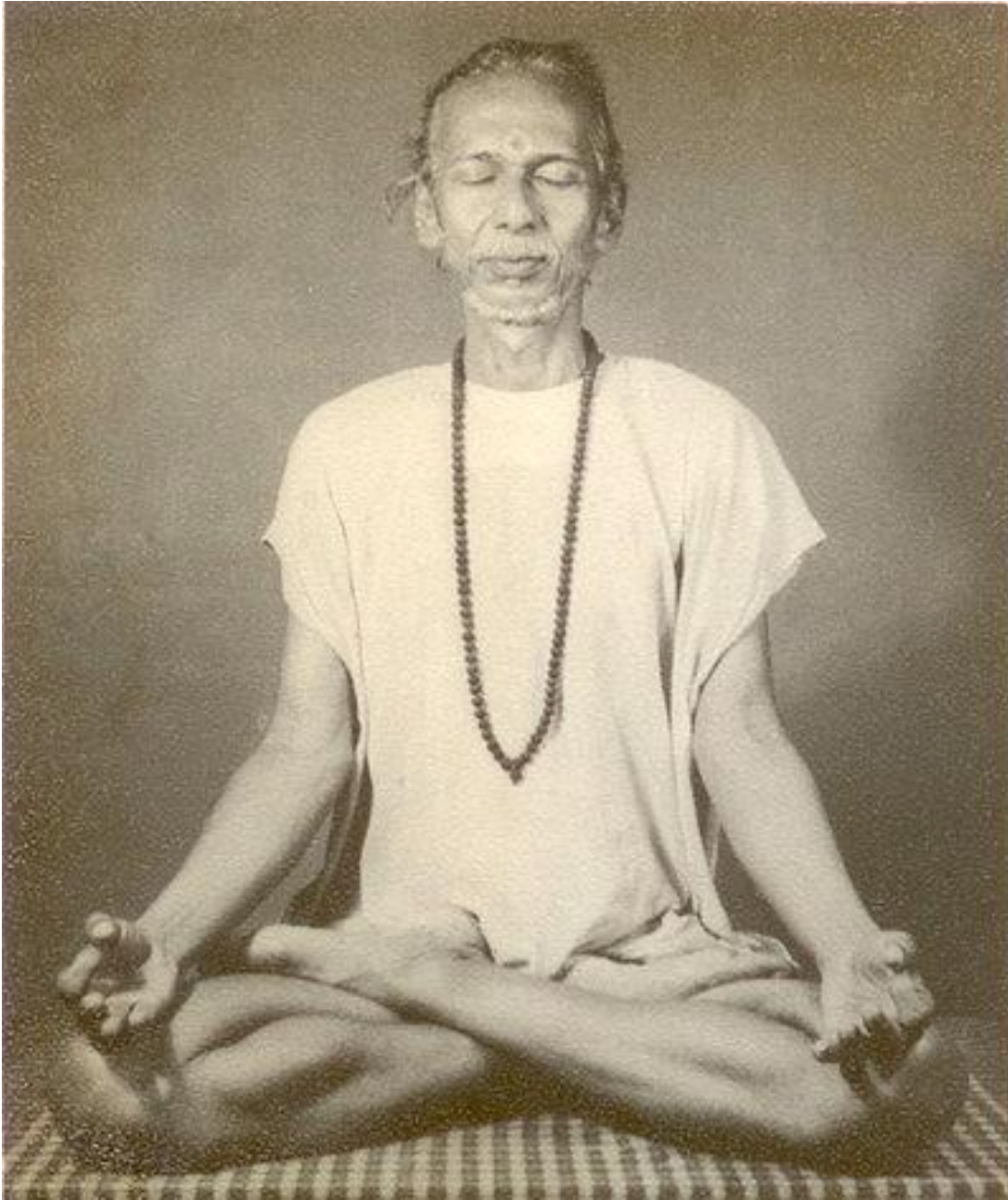


# THE WISE MONKEY



Swami Vishnudevanand Saraswati

[Frontispiece]



Swami Vishnudevanand Saraswati

[Title Page]

**THE WISE MONKEY**  
**and**  
**The Perfect Yogi**

by  
Swami Vishnudevanand Saraswati

**YOGA VEDANTA KUTIR**  
**Triveni Bandh, Daraganj**  
**Allahabad, U. P. (INDIA)**

[Colophon]

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# **THE WISE MONKEY**

## **and**

### **The Perfect Yogi**

*In the middle of a vast forest, in the hills of central India, is a pretty little waterfall beside which a yogi has been living in a little thatched hut for over forty years. He has been leading an ascetic life and most of his time is spent in meditation and other spiritual pursuits. His aged body is tall and slender. His large eyes, elegant nose and fair complexion indicate that he was well born, but three foot long strands of matted hair now hang from all sides of his head, like a lion's*

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*mane. His radiant face and saintly demeanour show that these long years of austerity have brought him inner knowledge and divine vision.*

*One day, after finishing his morning prayers and yogic practices, he emerged from his hut and went to the grove of fruit trees that stood to the rear of the hut. As he was gathering fruit, some monkeys came by. When they sighted the strange figure with long matted hair moving about the grove, they were surprised and frightened. They retreated a bit and watched the yogi with vigilant eyes.*

*In the band, there was one monkey who was much older and wiser than the*

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*others. He understood human nature and approached the yogi, prostrated before him and asked him directly for some fruit as a holy offering. The yogi was a tender soul with a generous nature and he gladly gave some fruit to the old monkey. Upon receiving the fruit, the monkey was pleased and he conversed with the yogi.*

#### **MONKEY:**

Reverend Father, you have treated me kindly, but most of your fellow men behave differently. They have no pity for us. We fear their sight and avoid contact with them. Please explain to me the cause of their different and hostile behaviour.

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#### **YOGI:**

My dear old monkey, it is very difficult to fully understand human nature. There are many different patterns of human behaviour and the human race has no uniformity of character as does your race. Man always has differences of habit. In fact, I believe that such differentiation is the mysterious cause of creation.

Among humans you will find some mild mannered and others hot tempered, some stingy and others generous, some simple and others pompous, some crooked and others honest, some lazy and others laborious, some

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wicked and others virtuous. People say, "Many men, many minds".

Some people change their natures thoroughly at some stage of life. Some who were sinners have turned into saints. These transformations can happen quite rapidly, within a few months or within a few years. Most people cannot understand the cause of these sudden changes of habit, in the same way that they do not really understand the cause of an unexpected attack of disease.

Man sows a thought and reaps a deed; he sows a deed and reaps a habit; he sows his habits and reaps his character; he sows his character

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and reaps his destiny. Most people cannot conceive of the subtle effect of all actions which is recorded in the heart of the doer in a most fine form, just as all sounds, great and small, are recorded by a tiny tape-recorded. Just as the sounds recorded on a tape may be heard again and again, the effects of all actions stored in one's innermost being are the seeds for further desires and actions. This is the inevitable law of *karma*.

You instinctively go to the orchards and planted fields to gather fruit and grain and the owners hurl stones at you and drive you away. You do not understand the human system of prop-

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erty. Men claim certain land for their own use and benefit. They work it for their own happiness and prosperity and do not show kindness to other species without selfish motives. They learn these practices from their parents and their neighbors.

### **MONKEY:**

God has created this vast world for all his children to use freely. Neither does any monkey claim any property as his own, nor do we as a group occupy any land permanently. "Might is Right" is the law of bestiality. It is not a sign of civilization but of demoralization. To forcibly

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expel other species and often in the most cruel manners, is certainly not humaneness but barbarity.

Here in the forest, I see you leading a simple life in harmony with nature. To me it seems ideal. Please tell me the story of your life and how you came to separate yourself from your fellow men both in residence and in behavior.

**YOGI:**

I was born a Brahmin and was raised in a large city. I was educated and went to the University where I studied many subjects including history, mathematics, physics and biol-

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ogy. Finally, I began studying for an advanced degree in philosophy, but with the pressures of my social life, I began to feel the need for money so I changed to the study of law and became an advocate. With enthusiasm, I started my practice at the High Court. I was immediately successful and rose to Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

During this phase of my life, I was an atheist. I sought material comfort in whatever way was possible. While a student, I had acquired a fascination with science and technology. I would gleefully purchase every new device that came on the market. Eventually it would happen that each of these imple-

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ments, instead of offering convenience and happiness, proved only to be expensive and burdensome. I became disgusted with each of them in turn. Nevertheless, I performed my daily duties and raised a family as best I could.

Then an episode took place which I could not forget and which forced me to change the direction of my life. One day, after giving the final decision to a very complicated case, I returned home to find a vicious quarrel between my wife and my daughter-in-law. I tried my best to reconcile them but I failed miserably. They could not be brought to compromise by any means. I began

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to feel ashamed of myself. As a judge, I had settled so many cases wisely and amicably. I had arranged compromises between powerful adversaries. But there I was, unable to settle a domestic squabble in my own household.

The quarrelling lasted for months and months. I could not have peace of mind while living in such an environment. In an attempt to find something of inner tranquility, I studied all of the principal scriptures

of the world. Through study, I could not find the essential thing that would satisfy my thirst for peace and perfect knowledge. I did manage to find some

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hints as to how one may strive toward the goal of life. The best that spiritual literature can do is to give some suggestions for spiritual practice. But at this time I still lacked the faith and determination to stick to one path and to follow it until realization. My mind was unsteady and would jump from one idea to the next.

As time went on, I became more and more miserable. The continuing struggles in my home left me outwardly perturbed. My mind became so confused that I could no longer think coherently about legal matters. With my life in a state of complete disarray, I saw no alternative but to totally

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change my way of life. I resigned from the court and left my home so that, through practice of deep and intense meditation, I could gain control of my mind and my senses.

There are numerous philosophies throughout the world, and in India, there are six schools of Hindu philosophy, but, of all of these, yoga is the only one to give a practical and systematic method to realize the Supreme Truth of the universe, and that Supreme Truth is within the heart of every single being. Yoga is the science of self-control, through which the Ultimate Reality is known and liberation is attained.

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Through the practice of yoga, I have attained the greatest tranquility of mind and the highest happiness of life. I have transformed my pretentious and contrived life into a simple and natural life, my acquisitiveness into renunciation, my worldly thinking into spiritual feeling, my sensory delusion into supersensory perception, my human bondage into divine liberation. Having become a perfect yogi, I have neither fear nor doubt nor attachment nor desire. My life is a play and I am a player.

I hope that you understand why I have left the society of men to live here in the forest. Yogic practice is

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the way to solve the intractable problem of life. Science cannot offer any ultimate answers to life's fundamental questions. It can at most offer temporary comforts and transitory solutions. Now, by the grace of God, I have realized the goal of life through spiritual practice.

I am perfectly satisfied with my transcendental experience and the knowledge thus attained. This knowledge is Self-knowledge. It is beyond reason and language. Self-knowledge is the pinnacle of all

knowledge. It is doubt free knowledge, realized directly, without any medium. Through this knowledge, everything is known and

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nothing remains to be known. When Self-knowledge dawns, all doubt and desire die by themselves. Just as darkness vanishes in sunlight, ignorance vanishes from the Self realized soul. Ignorance is the cause of affliction and Self-knowledge is the means to liberation. Everyone can cut the knot of ignorance with the sword of wisdom.

That is the story of my life and the final conclusion of my experience and knowledge.

**MONKEY:**

Now I understand how a large part of your way of living has been converted to our way of living. Like

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us, you also live on fruits, flowers, leaves and roots, here in the middle of this great forest. We admire you for your simplicity, austerity, equilibrium of mind and divine knowledge. Truly, there is a vast difference between today's urban dwellers and remote living sages like you.

Although there is some natural differentiation among men in different places and different climatic conditions, humans are at least 90% the same with respect to their bodies and physiological functioning, 99% alike with regard to their minds and psychological functioning and 100% identical in the essential nature of their

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souls or inner beings. Yet there are great differences in diet, dress, language and customs, which separate one culture from another, and are the causes of strife among men.

If the aim of all nations truly were to grant perpetual peace and everlasting happiness to their citizens, they would not fight with each other in the name of religion or some other belief. It is only their foolishness that makes them think that the rest of humanity is separate from them. It is a natural law that peace breeds peace, life begets life, light generates light and fighting brings fighting. There is no hope of achieving peace

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and happiness through warfare. Every action produces a reaction which is the same in kind.

Men's unnatural civilizations are a conglomeration of his ideas and fashions. We avoid everything unnatural. We maintain neither laboratories nor factories, nor do we produce anything to ease our life,



because we know very well that, where there is production, there is destruction; where there is betterment, there is debasement; and these are paired together as inevitably as attraction and repulsion or birth and death. Worldly life is never free from trouble. No matter where the

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mind goes and no matter what it thinks, everything is illusory. Hence we avoid all of the unnatural accoutrements of civilization, for they are the causes of misery and frustration.

We do not have an elaborate language with bombastic words, but instead use few words and some meaningful winks. We have neither literature nor religious scriptures. Thus we have neither presses nor libraries nor any formal education. In monkey society, there is neither superiority nor inferiority, neither government nor bribery, neither faction nor party, neither employers nor labourers, but only friendship and

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simple relationships among our monkeys. Please tell me your ideas about our species and about the modern civilizations of man.

### **YOGI:**

Let me tell you what I think about human civilization, or as you may prefer to call it, demoralization, but first I will relate a conversation that took place here a few years ago.

In my youth, I had become friends with a king. One day, this king came to this very spot in the forest with a large retinue, in order to meet me and to discuss spiritual matters. At first, he expressed his misgivings

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about God and also about my life.

He stated, "I do not believe in God. If we abuse God, why doesn't he punish us immediately? Hence there is no God. God is merely man's mental creation. Your life is contrived. You are living in a little thatched hut in the middle of a dense forest. You live just like an animal. This is quite dangerous and utterly dreadful. With your long nails and matted hair, you look more like a beast than a man. You have become totally uncivilized and are leading a most unnatural life for a man of your intelligence and ability."

He continued speaking in this

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manner until I asked, “My dear friend, please tell me, what is natural? Are all your man made things natural or unnatural? You shave your beard and your moustache every day, and time after time, you cut your hair. You live in an air-conditioned room. Please tell me whether this is natural or unnatural. All man made things are unnatural, but on the other hand, what grows and remains in its own condition is natural. Please think this over and tell me what you conclude.”

The king laughed and then asked me about the real nature of the world. He talked at length about modern living and about how things are

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changing day by day as new ideas, technologies and fashions come into being.

Science is giving us a glimpse of happiness and an ocean of distress. Its pleasure is like a mustard seed and its pain is like a mountain. After enjoying a minute, one suffers a year. Its joy is like a spark and its misery is like a conflagration. We talked at length about his personal life, and just before he departed he admitted to the bitterness of his materialistic existence and to the virtues of simple living.

It is no exaggeration to say that most of the habits of your species

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could be adopted for the better by man, who after all, is a descendant of your species. I praise your simple nature and your avoidance of all evil, hearing, thinking and speaking evil. It is truly a virtue of your species that you never try to invent anything to make yourselves more comfortable.

The science developed by the human race has been more harmful than beneficial. It has given the power to heal at retail, but it has created the weapons for killing wholesale. Thousands of hospitals have been built for curing the ill, but nuclear weapons have been built which can kill millions within a moment. A huge city, built

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over a span of hundreds of years, can be devastated and turned into an uninhabitable desert wasteland within a minute. Despite their best efforts, scientists have not been able to create any form of life, not to mention an intelligent life form like man, but they have produced innumerable devices for destroying life. The potential benefits of science through proper use are like a firefly's glow, but science has an inherent potential for misuse that is like the eruption of a volcano. Spiritual knowledge is the only antidote for the destructive nature of science.

Your species has been very sagacious in its total abstinence from material

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inventions, for science, along with its powers, has an inherently evil aspect. You monkeys do not even build huts or nests or anything for shelter. Be thankful for your natural lives and your freedom from mankind's misfortunes.

Still, there is one thing about monkeys that I would like you to explain. Why do you monkeys show your teeth at the slightest provocation? Is there some philosophy behind this? Is there some lesson that You wish to teach to everybody?

**MONKEY:**

Dear Father, you have asked me

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a most curious question, and so today I shall divulge to you the secret philosophy of our lives. The tooth is our most essential instrument, the tool with which we chew our food for easy digestion and good health. If any of us loses his teeth, then he is bound to suffer from stomach trouble, which in turn causes many other diseases. We adhere strictly to nature, and hence use neither toothbrushes nor toothpaste nor any powder to clean our teeth. Modern man brushes his teeth daily to keep them clean and strong, but in fact, most men suffer from tooth decay anyhow.

We bare our teeth as a special

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warning and as a challenge to man. Let men look at our teeth first and know the benefits of our naturally cared for teeth. Let them compare their teeth with ours and learn to imitate us.

If men sincerely wish to have a society with ideal health, they should be strictly vegetarian and lead simple lives. They should give up drinking and smoking. From us, they may learn many things about food and good health which they have forgotten in the thousands of years that they have lived apart from nature. We are their ancestors and we have never left our natural ways.

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We never do anything unnatural, or anything which disturbs nature, because we know that nature punishes the wrongdoer. Nature maintains her balance. Her creation is a lawful system. She helps those beings who live in harmony with her and chastises those who go astray. Disease is nothing but a punishment by nature, and simple living creatures recover naturally from their illnesses. Beings who keep their natural ways and lead restrained lives are the happiest creatures in the world.

By abandoning the natural ways and creating an artificial environment, human society has forgotten the real

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value of life. With all their sophistication, they enjoy very little, suffer greatly and are perpetually engaged in intrigue. Men with some degree of moderation may be happy, but the others are always in trouble.

Within their lifetimes, most of your brothers lose all their teeth and many of them use false teeth, which in turn causes further diseases. Men's unnatural lives lead them to all sorts of troubles and maladies, but instead of returning to nature, they attempt some unnatural remedies which only produce further misery.

Materialistic people do not wish to observe *brahmacharya*, that is, control

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of the sexual impulse. *Brahmacharya* is the pedestal upon which a healthy life must stand. Only those who exercise self-restraint are truly able to enjoy this world.

Man is the cleverest of all species, but he overreaches himself and takes dramatic falls. When he abandons his natural duties, he may enjoy some temporary success, but in the end, he winds up destitute. He has forgotten the value of a good simple task well done, and instead, he involves himself in complexities, which lead to his downfall. Our teeth are the symbol of the natural living of which we are proud. Thus we show

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our teeth to all.

**YOGI:**

Now I understand the importance of your teeth to you and why you display them so freely. Please tell me more about your species and your philosophy of life.

**MONKEY:**

Father, you know very well that the Almighty Lord has created this universe for his own sport. He and His law are one and the same, and we cannot be separate from God or His law.

In our lives, we try to abide by nature's balance and to obey her

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rules. We are neither humans nor ordinary beasts, but stand somewhere in between, beneath man but above the purely animal. Nowadays, the human race has deteriorated because of its materialism. We try to lead reasonable and contented lives. "Fewer wants, greater peace", is our motto. We endure all of

nature's disturbances, like heat, cold and rain, and do not worry about the weather. We do not hoard food, or anything else. What we do not wish to eat, we throw to the ground, and thus we help deer and other vegetarian animals by giving them fruit and leaves. We warn the peaceful vege-

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tarian animals of the coming of predators. Men can learn much from our vigorous lives and cheerful minds. Above all, they should imitate our vegetarian diet. Also, we never use any medicines. Men should consider this too.

Joyfulness and playfulness are our ideals. We try to forgive and forget. "Eat moderately, be merry and live a long contented life", is our most important proverb. Our whole life is a play and we do not care about the praise or censure of others.

But when men throw stones at us, we become terrified. When they use arrows or bullets to try to kill us, we

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flee to save our lives. Electric power lines are also a great danger to us. Men boast of the development of their sciences, but they do not recognize their inherent harmfulness.

Reverend Father, although we abide by nature, still we are bound by nature. Although we do not trouble our minds over famine and do not hoard food for it, sometimes irregular rainfall or other conditions cause a scarcity of fruit and we do feel hungry. Sometimes a fire destroys the forest in which we were dwelling and we are miserable for days until we find another place to live. Tell me about your knowledge.

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I want to know about the goal of life. Speak of liberation, of immortality and of freedom from all misery, for ever and ever.

### **YOGI:**

Life is a struggle between an internal force and the external nature. It is all a mysterious play. The whole universe is a mixture of the real and the illusory. The real knows the illusory, but the illusory cannot comprehend the real. But, the Supreme Reality pervades the whole creation and is inherent in every conscious mind.

Nobody can tell about the beginning of the illusory, but the Self real-

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ized man knows the end of the illusory. The illusory is like a dream. When one is awakened from a dream, one can speak clearly about the end of the dream and one knows the time that the dream has ended, but one cannot tell at what time the dream began. Similarly, one can never speak definitively about the onset of the world of illusion.

The Self realized man is free from all sensory allurements. Most people cannot comprehend this because it can only be realized through diligent practice. Through perfect concentration of the mind and the absorption of the mind in its object of meditation,

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the Self is realized. The mind itself is a very mysterious matter. It is neither real nor unreal nor a mixture of real and unreal both, but it is a mystery beyond the scope of mental cognition. Through intense meditation, the transcendental realm is entered and the Self is realized. One may enter the transcendental state as the greatest of fools, but one returns from it with the Supreme Wisdom. Self realization is the ultimate goal of all beings.

The practice which leads to Self realization is called *sadhana*. *Sadhana* must be pursued with unwavering faith, unending patience and unyield-

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ing perseverance. For success at *sadhana*, one must lead a disciplined life. One should eat moderately and should avoid eating anything which stimulates or irritates either the stomach or the mind. One should stay far away from bad company and should not engage in idle chatter. Self-restraint is essential to *sadhana*.

But anyone who practices with heart and soul eventually will succeed. Then he will realize that there is one Supreme Being that is omnipresent, omniscient and only One without a second, and that every individual soul is identical with this Supreme Soul. Once this is known, nothing else

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remains to be known. Knowing that which lies beyond the realm of birth and death, one is free forever from the wheel of birth and death. Resting in the certainty that one's very own Self is this Universal Being, nothing can disturb one's peace or blemish one's everlasting bliss.

The problem of life can never be solved by empirical scientific knowledge. The solution lies in the domain of inner spiritual knowledge. Worldly attachment is the cause of bondage. Liberation must be sought by finding the source, which lies within.

Among men and monkeys, there are three patterns of life. First is

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monkey life, which is natural life, abiding by nature and bound by nature; free from worry about future calamities, but suffering when calamities occur. However, sometime in the past, some monkeys began making and saving simple tools, and these monkeys evolved into men. Modern man lives in a self-created artificial environment. He has lost contact with nature and seeks to achieve happiness through inventing further artifacts, but instead he creates more trouble for himself. He is constantly worried and leads a miserable existence compared to the monkeys in the wild. This second pattern of life

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is inferior to the first. But, during the course of evolution, man's brain developed extraordinary power. Man has the intellectual capability to realize the dilemma of materialistic living and to pass beyond it to spiritual life. Spiritual life's ideal is "simple living and high thinking", and thus it draws the best from the other two patterns of living. While most of mankind is hopelessly entangled in the web of materialistic living, some few have had the wisdom to look within themselves and turn divine.

Simplicity and humility are the signs of saintliness. Non-violence is the supreme virtue. "Live and let

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live" is the most divine teaching. Forgiveness, kindness and tolerance are the qualities of humaneness. Selfless service to all beings is the sign of godliness. Self-contentment is the sign of liberation.

The subtle art of living is to act properly, in accordance with the time, place and situation. Live in this changing world like a lotus in water. You must live in this delusive world, but do not let this world live in you, just like a sturdy boat upon the water which does not allow any water to enter into it. Let only the noblest of thoughts enter within you. Imbibe all spiritual teachings coming from all

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sources, and sing of the everlasting glory of the Almighty Lord.

*Throughout this dialogue, all the monkeys had been sitting and listening attentively, but monkeys will always be monkeys, so towards the end, many of the younger monkeys were twitching and fidgeting. The wise monkey sensed their restlessness, and, as soon as the yogi stopped speaking, he gave a signal to the younger monkeys who gleefully jumped up and went off into the forest, bringing back a large heap of strange fruit never cultivated by man. The wise monkey presented them to the yogi who tasted them and was very pleased by this offering of sweet fruit*

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*that he had never tried before. The wise monkey made another series of gestures and then all the monkeys, one by one, came before the yogi and prostrated to him. Finally the wise monkey took leave of the yogi and monkeys went off into the forest.*

*The monkeys wander wide and far, but it seems that once or twice every year, they happen to return to the same waterfall in the middle of the forest. The wise monkey again spends a few hours discussing philosophical matters with the yogi and after exchanging gifts of fruit with him, the monkeys go off into the forest once more.*

## **HARI OM TAT SAT**

[Back Flap]

*Swami Vishnudevanand Saraswati* was born in a Brahmin family at Calcutta in 1904, but soon he lost his parents and grew up with relatives in the villages of Bengal. With faith that something lay beyond his meagre life, at nineteen he set forth and travelled all over India, seeking the Ultimate Truth. At the 1930 Kumbha Mela, he met his Guru, Yogiraj Handiya Baba, under whose guidance he practised yoga fervently and realized the Supreme Truth in 1934.

He now is enjoying inner peace at the Yoga Vedanta Kutir. He dedicates this booklet to his ardent devotee, the late *Binoy Krishna Bose*, whose selfless service he will never forget.



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