

SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

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Guru Purnima

18 July 2008, Bochasan

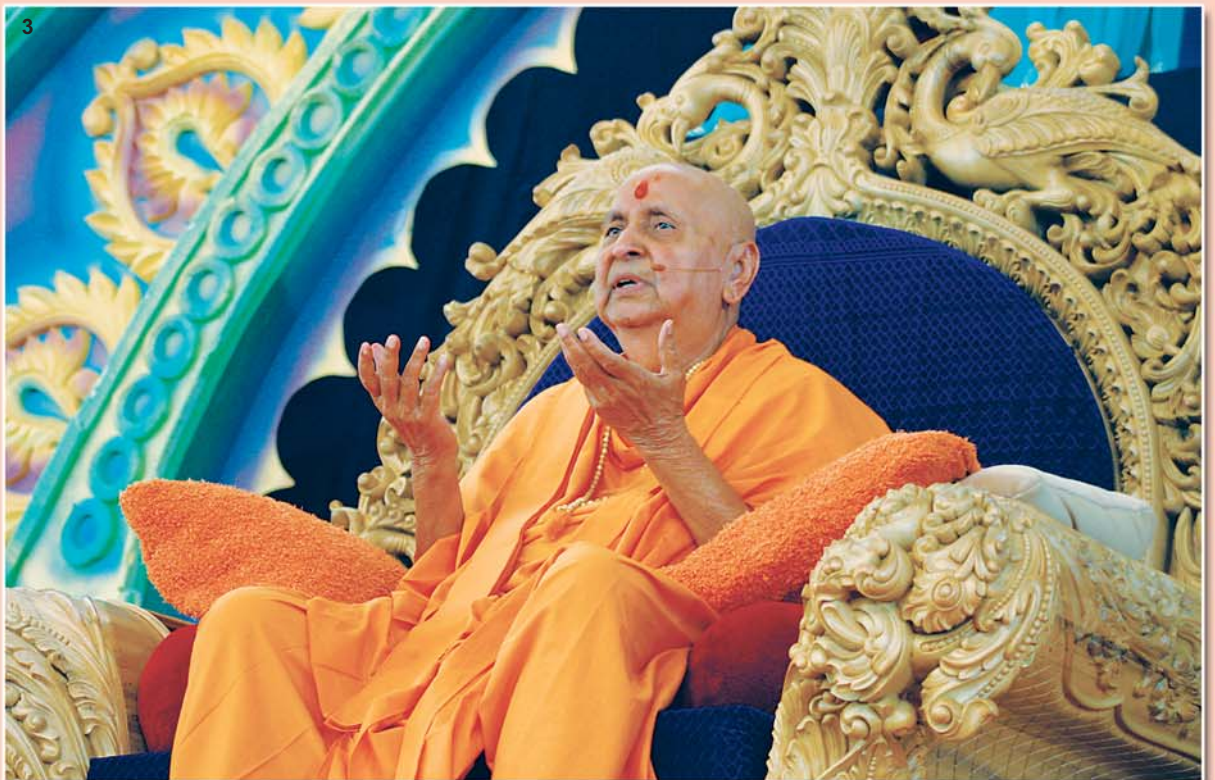
Celebration

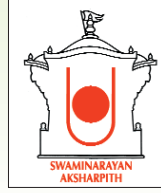


GURU PURNIMA CELEBRATION

18 July 2008, Bochasan

1. Swamishri on stage during the celebration assembly.
2. Devotees go for Thakorji's darshan in the main mandir.
3. Swamishri blesses the assembly of 30,000 devotees.





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August 2008, Vol. 31 No. 8

CONTENTS

1. *Swaminarayan History*
Manki Disappears4
The search for Maharaj's mare...
2. *Discourses*
True Satsang.....7
The path to profound peace...
3. *Great Indian Personalities*
Chandragupta Maurya10
Hero of India...
4. *On Life*
More Praise, Please!.....12
Encourage by appreciating...
5. *Indian History*
"My Favourite Book"14
Chanakya's aphorisms...
6. *BAPS Festival*
Guru Purnima Celebration.....16
7. *Vicharan*
Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Vicharan17
8. *Inspiring Incidents*
Living With Swamishri18
9. *BAPS News*
Rath Yatra Celebration, Sarangpur....20
Rath Yatra Celebration, Kolkata20
Divya Sannidhi Parvas, Bochasan21

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FIRST WORD

Dale Carnegie said that a person who seeks growth "must soak and tan his mind constantly in the vats of literature." Successful people are mostly voracious readers. Out of their curiosity and will to learn "leaders are readers." People generally read dailies, news magazines and novels for information, thrill and joy. But this is mere superficial reading. For inner development and personal growth one needs to read specific books; books that shape one's thoughts, attitudes, manners and behaviours. Reading value-based books and spiritual shastras resolve mental turmoil, give peace of mind and empower one to do good and think correctly. We need to nourish our inner core instead of only informing or entertaining our superficial self. Good books will help one to remain in good stead during turbulent times, by providing forbearance and strength.

The panacea for one's anxieties, self-manufactured problems and irrepressible thoughts lies to some extent in quality reading. Reading the Upanishads, Bhagvad Gita, Ramayan, Mahabharat, Shrimad Bhagvatam, Vachanamrut and the biographies and teachings of great people enrich one's thoughts and life with truth, happiness and the power to transcend the bondage of life.

When Arthur Schopenhauer, the German philosopher, read the Upanishads, he commented, "In the realm of knowledge there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been a solace in my life and will remain a solace after my death."



Manki Disappears

Shri Hari wished to leave Devadiya early next morning. Keshaba prayed that he take lunch before going. Maharaj refused. That night Manki, the mare, disappeared. Shri Hari told all to look for her..

“**M**aharaj, it is disgraceful and absurd that Manki has disappeared from our *darbar*! We will be put to shame. People will blame us forever,” Keshaba spoke as if she was overwhelmed by the tragedy.

“Yes, people will blame you and say that Manki disappeared from Keshaba’s *darbar*. Manki always neighs when anyone approaches or touches her. But this time she went away without making a sound!,” Maharaj said with surprise.

Keshaba simply laughed in her mind. After some time Jalamsinh Bapu, a footprint expert and others returned. The *pagi* informed, “Maharaj, I could not trace a single footprint of Manki’s.”

Shri Hari humorously replied, “Then did Manki grow wings and take flight! Look, some time ago Laduba and Jivuba put me to shame. Minbai of Kariyani had also put me to shame and today Keshaba is on the verge of putting me to shame.”

“Maharaj, it is God who maintains the pride and prestige of his devotees. And that is why he performs such mysterious *lila*,” Keshaba replied humbly.



A little while later, Dhyandas, a renunciant, who lived in the *hari* mandir, arrived. He announced to Maharaj, “Keshaba has said that if Maharaj agreed to leave after taking lunch then she would find Manki.”

Shriji Maharaj turned to Bapu and asked, “Bapu, where is Manki?”

Jalamsinh Bapu said, “Maharaj, I know Manki. The moment she hears your voice or gets separated from you she would neigh. If she is here then call her. I will take you around my house.”

Maharaj called out several times to Manki, but there was no response. Shri Hari told Keshaba, “I will leave after having lunch, but bring Manki to me.” Instantly, Manki neighed. Shri Hari smiled and said it was Manki’s voice.

“Come with me,” Keshaba told Maharaj. Shri Hari followed her. She opened the door of the room next to hers. Manki neighed and jumped

happily on seeing Maharaj. Shri Hari gently stroked her and said, "Why didn't you say anything uptil now? Was it that Keshaba had made you her sister?"

Tears streamed down from Keshaba's eyes. Choked with emotion, she added, "Maharaj, just as you are *bhaktavatsal* (one who loves his devotees) likewise Manki is also *bhaktavatsal*. She upheld my pride and prestige today."

"Keshaba, Manki is a *mukta* (a great soul). She understands the language of love," Shri Hari praised. Then he impatiently added, "Come now, bring my lunch quickly. Don't delay any more."

Shri Hari and his entourage took lunch, and after fulfilling the devotional love of Keshaba and Jalamsinh Bapu they left. Maharaj travelled to Macchiyav via Daduka. Here, Shri Hari stayed at Bapubhai's house. He called Dada Khachar and Ladha Thakkar and told them, "Shortly, I shall not stay in Satsang anymore. If you have anything to ask, you can do so."

Ladha Thakkar responded, "Maharaj, our minds are simply numbed by your resolve. Your desire to leave Satsang will cause disgrace and shame upon us. You have called the senior sadhus at Adraj. After taking their permission you can do as you wish."

Shri Hari noticed the turmoil in their minds. Then Maharaj called the *parshads*, "Go to Karjisan and give news that I am coming. Tell them that I wish to stay there secretly. I will stay at the house of Nanabhai, the Brahmin. I don't want anyone else to be there. And make sure that no one in the village comes to know of my presence."

Maharaj told Shukmuni, "Write a letter to Nityanand Swami, Chaitanyanand Swami and others to come to Karjisan."

"But you wish to stay there alone and secretly!" Shukmuni exclaimed.

"I want to discuss with them alone," Maharaj replied.

Maharaj travelled to Vadu, and then to Karjisan. Only Nanabhai was informed of his arrival. Maharaj stayed in a room at his farm. The farm partly belonged to his brother, Govindbhai. Maharaj enquired about him. Nanabhai said, "He has gone to the villages to spread Satsang. He will come to Adraj."

The sadhus accompanying Maharaj had put up on the outskirts of Karjisan. Whenever anyone enquired of Maharaj's presence they would reply that he was on his way to Adraj.

When Nityanand Swami, Chaitanyanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami and others came they garlanded Maharaj. Shri Hari sat with Nityanand Swami and Brahmanand Swami and said, "Soon, I shall no longer stay in Satsang. I am saddened because no one respects each other in Satsang. They consider each other as peers."

"Maharaj, Muktanand Swami is the senior-most sadhu. After speaking to him let him decide." Shri Hari remained silent. Only two to three days remained for Diwali. Maharaj said, "Let us all leave for Adraj now." Nanabhai asked, "Will you come here on your way back?"

"It depends on what happens later," Maharaj replied. Shri Hari and his whole group departed for Adraj.

Ratu Khant, a devotee of Adraj, came to receive Shri Hari at Karjisan. On arriving in Adraj, the local devotees gave a festive welcome to Maharaj. Shri Hari was led to the house of Ratu Khant, where he was to stay. Maharaj asked, "For how many days will you keep us?" Ratu Khant's mother, Sujanba, and sister, Havanba, replied, "You can go after we spend

*Chunthaji Khant, of the fourth generation after Ratu Khant, revealed that prior to Maharaj's arrival Ratu Khant was ploughing his farm. To his surprise he found a treasure chest full of gold coins and rupees. With this his mother and sister told Ratu, "Now there is no need for you to worry. Till now we did not have enough wealth to take care of Maharaj's needs and entourage. But now, with this newly found wealth sent by Shri Hari himself, do not send Maharaj away till it has been entirely used for him and the accompanying sadhus and devotees."

all our wealth on you.”* Shri Hari was pleased with her kind words and devotion.

The next day Muktanand Swami came with his group of sadhus and devotees from Vadorada. Devotees from as far as Kutch had also arrived. Since Maharaj had decided to leave the Satsang fellowship devotees streamed into Adraj from all directions. They camped on the village outskirts beneath the shade of trees and in fields. For all the arrangements Ratu Khant got the support and help of Govindbhai Patel and Nanabhai Vipra of Karjisan and other devotees from Vadu. The venue for the assembly was arranged beneath the shade of tamarind trees.

The food items for the *annakut* were prepared in advance by Sujanba, Havanba and the women devotees of Dangarva, Karjisan, Vadu and other neighbouring villages. Brahmin cooks prepared meals for all devotees.

The *annakut* items were arranged before Thakorji and offered with devotion and festivity. Then Maharaj performed the *annakut arti*. During *arti* Maharaj was also seen addressing the congregation in the assembly. When some devotees in the assembly heard that Maharaj was performing *arti*, they ran to see whether it was true. And those who were in *arti* ran to see whether Maharaj was really discoursing to the devotees. For a short while they saw Maharaj in two forms. After *arti* Maharaj sat down to have lunch. The sadhus, too, sat down elsewhere to have lunch, some of whom had pledged to eat only if Maharaj served them. Instantly, Maharaj came to serve the sadhus. Some were curious as to how he could have come to serve when he had just sat down to have his lunch. So they went to see, and they saw Maharaj was also having lunch. Everyone was amazed and happy at the miracle. They all felt that Maharaj’s sadness had lifted, at least for a while. Shri Hari served food to all again and again in many forms. In this way Maharaj lifted the pall of gloom among the sadhus and devotees.

The next day Maharaj addressed all, “Stay

here for two days. Ratuji wishes that all of you stay till he expends his wealth. But I do not wish him to exhaust his wealth. I shall permit you to go after two days.”

Shri Hari then told the sadhus to sing bhajans in the *garbi* style and to play *ras*. The local Patels decided to show Maharaj a game. They let lamps afloat in water and tried to pierce the lighted wicks by firing arrows. But none of them were successful. Shri Hari called Bhaguji and said, “You are a marksman. Pierce the lighted wick. Immediately, Bhaguji released an arrow and pierced the wick of a floating lamp. The Patels were amazed and praised Bhaguji’s feat.

That evening Shri Hari held an assembly and declared his ultimatum of leaving Satsang. Everyone became sad again. Brahmanand Swami asked Maharaj, “It is quite understandable that devotees are unable to give up their base nature because it is deeply entrenched, but I fail to understand why Bhagwan is unable to give up his nature that follows from his past incarnations.”

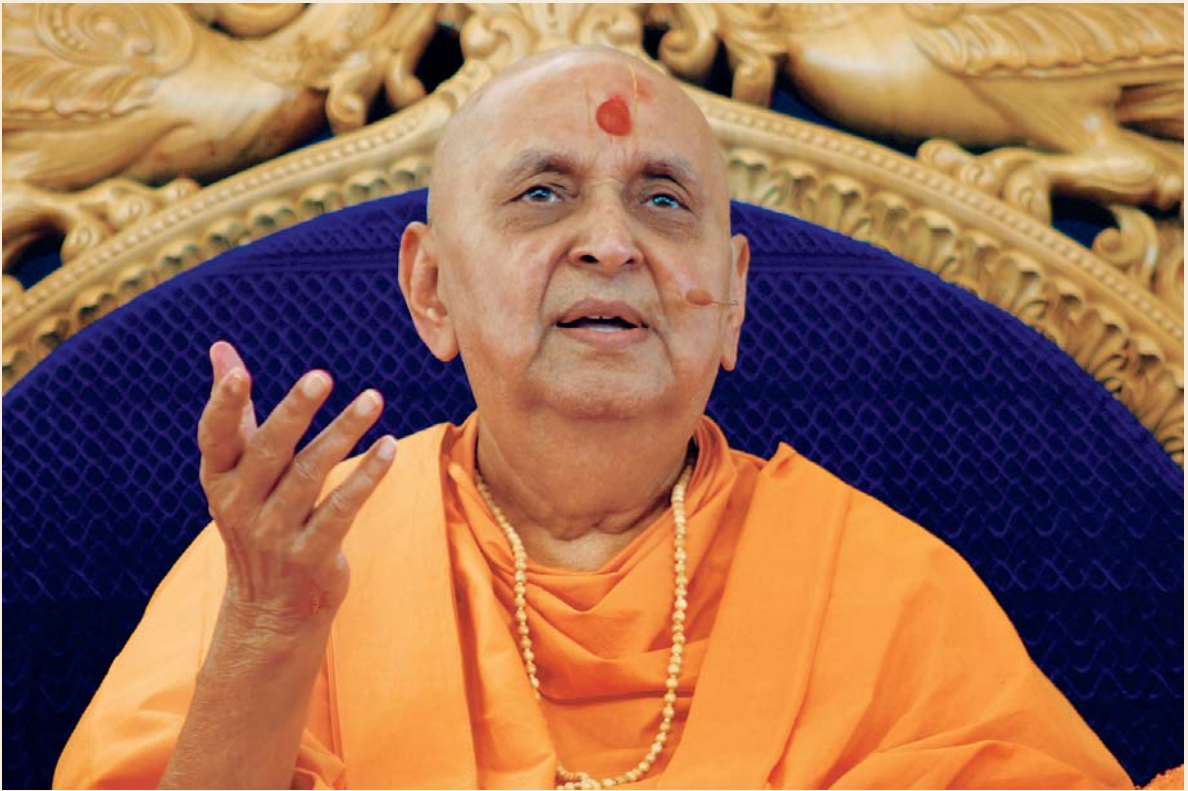
Shri Hari replied, “All actions of God are divine. They can be perceived as divine only with a divine vision. Such a divine attitude benefits and elevates a devotee.” Brahmanand Swami understood the purport of Maharaj’s words and remained quiet thereafter.

Sujanba conveyed through her son, Ratu Khant, “Maharaj forgive us for any lapses. Because of your sadness you have been talking about leaving Satsang altogether. But how will our wretched souls attain *moksha*?” Immediately Maharaj replied, “I will liberate the entire population of Adraj. Today everyone has come into my association, therefore there is no need for you to worry.” All were pleased and satisfied with Maharaj’s boon. It was late night. Maharaj announced that only the main devotees of each group should stay back the following day, while the rest should return home. ◆

(To be continued)

Translated from Bhagwan Swaminarayan

by Shri H.T. Dave



True Satsang

Swamishri blesses an assembly of devotees in the grand Haveli of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, on 22 October 1997...

“T

oday, everyone in this world is a prisoner of their desires (*moha*). People try in their own way to escape from this: austerities, observances, donations, business and other endeavours. Through these they try to gain peace and happiness. However, only if one engages in *satsang* and spiritual discourses (*katha*) does one attain peace. But if one does not engage in these two (*satsang* and discourses), then, however hard one tries, affection for God will not develop and without such affection, desires are not overcome. It is very difficult to escape from the clutch of desires (*moha*).

What is *moha*? It is to believe what is false

(perishable) as true (permanent) and what is true as false. Such *moha* exists, God and his holy Sadhu exist, *atma* exists, God is eternal and the source of all bliss – we read and know about all these things, but are unable to properly understand them.

One encounters worldly troubles and feels that *satsang* has nothing to offer, so it is avoided. Hence, *satsang* is not strengthened and *moha* is not overcome. The worldly objects to which one is attached are perishable. We do everything for this body, but in the end it dies; it is not immortal. Whatever happiness is described for worldly objects does not, in fact, exist. All one's efforts are wasted in its pursuit. The great

avatars and rishis have all told us this.

Tulsidas was very saintly and composed the Ramayan. He wrote from experience, “*Surpur, Narpur, Nagpur, e tinme sukh nāhi, kā sukh Hari ke charanme kā santanke māhi.*” – “There is no happiness in the realm of the *devas*, on earth or in the nether regions. Happiness lies only at the feet of God or his holy Sadhu.” We feel that such people say these things, but they don’t have experience of worldly life. There are so many new things to enjoy in this world. They write without knowing this. But whatever they write is from their profound experience.

Gunatitanand Swami says, “Whatever happiness there is in *maya* is not without misery.” What is *maya*? Maharaj has said that it is whatever that obstructs us in worshipping God. This may be one’s wife, husband, children, money, home, car, body or anything. So, whatever prevents us from overcoming *moha*, engaging in *satsang* and worshipping God is *maya*, and it leads to bondage. But if all these things are helpful in worshipping God, then no attachment results.

Only by associating with God and his holy Sadhu, and following their commands are happiness and peace experienced. So, keep *satsang* and God at the forefront of your life.

Engage in and fulfill your obligations to family, friends, work and society, but none of these brings lasting peace. All these things seem glamorous, but one day our eyes will close and all will be gone. If this outlook is developed, then no bondage results. But if attachments remain, they become a cause for rebirths.

King Janak ruled his entire kingdom, but was not attached to it, since he had faith in his guru, Ashtavakra Rishi, who was spiritually enlightened. He told the king, “One may dream that one has a big kingdom and much wealth,

“Only by associating with God and his holy Sadhu, and following their commands are happiness and peace experienced. So, keep satsang and God at the forefront of your life.”

and also may suffer much misery. But when one wakes up, one is lying in bed, and nothing seen in the dream exists now. So, this life is a dream of 50, 60, 70, 80, 100 years. While that other dream lasts two, five or ten minutes.

So, understand that all our forefathers have gone and we will also go, leaving everything behind. So, if one engages in *satsang* and bhajan one can overcome *moha*. However, when it comes to doing this, people resist and make excuses: I’m not well, I have too much work, and other such things. But one does not hesitate to run around shopping or for office work. So, it all prevents worship to God and hence is *maya*. If one is to get crores of rupees, one will run around even if ill.

Maharaj has stated in the Vachanamrut that those who have an affinity for darshan, discourses, bhajan and *satsang* do not find it difficult to leave worldly objects. No matter how physically tired they may be, when an opportunity for discourses or *satsang* arises they feel that they are not fatigued, since they have an affinity for God. They realize that *moksha* and eternal happiness is available only here.

Navratri has recently passed. People will have spent money to stay awake all night and dance. People readily go to parties, even by leaving their work and family responsibilities aside. But when asked to come here, to *satsang*, they refuse. Where there is *moha*, there is no happiness. But here we can get the highest form of happiness, free of charge.

Here, there are discourses and bhajans, but people are not interested. Swami says that those who have developed attachment to God have even renounced their kingdoms without any problems.

The story of King Bharat, after whom Bharat

(India) is named, is narrated in the Bhagvat. He was the son of Rishabhdev Bhagwan, who told all his sons, "If you want peace, leave all these royal privileges, find a virtuous sadhu and learn the wisdom of *atma* and Paramatma from him." This is the teaching he gave.

This is our tradition. And his sons were obedient. Today, people don't like to listen to such good guidance.

Youngsters today would retort that this is 'nonsense'. But this is our tradition. There was a harmonious rapport between father and son, husband and wife, brothers, and all family members. However, amid today's materialistic atmosphere family unity has broken down.

So, Bharat realized the truth of his father's talks and left his kingdom. These days, it is difficult to convince people to do *satsang*. They say they have no time. Even though we ask them to spare only an hour to listen to discourses, they do not.

Also, King Gopichand left his kingdom. His mother said to him, "Your father was also handsome and had everything, but his body is now reduced to dust. He didn't take anything with him. You are enjoying all this, but your body, too, will be reduced to dust when your *atma* leaves it. So, do some sadhanas that will help you attain *kalyan* - the purpose for which God has given this human body." These words made an impact and Gopichand renounced. He was not concerned about his throne. Thus, such people renounced their kingdoms, since they realized the truth.

You engage in *satsang* day and night, and hear these talks. Yet your senses become attached to worldly things and you are unable to withdraw them. Engage in your work and business, but if *satsang* is practiced sincerely, then you will experience peace and happiness. So, God should be kept at the forefront and his commands obeyed throughout life.

Remain within the boundary of God's commands and enjoy the 'food' of the senses. What

is food for the senses? For the eyes it is to see. You have to look, otherwise there will be accidents! But, Gunatitanand Swami used to warn about not being pierced by 'worldly thorns'. If one's gaze ventures towards vulgar scenes, those images will, like thorns, pierce within and cause disturbance and misery. Such 'food' should not be taken.

So, look around you, but keep your focus on God. Similarly, for the other senses. God has given this body to us to do good deeds. So give it good 'food'. Do not just feed it any old rubbish.

With this body, one should serve the family, society, country and God.

By taking pure 'food' (for the senses), inner unrest and misery that has accumulated over countless births, is destroyed. The *antahkaran* is purified. Good thoughts arise in the mind and *chitt*.

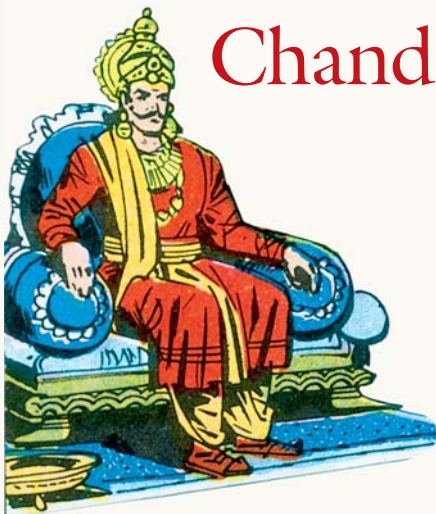
So, if attachment for *satsang* develops, one is purified and becomes a true, 100% *satsangi*.

Just as worldly work and studies are accomplished only by concentration, similarly, God's work is also possible only with concentration. Such focus is possible only when *satsang* is attained and one resolves to do only that which pleases God. When doing anything, think. "Will this please God? Will this please the guru?" Then you will have no problems.

This *satsang* is a great opportunity for us; it is a great treasure and so has to be protected, just like the Kohinoor diamond is guarded. This *satsang* is difficult to attain and is for our happiness and *moksha*. So it should be protected continuously. By God's grace we have attained this human body, we have attained this rare *satsang*, and we have attained the company of great sadhus like Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, through whom we have attained the knowledge of God's form.

To preserve all this, continuously engage in *satsang*."





Chandragupta Maurya

By the age of only twenty, an Indian youth arose from a humble background and conquered Macedonian rulers left by Alexander, toppled the mighty Nanda dynasty in Magadh and brought Bharat under one rule. In the words of the historian Vincent Smith, “These achievements fairly entitle him to rank among the greatest and most successful kings known to history.”

The contemporary Greek writers called him Sandrokottus, Sandrokuptos or Androcottus. In Bharat (India) he was known as Chandragupta Maurya. He was born in 340 BCE, reigned for 24 years and died in 298 BCE, at the age of only 42. His vast Indian empire ranged from Afghanistan and Baluchistan in the west, touching Persia, to Assam in the east, and from Kashmir and Nepal in the north to the Deccan Plateau in the south. Little is known about Chandragupta’s youth.

According to tradition, as a boy he was once playing the role of a king with his friends and giving justice to another boy who acted as a criminal. Coincidentally, at this point, Chanakya the stalwart teacher at Takshashila and author of the *Arthashastra*, happened to pass by and was impressed by Chandragupta’s precocity in passing judgement. Therefore he obtained permission from the boy’s mother to educate him in

Takshashila. In Chandragupta, Chanakya found a raw gem, who could be sculpted and polished in a way which would serve two purposes: first, to rid Bharat from the tyranny of Nanda rule, and second, to construct a united Bharat that could deter and defeat further foreign onslaughts.

Chandragupta entered the seat of the most advanced studies in the contemporary world at the age of eight. Since students were only admitted at the age of 16, Chandragupta was probably an exception on account of Chanakya. An education of eight years in its military academy among 103 princes probably brought out the best Kshatriya mettle in Chandragupta. This was in addition to the personal tutorship of his mentor, Chanakya, a master in polity. Around the time when Alexander invaded Punjab in 326 BCE, Androcottus met him, according to Plutarch.

According to Justin, the Roman historian, Chandragupta “was pushing to acquiring the throne by the superior power of the mind. Then, after having offended the king of Nanda by his insolence, he was condemned to death by the king, but he was saved by the speed of his own feet.... He gathered bandits and invited Indians to a change of rule.”

After graduating from Takshashila, Chandragupta set out with Chanakya for recruits from different places to amass an army. The mentor placed the pupil in command of this army. The majority of Chandragupta’s recruits to defeat Dhana Nanda were from Punjab. Jain and Buddhist texts cite that he also struck an alliance with a Himalayan king named Parvatak (Porus). He then defeated the Greek satrapies of Phillipus and Nicanor, left by Alexander, thus freeing Punjab from foreign rule. Next, he set off to fight the greatest army in India at the time, that of Dhana Nanda. Curtius estimated Nanda’s military

strength at 200,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 2,000 four-horsed chariots and 3,000 elephants.

CHANDRAGUPTA'S STRATEGY

According to Buddhist tradition, Chandragupta began his war on the Nanda empire by first attacking its frontiers, moving inwards towards the capital. While attacking the towns, he left his rear insecure and found his army surrounded and decimated.

After realizing his mistake, he posted garrisons in the places he conquered. After a series of battles, in 322 BCE, he successfully besieged Pataliputra, ousting Nanda. Chanakya played a key role in his strategy. Additionally, he gained the citizens' support, since they detested Dhana Nanda, who had extorted immense wealth from them, reducing them to destitution.

Thus, the Nanda dynasty ended and the powerful Maurya Empire was founded. While establishing his empire, a new foe appeared on his western horizon.

Around 305 BCE, Seleukos I Nikator, Alexander's Macedonian satrap, reconquered most of his master's former territories as far east as Bactria. He then crossed the Indus and confronted a new India, now united and stronger under Chandragupta, who possessed a formidable army, which defeated him. He then surrendered many territories, such as, Kandahar, Kabul, Herat and Baluchistan, to the Maurya Emperor. Chandragupta presented him 500 war elephants in exchange.

Seleukos then maintained friendly relations with him and sent Megasthenes, who lived in Pataliputra for a lengthy period, as his ambassador. During this time Megasthenes noted many details about Maurya's administration and India in general. It is from his authentic accounts that later Greek writers such as Diodoras, Strabo and Arrian wrote about contemporary India. In his *Natural History*, Pliny noted that the king had "a standing army of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry and 9,000 elephants; whence may be formed some conjecture as

to the vastness of his resources."

The Maurya Empire in western India included 'Surashtra'. This is corroborated by the rock inscription of Rudradaman I in Junagadh. It was ruled by Chandragupta's provincial governor, Pushyagupta. Chandragupta also extended his empire southwards beyond the Vindhya mountains into the Deccan Plateau.

Chandragupta renounced his kingdom at a young age bequeathing it to his son, Bindusara, who later passed it on to his son, Ashok. Chandragupta then travelled south with the Jain ascetic, Bhadrabahu, to perform austerities at Shravan Belagola near Mysore for some years. Then, in the true Jain tradition, he is said to have fasted to death. The hill where he lived is known as Chandragiri and a temple built by him as Chandragupta-Basti. The facade of his *basti* (temple) contains perforated screens with 90 sculptured events from the lives of both the guru and disciple (Mukherji 1952:40).

In the absence of telecommunications and fast transport, the remarkable efficiency of Chandragupta's infrastructure in an empire so vast underscores the work of an ingenious mind. This belonged to none other than Chanakya or Kautilya, his guru. For a king's successful sovereignty Kautilya wrote a whole text, *Arthashastra*. However the essence of this text can be summarized in one *shlok*:

Prajā sukhe sukham rājanah prajānām cha hite hitam,

Nātmapriyam hitam rājanah prajānām tu priyam hitam.

Meaning: The happiness of the people is the happiness of the king; their well-being, his. The king's welfare lies not in his own pleasure but in that of the people.

It was this eternally truthful ideal that Chandragupta and his grandson, Ashok, lived by. This bestowed upon them true greatness as compared to that earned by others in history who resorted to the sword in oppressing people in foreign lands. ◆

More Praise, Please!

*Look for the positive in others –
'catch them doing things right' and
appreciate their efforts.*

Vikram: My daughter taught me a lesson today.

Dilip: Why, did she teach you how to make a spreadsheet on the computer?

Vikram: No, I was scolding her because I caught her watching television during her study time. I was angry, since she hasn't been getting good grades lately.

Dilip: She's still top of her class, right?

Vikram: Well, kind of. She's still in the top five, but she can stand first if she studies well.

Dilip: So what lesson did she teach you? Not to scold a top five student?

Vikram: Well, she said that she'd completed her studies for the day, done her homework and assignments, and even her sociology project for next week. But she was upset that I always catch her goofing off, and never pay attention when she's actually studying.

Dilip: But you have to discipline kids and let them know the importance of studying.

Vikram: Yes, but what matters is how you do it. Her words set me thinking – 'You're always catching me doing something wrong, and you never even notice when I'm doing something right.'

Dilip: That would be a nice catchphrase, 'Catch them doing something right!'

Certificate of Appreciation

In appreciation for the efforts of
_____ in performing the assigned duties.

Signed

Dad

Mum

Date



Vikram: Exactly. I rarely praise her for studying more, doing her assignments regularly, or so many other things. I know she isn't always particular about doing her puja in the morning if she's rushed for school, and really shout if I find out she woke up late and skipped her puja. I think I should begin praising her for waking up on time and completing her puja on most days... that might motivate her to do it daily.

Dilip: Not your fault – even I do the same. I rarely commend my son for eating everything on his plate, but flare up when he doesn't have all his vegetables. I get upset with him if he gets up in the middle of our *ghar sabha* and goes to bed – I'll begin appreciating his presence in the *sabha* from tonight, that should make him stay on till the *cheshta* is completed.

Vikram: I agree, we both should be more balanced in praising and criticizing our kids. And why just our kids – think of how much that would help in your job as a traffic policeman.

Dilip: What, you mean we should give away credit points for stopping at traffic signals rather than taking points away for jumping one?

Vikram: Ha ha, no. I'm not proposing something that radical.

Dilip: Just joking, I know what you mean. There's already a system for that – even if you get three points for jumping a light, you get one point redeemed for every faultless year after that. That's a reward for doing the right thing, isn't it?

Vikram: Sure it is. People get salary raises and bonuses for doing good work, so I'm sure that we can use the same principle of catching them doing things right. You could even suggest some kind of recognition for people who haven't got a single traffic violation point in five or ten years.

Dilip: That would be great. In fact, why not start that at home and at office. Remember, we usually tend to criticize much more than we praise. We're always complaining about how our bosses are incompetent, our colleagues are dumb... and we always prove it to ourselves by catching their mistakes.

Vikram: Right, and we always overlook the many things which they've done perfectly well.

Dilip: We remember people by their eccentricities and odd behaviour, not their good deeds. We will always remember the time your neighbour dumped his garbage on your lawn – but never the time that he helped repair your lawn mower.

Vikram: Yes, we tend to remember the neg-

ative and not the positive.

Dilip: So now we should try to remember the good and brave deeds. For example, Edmund Hillary for climbing Mount Everest, Michelangelo for painting the Sistine Chapel, and so many others for their achievements and their positive attitudes – Pele, Babe Ruth, Michael Jordan, Luciano Pavarotti, Helen Keller, Warren Buffett, Beethoven...

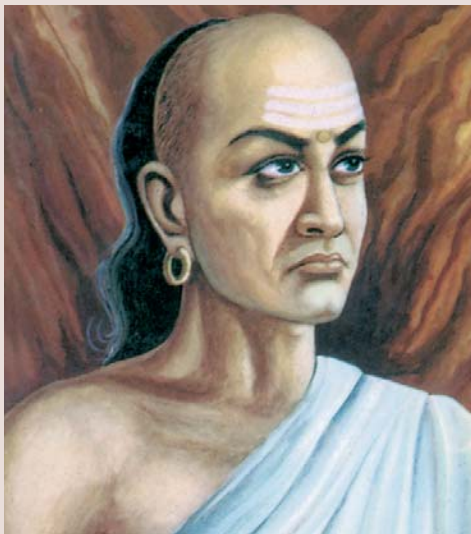
Vikram: Just like these people have become synonymous with their achievements, we need to make sure our children – and we – are associated with positive achievements, not negative.

Dilip: The best way to try for that is to catch our kids doing the right thing, and praise them for it. You'll need to praise your daughter for doing her assignments on time, cleaning up her room, or even for helping you organize your office work on the laptop.

Vikram: And you praise your son for finishing his vegetables, or when he plays the *tabla* well.

Dilip: Yes, I will. I've never realized till now, how much we take the positive things for granted while seeing only the negatives. So, thanks to your daughter, we've both learnt a lesson today – catch our kids doing things right. And why just our kids, that applies to the rest of our family, devotees in the mandir and people in our office or anywhere else. Let's judge others on the things they're doing right, not on the ones they're doing wrong – it will make our homes and offices much better and more positive.





“My Favourite Book”

In life, at different times, places and ages, under different circumstances, one's likes and dislikes (preferences) keep changing. The same follows about what we read.

When I was young I couldn't put down books written by Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai. Later it was Pannalal Patel, especially his *Maleela Jeev*. And then Shakespeare and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

Today, I'm interested in Chanakya/Kautilya. His treatise on *niti* and economics reveal how much of Chanakya is interwoven into our life. And yet we have kept Chanakya so far from our studies.

Some of his injunctions regarding kingly duties are: “*Sām, dām, dand, bhed*” and “*Yathā rājā, tathā prajā*”.

Further he says, “It is necessary to change according to the times, country and situations”, “Diseases and enemies should be put down as soon as they arise.” He had taught all this wisdom 2,400 years ago. We call them Chanakya's *Nitishastra* and Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.

A person's study of economics is incomplete until he has read *Arthashastra*:

*Anantshāstram bahu veditavyamalpascha
kālo bahavashcha vighna;*

Yatsārabhutam tadupāsītavyam

Hanso yatha kshiramivāmbhu mishrit.

“Scriptures are endless; there is much to be known, while the time is short, and many are the obstacles. One should, therefore, engage oneself in what is essential, just as a swan picks up only the milk from a mixture of milk and water.”

In 1776 Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*. Forgetting Kautilya, and under the influence of the West, we started studying Smith. Kautilya was much more an authority on the subject, gave more information and covered a wide range of topics in economics. Yet we forgot him and put him aside. Kautilya had regarded material wealth as divine and as a must and a duty for the householder:

*Prathame nārjitā vidyā, dvitiye nārjitam
dhanam; Trutiye nārjito dharmashchaturthe kim
karishyati.*

“When one did not get learning in the first stage (of life, i.e., childhood); when one did not earn money in the second stage (youth); when one did not earn religiousness in the third stage (middle age); what shall one do in the fourth stage (ailing old person)?”

Adam Smith and later Western economists

limited economics only to a study of material wealth, but in 1935 Lionel Robbins wrote *An Essay on the Significance of Economics*, in which he defined 'Arthashastra' very precisely and perfectly: "Economics is a science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between aims and means which have alternative uses."

For the first time human elements were accepted as integral to economics. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has, after many decades, given emphasis to this, but Kautilya had put forth the importance of human values, and human elements and standards in economics 2,400 years ago and gave many comments on it. For example, he gave the king rights to levy taxes. But along with that he also taught how to secure the taxes like a honey bee extracts honey from a flower without the flower feeling pain:

Yathā bhramarā madhu sevante tathā nrupaha prāpnuyatkarān.

"A king should extract tax from his subjects in the same way as the bees extract honey from flowers."

Many of his teachings are applicable today:
Samānshil vyasaneshu sakhyam.

"Friendship flourishes among those who

have similar character and similar calamities."

Vyāpare vasati Lakshmi.

"The wealth dwells in business."

Sukhasya mulam dharmah, dharmasya mulam arthah;

Arthasya mulam vānījyam, vānījyasya mulam svātantrayam; Svātantrasya mulam chāritryam.

Therefore, *Sukhasya mulam chāritryam.*

Wealth is at the root of happiness; business is at the root of wealth; independence is at the root of business; and character is at the root of independence. Therefore, righteousness is at the root of happiness;

A nation should pay attention to research because:

Sanshodhanena samvrudhi.

"Progressive growth is acquired by improving research."

A nation should invest in its virgin lands, water bodies, dams, irrigation and mining. The business initiatives of its citizens and the economic prosperity of nations feed each other and are not in any way self-opposed.

Thus, Chanakya's insights into human behaviour and its impact on business and society are relevant even today. ◆

HINDU RITES AND RITUALS

This excellent and thoroughly researched book enables the reader to experience the depth and understanding of how Hindus live and have adjusted to migration, changing cultural trends and cope with daily stress by their rites, daily rituals and festivals.

It gives detailed answers to the 'why' of traditional Hindu rites and rituals. This book features 781 superb colour photographs, 90 paintings and 27 maps.

Author: Sadhu Mukundcharandas

1st Edition: June 2007

Language: English

ISBN: 81-7526-356-3

Pages: 512 Hardback





Guru Purnima Celebration

18 July 2008, Bochasan, India

Over 30,000 devotees attended the Guru Purnima Celebration in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Bochasan on 18 July 2008.

The celebration assembly began at 8.00 am with dhun and bhajans. Thereafter, senior sadhus – Anandswarup Swami, Viveksagar Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami, Doctor Swami and Mahant Swami – spoke about the guru-*shishya* tradition and how to offer devotion to guru Pramukh

Swami Maharaj by obeying his wishes and realizing his spiritual purity.

Thereafter, children, teenagers and youths performed a traditional dance honouring God and guru. Then Swamishri was honoured with garlands by the senior sadhus, on behalf of all devotees worldwide.

Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly.

The celebration assembly concluded at 11.50 am.

SWAMISHRI'S BLESSINGS

“Today is a very sacred day for all Hindus, since we live our lives due to the blessings of the guru. Living by his wishes brings happiness and liberation for the *atma*. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has given such instructions in the Shikshapatri. Following them with devotion and faith in God leads to attainment of all four *purusharths*: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*.

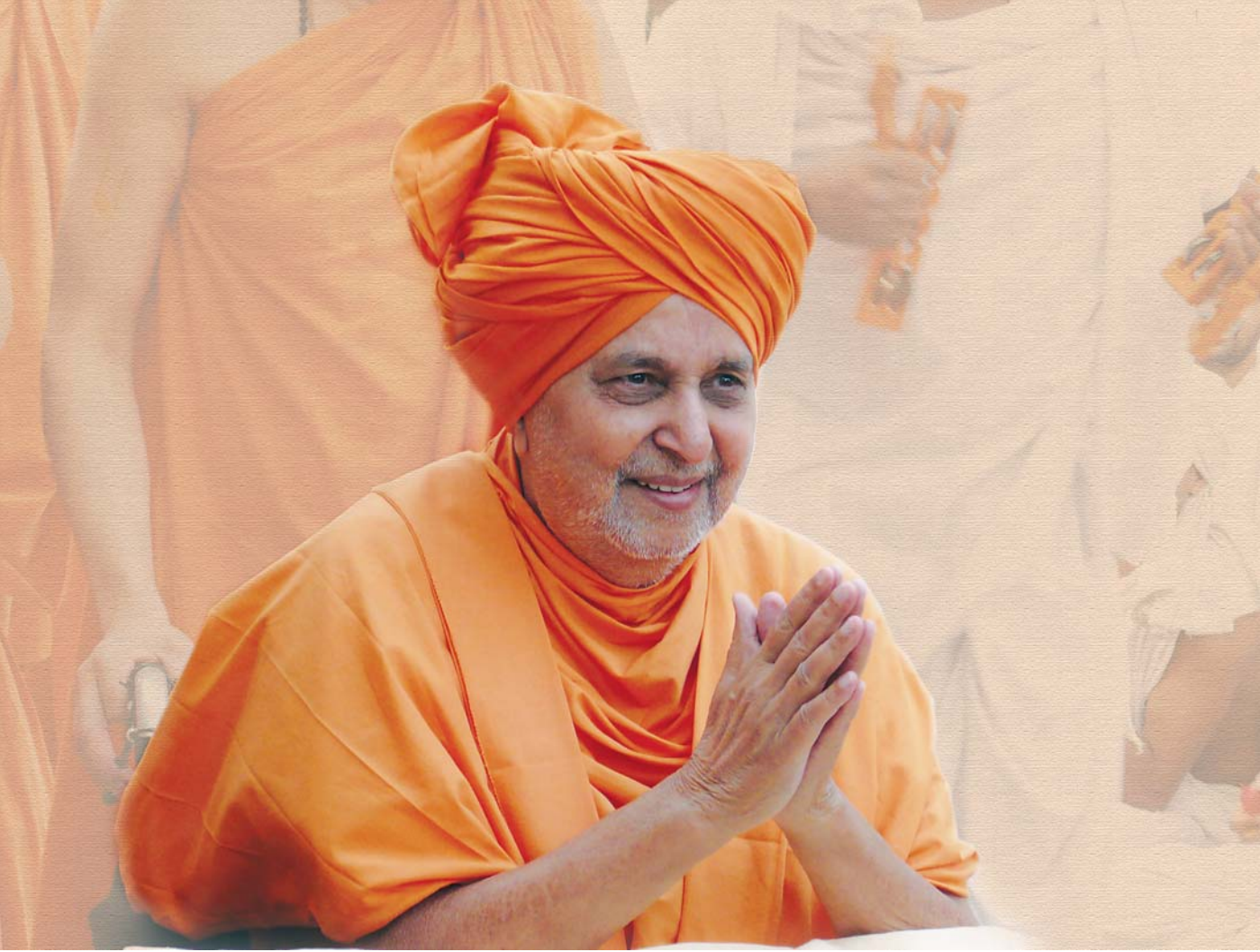
Our base is *dharma*. Without *dharma*, a man's life is no better than that of an animal. Shriji Maharaj said that *dharma* means *sadachar*.

Sadachar means living by the commands of God and the Satpurush. We should have compassion for all forms of life. Yogiji Maharaj used to say, “May God do good of all.” Also, one's life should be free of all addictions.

Artha is wealth. Earn money through noble means only and not by deceitful ways or by causing harm to others. Only if *artha* is gained by observing *dharma* does it bring happiness.

Kama is our worldly desires, and these should be satisfied in obedience to *dharma*.

Moksha is the fourth endeavour. It means to realize everything is perishable, realize that we have to detach ourselves from everything and attach to God, who is eternal. Realize the knowledge of *atma* and Paramatma. Understand that the body is perishable, that our true form is the *atma*, and offer devotion to Paramatma. If one engages in one's duties with such understanding, peace is attained. The God-realized sadhu gives us this true knowledge of *atma* and Paramatma. By serving him one attains happiness in this world and beyond.” ◆



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's
VICHARAN

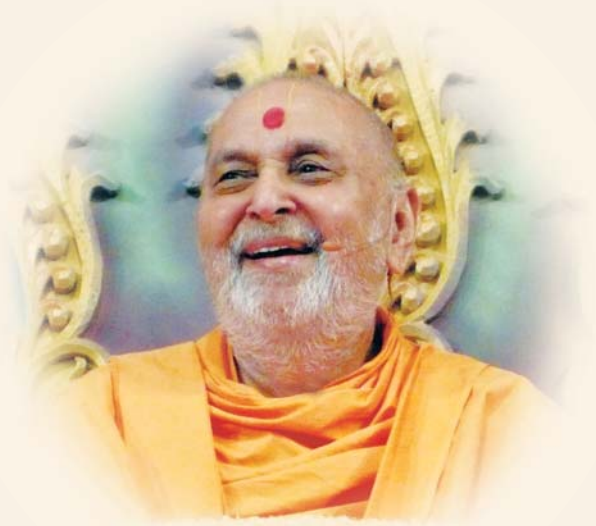
10 to 30 June 2008
Sarangpur

Swamishri's health was fine during his stay in Sarangpur. He gave darshan to devotees during his daily routine of darshan of Thakorji and Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir, and morning puja. Thereafter Swamishri gave audience to devotees wishing to seek counsel and blessings on important

personal matters.

Daily, the sadhus, *parshads* and *sadhaks* sang devotional bhajans at the Smruti Mandir while Swamishri did darshan and performed *pradakshina*. The morning puja resonated with bhakti through bhajans sung by sadhus.

Living With SWAMISHRI



SOUND ADVICE

10 June 2008, Sarangpur

A devotee informed Swamishri about his annual earnings and then asked, “It all belongs to you. Tell me what amount I should take to spend?”

Swamishri replied, “You keep as much as you need. Do not live with the mental burden of having to give donations. You have a family to take care of and social responsibilities to attend to. Furthermore, unanticipated circumstances or expenses may crop up. So donate after bearing all that in mind.”

A devotee’s dedication for Swamishri and Swamishri’s care for his mundane responsibilities is reflected through his sound advice.

RESOLVING A TRICKY SITUATION

11 June 2008, Sarangpur

A devotee told Swamishri how his wife, out of sympathy, had loaned Rs 25,000 to their neighbour. After eight years the neighbour had still not returned even a single paisa. The devotee added, “Now the question is that my wife remains miserable all day. I have tried explaining to her that even if we do not get the money there is no need for her to remain unhappy and worried. But she simply cannot reconcile or accept it. I am unhappy on both counts.”

Swamishri counseled, “You have my blessings, but you should, with the financial state of your neighbour in view, keep asking for your money. This will at least satisfy your wife (by kindling a hope of getting it).”

SWAMISHRI’S SOLACE

12 June 2008, Sarangpur

A youth in dishevelled clothes told Swamishri, “I cannot forget a mistake I made many years ago.”

Swamishri blessed him and gave him solace, “Now that you have confessed it before God and his Sadhu you should forget it and live your life normally.”

Swamishri comforted the youth and unburdened him from years of guilt and a heavy conscience.

DIWALI MEANS DIVINE JOY

14 June 2008, Sarangpur

Today was *ekadashi*. During his round of darshan of different holy spots Swamishri arrived at the spot in the mandir *pradakshina* where Shastriji Maharaj used to sit. Here, *sadhaks* from abroad sang, “*Rāj māre din din Diwāli re...*” with reference to today’s *ekadashi*. Swamishri enquired, “What does one have to do on Diwali?”

A sadhu replied, “Fast.”

Swamishri explained, “Diwali means to celebrate with joy. Everyone is joyful on Diwali. We should believe every day is Diwali because we are in a great holy place like Sarangpur – which is like Akshardham.

Someone added, “There is also joy because of your association.”

Swamishri replied, “We have the association of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. They created this place. Be joyful on seeing this neem tree. Swami used to sit here and perform many *lilas*. One should remember all those incidents and derive joy. This is Diwali.”

Swamishri interpreted Diwali as remembering the divine *lila* of Satpurush.

APPRECIATING BHAKTI TO GOD

15 June 2008, Sarangpur

Swamishri called Dhruval Patel, a *satsangi* teenager who resides in USA. He offers daily devotion and serves a small *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj that he keeps in his home mandir. He had brought the *murti* with him from America. When Dhruval came to Swamishri with the *murti*, Swamishri folded his palms and did darshan. Then he placed a rose at the feet of the *murti* and also placed a rose on Dhruval’s head as a symbol of respect and appreciation for his devotion to God.

MEDICINE FOR LIBERATION

23 June 2008, Sarangpur

While Swamishri was taking his medicine he asked someone, “Would you like to have this?”

The person replied, “Give me medicine that will cure me from the disease of the cycles of birth and death. And bless me that I am able to drink it no matter how bitter it is.”

Swamishri instantly replied, “You have been given the medicine of listening to spiritual discourses (*katha*) and engaging in bhajan and kirtan. These are the medicines you have to take because they will help you to remain stable amid praise and insult, and joy and misery.”

BALANCING LIFE

23 June 2008, Sarangpur

A student expressed, “I love reading the Vachanamrut, but don’t feel like reading my school textbooks at all.”

Swamishri encouraged him, “You must read both the Vachanamrut and your textbooks. By studying at school you’ll be able to make a career in life and by reading the Vachanamrut you will get spiritual knowledge. This will enable you to tide over joy and misery in life. You must learn to balance your life.”

MEANS TO PURITY

26 June 2008, Sarangpur

Several teenage *satsangi* boys had come from Rajkot for Swamishri’s darshan. When Swamishri learnt that they daily clean the mandir he became very happy. Swamishri showered his blessings upon them and said, “Clean the mandir properly and your soul, too, will become pure. Anger and other base instincts will disappear, and you will experience peace within.”

CONQUERING ANGER

26 June 2008, Sarangpur

Both father and son complained to Swamishri about each other. The son revealed, “He cannot stop getting angry. He explodes at any time.”

The father replied, “It is the same with him!”

Swamishri answered, “It is good that both of you have pointed out each other’s failings correctly. Now tell me whom do I have to bless.”

“Me,” both father and son replied together.

Swamishri happily advised, “Anger damages one’s business, home and everything. Therefore, give it up when you get angry, become alert and start doing bhajan. If you are alert then you will be able to diminish your anger gradually. See how politely and sweetly a businessmen talks in his business. Likewise, talk calmly and you will progress in life.”

◆
From Gujarati version by Sadhu Priyadarshandas

RATH YATRA CELEBRATION

4 July 2008, Sarangpur, India



The Ratha Yatra was celebrated in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Sarangpur on 4 July 2008. A procession of Shri Hari Krishna Maharaj with Swamishri in a decorated chariot was carried

out from the mandir to the Smruti Mandir. Sadhus singing bhajans and children dressed in colourful attires gave a festive flair. Senior sadhus performed puja and *arti* of Shri harikrishna Maharaj.

Thousands of devotees were present as Swamishri performed *puja* and *abhishek* of the *murti* of Shri Nilkanth Varni to be consecrated in the Abhishek Mandapam in Bhavnagar mandir.

After his morning puja, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "If we give the reins of our life's chariot to God and his holy Sadhu, they will take us to Akshardham. Just as Arjun discarded all his wishes and obeyed the Lord, we too must obey the commands of God and make our life worthwhile."

In conclusion, *prasad* was distributed to all. ♦

RATH YATRA CELEBRATION

4 July 2008, Kolkata, India



Over 3,000 devotees participated in the annual Ratha Yatra celebration organized by BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Kolkata, on 4 July 2008.

At 3.00 pm the Ratha Yatra began with the

Vedic puja of the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Jagannathji, Shri Balbhadraraj and Shri Subhadraraj, in the main 35-ft. high *rath* (chariot), by senior sadhus, Pujya Ishwaracharan Swami and Bhagvatpriya Swami.

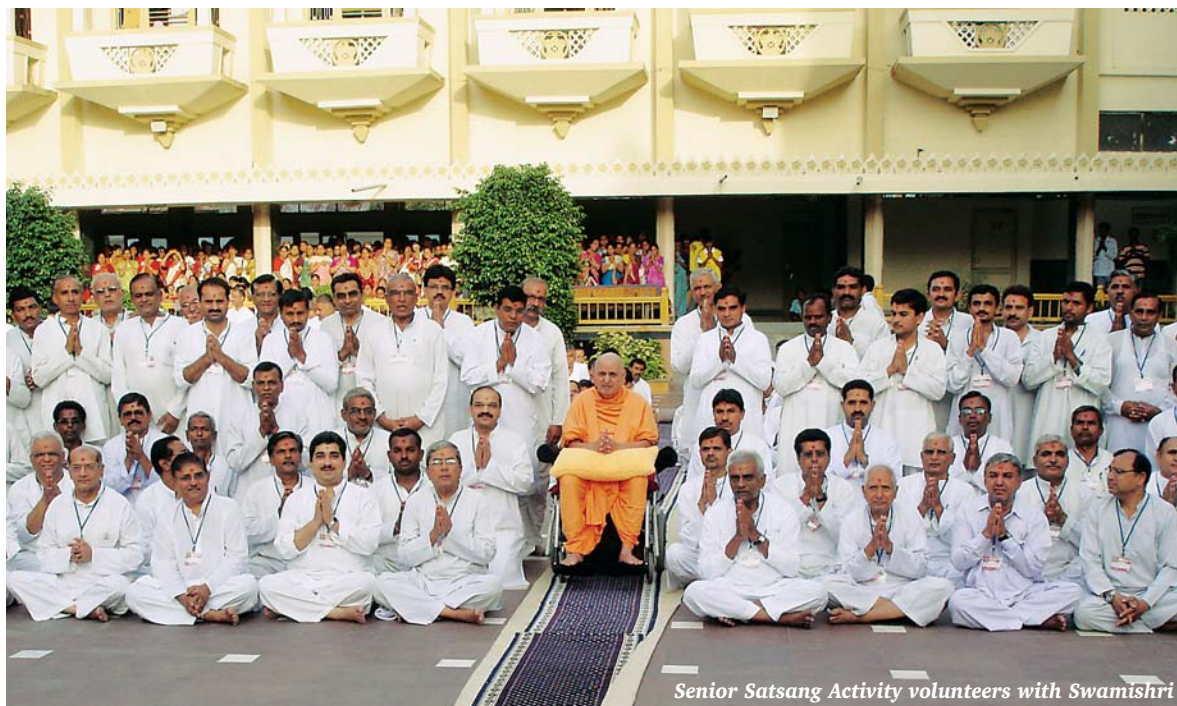
The procession was flagged off by chief guests, Shri Vikram Ghosh (renowned musician) and Shri Dineshbhai Trivedi (MP).

Thereafter, devotees took turns to pull the *rath* through the streets of Kolkata. Thousands of onlookers witnessed the procession. The devout atmosphere was enhanced by the devotees of Orissa, who had come specially to sing bhajans in their unique, traditional style.

The procession concluded at 7.00 pm outside the BAPS mandir on Chakraberia Road, where the final *arti* was performed. ♦

DIVYA SANNIDHI PARVAS

21-23 & 25-27 July 2008, Bochasan



In Bochasan, in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, special shibirs were held for the senior cadres of volunteers involved in the Sanstha's Satsang and Bal Activities...

The *shibir* for senior Satsang Activity Volunteers was held from 21 to 23 July 2008 and was attended by over 125 sadhus and 750 men and women volunteers. It focused on strengthening the qualities which make a good leader.

Every morning, after Swamishri's puja, short thematic presentations were presented by the volunteers. Also, along Swamishri's route to and from the assembly hall, volunteers made symbolic presentations reinforcing the message of the *shibir*.

During the day, speeches, live skits, audio-visual shows and question-answer sessions reinforced the *shibir* theme. The topics of the speeches by

senior sadhus included: The Secret of Successful Leadership, Leader Yet Servant, Discipline: Adornment for a Leader, A Leader Leads by Example and Leader: One Without Expectations.

A new element of the *shibir* engaged the volunteers in writing a research essay based on the Vachanamrut on the topic of 'agna'. This proved useful in giving everyone an insight into how the teachings of the Vachanamrut can be applied to *satsang*.

On the final day, after Swamishri's puja, the volunteers presented a brief, entertaining skit. The storyline equated the volunteers to automobile mechanics, who had come to the 'master mechanic', Swamishri, for their periodic servic-



Bal Activity volunteers present a skit before Swamishri

ing. Then Swamishri's blessed the assembly: "We have come here to overcome our base natures. That is the purpose of this *shibir*. Take the excellent talks you have heard from here with you.

Understand that Shriji Maharaj is supreme God, Gunatitanand Swami is Mul Akshar and the Satpurush is the gateway to *moksha*. If this true knowledge is understood then you will not be trapped by *maya*.

You have attained such true knowledge, so pass it on to others. You have all embedded the knowledge of Akshar-Purushottam in your hearts and so are able to dedicate yourselves like sadhus.

Think what this human birth is for... it is to become *aksharrup* and worship Purushottam. Maharaj will reward your efforts.

Through the efforts of all Satsang has grown, and will continue to do so. Our duty is to endeavour to fulfil Yogiji Maharaj's wishes. Those who do so will attain peace, and *satsang* will remain in their future generations."

The *shibir* for senior Bal Activity volunteers was from 25 to 27 July. Over 100 sadhus and 700 volunteers reveled in the divine atmosphere in Swamishri's presence. Swamishri's responses to

the volunteers on his way to and from the assembly hall filled their hearts with divine joy and lasting memories.

During Swamishri's daily walk, sadhus and volunteers presented reports of the children's activities in their regions.

The *shibir's* theme was 'Nissthavan Bhava' – Develop Firm Conviction. It strengthened the values of true spiritual wisdom, dharma, unity and sincere service. Speeches by senior sadhus, together with question-answer sessions, debates, skits and audio-visual presentations elaborated upon the *shibir* theme.

Blessing the dedicated volunteers, Swamishri said, "The work of the Bal Mandal is outstanding. Very good. Patience is required to work with children. You may feel that there is no progress, but your efforts will be rewarded. May the talks presented in the *shibir* be consolidated in your lives."

* * *

The volunteers were rejuvenated by Swamishri's presence, darshan and blessings in the *shibirs*. They resolved to continue their services to *satsang* based on the guidance they had received. ♦



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RATHYATRA CELEBRATION
4 July 2008, Sarangpur

1. Swamishri performs morning puja, with the stage backdrop commemorating the Rathyatra festival.
2. Swamishri performs murti-pratishtha arti of the abhishek murti of Shri Nilkanth Varni for the BAPS mandir in Bhavnagar.



**INAUGURATION
OF NEW SWAMINARAYAN HAVELI
BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Los Angeles, USA
6 July 2008**

With the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the Vedic inauguration rituals of the new traditional *haveli* of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan mandir in Los Angeles were performed by Pujya Bhaktipriya (Kothari) Swami on 6 July 2008. Devotees participate in the *mahapuja* ceremony in the *haveli* foyer. Also, the *murtis* previously sanctified by Pramukh Swami Maharaj were consecrated in the *haveli*.

In addition to the grand assembly hall, the *haveli* has facilities for children and youth activities.

(Inset) Pujya Bhaktipriya (Kothari) Swami ritually unties the *nadachhadi* to declare the opening of the *haveli*.