender, and a feeling of strength, because by connecting to that force in this way, you actually gain from it. The strength comes to you, the strength of the Guru tattwa flows into you. It just flows, and you cannot stop it. If you go into an air-conditioned room you will become cool automatically. You can't stop it.

In the same way, that Guru tattwa just comes into you, and you get a feeling of enormous strength from it. That is what I am experiencing and that is what all the people here in Rikhia have been experiencing for the last twenty-five years. They say that God came into their lives. That is what the villagers say.

They are innocent people. They don't know intellectual philosophy. They are simple, innocent people, yet they say, "God came into our lives." This is because their whole life was changed from the moment Sri Swamiji entered their lives, this gave them tremendous strength and self-confidence. Their awareness was elevated when Sri Swamiji stepped into Rikhia, and after that Rikhia was never again the same.

It was the day of the equinox, when day and night are in perfect balance; twelve hours in the day and twelve hours in the night and he came at midday. So you see, even the planets were supporting his arrival here. Everything – the nature, the planets, the whole universe was supporting his arrival. He marched in here like Rama marching to Chitrakut, and everyone was taken aback by that moment. This land was taken aback by his footsteps and never again was anything



the same after that. It happened in such a simple and pure way, there was no element of impurity in it. It was pure, simple, natural and humble.

Today, when we look at the photos of Swamiji doing Panchagni, we are in awe and we think, "Did Swamiji do this?" Yet for us back then, it was such a natural scene. We used to see him like that every day. It was so natural to see Swamiji with all this bhasma, with the damaru, with the shankh and the fires. It was so matter of fact to see him as a tapasvi. But now when we look at the photos, we look at them in awe, "Did this really happen?" That is the importance of memory. With memory you can relive that moment, that connection, when a great force descended and lived here.

Swamiji lived here twenty years, and twenty years was a long time for him to live in one place. His whole life, he never lived that long in any place, not in his home, not in Rishikesh, not in Munger. He was always moving in and out and in and out, but here he lived uninterrupted. For twenty long years he lived in Rikhia, and so you can imagine the kind of benefit that this place derived from his coming here.

Many people may not have even seen him. Some have heard him, others have heard about him, and for them the experience



will be different. But they too will feel the importance of this moment. They too will feel something very special about this moment. They may not understand it in the way that those of us who met him and knew him do, yet they will still be swept away and carried by the importance of this moment. This is the muhurta, the auspicious moment of Rikhia Agaman. We are all together in this, offering our love and our memories to Swamiji with joy and bliss. Offer all memories to him, even if it is not a good memory, don't worry. Guru, like Siva, has the power to consume everything. He can consume the poison, and he can also refine it for you and purify you. So whatever memory you have, offer it to him today. Today is the day – don't miss it, don't lose it.

### **Destiny of a Land**

Whatever is ordained to happen in anyone's life, try as you might to oppose it, it will happen. Rikhia was a barren and desolate place when we first arrived. There was nothing here and we had nothing. So when Swamiji told us that we had to start the work, we had to start from scratch - we didn't have anything as simple as a needle. We had to start collecting things and using our creativity but when there is a mandate like the one Swamiji received then it becomes possible.



Rikhia 1990





In the early days we used to live in mud huts or out in the open. You should have seen the Rikhia of that time, it was absolutely beautiful. It was so simple but it had such an incredible energy and vibration, radiant and vibrant. The buildings started to come up because an infrastructure was needed. I knew nothing about construction, I didn't even know that there had to be a foundation to make a building



Rikhia 2021

or about bricks, sand and cement. This was an immensely challenging task in front of me. There was nobody here so single-handedly I had to do it. Every time Swamiji used to say, "Okay, now here you make this," and as soon as it was finished he used to give me plans for something else to be constructed. So that is how the work started here brick by brick. Sannyasins used to drive the tractor to the river to get the sand to make bricks ourselves and provide some employment to the local villagers.

Tremendous effort was made. When I went out into the villages at that time, there were no roads. I walked or went by tractor – no car could negotiate that terrain – in order to collect data in the villages. I gathered information like names,



villages, family members, the type of houses they lived in, livestock and diseases. Swamiji said if you want to help them then you must give them what they need, not what you want to give. So the main focus was on what requirements were really essential. At that time they needed food, shelter, medicine and employment. Rikhiapeeth has been evolving according to the needs of the locality ever since. The condition he placed was that there should be no commerce, it had to be an act of love.

This land has a destiny. Like each of us has a destiny, the land also has

a destiny, and that destiny unfolds at the right time, at the right place, at the right moment and by the right person. When Paramahansaji set foot in Rikhia, the destiny of this place changed forever. I never knew that one little rikshaw ride from Deoghar would land me in this gravitational pull and sweep me off my feet.

When I first came to Rikhia, I came on a rikshaw. You know, we give rikshaws every day, and that day when we were sitting on the rikshaw, I suddenly remembered my first journey to Rikhia was on a rikshaw. I came here before Swamiji. Swamiji sent me on this mission to discover the place which he had seen in his meditation, far away from here, in Trayambakeshwar, and then he told me, "Now you go and discover this place, this is what I have seen." I came here on the rikshaw, and everybody warned me, they said, "No, no, no. That place is too interior and isolated." Nobody used to come here, people of Deoghar did not know Rikhia. They said, "No that is not a place that you should go alone."

I paid no heed to them as my Guru's mandate was most important to me. So I came by rikshaw, it took 45 minutes to an hour. As I was coming here I gradually felt all the tensions dropping, all the stress dropping, feeling totally relaxed and in tune. Even at that time I could feel that the place was ready, vibrant for the arrival of Swamiji. Although there was nothing here at that time, but even then it was beautiful. That is called rugged beauty. Nothing is there but there is a vibration, and energy, a purity. That is what I experienced when I first came here.

Rikhia may have a humble beginning but there is one thing in abundance in Rikhia, and that is peace. You know, the things which God gives free, you just have to look for it, if you take a walk down the road, you feel a sense of all the tension dropping in Rikhia, even the die-hard feel that something is dropping off, and after a few days here they say, "I don't know why but

I am feeling lighter, I am feeling unburdened as if something heavy is dropping off.”

**Rikhia is not an ordinary place.**

**It is a highly charged spiritual field.**

**When Paramahansaji came here he only magnified that more and more.**

### **Choosing to Remember**

The 23rd September 1989 is Rikhia Agaman, the day that Paramahansaji first stepped foot on this soil and its destiny changed forever. Every 23rd of September is Rikhia day. It is happy day. And it is also memory day.

You know, the food for mind is memory. We feed on our memories – we relive the same memories our whole life. You still relive memories that happened many years ago. Right now I am reliving a memory that happened thirty one years ago. Memory is so personal. This is my memory – it is not



your memory or his or her memory. It is my memory and how much I can keep that alive within me depends on me. The intensity of reliving it increases if it is alive in me, and this moment is so alive.

We have to choose what to remember. There are many things I don't remember, and there are moments I have chosen to hold onto, and those I relive again and again. In fact, I remember clearly these thirty-one years, and I would love to relive them again and again with Swamiji. And not just in this life, but in every life, I would relive every moment, because every moment with him was full of knowledge, every moment was full of inspiration.

Swamiji used to sit the whole day at the Sanatan Agni Vedi and the Maha Kaal Chita Dhuni. He would sit in his langoti and do his japa. It was so hot and there was nothing here. It was not like it is now, it was barren, dirty, full of weeds. There was a small kitchen where he would cook, and we would watch him and learn because none of us knew how to prepare food. He had a set time of 40 minutes to prepare





the whole day's food, and it was so tasty. I have never eaten anything more tasty than that, really. Whatever he prepared, it was always simple and very tasty.

The whole day he would be sitting here, out in the open. He never had any house, he lived out in the open, and at night, too, he would be here, where we are sitting now. That is how sacred this place is. And where the Samadhi is there was a kutir where he would keep his damaru and the shankh and other puja items. He never stayed there, but he kept those things inside because he could not leave them out in the rain. He lived out in the open, and every day there was thunder, lightning and rain. Those were the early days of Rikhia. And that visual of Swamiji sitting there doing his japa, those visuals, those moments come alive.

Every chapter of Swamiji's life is very significant, and he gave the most valuable treasures. If you start talking about it, there is no end. In Rikhia, he gave the most important lesson of all.



And not just a lesson, he gave an experience. In Rikhia Sri Swamiji initiated the possibility of opening the heart. He set that wheel in motion here, at the Hridaya Peeth, the place where Sati's heart fell. This is most significant.

Bhakti, bhakti, bhakti – that is what he spoke of all the time here. Rikhia is very important because it was not just a philosophy that he gave, or a teaching that he gave, he gave the indication for the further evolution of mankind. Do you want to remain within the animal instincts of greed, fear, enmity and aggression? He said, "If man wants to evolve further, then this is the way."

Memories of this type have to stay alive, you have to hold onto them – and all other memories you can wipe out, erase. The more these memories come alive in you, the more focused you will become and the more you will become aligned. But we don't remember all this. We remember when somebody hurt us, when somebody betrayed us, when somebody disappointed us, or insulted us, or when we were unhappy



or sick or in difficulties. We remember those things more. Memory is what your life is built on, and also your future. What will you carry with you? Just your memory. You're not going to carry this body, you're going to carry your memory in the form of a hard disc, your karmas.

So you have to be selective about memories, and hold those memories which can give you a push forward, such as Rikhia Agaman. Rikhia Agaman is the seed of a revolution that was planted here. Not a revolution with guns and ammunition and bombs but a heart revolution. That is what happened in Rikhia, and that is why it is so special. Because ultimately that is what we have to do – we have to open the heart space, we have to connect.

Guru is the connecting force, he is the one who connects us. Guru has connected all of us, and how did he connect us? With a vision. And that vision is very large. Guru expands our awareness and gives us a very big picture of how things can be for us in our lives.



So, every year we celebrate Rikhia Agaman. Earlier we used to celebrate it in a simple way. We would walk in with a picture of Sri Swamiji held high so Swamiji sees everything when we bring him in. There were only three or four of us back then, but now it has become a big drama! Somebody rings the bell, another person holds the umbrella, we sprinkle flower petals and Ganga jal. It's good, it should be like a drama, a real-life drama. Let's see. And who knows maybe the Rikhia Agaman will take place again. This is his promise.



Re-living the moment of Rikhia Agaman - Midday 23rd September 2021

# The Moment of Agaman

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The 23rd of September is the agaman day of Sri Swamiji coming to Rikhia, and it is the agaman day of him entering our lives as well. So, it's a double celebration, not only of the place, which is external, but also of the presence, which is internal. The moment Paramahansaji met someone was the agaman of Swami Satyananda in that person's life. This remains undisputed. The moment his eyes connected with your eyes, that was the moment of agaman in your life. Just the eye contact with him was enough to welcome Swamiji into your life. That was the beauty of his eyes, of his personality, of his nature, of his presence. The life of Sri Swamiji was a mirror, showing everybody their own, true self. The president of a nation could look into that mirror and talk, a thela-wala could look into that mirror and talk, a child could look into that mirror and talk, and even God could look into that mirror and tell him what to do. And even though he is not around, it keeps happening through the images and the photographs. And the same inspiration, the same connection, is experienced by people even today.

He arrived in Rikhia on 23rd September in 1989. What happened when he came to Rikhia? The destiny of Rikhia changed. What happened when he came into our lives? Our destinies also changed, and that is why we are here, living a destiny created by him for us. Lives were touched, destinies changed and they unfolded, wherever he went. So it is that moment of connection that we should always remember and relive.

### **A New Vision for Humankind**

Rikhia agaman opened a whole new view, a new vision for humankind at large. What Sri Swamiji initiated here is something that I can very safely say was not yet seen by the world. Everything in his life had a very specific purpose, always for the upliftment of people. Rikhia evolved as a means of uplifting the people and installing the spiritual precepts and the teachings and vision of Swami Sivananda, and these have become the aim and lifestyle of the place. This is the need of all society at present and also for the future, as the situations deteriorate and mind sets get imbalanced. This experience and this lifestyle, which Swamiji established here is going to be very much in demand by the citizens of our globe.

As Swami Satsangi said, this is a time of memories, and memories are also smritti, one vritti of chitta. So if it is a repeat, it has to have something good about it. And truly, for us who have known Sri Swamiji, every memory is cherished because in each memory of every moment, just by being in his presence, there was so much to imbibe. And memories



take you back to the moment, they make you relive and reabsorb, reanalyse, re-imbibe those precious moments in time that we spent with our master. And it is this that keeps the connection. For those who have not seen him, it may be difficult to know what we experienced and feel, but still they catch onto the feeling and also experience the subtlety and the essence of this connection. In this manner, the connection and the inspiration live on.

For me it has been a very interesting journey, because I was born in the lap of Sri Swamiji and I stayed with him till the age of fifty. Fifty years in the physical presence of a master is a very rare experience to have. And for fifty years, I saw Paramahansaji in all the roles that he played. Throughout his lifetime, from his life at home to living in his Guru's ashram, later on at Munger, and then in Rikhia, his every moment was dedicated to the welfare of the other person. Not a single moment can I recall when he said, "This is my time, my moment." I am sure that people who have seen him will agree and confer that he never once thought about himself. And in fact, if people thought about his needs he would say, "No, you have to think of others." He was a person who lived a totally different life which nobody can even imagine, because there is no example in the world at present.

It is only through commitment, surrender, devotion and dedication that one can achieve all that. Swamiji had that commitment to the path that his Guru had shown him – and the path was sannyasa. Yoga was incidental on the way, the mandate of his Guru, which he had to fulfil. But when that mandate was accomplished, Swamiji lived his sannyasa life. It was here in Rikhia, as a sannyasin, as a tapasvi, and in the way he lived his life that the radiance of his being illuminated the world around him. Let us celebrate these precious memories and be happy for his luminosity in our lives.



### **Light of Inspiration**

The 23rd of September is a day of historic importance for Rikhiapeeth, for it was on this day that our Guruji first stepped onto what was then a barren land. Rikhiapeeth is not a property. Rikhiapeeth is the spirit that connects us with him. We are part of that spirit, and it is his eternal and ever-luminous presence that we are able to feel today. This is an experience that we should always cherish in our lives, for it is an experience which connects us to beauty, to something positive, uplifting and fulfilling.

Swami Satsangi is the only one present today who actually witnessed this moment. Sri Swamiji entered here by car with her. It was 12 o'clock, midday. She was blessed with the divine boon of being the witness to the auspicious moment when he first arrived in Rikhia.

When our Guruji came here his aim was not to establish an institution. He came here because he received a mandate and instructions from his Ishta Devata, Bhagawan Trayambakeshwar. He did not come to fulfil a desire; he came to fulfil the divine mandate and divine sankalpa that were revealed to him. He came here for solitude, and he lived as a renunciate, as a dedicated tapasvi living a life of austerities.

Even when he lived with his Guru in Rishikesh, Sri Swamiji lived a life of renunciation. With Swami Sivananda he became very simple, innocent and pure. He surrendered his head to his Guru, and about this he has said, "The day I surrendered my ego at the lotus feet of my Guru, my mind became calm and doubts and questions had no place in my life. I know I had reached my Guru, my ultimate abode."

It was that thought, that flame that guided him throughout his life. With faith and conviction he dedicated himself to serving his Guru, fulfilling his instructions and mandates. There are many sannyasins who do not believe in the Guru,

who do not agree with what Guru says. Under the guise of dedication they manipulate the sankalpas of Guru to serve their own selfish means.

Sri Swamiji was not one of those disciples who use Guru as a stepping stone to fulfil his own desires. Our Guruji, Sri Swami Satyananda, was a rare jewel who not only followed the instructions of his Guru to the letter, he also left behind a parampara, a tradition, with a philosophy and principles we could follow for the welfare and upliftment of society and mankind.

### **Living with a Siddha**

It is very rare that people get the opportunity to live at the same time as that of a siddha. To live with such a being, under the umbrella of his affection, love and protection, is the greatest fortune. People who lived in Rama's time might have not recognized the importance and significance of his incarnation, yet today history sings the glories of Sri Rama. Today people bow down to those fortunate people who lived in Ayodhya or Chitrakut when Sri Rama was there. They



bow down to those people who had darshan of Sri Rama. We have not seen Rama, however we have lived in a time when luminaries like Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda took birth. We have had the good fortune of knowing the people of this great parampara, this great lineage. They have touched our lives and made our lives beautiful, and they are still guiding us.

Once, Lord Krishna met a Rangrez, a cloth dyer, in Mathura. He said to him, "Oh, Rangrez Baba, please give me a bucket full of colour. I also want to dye the cloths of the people!" The Rangrez said, "Alright, just pick up any bucket of your choice. Take it wherever you want and colour whomever and whatever you want to colour." So Lord Krishna took a bucket of colour and stood on the corner of a square, and started calling out, "Who wants to get their clothes coloured? Come and get your clothes dyed in the colour of your choice!" One man came, gave his angavastra and asked him to colour it red. Krishna took the cloth and dipped it in the bucket, and when he took it out the angavastra was coloured red. Seeing this, another man came and asked him to colour his cloth green. So Krishna took his cloth and dipped it in the same bucket. When he took it out, the cloth was green. Another man came and asked Krishna to colour his dhoti pitambari, bright yellow. Krishna dipped into the same bucket and the dhoti was pitambari in colour. Like this, many people came to him and got their clothes coloured in the colour of their choice.

However, there was one man standing in the distance, silently witnessing and observing all that was happening. Finally, he approached Krishna with a cloth. Krishna asked him what colour he wished for, and the man answered humbly, "Sir, I have been observing you for a long time. You have only one bucket of colour, but you are colouring everybody's cloths whatever colour they desire. I would like you to colour my cloth with whatever colour you have in that bucket."

This beautiful story illustrates the quality of a saint, a tapasvi, a siddha, a great man. He will colour your life with whatever colour you desire. He will colour your life according to your social, mental, spiritual needs, according to your desires and cravings. Guru is also like that. He fills your life with colour according to your desires, in order to give you happiness and peace and to inspire you to be positive and creative in your expressions in life. Guru inspires you and makes sure that you move from the negative expressions towards the positive and creative expressions in life. For a man to be endowed with divine qualities and spiritual awareness is a great wonder, because he gives you a direction and a path to tread upon.

### **A Divine Mandate**

Sri Swamiji came here to fulfil the divine mandate of performing austerities and sadhana of naam-smaran with every breath, and it was during these sadhanas that he received the three principles of Serve, Love and Give revolution. He did not do this to establish an institution; he did it to offer society a better way to live. This revolution is now fructifying in Rikhia, in the lives of kanyas and batuks who were brought up under his protection and who have lived their lives in his embrace, and in the lives of all the people living in the nearby villages who have received his love and affection in bounty. It was the grace of this great sannyasin that a new life, a new philosophy, a principle and a sadhana were established in this place.

Even though he left his mortal frame, this work has not stopped. In fact, it has become more vibrant and alive through the lives of the kanyas and batuks and the people of Rikhia. The sankalpa of Serve, Love and Give, the samskara and the flame that he kindled in their hearts, is making their lives brighter and brighter. This is the flame of the austerities he performed, and it has transformed this whole place from a barren land to a tirthsthan, a holy place recognized all over the world. Only a saint can give such a gift to the mankind.

Whether you understand it or not, whether you accept it or not, there is a miracle taking place within you, on the mental plane and behavioural dimensions, and it is happening spontaneously here in Rikhia. You have received the light in your path, and now you have a way to come out of the vicious circle of negativity and embrace positivity in your life. Each 23rd September we commemorate that very moment when our Gurudev, Sri Swami Satyananda, came to Rikhia and lit the flame of inspiration in our lives. This memory has the power to inspire you to tread upon the path of light, and your goal in life should be to live and express your karmas



and interactions as he has guided you. May we keep the flame alive and continue to walk the path and may we continue to do the work he has given us, following his guidelines and principles.

There is nothing more to say. Don't try to think or analyse, do not try to connect with your intellect and mind, with your brain and senses. Just be in his presence. That is enough. Just be in his ambience and feel him, experience him and be with him. Just merge. That is the best way you can experience his presence in your life, through the spirit that is shining in Rikhiapeeth. When he came here, he lit a jyoti. Let us merge with that light.





### **Roots of Rikhia**

Look at what happened in Rikhia, and understand what has happened in the past. There are many people now who are new to the inspiration that Sri Swamiji created, who have come to the ashram after Sri Swamiji's Maha Samadhi and who have not had contact with him. There are also many who knew him whilst he was in Rikhia and have been the witness of the development and growth, both external and internal, here in Rikhiapeeth. There are few who recall his time pre-Rikhia where he worked to propagate and spread the message of yoga from door to door and shore to shore, following the mandate of his Guru, Swami Sivananda.

Even before he learnt of yoga, something unique happened in Paramahansaji's life. Just as a seed has all the potential contained within the shell, in order to express the potential, the seed has to break the comforts of the shell and sprout. It becomes a little gentle plant, a strong young plant and a sturdy old plant. When it reaches maturity, at whatever stage it is destined, flowers and fruits appear. The appearance of the fruits begins another cycle in this journey of the tree. We have witnessed the same thing in the life of our Guru, Sri Swami Satyananda is the epitome of the completeness of yoga. Paramahansaji used to say to think about Swami Sivananda is yoga and we say that he is the epitome of the completeness of yoga.

### **Awakening the Destiny of Rikhia**

Rikhiapeeth was a very special place whose destiny was waiting to be awakened with the arrival of Sri Swamiji, who was guided to this destined place by no other than the Ishta Devata of Sri Swamiji, Lord Siva. And when he came here, it was to live the life of isolation and seclusion, not to establish Rikhiapeeth or Sivananda Math or Sivananda Ashram or any such peripheral organization.

He arrived at Rikhia because he was guided. Possibly he did not even know what was in store for him, because each moment was revealed to him as he immersed deeper into the awareness of the cosmic power, cosmic self, called God.

Do you think God only exists or will appear in the gross form, in the gross plane, created in your image? God can take any form. It can appear to you the way you want it to appear but in reality what is it? The physical, the material is not the answer to the experience of the godly nature, the godly quality, the godly perception. He said it was necessary to go beyond body into the subtle flows and discover the godly nature. To go further beyond that into the causal, then the transcendental and discover the flow of divine nature permeating each and every atom of the visible and invisible dimensions and universes.

Sri Swamiji expressed such things very clearly. You can read about it in the books, like Bhakti Yoga Sagar, where his own words describe what he felt, understood, realized, and what he lived. Everything is there in black and white. We have the written, verbal and visual records of what he contributed to Rikhiapeeth, from which we are all benefiting from today.

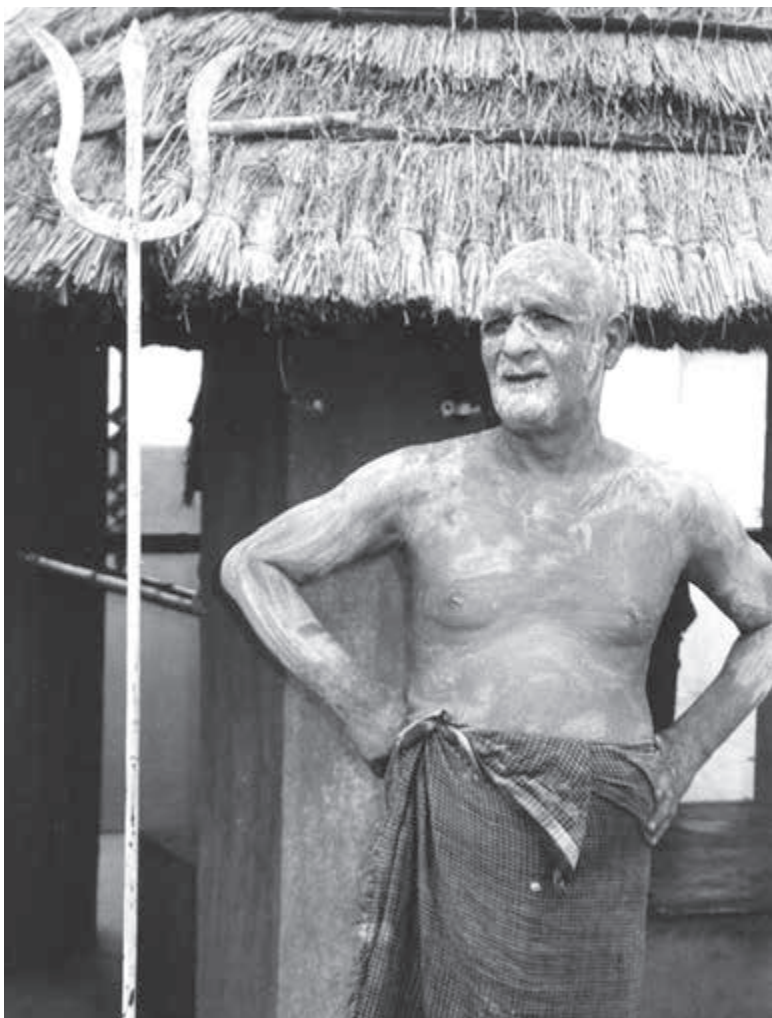
Paramahansaji said he heard a clear voice saying, "Satyananda, provide for your neighbours like I have provided for you." Sri Swamiji called Swami Satsangi and a few of the earlier sannyasins and told them, "This is the mandate which I have received. You have to fulfil this mandate."

### **Strength and Foundation of Rikhia**

Swami Satsangi plus the very few here at that time became the energy, strength and foundation on which Rikhiapeeth was established. In the early days the first mandate was "Provide for your neighbours, like I have provided for you."

At that time there were Swami Satsangi and one or two others here, living a very rugged, rough and detached life.

On the gate there used to be a sign 'Do Not Come Again'. Sri Swamiji used to explain that, "I have come here for sadhana, not to meet with anybody. If I had to meet with anybody, why would I leave the institutions which I had created? Leave me alone. When you come, you are disturbing me in my isolation, in my seclusion, in my remembrance, in my sadhanas." Nobody was allowed to enter.





He was following a call, the call of destiny. He was following the mandate of God. He was living the life of a sannyasin and not as a friend or companion to anyone, a life to which he had committed to in the early twenties before you were born. His commitment to sannyasa was complete and total. His commitment to yoga was complete and total. His commitment to his Guru was complete and total.

The day he came to Rikhia, he renounced all of his clothes, smeared bhasma on his body, and sat down in a dilapidated building which was the only structure standing, where Raghunath Kutir is now. He sat there and started his practices which included pranayamas, mantras, japas, meditations, and his own invocations to which we were never a party. It was his life, his sadhana. All of these previous sadhanas gradually built up until his commencement of Panchagni.

What for? Was it his choice? No. Sri Swamiji said, "I was told to give, to provide for the neighbours what God had provided me with. I had been provided with the right comforts of shelter, food, health, clothing, the basic luxuries of life. Fans, electricity, fridges or an AC are not required to live life naturally."

He gave the mandate to Swami Satsangi, while he was engaged in his own sadhana, and she used to get everything done. If you remember in the early Sat Chandis, while I used to be with Paramahansaji in the program, Swami Satsangi with her two helpers, Tetu and Kartik, used to stand on a chair near the gates in Tapowan, calling the names of two thousand villagers to get them in a respectable line through which they would come to receive their prasad. Every Chandi her voice used to go hoarse. That was the effort they put in.

Paramahansaji knew that what God wanted was being done through Swami Satsangi. She was capable and she was truthful to her Guru. Many are capable but few are truthful. They live in the hypnosis of "I am being truthful about myself", but in real life many things are hidden. Everyone is like that, many times you hide and justify your wrong actions in order to save your own skin and put the blame on somebody else. Sri Swamiji could trust Swami Satsangi. She would never falter in her commitment.

Therefore he gave the message, the mandate of Serve, Love and Give as the foundation stones of Rikhiapeeth. Sri Swamiji made her the Peethadhishwari, the empress of all she surveys, in the spiritual sense, not in the material sense, and believe me that is true. Since then Swamiji's Shakti has just increased every year. He gave the mandate of Serve, Love and Give for Rikhiapeeth. He gave the teaching of atmabhava to everyone as the highest experience of yoga.





# PART III

## Vision of Rikhia

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



## Vision of Rikhia

I came to Rikhia on 23rd September 1989. I pitched my tent, then I made a small kutir, a grass hut. The instructions were clear “Keep away from disciples, money, gurudom. Eka Niranjana. Just remain alone, in absolute solitude.” That is the dharma of a Paramahansa. I am not a head of an institution, I am not a Guru. I am an individual. I should not and do not want to be a Guru. I do not want to give advice.

After coming, things became clearer and my cataract vision was corrected. A metamorphosis took place in my personality, way of life and destiny. I changed my teaching and my way of thinking.

Slowly all the unnecessary things began to drop away. I do not mean things related to the world, but those that constituted intellectual knowledge and academic information. After coming to Rikhia, I was enlightened and discovered my relationship with God. For fifty to sixty years I did not know it. No. But I have now discovered that relationship.

Now I will not make any prayers to God because He knows what I need. What do I need? I do not need anything. I do not have to run an institution. I have no dreams. I have no ambitions. I am God’s servant.

Life began to be simpler. My mind became totally and singularly absorbed only in Ramacharitamana. I gave up reading other books and writing. I would get up at midnight, take bath and sit down to recite, continuing through the day

up to four in the afternoon. Then I would sleep for two hours and on waking up resume the recitation, as if in one breath. Thus I would take fourteen or fifteen hours to complete the Ramacharitamanas. This is a simple sadhana.

After arriving at Rikhia I took a sankalpa to complete ten million and eight hundred thousand mantras, which means that at the rate of ten to twelve hours a day, it would take me three hundred days, almost a year. It was a lovely year. That year I did not meet anyone; I was in total seclusion and isolation. I used to sit in the Akhara and do my mantra. Sometime after I had completed the mantra purashcharana, I suddenly started doing japa. I didn't know what was happening, but I went on doing it. I was not tired, I was not aware, I was not unconscious. When I became aware it was evening. Ten or twelve hour had passed and I had not known what I was doing. The shrill voice came again, "Take care of your neighbours as I have taken care of you." It is practically the same as Christ's message of "Love thy neighbour." That is all.



This was not an idea. This was God's mandate. It was not hallucination. It was a mandate and I heard it very clearly! I do not experience strange psychological states. I am a perfectly normal person, but that set me reflecting on His words.

God had given me the idea during that first year, when I came out from the Panchagni sadhana. God told me, "I have given you shelter; you too give shelter." I have a small kutir. That is the facility my God has provided me with. I will provide others with the same facility, because He has ordered it.

I told myself, "Satyananda are you very selfish? Will you eat all the sweets yourself? Will you have darshan of God all by yourself? What is the use of the atmajana that you attain? How can the world benefit by your spiritual gain and self-realization? You are very selfish, give up selfishness." I said to God, "Show me the path. I am blind. Tell me what to do. To give them clothes is not enough. Money is not enough, money cannot buy love. I cannot purchase love and give it to somebody."

Thenceforth, God began to show me the path. He said, "Give blankets to those who are fighting the cold." Slowly the guidance came in clear terms. The message was clear. I then told the sannyasins to increase their activities. I said, "There are people in the village who should get clothes, sick people who should get free medicine and a few boys and girls who should get help or a scholarship for education. Also, those who are unemployed should somehow earn twenty or thirty rupees daily so that they can make both ends meet. For that, rickshaws or thelas should be given. So there is a lot of activity here now and we intend to increase the activity further."

I started distributing Prasad at the end of the year to rickshaw drivers, thela drivers, labourers and beggars. I made a sankalpa to do ten million eight hundred thousand rounds

of japa before Chaturmas ended. It took me three hundred days and it was very difficult.

Here, within three days my store was full, I thought, "Let this be Karna Chaura. Instead of giving gold we will give clothes." Sometimes we get clothes or blankets from here and there, so our work goes on and we distribute them in the villages. In a year we give Good Luck kits to about two hundred girls. I thought, "Although I have not married, I can surely give dowries."

To distribute everything requires time and planning. We have to make a list of every member of each household in every village: who is the head, who is the son, who is the daughter, who is getting married. This information is fed into the computer, and then bundles are made according to the list and distributed by trucks, tractors and cars. Plenty of manpower is required for this work. It takes more than three days to prepare bundles for one village and that too is done with the help of the local people. Swami Satsangi has taken up this and works tirelessly day and night.

### **World Family**

The idea of helping others is very easy to have, but when it comes to implementing it, is not an easy job. It requires organizational skills and so many great qualities. Difficulties arise, despite being a renunciate. A sannyasin should abide by the dharma of a sannyasin, otherwise it is useless to change the garb, name or sect. Sannyasa has only one dharma - to work for the welfare of others and that is their only work.

Saints are not born for salvation, for gaining knowledge or for mere worship. Saints are born to prepare the ground for the arrival of God. If I am born for the Lord, then I must complete the groundwork for him. If each saint or sannyasin takes moral responsibility for the development of one panchayat



in India, there will be no need for a five year plan because we have plenty of resource. Everything is possible where there is goodwill.

The world family begins with your own next door neighbours. The world family starts from your own village, from the people in your immediate neighbourhood. Don't talk about Vedanta as long as their misery, shocking condition and abject poverty does not touch a chord in your heart, as long as their suffering does not become part of your suffering, their difficulty does not become your difficulty, their pangs of hunger do not become your pangs!

Of course, the definition of neighbour may change later, it may not be just Rikhia or Deoghar. That depends upon my capacity. Those who say, "This is mine and that is thine" belong to the lower category, but for people who are generous, open hearted and broad minded, the whole world is one family, even though it may be split into many different countries.

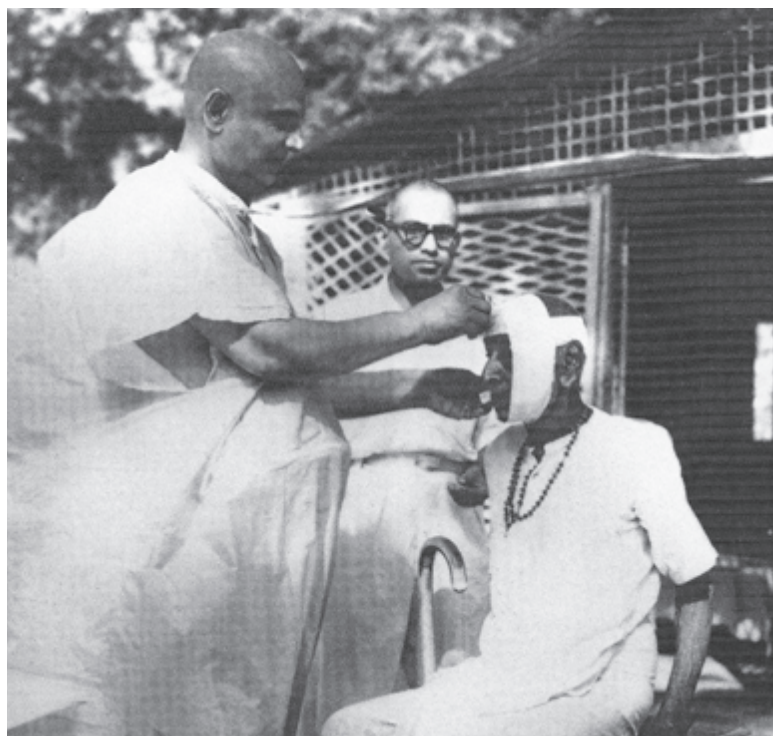


### **A Blank Cheque**

God has asked me to do the work that is being done in the villages of Rikhia, so I am doing it. He provides me with the means, and as long as he asks me, as long as I live, I will do it.

The Goddess Lakshmi has given me a blank cheque. Why talk about one or two lakhs; I ask for crores, tens of millions, and she gives it to me! Lakshmi has assured me, "Satyananda, if you do as I tell you and spend this money for others, my bank is open for you. The day you use this money for your personal enjoyment, the cheque will bounce."

This is absolutely true. The cheque of many preachers they bounce because they spend it on themselves. Our primary obligation is to others, towards ourselves is secondary.



### **Serve, Love, Give**

Swami Sivananda's fundamental philosophy of life was service. His priorities were: "Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize." Meditation was at the end of his list, a long way off. Whereas you start your spiritual life with meditation, my Guru's spiritual life started with service and culminated in meditation. The beginning of spiritual life stems from service to humanity.

Swami Sivananda used to say that just as there is an education system from kindergarten to university, similarly there is a schooling system in spiritual life. The first level is service, the second is love, the third is give. God exists, so you have to think about Him. You have to meditate and pray. You have to purify your heart. I asked "But how?" He said that the kindergarten of spiritual life is service. What comes next? Loving others. Then the next class is give, give and give. This is primary spiritual schooling - serve, love and give. This elementary class of spiritual life will prove very useful.

After this, Swami Sivananda said that we should purify the self - purify the mind, heart, intentions and actions. Practice ahimsa, non-violence, satya, truthfulness, brahmacharya, sensual restrain, aparigraha, non-possesiveness, tapasya, austerity, asteya, honesty, saucha, cleanliness, santosha, contentment, and so on. Purification means that just as you clean your dirty clothes by putting them in detergent, so you put your heart in detergent, soak it and clean it.

Swami Sivananda said, "Suffering and pain is the crucible into which nature throws a man whenever she wants to make him a sublime superman." You have to accept pain. Don't be afraid of suffering. Don't depend on the things of worldly life. Riches will not go with you.

Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

You should not depend on wealth as your security in life. Security in life is purification.

After purification, Swami Sivananda spoke of meditation. He said that meditation is like going to college, it is higher education. In meditation or prayer you enter a state of shanti, peace or tranquility, where you become one with God. There is only God in front of you, because God is everywhere. He exists in every particle. Finally, comes realization.

So, serve, love and give are elementary education. Purify is intermediate education, and meditation is college education. Realization is postgraduate education. This is the curriculum of spiritual schooling. Swami Sivananda gave me the mantra - serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize, be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate, bear insult, bear injury. This is very difficult, but it's the highest sadhana!



It took me many years to emulate my Guru and practice his principles. He used to say, "Whatever you have, give it to others. It does not belong to you." I never understood him then, but now I do. Nothing belongs to me, nothing is mine. I am just a medium.

### **Atmabhava**

What is the first thing in Vedanta? Atmabhava. "One who finds me in all beings, one who finds all in me." It is written in the Ishavasya Upanishad: "Let your suffering be my suffering, my suffering be your suffering."

If we do not expand the atmabhava, the sense of selfhood, then all the sadhana is useless. Atmabhava means feeling for others like you do for yourself. When your son falls sick, what happens to you? Yet when somebody else's son falls sick in your neighbourhood, you say, "Give him antibiotics." That's all. You do not think beyond that, nothing happens in the heart. Nothing happens in the head either. You go to sleep peacefully although his son is still sick. You have done your work, applied this medicine, called that doctor. You can make the phone calls, you may even take him to the doctor by ambulance, but the feeling that you get when your child is sick doesn't come. Why not? Atmabhava is not there.

Thinking of others may be a very good quality but it hardly requires any talent. "Let everyone be happy"- how long does it take to think that? It takes not time or skill to feel that. Your thoughts are very good and you have prayed for everyone to be happy, but what have you actually done? To implement that positive thought you should live like a sannyasin for few days. You will obtain two advantages from this. One advantage is that others will benefit. The other is that you will realize that one can live like a sannyasin as well as manage the household, run the factory, industry or even the government.



You can do everything more efficiently when you live like a sannyasin with the feeling of dedication and non-attachment. Every action can be done in the spirit of sannyasa. This is written in the Gita as well.

This is what a sadhu should do. Every sadhu must do it. The growth of society should now centre around the ashrams. The number of the twenty-first century is three and this is the number of sannyasa also. In this century there will be a large number of sannyasins. Why? Because otherwise the governments will not manage.

We are working for rural development and all the work will be done first for Rikhia county. Of course the whole of India is our county, but once we start here others will also understand how good work for humanity is possible through yajnas and how good people from far away places meet each other at yajnas. Those who cannot come by train will use the airstrip which is being planned in the nearby town of Deoghar. One day there will be an airport and you can come easily.





It is better to live in the villages and teach the local people some skills that will help them to improve their conditions. Now in Rikhia we have employment plans for all the women, including carpentry, electrical work and farm work with the newest methods. You can teach the woman how to sew fashionable clothes in the latest styles and then find a market for these garments in the city, sell them there and send them money order back to the village. There will be work for old women too and education for little girls. There should be some art and attainment possible for women and girls.

### **Charity Begets Poverty**

This is not charity. Charity begets poverty. In order to help people, you should make them self-sufficient; give them an opportunity to build their skills; give them auto-rickshaws and teach them to drive so they can earn forty or fifty rupees daily. That is more than enough for them to live on. You can also build houses for the villagers. First you have to get coal to make bricks, then bake them and use them for construction. It takes two months or more to build one house. A civil engineer is also needed for the construction work, to decide on the area, how to make the pillars, where to put the rods, the structure of the foundations, the height of the plinth. All these things have to be looked into.

Ask the people of Rikhia. I came here in 1989 and since then change has taken place. Do you remember how it was here when I entered Rikhia in 1989? The ladies did not even have enough cloth to cover their bodies! If you enter a colony and the ladies are not clad properly due to poverty, what does it mean? That they are still living in the primitive age. This was just one aspect of their plight and condition when I arrived. People say openly that for days at a time they had no food to eat. There are people who say, "Swamiji our daughters did not eat for two or three days." Now their daughters who have been born after I came here have a nice time.

Earlier during the day no one would pass this way. Today, Rikhia is slowly entering in the 21st century. We have PCO's, mobile networks, satellite connections, cyber cafes, internet, shops, traffic. Nowadays at least fifty to a hundred scooters pass by. And even nice, bright, well-dressed children in school uniforms going to school and ladies wearing nice saris and woolens in winter.

As you can see, now things have turned. You have seen the boys and girls of Rikhia. You should have seen them before. Today, the children speak English, chant in impeccable Sanskrit and have developed many other talents. They are full of surprises. Some of the girls even go by bicycle to Deoghar to study in college. The change is very apparent. The parents too have undergone a transformation. They are comfortable and happy, not in dire need as they were when I came in 1989. This change has taken place not because we give them many things, but because the children, the kanyas and batuks who come here, have somehow brought prosperity to their families.

Qualification is one thing, ability is another, but one thing is sure, when someone gets the blessing of God that person becomes someone. We understand that knowledge alone does not give success in life. Without the grace of God and without His blessings, that knowledge stagnates and dies. In two years we have seen a total change of scene.

### **Prasad Means Happiness**

When God gives the order, his servant works for him. In this way it should be understood that I am not serving society but obeying God. What is being distributed at this program is not donation, it is Prasad. What does prasad mean? Prasad means happiness, delight and joy.

On Kartik Purnima, when both of my anushthans are over, I offer prasad to the Lord. That prasad is neither fruits nor

sweets, bel leaves nor Tulsi leaves. It will be ten thousand items of clothing for women, children and men. Rickshaws and thelas for the strong young men and auto-rickshaws for the educated men. Marga Sheersha is the best month of the year and we choose it for distributing the prasad.

The question arises as to whether my compassion is misused. No, my dharma is simply to love you. Now it is up to you to decide what your dharma is. How can I decide your dharma? How can I say you must love me in return? You never say, "Love me." Is there any such phrase in the world? There is a



phrase, "I love you" but I have never heard anyone say, "Love me." Yes I love you because it is my duty, but whether you love me or hate me or kick me, what you do is your duty. You can say, "I hate you, you are a damned fool!" It's up to you.

"God, give me enough so that I can give to others"- this should be your prayer. Do not pray only for your own television set and motorcycle. It is said that a boy went to the curd shop and asked for an earthen pot. The curd seller said, "An earthen pot is not available for free. Give me half a rupee." So, the boy went to his father who said, "Buy the curd for half a rupee and you will get the earthen pot free."

You have been given such a good opportunity to gain virtue. It is your good fortune that instead of giving only to your own you can give to so many. Hold fast to your faith in God.

Whatever methods I have adopted over the years, whether yoga or the activities in Rikhia, were only means to fulfil this sankalpa. All of you must learn to live for others apart from making individual resolutions.

### **All is your Desire**

I am a gift of God and I have realized this in my life. My speech, my mind, my life are gifts of God. Everything in me – the goodness, the evil, the intelligence, the idiocy, the genius – all are gifts of God. So I will think and behave like Him. I can't be God but I can definitely think about how God thinks.

Here in Rikhia God has given me two directions, "Love your neighbours as I have loved you" and "Help your neighbours as I have helped you." These are His orders and He will also implement them. I am Your chariot and You are the charioteer. I am a machine and You are the mechanic. I am your vehicle and You are my driver. I will go where You take me. All is your desire.



# Sankalpa

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

I have always prayed with the sankalpa for the wealth, long life, good health, success and prosperity of everyone. Let everyone be happy, let everyone be healthy, let everyone look upon everyone else with equanimity and may no one ever feel any pain or sorrow.

May all be happy, may all be free from disease. May all receive the auspicious blessings of God. May no one experience suffering and if there is suffering then feel happy because God's grace, Mother's grace, the grace of the Divine, is in us.

*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah,*  
May God make them prosperous,  
*Sarve bhavantu niramaya,*  
May God make them free from disease,  
*Sarve bhadrani pashyantu,*  
May God remove all the sickness and ill of their family,  
*Maa kashchit dukha bhagbhavet.*  
And let them enjoy bliss, peace, happiness and health.

The Rikhia ashram will now be known as Rikhiapeeth. Peeth means 'seat', an apt term for Rikhia as the instructions given by Swami Sivananda have culminated and fructified here. He gave me three instructions, "Serve, love, give". These precepts became the sadhana to be perfected in my life, and took a definite form when I came to Rikhia.

To help others grow and become better in all respects, external and internal, social and personal, is my sankalpa. Rikhia is an ashram in the original sense of the word, because here a lifestyle is lived. Swami Satyasangananda is the first Peethadhishwari, or acharya, of Rikhiapeeth and has been given the sankalpa



that the three cardinal teachings of Swami Sivananda will be practiced and lived here. This is the future vision of Rikhia.

Just as you have Govardhan Peeth or Sharada Peeth, this is a different Peeth called Rikhiapeeth. Its mantra is Aim Hreem Kleem. It has just been born. It is not even registered, just naming ceremony has taken place. We will have it constitutionalized, we will have a memorandum, an association and make it acceptable to the country and people. It will not be a Hinduistic institution. It will have a spiritual tone, not a secular tone. I think that people say they believe in secularism without thinking about what it means. So Rikhiapeeth will have a spiritual tone, and at the centre of its spiritual tone will be the masses.

The salt of the earth are the poor people. Eighty percent of India is poor. They make up eighty percent of Rikhia panchayat too. It is these people we have to keep in mind. They live a pathetic life, and we have to do something to raise their standard of living. What is written in your newspapers and books is rubbish. Unless you are able to bring happiness to each and every person, your philosophy is a farce. It is meaningless. Your religions are futile.

The responsibility of religion is to help mankind, but it has never done that. Just read history. Religions have failed in this and history bears witness. The greatest wars were created by religions. The worst genocides were caused by religions. So what should be your approach to religion? At this point of time we have to see whether to re-establish religion, reconstruct religion, or reject it. We are thinking individuals. If there is a cobra in your house, how will we deal with it? We cannot say, "It is my mother's pet." Religions have to come to man's rescue, and not create more problems. Peace, shanti, and non-violence, ahimsa, should be the slogan, aim and purpose of religion. This is the religion we are talking about in the mantra Aim Hreem Kleem.



## Seva as Sadhana

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati

The seva that emerged out of Rikhiapeeth was born out of Sri Gurudev's sankalpa which was universal in nature. His vision was for universal peace, plenty and prosperity. When a universal force of sankalpa is created for the good of many, that becomes very mighty and sustains itself just as a mighty river like Ganga sustains itself, despite so many bathing in it and drawing from it.

So the seva here at Rikhiapeeth is not done with the bhava or feeling of charity. It is done with the same sincerity with which a yoga sadhaka would practice his sadhana. Here seva is the sadhana because it was born out of the sankalpa of Serve, Love and Give, which is the seed sown by Swami Sivananda. Imagine that!

Swami Sivanandaji sowed the seed of Serve, Love and Give in Rishikesh almost one hundred years ago. His

beloved disciple Swami Satyananda did not allow that seed to diminish or perish, he nurtured it and allowed it to blossom at Rikhia.

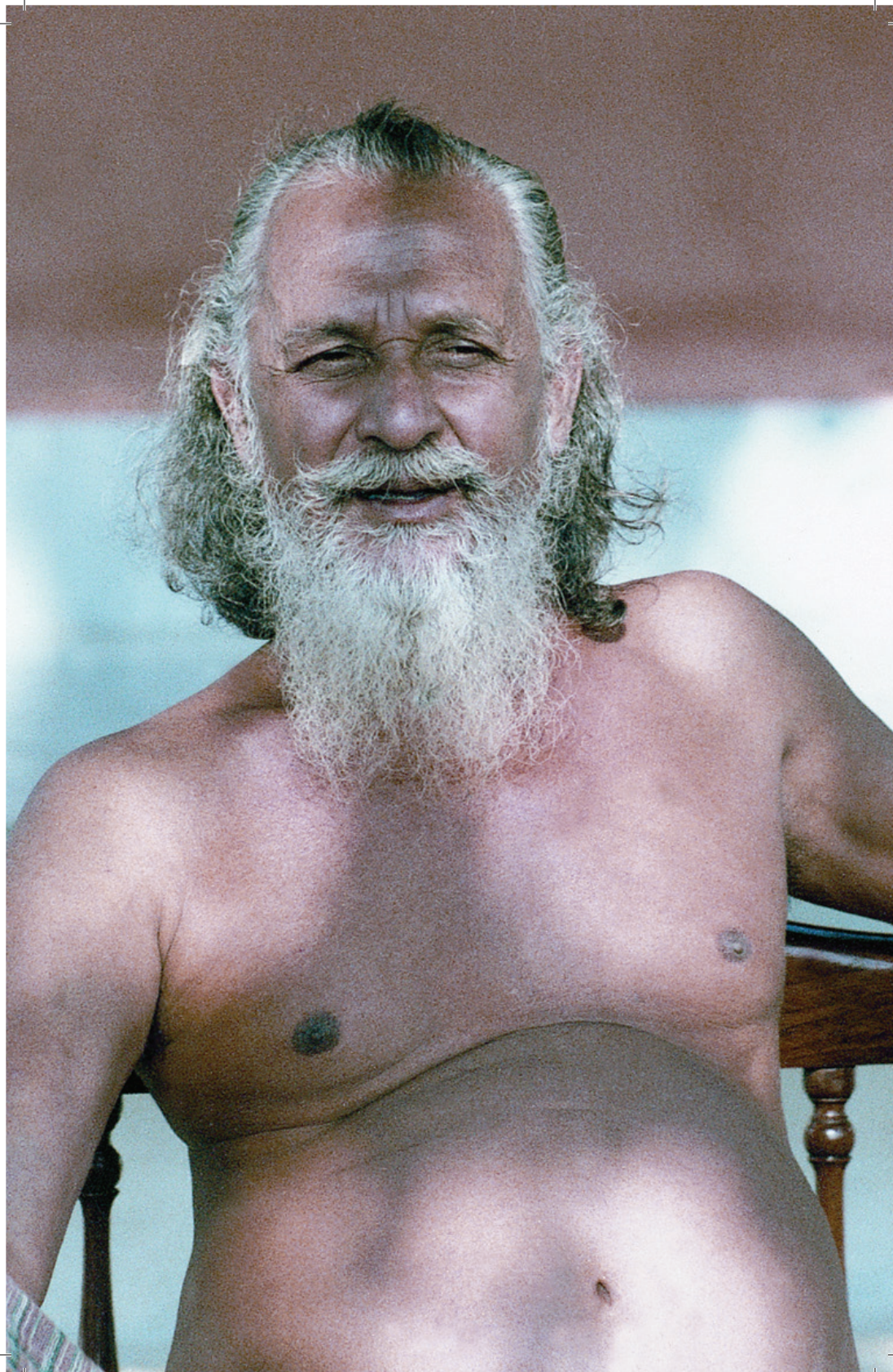
Here at Rikhia he manifested that sankalpa and thousands and millions joined in the sankapa of serve, love and give and the effects as you know have been far reaching. The sankalpa of a visionary is not an individual one. It is not an individual thing. This is not the age of the individual; this is the age of association. What one person can do is so limited. But twenty people can do so much more.

### **Serve, Love, Give**


The way to atma, the effulgence within you, is through serve, love, and give. Just as there are rules and conditions in everything, serve, love, and give, when practised in a particular manner, will move you closer to atmabhava. The result is proof positive here at Rikhiapeeth and it is something I could not have imagined when we first arrived here. At that time my Guru was saying it so I believed it to be true. That is the kind of faith you have to have in Guru. It is what his Guru told him.









A photograph of a person's arm resting on a dark wooden railing. In the background, a brass hanging ornament is visible, featuring a tiered base, a circular plate, and a decorative finial with a bird-like figure. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with light blue and white elements.

## Free as a Bird

*Once you have surrendered  
To the Guru completely,  
You become as free as a bird,  
Able to fly anywhere  
Or do anything.  
So do not be afraid of surrender.  
Commit yourself,  
And discover infinity.*

*- Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

There were so many events in my life where I always thought I was the doer, the main entity, that whatever happened was because of me. But today, after fifty to sixty years, I have realized that God is the doer and whatever has happened in my life is all due to Him. He made me do all these things. What a fool I was! Had I known earlier that He was making me do all these things, at least I would have enjoyed all those years. But today it is all bliss. The pursuits of my spiritual life are fulfilled and I do not require anything now. Give your darshan to me if you so will, otherwise I do not deserve it. For it is His will that prevails. I am only His servant and a servant has no choice.

- Swami Satyananda Saraswati









SPREADING PEACE, PLENTY AND PROSPERITY  
1923 - 2023