

SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

Annual Subscription Rs. 60
January 2011



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SWAMISHRI'S VICHARAN
October-November 2010

1. Swamishri blesses a satsang assembly in Junagadh.
2. Devotees enjoy Swamishri's darshan and blessings, Junagadh.
3. Swamishri showers flower petals to sanctify the accounts books of the devotees during Chopda Pujan, Gondal (5 November).
4. Annakut offered to Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj, Gondal (6 November).
5. Swamishri blesses the Prabhodini Ekadashi assembly, Rajkot (21 November).
6. Swamishri performs *arti* of the Hathadi (Vegetables) Annakut, Rajkot (21 November).



SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

January 2011, Vol. 34 No. 1

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Website: www.baps.org

E-mail: magazines@in.baps.org

Founder: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj,
Editor: Sadhu Swayamprakashdas,
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Designer: Sadhu Shrijiswarupdas
Published & Printed by: Swaminarayan Aksharpath, Shahibaug,
Ahmedabad-380 004, India.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Outside India (By Air Mail)		India	
	Rupees	Pounds	US Dollars	Rupees
1 Year	500	6	10	60
2 Years	1000	12	20	110
3 Years	1500	18	30	160

Jiva Khachar Schemes Against Dada Khachar

During Shri Hari's stay in Gadhada Dada Khachar faced an ominous challenge...

After the Fuldol celebration in Gadhada Brahmanand Swami fell ill. Slowly his illness became grave. Shri Hari made special arrangements for his treatment and care. Harji Thakkar, who was Dada Khachar's financial manager, felt that Brahmanand Swami's illness had turned chronic and terminal. He became worried. He shared his anxieties with Dada Khachar



and his sisters. They all prayed and requested Maharaj to make him well. Shri Hari declared, "Dada, Brahmanand Swami's lifespan is nearly over; he will shortly pass away and go to *dham*." Maharaj's reply shocked all and subsequently an air of gloom descended upon them. Dada Khachar beseeched, "Maharaj, it is in your hands to make Brahmanand Swami well. So many have been inspired into Satsang through him. Do not take him away to your abode so soon."

Maharaj explained, "Dada, with regards to Swami's lifespan, time will do its duty. However, if you all wish to extend it, contribute a part of your lifespan to him."

The women devotees readily agreed. Some offered two years, five years, and others a month or few weeks. In all it added up to twelve years. Shri Hari was pleased with their concern for Brahmanand Swami and assured, "To honour your feelings, I will allow Swami to live further."

By Maharaj's wish Brahmanand Swami start-

ed recovering. In the next few days his fatal illness had totally disappeared.

Every day, Shri Hari listened to the Shrimad Bhagvat read by Pragji Dave. Maharaj had also initiated the rebuilding of two rooms in the east-facing part of Dada Khachar's *darbar*. For the construction work Maharaj had called Gangaram Suthar from Mansa and Harkha Suthar of Unava. Devraj, the mason

from Gondal, was already serving in Gadhada.

The birthday celebration of Maharaj in 1820 was celebrated in Gadhpur. Thereafter Maharaj instructed Nityanand Swami and Chaitanyanand Swami to leave for Surat and inspire all with satsang.

Once Maharaj told a *parshad* to call Dada Khachar to come to him immediately. At that time a barber was shaving Dada Khachar's beard. It was half done when the *parshad* called. Dada got up instantly and tied a cloth over his face. When Shri Hari saw him, he asked, "Dada, what were you doing?"

"Maharaj, I was getting a shave. On your call I came here immediately. What are your instructions?"

Maharaj smiled at his obedience. Then his eyes moistened with tears of joy, "Dada, you should have come after your shave was over. There was no urgency."

"Maharaj, that would have delayed my coming and you would have had to wait unnecessarily," Dada Khachar replied humbly.

Shri Hari looked at Muktanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami, Shukmuni Swami and others and praised, "Did you see Dada's alacrity in conforming to my words?"

"Maharaj, there is nothing in his heart other than your divine form," Muktanand Swami commended.

"And that is why I have to take care of him, his family, his land and his assets."

Dada was still standing with folded hands. He was awaiting Maharaj's instruction.

MAHARAJ IMPARTS THE ROYAL DUTIES TO DADA KHACHAR

Maharaj spoke to him, "Dada, do you know that Jiva Khachar is on the verge of playing a dirty trick on you. He wants to confiscate your home and land and take charge. Furthermore, he wishes to throw you out and reduce you to a tramp."

"Maharaj, I am simply unaware of it. I cannot believe that Jiva Bapu would do this," Dada replied innocently.

"Look Dada, you are a king," Maharaj began with a strict tone. "It is your duty as a king to protect your people. For that you have to learn the lessons of kingship. Become proficient in solving problems and situations through the four means of *sama* (peace), *dama* (suppression), *bheda* (division) and *danda* (punishment). You have to deploy observers and secret agents who can inform you about what's happening in your kingdom. On the contrary, you are aloof and absorbed in bhajan, believing nothing untoward is happening in your kingdom. But you must understand and shrewdly execute the duties of a king."

Dada Khachar was still standing with folded hands and eyes cast downwards. Seeing him thus Shri Hari reproached him further, "If you lose your kingdom you'll be ruined. Then where will you go, and what will you eat? Have you ever thought about that?"

Dada Khachar still stood mutedly. Gently Muktanand Swami interrupted, "Maharaj, in his

heart he cherishes only your divine form. So how can he have worries about other things! Where there is God there are no desires, and where there are desires, God does not reside. Maharaj, since he cares for you, you worry about and care for him."

Shri Hari listened patiently to Muktanand Swami's eulogy. Maharaj throbbed with joy at Dada's sacrifice and devotion. Muktanand Swami continued, "In the Mahabharat war when Bhishma announced his pledge to kill Arjun the next day, there was turmoil and fear in the Pandav camp. Even Shri Krishna was worried. He went to Arjun's tent to reassure and embolden him. However on seeing Arjun in deep sleep, he was amazed. He woke Arjun up. On seeing Krishna, Arjun sat up surprised, "My Lord, what brings you here at this hour?" Shri Krishna asked him, "Have you heard Bhishma's terrible pledge? The entire Pandav camp is paralysed with fear for your life, so how can you sleep?" Arjun simply smiled and uttered, "My Lord, because you are awake!"

Shri Hari replied, "I understand. So it means that worrying for Dada is on my head?"

"Yes Maharaj. You have been caring and worrying for him on all occasions!" Muktanand Swami reaffirmed.

"Swami, now hear me seriously. Jiva Khachar has gathered 2,000 men for war. He has also fortified his army with Arab soldiers from Bhavnagar. Tomorrow they will arrive here and attack. They may conquer Dada's share of Gadhada village." As Maharaj spoke, his voice trembled with anxiety.

DADA'S SUGARCANE FARM IS SET AFIRE

Meghji and Hasan, who looked after Dada Khachar's farm, came running frantically to the *darbar*. "Maharaj, something unexpected has happened. The sugarcane farm in Lakshmiyadi has been torched by someone. We have just come from there. There's a raging fire rapidly consuming Dada's farm."

Shri Hari turned red with anger. He stood up instantly, thumping his left palm with the fist of his right hand. Maharaj spoke in exasperation, "I'll have to teach Jiva Khachar a lesson by showing him the awesome form of Narsinh avatar. All these years my recognition of Jiva Bapu's services to me had restrained me from giving him fitting replies to all his schemes against Dada Khachar. But today what has occurred is the last straw! All the merits of his services have been destroyed due to his aversion for a great devotee like Dada Khachar." In the meantime, Sombai, Jiva Khachar of Sarangpur, Somla Khachar and other *parshads* arrived and informed, "Maharaj, Jiva Khachar's army is now outside our door. They are shouting slogans and banging their hands on the door. Tell us what we should do now!"

Shri Hari changed into saffron clothes and armed himself with a sword and shield. He told Dada Khachar, "You go to Sarangpur now. I will take care of the problem."

Dada argued, "It is a *kshatriya's* duty to fight and not run away. A true *kshatriya* fervently waits to be of service on occasions of war, and you tell me to go away to Sarangpur!"

Maharaj explained, "Dada, whatever I say to you now is your duty. Just obey me and go to Sarangpur with a couple of *parshads* as your bodyguards."

With no other alternative, Dada Khachar obeyed Shri Hari's command. He left for Sarangpur with a heavy heart, walking away from the imminent attack on his house and the criticisms from his critics.

Maharaj came out of his room ready to clash with the enemy. Somla Khachar checked Shri Hari, "There is no need for you to join the fray. We ask you to simply bless us and leave the rest to us."

Shri Hari replied, "Somla Khachar, you are all my instruments. I will protect Dada's property through you all. You have my blessings. The enemy will be routed by your skills and

courage. Go and show them your might. Jai Swaminarayan!"

Everyone chorused the *jai* aloud. Satchidanand Swami armed himself with a plough and joined the Kathis for the fight. Other sadhus took up batons and staffs. Maharaj told his sadhus, "You have the lustre and power of celibacy, faith and devotion. The opponents are characterless and lifeless because of their addictions to liquor, ganja and marijuana." Shri Hari cheered them for the big battle. The brave Kathis opened the giant door of Dada's premise. The Arab soldiers were ready to fire their rifles, but on pulling the trigger nothing happened. The Kathis fired their rifles and wounded the opponents. Chaos swept through the opponents' rank. They all started running helter-skelter. Satchidanand Swami pursued them with his giant plough. The opponents were simply dazed to see the Swami, who was over six feet tall, brandishing a big plough. The opponents were left in disarray. Some ran away, some hid themselves, and the majority surrendered.

When the Kathis returned, Shri Hari showered his joy upon them for their victory. Maharaj enquired, "What happened to the enemy?"

"Not one could oppose us because their rifles did not fire. We attacked fiercely, and their forces buckled under our onslaught," Somla Khachar narrated the scene. Shri Hari observed that not one of his Kathis or sadhus was injured. He asked, "You don't have a single wound or scratch!" Somla Khachar explained, "Maharaj, with Bhaguji bravely wielding his sword no one dared to fight."

Shri Hari smiled and stated, "That's fine. But, even if we had lost 200 people for Dada's sake, it would have been worth it." All the Kathis knew that by Shri Hari's grace none of them had lost their lives or suffered a scratch. Once everything calmed down in Gadhada Maharaj recalled Dada Khachar. ◆

(Contd. next issue)
From Gujarati text of
Bhagwan Swaminarayan
by H.T. Dave

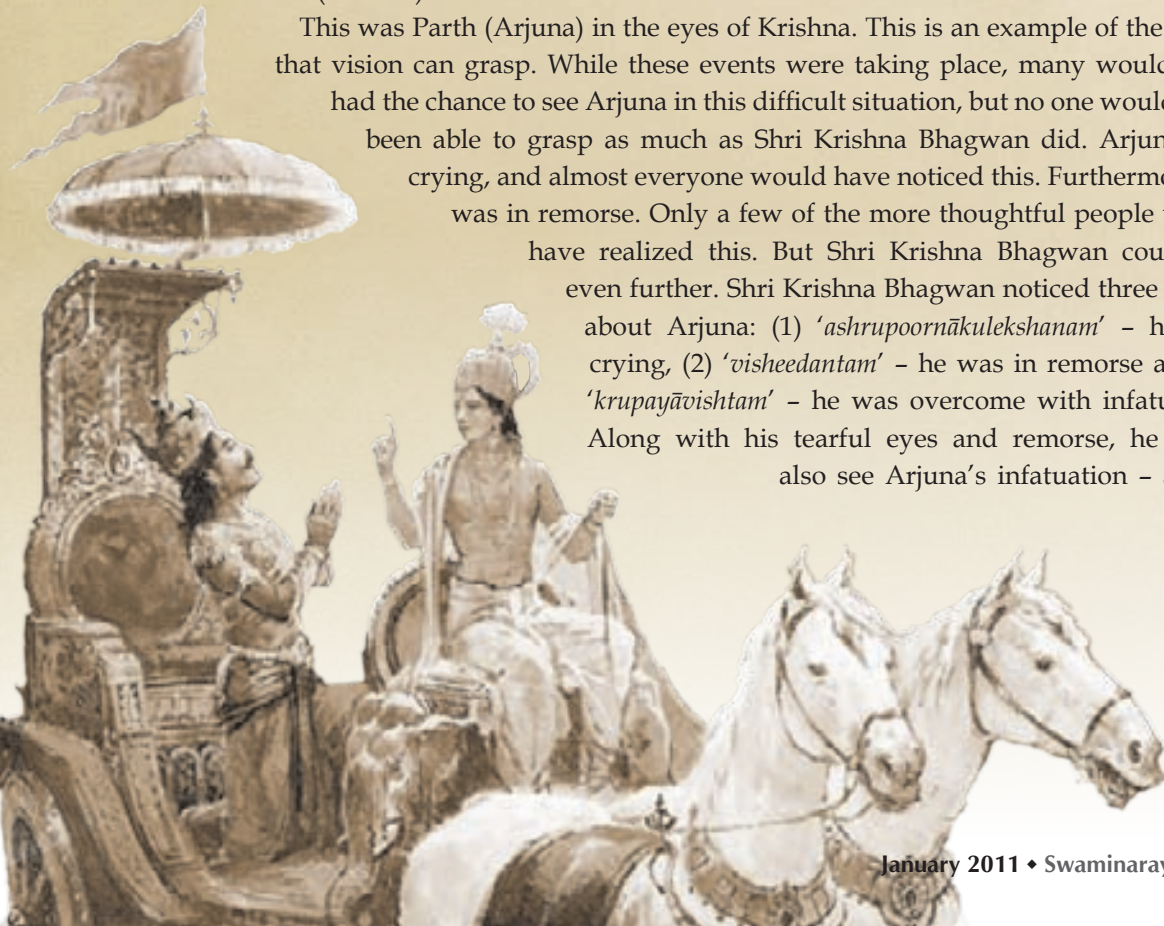
BRĀHMI STHITI YOGA: PART 1

ARJUNA IN THE EYES OF KRISHNA

(Recap: Arjuna was overcome with emotion on seeing his relatives in the opposition. His body became weak, his bow dropped out of his hand, his mind became agitated, and he decided not to fight. Overcome with grief, he sat down at the back of the chariot. This is where the first adhyāy concluded. We will now take a look at what happened thereafter in the second adhyāy.)

On the outset of the second *adhyāy*, Sanjaya says to Dhritarāshtra, 'तं तथा कृपयाविष्टमश्रुपूर्णाकुलेक्षणम्। विषीदन्तमिदं वाक्यमुवाच मधुसूदनः॥' - '*Tam tathā krupayāvīshitamashrupoornākulekshanam, visheedantamidam vākya muvācha madhusoodanaha.*' - 'Madhusudan Shri Krishna said the following words to Arjuna who was overcome with infatuation, in remorse, and whose disturbed eyes were filled with tears' (Gita 2.1).

This was Parth (Arjuna) in the eyes of Krishna. This is an example of the depth that vision can grasp. While these events were taking place, many would have had the chance to see Arjuna in this difficult situation, but no one would have been able to grasp as much as Shri Krishna Bhagwan did. Arjuna was crying, and almost everyone would have noticed this. Furthermore, he was in remorse. Only a few of the more thoughtful people would have realized this. But Shri Krishna Bhagwan could see even further. Shri Krishna Bhagwan noticed three things about Arjuna: (1) '*ashrupoornākulekshanam*' - he was crying, (2) '*visheedantam*' - he was in remorse and (3) '*krupayāvīshitam*' - he was overcome with infatuation. Along with his tearful eyes and remorse, he could also see Arjuna's infatuation - as if a



complete picture of Arjuna, both internally and externally, was clear in Krishna's eyes.

From a philosophical point of view, Shri Krishna's ability to perceive Arjuna's state is astonishing and awe-inspiring. The philosophical shastras of Sanatan Hindu Dharma give a clear description of the *jiva* in its bound state. Whenever a *jiva* which is bound by *maya* attains a human or other birth, it is associated with the three bodies of *maya*. These three bodies are the *sthul sharir* – the gross body, the *sukshma sharir* – the subtle body, and the *kāran sharir* – the causal body.

To understand the philosophical depth of the Bhagavad Gita, let us briefly acquaint ourselves with these three bodies.

THE STHUL SHARIR: THE PHYSICAL BODY

The *sthul sharir* means our physical body made up of the five gross elements. We can physically experience this body, touch it, see it and describe its form and colour. We can see its actions, such as sitting, speaking, laughing or even crying. We can measure its height and weight.

THE SUKSHMA SHARIR: THE SUBTLE BODY

Our subtle body is comprised of the *mana*, *buddhi*, *chitt* and *ahamkār*. *Sukshma* means subtle. As opposed to the physical body, we cannot see this subtle body with our naked eyes. Its form and colour cannot be described. Nevertheless, the subtle body is much more powerful than the physical body and influences it. Whatever we think, good or bad, whatever decisions we make, whatever contemplation we do, is all done using the subtle body.

This subtle body has a unique relationship with the physical body. For example, whatever good or bad we think, whatever we decide, whatever we contemplate on, resultantly inspires the physical body to act accordingly. As a result of this, we experience emotions of joy or misery

in our hearts. This results in expressions such as laughter, dance, singing, lamentation or crying in the physical body. Thus the subtle body performs a unique role with the physical body.

THE KĀRAN SHARIR: THE CAUSAL BODY

The causal body is the cause of all misery. It is this causal body that is the cause of the repeated births and deaths of the *jiva*. *Maya*, experienced in the form of base instincts such as lust, anger, greed, infatuation, etc. is the causal body of the *jiva*. This *maya* has possessed the *jiva* in the form of the causal body since time eternal. It is from this causal body that the subtle and gross bodies are shaped. One's thoughts follow one's instincts. And one's actions follow their thoughts. In this way, the causal body plays a special role in every aspect of our lives, and is the cause of all our misery and worldly attachments (*bandhan*). Therefore, to free ourselves from worldly misery and the bondage of births and deaths, we should first understand the root of all of this, i.e., we must know the causal body; and then we must separate ourselves from it.

Here, in the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna Bhagwan has observed all three of Arjuna's *sharirs*: (1) '*ashrupoornākulekshanam*' means one whose disturbed eyes are filled with tears. These words describe Arjuna's physical body, (2) '*visheedantam*' means in remorse. These words describe his subtle body and (3) '*krupayāvishitam*' means he is overcome with infatuation. This depicts his causal body.

Truly, Shri Krishna Bhagwan is not just an expert physician, nor is he just a psychiatrist, but he also plays the further role of being a spiritual doctor. Arjuna is sick, spiritually sick. Crying is a physical symptom of this disease. But no one cries without reason. Arjuna is crying due to the remorse in his mind and this remorse is a subtle symptom of his disease. Shri Krishna Bhagwan has pinpointed the reason for this remorse too, it

is his infatuation. This infatuation is the main cause of his disease. It is this infatuation that is expressed as remorse and tearful eyes.

Thus, Shri Krishna Bhagwan has not just picked up on the disease, but has also realized the cause of the disease. Shri Krishna then thinks over the cure.

FORESIGHT OF A HAPPY PARTH

The trait of a good and true doctor is that as well as seeing the prevailing miserable state of the patient, he can also visualize his future. This future is engraved with a healthy and happy life. Even though Arjuna is crying in remorse, seized by infatuation, in the Gita, could Shri Krishna have envisioned his future in which he saw a healthy and happy Arjuna? This question is answered in the last *adhyañy* of the Gita. *Shloka* 54 of the 18th *adhyañy* gives us a glimpse of that vision. The words are 'ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।' - '*Brahmabhootaha prasannātmā na shochati na kāṅkshati*' - 'One who becomes *brahmarup* attains happiness, he never grieves and never has any worldly expectations.'

To become *brahmarup* means to become like Aksharbrahman, to become free of the influences of *maya*, to become *gunātīt*. Anyone who wants to be free of the pains of despair, who wants to experience happiness, must become *brahmarup*. Parth is seized by infatuation, and hence in despair, in remorse and crying. But, if his *ātmā* attains the *brahmic* state (*brahmabhootaha*), imbibes the qualities of Aksharbrahman, becomes free of the influences of *maya* and becomes *gunātīt*, he will immediately be entitled to the boon of being '*prasannātmā*' - happy. He attains the level of '*na shochati na kāṅkshati*', that is, never grieves and never has any worldly expectations, and thus no longer has any reason to cry. Not only that, 'नैनं प्राप्य विमुह्यति' - '*Nainām prāpya vimuhyati*' - 'he will never again be infatuated'.



One who becomes *brahmarup* attains happiness, he never grieves and never has any worldly expectations.

Gita 18.54

It is for this reason that Shri Krishna Bhagwan has now decided to give the infatuated Parth the spiritual remedy of becoming *brahmarup*.

We should put ourselves in Parth's situation for a moment. Parth is Pruthā's son, Arjuna. Parth also means one who is born from the earth. All of mankind is born from the earth. We are miserable, in an infatuated state and in remorse. We are crying and are disheartened. Along with Arjuna, we too should take a sip of this remedy of becoming *brahmarup*.

Thus, in order for Parth to attain this ultimate spiritual state of becoming *brahmarup*, Shri Krishna commences giving him the necessary course one treatment after another. Of that, the first treatment is a dose of courage.

HOW HAS THIS COME OF YOU, ARJUNA?

Shri Krishna Bhagwan said to Arjuna, 'कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् । अनार्यजुष्टम् अस्वर्ग्यम् अकीर्तिकरम् अर्जुन ॥' - '*Kutastvā kashmalamidam vishame samupasthitam, anāryajushtam asvargyam akeertikaram Arjuna*' - 'O Arjuna! No great man would do such actions. Moreover, such actions would not help one attain heaven, such actions would not even give one fame. How have these tainted actions come of you at such an inappropriate time' (Gita 2.2).

Shri Krishna Bhagwan himself is expressing his astonishment to Arjuna. Arjuna means one who has a pure, clean *antahkaran*. How did this taint enter such an *antahkaran*. Even more astonishing than this is that the very action that Arjuna believed to be the best action, was really something that great men would not do (*anāryajushtam*). Arjuna had felt that if I fight I will not attain heaven, and with this thought he had decided not to fight. But, in fact, this very decision was one that would not lead to heaven (*asvargyam*). Arjuna felt that the war would lead

to dishonour and thus wanted to stay away from the war, but in reality staying away from the war would be the cause of dishonour (*akeertikaram*). In this way, it is astonishing that the thoughts and decisions of someone like Arjuna are wandering in the completely opposite direction at such a crucial time. This is what brings these words to Shri Krishna's lips.

Having said this, Shri Krishna says an important thing.

ARISE ARJUNA

‘क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते। क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्तवोत्तिष्ठ परंतप॥’ – ‘*Klaibyam mā sma gamaha Partha Naitattovayyupapadyate, Kshudram hrudayadaurbalyam tyaktavottishtha Paramtapa*’ – ‘O Pruthā's son, Arjuna! Don't become impotent. This does not befit you. O one who is terrifying to the enemy, stop being weak-hearted and arise’ (Gita 2.3).

Klaibyam means impotence, lack of strength. Just like it is useless to expect the fruit of progeny from an impotent person, similarly, even though Arjuna felt his decisions were appropriate, as far as Shri Krishna was concerned, they were useless and unfruitful. Actually, Arjuna and weakness are two things that cannot be imagined together. He did not in the slightest lack physical strength. He was not at all scared of the enemy. He was intelligent. He was very skilled in war tactics. Yet his weakness was due to something different. He had become subject to a weak heart. He had collapsed from within. He had been struck with disease caused by the fear of imagined sins and unrighteousness. Thus he had forgotten his duty. Shri Krishna Bhagwan knew Arjuna's duty very well. He also knew that physical strength and intellectual ability were not sufficient for one to fulfil one's duty; for that one needs inner courage as well. Without inner courage, physical strength and intellectual ability are of no use. Arjuna was in the same situation. Weakness had suddenly taken a grasp on him. That is why in this *shloka*, telling him to discard his impotence (*Klaibyam*

mā sma gamaha), Shri Krishna attacks his inner weakness and encourages him.

Explaining the reason for Arjuna to abandon his cowardice, Shri Krishna Bhagwan says, ‘नैतत्त्वयि उपपद्यते’ – ‘*Naitat tvayi upapadyate*’ – ‘O Arjuna! This does not befit you.’

Here, Shri Krishna was reminding him of his valour, awakening his pride and making him aware of his role. It was as though Krishna was hinting at his true form: O Arjuna! Who are you? To whom do you belong? Think about your responsibility. Think about your abilities. O Parth! You are an extremely powerful and brave warrior. When you were born, there was a divine utterance saying that you will be the foremost of all warriors. Moreover, remember your bravery, you single-handedly defeated everyone on the battlefield showing your expertise in weaponry. You defeated Indra during the Khandavdah incident. You saved Acharya Drona from an alligator. You have attained all these honours and more. Therefore, O Arjuna! This does not befit you (*naitattovayi upapadyate*).

Moreover, O Parth! To forget one's duty and be controlled by one's emotions is an inferior level of weakness of the heart. Therefore, O one who terrifies foes! Forsake this inferior weakness and arise to perform your duty.

The address, ‘one who terrifies foes’ opens up a new perspective for us. Shri Krishna does not address the crying disheartened Arjuna as a crybaby or coward. Even though Arjuna may be crying at the time, Shri Krishna can simultaneously see his true strength. This is an ideal example of how to help the fallen back to their feet.

Thus Krishna first gave Parth a dose of valour, and we will see what he gave thereafter in the next article. ◆



SNAPSHOT OF SOCIETY

On 4 February 2000, Swamishri left Jambusar, near Bharuch, and during the day travelled to eight villages before arriving at night in Atladra. In one of the villages, Nahaar, he performed the murti-pratishtha of the new BAPS mandir and thereafter, blessing the devotees, Swamishri described the troubled state of society and emphasized the essential role of mandirs in helping to sustain spiritual and moral practices. The following is an extract of his thought-provoking blessings...

When mandirs of God are built, people question their need. But when bars, gambling dens, cinemas and other such places are built people do not object. These places degrade morals, yet people accept them.

For inner peace it is necessary to know our dharma, our culture, and who were Bhagwan Rama, Bhagwan Krishna and Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the good virtues they taught. Technology has led to outer development, but from its abuses it has corrupted our inner values.

TV, cinema and other things show vulgar pictures and talks. Even in many books and magazines there are vulgar photos. They pollute

the mind, leading to corruption, violence, dishonesty, addictions and other bad habits. Undiscriminating people don't seem to mind allowing such images into their homes. However, there are those who object or are disinterested when photos of God are kept. But photos of God will sustain our culture and morals. Before, shastras such as the Gita, Bhagvat, Upanishads, Ramayan, Mahabharat, Vachanamrut, Shikshapatri and others were kept in the home. Nowadays they have, to a large extent, been replaced by vulgar books. This results in quarrels, loose behaviour in the home and in society, and addictions. So, the more we do to preserve our culture and traditions, the more we will benefit.

We are losing our true wealth. Dharma is our

true wealth. By allowing vulgarity in the home, only problems arise. So, much thought is needed about this.

If one remembers God, he will look after us. Bhagwan Swaminarayan manifest on this earth and taught such values. He insisted that we develop a good character. Good character means observing dharma, honesty, compassion, ahimsa, *brahmacharya*, service to others, and abstaining from addictions. All faiths teach that a life of pure character and free from addictions leads to happiness.

Living by such good values prevents wasting of money, and from these savings much good work can be done for oneself, one's family and one's country. Mandirs give good inspiration, and so we will benefit. There is also a need for schools and hospitals; our Sanstha has also built and runs them. But, today, we see that after finishing studies at school or college, students have little training in character and values. Even many parents do not give such education at home. In schools and colleges, teaching of dharma is prohibited, so what will children learn? There are so many vulgar activities and much loose behaviour in schools and colleges everywhere.

In the past we had the *gurukul* system. They studied and did not entertain any vulgar thoughts. In addition to the academic subjects, the gurus taught them how to live a pure life: '*Satyam Vada*' - 'Speak the truth', '*Matrudevo bhava*, '*Pitrudevo bhava*' - 'Respect your mother and father like gods'. With such noble values, they graduated and then served society. Society, then, was based on dharma and service to others. Today, books and newspapers write about violence, loose behaviour and vulgar thoughts. These evil ideas corrupt our good character and so disturb our inner peace.

Bhagwan Rama, Bhagwan Krishna and other avatars manifest on earth in different eras to remove *adharma* and establish dharma. "*Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati Bhārata...*"

Kans, Dantvakra, Shishupal, Hiranyakashipu,

Ravan and others terrorized society and the avatars manifested on earth to defeat them and remove *adharma*. Duryodhan and the Kauravs were intent on destroying, but Krishna sided with the Pandavs and defeated them.

So, if we seek the refuge of God then we will be protected from the evil surroundings. If we do not remain alert, then our children will be affected adversely. Today, parents find it difficult to discipline their children. They are not aware of what is happening at school: are the children studying sincerely or indulging in immoral behaviour?

Parents are so engrossed in their own work, they have no time for worship; not even at home. In the home one should at least have a *murti* of God. Whoever one has faith in, pray, offer worship, read shastras and go to the mandir for darshan. If parents do not practice such dharma, their children will not either. Today's social environment is such that even those of good character become bad. Time and money are lost in bad habits and addictions. So, the greater the practice of satsang, the greater the peace you will experience.

Even in weddings and other social functions, dharma should be practiced - do not indulge in meat eating or drinking alcohol. All these things are from another culture.

In Bhagwan Swaminarayan's time, people used to sacrifice goats, and other animals in *yagnas*. But he introduced non-violent *yagnas*, without killing of animals. He demonstrated the benefits of such non-violent *yagnas* and taught people to lead a pure and pious life.

All these talks are sustained by our shastras, mandirs and sadhus. If we live with faith and trust in them, then our children will also live accordingly.

Yogiji Maharaj had this foresight many years ago. So, he founded the *bal*, *kishore* and *yuvak mandals*. They have spread now throughout the world. They teach good values to the children, teenagers and youths and inspire faith in dharma. Living by these principles will bring true inner happiness. ♦

PRINCIPLES OF SATSANG: SAMP, SUHRADBHAV AND EKTA

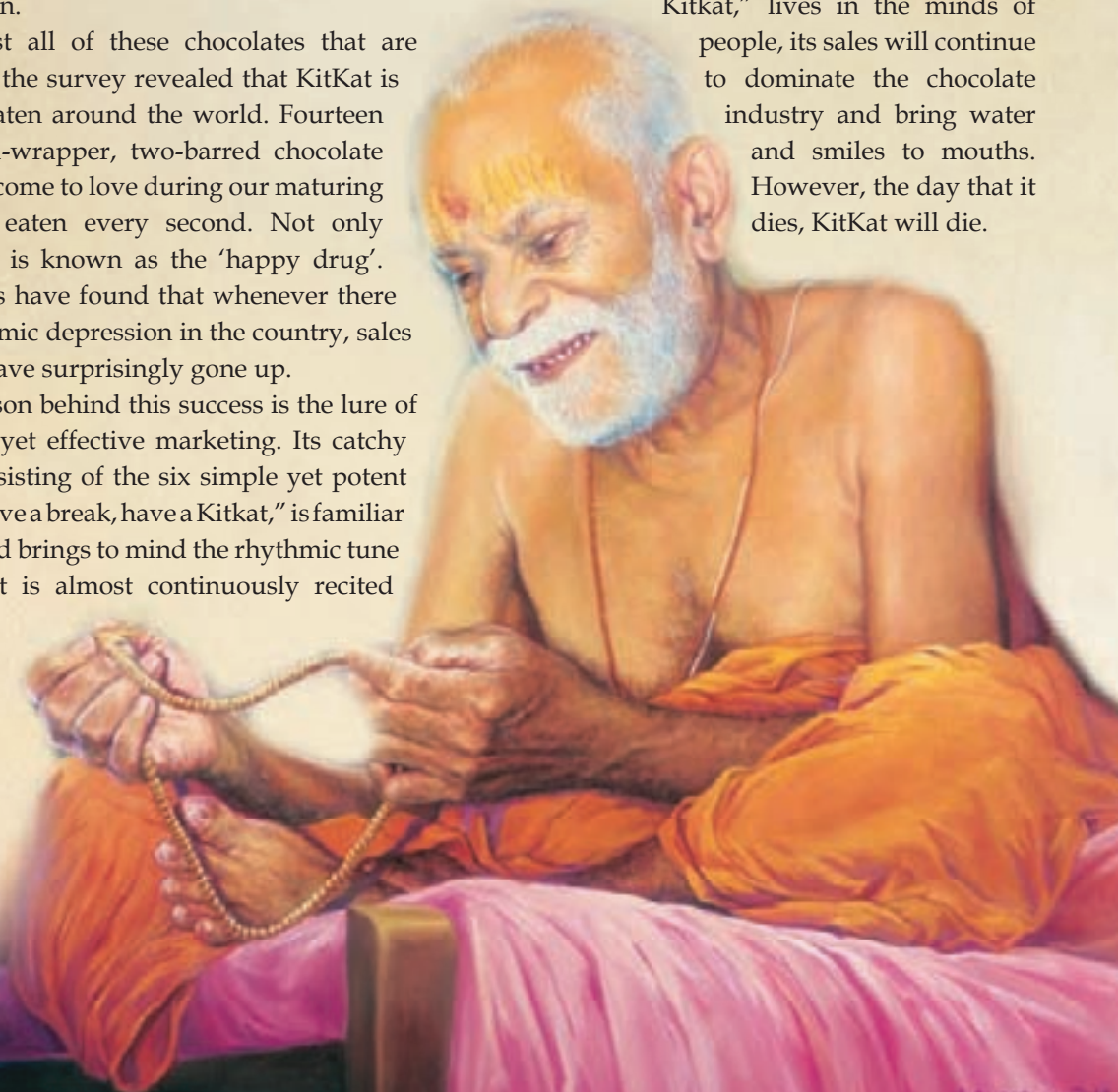
A recent well-known survey revealed that the English, Welsh and Scottish people in England eat individually ten kilogrammes of chocolate every year. Their cravings for the mouth-watering, cacao tree derivative amounts to the consumption of about four billion kilogrammes of chocolate each year. One can imagine the elation felt by the dentists of the region.

Amongst all of these chocolates that are consumed, the survey revealed that KitKat is the most eaten around the world. Fourteen of that red-wrapper, two-barred chocolate that we've come to love during our maturing years, are eaten every second. Not only that, but it is known as the 'happy drug'. Researchers have found that whenever there is an economic depression in the country, sales of KitKat have surprisingly gone up.

The reason behind this success is the lure of its simple, yet effective marketing. Its catchy phrase consisting of the six simple yet potent words: "Have a break, have a Kitkat," is familiar to many and brings to mind the rhythmic tune to which it is almost continuously recited

in its advertisement. This message has caused it to not only double its production in the last ten years, but also to continue dominating the market. It is the only message in the corporate world that, since its inception in 1937, has never had to change.

Marketing strategists have revealed that so long as this message, "Have a break, have a Kitkat," lives in the minds of people, its sales will continue to dominate the chocolate industry and bring water and smiles to mouths. However, the day that it dies, KitKat will die.



Similarly, about 230 years ago, Shriji Maharaj came to this earth with certain messages. They carried this Sampradaya through its growing pains, resulted in its spectacular growth, and formed its bedrock and identity. One can also say, that so long as these principles live in the minds of its devotees, this Sampradaya will continue to flourish.

Among the many messages that Shriji Maharaj revealed, the principles of *dharma*, *jnan*, *vairagya*, *bhakti*, *swarupnishtha*, and *samp*, *suhrudbhav* and *ekta* are messages that lie at its foundation. These lay the foundation of this Sampradaya. Of these principles we will focus our attention on *samp*, *suhrudbhav*, and *ekta* in this article.

The message of *samp* is not new to us. We have heard of the tremendous power generated by working together. Breaking one arrow as opposed to a bundle, the force of a falling droplet of water compared to a stone-cutting waterfall, and the strength of a piece of string and many pieces wound together are all analogies used to demonstrate nature's lesson of *samp*. Even history has attested to the significance of such power to accomplish seemingly impossible goals. Everything from Gandhi's proclaimed salt march to the French bourgeoisie's revolution against its aristocratic government was consequent of the power of working together.

However, is working together enough? The same people who walked besides each other on their march towards revolution in countless nations were later found at one another's throats. Sometimes we equate unity with simply being or working together; but, this is not the case. *Samp*, *suhrudbhav*, and *ekta* require something more. The 1998 World Expo in Portugal serves as a reminder that *samp* is not as simple as we often believe. The theme of the exposition was "Our Heritage of the Future." In its preparation, a new complex was constructed in Lisbon to house vivid exhibits of the world. It was an exhibition of the wonderful innovations, contributions and peculiarities of the world. In the centre of the complex, a large aquarium was constructed consisting of

thousands of fish and ocean life from around the world to represent the rich diversity of our world. Surprisingly, the aquarium also housed many sharks – carnivores that eat other fish. When a guide was questioned, "You have sharks in this aquarium, but don't these sharks attack the other fish?" The guide gave an intriguing answer, "These predators are fed regularly!"

There's a similarity between sharks and humans. We work and live together with each other and seem to have unity with one another. However, just as there can be unity in disparity, there can be disparity in what seems like unity. Unity lasts as long as we are fed, that is, given our share of respect, praise and appreciation, among other things. Although we may live, work and even fight alongside with each other, the potential to attack one another and to lose our integrity remains. It is circumstance that brings out the predator in us. When our food becomes compromised, when we lose the bread and butter that makes us tick, we begin feeding.

The real-life TV show, *Survivor*, which several years ago topped the charts for many months, bears testament to the birth of this aggressive nature of normal people when placed in abnormal circumstances. In the show, a group of people were placed on an island or some remote location and asked to perform certain tasks. Among the many activities, every night all of the members of the group would gather to present the work that they had accomplished, express their successes and grievances, and vote for one of the members of the team to be removed. The person who received the most votes was asked to leave the show, and in effect lost his chance to cash in on the winning prize. After the show ran its course, the last remaining person would be hailed as the survivor and was generously gifted by the producers of the show.

The interesting part of the show, however, was to notice the transformation that each person underwent as the show progressed. At intervals the participants of the team were interviewed and asked questions about the status of their

task and what they felt about the people that they were working with. During the beginning of the series, everyone looked forward to helping each other, praised one another, was polite and quickly formed close ties.

However, as the days progressed and participants began to be voted off the show, the animalistic instinct kicked in. What once seemed like camaraderie was quickly lost. People began slandering, small groups or alliances developed, participants hindered the completion of each other's tasks, and some even dared to covertly destroy in the middle of the night what others had worked on during the day.

After several episodes of this TV show, many noticed that this did not happen just once, but over and over again. The people, tasks and location would change, but the results were the same – unity broke down and everything short of all-out-war began to erupt.

Samp, suhrudbhav and *ekta* rises above merely working and being together. It's about being able to work with each other when feeding has become scarce and the opportunity to attack is the easy option. It requires something more fundamental than a simple outward expression of social harmony. Having *samp, suhrudbhav* and *ekta* is about having our intentions, values and attitudes in sync with others around us. This requires one to sacrifice personal desires, extend one's heart to others and feel their emotions, and to become a servant of servants. These same sentiments are captured by Yogiji Maharaj's words when he identifies the following features of *samp, suhrudbhav* and *ekta*.

STAYING HUNGRY TO FEED ANOTHER

Yogiji Maharaj was in Dangra in 1918 (V.S. 1974) to celebrate the consecration of the mandir's *murtis*. Although it was a small village, on this day the streets were bustling with excitement. Thousands of devotees had come to take part in the ceremonies that lasted throughout the morning. Noon came, and with it lunch prepared and then served by Sadhu Jnanjivandas and other

sadhus. The chilled *ras* and soft *rotlis* were more than a welcome break from the sweltering midday heat. After everyone had finished their meal, Jnanjivandas and two other sadhus sat down to eat. There was only enough *ras* left for the three of them. Just as they were about to begin, three devotees, Kuberbhai from Bhavnagar, Nanubhai Sheth, and Narayanbhai Mistry peeked in to see if there was still anything left to eat. Jnanjivandas sensed their disappointment. He immediately got up, ushered them to sit down, and fed the devotees his share of *ras*. To stay hungry to feed another requires one to let go of one's desires – a sacrifice of the mind.

TO PLAY THE BLAME GAME WITH DIFFERENT RULES

In 1937 (V.S. 1993), the times were tough in Gondal. Insufficient food meant having to travel in the sweltering Indian sun to extra homes, neighbourhoods and villages to beg for food to have something to eat for dinner. As a result, wasting anything was a sure way of getting rebuked; and it was understandable, since things that we take for granted, were only the realities of dreams. Ghee, purified butter, was a precious commodity at the time, and as a result, it was kept under the safest conditions to ensure that it lasted. Once, in the kitchen, Sadhu Baldevcharandas accidentally tipped over a jarful of ghee. Just then Nirgun Swami walked by. Baldevcharandas stood in horror. With both hands outstretched he tried to speak in defense, but nothing came out. Nirgun Swami unable to bear the wasted ghee began reprimanding the sadhu for his carelessness. Yogiji Maharaj saw all of this unfolding, and stepped in, "I spilled the ghee when I accidentally kicked it with my feet. It's not the sadhu's fault." Nirgun Swami turned to face him and vented, "Then you should be careful when you walk!" Yogiji Maharaj had taken the blame for something he hadn't done. To take the blame on behalf of another requires one to extend one's heart and feel another's emotions.

TO BECOME A SERVANT OF SERVANTS

When Yogiji Maharaj was in Dar-es-Salaam in 1959, many youths travelled with him. Throughout the day, they listened to *katha*, performed Swami's *seva*, which involved among other things, helping in the kitchen. They also sat with Swami and other sadhus to have discussions (*goshthi*) and memorize kirtans and *shlokas* that Yogiji Maharaj himself selected. Every day was a *shibir*, and their leader was Yogiji Maharaj himself. He personally took interest in each and every one of them and ensured that they made the most of being with him. Yogiji Maharaj was their mother, father, brother and guru – he taught and cared for them in the most unimaginable ways. He taught not only by instruction, but also by example.

Once, many youths had soaked their clothes in the bathroom. They had thought that they would wash them later in the evening when they had some free time on their hands. Swami happened to walk by and saw the soaked clothes. Under pretense for going to the bathroom, Swami went in and locked the door from the inside. He knew that if anyone found out about what he was going to do, they would try everything in their means to stop him. Swami then began to wash the youths' soaked clothes. Several youths quickly gathered outside the door and began pleading to Swami to stop. They were travelling with him to serve him, not to be served by him. Nevertheless, Swami washed the entire pile of clothes and taught the youths an important life lesson. As guru serving his disciples, Yogiji Maharaj demonstrated the identity of purpose between the two – to be a servant of servants.

Yogiji Maharaj's purpose, heart and mind, and as a result, his actions, were all tuned to understanding and serving others. The Rig Veda reaffirms this missing piece when it states in a prayer, "Let our purpose, heart, and mind be the same and let us perform our tasks together."¹ Unity based on this principle doesn't change with circumstance. Although the opportunity arose,

1. Rig Veda 10.191.4

Yogiji Maharaj chose the path less travelled. His unity lasted even when his share of respect, praise, and appreciation, among other things, did not.

How does one develop such virtues? How does one extend one's purpose, heart and mind to others? Yogiji Maharaj's answer follows.

TO PLACE AN INFINITE VALUE IN THE VIRTUE OF ASSOCIATION

In 1965 Yogiji Maharaj was in Gondal. One afternoon, Gunvantbhai came to Yogiji Maharaj. He was visually distraught and seemed like he needed to get something off of his chest. He marched his way to Yogiji Maharaj and began to reveal the cause of his frustration, "Bapa, this youth doesn't do any *seva*, and loiters in the mandir. If that wasn't enough, he's got a filthy habit of lighting a cigarette when no one is looking." Before he could finish, Yogiji Maharaj interrupted, "Have you had Shastriji Maharaj's darshan?" Gunvantbhai was caught off guard, "No?" Swami explained, "He's seen Shastriji Maharaj... You should understand his greatness." Gunvantbhai shook off his distress, fell at Yogiji Maharaj's feet and asked for forgiveness. Swami smiled and assured him, "Don't worry, you will develop *samp*, *suhrudbhav* and *ekta*."

Such a seemingly small virtue, if it could even be called that, as having seen Shastriji Maharaj was enough. The secret to *samp* is to understand another's greatness. Greatness comes in many shapes and sizes. However, the virtue which Yogiji Maharaj gave significance to was independent; and as a result, unsusceptible to not only situation and change, but also of the person it was attributed to. Understanding the virtue of association with a Gunatit Guru (*sambandh no mahima*) is what renders a unity of purpose, heart and mind between individuals; and hence, makes *samp* ineffaceable by circumstance. This is the supreme value that Yogiji Maharaj organized his life around. This is *samp*, *suhrudabhav* and *ekta* in its truest form. ♦

TWO CHAMBERS WITHIN US...

In one chamber lies evil and in the other resides God.

Which chamber do we want to open?



In every one of us there lies virtues and faults. Humans have both faith and no faith. When we get the company of a God-realized person the good in us blossoms forth. Our earth contains a variety of minerals and elements like zinc, copper, nitrate, chloride and also unwanted waste. Trees absorb whatever that is good from the soil. Similarly, an association with the Gunatit Satpurush brings out whatever good that lies in us. He awakens our faith. Since his personality is divine the qualities

of faith, trust, love for God, etc. come forth from within us. Our virtues manifest according to the type of person we keep company of. If he is a crook or a morally perverted person then the bad surfaces from within us. The calculation is very clear.

The lyrics of a kirtan say, "There are two chambers within us. In one resides God and in the other lies evil." The analogy is wonderful, and needless to say a reality. In all of us there lies two chambers. When we get the association of the Satpurush he opens for us the door in which God resides. And if we bump into someone who is corrupt, then he opens the other door from which evil steps out. In fact the door of evil is always open! Evil does not allow its door to remain closed. On the contrary, evil shuts the door of God for us! But when we meet the God-realized Satpurush our story becomes different.

We have got such a Satpurush in the form of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. We have his association after innumerable births and to some extent by virtue of our past merits. Bhagwan Swaminarayan reveals so in Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 2. Whoever is in Satsang, no matter how small he may be, his *atma* is not small. Yogiji Maharaj used to address children, "You are not small. You are *akshar* and the rest that is in you is *dehbhav*." This is the perspective we have to develop in us.

Once, Yogiji Maharaj arrived in the village of Dhuava near Jamnagar. He was invited by a devotee to perform the ground-breaking ritual for the construction of his new home. The strange thing was that there was no Brahmin to conduct the ritual. So Yogiji Maharaj himself conducted and performed the ritual by singing the *shlokas*, "*Mahādhyānābhyaṣam...*" Once this was over the devotee told Yogiji Maharaj to sanctify his farm. Swami told him, "We will go there in the evening and from there we will proceed to Rajkot." In the evening everyone forgot about the visit to the farm. Yogiji Maharaj's car was heading towards

Rajkot. After travelling for about five kilometres Yogiji Maharaj remembered and expressed his wish to return and sanctify the devotee's farm. Sanatan Swami, who was accompanying Yogiji Maharaj, replied that the devotee must have forgotten about it, so there was no need to go. But Yogiji Maharaj insisted that they go. So the entourage returned to Dhuava and arrived at the farm. The farm had been ploughed, so there were clods of mud. I was with Yogiji Maharaj as a *parshad* (wearing white clothes). Yogiji Maharaj held my hand for support and walked on the clods of mud to the opposite end of the farm. Along the way there were two mango trees. Yogiji Maharaj patted them with his hands and revealed, "Both of them have been performing austerities since 10,000 years." I felt that Swami had specially come to bless the two mango trees. It was not possible to know the true answer. Imagine, after 10,000 years of austerity they got the association of a God-realized person. Similarly, our affiliation with the Satpurush in Satsang is not a coincidence. Partly after acquiring so much merits (*punya*) we have got his association. However by the grace of God and the Satpurush we have forgotten all that. If we were able to remember our past we would not be able to do satsang. We would breathe with arrogance, "Oh, I am of this calibre, and I have so much merits!" We can derive the benefit of doing satsang when we remain humble.

It is difficult for those who are otherwise to tread the path of spirituality. Yogiji Maharaj said that one should listen to satsang discourses with the attitude that one is spiritually ignorant. Once one has eaten a stomach-full what can one eat when visiting the kitchen? It doesn't matter that the food items are superb, one will not feel like having even a little. Similarly, when one feels "I know everything" then one's ability to learn further comes to an end. That is why God has blocked our past altogether. It is indeed a blessing in disguise. However, one thing is clear that after the accumulation of merits of so many

past births we have had the association of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who are God-realized persons.

Sometimes when we mull we feel that if we were to amass the *punya* of this universe we would not get the opportunity of this association. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had so wished and that is why we have had this spiritual association. It is his wish and resolution, otherwise our spiritual merits would fall way short in attaining him. He said that he is realized through divine grace and not through sadhanas alone, and that we have had his association through the former.

After having attained him, what remains to be done now? We have to preserve him only in our hearts. All our activities, like working, business, farming or whatever should be external. Whereas within, we should have God and his realized Sadhu. There should be nothing else within us but them.

When one is sitting in a boat it is alright when the boat is in water. But what if there is water inside the boat? Similarly, one may go anywhere in the world, but the world should not get inside oneself. Within oneself there should be only two things – God and his realized Sadhu. Inside, one should have Pramukh Swami. This is all that is to be done. And that is true refuge.

In his prayer at Mahelav Yogiji Maharaj said, “O Shastriji Maharaj, may we always remain steadfast in the trials you put us through, and may you bless us with virtues so that we may remain at your feet.” When we are in Satsang is it so that we are at his feet? We need to introspect on this. Firm refuge means having total faith. If one has absolute faith only then is one’s refuge genuine. Till one is deficient in trust or faith, and in spite of bowing down at their feet, one’s refuge is mere ostentation. A true aspirant nourishes the feelings of what Yogiji Maharaj prayed, “May we always remain steadfast in the trials you put us through, and may you bless us with virtues so that we can remain at your feet.”

People make so much effort to achieve their

worldly goals in life. Eric was a blind man who climbed Mt. Everest. First he resolved to scale Mt. Everest, then he practiced, and finally he succeeded. He put in incredible effort. I had read of a mountain climber who practiced by hanging on his finger placed in a hole on a mountain for three hours. He did this because if he slipped in the Himalayas, he could hold on and survive with his finger firmly attached to the crevice. Why so much effort? Because he knew that climbing the Himalayas was not small play. So he put himself through immense rigours and tests.

The reason why Yogiji Maharaj discoursed about tolerating difficulties was that we have to reach all the way to Akshardham. Sometimes God tests us. Bhagwan Swaminarayan resided in Dada Khachar’s *darbar* for 25 years. At one time there was not a single grain of food left in Dada’s house. Still Dada Khachar did not flinch in his faith and neither did he complain to Shriji Maharaj. Some devotees informed Maharaj, and Dada stood humbly before him asking for more trials!

Like Dada Khachar did, we would not pray for tests to come our way, but at least when they do come we should not evade them. In fact, we should remain strong, be patient and cultivate a conviction that whatever God does is for our good. But we often reason, to the contrary, how others will see us and think about us. But let them think and say whatever they want. We should think only about what God will say to us. Either we please God, or others. We will not be able to please both.

To please God and his realized Sadhu we have to bear the trials that come our way. Yogiji Maharaj revealed another way to please God and the Satpurush: it is called *suhradaybhav* – the spirit of friendship. In his prayer at Mahelav Yogiji Maharaj said, “O Shastriji Maharaj may we maintain *suhradaybhav* with your devotees.” Yogiji Maharaj repeatedly said this for over twenty years. Not a single day passed without

him uttering this. It was Yogiji Maharaj, a great person, who said this. Shastriji Maharaj praised him, saying, "There is no sadhu like Jogi (Yogiji Maharaj) in countless universes. Vyasji has written about the 64 virtues of a true Sadhu. If Vyasji had forgotten to write any other virtues one would find them in Jogi." Before his earthly departure Shastriji Maharaj said, "Yogi is me, and I am Yogi."

So, such an esteemed person like Yogiji Maharaj had given us this wisdom. He was not an ordinary sadhu, but one who was a guide and master of *brahmavidya*. In colleges we find professors who are chartered accountants and have PhDs, and doctors who have FRCS degrees. Similarly, Yogiji Maharaj was a master in the subject of *brahmavidya*. He was not merely a professor of *brahmavidya*, but one who had realized it. He was Brahman himself! These were his words. One should understand their importance and abide by them in one's sadhana.

On the spiritual path we see how aspirants endeavour in so many ways to attain God. A devotee in Mumbai performed various sadhanas out of keen interest. Once on hearing of another sadhana he went to Assam to learn it. On returning, he described his experience saying that he was shut up in a dark room for fifteen days. Only a dish of food was provided daily at appropriate times. He was prohibited to come out at all and was told to simply meditate inside. At the end of it he got so fed up that he realized that there is nothing greater than Satsang.

There is sadhana in Satsang too. Yogiji Maharaj showed it to be *suhridaybhav* towards God's devotees, and not to find faults in sadhus and devotees. Some find this command of not seeing others' faults as a type of punishment. But it is not so, it is a sadhana. Just try it. You will realize the devotees' greatness (*mahima*).

Yogiji Maharaj once revealed that in his 50 years of satsang he had never perceived faults

in anyone. Even if someone was naïve and a moron he had never found fault in him. These words of his reflect the spiritual height he had attained. He did not live as a recluse in a jungle, nor in seclusion, but in the midst of thousands of people. Hundreds of people met him daily with questions and problems. Some even confessed their moral failings to him and asked him for atonements. Despite all this Yogiji Maharaj never viewed them as sinful and faulty. This is truly astonishing. And in our case, we get mired in taking faults of others by merely hearsay. We then falsely brand someone, and whoever we meet we describe their faults. This is a wrong sadhana! It is human nature to do what one is not supposed to practice as one's sadhana, and to disregard or reject what one is supposed to do.

The emphasis on not finding faults is not so in other *sampradayas* and shastras as much as it is in Satsang. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has stressed strongly in 60 Vachanamruts about not taking faults of others. He says that he got irritated upon anyone who came to talk of a sadhu's or a devotee's faults. He sometimes ignored, disrespected and even reproached the informer.

When someone tells us to meditate in solitude for one hour, we can understand that to be sadhana. But not seeing faults in others is not perceived by us to be a form of sadhana – in fact it is the greatest of all sadhanas. Perceive the greatness of others and understand their glory. Only then will one advance on the spiritual path. This is most necessary and important.

If we were to ask ourselves, "For whom do we come to Satsang? Is it for ourselves or for others? Is it for our own *moksha* or for that of others?" Needless to say it is clear that there is no point in seeing faults of others. Suppose that beneath an alphonso mango tree there lies a ripe mango and around it some stones, dry bones, leaves, and a little further away one sees the faeces of a dog. Our eyes register all these things, but what will we pick up? Obviously the mango. We will

not rest our eyes on other things. Isn't that right judgement between good and bad. If someone asks where we got the mango from, we would say beneath the tree. But we will not name the other things around the mango. Likewise, in Satsang, we will see both virtues (*gunas*) and faults (*avgunas*), but what should we take? Only the virtues of others.

When we see faeces, we spit on them with disgust or simply turn away. Then why do we take others' faults that are akin to faeces? When we go to buy mangoes, do we put dog faeces in our shopping bag? Then why do we reject the virtues of others and focus upon their faults?

The human mind, like a computer, is such that on seeing the slightest fault of others it erases their virtues altogether. Then the person's faults only are projected on the screen. Since long man has this perverse inclination. And that is why a person will always see the faults in others first. Later, whenever he remembers that person, the first thing that pops up in his mind is his or her faults. He will never see the virtues of that person. This is the biggest hindrance on the path of spiritual sadhana. In fact we should look at our own faults. Getting habituated in observing others' faults is the biggest obstacle on the path of spiritual progress.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan says in Vachanamrut, Gadhada III 8 that the biggest obstacles on the spiritual path for a devotee are that: (1) he does not look at his own faults, (2) he mentally disassociates himself from a devotee of God and (3) he behaves in a flippant manner with devotees.

Tulsidas has revealed, "When God graces, only then does one realize one's (inner) faults." This means realizing our own faults and not seeing the faults of others is God's grace. See only the virtues in others. Do not find faults. This principle will appear again and again on the path of spiritual sadhana.

A doctor states that you have a certain illness and therefore you'll have to take this medicine

and follow the prescribed diet. In so doing, you become healthy again. Similarly, seeing virtues in others is like medicine on the spiritual path. You become healthy. But when you see faults, then the medicine becomes poison. The greatest loss in seeing others' faults is that you will be unable to realize the true form of God and the Satpurush.

When a person takes aim with a rifle he has to close one eye and squint the other. Thereafter the goal is accomplished. If both the eyes are open, the bullet will go elsewhere. Likewise, one should have the Satpurush as one's goal and also focus on one's own inner self. Then one will not see faults in others. Bhagatji Maharaj never focused his sight on others; he saw only Gunatitanand Swami. And thus he perceived virtues in others and never bothered about the trash.

In conclusion, let us recap. There are two chambers within everyone. In one resides God, in the other, evil. When one falls into the habit of seeing faults in others, it means that one is walking inside the chamber of evil. Thus the inner chamber of evil will remain open, and the chamber of God will remain closed. Subsequently, evil will become strong and robust. However, when one looks at others' virtues it means one is inside the chamber of God. Then the chamber of evil will get shut. The result will be peace, and nothing but peace. There will be peace in this life and thereafter.

Which chamber would one want to keep open? After having the company of the Gunatit Satpurush do you still want to chose the chamber of evil? The choice is purely individual...



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's VICHARAN

October to November 2010

Sarangpur, Junagadh, Gondal, Rajkot, Bochasan



Swamishri, senior sadhus and devotees during *yagna* of Guru Parampara *murtis*, Gondal



Swamishri displays a radish before sadhus and devotees, Rajkot

- 1-7 Oct: Sarangpur
- 8 Oct: Sarangpur, Junagadh
- 9-17 Oct: Junagadh
- 18 Oct: Junagadh, Gondal
- 19 Oct-10 Nov.: Gondal
- 11-17 Nov.: Rajkot
- 18 Nov.: Rajkot, Bochasan
- 19-30 Nov.: Bochasan

OCTOBER

1, Sunday, Sarangpur; Bal-Yuva Din

To celebrate Bal Din BAPS children performed traditional dances during Swamishri's morning puja. Children also narrated incidents from the life of Ghanshyam Maharaj and performed a drama on Kalidatta, the demon who tried to kill Ghanshyam.

In the evening satsang assembly youths of the Youth Training Centre presented aspects of their training programme through drama, speech and dance. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, appreciating the presentations by children and youth. He said, "Character is of importance in life. In spite of having very good education when one does not have character one cannot achieve true success. One must accomplish one's

worldly works, but along with them one must consolidate spirituality in life. This gives one inner strength."

4, Monday, Sarangpur

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Mombasa (Kenya), Karjan and a suburb of Mahesana.

10, Sunday, Junagadh; Bal-Kishore Din

During Swamishri's stay in Junagadh children and youths briefly celebrated various festivals each day on the mandir premises when Swamishri came for Thakorji's darshan. They celebrated Shivratri, Yogi Jayanti, Guru Purnima, Raksha Bandhan, Janmashtmi, Ganesh Chaturthi, Vijaya Dashmi, Chopda Pujan, Diwali and Swamishri's birthday.

Today, in Swamishri's puja, BAPS children sang kirtans, performed a traditional dance, delivered a speech and recitation of *shlokas* from the 15th Chapter of the Bhagvad Gita.

In the evening assembly *kishores* presented dramas on 'Upasana' and 'Ten Fools'. Thereafter Swamishri was honoured with garlands. In

SHARAD PURNIMA

226th Birthday Celebration of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami

Friday, 22 October 2010 Gondal

The 226th birthday celebration of Gunatitanand Swami was celebrated on the mandir grounds. The mandir, Akshar Dwar, office complex, guesthouse and the facade of assembly hall were decorated with colourful lights. Swamishri was seated in the centre of the mandir *pradakshina*, and the senior sadhus and guests were seated below on the podium outside Akshar Deri. A performance stage was set up in front. Two huge LED screens were arranged to facilitate darshan for all.

The celebration assembly included speeches by senior sadhus, five *artis*, a drama, a dance and Swamishri's blessings. The programme was as follows:

- 'Shriji Maharaj and Gondal' speech by Brahmadarshan Swami
- 'Gunatitanand Swami Spread the Glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan' by Shrihari Swami
- 'Bhagatji Maharaj's Unique Mission' by Siddheshwar Swami
- Arti
- 'Shastriji Maharaj's Unparalleled Work of Establishing Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj' by Tyagvallabh Swami
- Drama: Pratishtha of Bochasan Mandir
- Arti
- 'Yogiji Maharaj Encouraged Divyabhav and Suhradbhav' by Ishwarcharan Swami
- 'Swamishri's Unparalleled Works' by Atmaswarup Swami
- Arti
- 'God's Doership' by Mahant Swami
- Swamishri inaugurated publications of Swaminarayan Aksharpith: 'Shobhe Shri Ghanshyam' (CD of bhajans sung

by Gurukul children), 'Satsang Darshan, Part 108' (DVD of Bhadra Pratishtha Mahotsav), 'Bhagwan Swaminarayan - A Divine Story' (Audio CD in Hindi) and '108 Prasangs' in Kannad language.

- *Balaks* and *kishores* performed a traditional dance
- Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior sadhus
- Swamishri's blessings.

Swamishri blessed the huge assembly of 19,000 devotees, "Whenever we come to Gondal we get darshan of Akshar Deri, Maharaj's darshan, and we experience divinity all around. Akshar Deri is divine. It fulfils the wishes of all. We are also reminded of Yogiji Maharaj, his bliss, his discourses and his works. The memorial shrines of Gunatitanand Swami and Yogiji Maharaj are present here. Shastriji Maharaj built this mandir. It is because of their divinity that we experience joy and happiness.

"Shastriji Maharaj spread the glory of Akshar according to the Vachanamrut. He himself had understood it and internalized it in his life. He did not spread the knowledge of Akshar-Purushottam to gain personal fame, but so that if others understood it they would become *brahmarup* and attain his divine abode.

"Yogiji Maharaj chanted *dhun* in Akshar Deri and prayed for the growth of Satsang, mandirs and sadhus."

The celebration assembly concluded at 10.00 p.m. All the devotees were given *prasad* of *dhudh-pauva*.

conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly saying, "Junagadh is a land of enlightened rishis. Bhagwan Swaminarayan came here as Nilkanth Varni. Gunatitanand Swami was appointed as the Mahant of the Mandir and he and his sadhus toured the region to spread the knowledge of Akshar and Purushottam." Swamishri also explained that our true form is *atma*, and as long as we believe ourselves to be the body we will experience misery and pain. The Gunatit Sadhu is the doorway to *moksha*.

15, Friday, Junagadh

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *pujan* of the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Radha-Krishna Dev, Shiv-Parvatiji, Sita-Ram, Hanumanji, Ganapatiji and Guru Parampara for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Jamala, Mahesana district.

17, Sunday, Junagadh; Vijaya Dashmi

With the blessings of Swamishri senior sadhus performed the foundation-stone laying ceremony of a *shikharbaddh* mandir at the birthplace of Yogiji Maharaj in Dhari. Swamishri was in Junagadh and blessed the devotees gathered for the function by phone, "Today, the foundation-stone laying ceremony has been performed by Mahant Swami, Kothari Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami. I have prayed that God makes you all happier in life and grants you *moksha* for having offered *seva* for the birthplace of Yogiji Maharaj."

In the evening satsang assembly in Junagadh Viveksagar Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami and Ghanshyamcharan Swami addressed the gathering of 10,000 devotees. Swamishri was honoured with garlands. Then the youths of BAPS Chhatralaya, Junagadh, performed a traditional dance. Thereafter Swami blessed the evening assembly, eulogizing the saintliness of Gunatitanand Swami and Yogiji Maharaj. At 7.30 p.m. Swamishri's Harikrishna Maharaj was brought in a decorated palanquin into the assembly hall with great hon-

our and festivity. Senior sadhus performed *pujan* of Harikrishna Maharaj and the devotees honoured him.

24, Sunday, Gondal, Bal-Kishore Din

In the evening assembly, BAPS children performed a drama, 'Don't Forget Your Parents'. Then Ghanshyamcharan Swami addressed parents about instilling values in children. Then *kishores* enacted a drama 'A Priceless Boon'. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Yogi Bapa wished and established *bal mandals* and *yuvak mandals* so that children and youths be nourished with values, excel in studies and grow up to be very good volunteers, businessmen and officers. But today the educational curriculum is such that students become troublesome and agitative. When values like non-stealing, morality, celibacy and non-addictions are introduced from a very young age, they stay till the end of one's life. And that is why we have *bal sabha*, *kishore sabha* and *satsang sabha*."

30, Saturday, Gondal; Conference of Gurukul Alumuni

The annual gathering of past students who studied at the BAPS Gurukul in Gondal was held on the mandir grounds. More than 1,200 ex-students attended. The assembly commenced with reminiscences from past students. A drama, 'Dream', was enacted by the Gurukul boys. Then Mahant Swami gave awards to outstanding students of the Gurukul. This was followed by a traditional dance and offering of garlands to Swamishri. Another drama, 'From Darkness to Light', was performed by students of the Gurukul. Finally, Swamishri emphasized in his blessings about the need for values and understanding the glory of Yogiji Maharaj.

NOVEMBER

2, Tuesday, Gondal

Today the *murti-pratishtha yagna* for the consecration of the marble *murtis* of Bhagatiji

DIWALI, ANNAKUT AND NEW YEAR'S DAY

5-7 November 2010, Gondal



Offering of *annakut* before Thakorji, Gondal

5, Friday, Gondal; Diwali and Chopda Pujan

After Swamishri's morning puja, Mr John Malcolm (who is writing a biography on Sir John Malcolm, the Governor of Bombay State who had met Bhagwan Swaminarayan) was honoured by Viveksagar Swami.

Swamishri also inaugurated new publications by Swaminarayan Aksharpath: *Hinduism, An Introduction, Sanskrutinad, Smruti Toran* (photo album of Yogiji Maharaj), *Vachanamrut* (MP3) and a small replica of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's *murti* in Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi.

At 6.10 p.m. Swamishri performed the rituals of *chopda puja* (*puja* of accounts books of devotees) in front of the mandir. Thousands of devotees also participated in the rituals. Viveksagar Swami gave a discourse on the importance of *chopda puja* and honoured Swamishri with a garland. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly and personally showered flowers and rice grains to sanctify the accounts books.

6, Saturday, Gondal; Annakut Festival

Annually the *annakut* festival is celebrated in all Hindu mandirs throughout the world.

Every year Swamishri celebrates this festival in Gondal. A grand feast of a variety of vegetarian foods was arranged before the deities in the mandir and Akshar Deri. Swamishri arrived in Akshar Deri at 11.00 a.m., sang a *thal* and performed *arti*. Thereafter Swamishri came to Thakorji in the mandir, where the students of Gondal Gurukul had commenced singing *thals*. More than 150 devotees were seated beneath the mandir dome before the deities and 250 devotees and sadhus were seated in the mandir *pradakshina* viewing the bhakti rituals on close circuit TV. After singing five *thals* Swamishri performed Govardhan puja and *arti*. Thereafter Swamishri blessed all.

7, Sunday, Gondal; New Year's Day

After darshan of Akshar Deri and Thakorji Swamishri performed his morning puja. Thousands of devotees had assembled for the New Year's darshan and blessings. Swamishri blessed all, saying, "We have all got the benefit of celebrating New Year's Day in Akshar Deri. We also celebrated Diwali and Annakut here. This place is such that whoever comes here experiences joy. People come from India and abroad - this is the attraction that

Yogiji Maharaj has bestowed. We are indeed very fortunate to be here. One's base natures are dissolved by coming to such holy places. Sometimes we feel, 'What will happen to us? What will be our destiny?' But Swami says that we are blessed.

"By having God and his holy Sadhus in the forefront of all our activities, we will get happiness, peace and joy in life. We celebrate

festivals often so that we do not forget God and his Sadhu. We experience obstacles in life, but they are for our good; we develop more love for God and remember him more.

"I pray to Shriji Maharaj to bless you all, to give you inner strength and happiness in life."

Finally, Kothari Jnanprasad Swami honoured Swamishri with a garland.

Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the newly extended *pradakshina* of the mandir commenced. The *murtis* of Hanumanji and Ganapatiji were also to be re-consecrated in the newly built shrines of the extended mandir *pradakshina* in front. At 7.30 a.m. the Vedic rituals commenced in the presence of senior sadhus. In all there were 136 *yagna kunds* and 7 main *kunds* with 1,354 devotees as the *yajmans* (participants).

Swamishri arrived at the *yagnashala* at 8.40 a.m. Along with the *murtis* of Guru Parampara there were also the marble *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Guru Parampara (canvas paintings) for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Amraivadi, Ahmedabad. On behalf of Swamishri, Mahant Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami performed the *pujan* rituals. Thereafter Swamishri blessed the assembly, "This place is great because Yogiji Maharaj loved it immensely and blessed countless devotees and bestowed bliss upon them. Today we have gathered for the *pratishtha* of the *murtis* of the Guru Parampara. So many devotees and sadhus are eager and happy on this occasion. We have performed a *yagna* as part of the *pratishtha* rituals."

3, Wednesday, Gondal; Guru Parampara Pratishtha Mahotsav

After the *mangala arti* in the morning, the *pratishtha* rituals of the Guru Parampara *murtis* commenced at the hands of senior sadhus:

Bhagatji Maharaj – Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Shastriji Maharaj – Pujya Mahant Swami, Yogiji Maharaj – Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pramukh Swami Maharaj – Pujya Viveksagar Swami, Hanumanji – Pujya Siddheshwar Swami and Ganapatiji – Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami.

Devotees who had offered their services for the occasion were seated in the mandir *pradakshina*.

Swamishri performed *pujan* and *arti* of the *murtis* of Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, Hanumanji and Ganapatiji.

14, Sunday, Rajkot; Kishore Din

The evening satsang assembly commenced with Viveksagar Swami's discourse on the *Harililamrut*. Then the *kishores* performed a drama, 'A Priceless Boon', and a traditional dance in Swamishri's presence. After Swamishri was honoured with garlands he blessed the assembly, "The satsang in Rajkot is wonderful. This is because Yogi Bapa had visited this city often and blessed all with spiritual knowledge and bliss. Shriji Maharaj met Sir John Malcolm here and blessed him and the people of Rajkot. Also, Shastriji Maharaj studied Sanskrit here and Yogiji Maharaj had great love for the devotees of Rajkot. Formerly we had a small mandir in Rajkot, and today we have a wonderful hall.

"The youths gave a good performance due to their love for satsang. If one has wealth but no character then there is no peace in life."

More than 12,000 devotees attended the satsang assembly.

KARTIKI PUNAM FESTIVAL

21 November 2010, Bochasan



Drama performed by youths during Kartiki Punam Festival, Bochasan

A grand *annakut* was arranged before the deities in the mandir. Swamishri performed *arti* in all three shrines.

The theme of this morning's celebration assembly was 'Shastriji Maharaj's endeavours in spreading the *upasana* of Akshar-Purushottam'. The programme included:

- Traditional dance: youths of Gana mandal
- Glory of Festivals: Sarvamangal Swami
- Unity, Sacrifice and Satpurush: Brahma-vihari Swami
- Development of BAPS on Principles: Viveksagar Swami
- Unity, Base of the Sanstha's Development:

Tyagvallabh Swami

- Drama: Sacrifice
- Sacrifice, Base of the Sanstha's Development: Kothari Swami
- Satpurush, Essence of the Sanstha's Development: Mahant Swami
- Traditional Dance: youths
- Swamishri's blessings.

In his blessings Swamishri stressed upon the power of God as the main element in the development and progress of BAPS. Swamishri also eulogized upon the life and work of Shastriji Maharaj.

More than 20,000 devotees attended the festival assembly.

17, Wednesday, Rajkot; Prabodhini Ekadashi

Prior to his morning puja Swamishri came for Thakorji's darshan in the mandir. A grand *annakut* of fresh vegetables, fruits and nuts were arranged in all three shrines. Swamishri showered his blessings upon the sadhus and devotees for the devotional offerings to the deities. On arriving in the assembly hall for his morning puja, an impressive vegetable market had been set on stage.

Swamishri blessed the assembly, praising their devotion and love for satsang. Swamishri

also emphasized upon the doership of God. Finally, Swamishri picked up different vegetables in turn and showed them to the assembly. The devotees were in raptures at Swamishri's divine darshan.

28, Sunday, Bochasan

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Rudel. ◆

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas
Translation: Sadhu Vivekshivandas

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

December 2010, Anand and Chansad



A scene from the drama *Sant Param Hitkari*, Anand



Youths perform a traditional dance, Chansad

From 1 to 13 December 2010, the tenth anniversary of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Anand, and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 90th birthday were celebrated with a series of illuminating, inspiring and entertaining events: Viveksaagar Swami's Harililamrut *parayan*, annual day presentation by APC, Vidyanagar, 'Jivishu Swamini Mate' – a drama on the service, sacrifice, devotion and courage of the pioneering devotees of Anand, devotional bhajans by BAPS sadhus and *Sant Param Hitkari Part 2* – a 3-hour drama depicting the life, work and saintly virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The festivities concluded on 13 December with over 25,000 attending Swamishri's 90th

birthday celebration in the presence of Pujya Mahant Swami.

On 7 December 2010, over 17,000 devotees gathered in the small village of Chansad, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthplace, to celebrate his 90th birthday and offer their respects on this auspicious day. In the presence of Pujya Mahant Swami, the celebration assembly featured speeches by senior sadhus, bhajans, a drama, a dance and audio-visual shows, all elaborating upon the inspiring assembly theme: 'Karu Vandana, He Pramukhji Tamari...' – 'O Pramukhji, I Bow to You...'. Also present in the celebration assembly were local leaders and other dignitaries. ♦

BAPS RAISAN TOPS GITA CHANTING COMPETITION

22 October 2010, Ahmedabad, India

Students of BAPS Vidyamandir, Raisan were among the over one thousand students from different schools throughout Ahmedabad participating in the annual Bhagavad Geeta *shloka* chanting competition organized by the Chinmaya Mission in Ahmedabad. This year the young students, from Standards 1 to 10 were required to learn and chant the tenth *adhyaya* of

the famous shastra.

In the finals 11 students of BAPS Vidyamandir, Raisan, won awards in different age groups and BAPS Vidyamandir, Raisan, received the best participating school award.

We congratulate all the students and staff for their outstanding achievements. ♦

INAUGURAL LECTURE AT BAPS SWAMINARAYAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

14 November 2010

The inaugural lecture at the recently opened BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute in Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi, was held on 14 November 2010, with support from the BAPS Women's Wing in New Delhi. Titled 'Social Services in Dharmic Dimensions', the lecture was delivered by the chief guest, Ms. Anju Bhargava, founder of the Hindu American Seva Charities (HASC) and a member of President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith Based and Neighborhood partnership, a Senior Vice President at Bank of America and a Principal Director at Global Synergy Associates.

The event was chaired by Ms. Nitaben Shah, Director of Gujarat State e-governance and senior BAPS Women's Activities volunteer for the past 30 years. After the opening Vedic prayers and

traditional lighting of the lamp, Ms. Bhargava was honoured with flowers.

In her presentation, Ms. Anju Bhargava emphasized on *seva* in society through mandirs, churches, mosques and other religious places of worship. Explaining the importance of rituals, she said, "Many people feel rituals are unnecessary. Why should we have rituals? What is the meaning behind them? It is not mindless; it is actually mind-expansion. It is an inner journey [to] Sat-chit-anand, which is the Hindu goal of life."

Then, during the question-answer session the chief speaker insightfully answered the audience's questions and engaged in a healthy discussion on society and spiritualism.

The inaugural function concluded with an address by chairperson, Ms. Nitaben Shah. ♦

LT. GOVERNOR GENERAL OF DELHI VISITS AKSHARDHAM AND BAPS SWAMINARAYAN VIDYAMANDIR, RAISAN

4 December 2010, India

On 4 December 2010, Lt. Governor General of Delhi, Shri Tejendra Khanna, visited the BAPS Swaminarayan Vidyamandir at Raisan, near Gandhinagar. He was welcomed in traditional style by children of the pre-primary section, who applied a *tilak* while chanting Vedic *shlokas*.

He visited all three sections of the school and was extremely delighted by the enthusiasm of the school management, teachers and students.

He also appreciated the extra-curricular achievements by the students.

In an illuminating discourse with the students of Standard 10 Shri Tejendra Khanna



boosted their morale and emphasized the necessity of a spiritual environment in educational institutions, since unless there is inner and outer balance a person's life is disturbed and becomes unstable.

Before departing, he expressed his best wishes for the success and progress of the school, staff and students.

Shri Tejendra Khanna also visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in Gandhinagar to see the recently opened Sat-Chit-Anand watershow and was touched by the remarkable presentation and its spiritual message. ♦

WORLD DIABETES DAY CELEBRATED AT SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM, NEW DELHI

13 November 2010

On the evening of 13 November 2010, celebration of World Diabetes Day, India, commenced at Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi, as part of the largest ever campaign in the country to raise awareness on World Diabetes Day through the Blue Monument Lighting Challenge.

The lighting of Swaminarayan Akshardham kicked off India's participation for the first time in the Blue Monument Lighting Challenge, a call to illuminate iconic landmarks, monuments and buildings all over the world in the official blue colour of World Diabetes Day.

The inaugural ceremony was held in the Swaminarayan Hall at Akshardham amidst a large gathering of diabetic children and adults, charity groups, NGOs and national media, the Heal Foundation, Project Hope, Ministry of Health, Govt. of India and other organizations.

Event attendees included the Danish Ambassador to India, H.E. Freddy Svane and his family; Chair of the Canadian Diabetes Association, Aileen Knip; Chairman of Diabetes



Blue Fortnight and president of Delhi Diabetic Forum, Dr Subhash Wangnoo; Vice President of International Diabetes Federation, Ms. Anne Belton and other notable corporate and medical dignitaries.

The Blue Monument Lighting Challenge is a global movement in which 660 monuments in nearly 72 countries have been lit so far. "It has been happening in western countries for nearly a decade now. This is the first time we have attempted something like this in India," said Dr Subhash Wangnoo.

The kickoff ceremony culminated with the Danish Ambassador illuminating Swaminarayan Akshardham in the blue colour with a press of a button and thus simultaneously bathing over 50 monuments and buildings across New Delhi, including, India Gate, Qutub Minar, Red Fort, Old Fort, National Museum and other landmarks of Delhi, with blue light.

After the ceremony, 50 lanterns were lit in the mandir courtyard and sent up into the night sky. ♦

ANNUAL REGIONAL KISHORE-KISHORI SHIBIRS Theme: Yuvano Jago

10 to 16 November 2010, Sarangpur

During the Diwali Vacation, *kishores* and *kishoris* from Surat and Bhavnagar participated in the Annual Regional Kishore-Kishori Shibirs held in Sarangpur. This year's theme for all the regional shibirs is 'Yuvano Jago' - 'Arise Youths'.

First, from 9 to 13 November, around 2,600 *kishores* and *kishoris* from Surat attended the *shibir* held in Sarangpur.

The eligibility criteria for the *kishores* and *kishoris* to attend this *shibir* were as follows: (1) Daily Puja, (2) Over 80% attendance in the weekly assembly and (3) Memorize Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 61 and Yogi Gita.

The *kishores* and *kishoris* arrived in Sarangpur for the *shibir* from 10 to 13 November, held in the presence of Pujya Mahant Swami.

The *shibir* topics were presented through



Youths of Surat meditate during a *shibir* session



Kishores from Bhavnagar participate in a game

speeches by Mahant Swami and other experienced sadhus, question-answer sessions, interviews, seminars, debates, quizzes, skits, dances, games and other involvement programs. The topics covered included: Goal, Effort, Kusang, Generation Gap, Niyam-Dharma, Brahmacharya: The Ornament of Youth: Hindu Dharma, Swaminarayan Sampradaya and BAPS.

Expressing the debt owed to their parents and elders the *kishores* and *kishoris* wrote a letter to their parents appreciating what they have done for them and pledging to serve them for life. The letters were then posted from Sarangpur to Surat on that day.

Then, from 13 to 16 November 2010, around 640 *kishores* and *kishoris* of Bhavnagar participated in the Annual Regional Kishore-Kishori Shibir held in Sarangpur.

Together with speeches by Mahant Swami and other experienced sadhus the *shibir* theme was reinforced through question-answer sessions, audio-visual presentations, group discussion sessions, debates, skits and involvement games.

Topics presented included Vachanamrut, Swamini Vato, Niyam-Dharma, Self Control, Goal Attainment, Nitya Puja, Mansi Puja, Ideal Home, Respect for Parents, Understanding Parents, Swaminarayan Sampradaya and Hindu Dharma.

Before departing, the youngsters pledged to perform daily puja, attend the weekly *kishore* assembly, bow daily to parents and develop firm faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

In all, the *shibirs* served to awaken the *kishores* and *kishoris* to lead lives that will truly please guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj. ◆

WORLDWIDE DIWALI, ANNAKUT AND NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

5-7 November 2010

Thousands of devotees celebrated Diwali, Annakut and the Hindu New Year at BAPS centres throughout India, USA, UK, Canada, Africa, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East from Friday 5 to Sunday 7 November 2010.

On Diwali, devotees participated in the traditional, auspicious Chopda Pujan ceremony in which accounts books for coming year are sanctified.

On the following day, Annakut was celebrated with the devotional offering of hundreds of freshly prepared vegetarian delicacies to the deities. It signifies the devout offering of the

first meal of the New Year to thank God for his providence over the past year and to seek his blessings for the year ahead. Photographs of *annakuts* offered at some BAPS mandirs are shown on the following pages.

On New Year's Day devotees visited their local mandirs and resolved to live by the ideals taught by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Gondal for these celebrations and thousands of devotees came there to seek his blessings during this auspicious time. ◆



Surat, India



Sarangpur, India



New Delhi, India



Rajkot, India



Mumbai, India



Ahmedabad, India



Lenasia, South Africa



Sydney, Australia



Melbourne, Australia



Atlanta, USA



Houston, USA



London, UK



Toronto, Canada



Chicago, USA



Edison, USA



SWAMISHRI'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS
Mumbai and Anand

1. Swamishri bows at the feet of Shri Nilkanth Varni, Mumbai (13 December 2010).
2. Youths honour Swamishri on his birthday with a traditional dance, Mumbai (13 December 2010).
3. Devotees gathered in Anand for the Mandir Decennial and Swamishri's birthday celebrations (1-13 December 2010).
4. Spiritual leaders pay tribute to Swamishri in a special assembly, Anand (1-13 December 2010).
5. Children and teenagers present a lively dance during the performance of *Sant Param Hitkari Part-2*, Anand.



GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF BAPS MANDIR IN KAMPALA, UGANDA

1. The newly installed *murtis* in the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir at Kampala. (Inset: BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Kampala, Uganda)
- 2-3. Senior sadhus perform the Vedic installation rituals. 4. Grand procession of the *murtis* through the streets of Kampala.
5. Youths present a traditional dance during the cultural programme.