



# Spirit of Himalaya

## The Story of a Truth Seeker

BY SWAMI AMAR JYOTI

*Swami Amar Jyoti began writing Spirit of Himalaya in 1978 while staying in the Kullu Valley of Himachal Pradesh, India. Based partly upon His personal experiences in the Himalayas and of other holy men there at that time, it presents the story of a spiritual seeker aspiring for Liberation—Mukti. He revised the text in 1990 and the 4th edition was published by Jyoti Ashram (Pune, India) in 1991. This timeless classic, published as an eBook by Truth Consciousness in 2014, will also appear in a new print edition this autumn.—Ed.*

**T**HE SUN HAD GONE DOWN behind the western ranges, silhouetting the violet slopes patched with snow. The great mountains stretched in endless diversity of form and color. Sometimes the trail passed through exquisite flora and fauna of multitudinous variety which only Himalaya could produce—the thrills of Mother Nature’s handiwork were present at every turn—and at other times the trail passed over glaciers, entering a space which was quiet, austere and cold. Satyakam felt much quieted too, but not without melancholy. He couldn’t understand why. Suddenly it crossed his mind that someone was transmitting thought patterns to him to show him how comfortable, warm and cozy he would have been in his home

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in the plains! Feeling guilty, he looked at the back of his Master, who turned around and glanced at him. Satyakam saw clearly the radiant and joyful countenance of the sage. Like a miracle, his melancholy mood vanished and joy danced upon his face in tune with his Master’s. He again looked toward the upward stretched arms of Himalaya and saw the holiness, beauty and splendor of the heavenly abode. His soul leapt in ecstasy.

This was the third day of the lunar month, and a crescent moon appeared in the east. A hardly perceptible dim moonlight spread over the silvery mountains. The sky was crystal clear.

The Master broke the silence:

“In a short while we’ll reach the Kund.” By now the river had considerably reduced in breadth and depth. The nectar-like water softly murmured an unknown song, sending a tingling vibration of joy through Satyakam’s spine. A sign of life?

The last climb was quite steep. Satyakam felt no fatigue this time, but was fresh, light and full of energy. His soul too was quietly singing an unknown tune. His inner world was in perfect tune with this golden region of Himalaya, canopied by the fathomless sky. On the way, he had seen wild flowers of riotous colors stretched over the meadows, and the memory still lingered in his heart.

As they climbed to the top of the steep slope, a breathtaking view captivated Satyakam. A fantastic lake, surrounded on three sides by still higher mountains, spread over a large area. From the near end, the river Saraswati flowed silently and smoothly. As the sun set behind the high ranges, the lake darkened with the mountainous shadows reflected in it.

The holy man looked around and proceeded to a spot which he seemed to know. A big, flat rock jutted like a cantilever out of the side of the mountain, and underneath was a level space that looked like an unwallled open room—just sufficient for one person

to lie down. At the farther end of it lay a log, cut semicircular and giving the impression that it could be used as a pillow. Something clicked in Satyakam and he exclaimed, “It occurs to me that I have seen this spot before! I seem to feel that I have visited this place sometime...!”

His Master, interrupting his strange feelings, said hurriedly, “Satyakam, you rest here tonight and I’ll see you tomorrow morning.”

Satyakam didn’t feel the need of asking where his Master would stay, as by now he knew his capacities well enough.

Soon the sage vanished in the darkness of the approaching night. Satyakam spread his blanket on the stone floor, with one end of it overlapping the semicircular log. The bed was complete. He did all this so naturally that it seemed as if he had been doing it every night!

He looked around but all he could see was a very dim blue sky with twinkling stars, a soothing rippling of water in the lake, and the tall snow-peaked sentinels—the eternal Himalaya. Quiet enveloped Satyakam with a motherly caress. He felt at home and gradually began to relax. He wasn’t very sleepy, so he sat in lotus posture on the blanket facing the lake. The heat generated by climbing up the trail was slowly subsiding and he began to feel chilly. He pulled his thick woolen shawl around his shoulders and covered his whole torso. Gazing timelessly at the waters, his eyes closed like petals of a lotus and he was lost in meditation.

Much later, in the dead of night, in his half drowsiness, he lay back on the blanket. His head rested on the blanket-covered log, the thick shawl stretched over his whole body. The mysterious lullaby produced by the sweet rippling water drew Satyakam into slumber.

His first night of sleep in this celestial 13,000 foot high abode of Himalaya—the fortune of only a few lucky souls—gradually transformed into a gray dawn. Once again, like lotus petals, his eyelids opened

slowly. He couldn't believe where he was! But soon the recollection came back to him and he arose. Sitting in a comfortable pose, Satyakam folded his hands and bowed down—to whom? Water? Mountains? Sky? Perhaps to all creation, to his almighty God!

He got up, took his bowl and advanced toward the lake. Filling the bowl with water, he went behind the big boulders a fair distance from the lake. After finishing his morning washing, just as he was remembering his Master, the first rays of the golden sun fell on him. He felt the warm welcome. Facing the east, he bowed down to the sun, and in loving obeisance remained in the bent pose for quite a while.

The water in the lake was very bright this morning as the sunshine lay over it. The images of the triple mountains did not make dark shadows as they had last evening, for now the sun faced them. Except for intermittent snow on the banks, fresh green grass lay like a carpet all over. Many wild flowers of exquisite color and variety adorned the soft verdant grass. The shining snow peaks looked to Satyakam like messengers, and behind them lay a limitless blue void. He might have lost himself in that white, blue and gold, when suddenly and unbelievably he saw two fleecy white bodies at a far distance, lightly floating on the surface of the water like white lotuses, moving slowly toward him. As they approached he clearly saw that these were swans! They were larger than usual, with an otherworldly look. Pinkish red rims encircled their eyes, giving them a divine appearance, an embodiment of purity and serenity; their eyes hardly winked, as if continually open. Their very sight transported Satyakam in amazement and rapture. He felt as if the swans did not belong to this world. Their sage-like bearing, their eyes open but with an inward gaze and their smooth sailing radiated peace and joy all around. Satyakam was about to lose himself in ecstasy when he heard soft footsteps nearby. He looked to his right. His Master was standing there looking at him with love and an unknown new hope. Satyakam remained in nearly total awe.

The sage spoke softly, like quiet morning music, "There has been a legend around here since time immemorial that those two swans are the embodiment of Shiva and His eternal consort Durga. They roam about all over Himalaya and appear and disappear at various lakes. Only a few fortunate souls have been blessed with their vision, and you are one of those, Satyakam."

Satyakam again turned his face to behold the divine pair. He just couldn't take in the perfection which emanated from their halos in the form of dreamlike beauty, purity and fullness. Although it seemed shallow, he bowed down traditionally on the ground facing the eternal couple, uttering, with a trembling voice, "Shiva... Shiva... Durga... Durga..." In humble admiration he bathed in nature's magnificent spectacle.

After a short while he arose on bended knees and then got to his feet. Once again he looked, with more intimacy, love and reverence at the rare sight. Their feathers were like snowflakes, white as fleecy clouds. Their long slender necks gently held the radiantly haloed heads. The great birds turned back and sailed smoothly away and away, until, all at once, they vanished. Satyakam was stunned. It seemed a dream. No longer could he hold on. With utmost surrender, he lay his head on his Guru's feet. Thereupon he lost all external consciousness. While he was still upon his Master's feet, an unexpected dreamlike scene appeared to his inner eye. An ochre-robed monk, with shaven head and bare feet, holding a bamboo staff in his right hand, was standing upright. He recognized his previous birth and simultaneously heard *hnu* overhead from his Guru, as a confirmation of what he was seeing. Also "That's right," which he couldn't miss. The name of the monk followed immediately and he couldn't have thought otherwise. His fifth chakra opened this day.

As he raised himself slowly and faced his Master, quite close by, he saw a pleasant smile on his face. Like a movie, all the connected scenes and memories passed before him in quick succession. The lake, the small open cave where he had slept last night: these surroundings seemed very familiar to him, as if yesterday's occurrence. Yes, he had lived here, meditated and done various austerities in his previous incarnation!

His face burned with the sweet warmth and brilliance of newborn radiance. His eyes were shining like clear crystals and joy unspeakable filled his whole face, nay, his whole body. This was his initiation in the present birth, linking him to where he had left off in his last birth. 🌸

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