

# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

June 2011

Annual Subscription ₹ 60/-



*Yogiji Maharaj*

*Idol of Humility, Service and Devotion*



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**SWAMISHRI'S VICHARAN**  
**Atladra, February-March 2011**

1. Swamishri blesses the youths during the evening Kishore Din assembly (13 February) 2. Swamishri on stage during the special assembly presented by youths of the Akshar Purushottam Chhatralaya, Atladra (13 February). 3. On his way to the *abhishek mandapam*, Swamishri blesses devotees as they perform skits and sing bhajans (16 February).





# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

June 2011, Vol. 34 No. 6

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Website: [www.baps.org](http://www.baps.org)

E-mail: [magazines@in.baps.org](mailto:magazines@in.baps.org)

**Founder:** HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj,  
**Editor:** Sadhu Swayamprakashdas,  
**Contributors:** Sadhu Vivekjiandas, Sadhu Amrutvijaydas,  
**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

The Hindu shastras prescribe God-realization as the ultimate goal of human life. In this sublime state one transcends the dualities of life and revels in the ecstasy of God. The easiest way to achieve this is by associating with a God-realized person.

Yogiji Maharaj was a great soul who was forever immersed in the divine joy of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and guru Shastriji Maharaj.

During Yogiji Maharaj's visit to London, in 1970, a reporter from a daily newspaper, Mr David Mertyns, asked him, "How do you stay in this world?" Swamiji answered, "Shriji Maharaj has said that our world is fickle and perishable. I believe it to be so and thus live like a lotus in a pond." David asked another question, "You talk with God, but how would others come to know of it?" Yogiji Maharaj explained, "One who has attained that [divine] state can know." Swamiji's brief answers revealed the inner core of his profound spirituality.

Once, an attendant of Yogiji Maharaj described to him a serial article "How God Came Into My Life" that had appeared in the *Bhavan's Journal*, a monthly magazine published from Mumbai. Each month the magazine carried testimonies of how great gurus of India had attained spiritual enlightenment. The attendant requested Swamiji, "If you would narrate your experience about how God came into your life, then we could send it to the magazine." Instantly Yogiji Maharaj smiled and revealed, "I have constant darshan of God." In Yogiji Maharaj's life there was no single moment when God entered into him, simply because he was an eternally God-realized soul.

Only such great souls can bless us with *moksha*. ◆

# Shri Hari's Divine Lila

*Shri Hari had taken upon himself a grave illness in Gadhada.  
His strange behaviour tested the faith of all...*

## NONE SHOULD SLEEP IN THE ASSEMBLY

During a morning assembly in Gadhada Shri Hari told his sadhus to sing bhajans. Shortly thereafter a senior sadhu began addressing the audience. Maharaj had instructed in advance, "Don't sleep in the assembly. Whosoever feels drowsy should get up and stand at the back. In spite of doing this, if one still feels sleepy, one should do ten prostrations. And if sleep persists, go to the River Ghela and take a dip." Everyone was alertly listening to the discourse.

Slowly, Maharaj started recuperating from his illness. With the arrival of the mango season devotees started bringing mangoes for Maharaj. Shri Hari would first give them to his sadhus and then he would eat them. On 6 July 1820 (Jeth *vad* 11) the devotees brought abundant mangoes. The next day, Maharaj told the cook to prepare mango juice (*ras*) and chapattis for lunch. When dinner was ready, Maharaj took a little and generously served *ras* to the sadhus. Jiva Khachar and Dada Khachar also sponsored meals of *ras* and chapattis for all. Everyone felt Shri Hari had recovered from his illness. But still the devotees insisted that he stay in Gadhada for the four holy months of Chaturmas, so that he could get enough rest and recover fully.

## DISCOURSE ON GITA BHASHYA IN AKSHAR ORDI: 1820 (A.S. 1877)

Every morning and evening, Shriji Maharaj discoursed to an assembly of devotees and sadhus in Gadhapur. At night he held special reading sessions in Akshar Ordi of Ramanujacharya's commentary on the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. Initially, only scholarly sadhus participated in these sessions. But as word spread, more and more sadhus started attending. The small room would become overpacked and stifling. Maharaj

called Muktanand Swami and suggested, "Allow in only those who understand, and tell the rest to attend the morning and evening public discourses."

The next night Muktanand Swami asked each of the sadhus before they entered, "Do you understand the *katha*?" The majority said no, so they were told to attend the morning *katha*. When Gunatitanand Swami arrived, Muktanand Swami asked the same question. Swami replied in Sanskrit, "The *katha* is really extraordinary. It has never been done so in the past, neither will it be done in future."

Shri Hari immediately told Muktanand Swami, "He understands well; let him in."

## SHRI HARI SANCTIFIES RADHAVAV

On Maharaj's word, Radhavav (a stepwell) was constructed on a farm on the outskirts of Gadhada. The monsoon rains had filled it to the brim. One day Sachchidanand Swami requested Shri Hari, "Maharaj, come and take a dip and sanctify the well." Shriji Maharaj arrived with Dada Khachar, Nityanand Swami and several *parshads*. On seeing the abundant freshwater in the well Maharaj was pleased. He said, "Whosoever can swim may enter into the well and show their skills." Several *parshads* took the plunge and showed their swimming expertise. Then Maharaj commanded, "Someone go to the bottom of the well to see how deep it is." The *parshads* dived, but they could not go deep enough to plumb its depth. Then Maharaj dived into the well from a nearby neem tree. Immediately after him Dada Khachar dived in a cross-legged posture. Shri Hari touched the bottom, and while coming up he saw Dada Khachar. When Maharaj surfaced he showed to all a beautiful, large crystal. He declared, "From this, a beautiful *murti* of Surya



Narayan will be carved." Maharaj gave the stone to Sacchidanand Swami and told him to send it to Laduba.

### "I WAS MEDITATING UPON YOU"

After some time Nityanand Swami surfaced from Radhavav. Maharaj enquired, "Where were you all this time?"

"I was sitting at the bottom meditating upon you."

"Then show it to us again," Maharaj eagerly stated.

Nityanand Swami dived into the well again. He surfaced after half-an-hour. Shri Hari expressed his pleasure on him and blessed, "You are an expert in scriptural studies and also in swimming. Through your scriptural knowledge many will be liberated from the ocean [of *samsara*]."

Shri Hari performed the evening *arti* there, and then returned to Dada's *darbar*. During late evening Shri Hari held a satsang assembly. Muktanand Swami asked, "Maharaj, it seems you like neem trees. You sit beneath this neem tree to discourse. And at Radhavav you jumped from the neem tree into the well and ignored the tamarind tree next to it."

Shri Hari explained, "A neem tree is bitter in taste, but it cures a person of illness. That is why I prefer it. My words are also bitter like neem juice. They may be difficult to obey, but they reward one with the bliss of Akshardham. Those who disobey my words and engage themselves in worldly pleasures experience temporary joy, but they cannot attain liberation from the cycles of life and death. Once they die they suffer the tortures and pains of *narak*."

### WRITING OF THE 'VEDARAS'

After the morning discourse Shri Hari told Muktanand Swami, "Swami, the month of Ashadh (July-August) has set. You are not keeping well. Stay here and rest for some time. I have written a letter about the moral rules for sadhus. I would like you to write a book in verse form based on it. Call the book *Veda Rahasya*."

Muktanand Swami commenced versifying the

content of Maharaj's letter. Each day when he spoke the verses Siddhanand Swami wrote them down.

### LISTENING TO HOLY SHASTRAS TRANSFORMS ONE'S SOUL

1820 (A.S. 1877) had set in. Shriji Maharaj was in Gadhpur. Jiva Khachar of Sarangpur came to Gadhpur with his daughter, Devkuba, and sons, Vagha Khachar and Amra Khachar. Rathod Dhadhal of Sarangpur also came with his daughter Maluba and others. When Shri Hari enquired about the purpose of their arrival, they replied, "We have come to invite you to Sarangpur."

Maharaj happily agreed, saying, "I will come there to celebrate the festival of Krishna Janmashtmi. At present, the *katha* of the Purans is being read, so it will not be possible to come." Jiva Khachar had come with a fervent wish of taking Maharaj with him. Maharaj's answer saddened him. Shri Hari advised, "Bapu, stay here. Listen to the *katha* from the Purans. By listening to *katha* one becomes addicted to it, and the base instincts in one's *jiva* are dissolved. Thereafter, one becomes *brahmarup*."

Jiva Khachar gave up all his resolves when Maharaj told him to stay. Shri Hari was pleased with his easy and compliant nature. Maharaj praised him, "On my word Bapu has relinquished his desire to take me to his village. That is why his mind has calmed down. Such flexibility in a devotee solves any agitation within and pacifies the mind and heart. Such behaviour also makes one's life less burdensome."

In Satsang the devotees were aware of Jiva Khachar's (of Sarangpur) good nature, and his soul-strength to dissolve all other worldly thoughts. Jiva Khachar and his family stayed to listen to the *katha*. Dada Khachar and his family were also happy to have their company.

### JANMASHTMI FESTIVAL IN SARANGPUR

On 28 August 1820 (Shravan *vad* 5), Shri Hari arrived in Sarangpur with a large retinue of sadhus and devotees. He was given a festive welcome by the local devotees and villagers. Everyone was eager to have Maharaj's darshan and

serve him in any way possible. Maharaj, through his grace and visits, nurtured faith and devotion in his devotees and aspirants.

Shri Hari's stay was arranged at the home of Jiva Khachar. The devotees of Sarangpur hosted all the members of Maharaj's retinue.

The day before Janmashtmi Shri Hari mounted on Manki to see what arrangements had been made for the festival. He went to the outskirts of Sarangpur where the shallow waters of Falgu and Utavali flowed. Between them was a swathe of land on which a makeshift canopied hall was set up. Shri Hari was pleased and gave instructions for the seating arrangements for sadhus, devotees and women. That same evening Shriji Maharaj addressed the devotees, "Tomorrow at the break of dawn we will first celebrate the birthday of Ramanand Swami. So all of you must complete your daily rituals and come to the assembly. We shall listen to his glory and sing bhajans. Observe a fast tomorrow. In the evening we will celebrate the birthday of Shri Krishna."

### JANMASHTMI CELEBRATIONS

Early next morning Maharaj came to the assembly hall. He performed *pujan* of Ramanand Swami's *murti*. The sadhus also offered their respects. Shri Hari then narrated the life of Ramanand Swami in detail. Thereafter Muktanand Swami spoke, "Ramanand Swami chose Nilkanth Varni from among all his disciples as his successor and head of our institution. His choice reflected his wisdom and intelligence. Furthermore, his decision convinces us of his insightful capacity to see the inner self of a person. It is through his divine powers that the Sampradaya has flourished."

After celebrating Ramanand Swami's birthday, preparations for Janmashtmi began. The *murtis* of Shri Krishna, Balram, Nand, Yashoda, Devki and Vasudev were adorned and installed in the assembly hall. The celebration began by bathing the *murtis* with *panchamrut*. Thereafter *mahapuja* was performed. Brahmins chanted Vedic mantras and sadhus sang bhajans till 12 mid-

night. The *murti* of Balmukund (child-form of Shri Krishna) was placed in a decorated *hindolo* (crib) and Maharaj performed the celebration *arti*. A feast was offered to Thakorji. The *param-hansas* sang bhajans glorifying the birth of Shri Krishna while Shri Hari rocked the *hindolo*.

Shri Hari then called Pragji Purani and told him to read the childhood stories of Shri Krishna from the tenth chapter of the Shrimad Bhagvat. Hearing the glory of God brought joy to the hearts of all.

### ESSENCE OF BHAGVAT DHARMA

Next morning, Shri Hari came to the assembly, dressed in white clothes. He shared his spiritual knowledge as a finale to the previous night's celebration. "I have come on earth to reestablish Bhagvat Dharma. It is also otherwise known as Ekantik Dharma. There are two aspects of this Dharma: *nivrutti* dharma (renouncing all worldly actions) and *pravrutti* dharma (performing actions). In both types, if they are associated with God it is called Bhagvat Dharma. By following it the *jiva* attains *moksha*. However, when it is not related to God then it is simply known as ordinary dharma. Such dharma confers one with name and fame, but it will not enable one to attain final *moksha* (*atyantik moksha*). One who is learned or spiritually intelligent can understand this essence. And those who fail to do so perceive fault in sadhus, who, in spite of having taken the path of renunciation, are engaged in mandir-building activities [and other types of *seva*]. They only appreciate sadhus who have given up all activities and remain seated [in meditation]. Such people are not wise, because they have failed to understand the essence of karma yoga." ♦

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

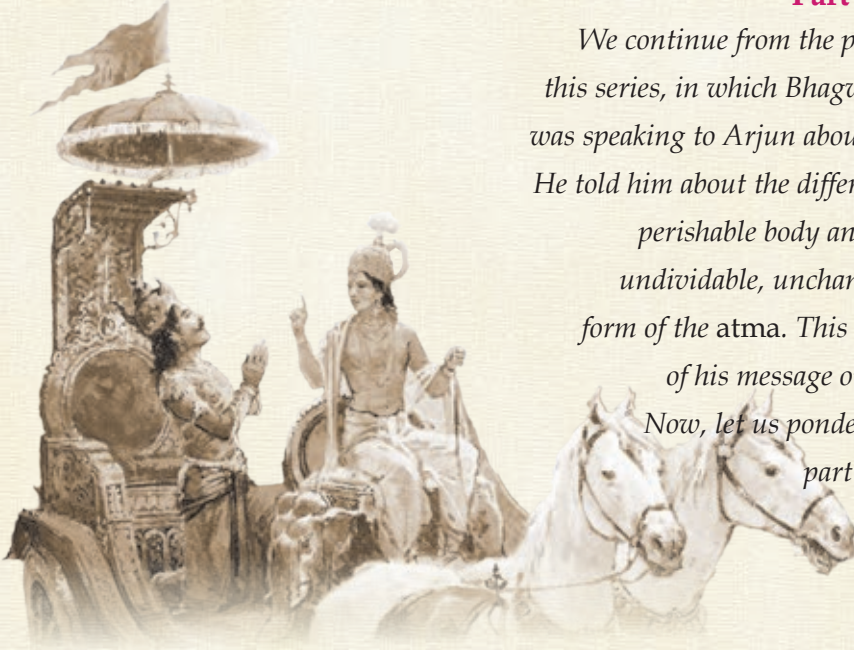


# ADHYĀY 2

## BRĀHMI STHITI YOGA

### Part 5

*We continue from the previous article in this series, in which Bhagwan Shri Krishna was speaking to Arjun about sankhya jnan. He told him about the difference between the perishable body and the uncuttable, undividable, unchanging and eternal form of the atma. This was the first part of his message on sankhya jnan. Now, let us ponder over the second part of his message...*



### FOR ONE WHO IS BORN, DEATH IS INEVITABLE

Bhagwan Shri Krishna tells Arjun, 'जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च । तस्माद् अपरिहार्येर्था न त्वं शोचितुम् अर्हसि ॥' - 'Jātasya hi dhruvo mrutyur dhruvam janma mrutasya cha; Tasmād aparihāryerthe na tvam shochitum arhasi' - 'For one who is born, death is inevitable. And for one who has died, birth too is inevitable. This fact is unavoidable, and thus it does not call for your sorrow' (Gita 2.27).

Change is the one thing that is unchangeable about nature. Birth means creation, and creation means change. That is, change from one stage of existence to another. Death means destruction. And destruction too means change. Again, from one stage of existence to another. Birth and death, or creation and destruction, are thus two aspects of change. For instance, clay in its original state

is distributed in various forms in the ground. A potter's efforts, however, brings the clay together and unites it to form a specific shape. And thus we see the birth of a pot. Years later, this same pot is discarded. From the smallest particle to the millions of universes, everything in creation undergoes such change in the form of birth and death. This cycle stems from *maya's* unending dance of destruction, which is inspired by God himself.

As soon as a person is born, death slowly and steadily approaches, just as the sun begins its move towards the western horizon as soon as it rises. If the sun rises it must set, and if it sets it must rise. Forecasters thus list the times of both sunrise and sunset, rather than listing either one of the two alone.

Flowers blossom with the inevitability that they will wither. Clothes and jewellery too are



made with the certainty that they will one day become worn out. Buildings are created with an understanding that they will one day have to be rebuilt. Nothing has been created to this day that has been able to keep away from being deteriorated by the wheel of change.

Just look around and you'll notice that you are surrounded by a sea of change. In fact, in your home, what was once new is now old. In the same way, that which appears new right now will become old one day. Clothes, glasses, shoes, utensils – after a certain amount of time, these all have to be replaced. New and old are simply words that represent different states of change. Change is seen, sometimes in the form of something new, and at other times in the form of the old. It is easy to comprehend when it is seen in the form of the new becoming old. However, something old transforming into something new is a concept that is a little more difficult to grasp, although it is just as true.

This process of transformation which takes place in the world, also occurs in our bodies, for the human body too is part of creation. Our bodies are constantly changing, and that's why there's no exact date or time when childhood ends and youth begins, or when youth ends and old age begins. It's a continual process, a constant flow that cannot be stopped. It is due to the slow and steady, tortoise-like pace of time, which always outruns the hare. This fearful reality of large-scale destruction is quite difficult to grasp. Nonetheless, shastras like the Bhagavad Gita help us to understand its intricacies and implications on life.

'*Jātasya hi dhruvo mrutyuhu.*' The word *mrutyuhu* means death. The words *dhruva* and *hi* both mean definite. Bhagwan Krishna uses two words where he could have used just one. But by repeating himself, he makes himself absolutely clear that there is no way around death, that death is absolutely inevitable.

Change is an inherent characteristic of the world; it is unrealistic to expect it to remain

constant. Based on this trait, in Sanskrit, two words are often used to refer to the world – *jagat* and *sansar*. *Jagat* comes from the verb *gacchha*, which means 'that which goes', and *sansar* comes from the verb *sru*, which means 'that which flows'. These words suggest that movement, or change, is an unavoidable part of creation. It is integral to the very nature of the world.

Bhagwan Shri Ramchandraji expresses this principle to his younger brother, Bharat, when he says, 'सर्वे क्षयान्ता निचयाः पतनान्ताः समुच्छ्रयाः । संयोगा विप्रयोगान्ता मरणान्तं च जीवितम् ॥' – '*Sarve kshyāntā nichayāhā patanāntāhā samuchchhrayāhā, sanyogā viprayogāntā maranāntam cha jeevitam*' – 'Whatever is seen to have come together will all end in separation. All elevations end in degradation. All worldly unions end in separation. All final state of life is death' (Ramayan, Ayodhyakand, 105-16).

Similar words of wisdom can be found in the Mahabharat as well (Mahabharat, Rajdharma, 27.29).

One who sees the world in such a way is known to have an understanding of *nashvantpanu* (the perishable nature) of the world.

By saying '*Jātasya hi dhruvo mrutyur dhruvam janma mrutasya cha*', Shri Krishna Bhagwan thus teaches Arjun to look at the world with an understanding of its *nashvantpanu*. He then goes a step further to teach Arjun another important life lesson.

### WHY GRIEVE FOR THE INEVITABLE?

Shri Krishna says, 'तस्माद् अपरिहार्येर्था न त्वं शोचितुम् अर्हसि ॥' – '*Tasmād aparihāryerthe na tvam shochitum arhasi*' – 'And so it is not becoming for you to grieve over that which is bound to happen' (Gita 2.27).

That which we cannot change is known as *apariharya*. That is, it is something which has to be accepted. Summer heat, for instance, can be called *apariharya*. There is simply no way it can be chased away. The same goes for rain as well. Once it starts raining, there is nothing we can



do to stop it. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tornadoes – all such natural phenomena are *apariharya*, for nothing we do or say can ever stop them. It is not befitting to lament over that which is *apariharya*. The quicker we accept reality, the better off we are. Just imagine a person who becomes distressed about rain or heat. Or a person riding on camelback complaining about bumps. Of what use is such complaining?

Most people are terribly afraid of death. Some consider even just hearing the word ‘death’ to be a bad omen. Mere talk of death makes people uneasy. Why? Because people are ignorant of the world’s true nature, which dictates that death is inevitable. But reality should not be feared and should be accepted as it is. For, ignoring or denying a principle because of fear does not make that principle any less true. In the end, even those who live in denial have to suffer the consequences of such reality.

Whether it is accepted or not, one who is born will one day die. How long can one run from death? How long can one hide? Death’s ways are distinctive and unfathomable. No matter where we are or who we are, death will come and find us.

Just think of Ravan and Abhimanyu. The stories of their deaths are legendary. Ravan was the villain who kidnapped Sita and then fought against Bhagwan Ram. The Ramayan describes that to avoid death Ravan performed difficult austerities and chanted the Vedic mantras meant to save a person from death. And Abhimanyu, whose story is in the Mahabharat, wore a bracelet his grandmother Kunti had tied around his wrist. The bracelet was supposed to make him immortal. Yet Ravan and Abhimanyu both eventually found themselves engulfed in death’s cold embrace.

No matter how hard we try to escape, death is certain. It is an unavoidable reality. Perhaps that is why one poet has said, “Why shed tears for those who have died? Those who shed tears themselves too will one day die. They will all

be blown away like gourds at the mouth of a cannon.”

Bhagwan Swaminarayan was Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan himself, yet for the sake of his devotees, he expressed how firmly he held this view of death described in the Gita. He says in the Vachanamrut, “I have constant awareness of these five thoughts: first, I am certainly going to die and leave this body; it is imminent. In fact, I firmly feel, ‘I am going to die at this second, at this very moment. Such awareness remains in times of happiness and distress, pleasure and displeasure, in fact, amidst all activities” (Gadhada III 30).

The Gita thus explains to us that death is *apariharya* – unavoidable – and so it should not cause fear or distress. Rather, it should be understood and accepted as reality. This type of knowledge is yet another aspect of *sankhya jnan*.

Not to grieve over circumstances that are unchangeable is a powerful concept – one that can work miracles. It often happens, for instance, that we disagree with the attitude or behaviour of someone close to us, whether it be at school, at work or in the home. Such disagreement often leads to conflict. We may have tried sincerely to come to a compromise more than once, but to no avail. We should try to accept the circumstances, then, as *apariharya*. Remembering this teaching of the Gita will take away our grief and help us feel at ease, provided that we have tried our best.

Now, let us take a look at *sankhya jnan* from another perspective.

## THE MAGIC OF SEEING THROUGH

Krishna tells Arjun, ‘अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत। अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना।’ – ‘*Avyaktādeeni bhootāni vyaktamadhyāni bhārata, avyaktanidhanānyeva tatra kā paridevanā*’ – ‘O Arjun! All beings were unmanifest before they were born. They are manifest only in the middle, or so long as they live. When they die, they become unmanifest once again. What is the cause then for grief?’ (Gita 2.28).



Consider a mound of clay. It is not too difficult to imagine that clay being made into a pot. The same goes for a block of wood being carved into a masterful work of art, or a flower bud blossoming into a fragrant flower. But what about imagining transformation in the opposite direction? What about seeing a pot as mere clay, a carved masterpiece as an ordinary block of wood, or a blossomed flower as a beautiful façade behind which death incessantly rears its ugly head.

Every object in the world goes through three stages - beginning, middle and end. The middle stage is when the object is *vyakta*, or manifest. The beginning and end stages are when the object is *avyakta*, or unmanifest. Here, Shri Krishna Bhagwan explains to Arjun that he should see that which is *vyakta* as *avyakta*, or that which is manifest as being unmanifest. In other words, he tells Arjun that he should not see things as they are in the middle, but that he should see them as they are in the beginning or end, either before creation or after destruction. Seeing life in this way almost works like magic. Indeed, it opens a person up to an entirely new world of experience and eliminates grief once and for all.

Bhagwan Krishna thus teaches Arjun to look beyond the perishable body and towards the immortal soul. In this way, he teaches him yet another facet of *sankhya jnan*.

Parabrahman Purushottam Bhagwan Swaminarayan repeatedly stresses this point in his discourses. Once, Muktanand Swami asked Bhagwan Swaminarayan, "Maharaj, life is full of difficulties. Amidst all these difficulties, what understanding should a devotee of God cultivate in order to remain happy at heart?"

Bhagwan Swaminarayan answered, "Constant awareness of the *atma*, which is distinct from the body; the awareness of the perishable nature of all wordly objects; and the awareness of God's greatness. By keeping these three forms of awareness, no difficulties hinder... in any way" (Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 60).

Mul Aksharmurti Gunatitanand Swami Maharaj has also expressed similar thoughts in his spiritual talks: "Grief will never occur if, amidst all activities, one keeps the understanding of the world's perishability" (Swamini Vato 2.24). Also, "How can *sankhya* be strengthened? The answer, 'Observe that man dies and the body becomes old. Think of the *nitya pralay*, *nimitta pralay* and *prakrut pralay*'" (Swamini Vato 1.97).

Here, it is worth mentioning that the changing nature of the world is a concept which many people have explored in modern times. Even scientists like Albert Einstein have accepted that matter is constantly undergoing change. Such intellectuals have thus taken a step towards understanding the world's *nashvoantpanu*. However, they have not been able to go as far as to say that understanding this reality can free us from grief and help us be happy in life. It's almost as if such a thought just never occurred to them.

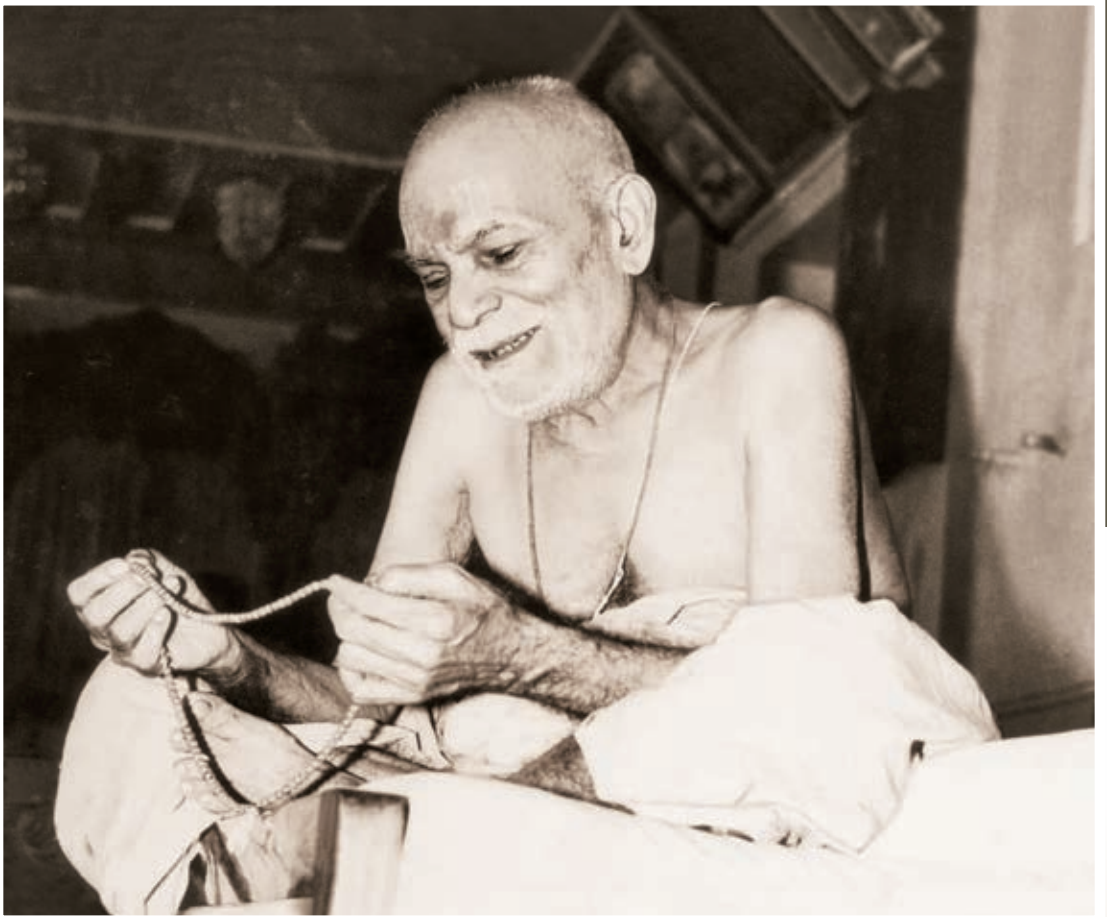
India's philosophers, on the other hand, have not missed out on this find. For, the science of change in the Gita begins with '*jatasya hi dhruvo mrutyuhu*' - the ever-changing nature of the world and the stark reality of death - and ends with '*na tvam shochitum arhasi*', a call to stay composed. Similarly, the Gita does not stop at '*avyaktādeeni bhootāni*', a call to see the world in its unmanifest state, but it goes further to say '*tatra kā paridevanā*', that loss should never be a reason for pain.

This in itself is true science. It is a shining example of the scientific truths in the Hindu shastras. And it is so solid that it might as well be written in stone, for nobody has been able to challenge it to this day.

Bhagwan Krishna thus takes his explanation of *sankhya jnan* forward by further elaborating upon the body's perishability and the soul's immortality. And while doing so, he encourages Arjun to use *sankhya jnan* to keep himself undisturbed and focused amidst the battlefield. ♦

1. *Nitya pralay*, *nimitta pralay* and *prakrut pralay* are three different forms of destruction.





# GLORY OF SEVA

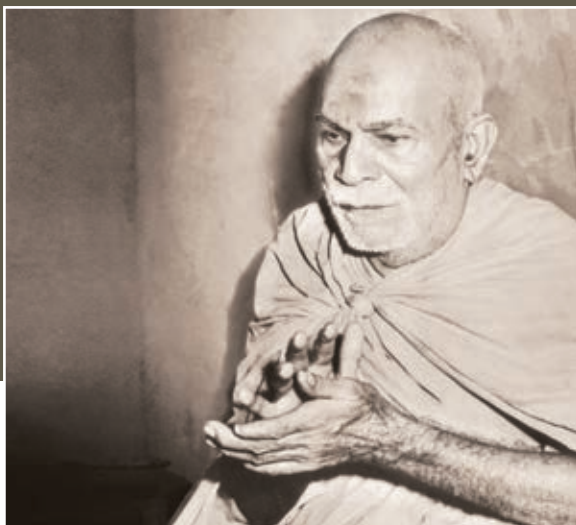
Yogiji Maharaj Speaks About the Glory of Seva



**S**eva was inseparable from Yogiji Maharaj's life. It was this lofty virtue of his that immensely pleased Swami Krishnacharandas in Junagadh. His services in the construction of the mandirs at Sarangpur and Gondal were indeed matchless.

For Yogiji Maharaj, *seva* was a sure-fire way to *moksha* and the best form of worship. He liberally laced his discourses with the significance of *seva*. His dialogues with the devotees were also sprinkled with the glory of *seva*. Samples of his wisdom are worth brooding over:

- ❖ "We should readily engage in *seva* of all, no matter how young or old. Maharaj has largely focused on *seva*. One should make an addiction of *seva* just like Uka Khachar. Unless one takes fancy to *seva* in the manner of an addiction, one would not like



doing *seva*. Subject your mind to an utter crush. Perform *seva* to that point. *Seva* is not to be done in a haphazard manner. An obsession with *seva* pleases God to no end."

- ❖ "Do not show off one's *seva*. One should feel restless without doing *seva* even as long as a wink of the eyes. Do *seva* in all humility, but never out of deception. One should do *seva* out of one's own accord but should not be required to be told again and again."
- ❖ "Doing *seva* with a feeling of divinity and unqualified intellect is *bhajan*. It is mere action if you serve with resignation. With faith, it turns into *seva*."
- ❖ "One conquers one's mind by doing *seva* of the Satpurush."
- ❖ "An earnest *seva* offered to a devotee is as good as a pilgrimage."
- ❖ "One who cleanses utensils, washes clothes and serves poor devotees, pursues the humblest form of worship which is highly valued. If one desires to attain *moksha*, one should shake off one's pride absolutely."
- ❖ "*Seva* is *jnan*, and *seva* is *bhakti*."
- ❖ "There is no other means like *seva* to please God. Serve each sadhu well, with divine feelings. Bear all the censure. If you could bear with hundred dressing-downs, you will be rewarded with an equal number of

virtues. One would grow virtuous if one cares for the devotees through thick and thin."

- ❖ "Pleased with the virtue of *seva*, the Satpurush could swathe one with enlightenment."
- ❖ "According to Vachanamruts Gadhada II 7 and Gadhada II 59, one can rise spiritually only with *seva*."
- ❖ "Only the highly meritorious are blessed with chances of serving the Sadhu in communion with God, the less meritorious are not that fortunate."
- ❖ "Greatness attaches to the servant-like, not to the commanding. Serve everyone."

For Yogiji Maharaj *seva* was the best manifestation of dharma. The following incident testifies to this.

Yogiji Maharaj was travelling by train from Bochasan to Gondal in July 1956. Scores of devotees jostled with one another for his darshan at Vankaner, Then, at Surendranagar, Viramgam and Anand railway station. The scene impressed a youth travelling in the next First Class compartment. He came to Yogiji Maharaj for darshan.

Yogiji Maharaj enquired, "Who are you?"

The youth replied, "I am a native of Palanpur and live in Kolkata. We are tea merchants. I am





going to London for higher studies." After the brief introduction the youth enquired of Yogiji Maharaj, "I have seen the number of people drawn to you. I would like to know how you achieved such glory?"

Yogiji Maharaj replied briefly, "It is by way of cleansing utensils. It's all thanks to the grace of my guru Shastriji Maharaj."

The reply left the youth wondering how dish washing could ever make a *mahatma* of a man.

Often, Yogiji Maharaj put simple *seva* before everything else as the secret of spiritual growth.

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Yogiji Maharaj always guided himself by the precedents of *seva* set by Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Shastriji Maharaj and other sadhus and devotees. He often narrated those episodes before the devotees:

"Parvatbhai agreed to work as Dada Khachar's labourer. Rajabhai ploughed the land for Parvatbhai. Muktanand Swami ploughed the land for Mulubha. How caring and what glory they nourished!

"Gunatitanand Swami was on his way to Bhal region. There were thirty sadhus with him. It rained so heavily that everyone's shoes became mired in mud and they began to sink in the mud. Gunatitanand Swami gathered the shoes of all the sadhus, tied them in a bundle and walked

about 17 km, carrying 40 kg of weight. Shastriji Maharaj walked about 200 km wading through four feet of water from Dholera to Navada in the rains to reach Gadhada to make *mesur*, a sweet item, for Bhagatji Maharaj. A confectioner could well have been sent for." This is called faith. If one is faithful and loyal, one could face all odds.

"Shriji Maharaj himself washed loin-clothes of the sadhus. Muktanand Swami also did *seva* and went for begging alms to the villages around Loj. Maharaj also made *rotla* for the sadhus.

"Once the Mahant of Tarnetar went to Junagadh for *darshan* of Gunatitanand Swami. Swami was then sweeping the mandir ground with a broom. He asked Swami where he could meet the Mahant. Swami said, 'Go to the assembly hall. He will soon be there.'

"Then Swami went to the hall after having washed his hands and legs. On seeing him, the Mahant was surprised. He said, 'You were just now sweeping the floor!'

"Then Swami explained, 'Here, one who does a lowly job is highly placed.'

"Once a devotee asked Gunatitanand Swami, 'How did you achieve greatness?'

"Swami replied, 'By scrubbing clean the vessels of devotees the tips of my nails have worn out. That is the way to greatness.' ♦



# YOGIJI MAHARAJ IDOL OF SEVA

When Akshar Mandir was under construction in Gondal, the Diwan of Gondal (the then administrator of a princely state) came for darshan of Shastriji Maharaj (Swami). Yogiji Maharaj was then delivering a discourse in Akshar Deri. He told Diwanji, "Shall I call Swami here?" But Diwanji said, "Swami is a great sadhu. Don't call him here. I will go wherever he is."

Diwanji went to where Shastriji Maharaj was. Shastriji Maharaj was then kneading building materials for plastering. When Diwanji saw this, he was overwhelmed. His respect for Swami grew.

Yogiji Maharaj narrated such episodes of *seva* to the devotees. He himself practised such *seva*.

It was midnight in Sarangpur. All the sadhus were fast asleep. Shastriji Maharaj was stirred out of sleep. Waking up, he found that a group of about seventy-five devotees had arrived.

Shastriji Maharaj welcomed them and enquired, "How come you've arrived at this hour?"

One of the devotees explained, "The bus broke down on our way to Kariyani. We have come to stay overnight."

"You can stay here. This mandir is yours. Have you had dinner?" Shastriji Maharaj enquired.

"No, it's half past one. We would not like to trouble you," the devotees said.

"Oh, it is no trouble at all! This is a timely *seva*." Shastriji Maharaj said smilingly. He



thought that since the sadhus were tired nobody would be willing to cook for so many at this hour. Then, Jogi readily came to his mind. While the devotees were waiting, Shastriji Maharaj went to wake up Yogiji Maharaj. Hearing the stir, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami woke up, "Who is it?" he asked.

"I'm looking for Jogi. Some devotees have just arrived. We have to arrange for their dinner," Shastriji Maharaj said.



Bhagwatswarupdas Swami recognized Shastriji Maharaj's voice. He said, "He has gone to bed at one after telling the rosary. As usual, he will wake up at three o'clock. He does not sleep in the afternoon. It would be better if he gets rest now."

"But Bhagwatswarupdas, who else could keep my honour at this hour? Who else can help me? Only Jogi can do it, so, let's wake him up," Shastriji Maharaj argued. Pity was palpable in his voice.

"How about treating them with food in the morning?" Bhagwatswarupdas Swami suggested.

The dialogues stirred Yogiji Maharaj out of his slumber. He stood up before Shastriji Maharaj with folded hands. Shastriji Maharaj was very pleased. He said, "O Jogi! We have to cook dinner for the devotees."

And Yogiji Maharaj got ready for it. The clock struck three when the devotees finished with dinner. Even at this odd hour, having done tiring kitchen chores, Jogi looked as fresh as ever and his fervour for service did not fade even one bit.

*Seva* clung to Jogi's persona like second nature. He always felt enthusiastic for *seva*. He spoke to the youths on his love for *seva* on 3 June 1959, "I served for 40 *sadgurus*. Also I used to pack lunch for the devotees of Sarangpur, Nava Gam and Mojidad who were to leave early the next morning. I would wake up at 1.30 at night and make about 150 *rotla*. I would get *gor* and pickles from the sadhu in charge of the kitchen store at night, so that I didn't have to wake him up in the morning. By the time it struck 4 o'clock in the morning, I would get the lunch ready for the groups of devotees with *rotla* and *gor* tied neatly in a saffron cloth.

"Even if I were to die right now, it would be with peace in the heart of my heart. It is satisfying to have lived in the company of great sadhus and pleased them all. That is the reason I am at peace with myself."

"If I were asked now, I would cook food for



fifty persons and serve them all and I won't get tired."

Yogiji Maharaj was 70 when he shared this revelation of his zest for *seva* with the youths. On another occasion he expressed his zest for service, saying, "Serve well. Only the fortunate get such chances. I have served for 40 years. I have never had my meal first. I would make do with whatever was left and then would have dinner at night. Serving is immensely meritorious."

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Yogiji Maharaj was always eager to do *seva*. Once, he went to the bathroom at a mandir in East Africa. There, he found a pile of unwashed clothes of youths. He locked the door and washed all the clothes.

It was a pleasure for him. Only when he emerged out of the bathroom did everyone realize that he had washed all the clothes.

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Once, Yogiji Maharaj visited Narayan Ghat, a river bank, in Ahmedabad with some sadhus and devotees. There, Kothari Babubhai was changing clothes after his bath. Yogiji Maharaj picked his wet dhoti, saying, "Let me wring it for you." Hearing this, Babubhai felt dazed. He tightened his grip and snatched the dhoti from him, saying, "Why should you do that?"

Yogiji Maharaj humbly said, "It is a great fortune to serve devotees like you on whom Shastriji Maharaj has showered his grace."

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On the occasion of Shastriji Maharaj's 85th birthday in Atladra, C.T. Patel came from Mombasa, Africa. It was 11.00 p.m. C.T. Patel tried for an hour to find space to sleep but to no avail. It was 12 midnight. C.T. Patel reached the kitchen where he found Yogiji Maharaj sitting awake with rosary in hand. Yogiji Maharaj asked him, "Have you not gone to sleep?"

C.T. Patel enquired, "I will do that, but how about you? Why do you still remain awake after a tiring day?"

Yogiji Maharaj replied with a smile, "Some

devotees arrive late at night for the festival. They should be treated well." Then he found space for C.T. Patel to sleep.

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Once Yogiji Maharaj arrived at Ramod, at the invitation of the local devotees. He called this village a Gokuliyu village, where the people were pious and peaceful. There were many devotees. So, Matam Swami started preparing lunch while Yogiji Maharaj discoursed to the devotees.

The kitchen was not airy and the fuel wood was fresh. When the fuelwood was lighted it



produced lots of smoke. Matam Swami's eyes started burning. He went upstairs and went to sleep. When Yogiji Maharaj came after the discourse, Matam Swami was not to be seen. He went upstairs to find Matam Swami sleeping. When Yogiji Maharaj enquired about lunch, he said, "I won't cook. It's very smoky." Yogiji Maharaj told him lovingly, "We have to offer food to Thakorji on time."

But Matam Swami was irritated. He said, "You may cook if you want to offer *thal*. I won't go there."



Then Yogiji Maharaj started cooking himself. Soon, it was all ready. Mohanbhai, a devotee, enquired about Matam Swami on finding Yogiji Maharaj cooking.

Yogiji Maharaj's eyes were red with smoke. He said with a smile, "After a long time I have prepared *thal* for Thakorji. Matam Swami is very kind that he offered me this *seva*."

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Yogiji Maharaj was eager to have *seva* even in his old age. The following event took place in Gondal when he was 76 years old.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, Swamishri was lying awake in bed. The sadhus in his service were asleep. He left the bed without any help. Put his slippers on and walked to the back of the room to go to the bathroom. Looking out of the window, he saw garbage in the garden. So, he went to the kitchen from where he could reach the garden. He covered some foodbowls which were lying uncovered. He also covered an earthen pitcher and closed a dripping water tap. Then descending the steps, he went to the garden and picked up a broom. He walked carefully, since there was no one to support him. He gathered mango skin and leaves lying scattered under an almond tree. On hearing the rustle of leaves, the sadhus attending on him were awakened. They did not find Swamishri in bed. They rushed out to find Yogiji Maharaj sweeping with a broom. They took it from him and prayed, "Bapa, don't do this ever again."

But Yogiji Maharaj reacted with his fond desire, "I very much feel like serving, but no one allows me to do so."

Yogiji Maharaj harboured a constant longing for *seva*. He didn't get an opportunity for it because of his old age. He often expressed his uneasiness over it. Once while wearing his dhoti after a bath, he said, "It was I who made Ada's shrine. I was then a disciple. Now, I have a higher degree. I have become a guru. Now, from a guru what shall I be?" Then he replied himself, "Now, I would like to be a disciple; so that I may get to

scrub utensils. There is no point in becoming a guru."

On yet another occasion, 28 January 1964, he awoke from sleep all of a sudden and told the attendant sadhu, "I want to go to wash the dishes."

The attendant sadhu informed, "They are doing that." Then he slept for some time and then woke up again suddenly, saying, "I feel like washing dishes. Take me there. It is quite a fortune to wash the dishes of the devotees. I strongly feel like serving the devotees."

Yogiji Maharaj was 74 then and suffering from several ailments. Considering his age and deteriorating health, the sadhus and devotees would not allow him to do any *seva*, howsoever he wished. The urge began to appear in his dreams. While having his meal on 1 October 1969, he said, "I had a dream last night. I went to the kitchen. There was nobody. It was 10 p.m. I wondered why the food was not ready yet. Then I made chapatis out of 10 kg of flour on two pans in just half an hour. Balmukund Swami was helping. Then I awoke."

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One afternoon, after having rest, he shared his dream, "Today I was thinking of my days in Junagadh. I went to Jaga Bhagat's room for darshan. Then I had darshan of the place where Krishnaji Ada used to give discourses. Then I came to Gondal. There I went to the cowshed with Daji Bapu and Jayanti. The dung had not been cleared for three to four days. I suggested to Daji Bapu, 'Let's clean it.' But Daji Bapu said, 'We will get it done by a servant.'"

"So I suggested, 'I am that servant. Why should we look for another person? Then I and Jayanti took two baskets, collected the dung and emptied it on the dung-heap. Then we cleaned the cowshed and spread thrashed stalks of wheat so that it didn't feel wet. Then the cows came and sat on it. The devotees also came and finding it spick and span, enquired, 'Who did it?'"

"I told them, 'The devas came to do it. Indra, Brahma, etc.'"

"Then, Daji Bapu was going to throw away a basketful of dry babul sticks. But I advised, 'Don't throw them away.' Then I said that once I went on a home visit to an apartment on the fifth floor in Mumbai on the day of fast and received rupee one and twenty-five paise as cash. That is how we get money. So we can't afford to throw away babul sticks. Buy fresh ones for Thakorji but for us we use the ones that have been soaked in water to last at least three days."

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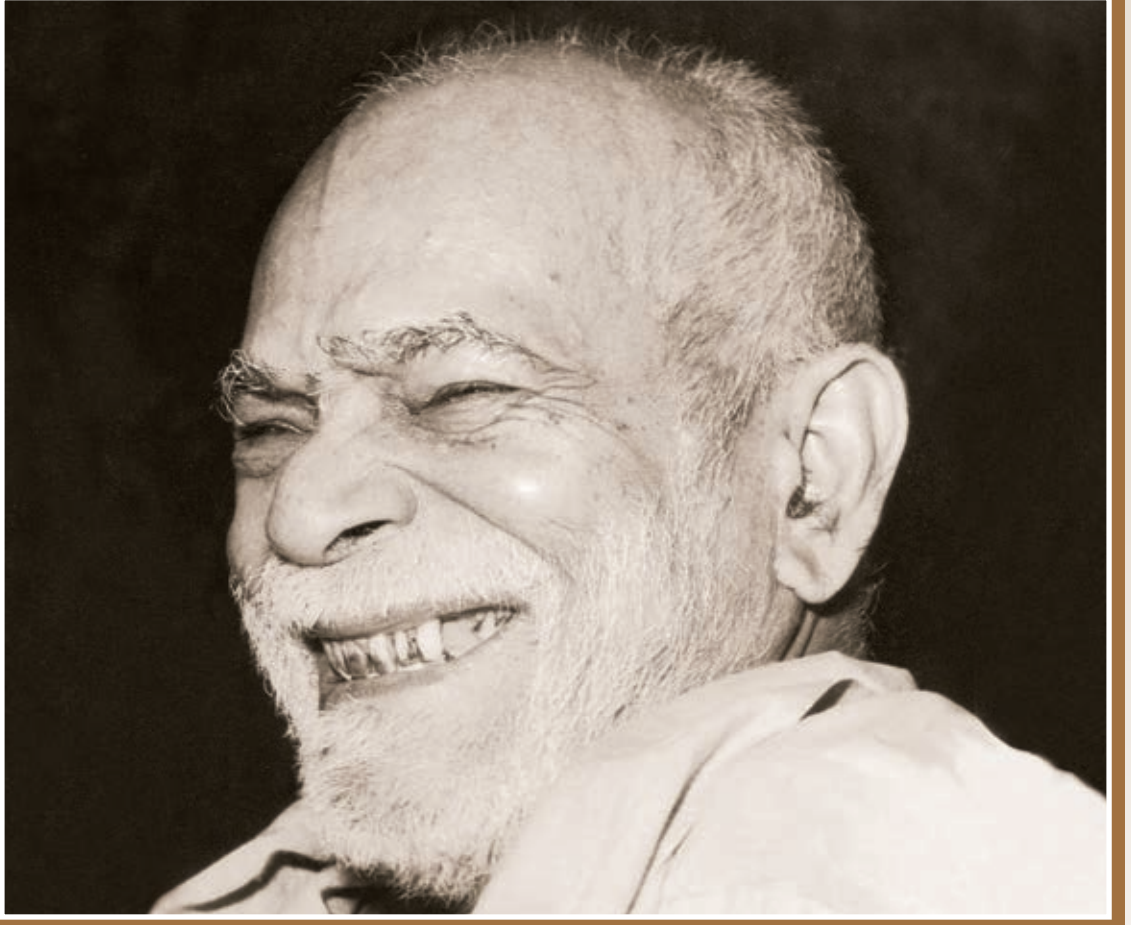
On 1 January 1970, he shared his dream darshan, "Shastriji Maharaj offered me his darshan today. I went to a village. I don't recollect its name. Shastriji Maharaj was with me. So were some devotees. Shastriji Maharaj asked me for a glass of water. Then I began to give water to all with a pitcher after filtering it in a small earthen pot. It was already filtered. But we should filter it ourselves. Shastriji Maharaj was seated on a chair, barechested and wearing headgear. He was very pleased to see me. Then you (Swami Ishwarcharandas) came and my eyes opened."

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Yogiji Maharaj shared another dream. One early morning on 9 January 1970, he recollected, "I had a dream. In Chansad, Mota Swami kneaded a dough of about 10 kg of wheat flour. Then he slept. When I went to the kitchen, the dough was lying there. I asked Mota Swami about it, but he said, 'I am down with fever.' Then I told him, 'You should have informed me earlier.' Then I rolled and baked all the chapatis and cooked 10 kg of vegetables."

When one realizes his matchless quality of *seva* the following words of Yogiji Maharaj echo in one's mind, "With thousands of followers, if one still acts as a meek servant of them, take it for granted that either God has entered his person or he is God himself." ◆





# R E F L E C T I O N S O N

## Yogiji Maharaj



*Great spiritual masters, pundits and prominent citizens share their reflections about Yogiji Maharaj*

One whose gaze is simple like a child's, whose speech is without deceit, whose heart is filled with genuine feelings, who always has the highest, pure devotion to Paramatma, who is staunch on the path of saintliness, who has noble and pure fame, with such virtues Yogiraj, the best among renunciates, forever radiates.

- Pujoyapad Kashikanandji Maharaj, Mumbai

Approaching Yogiji Maharaj, his unshakeable faith, his heart filled with devotion to God, his detachment, his humility and other virtues are evident.

**- Pujyapad Shastriji Pandurang Athvale**

One whose master is the supreme Narayan, Parameshwar himself ... who believes from the heart that 'nothing is mine' and everything is his is a true devotee of Swaminarayan.

**- Pujyapad Shri Rang Avdhut Maharaj**

His life is noble and pure. This great man (sadhu) has spent his life for the benefit of society. That he has experienced much spiritual bliss is evident to us when we have his darshan.

**- Shri Ravishankar Maharaj  
Vallabh Vidyalaya, Bochasan**

My inner progress was due to Shastriji Maharaj. Shastriji Maharaj was the representative of God; this was my personal experience. Today, I see and understand Yogiji Maharaj as that representative of God.

I believe that he (Yogiji Maharaj) has such powers to do anything he wishes in the *brahmand*.

Shastriji Maharaj was ill in Atladra. He sat me on his bed and showered his pleasure (blessings). I asked him, "Who will give me such joy now?" Shastriji Maharaj told me, "Yogiji Maharaj will give you every joy. Don't worry."

I had the last darshan of Shastriji Maharaj at Ahmedabad station, when he was on his way from Atladra to Sarangpur. I became tearful on seeing him ill. I asked him, "Who will support me now?" Shastriji Maharaj held my hand, placed it in Yogiji Maharaj's hand and said, "Yogiji Maharaj will forever protect you."

**- Honorable Shri Gulzarilal Nanda,  
Twice Acting Prime Minister of India,  
Former Home Minister**

Ever since I came in contact with Yogiji

Maharaj, his great personality has been engraved in my heart. Love and compassion continually flow from his eyes. His words always flow with memories of God.

**- Shri Babubhai Jashbhai Patel  
Minister, Public Building, Electricity and  
City Supplies, Gujarat State**

In today's circumstances, a saint like Yogiji Maharaj is our mentor. In the presence of this Yugpurush [person of the era] we forget the world and ourselves. We experience peace. That feeling is beyond words.

**- Shri Chimanbhai Patel  
Minister, Gujarat State**

Yogiji Maharaj's heart and actions are innocent and simple like a child's. Listening to his bhajans I experienced his intense devotion. Devotees are drawn to him due to his detachment, simplicity and child-like innocence.

**- Shri Vijaykumar Trivedi  
Minister, Gujarat State**

Limitless love and firm *atmanishtha* are manifest in Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj. His mere darshan grants worldly souls peace.

Yogiji Maharaj is like an innocent child. His heart is pure and transparent like a gem. His glory is limitless.

**- Shri Mohanlal Vyas  
Minister, Gujarat State**

His clear talks, his detachment, his compassion towards all, his faith in God, his trust in truth, his self belief, his matchless devotion.... So many noble virtues, how many should I list?

**- Shri Devendra M. Desai  
Minister, Gujarat State**

Who is the life force of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya? Swami Yogiji Maharaj.

**- Shri Hariprasad M. Choksi  
Government Pleader, Bombay State**



Saints like Yogiji Maharaj do not distinguish between you and I, yours and mine; they have no worldly desires and so their thoughts, words and actions succeed for the good of all.

**- Shri A.B. Patel, CMG  
Shri Arvind Ashram, Pondicherry**

His outstanding quality is his saintliness, which is revealed by his pure life, devotion, humility and simplicity. Yogiji Maharaj is the guru of thousands, yet he is not egoistic about this. This is a great feat.

**- Shri Manilal C. Parekh  
Renowned Writer, Rajkot**

Love, service, renunciation, compassion... all these and other virtues are found in Yogiji Maharaj. In his presence, improper thoughts do not arise.

**- Justice Shri D.V. Vyas, Mumbai**

His life is a great message. It is our great fortune that we have his company. Whatever I have achieved is the result of Swamishri's blessings.

**- Shri Govindsinhji M. Chudasama, IAS**

A yogi is greater than one who performs austerities, and one who has knowledge or performs rituals. A yogi is one who is totally attached to God. In this sense, Yogiji Maharaj is a true yogi.

**- Shri B.J. Diwan  
Chief Justice, Gujarat**

His simple language had a captivating aura, leaving a deeper and more effective impression than even the greatest speeches.

**- Shri A.B. Yagnik  
Principal, Mithibai College  
of Arts and Science, Mumbai**

Yogiji Maharaj is such a saint who is not attracted to the world, is detached, is honest, is

a friend to all and advocates discipline. His talks do not differ from his actions.

**- Shri S.R. Bhatt  
Principal, B.D. Arts College, Ahmedabad**

Yogiji Maharaj is truly a liberated saint. He is the form of bliss... He is truly a great person.

**- Shri Ramanlal Soni, Writer, Modasa**

He is an ocean of affection. He has won the hearts of countless people, young and old. Without losing his mental stability and without even the slightest trace of disrespect he has tolerated many hardships in a saintly way.

**- Prof. Dr Bhagvatiprasad Pandya  
Ahmedabad**

Param Bhagvat Sant Swamishri Yogiji Maharaj is supremely austere, compassionate, devout and a sadhu of the highest calibre. Through his pure life he has guided countless souls onto the spiritual path.

**- Mahantshri Shantiprasadji  
Shri Anandabawa Seva Sanstha, Jamnagar**

Yogiji Maharaj is a stream of flowing nectar. Humility is his innate God-given nature.

When a devotee departs from his presence, he feels that he has embraced God.

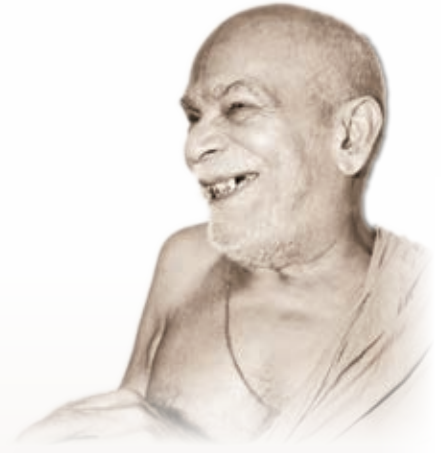
Whatever he says comes true and his actions are pure. He has matchless humility.

**- Shri Krishnashankar Shastri, Nadiad**

His sparkling eyes, smiling lips and shining face inspire spiritual joy in all his disciples. His life is an honour to himself and a pattern to mankind. It is like the sap of a living tree which penetrates every bough, branch and twig and permeates them through and through.

**- Shri M.R. Gopalacharya  
Panditratna Panditraj, Mumbai**





# YOGI GITA

## Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj's Life-Feelings

- I am not a leader! I am a servant. My importance lies as a dishwasher – in doing menial *seva*.
- The faults of even the most junior of devotees never arise in my mind. I do not see such things! I do not allow myself to see such faults. I see them all as *murtis* of Brahma. Never do I feel they are worldly. I believe them to be divine.
- I intensely desire to do *seva*. But no one allows me to do so. (Words spoken in old age.)
- From the beginning I have loved *kirtan-bhakti*. It is my habit. I enjoy it immensely when anyone sings *kirtans*.
- I prefer doing *seva* and I am greatly pleased if the names of Shastriji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami gain popularity.
- I would give my all to celebrate Shastriji Maharaj's birthday. I don't like my birthday being celebrated. I am ever ready to wash dishes and tolerate scoldings. From the beginning I've lived as a servant, not a guru. I dislike being a guru, but enjoy being a servant. I have tolerated many scoldings. For 40 years I've suffered beatings, so I am now used to tolerating.
- I came to Shastriji Maharaj in the Samvat year of 1969 (1913 CE). In Samvat year 2007 (1951 CE) Swami returned to Akshardham. Till the end I obeyed Swami's commands unfailingly and thus pleased him.
- Even if I get just a *rotlo* to eat, I would eat it and work for the growth of Shastriji Maharaj's Sanstha.
- I dislike my birthday being celebrated. I do not desire one bit to be worshipped. I dislike being garlanded. I dislike people prostrating to me, calling my *Jais*... I am saying all this to you in honest revelation.
- I have served all the *sadgurus* immensely and earned their blessings. I have worn out my body.
- I have always acted according to the wishes of Shastriji Maharaj, but not according to the calling of my own mind. So, Swamishri has become extremely pleased. And today he gives *darshan* and I experience bliss.
- I have cared for all and served everybody. I have never insulted anybody, never scorned anyone. That's why everyone is so affectionate towards me. Never have I asked for anything from anyone. For Thakorji I have asked, but never for myself.
- For me, rest lies in the growth of Satsang.
- If I err, then please tell me so that I can improve. I like being shown my mistakes, so that I can improve! I do not like being honoured but insult pleases me.
- Whenever Shastriji Maharaj called out 'Jogi', it instantly filled me with great joy that 'Shastriji Maharaj has called me!' And if I were writing, I'd drop the pen; and if I were eating, I'd put down the morsel... ◆





# WATER IS LIFE

PART 2



(a) Orange soda



(b) Water



(c) Cola

## THE BEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD

1. Which drink is the perfect nutrient to replace the eight glasses of water that your body loses daily through sweating, exhaling, urination and defecation?
2. Which ones contain the equivalent of eight cubes of sugar, dehydrate you, remove calcium from your bones and lead to osteoporosis? (Answers at the end of the article).
3. Which is the most acidic, erodes enamel and punches holes in your teeth?

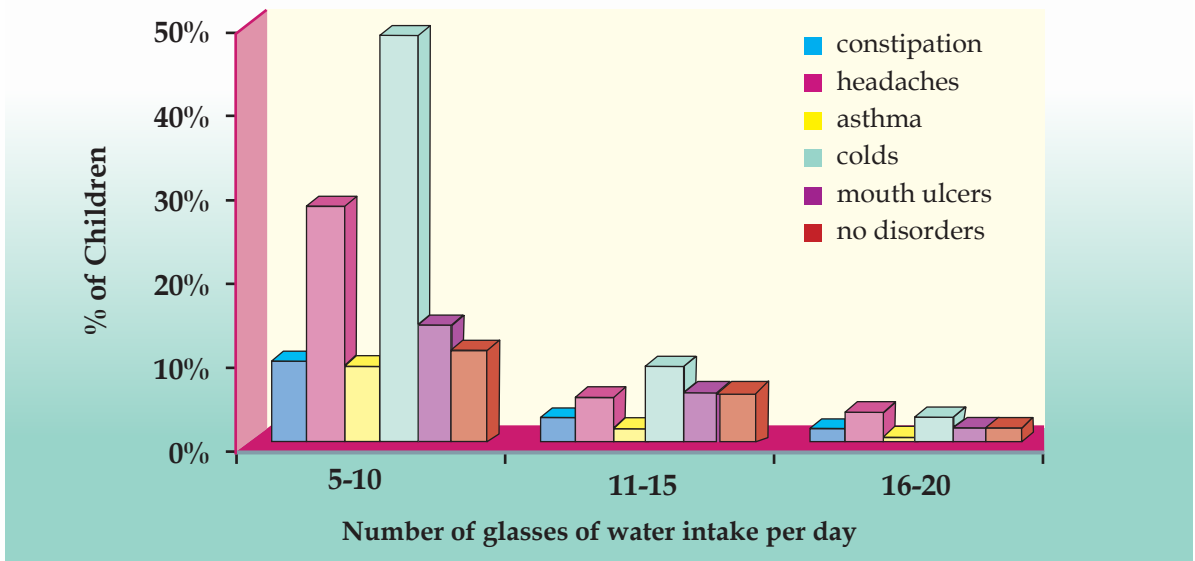
In this second article about water, we shall examine the water intake of schoolchildren, the effects on their health and guidance for parents.

In a BAPS survey conducted in Ahmedabad in early March 2011 (cool period), 162 boys and girls aged 11 to 14, filled in a questionnaire about their daily water intake, the colour of their urine and whether any of them suffered from any of the following disorders: constipation, headaches, asthma, colds and mouth ulcers. The results are presented in the bar chart (next page).

An interesting correlation emerges. The most noticeable observation is that children who drink less water (in the 5-10 glass range) tend to suffer from disorders to a greater extent than those who drink more water, as seen in the next two ranges. These decrease as the water intake increases. Surprising as it may seem, those who drank more water suffered less colds than the first group. A plausible reason for this is that less water intake probably compromises immunity.

Since this was not a survey conducted on

## WATER INTAKE OF BAPS CHILDREN AND DISORDERS (March 2011, Ahmedabad)



a one-to-one basis, but one based on filling a questionnaire in the Sunday *bal sabha*, anomalies did occur. For example, children who drank enough water (16-20 glasses) still suffered constipation and mouth ulcers. This could be due to other factors, such as, not chewing food properly, eating little or no green vegetables, drinking water during meals and eating foods which innately cause constipation, such as, white bread, milk and yogurt. Similar is the case for headaches, despite adequate intake. This can be due to stress at home or school. A few children stated that they had 21-25 glasses per day. This is highly doubtful. According to Dr Mehul Trivedi (MD Homeopathy) and Hitesh Chauhan, a biostatistician, who evaluated the survey, this could be due to an error by children who probably did not know exactly how much water they drank and probably regarded a few sips every now and then as a whole glass. Finally, a follow-up survey is also necessary to see what percentage are relieved of their disorders, especially in the first two groups, 7-10 and 11-15 glasses/day, after they increase their water intake.

Some of the children did not drink water at

school for the simple reason that parents had advised them not to drink school water for fear of contracting water-borne diseases! Another parent feared that his son might refill the bottle in school with contaminated water. This fear is also valid. We hear about municipal and private schools in India not regularly cleaning their overhead water storage tanks. Such laxity occasionally causes water-borne infections such as diarrhoea, typhoid and jaundice in pupils in these schools, such that they have to close down until the tanks have been cleaned properly.

Some parents also did not think about giving their children water bottles, because according to one parent, "Tushar is going to return home at 2 p.m." Eight-year-old Tushar attends morning school. During this period he does not drink any water and his lips are always dry. He used to visit the W.C. four times to void stool. After he was given a water bottle, he stopped visiting the W.C. His frequent voiding was due to indigestion caused by dehydration. Drinking enough water improved his digestion. It has been over a month now and he has also gained some weight.

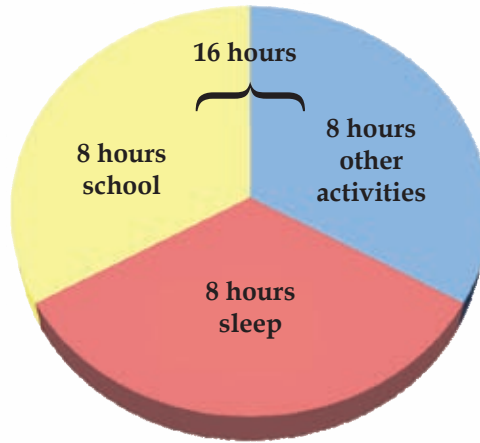
Apart from the survey, we consider a few



other interesting cases. One is of 12-year-old Naresh. A paediatric neurologist diagnosed him as having “childhood migraine” after all tests and CT scans proved normal. Naresh was prescribed three types of medications to take daily, which made him drowsy. As a result his grades have suffered. Amazingly, the physician never bothered to ask him when he suffered migraine. Naresh divulged to sadhus that he got the attacks only on Mondays and Thursdays, after he played football in two consecutive periods in the afternoon (80 minutes). However when he played football on Fridays and Saturdays during only one sports period (40 minutes), he suffered no migraine! Hence his migraine was triggered by dehydration from sweating and exertion during his 80 minutes of sports. So when you get headaches during exertion or hot weather, first think of *pani* (water), not pain killers.

Another case is of 14-year-old Kirit. To onlookers he seemed to be suffering from a fit when he fainted one evening at 9.00 p.m. after playing cricket with friends from 5.00 p.m. till 7.00 p.m. in the hot Indian summer.

The emergency physician, suspecting hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar), gave him intravenous glucose solution, advised him to eat more frequently and discharged him. But Kirit’s father still feared that Kirit might have epilepsy. Therefore he got Kirit’s EEG done by a neurologist. The result was normal and the neurologist told the parents not to worry about epilepsy. An astute relative, who was a health care professional, later questioned Kirit about his water intake that afternoon. He concluded that Kirit’s fainting episode was probably not due to low blood sugar but fainting resulting from only dehydration since Kirit had not drunk any water all afternoon. He



advised Kirit’s parents not to fear about diabetes nor epilepsy and that he did not need frequent meals but to actively drink water when playing games in temperatures hovering around 42°C. This was six years ago. Since then Kirit has not fainted once, as he drinks plenty of water while playing and afterwards as well.

There may be many such Tushars, Kirits and Nareshs suffering from disorders which can be resolved by simply drinking more plain water. Others who drink sodas, tea, coffee, colas and sports drinks are also inviting dehydration for the simple reason that they contain caffeine. Caffeine is a known diuretic – that which induces urination. Drinking the above beverages leads to more dehydration. They are not an alternative to plain water.

### TIME FOR WATER

Theoretically, in the pie-chart above, a child has 16 hours to drink water, indicated by the yellow and blue segments. However, if the child avoids drinking water during school time, only eight hours remain. If one follows Dr Fereydoon’s advice to avoid water 30 minutes before a meal and to start two hours after a meal (assuming one has only one main meal), then this further cuts the time by three hours, leaving only five hours in which to drink at least 8 glasses. This is not feasible for children, assuming they are fully aware of the benefits of water. Therefore children should be urged to drink plain water during school time to space out the total daily intake during the 16 hours that they are awake. This would work out to an average of one glass every two hours. Similarly, adults should adjust their own greater intake more frequently during the 16 hours.

## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

**India:** Whether children attend school in the mornings or afternoons, their usual morning schedule is to have tea or milk during breakfast. From then till midday, they hardly drink any water. The exception is of children of parents who are educated, who usually instruct them to drink some water, but usually still not enough, until midday.

Those who return home from school in the afternoon at about 2.00 p.m., then have lunch. Then they go off to play until about 4.00 p.m. This is the first occasion when the child himself drinks water, induced by thirst from playing. Then in the evening after returning from tuition, the child sits down to have dinner, which often includes milk. Then after some reading or play, the child goes to sleep, without water. Therefore the total water intake only amounts to about six glasses! Only during the three to four summer months does their intake increase. Yet, it may not be enough. The colour of urine is the only indicator of the level of hydration.

**Abroad:** School time is usually from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. in both primary and secondary (high) schools. The case here is worse than in India! A child's morning schedule usually starts with a hurried breakfast of milk and cereal, with some orange juice at the end. Once at school, kids hardly drink any fluid until lunch which consists of sandwiches, chocolate bars, and either milk, fruit drink or soda. During break time, some may have a fruit drink or soda again, but rarely water. On arriving home at about 4.30 p.m., the child will have a snack with tea, milk or fruit flavoured drink. Then the traditional dinner at about 8.00 p.m. when the child may have more milk, juice or soda! At about 10.30 p.m., the child goes to bed usually without drinking water!

A 48-year-old Gujarati parent who attended school during the 70s in the UK, revealed that his school schedule was similar to his son's, perhaps with less soda then. "I couldn't afford it every day. But I remember that my Hindu friends and

I hardly drank any plain water at school because the water taps in school were *juthā* – lipped by others. They didn't keep glasses as they do in India. And I did suffer from headaches quite often! Parents or teachers never advised us about drinking water. We kids never gave it a thought. Not one of us lugged a water bottle in our already heavy school bags".

In the US, the story is a nightmare. According to Eric Schlosser in his *Chew On This*, "43% of elementary schools, 74% of middle schools and 98% of high schools have soda machines, candy machines...." Many teenage boys drink five or more cans of soda a day. Each can contains the equivalent of about 10 teaspoons of sugar. Soda drunk by teenage girls had tripled since 1978, to about 17 ounces a day. A study in Massachusetts revealed that 9th and 10th grade girls who drank soda were more prone to osteoporosis, which results in bones breaking easily, than girls who didn't drink any. Worse still is that 20% of American children aged one to two, drink soda every day!

The average adult drinks about 52 gallons of soda annually! So one wonders who does drink plain water in the US? Even in remote Alaska, Eskimo children have begun to guzzle down soda instead of water. A dentist there reports that, as a result, many such teenagers lose their permanent teeth before they are sixteen (Schlosser 2006:138,143,148,221).

According to Dr Fereydoon, the author of *Your Body's Many Cries for Water*, cited in the previous article, when children drink sodas, "they become vulnerable to the addictive properties of caffeine-containing beverages." This will, in some children, induce them to use harder addictive drugs later in school or college. His advice to drink plenty of plain water is so simple that there is a tendency to brush it aside lightly. However those who have sincerely followed it have experienced surprisingly beneficial effects. In his second book, *ABC of Asthma, Allergies & Lupus*, he



has published letters from even physicians. One of them, Dr Cherry Brown-Christopher, MD, reported that her eight-year-old son was cured of asthma and allergic rhinitis just by taking water as advised by Dr Fereydoon. His method was cited in the March issue. In his third book, *How to Deal with Back Pain & Rheumatoid Joint Pain*, he again stresses the importance of water in relieving such pain including sciatic pain, without the need for analgesics. His method turns conventional medicine on its head.

### TEN-POINT GUIDELINES

Parents have to become proactive and at times be firm in their children's diet habits. The following points should be helpful:

1. As far as water is concerned, you should inform your children about the benefits of water and the disadvantages of artificially flavoured fruit drinks and sodas.

2. You should also keep water available in the kitchen for children to drink between meals and snacks.

3. Do not allow them to drink the above beverages (in point 1) between meals and snacks.

4. Charity begins at home. So if you are also guzzling sodas at home in sight of your children, then you should stop this first. Kids being smart, will not accept your advice if you do not practice what you preach.

5. Before they leave for school, rather than checking their school bag, ask them whether they have put a bottle of water in it.

6. When kids return home from school, if a parent is at home, he/she should always ask them when they last drank water. If necessary, advise them to drink water first and have a snack after half an hour.

7. Initially, prepare the lunch box together with your child. Guide him/her about healthy foods which are also exciting. Eventually, let children prepare their own lunch boxes, provided you cook or prepare a traditional item for them every day or alternate day. White bread sandwiches and commercial energy bars are poor choices because the former has no fibre

and the latter may have one or more ingredients which contain MSG – Monosodium Glutamate. This is an excitotoxin which can cause many side effects (Blaylock 1997). A healthy, satiating home-made lunch will prevent them consuming sodas or artificially flavoured drinks with junk food. These drinks either contain aspartame or HFCS – high fructose corn syrup – which have their own drawbacks. The makers of aspartame admit on their website [www.nutrasweet.com](http://www.nutrasweet.com) that, "it breaks down in the body to produce methanol and formaldehyde." This is hazardous for the liver, other organs and has been linked to the impairment of the central nervous system (Erb 2003:107). As for fructose in HFCS see point 9.

8. Teach kids to become 'advert' smart. All foods and drinks advertised on TV may not be healthy, as claimed. For example, most sports drinks contain a high amount of caffeine. Being a diuretic, it increases water loss through frequent urination.

9. Just cutting down the intake of sodas and other sweet beverages and increasing water intake will improve the future health of your children by lessening their chances of developing metabolic syndrome. This is a group of the following disorders caused by fructose (component of sugar): abdominal obesity, high triglycerides, low HDL cholesterol, high blood pressure and high blood glucose (due to insulin resistance). Dr Richard Johnson (MD) states this in his best seller *The Sugar Fix* (2009:57-60).

10. Eating meals together with the family, especially breakfast and dinner, has several advantages. It will make you aware of your child's eating habits. This will help you early on to remove his/her bad habits, such as drinking sodas or artificial fruit drinks during meals. This is supported by a study which found that the number of family meals eaten together predicted how well a teenager was faring in studies, and dealing with peers, substance abuse and depression (Berg 2004:285). Pramukh Swami Maharaj has always advocated *samuh bhojan* for householders to strengthen familial harmony and spirituality.

## ICED, CHILLED, TAP OR WARM?

Drinking chilled water during or after meals will tend to solidify oils and fats in the food churning in the stomach, forming sludge. This slows down digestion. The sludge then floats on top of the food. The acid and enzymes break this down and this is absorbed faster in the intestine than the solid food. Some experts believe that this coats the inner lining of the intestine. This turns into fat and leads to cancer. Hence, there may be some wisdom in traditional Gujarati cuisine to drink warm *dāl* or *kadhi* after a meal.

Chilled drinks with meals also lowers the temperature of the stomach and dilutes its acidic contents. Digestive enzymes in the stomach function best at body temperature and pH1. This is the pH of the strong hydrochloric acid which the stomach produces. More fluids such as sodas and juices dilute the acid and increase the pH. Result? Poor digestion. In Ayurveda this is known as *mandagni* – dampening of the digestive fire. This leads to a host of gut disorders and illnesses in the body. In his *Ashtanghrudaya* (Nidansthan 12.1), Vagbhattach Rishi (c. 5th century CE) writes, “*Rogāhā sarve-pi mandegnau.*” Meaning, “All diseases arise from the dampening of the digestive fire.”

In illness, Ayurveda advises drinking boiled water cooled to room temperature. Two parts are boiled off from five parts. This water becomes very therapeutic and removes *aam* – the sticky toxin that clogs the body’s tissues. In winter, Ayurveda advises drinking warm water with ginger powder (*sunth*) – about half a teaspoon in one litre of water stored in a vacuum flask. Drinking this water keeps the digestive fire strong and helps prevent mucus disorders such as colds, rhinitis, sinusitis, asthma, etc.

## CONCLUSION

Besides the disorders cited in the two articles, more and more parents abroad are suspecting that their children suffer from ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Some medical researchers, such as Dr Johnson have recently proposed a new finding, that this is due to the combined effect of caffeine – a stimulant – in sweet beverages, as well as uric acid formed after intake of fructose. Uric acid is chemically similar to caffeine and is a stimulant. According to Dr Johnson, studies show that hyperactive children tend to have high uric acid (2009:85). Hence ADHD can also lead to lower grades, inferiority complex and mood swings, which in turn can lead to depression and bingeing and subsequently obesity.

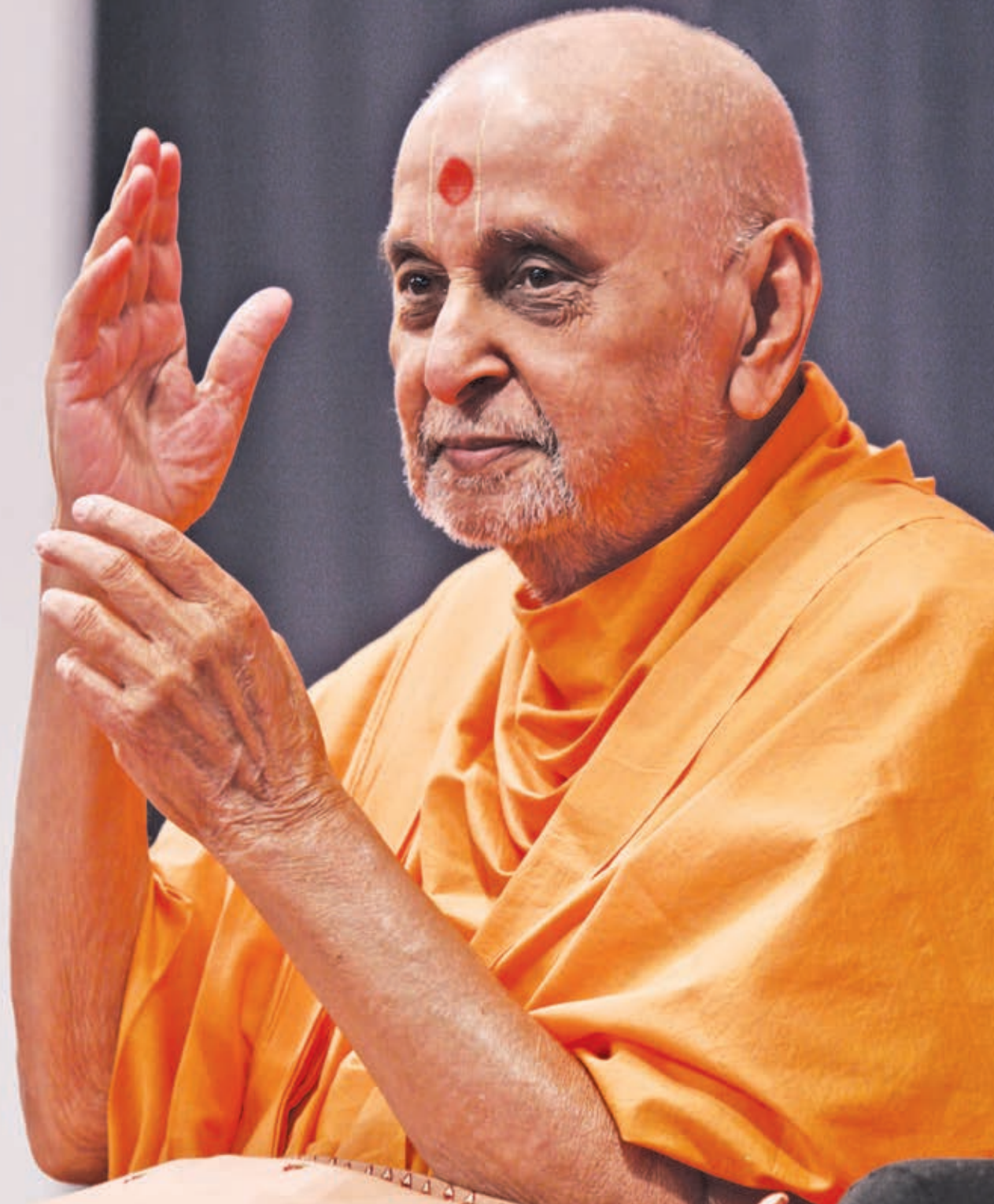
That which affects the mind affects one’s *adhyatma* – spirituality. Hence, there may be more truth in the Bhavaprakash Sutra, “Water is life to creatures”, than the enticing modern *sutra* in adverts proclaiming, “Cola is cool”. The bottom line? Your children may only need to drink more plain tap water to save them from the many ills of modern fast-paced lifestyles.

**Answer:** (1) b , (2) a and c (3) c. The best and healthiest beverage in the world is plain water.

### Source refs.:

- *Ashtanghrudaya* of Vagbhattach Rishi.
- *Chew On This* by Eric Schlosser & Charles Wilson, 2006.
- *Underage & Overweight – America’s Childhood Obesity Crisis* by Frances Berg, 2004.
- *Your Body’s Many Cries for Water*, 1992, *ABC of Asthma, Allergies & Lupus*, 2000, *How to deal with Back Pain & Rheumatoid Joint Pain*, 1991 by Dr Fereydoon Batmanghelidj.
- *The Sugar Fix* by Richard Johnson M.D., 2009.
- *Excitotoxins – The Taste That Kills* by Russell Blaylock, MD, 1997.
- *The Slow Poisoning of America* by John & Michelle Erb, 2003
- Special thanks to Dr Mehul Trivedi (MD) & Hitesh Chauhan (Bio-statistician), who evaluated the children’s survey results & thanks to the BAPS children, Ahmedabad, who participated in the survey. ◆





Swamishri in a satsang assembly, Atladra, 2 March 2011

# PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN

9 - 28 February & March 2011  
Atladra (Vadodara), Godhra, Bodeli, Sarangpur

## FEBRUARY & MARCH

9-28: Atladra

1-10: Atladra

1-10: Atladra, Godhra

12-15: Godhra, Bodeli

16: Bodeli, Sarangpur

16: Sarangpur

## FEBRUARY

### 13, Sunday, Atladra; APC Annual Day

At 6.15 p.m. Swamishri arrived in the assembly for the Annual Day programme held by students of Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya (APC). The main highlights were a skit on the theme "What is APC?" and a drama scripted by Yogendra Swami, "Champion of the Champions". In conclusion Swamishri blessed the satsang assembly, "I congratulate the students of BAPS Chhatralaya for their presentations. It is necessary to attain position in our career and life, but the real goal is to attain *moksha* for one's *atma*. Yogiji Maharaj has shown to us about how to experience peace in one's *atma*. He used to say that satsang is the college for *brahmavidya*. As students you should sincerely study, but also remain steadfast in *niyams* and *upasana*. Today, the social atmosphere pervades with entertainment and other things. You should not waste your money and time in entertainment and other shows. We find students slipping into eating meat and getting mired in addictions. To keep oneself away from all these influences we have this hostel (Chhatralaya). One should never forget that whatever one does should be done to please God."

### 16, Atladra

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha*

rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Tuver (Poshina region), and Bapunagar in Ahmedabad (*murtis* of Ghanshyam Maharaj and Guru Parampara).

### 18, Atladra

On the previous day Bob Kaplan, former Solicitor General of Canada, met Swamishri and offered his respects and deep gratitude. Today, after Swamishri's morning puja, Bob Kaplan addressed the gathering of devotees.

"I am very very happy to be here today. I feel today that I am celebrating a friendship, a very respectful friendship, that I have had with Swamiji for well over 30 years.

"And I have no reservation in saying that the most powerful institution of the community and of the larger community in the city of Toronto is the Swaminarayan faith and the personal inspiration of Swamiji.

"So this is a public reason for me wanting to celebrate with you today. But in addition to the public reason that I have for wanting to celebrate with you today, I have a deep personal reason for wanting to be here among you today.

"Last July I found out that I was suffering from an extreme version of lung cancer with a melanoma on my right lung. I went to the best hospital in the world in New York city, and I was told of the very serious risks that I would be facing while undergoing medical treatment. They told me that with cancer the remedies are sometimes worse and more serious than the disease.

"I informed my friends in the Indian community and I informed Swamiji about this terrible development.

"The story has a happy ending so far,



because the hospital told me a month ago that the cancer on my lung had disappeared. The effects of the treatment that I received have not yet disappeared. But I am recovering from those effects. And I believe profoundly that the prayers and the good wishes that have come to me have been a powerful part of my cure.

“And for all of you who have prayed and for Swamiji in particular, I want to thank you for your prayers and your support that have sustained me.

“So for public reasons which I mentioned and for private reasons which I have also mentioned, I am sure that you understand the powerful meaning that today has for me... and the great pleasure that I feel in enjoying the welcome that I have received.

“Thank you very much.”

## 27, Sunday, Atladra; Kishore Din

On Saturday 26, the Women’s Day programme was held in the assembly hall.

This evening, Swamishri attended the Sunday satsang assembly. The Kishore Din programme included a traditional dance by *kishores*. Thereafter a drama, ‘Upkar’, was enacted by *kishores*. Finally Swamishri blessed the assembly.

## MARCH

### 12, Saturday, Godhra, Bodeli

At the designated auspicious time of 8.38 a.m. Swamishri began performing the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the BAPS *shikharbaddh* mandir in Godhra. The senior sadhus also performed the rituals, Pujya Mahant Swami (Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj), Pujya Kothari Swami (Ghanshyam Maharaj), Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami (Harikrishna Maharaj and Radha-Krishna Dev), Pujya Dr Swami (Nilkanth Varni), Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami (Shiv-parivar) and Pujya Acharya Swami (Ram-parivar).

Swamishri also performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Galibili

(Kharod), Damavav (Devgadhi-Bariya region), Antarsumba (Limkheda region), Uchvaniya (Dohad region) and Agavada (Dahod region).

Thereafter Swamishri blessed the *pratishtha* assembly and left for Bodeli. At 4.00 p.m. Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals while the senior sadhus performed *pujan* of *murtis*. In conclusion Swamishri and the senior sadhus performed *arti*. Swamishri then performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Kukshi (Madhya Pradesh) and Bharthi villages. (Details in *Swaminarayan Bliss*, April-May 2011).

### 16, Wednesday, Bodeli, Sarangpur

Swamishri left Bodeli at 10.05 a.m. by helicopter and arrived in Sarangpur at 11.00 a.m.

### 20, Sunday, Sarangpur; Pushpadolotsav

Swamishri celebrated the Pushpadolotsav (Festival of Colours) in the evening on the mandir grounds. (Details in *Swaminarayan Bliss*, April-May 2011.)

### 24, Thursday, Sarangpur

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* of *murtis* for BAPS mandirs in Leicester (UK), Tzaneen (South Africa), Cape Town (South Africa), Arusha (Tanzania) and Tanga (Tanzania).

### 25, Friday

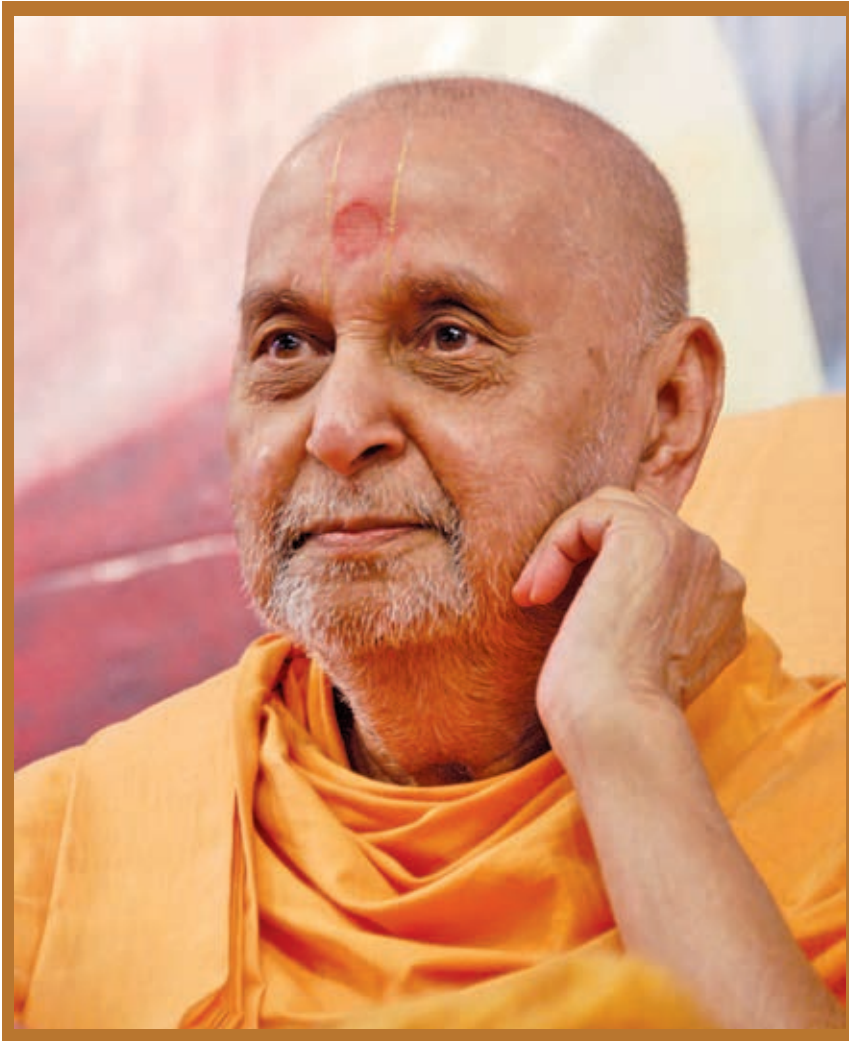
Swamishri gave *parshad diksha* to 23 youths. (Details in *Swaminarayan Bliss*, April-May 2011.)

### 31, Thursday, Sarangpur

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *pujan* of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Ankleshwar GIDC, Ghoghamba and Agavada. ◆

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

Translation: Sadhu Vivekivandas



## LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

February-March 2011

### UNREMITTING FAITH

11 February, Atladra (Vadodara)

An aged devotee came to meet Swamishri. He was being harassed by a *bhuvoo* or tantrist, who told him to give up his faith for Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Swamishri, and accept his refuge. The devotee had refused and challenged him to try whatever tantric practices he wished upon him. For the past 35 years the tantric had been chanting incantations and trying all means to make him unhappy. The unrelenting devotee was facing some of the tantrist's antics. He

described that sometimes, while walking on the streets, he would experience the pressure of an unknown hand on his shoulder and hear a voice say, "Still you do not accept!"

Today the 75-year-old devotee broke down crying before Swamishri and prayed, "My brothers have accepted the *bhuvoo's* refuge, and they are happy. I am alive because of you. Please bless me."

Swamishri was pleased with the devotee's unremitting faith. He blessed him and his son and chanted *dhun* for his happiness.



## INTEGRITY GIVES PEACE

11 February, Atladra (Vadodara)

Shri Rakeshbhai Asthana, Police Commissioner of Vadodara, paid his respects to Swamishri. He has sought Swamishri's blessings on several occasions before. Swamishri praised, "You render your duties with integrity. You have no intention of doing anything bad to anyone so things turn out well for you. You offer selfless services and do your duties for the country with honesty. That is why God and his blessings are with you."

Rakeshbhai was overwhelmed with peace and joy. He opined, "I feel very peaceful and satisfied after talking to you. My work entails a lot of tension."

Swamishri reiterated, "God is with you because you do your duty for the country selflessly. If there is any selfish motive one cannot dispense one's duties properly. Only one who is selfless can serve with integrity."

Rakeshbhai enquired, "I cannot understand why I feel peaceful in meeting you."

Swamishri revealed, "Because you do your duties with honesty and character."

## METICULOUS CARE

4 March, Atladra (Vadodara)

Swamishri was on his way to perform his morning puja. On seeing Dr V.C. Patel, former mayor of Vadodara, Swamishri asked him, "Are you going to meet me later?" Dr Patel said, "Yes".

Swamishri then instructed Kothari Bhagyasetu Swami, "Make an arrangement for a car to bring him to the assembly hall [for the puja]. Assign a youth to take care of him. After puja tell the youth to bring him upstairs to the meeting hall to see me."

On many such occasions Swamishri, knowing fully well that a guest or an aged devotee could get lost or jostled in a huge gathering, has taken meticulous care.

## NO COPROMISE IN NIYAMS

24 March, Sarangpur

A *satsangi* youth became engaged to a non-*satsangi* girl. The girl gradually started practicing a few rules and traditions of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. But the girl declared her wish to have biscuits containing eggs in the ingredients served on their wedding day. In spite of explaining to her that it would not be right, she remained resolute. She said that it was her long cherished wish to do so on that day.

The youth came to Swamishri with the issue. Sympathizing with her he told Swamishri, "To make her inclined towards satsang and not displease her, I feel that I should fulfil her wish."

Swamishri interjected, "If she is displeased then let her be so, but you should not compromise on our *niyams*. One should never take meat [or eggs]. The girl has given up eating onions and garlic on your word, then where is the problem in giving this up too?"

The youth argued, "I feel if I allow her to do this, rather than refuse her, then there will be no further hitches for her in accepting satsang."

Swamishri replied categorically, "You feel the need to marry her, then does she not also feel the same for you? You pressured your parents to allow you to marry her and thus fulfil her wish. Then can't she agree with you in this matter? You must tell her that they [biscuits with eggs] cannot be served. I will pray that God inspires her mind to give up her resolve. Is it proper to eat in this manner [by breaking rules] or to follow the disciplines of Satsang? God is pleased when one abides by his moral rules."

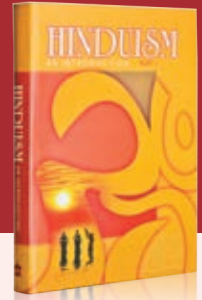
The youth left with a resolve to follow the satsang disciplines. ◆

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

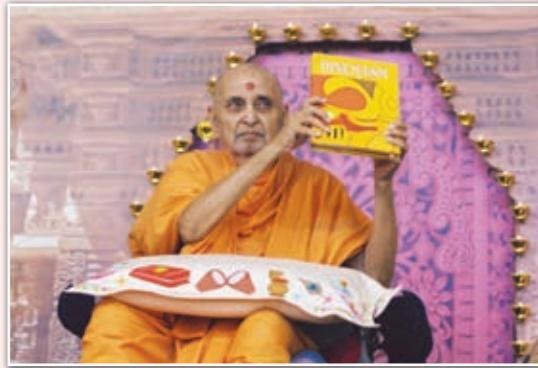
Translation: Sadhu Vivekjiandas

# HINDUISM

## AN INTRODUCTION



### REVIEWS



*Hinduism, An Introduction*, published by Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Ahmedabad, is an excellent primary source of information on the history, traditions, philosophies, festivals, deities, devotees and many other aspects of Hinduism.

The book is in two volumes, with a combined total of 712 pages and 748 photographs.

The publication was inaugurated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Gondal on Diwali (5 November 2010). Since then several revered spiritual leaders and distinguished scholars, judges, doctors, scientists and other public figures have reviewed the book and kindly sent their opinions.

With deep appreciation for their reviews, we wish to share them with our readers. In this third instalment we share the reviews of two of the many illustrious dignitaries.

### Dr A.P.J Abdul Kalam

Former President of India

I have studied *Hinduism – An Introduction* by Sadhu Vivekjiandas. It is indeed well written with beautiful thoughts and adorned with beautiful photographs. The book explains Hinduism as Sanatana Dharma, the eternal law by its adherents. The book is a beautiful contribution and full of well-articulated thoughts. Hinduism is indeed a natural religion.

The book introduces in a clear-cut manner the large body of Hindu canon, divided into revealed (Sruti) and remembered (Smriti) texts. These texts discuss theology, philosophy and mythology, and provide information on the practice of religious living (dharma). Among these texts, the Vedas are the foremost in authority, importance and antiquity. Other major scriptures include the



Upanishads, Puranas and the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana.

The book explains daily morality, based on the notion of Karma, effects of all deeds actively

shaping past, present, and future experiences. Bhagavad Gita is of great synthesis for human dream, synthesis in succeeding for peace and happiness of life.

## R.C. Lahoti

Former Chief Justice of India

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Hinduism is one of the great religions of the world and certainly the most ancient one. Historians believe it to be 4000-5000 years old; the Hindu belief is that Hinduism is *sanatana* (eternal) – that it was born even before the universe was created or life came into existence. Hinduism is believed to be timeless and imperishable.

Religion is a phenomenon that is surrounded by complexities. It is difficult to conceptualise and define in words what religion is; it is more a matter of faith rather than of intellectual analysis. No wonder those who indulge into finding conceptual core of religion by applying scientific methods often fail in their adventure (or misadventure). And yet, the Great Masters – our rishis and *sanyasis* – are confident of Hinduism having firm scientific footings. Hinduism gets dyed in mysticism.

Those who have lived in and practised Hinduism, have felt convinced that shorn of embellishments which have unscrupulously entered into Hinduism for well known historical reasons and by introduction of certain practices therein which it does not permit, the Hinduism as commonly projected today is not what it is in its purest form. There are many a misgiving about Hinduism. That is why, in these days, to understand Hinduism needs a deeper study and understanding, something akin to reinventing Hinduism.

These two volumes on Hinduism are a benign presentation of research – intensive and extensive, both – by Sadhu Vivekjiandas, his team, his associates and his guide, all blessed by Shri Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj.

To one who believes in Hinduism, this book would elevate the belief to faith, enabled by a better understanding of the subject. To one who is inquisitive about Hinduism, or, is on a journey for searching the souls of several religions on earth, the book would quench one's thirst for knowledge to the extent of Hinduism. Turning over the pages of the book leads one into introspection of self on tenets of Hinduism. Systematic and scholarly presentation of the subject – *Hinduism* – in two volumes, is so engrossing that the reader is switched off from outside pressures and distractions; the vision gradually gains clarity by cobwebs of confusion created by conflicting opinions being removed; and, the reader finds himself into an ocean of quietness with a sense of spirituality setting in, descending from the Supreme.

Swaminarayan Aksharpith has done a great service to the humanity and also attempted at partially repaying its debt to Hinduism by publishing these volumes – attractively printed, beautifully illustrated and well bound. I commend reading of these volumes to every man of faith, be it of any religion, to all seekers of spiritual attainment, and, also to those who derive pleasure from digging into historic events or from floating in mysticism. ♦

## KISHORE CONVENTIONS

April-May 2011, Gujarat

During the summer vacation, a total of over 6,800 *kishores* from throughout Gujarat and Mumbai gathered to participate in the one-day Kishore Conventions held at 47 centres. The

day-long programmes of fun-filled activities provided an opportunity for the youths to relax after their annual school and college exams and also to learn about satsang. ♦

## ANNUAL REGIONAL KISHORE-KISHORI SHIBIRS

THEME: 'YUVANO JAGO'

April-May 2011

During the summer vacation in Gujarat, *kishores* and *kishoris* from throughout the state participated in the various regional shibirs. Based on the theme 'Yuvano Jago', the topics presented included Hindu Dharma, Kusang, Niyam-Dharma, Education, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Puja, Asmita and others. Through speeches by senior and experienced sadhus, question-answer sessions, workshops, audio-visual presentations

and interactive activities, the youngsters received valuable guidance on how to best mold their lives and create a platform for future progress, peace and success. Over 4,100 *kishores* and *kishoris* from Vadodara, Bharuch, Ankleshwar, Nadiad, Anand (Rural), Ahmedabad, Mehsana and Himmatnagar regions participated in the four *shibirs* held at Sarangpur, Ahmedabad and Bochasan. ♦

## KISHORE-KISHORI JNANSATRA

11 to 18 May 2011, Sarangpur

Over 425 selected *kishores* and *kishoris* from throughout Gujarat and Mumbai participated in an intensive 8-day satsang training camp from 11 to 18 May 2011 at BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Sarangpur in the presence of Pujya Dr Swami.

The camp helped to strengthen satsang in the lives of these youngsters, by focusing on a different theme each day, such as, Upasana, Satpurush, Living for Swamishri, Vachanamrut, Family Unity and Time Management. Inspiring speeches by Dr Swami and other experienced sadhus provided in-depth knowledge and practical guidance. The topics were elaborated upon through audio-visual presentations, discussions and interactive activities.

Every morning, experienced teachers taught

the youths yoga and pranayama (breathing exercises). Training was also provided on public speaking, networking skills and worship rituals, such as, *arti*.

Daily, during the camp, the *kishores* performed physical service by serving food, washing utensils and cleaning washrooms. *Kishoris* served by cutting vegetables and doing general housekeeping.

Organized by the Satsang Activities Central Office, this training camp was a tremendously enjoyable and enlightening experience for the youths. Before departing they resolved to focus on their studies, serve their parents and strengthen their personal practice of satsang. ♦

# BAPS CHARITIES ANNUAL CHALLENGE

10 April 2011, UK

More than 3,500 people across the UK took to the streets and parks from Saturday 9 April 2011 to Sunday 17 April 2011 for the BAPS Charities Annual Challenge to raise funds for older people and other worthy causes.

BAPS Charities, UK, held this year's event in conjunction with the UK's leading charity for people in later life, Age UK (formed by the merger of Age Concern and Help the Aged) as well as several smaller charities around the country. It

brought together members of the community from a wide variety of backgrounds and ages – ranging from three to 97 – to walk, jog or run a distance of 10 kilometres. Over 50 participants took the more challenging option of cycling 30 kilometres around the picturesque setting of King Edward Park in north-west London.

The BAPS Charities Annual Challenge was completed in 16 centres around the UK, many supporting charities at the local level as well. ♦

## SATSANG SHIBIRS

THEME: 'ALLEGIANCE TO ONE'

14 April-8 May 2011, Gujarat & Mumbai

From 14 April to 8 May 2011, 35,500 men and 37,500 women devotees attended the 58 one-day Satsang Shibirs held at 42 venues throughout Gujarat and Mumbai.

Through inspiring and informative speeches by senior, experienced and learned sadhus, as well as audio-visual presentations, question-

answer sessions and skits, the devotees gained a deeper understanding of Bhagwan Swaminarayan as supreme God, Gunatitanand Swami as the form of Mul Akshar, Pramukh Swami Maharaj as the manifest gateway to *moksha* and other important principles of satsang. ♦

## YOUTH CONVENTIONS

THEME: 'SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT'

April-May 2011, Perth, Sydney and Melbourne, Australia

Based on the theme "Spiritual Quotient", Youth Conventions were held at BAPS centres in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne during April and May 2011. Over 650 youths from centres across the country attended the conventions.

The conventions focused on how a career-oriented generation can better channel their time and resources into developing their spiritual quotient. Through interactive presentations

and breakout sessions, youths learnt about an array of topics: positive thinking, power of faith, the role of intelligence and practical aspects of spirituality, such as, daily rituals. A panel discussion based on the true-life incidents of the panelists delivered an inspiring message about faith in God. A group discussion on the story of Eklavya encouraged everyone towards applying positive living principles in their daily lives. ♦

## AN ANNOUNCEMENT

From next month, *Swaminarayan Bliss* will be published as a bi-monthly. The first issue will appear for the months of July-August. Each bi-monthly issue will come to you with a variety of articles for teenagers, youths and others. We hope you will savour the new format and articles.



# DR A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM VISITS BAPS MANDIR

24 April 2011, Chicago, IL, USA



Over 1,500 youths gathered at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Chicago on 24 April 2011 for a Youth Conference titled "Today's Youth, Tomorrow's Leaders" held in the presence of former President of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

In his keynote speech, Dr Kalam inspired the youth to serve their family, their community, their nation and humanity as a whole by working hard in their education and career goals while making sure to selflessly give back to society. He engaged the audience, having them take several oaths, which ensured that the youths present take the necessary steps in creating a better future for all.

He requested everyone to spread literacy and challenged them to teach five people to read.

He talked about his first meeting with Pramukh Swami Maharaj which lasted for over an hour, where they discussed the connectivity of spirituality and scientific development. Dr Kalam said, "What [Pramukh Swami Maharaj] wished to say was that the stronger the spiritual wealth, the stronger will become all the other forms of wealth. Spirituality will help human beings to live happily and peacefully."

State Senator John Millner, State Representative Randy Ramey, and the Mayor of Bartlett, Mr Michael Kelly were also present. ♦

## BAPS CAMPUS SABHA RECEIVES AWARD

19 April 2011, Philadelphia

On 19 April 2011, the BAPS Campus Sabha initiative in the Philadelphia area was awarded "Outstanding Cultural Program of the Year" by the University of the Sciences. Presented by Dr Walter Perry, Associate Dean of Students at the University, the award recognized the efforts of the BAPS Diwali celebration event, "Enligh10ment: A Journey from Darkness to Light", organized by the group on 10 November 2010



in the University. The Diwali event saw over 400 students attend and enjoy the cultural programme as well as one of the largest Annakut presentations prepared by students with over 275 items.

The campus *sabha* initiative, which has become known as "Sabha in the City", has been successfully running for the last seven years with strong participation from local students. ♦

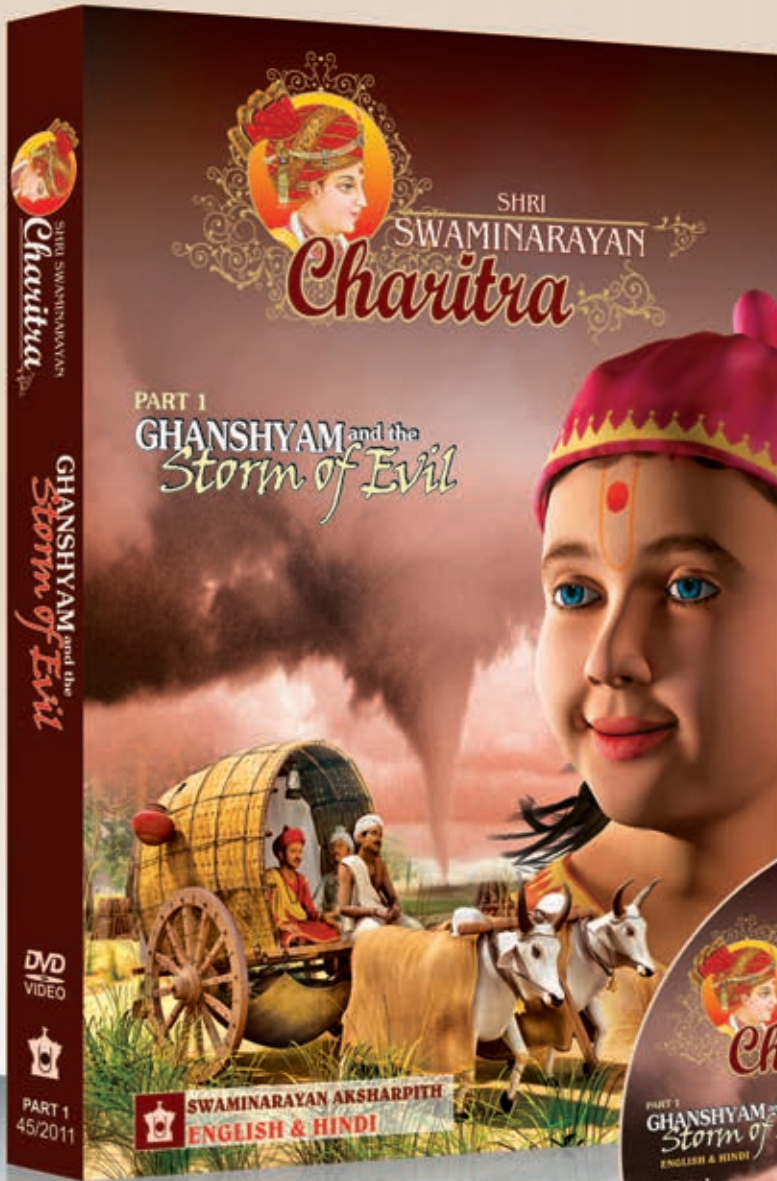




**SWAMISHRI'S VICHARAN**  
**Atladra and Sarangpur, February-March 2011**

In Atladra and Sarangpur, Swamishri performs *pujan* and *arti* of *murtis* for new BAPS *hari mandirs*:  
**1.** For mandir in Tuver (Atladra, 16 February). **2.** For mandir in Leicester, UK (Sarangpur, 24 March). **3.** For mandir in Ankleshwar (Sarangpur, 31 March).





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SOON

Pre-order your copy at your  
nearest BAPS bookstall.

See the trailer on  
[charitra.baps.org](http://charitra.baps.org)



This is the first part of a 3D animation film series on the life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. It takes us to Chhapaiya in North India, where Ghanshyam was born on 2 April 1781. We visit the celebrations in which Markandeya Muni named him Ghanshyam due to his divinity. He was a playful child, and we join him for a game of hide and seek with his friends. But there is danger in the mango orchard where they are playing... the evil Kalidutt wants to kill Ghanshyam, and uses his black magic to cause rain, storm and strong winds that can uproot trees. The other children are frightened, but does Ghanshyam run away? What happens when, fearing the worst, Dharmadev and the other villagers rush to the mango orchard looking for the children?