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 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!

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 Adhunik Publisher in 1993. This timeless classic, published as an eBook by Truth Consciousness in 2014, will also appear in a new print edition this autumn.—Ed.
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.