



Swami Satyanand Saraswati ji Maharaj

Param Puja Shri Swami Satyanand Saraswati ji Maharaj, the apostle of godliness, selflessness, and humanitarianism was born on April 7, 1868 at village Mohra near Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan). He lost both his parents quite early in life leaving him to the care of his maternal grandparents. The destitute orphaned boy, then called Lakshman (and also Govind) at home, drifted towards spiritualism and began to follow the sages and the savants of his time. He became a Jain ascetic at the age of 19, studied Jainism under the tutelage of a Jain muni and impressed all and sundry with his phenomenal memory. He was to become the favorite of Jain monks and devotees. He could discourse on atheism, the main tenet of Jainism, at length. A small volume named Adhyatm Chikitsa however became a turning point in the life of Swami ji. The book advocated the idea of untreatable faith in the immutability of the Almighty and His omniscience. There was a total conflict between what He had been believing, practicing and proclaiming as a Jainism follower and what the volume taught and revealed. Soon He decided to renounce his faith in Jainism and made the decision known to the Jain monks. He was heaped with offers of material gains in future if He continued to be a Jain ascetic. But the divine call from God prompted Satyanand ji Maharaj to pursue Vedic literature, follow the revealed religion and take it to the masses. At the age of 30, He joined Arya Samaj and began to work with Mahatma Munshi Ram ji. Swami ji became a spirited seeker with a famous voice and continued to give discourses, write books and meditate for long hours. However, the spiritual hunger to know and experience the Lord continued to haunt Him. He went to several sages and sanyasis who could not help him realize the unknowable absolute. He finally decided to go into solitude at a peaceful place and meditate extensively. He selected Dalhousie for his hermitage and retired into deep Sadhna. It was here on July 7, 1925 on the day of Beas Purnima that the Lord blessed Him with a beatific experience. He heard Ram, Ram and the imperative command Ram Bhaj, Ram Bhaj, Ram Ram all around. The atmosphere around Him became enchanted and He wafted into a trance with the holy melody around reverberating within him.

He realized that Ram permeated all souls, all particles and all that is living. He is well above and beyond time. Human gurus and all incarnations are subject to the time they are mortal and then they die. It is Ram, the eternal Guru, who is timeless and eternal.

Swami ji accepted the realization and decided to disseminate it all around. Soon He parted company with Arya Samaj since it insisted on promulgation of "OM" as against "Ram" propagated by Swami ji. He began to travel and initiated his followers to the acceptance of "Ram" as mool mantra and prasaad. He called upon his followers to rise above communalism, casteism and sectarianism, as these encouraged bigotry and hatred. Swami ji was not a book-bound sage but a saint driven by actions. He asked his followers to renounce worldliness and materialism. In order to make them realize the benefits of asceticism, He conducted a unique experiment called Sadhna Satsang. It was to be a four to five day long meditation camp where sadhakas (seekers), both initiates and confirmed devotees, would gather under the spiritual care and direction of the guru. They would, at least for these few days, renounce their overwhelming love for worldly possessions, children, physical desires, and also aspirations. They would collectively meditate via jaap (name chanting), and give rise to mystic vibrations which would then help them grow spiritually, heal them physically, and bless them with eternal prosperity.

The first such camp was held by Swami Satyanand ji in Haridwar and later followed by a number of other camps all over India. Swami

ji was a selfless humanist from the core of his heart. He always prayed for the health and well-being of His fellow men. He prayed for the safety of all, for the success of entire mankind, and for the welfare of India and all other nations. His prayers were never for Himself but always for the others as He believed in *sarve bhavantu sukhinam, sarve santu niramaya* (May all become happy and may all be free from illness). On November 13, 1960 Swami ji left the mortal body at Delhi and became the shining star for the innumerable followers to emulate and adore. As per the Vedic traditions, his mortal remains were given a watery send off in the holy Ganges at Neel Dharma. Swami ji shall be remembered for all that He did to alleviate the suffering of humanity.

He left His core beliefs and teachings in His writings, the most prominent of which is the *Amrit Vaani*. It has simple words which conclude in internal lilting rhythm and create an inescapable magical effect on the seekers. Other philosophical volumes include *Bhakti Prakash*, *Valmiki Ramayana Saar*, *Shrimad Bhagwat Gita*, *Ekdashopnished Sangrah*, *Prarthna Aur Uska Prabhav*, *Upasak ka Antrik Jeevan*, *Bhakti aur Bhakt ke Lakshan*, *Sthitpragya ke Lakshan*, *Bhajan and Shvani Sangrah*. The compilation of His discourses can be found in the *Pravachan Piyush*.