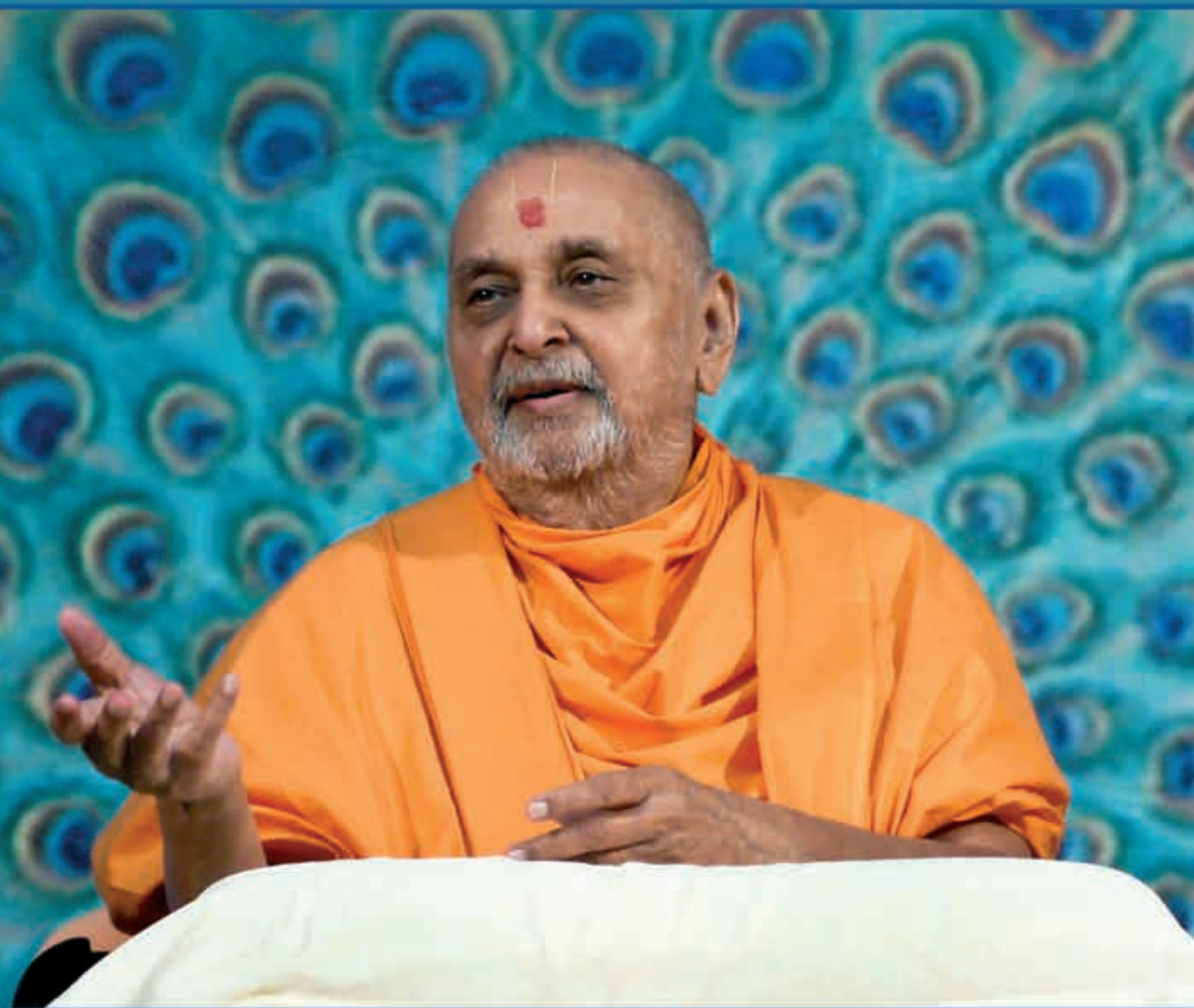


# SWAMINARAYAN **BLISS**

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Swamishri in a Satsang Assembly,

3 July 2009, Bochasan



#### GRAND RATHA YATRA CELEBRATION, MUMBAI

On 24 June, Swamishri performed puja and arti of Thakorji and flagged off the rath yatra procession from Swaminarayan Mandir, Dadar. The 1 km long grand procession of sadhus and devotees sang *dhun* and bhajans while carrying Thakorji in a palanquin.





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## FIRST WORD

Life is generally based on choices. We choose the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the books we read, the sports we play, the friends we have and many other umpteen things. Our choices may change during different periods of our lives – childhood, youthhood, adulthood, parenthood and grandparenthood. This continuous process of choosing involves distinguishing, discarding, accepting and rejecting. A lot of mental effort goes into deciding what we want and don't want.

But, there are the good choices and bad choices, the right choices and wrong choices. The good choices and the right choices are beneficial, rewarding, satisfying and elevating. Whereas the bad choices are damaging. So, we have to be careful, mature and judicious while making the major choices in life. For that we simply can not be irresponsible, ignorant and off guard.

Now the question is how do we know what are the right or wrong and good or bad choices? Should we choose popular trends, adopt contemporary lifestyles and behaviours of icons and stars or simply do what our peers say? No! Our choices must be based upon moral standards, spiritual values and eternal principles.

Hindu tradition popularly advocates the need to base our choices on the words of the shastras and the God-realized guru. Both are believed to be the forms of God. So our choices should conform to their instructions. Abiding by them, we are guaranteed to receive goodness, joy and divine benedictions. ◆

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# Shri Hari's Lila

*After celebrating Fuldol in Botad  
Shri Hari arrived at Gadhada...*

embrace the Lord, and instead, stretched its arm-like waves to worship and touch his holy feet.”

“Do you understand anything from this?” Maharaj asked.

The Kathis recalled, “Maharaj, we had seen something similar when you played the flute by the banks of the river Kalubha.”

“But, what did you understand from it?” Maharaj enquired.

“Your divinity, what else!”

“Yes, that's true. But the river gave up its nature of flowing because of the notes of God's flute. It stopped to worship and touch the holy feet of God. When a river, which seems lifeless, gives up its nature, then how much of your nature have you changed on hearing God-incarnate's words? When there is divine power in the notes of a flute played by God, then what magnitude of power lies in his words! God is knowledge. All his actions and words are also knowledge. When one understands this, knowledge dawns within.”

Nityanand Swami appreciated, “Maharaj, it is only when you reveal such a subtle aspect of knowledge that we come to understand and realize its true import.”

Shri Hari explained, “The Shrimad Bhagvat is a revealed text. Only when one transcends the three physical states (conscious, dream and deep sleep) and attains samadhi can one understand its subtleties. One cannot understand the essence of God's words while one is in the mundane state. One has to attain the *gunatit* state for this.”

**S**hri Hari arrived in Gadhpur with Muktanand Swami, Nityanand Swami, Shukmuni and other sadhus. The local devotees rejoiced on seeing him. During his stay, Maharaj instructed Pragji Dave (Purani) to read the 10<sup>th</sup> canto of the Bhagvat. Daily, Pragji Purani would read a few *shlokas* and Shri Hari would elaborate and explain them. Sometimes when Pragji Dave explained, the Kathi devotees would feel drowsy and fall asleep. To awaken them Maharaj would throw a *berkho* (a string of large beads) and reproach them, “Why do you lapse into sleep when such wonderful *katha* is going on?” The Kathis replied amusingly, “Maharaj, it is not our fault. When Pragji opens the ‘book’, sleep emerges and overpowers us.”

Shri Hari added, “This is what happens to those who do not know how to savour *katha*. However, for those who wish to be immersed in its joy find it to be like *amrut*.” Then Maharaj recited a *shloka* from the *Venu geet*, “On hearing the sound of Krishna's flute, the fast-flowing river got arrested in its course. It stopped from advancing speedily to

The devotees were lost in thought and trying to make out what Maharaj was saying. Shri Hari was aware of and amused at their confusion but continued, "Through an association with the Gunatit Sadhu one can attain self-realization. Through him one can also realize God and grasp the exact meaning of the shastras."

The daily reading of the Shrimad Bhagvat continued till Hari *navmi* festival. Maharaj had invited his *paramhansas* for the festivities. On that day the birth of Ram was celebrated at noon, and that of Shri Hari at night. The next day, Dada Khachar held a feast for the sadhus and devotees. Two days later, Jiva Khachar sponsored a meal for all. Shri Hari instructed that everyone should stay for five days. He discoursed to them, gave darshan and provided an opportunity to be in his service. Thereafter, Maharaj told the *paramhansas* to travel to the towns and villages for the benefit of all. He told Muktanand Swami, Nityanand Swami and Brahmanand Swami to stay with him.

A few days later Jayanand Swami came to see Maharaj from Shrinagar (Ahmedabad). He made a request, "Maharaj, after getting the land from Mr Heron for building a mandir in Ahmedabad, you had told Nanabhai to build an assembly hall and residential quarters for sadhus. Nanabhai accomplished it through the help of devotees. After that he went to Karjisan, fell ill and passed away. His last wish was to call Muktanand Swami for four months to Ahmedabad and discourse on the Shrimad Bhagvat. I pray that you tell Muktanand Swami to go to Shrinagar."

Shri Hari felt sad at Nanabhai's departure. He was an ideal devotee and was a sincere administrator. Maharaj remained silent for a while. Then he asked, "Have we got the land officially transferred in our name?"

"Mr Heron has sent the papers to his head office in England for official endorsement. The papers should be arriving in a few days time. Mr Heron, however, had told us to start building the assembly hall and promised that the official documents would arrive within a few days."

Shri Hari replied, "We will send Muktanand Swami in the holy month of Chaturmas. For the present we shall send other sadhus." And with this, Maharaj told Achintyanand Swami, Premanand Swami, Devanand Swami, Bhudaranand Swami, Yoganand Swami, Raghavanand Swami, Dhyananand Swami, Sukhanand Swami, Mukundanand Swami, Adharanand Swami and Purnanand Swami to go to Ahmedabad. Shri Hari told them, "Achintyanand Swami will be your head. Obey his words, and beg for alms daily. Whoever comes to the assembly talk to them about the glory of satsang. Muktanand Swami will come there in June and give a discourse on the Bhagvat. When he comes, you shall all abide by his words."

With the growth of Satsang Shri Hari's travellings increased considerably. But whenever he arrived in Gadhada he used to reside there for two to three months. Dada's family and the local devotees served him wholeheartedly.

On learning of Maharaj's stay in Gadhada, Jhinabhai Darbar of Panchala came with his sister, Adiba. At the latter's wish to sponsor a meal, Shri Hari arranged a meal of *dudhpak* the next day. On the following day when Maharaj sat down for lunch, Somba Fui (Dada Khachar's aunt) prodded him to eat more. "Do you want to remain thin and emaciated! Learn how to eat. We Kshatriyas eat less during public feasts for the sake of our pride, but on arriving home we gorge on *rotlo* and buttermilk. You do not eat enough to fill your stomach." Then Somba indirectly asked Mukund Brahmachari, "Does Maharaj eat secretly after his meals?" The Brahmachari clarified, "We get no food between meals. And I do not keep anything that remains after each meal. Whenever devotees bring any sweet or food items for him, Maharaj sends them all away to the *darbar's* kitchen."

Shri Hari replied to the contrary, "Though the Brahmachari lives with me, he is unaware of some things. I do secretly eat afterwards!"

Mukund Brahmachari was surprised, and questioned, "What food items are available here for you to eat?"

Maharaj smiled and revealed, “I ‘consume’ the pride of others. Be it pride for one’s high status, riches, education, bhakti or whatever – that is my ‘food’.”

Somba Fui grasped the essence of Shri Hari’s words. She spoke humbly, “Maharaj, we are aware of our base nature, but we have deep faith that our pride will eventually wear off through our association with you.”

After Maharaj finished lunch, he came to serve *dudhpak* to the sadhus. He filled their eating bowls to the brim. Maharaj came to Brahmanand Swami. The latter thought that if he hid his bowl away then Maharaj would pour the *dudhpak* on his head as he had done so on previous occasions. So, he held out his bowl. Maharaj filled it up, and poured whatever remained in his vessel on Brahmanand Swami’s head. Everyone was happy on seeing this *lila* (divine action). Instantly, Brahmanand Swami composed a kirtan and sang it, describing how Maharaj served and poured *dudhpak* on his head. On hearing it, Shri Hari went to get more. Then, while returning with a potful, Jivuba clamped her fingers onto the clay pot and stopped Maharaj, “You can serve the sadhus as much as you wish, but do not waste it by pouring it on them!” But Maharaj held the mouth of the pot tightly. Jivuba too had gripped it strongly. After a little tugging the pot broke. Maharaj brought another potful to serve. Instantly, Brahmanand Swami composed and sang a bhajan on Maharaj’s *lila*. After lunch, Brahmanand Swami composed twenty-eight *padas* describing the divine *lila*. That same evening while he was singing those verses, Shri Hari argued as to when he had done that. Brahmanand Swami smiled and replied, “I have only composed and sung what I had seen!” Maharaj acknowledged his words with a smile, looked at Jivuba and joked, “Give him some *prasad* from my dish or else he will defame me!”

Soon, the month of May passed and it was June. Shri Hari instructed Muktanand Swami to go to Shrinagar, “Stay there for four months and discourse on the Shrimad Bhagavat. Now times

have improved after the arrival of British rule. But still evil elements will raise their heads to create problems, so be wary.” Maharaj sent several student sadhus with Muktanand Swami, telling them to meet him in Vadthal to celebrate Bhim *ekadashi*.

A few days later, Shri Hari left Gadhada for Vadthal. He took Nityanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami, Jayanand Brahmachari and other sadhus and *kathi* devotees with him. Maharaj told the *kathi* devotees, “The mango season has arrived in Gujarat. I will have mango juice and chapattis prepared for your lunch. And every morning and evening I shall dispense to you the nectar of spiritual discourses.”

Dada Khachar, Sura Khachar, Somla Khachar and other devotees replied, “For us, your darshan and discourses are of greater value and joy than the mango juice and chapattis. Through our spiritual association with you our mundane inclinations and desires get dissolved. Our hearts get filled with the joy of your divine form.” Shri Hari was pleased by their faith and understanding.

On their way, Maharaj and his group encountered a storm. The turbulent winds kicked up sand and stones into the air. The tempest buffeted and pounded the group. Visibility turned zero. The horses closed their eyes and neighed aloud. Some, out of fear and agitation, raised their forelegs into the air. The *kathi* devotees pulled their reins to control them. Everyone was covered in sand but eventually found their way out. Shri Hari gave orders to return to Gadhada. The storm continued unabated. On reaching Dada’s *darbar*, Maharaj told Jayanand Brahmachari, “You shall leave for Ahmedabad tomorrow. Give this letter to Muktanand Swami and then go with him to Vadthal.” ♦

From Gujarati text, *Bhagwan Swaminarayan*  
by H.T. Dave



# The Ugly Face of Anger

*A deadly emotion that creates and leaves a trail of destruction and negativity. What are its causes and means to rein and remedy it, and induce peace and good health in our lives?...*

**A**s I look around the boardroom at my fellow team members, I'm filled with excitement. For months, I've been waiting for that one project that will set me apart from my co-workers, the one that will give me a chance to shine. What a lucky break to get assigned to such a powerful group of people! To my right is an organized co-worker who is perfect for recording and keeping the group on task. Across from me is the guy who has brilliant ideas and can really elevate your project to the next level. And me – I am the implementer. I'm the one who can take a project and bring it to fruition.

And then I hesitate. At the far left end of the table is the lone team member who throws a punch at my confidence. I remember that he straggled in late to this meeting, dishevelled and unprepared. He has not said one word during the whole strategy session, and I start to get worried.

However, being the team leader, I want everyone to be involved and so I decide to assign

him a part of the project to complete. In the coming days, I follow up with him to see if he needs any help. He says, "I'm fine. I'm almost finished putting it together." Finally, the deadline approaches. I approach him and the rest of the team members to gather their information. He tells me that he doesn't have it and that it's nowhere close to being done.

My blood begins to boil as I try to comprehend every word he speaks. I try my best to stay calm, but the dream of successfully completing this project so that my boss recognize my talent dances before my eyes. The pain of knowing that this dream is now shattered is too much to bear. I raise my voice and begin yelling at him, telling him how irresponsible he is and not capable of doing anything right. I continue until I realize that the other team members are staring at me.

Anger! It's an inherent quality in all of us. But the way we express it varies from each individual.

## CAUSES OF ANGER

Anger is an emotion that usually leaves us feeling negative afterwards. But at the same time, we know that it's an inherent part of us. So what causes the ugly face of anger to arise? L. Channing, author of the book *About Anger*, attributes anger to other emotions like frustration, hurt, annoyance, and disappointment. Leonard Berkowitz and Eddie Harmon-Jones from the University of Wisconsin-Madison state that people become angry when they are kept from attaining an important goal.

However, Pramukh Swami Maharaj has given the simplest yet most intuitive answer to the main cause of anger: ego. But what is ego? Simply put, it is self-importance. You can see that all causes of anger mentioned above actually stem from ego. For example, in the scenario mentioned at the beginning, I was upset not because the project was incomplete, but because I could not reach the goal of having approval from my boss. So it indeed is true that the real cause of anger is ego.

## DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS OF ANGER

Anger is such a strong emotion that it affects not just ourselves as individuals but also others around us. It can change the entire environment, whether we are at work, school or the mandir.

Shriji Maharaj, in *Vachnamrut Loya 1*, has described the environment in which there is the presence of a person who has a lot of anger. "If a snake were to appear in this assembly at this moment, then even if it does not bite anyone, everyone would still have to rise and scatter; there would be panic in everyone's heart. Furthermore, if a tiger were to come and roar at the outskirts of a village, then even if it does not harm anyone, all would feel terror within, and no one would come out of their homes. Similarly, even if a trace of anger were to arise, it would still be a source of extreme misery."

From our previous scenario, we can see that by yelling at my fellow colleague in public, I not only embarrassed him but also made a negative impression on my other colleagues. These types

of emotions create a tense atmosphere not only in the workplace but anywhere we go.

We've looked at the terrible effects of anger on those people around us but the effect on ourselves is even more detrimental. When we get angry, our heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature all increase. If this anger is not controlled, then some of the long term effects include increased anxiety, high blood pressure and headache. It's amazing how one emotion can have such negative effects on our body.

## METHODS OF ANGER MANAGEMENT

So, we know that anger is detrimental to our well-being. But how can it be managed? To that, Swamishri has yet another insightful answer. Once, Swamishri was on a flight from Auckland to Singapore. A 13-year-old boy, named Kirtan, was also travelling with Swamishri. Being honest, he confessed to Swamishri, "I get very angry! How can I overcome it?" Swamishri provided a great yet applicable solution. "Whenever you get angry, remember Shriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj and chant 'Swaminarayan Swaminarayan' in your mind. By remembering Maharaj, your anger will subside. Now, just think where is the need to get angry? There is no gain by getting angry on anyone. By getting angry, your work is not accomplished and the other person is left miserable and distressed. By doing bhajan, chanting 'Swaminarayan Swaminarayan,' the distress of the other person and yours, is dissolved."

According to the Better Health Channel in Australia, it has been found that there is a strong link between anger and stress. This is why relaxation techniques are now frequently being used as a method of controlling anger.

However, it's also important to recognize triggers within ourselves so that we may learn what makes us angry and control it. Once we find the reason, we can find a solution so that we are better prepared when the situation arises again. If the reason you are angry is because you got into an argument with

*(contd. on p. 13)*



# The Mundaka Upanishad Proclaiming the

# Akshar-Purushottam Principle Part-2



## ANOTHER NAME OF AKSHAR: 'BRAHMAN'

First Angirā Rishi used the word 'Akshar' for the divine entity which is the cause of the whole world. Then to make it known that this entity called Akshar is also known as 'Brahman', Angirā uses the word 'Brahman' instead of Akshar when he explains how Akshar causes creation. For example, 'तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म' – 'Tapasā cheeyate 'Brahma'' (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/1/8), 'तस्मादेतद् ब्रह्म नाम रूपमन्नं च जायते' – 'Tasmādetad 'Brahma' nāma roopamannam cha jāyate' (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/1/9).

The Bhagavad Gitā also reinforces this fact. In the first *shloka* of the eighth *adhyāy* (chapter), Arjuna enquires about the Brahman entity, 'किं तद् ब्रह्म' – 'Kim tad Brahma' – 'What is that Brahman?' (Gitā: 8/1). Krishna Bhagwan answers using the word Akshar for Brahman 'अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमम्' – 'Aksharam Brahma Paramam' – Akshar, which is above *jivas*, *ishwars*, *māyā* and *muktas*, is Brahman (Gitā: 8/3). The only difference is that in the Mundaka Upanishad Brahman has been used in the place of Akshar, and in the Bhagavad Gitā, Akshar in the place of Brahman. Hence, Akshar and Brahman are two synonyms of the same

entity. This is the very reason the eighth chapter of the Gitā is called the 'Aksharbrahman Yoga' – putting both words together. That is why in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya as well, the joint name 'Aksharbrahman' is used for this divine entity.

## AKSHARBRAHMAN: ALL-PERVADING

In addition to being the cause of creation, Aksharbrahman is also shown as pervading all creation.

Wherever there is an effect, there is a cause. By Paramātmā's wish, Aksharbrahman is the cause of all. The whole of creation is its work. Therefore, wherever the world is, its cause, Aksharbrahman, is there as well. This is the all-pervasiveness of Aksharbrahman. Maharshi Angirā says that this Aksharbrahman is 'सर्वगतम्' – 'Sarvagatam' – 'all-pervasive' (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/1/6) by its omniscience. Moreover, O Shaunak! There are many other traits that come with being all-pervasive. These are also present in Aksharbrahman, 'बृहच्च तद् दिव्यमचिन्त्यरूपं सूक्ष्माच्च तत् सूक्ष्मतरं विभाति। दूरात् सुदूरे तदिहान्तिके च पश्यत्स्विहैव निहितं गुहायाम्॥' – 'Bruhachcha tad divyamchintyaroopam sookshmāchcha tat sookshmataram vibhāti, doorāt sudoore tadihāntike cha pashyatsvihaiva nihitam guhāyām' (Mundaka Upanishad: 3/1/7). Meaning, the divine and unimaginable Aksharbrahman is extremely large and bigger than everything. (That is why it is called 'Brahman'.) It is subtler than the subtle. It is farther than the farthest and yet near (because it is everywhere). And whosoever realizes it, experiences it residing within their hearts.

Therefore, O Somya! For the pervasiveness of Aksharbrahman, I clearly say, 'ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्म पश्चाद् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण। अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम् ॥' – '*Brahmaivedamamrutam purastād Brahma pashchād Brahma dakshinatashchottarena, adhashchordhvam cha prasrutam brahmaivedam vishvamidam varishtham*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/2/11). This nectar-filled indestructible Aksharbrahman is in front of everything and it is behind everything. It is to the south of everything and to the north. Above and below, Aksharbrahman pervades (*prasrutam*) everything in this world. Therefore it is *varishtham*, i.e. the best, and worthy of prayer.

After stating the pervasiveness of Aksharbrahman, another divine attribute is mentioned.

### **AKSHARBRAHMAN: SUPPORT OF THE WORLD**

This Aksharbrahman is also the support of all. Angirā Muni says, 'यस्मिंल्लोका निहिता लोकिनश्च तदेतदक्षरं ब्रह्म' – '*Yasminllokā nihitā lokinashcha tadetaksharam Brahma*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/2/2). Aksharbrahman is that by whose support the infinite worlds of countless universes, and the residents and governors of those worlds abide. In the Kathopanishad, Yamarājā explained the same thing to young Nachiketa, 'तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते। तस्मिंल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन' – '*Tadeva shukram tad Brahma tadevāmrutamuchyate, tasminallokāhā shritāhā sarve tadu nātyeti kashchana*' (Kathopanishad: 5/8, 6/1). For Aksharbrahman the Bhagavad Gītā has also stated, 'सर्वभृच्चैव' – '*Sarvabhurchchaiva*' (Gītā – 13/14), 'भूतभृत् च' 'Bhootabhatru cha' (Gītā – 13/16), i.e. that Aksharbrahman is the supporter and nourisher of all beings.

Thus Aksharbrahman has been described as the cause of creation, as pervading creation and as the supporter of creation. Now another form of Aksharbrahman is explained.

### **AKSHARBRAHMAN: ABODE OF PARABRAHMAN**

O Shaunak! This very Aksharbrahman is, in another form, the divine abode of Paramātmā and infinite *brahmarup muktas*. 'एष वः पुण्यः सुकृतो ब्रह्मलोकः' – '*Esha vaha punyaha sukruto Brahmaloaka*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/2/6). This Brahmaloaka, i.e. Akshardham, is extremely divine, it is extremely pure. It can be attained by performing good deeds full of bhakti. Moreover, 'तपःश्रद्धे ये ह्युपवसन्त्यरण्ये शान्ता विद्वांसो भैक्षचर्या चरन्तः। सूर्यद्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति यत्राऽमृतः स पुरुषो ह्यव्ययात्मा' – '*Tapaha shraddhe ye hyupavasantyaranye shāntā vidvāso bhaikshacharyām charantaha, sooryadvārena te virajāhā prayānti yatrāmrutaha sa purusho hyavyayātmā*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/2/11). Those devotees that go to reside in the forest and, attaining *brahmavidyā* with faith and a calm mind, perform the *upāsana* of Paramātmā. On death they go, via the *archi*-path, to Akshardhām, where the immortal and imperishable Paramātmā resides.

Furthermore, 'परमं ब्रह्मधाम यत्र विश्वं निहितं भाति शुभ्रम्' – '*Paramam Brahmadhāma yatra vishvam nihitam bhāti shubhram*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 3/2/1). Brahmadhām is *paramam*, i.e. above all other abodes. This is because it is the abode of Paramātmā himself, and there is not even the slightest contact with *māyā*. There, everything is divine. Shaunak! What can be said about that Akshardhām! 'न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्यतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः। तमेव भान्तमनुभान्ति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥' – '*Na tatra sooryo bhāti na chandratārakam nemā vidyato bhānti kuto'yamagrihi, tameva bhāntamanubhānti sarvam tasya bhāsā sarvamidam*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/2/10). Compared to the divine light of Akshardhām, the light of the sun, moon, stars and lightning is insignificant and of the mundane realm. Moreover, the reality is that it is by the divine powerful light of Akshardhām that the sun, moon and others have light.

In this way, Aksharbrahman, in the form of Akshardhām, is also a divine place. Now yet another function of Aksharbrahman is explained.

## AKSHARBRAHMAN:

### AS A SEVAK IN AKSHARDHĀM

Maharshi Angirā explains the different functions of Aksharbrahman very clearly.

As an abode Aksharbrahman upholds Paramātmā and the *muktas*. Aksharbrahman also resides with a form within that very abode. Explaining this, Angirā says, 'दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे ह्येष व्योम्यात्मा प्रतिष्ठितः' – 'Divye Brahmapure hyesha vyomnyātmā pratishthitaha' (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/2/7). Aksharbrahman, the *ātmā* of all, resides in divine Brahmapur, i.e. Akshardhām. That too, with a form with divine hands, feet, etc. 'मनोमयः प्राणशरीरनेता' – 'Manomayaha prānashareeraneta' (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/2/7). He is complete with a divine mind, vital breath and body. The figure of his body is also beautiful. 'हिरण्मये परे कोशे विरजं ब्रह्म निष्कलम्। तच्छुभ्रं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिस्तदात्मविदो विदुः॥' – 'Hiranmaye pare koshe virajam brahma nishkalam, tacchubhram jyotishām jyotistadātmavido viduhu' (2/2/9). That very Aksharbrahman is in the form of a servant of Paramātmā in that extremely illuminous and supreme Akshardhām. It is always free of the three *gunas* – *rajoguna*, *tamoguna* and *sattvaguna* – unchangeable, and *shubhram* – beautiful in every way, extremely pure and the lustre of even the luminous. It is known as such by the wise. Therefore we should know it too.

Thus, Angirā Muni has disclosed a unique form of Aksharbrahman. Then Angirā explains yet another important function of Aksharbrahman.

### AKSHARBRAHMAN: AS A BRIDGE

Shaunak! All the functions of Aksharbrahman that we have seen so far are divine. Nevertheless, what I am about to say is something of great benefit to spiritual aspirants like us. It is extremely useful and therefore must be known. It is not easy to see, know or experience Aksharbrahman as the all-pervasive, all-supporting cause of all. Nor will we be able to see, know or experience Aksharbrahman as Akshardhām or as the servant of Paramātmā in that Akshardhām until we become *brahmarup*. The

only way we can see, know and experience all of this is if Aksharbrahman himself, out of compassion, comes in human form before our very eyes and becomes like us and stays with us. Therefore, I will now explain the form of Aksharbrahman which is easily available to all. With these sentiments, Angirā says, 'अमृतस्यैष सेतुः' – 'Amrutasyaisha Setuhu' (Mundaka Upanishad 2/2/5). It is this very Aksharbrahman that is the bridge to immortality, i.e. *moksha* (liberation), and the attainment of Paramātmā. Just as people cross large raging rivers easily by taking the refuge of a bridge, similarly by taking the refuge of Aksharbrahman spiritual aspirants cross the ocean of this life. This form of Aksharbrahman is known as the 'guru'. That is why when it was time to describe the characteristics of the guru, Angirā clearly said that the guru should be 'श्रोत्रियम्' – 'Shrotriyam', i.e. he should be realized in the essence of all the shastras, he should be 'ब्रह्म' – 'Brahma', i.e. Aksharbrahman himself, and he should be 'निष्ठम्' – 'nishtham', i.e. he should have conviction in Paramātmā. (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/2/12)

### AKSHARBRAHMAN'S FOUR FUNCTIONS

Looking carefully at this entire description of Aksharbrahman we can see four distinct functions. One being the all-pervasive, all-supporting cause of all. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has used the word '*chidākāsh*' for this (Vachanamrut Gadhada I-46). The second, being the support of Paramātmā and the countless *muktas* as an abode. For this, Bhagwan Swaminarayan uses words such as 'Akshardhām', 'Brahmadhām', 'Brahmapur' (Vachanamruts Sarangpur 1, Gadhada I-63, Kariyani 8, etc.). Thirdly, being in the service of Paramātmā within that Akshardhām with a human-like form. Bhagwan Swaminarayan talks about this in Vachanamrut Gadhada I-21, 'In its other form, that Akshar remains in the service of Purushottam Narayan.' The fourth form is, by the wish of Paramātmā, to incarnate in human form to rid aspirants of their ignorance, to make them *brahmarup*, to develop

the highest level of *nirvikalp* faith in them, and to let them experience the manifest form of Paramātmā. Bhagwan Swaminarayan mentions this in Vachanamrut Gadhada I-71, ‘When God incarnates for the purpose of granting liberation to the *jīvas*, he is always accompanied by his Akshardhām, his attendants – who are formed of *chaitanya* – and all of his divine powers. Thus, although Aksharbrahman is only one entity the shastras have described its four forms based on its different functions.

That is why Maharshi Angirā sings the glory of all four forms of Aksharbrahman in a single mantra. He says, ‘आविः सन्निहितं गुहाचरं नाम महत्पदम् अत्रैतत् समर्पितम् । एजत् प्राणनिमिषच्च’ – ‘*Āvihi sannihitam guhācharam nāma mahatpadam atraitat samarpitam, ejaṭprāṇnimishachcha*’, i.e. OShaunak! This Aksharbrahman can *avihi* – manifest, i.e. incarnate. Furthermore, the same Aksharbrahman is ‘*sannihitam guhācharam*’, i.e. stays near all in their hearts. Moreover, that Aksharbrahman is ‘*mahat padam*’ is a specific paramount place. Not only that, but it is ‘*atraitat samarpitam*’, which means: ‘*atra*’ in that *Akshardhām*, ‘*etat*’ that very Aksharbrahman, ‘*samarpitam*’ is devoted in the service of Purushottam Narayan. Furthermore, O Shaunak! Aksharbrahman, who is engrossed in the supreme service of Paramātmā, moves, walks and blinks his eyes. In other words, it is not formless without organs but eternally has a form with divine hands, feet and all other organs. Moreover, the words ‘move’, ‘walk’, ‘breath’, etc. also show the importance of the manifest Brahmaswarup guru.

In this way, of the two divine entities that must be known in *brahmavidyā*, namely Akshar and Purushottam, we have extensively seen the form of Akshar.

Then the form of Purushottam Narayan, who is above all and beyond this world, is explained.

## **PURUSHOTTAM ABOVE EVEN AKSHAR**

Seeing how the Mundaka Upanishad has

explained Aksharbrahman, one starts to think how it would be possible to sing the glory of Parabrahman! This is nothing but natural, since Aksharbrahman has been described as the cause of creation, all-pervasive and the support of all. Now what can be said for Parabrahman? Therefore, someone may be deluded that this entity for which the word Akshar or Brahman has been used is in fact Parabrahman! It is this that Angirā now explains. He is clearly conscious of what he is saying. This is the word of the Vedas. It is impossible to sing the glory of Parabrahman as he is, ‘यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह’ – ‘*Yato vachō nivartante, aprāpya manasā saha*’ (Taittiriya Upanishad Ānandvalli: 4).

Moreover, whatever glory is sung it is encompassed in Aksharbrahman. That is why Angirā Muni shows a unique way of saying the true glory of Parabrahman. He said, for Paramātmā we can say, ‘अक्षरत् परतः परः’ – ‘*Aksharāt parataha paraha*’ (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/1/2). Paramātmā is above even Aksharbrahman who is above all. That is to say he is also the controller of Akshar, pervades Akshar, supports Akshar and is worthy of worship by Akshar. Just as after describing someone as a millionaire and a person of great authority, you say that he is the servant of someone else, then imagine how great the other person must be. Paramātmā governs Akshar, Aksharbrahman is Paramātmā’s servant.

Saying the glory of Paramātmā, Angirā Muni says, ‘एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च । सं वायुर्ज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धरिणी ।’ – ‘*Etasmājjāyate prāno manaha sarvendriyāni cha, sam vāyurjyotirāpaha pruthivee vishvasya dharanee*’ (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/1/3). Meaning, it is from this Paramātmā that the vital breath, mind, eyes, ears and other organs, earth, water, fire, wind, space etc. are produced. Thus, informing us about the causative aspect of Paramātmā he finally says, ‘पुरुष एवेदं विश्वं कर्म तपो ब्रह्म परामृतम् ।’ – ‘*Purusha evedam vishvam karma tapo brahma parāmrutam*’ (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/1/10). It means that Purushottam

is the *ātma* of this whole world, of all karmas and of even Aksharbrahman itself. Thus showing Paramātmā's supreme control and pervasiveness. There are many mantras in this Upanishad which sing the extraordinary glory of Paramātmā, but when it says, 'अक्षरात् परतः परः' – '*Aksharāt parataha paraha*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/1/2), all this glory is encompassed within that. This means that whatever characteristics Aksharbrahman has, like being the cause of creation, pervasive and the supporter of all, etc., they are all subject to the wish of Parabrahman, who is above Aksharbrahman.

Thus the glory of Paramātmā has been sung in a unique way. Hence, to understand Purushottam's true greatness it is necessary to know Aksharbrahman. So, the purpose of this Upanishad can be understood clearly.

Along with this let us also understand another fact. In this Upanishad the glory of Paramātmā has been sung as '*Aksharāt parataha paraha*', i.e. superior with respect to Akshar. Therefore it is also clear that the entity referred to as Akshar in this Upanishad is not Paramātmā.

Truly, the three words, '*Aksharāt parataha paraha*' contain everything. The glory of Akshar,

the glory of Purushottam and the eternal difference between the forms of these two entities, Akshar and Purushottam.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, in this Upanishad, Angirā Muni, clearly explains the forms and divine characteristics of the two divine entities, Akshar and Purushottam. This is *brahmavidyā*, this is *parāvidya*, this is *adhyātmavidyā*, and this is the principle of Akshar-Purushottam. For this very reason, the Akshar-Purushottam principle echoes in the mantra 'येनाऽक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम्' – '*Yenā'ksharam purusham veda satyam provācha tām tattvato brahmavidyām*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/2/13). Or, at the very least, one cannot but feel as though this mantra resonates as a synonym to the Akshar-Purushottam principle.

How can we imbibe this *brahmavidyā*? Who is Parabrahman? Who is Aksharbrahman? What is the place of Aksharbrahman and of Parabrahman in our spiritual endeavours? If we attain this *brahmavidyā* completely, what fruits will be achieved? Many other subtle secrets still fill this Upanishad. We will explore these in the next issue. ♦

(contd. from p. 8)

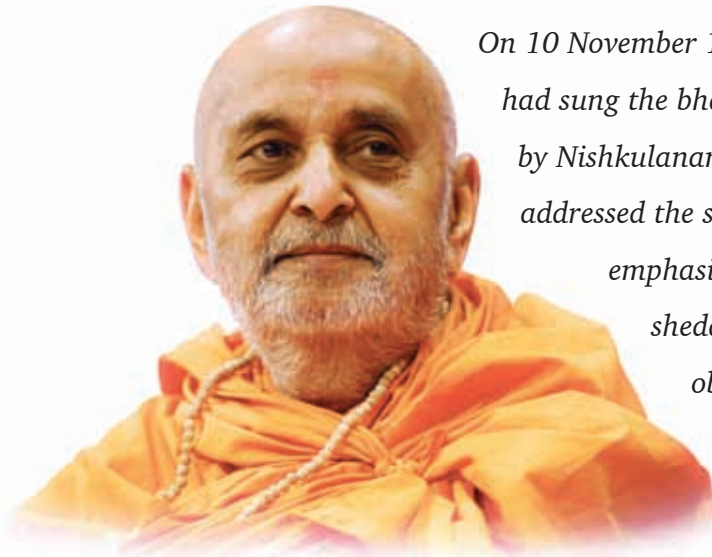
someone, then try stopping yourself from lashing out at them. Try putting yourself in their shoes. The reason for their actions may be something that you may not know about. Just pausing for a few seconds can make a big difference!

Let's relate back to our scenario. If taken from a different perspective, what could have been done to ensure a more positive outcome? I could have approached the situation in a calm manner and tried to think of a valid reason for the colleague's actions. By yelling at him, I don't even provide him the opportunity to explain himself. Also, yelling does not change what happened in the past and does nothing for the future except destroy a work relationship with fellow colleagues.

## CONCLUSION

From our scenario it becomes apparent that although during difficult situations where we have this urge to just let out our anger, the reality is that by doing so, it accomplishes nothing. Rather, it makes the situation worse and results in hurt feelings among the people around us. So the next time we have the desire to scream and yell, we should take a step back and think about the effects our anger can have later on. Also, remember that we may not always know the situation and the reasons for why things happened the way they did and so we have no right to make a judgement. Rather, as Swamishri has suggested, the immediate solution is as simple as saying 'Swaminarayan Swaminarayan.' ♦

# Knowledge of Sankhya



*On 10 November 1998, in Mumbai, after the sadhus had sung the bhajan ‘Dhorājini dhābdi...’, composed by Nishkulanand Swami, Pramukh Swami Maharaj addressed the satsang assembly in Mumbai. He emphasized that real happiness lies in shedding desires for worldly pleasures and objects and becoming attached to God...*

**N**ishkulanand Swami was an embodiment of detachment and so disliked finery. He wore coarse clothes and ate simple food. He taught that, after becoming a devotee of God, if one were to desire worldly objects then one has not understood anything, since satsang is not practiced for gaining such worldly objects. Many have shunned worldly objects.

In previous lives as kings, one would have had worldly objects, eaten many rich foods and travelled in many cars. After doing all these things, the *jiva* is born again. It has taken birth in all life forms and enjoyed material pleasures. And now, after attaining this satsang and such talks if one continues to desire perishable worldly objects then one has not understood the glory of God, or satsang.

Nishkulanand Swami in his bhajan ‘Dhorājini dhābdi...’ says that having left everything to practice satsang, such desire for worldly objects will result in deficiency in one’s *ekantik dharma*.

Maharaj has said that *kusang* and worldly objects are obstacles on the path of *ekantik dharma* (Vachanamrut Gadhada I-16).

In those days Dhoraji produced *dhābdis* (shawls) of a high quality. A sadhu became attached to one. He had renounced everything, yet became attached to the shawl. So, he lost focus on God. If one becomes attached to worldly objects, how can one concentrate on God? Thus, this is a deficiency in one’s *ekantik dharma*. Both *kusang* and worldly objects have to be shunned.

Possession of worldly objects does not speak of one’s greatness or excellence. Our greatness lies in saintliness and devotion. All these talks are aimed at uprooting desires from the *jiva*. But the nature of the *jiva* is such that it is disturbed by even minor things and so, despite having attained this great satsang, it falls and leaves.

The example of shawl (*dhābdi*) represents such worldly attachment. If one is told to leave it as it is not required, one is hurt and questions, “You want me to leave my *dhābdi*?” Eventually, everyone will have to leave worldly possessions. For those who understand this it is fine, but people find it difficult to leave worldly objects. If one does not have such hankering, there is no pain; but if one gets it one becomes possessive. At such a time, all

the spiritual association one has become engaged in, the *seva* one has done, and the *bhakti* one has offered goes waste. In *satsang*, one has to discard worldly objects, body-consciousness, honour and insult, happiness and misery, be tolerant and offer *bhakti*. It is possible to become *ekantik* only if all this is left, and this will happen only by this association (of *satsang*).

Is there talk of *ekantik dharma* elsewhere? No, there is talk only of hotels, cinemas, parties and other such worldly things. Talks of not indulging in the material pleasures are only found wherever there is *satsang*; elsewhere there is encouragement to indulge in one's desires. Someone may take you to a party where your senses are polluted and so you fall from *satsang*. Is that good? Outside you will get such offers to enjoy. In *satsang*, you will not get such offers; only talks of giving them up.

Yogiji Maharaj used to instruct everyone not to eat out and to abstain from going to the cinema or to parties. To those who did these things, he used to prescribe a fast as atonement. Here, there is talk for the *mumukshus*, those with determination and with a stout heart. These talks are for those who want to please God and enjoy the bliss of God. They are not for others. Those who have understood and walked this path have become happy.

But, Swami says that the nature of the *jiva* is such that attachment to material objects cannot be discarded. A *satsangi* who is smitten by the bug of worldly objects continues to wallow in ignorance despite regular attendance to *satsang* assemblies. Swami says, there is no alternative but to leave it all. Understand this principle now or after two births, ten births or even after 100,000 years, but there is no alternative to it.

So, why not give it up in this birth and become happy. If desires remain, then *Yama* will come and take you, however much you refuse and resist. You may hold on to possessions for a while, but at the time of death will they remain with you? So, Gunatitanand Swami says it is good to understand and give them up. That one will not remain

forever on this earth is certain, so why cling on to things that are transient. When one renounces them on Swami's instruction, then there will be no deficiency in attaining *ekantik dharma*.

Even Shastriji Maharaj pleased his guru, Bhagatji Maharaj, by giving away the holy footprints when instructed by him.

Sant Swami used to say even if one daily reads and worships the *Vachanamrut*, it will not help in attaining *moksha* unless one puts it into practise. If there is glory for Shriji Maharaj only in the *jiva*, then there will be no problem.

Thus, since desires for insignificant worldly objects remain, one is unable to please the holy *Sadhu*.

Maharaj also says that one should shun obstinacy, ego and jealousy. Faiba of Machhiav pleased Maharaj many times, but would not make peace with her daughter-in-law. So, Maharaj, God himself, left without eating the food offered by her.

Thus, now that one has attained God and his holy *Sadhu*, and understood their glory, one should give up such things and experience divine happiness. Otherwise, many disputes and arguments flare up from such stubbornness.

In this world, attachment results in inner conflict. Many families are destroyed by arguments over land and money.

So what is the fruit of *satsang*? That one has to discard obstinacy, ego, jealousy, the desire for worldly objects, and retain only God. If everything else is given up, one experiences happiness and peace. Even if one gets millions of rupees, worldly pleasures and power, one will not be happy.

Hence, be satisfied with what you get to sustain the body. Only one who has true wisdom, understanding, and firm faith in God and his holy *Sadhu* will be truly happy.



# Observing Commands

*Bhagwan Swaminarayan has stated that agna and upasana are the two wings of satsang which must be strengthened to reach Akshardham. Bhagwan Swaminarayan placed great emphasis on the need to practice satsang and live one's life according to the agnas (commands) of God, his holy Sadhu and the shastras. He declares that his words represent his divine form and in no circumstances should they be disobeyed. This is the simplest, safest and surest way to please God and attain moksha.*



1. In Sardhar, Shri Hari told Muktanand Swami in private, “One who accepts my word never encounters even the slightest misery. Jarasandh seized the kingdoms of countless kings [and was still defeated], but Shri Krishna protected those who sought refuge at his feet. Similarly, I protect those who have faith in me. I absolve them of all sins. Do not doubt this.”
2. In Ingorala, Shri Hari said, “My devotees should not act wilfully, but observe the *agnas*. One who behaves wilfully, even if he observes dharma, is a great renunciant, chants my name, sings my glory, becomes emotional on remembering me, emaciates his body, meditates day and night, or composes poems and bhajans, is still *vimukh* (distant) from me.”
3. In Memka, Shri Hari said to the sadhus, “One who observes *niyams* is not trapped in the net of *maya*. An expert swimmer does not drown in water, since, having once learnt to swim, the fear of water is removed. Until he learns [to swim], even a mighty and powerful person is afraid of water.
4. There are many forms of worldly knowledge. In the same way, *brahmavidya* is attained in many ways through satsang. Those who introspect, understand this. Without introspection, even the extremely intelligent cannot grasp *brahmavidya*.”
5. In Jiva Khachar’s *darbar*, Shri Hari addressed the sadhus, “As long as one acts wilfully, one does not rise above the *jiva* state. When one does according to the wish of *ishwar*, one becomes like *ishwar*.”
6. In Gadhada, Shri Hari said to Jiva Khachar, “Maintain a way of doing that which pleases God. Worldly people wish to do as they please. I believe that one who renounces, chants, fasts, undertakes pilgrimages, performs observances and *yagnas*, sponsors meals and makes various other donations but behaves wilfully does not attain *kalyan*. When the sun rises, there is no need for candles and oil torches; when it rains there is no need to irrigate with a *kosh*; one who sits in a boat does not need to tie gourds [to stay afloat].



Similarly, for one who does what pleases God all other endeavours are automatically completed.”

7. In Jetpur, Shri Hari said, “Those who do as they please, suffer. Those who want to preserve satsang should never act wilfully. Just as a rope-walking artiste keeps his focus on the rope, similarly those who walk keeping their focus on the rope of *agna* will win. Transgressing commands even by mistake leads to disgrace. Also, it is said that devotees have no sins, but to me, only those who observe my commands, do what pleases me, and trust all the big and small commands are devotees. Those who want to cling to *satsang*, should not act wilfully nor should they transgress my words and act. Those who do not act according to my commands are not devotees.”
8. In Mangrol, after the Annakut festival, Shri Hari said, “I will grant *moksha* to those who have faith in my words and act accordingly. I will grant extreme happiness to those who listen to my *charitras*. Believe my words to be my form. Those who believe like this and observe them, I consider to be obedient. Those who do not follow my commands, even though they stay near me and serve me, I consider them to be distant from me. This is my firm belief. I consider my words to be more important than me. I forever reside in my words.”
9. In Ahmedabad, Shri Hari said, “All *satsangis* should remain within the *niyams* and observe dharma. Without adhering to the *niyams*, dharma cannot be observed. To obey the commands is superior to austerities.”
10. In Bhuj, Shri Hari sat on the swing and said, “Resolve happily to obey the words of God; that is a divine way. One who behaves as he wishes may possess special powers, but will lose those powers. One who observes the commands is more powerful than a *siddha* (one endowed with special powers). One who thinks that God is no longer manifest [on earth] should believe God’s words to be manifest and follow them.”
11. In Gadhpur, Shri Hari said, “Those who serve as I tell them to and never become anxious, I keep in my service. Those sadhus, *varnis* and *parshads* who do as they please, I shun. Bhav, Brahma, Narad and others did as they pleased and were disgraced.”
12. In Loj, Shri Hari told Muktanand Swami and Brahmanand Swami to sing and then said, “Those who perform spiritual endeavours still attribute countless faults to the actions of God. Those who believe that their *moksha* is due to their own spiritual endeavours will not believe in my words. So, act only according to my words. Infinite spiritual endeavours are contained in my words. All my householder and renunciant devotees should know this with firm conviction.”
13. In Bhuj, Shri Hari said, “Believe my words to be like nectar. Those who believe them as poison receive the fruits of poison. My words give happiness. There is no greater *moksha* than to act according to my words.”
14. In Gadhada, Muktanand Swami narrated what Shri Hari had said, “Those who believe the devotees of Parabrahman to be *brahmarup*, and respect the commands of the guru and act accordingly; when sadhus observe their *niyams*; householders observe their *niyams* – then *maya* is unable to cause them any hindrance, since, *maya* is subservient to God. *Maya* devours those who act as they please. They do not remain in satsang, and eventually become *vimukh* and get caught in the cycle of births and deaths. Sadhus or householders who spread even the slightest fault of other sadhus, householders or mine, will decline daily like one with tuberculosis.”



# GURU PURNIMA

7 July 2009, Bochasan



Prior to his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of puja and *arti* of *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Wellingborough (UK). Swamishri performed his puja in his room.

The Guru Purnima assembly had commenced at 8.30 am. Satyaprakash Swami, Viveksagar Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Dr Swami and Mahant Swami spoke about the glory of Swamishri's life and works. More than 60,000 devotees from all over India and abroad had gathered for Swamishri's darshan. Stage guests Shri Ravichandran, director of IIM, Indore, Shri B.G. Patel, Vice-Chancellor of Sardar Patel University and Shri C.L. Patel, Chairman of Charutar Vidya Mandal, were honoured with garlands by senior sadhus.

Swamishri inaugurated an Mp3 and audio CD of Gunatitanand Swami's biography (Gujarati), a CD on Swaminarayan *dhun*, 'Naam Smaran', a foot high *murti* of Shri Nilkanth Varni and a set of moral stories for students, 'Sucharitam', written by Sadhu Priyadarshandas. Thereafter, Swamishri was honoured with a variety of

garlands by senior sadhus. A traditional dance on the lyric "Swaminarayan Charankamalma..." was beautifully performed by BAPS children of Mogri centre. Then a *pushpanjali* ritual was performed by all to offer respect to Shriji Maharaj and Swamishri.

The celebration climaxed with Swamishri's blessings, "Today is the best of days for the whole world. Through the guru one attains spiritual knowledge and then liberation. Veda Vyas has mentioned this in the Vedas, Upanishads. Gita and Shrimad Bhagvat. Shriji Maharaj has revealed in the Vachanamrut and Gunatitanand Swami has expressed in his Swamini Vato that by taking refuge in a guru one becomes free from all bondage. By going to him one becomes liberated from *maya*, *samsara*, I-ness and Mine-ness and subsequently one becomes happy. The more one consolidates the knowledge of *atma-Paramatma* in one's life the more happiness and peace one experiences in life."

After the celebration devotees were served *maha-prasad*. ◆

## Pramukh Swami Maharaj's

# VICHARAN

8-31 May, June, 1-10 July 2009, Mumbai, Bochasan

### MUMBAI, 10 May, Sun

In the evening satsang assembly Viveksagar Swami delivered a discourse. Thereafter, a drama on ideal devotees 'Satsangi to tene kahiye', written by Adarshjivan Swami, was performed by youths. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "With satsang and bhakti, one should not become egoistic, jealous or harbor ill-will towards others. When one does not have the predominance of satsang in life, one is faced with problems at every step. The devotion one offers to God becomes useful, just as Dada Khachar, Parvatbhai and others had done."

### 17 May, Sun

For the convenience of devotees, today's evening satsang assembly was dedicated to celebrating Yogiji Maharaj's birthday. During this symbolic celebration, sadhus initiated by Yogiji Maharaj, namely, Premprakash Swami, Viveksagar Swami and Kothari Swami, recollected their experiences about Yogiji Maharaj. This was followed by a video show on Yogiji Maharaj. Finally, Swamishri blessed the devotees, "Yogiji Maharaj was a divine person. One would always find him smiling, showering love and compassion, and brimming with joy. By remembering him our miseries and pains disappear." In conclusion Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior sadhus.

### 21 May, Thurs

Swamishri blessed Bhadresh Swami for writing 'Swaminarayan Bhashyam', a commentary on the Brahmasutra. Thereafter Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of puja and *arti* of *murtis* for BAPS hari mandir in Algadh, Surat district.

### 24 May, Sun

The evening satsang assembly was dedicated to the celebration of Swamishri's symbolic 60th

anniversary as the president of the BAPS. Several sadhus narrated incidents about Swamishri's saintliness and other virtues. Then a video on Swamishri was shown. Viveksagar Swami discoursed on Swamishri's saintliness and Herculean efforts for the growth of Satsang. Thereafter, children and teenagers performed a traditional dance. Then a drama written by Adarshjivan Swami was enacted. The celebration assembly closed with Swamishri's blessings, "We are all making efforts together in Satsang – youth volunteers, sadhus and devotees. I offer my *vandan* to all. I see in you all sentiments of dedication and sacrifice. The reason for this is that Yogiji Maharaj had visited here often, and blessed you with his divine joy, discourses and love. Whatever is accomplished in the Sanstha is due to the glory of Shastriji Maharaj and the wish of Yogiji Maharaj. Shriji Maharaj had said that without his will a dry leaf can not be moved."

Swamishri released a memorial publication, 'Smruti', depicting the history of Mumbai Satsang Mandal. Thereafter Swamishri was honoured with garlands and a flower shawl by senior sadhus.

### 27 May, Wed

Today was the official 60th Pramukh Varni Din – the day Shastriji Maharaj appointed Swamishri as the president of the BAPS. Bhajans about the glory of Swamishri were sung by sadhus during his puja. Thereafter, senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with garlands and shawls.

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of pujan and *arti* of *murtis* for BAPS hari mandirs in Barshi, Dahanu, Jamge, Nanded and Kankrali.

### 7 June, Sun

The evening satsang assembly celebrated Children's Day. A drama in Hindi 'Sanskar Surya ke dharak', written by Aksharkirtan Swami, depicted inspiring incidents from the lives of BAPS children.

Thereafter, Swamishri was garlanded by sadhus. A publication in Kannada language, *Swaminarayan Sampradaya*, was released by Swamishri. Finally, in his blessings Swamishri said, “Children have presented a wonderful programme here today. By realizing God’s glory, one is blessed with soul-force. By treading the path of satsang, others are also inspired. Quite often one becomes proud of one’s wealth and career. The feeling that ‘I have done this’ always prevails. The mighty Ravan, Kamsa, Shishupal, Dantvakra and others ruled the world and people shuddered under their persecutions – but they too passed away, leaving no trace of themselves. So, having ego is wrong. Do not have pride of any type. If you have the blessings of God and his Sadhu, then you will have inner strength.”

### **14 June, Sun**

The evening satsang assembly celebrated Kishore-Kishori and Yuvak-Yuvati Day. More than 2,500 youths had assembled in the Yogi Sabhagruh. In all, there were 9,900 devotees and youths. When Swamishri arrived, a drama ‘Ek Daglu’ was in progress. Thereafter Swamishri was honoured with garlands. In his blessings Swamishri praised, “Kishore *mandal ni jai*. The reason behind the Kishore Mandal’s enthusiasm and faithful effort is the motive to please Maharaj, Swami, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. Outside, many programmes are held to please and entertain others, but one will not gain values and inner purity. However, when one becomes associated with and committed to satsang, one realizes its importance, and then one nourishes the feeling of what one can do for God and his Sadhu. By indulging in material joys, one invites misery and pain. No matter how wealthy one is infatuation for worldly pleasures does not give peace. And conversely, when one has no wealth but savours satsang, one is blessed with peace.”

### **24 June, Wed; Rath Yatra**

During the satsang assembly held in Yogi Sabhagruh on Sunday 21st Swamishri steered the decorative *rath* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and

Jabreshwar Maharaj with a remote controlled console.

Today, at 4.00 pm a *rath yatra* was organized on a large scale on the streets of Dadar. Swamishri performed puja and *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Jabreshwar Maharaj and Shri Dakshineswar Maharaj, who were placed in two decorative palanquins. Senior sadhus carried the palanquins on the streets with the accompaniment of tunes played by a music band and bhajans sung by sadhus. Children dressed in costumes of all Indian states enthusiastically danced in traditional fashion. With male and female devotees participating, the *rath yatra* procession was 1 km long. The route included Matunga, King Circle, Pritam Hotel and back to the mandir in Dadar. The *rath yatra* concluded at 7.00 pm.

### **26 June, Fri**

Swamishri departed from Mumbai in the morning and arrived in Bochasan via Vadodara at 11.30 am. Swamishri was accorded a warm welcome by the devotees.

## **BOCHASAN**

### **3 July, Friday; Devpodhi Ekadashi**

Due to delayed monsoon rains Swamishri had instructed that prayers in the form of *dhun* be sung before Thakorji in the mandir and thereafter in his morning puja. After his puja was over at 8.30 am Swamishri told the sadhus to continue singing the *dhun*. Till 9.00 am Swamishri and all the devotees prayed for rains. Thereafter Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Today is *ekadashi*. Bhagwan Vaman came to King Bali and asked for three steps as charity. His guru warned him that the boy was God, and that he had come to trick him. But Bali replied what was wrong in being deceived by God. He gave his all. True devotees had sacrificed everything for God. Narsinh Mehta, Dada Khachar, Parvatbhai and others gave everything to God and in return they were blessed with eternal happiness.” Swamishri also blessed that the rains will arrive and fill all the natural reservoirs, rivers and dams. ◆

# LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI



## FOR THE SAKE OF ONE'S CHILD

**15 May, 2009 Mumbai**

A father and son came for Swamishri's darshan and blessings. The son was of a tender age. His father was habituated to drinking alcohol. Swamishri asked him, "How would you feel if your son started drinking?" The father remained silent. Swamishri asked the child, "What does your father drink?" Before the boy could answer his father averred, "He doesn't know as yet?" Swamishri picked up his words and advised, "When he comes to know and starts drinking, how will you react?" Give it up for the sake of your child. There is no need to drink liquor at all. Everything other than eating, praying to God and looking after one's responsibilities is wasteful."

Swamishri's words produced a desirable effect.

## FAILURE AND FAITH

**3 June, 2009, Mumbai**

A youth had titled his letter to Swamishri, 'God does not exist 100%'. The reasons he gave were as follows, "I failed six times in the eligibility

exam to go abroad. Then the agent ran away with Rs.50,000 that I had paid. I tried to obtain visas for USA and England but failed. You had blessed me, but there was no success. I had offered *abhishek* to Nilkanth Varni but to no avail. In every endeavour I have failed miserably. So, God does not exist! Others get success and why am I a victim of failure?"

Swamishri advised the youth by phone, "God exists. He is the all-doer. It is his wish that prevails. Your failure is no reason to believe that he does not exist. Believe him to be the all-doer, do your puja daily and attend satsang. Pray daily so that you can get good thoughts. Do not lose hope and courage in spite of your failures. Maharaj had blessed Dada Khachar a number of times and yet his work remained undone. But he never left Maharaj! So be strong, feel hopeful and engage yourself in bhajan. God will do good for you."

## SOLUTION TO DEPRESSION

**4 June, Mumbai**

A youth was suffering from depression. Swamishri reassured him, "Always chant God's

name. You have a house, parents, relatives, ... Then why are you depressed? God is also with you. Why do you worry? Remember Maharaj. I will also pray for you.”

Swamishri reminded him of all that he had and thus infused hope and strength.

### **PRAISING A DEVOTEE**

**9 June, Mumbai**

Dr Bhagubhai Patel is 98-years-old. He had served Shastriji Maharaj and offered his services as a doctor to Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Presently, because of old age, he suffers from amnesia and poor eyesight. He spends his time saying *mala*, doing bhajan and *arti* all day. On seeing him Swamishri started singing his praises, “You do a lot of bhajan. You have served both Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. They have blessed you. You have the association of Maharaj so may you be blessed with Akshardham while doing bhajan. Your sons are good. They serve you with care and respect. The reason for this is that you have offered devotion to God. I am very happy that you have come, and I have had your darshan. The sadhus have also got your darshan. Everyone is pleased to see you.”

Swamishri expressed his respect for and sang the praises of a dedicated and genuine devotee.

### **COMFORTING A DEVOTEE**

**15 June, Mumbai**

A devotee and his wife had gone on vacation to Darjeeling, West Bengal. During a boat ride his wife mistakenly fell into the lake and was drowned. The devotee was in deep shock. He remained cloistered in his home and had not attended to his business since the tragedy occurred fifteen days ago. Swamishri blessed the devotee and advised him, “It was her fate to die in that manner. Now instead of remaining depressed and paralysed pray for her soul. You will experience peace within. Chant Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan. Say five *malas* daily. Do bhajan. It will give peace to her soul too.”

### **CONVICTION IN GOD’S DOERSHIP BESTOWS STABILITY**

**24 June, Mumbai**

“In spite of the many difficulties and problems you face how do you maintain patience and equipoise?” a sadhu asked Swamishri.

“From the very beginning I believe that Maharaj and Swami are the all-doer. When something happens what can we do? So I have decided from the beginning that God is the all-doer.

“One faces problems when one has to deal with others or get things done. In such large organisations there are bound to be problems, but by having faith in God and leaving it upon him, I have experienced that everything works out well. Maharaj, himself, wanted to perform the *pratishta* of Gadhada mandir, but he couldn’t do it. So, whatever happens is all due to the wish of God. By leaving everything upon him, there are no problems. One will find people who criticize in whatever one does, but as long as one makes honest efforts with God and his Sadhu in mind, there is no need to worry.”

### **SWAMISHRI’S COMPASSION**

**16 June 2009**

A fallen devotee poured his heart with remorse, “Swami! I had a lot of *manushyabhav* for you. Because of that I had given up Satsang for eight years. I had stopped coming to the mandir. Subsequently, I was left devastated and miserable. I ask you to have compassion upon me and take me back at your feet.”

Swamishri listened with compassion and patience. Once he had finished confessing, Swamishri blessed him by placing his hand on his head and said, “Now forget what has happened. God has blessed you with spiritual awareness. Do satsang regularly. Do not fall into the habit of addictions and vices. And be regular in the Sunday assembly. Maharaj has forgiven you, and you’ll be happy.” ♦

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas  
Translation: Sadhu Vivekjavandas

## BAL NATIONAL SUMMER SHIBIR 2009 DRADH PRITI

27 June to 5 July 2009, Toronto, Canada



By the divine grace and inspiration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the annual Bal National Summer Camp took place at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Toronto, from June 27, 2009 to July 5, 2009. The top 48 *balaks* were selected from across North America.

This year's camp, entitled "Dradh Priti," comprised of various workshops, activities, and discussions aimed at elevating their spiritual and personal lives. Traditionally a forum for developing and improving essential *karyakar* skills, the camp also aimed to strengthen the *balaks'* relationship and attachment to Satsang and the Satpurush. In order to accomplish these goals, the Children's Summer Camp was structured on two counts, Leadership and Spirituality, which were designed to provide them with a balanced learning experience.

The Leadership Track consisted of five different classes: Essential Skills, Ethics, Etiquette, Leadership and Teambuilding. In these classes, the children were taught skills ranging from public speaking to writing, teamwork to independent thinking, and effective communication to maximizing one's creative potential, motivating oneself to motivate others and various other

leadership skills.

In the Spirituality track, the children learned the deeper meaning behind some of the various Hindu rituals they perform on a daily basis, including *arti*, *thaal* and *puja*. Hosting the camp at a traditional Hindu Mandir also added to the overall goal of the camp, as the youths were able to participate in various rituals, such as *arti*, *chesta* and *abhishek* of Nilkanth Varni.

During the camp, the attendees also participated in various evening programmes, games, activities and sports, allowing for a different medium by which they were able to develop, interact and have fun. In addition to this, the youths also participated in an exciting outing to nearby Niagara Falls, Botanical Gardens and the Floral Clock.

The camp proved a great success as participants departed with renewed confidence, enhanced abilities, and increased motivation which will undoubtedly propel them to greater heights in their education as well as their personal satsang.

◆

# UK NATIONAL KARYAKAR SHIBIR 2009

28 June 2009, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London

With the grace and blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the UK National Karyakar Shibir 2009 entitled 'Adarsh' was held at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, on Sunday 28 June 2009. Over 800 delegates representing 35 centres from around the country attended the event.

The *shibir* started with an inspiring video presentation depicting the theme through the lives of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. After a speech by Satyavrat Swami on the aim of the *shibir*; a video of Swamishri's blessings was shown.

Yogivek Swami then spoke about 'Antardrashti',



'Dradhtha', 'Adar', 'Ruchi', 'Samjan' and 'Het' in relation to one's *seva*. Such qualities were then illustrated in a presentation by Shri V. H. Patel, who thanked all those responsible in receiving the prestigious Queen's Award for Volunteer Service.

The second and third sessions were tailored for individual *mandals* and departments, where the *sant sanyojaks* and lead *karyakars* had prepared programmes and activities that were of particular relevance.

The *shibir* concluded in the evening. ♦

## SUMMER SHIBIR 2009 HINDUISM: DISCOVER AND LIVE

June & July 2009, USA & Canada

During the summer break, the Bal-Balikas (13 July) Kishore-Kishoris (25 June) and Yuvak-Yuvatis (17 July) gathered in regional *shibirs* themed: Hinduism – Discover and Live. Over the 6 regional *shibirs*, there were



more than 2,000 *bal-balikas* and 1,800 *kishore-kishoris*. Continuing from the previous year's *shibir* on *Satshastras*, the attendees explored what defines Hinduism, how it has been perceived

throughout history and what it means to be a Hindu. They discovered some of the core beliefs of Hinduism and discussed where to fit these concepts into their lives and in what manner.

Each presentation was followed by a discussion session, where groups of 10-15 children or youths further explored these topics.

The day's sessions gradually tapered down to some educating entertainment. Humorous, yet



witty evening programmes journeyed through ancient Indian and Hindu history and explored common misperceptions about the nation and the religion.

An inter-centre basketball tournament held for the *kishores* and a talent-showcasing dance competition, Sangam, held for the *kishoris*, added an exhilarating extra dimension of healthy competition and enjoyment to the retreat.

The *bal-balikas* were given the opportunity

to exhibit their satsang knowledge and talents through various competitions like *mukhpath* (memorizing) competition, talent competition, and sports competition. Spanning two days, the competitions showcased months of preparation and practice by the *balaks* and *balikas*. They were rewarded for their efforts with medals and trophies for the top winners. ♦

## THIRD CONGRESS OF LEADERS OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

1-2 July 2009, Astana, Kazakshtan



World Congress of Religions at the Palace of Peace and Accord



Dr Janakbhai Dave of BAPS and other delegates

A two-day World Congress of religious leaders was held in Astana, Kazakshtan, from 1 to 2 July. The President of Kazakshtan, H.E. N. Nazarbayev, had invited a BAPS spokesman to address the Congress on behalf of all Hindus following his visit to Swaminarayan Akshardham in January 2008. On behalf of BAPS, Dr Janakbhai Dave and Nirav Patel attended the Congress.

On 1 July President N. Nazarbayev gave the welcoming speech after the inauguration ceremony at the Palace of Peace and Accord. The keynote speech was given by President Shimon Peres of Israel. Thereafter brief addresses by leaders of the main world religions followed. Their speeches focused on building a world of

tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation. In the evening a reception was hosted for all delegates by the President at the Sultanat Saraiy Palace. Dr Janakbhai Dave met President Nazarbayev and extended an invitation to President Shimon Peres to visit Swaminarayan Akshardham. He also met the Indian Ambassador to Kazakshtan and had dialogues with the delegates.

On 2 July Dr Janakbhai spoke during the session on “Moral and Spiritual Values, World Ethics”. Furthermore two more sessions, “Dialogue Cooperation” and “Solidarity, particularly in the Period of Crises” were held.

In conclusion the Congress drafted an international appeal. ♦

# PRESIDENT OF INDIA, HER EXCELLENCY PRATIBHA PATIL, VISITS SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM MANDIR

Tuesday, 7 July 2009, New Delhi, India



The President of India & her husband Shri Shekhawat perform arti of Shri Neelkanth Varni at Swaminarayan Akshardham



The President and her husband at Swaminarayan Akshardham

Her Excellency President Pratibha Patil and her husband, Dr D. R. Shekhawat, visited Swaminarayan Akshardham to celebrate their 44th wedding anniversary and Guru Purnima. Their daughter, Smt. Jyoti Rathore, and son, Shri Rajendra Singh, also accompanied them on this special occasion. They were traditionally welcomed by Dr J.M. Dave on behalf of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the inspirer of Swaminarayan Akshardham and the head of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha.

The President and her family offered prayers and flowers to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Ganeshji and Hanumanji. Thereafter, they visited the entire Akshardham complex, which included the Ten Gates, Bhakti Dwar, Mayur Dwar, Holy Footprints, Elephant Plinth and Narayan Sarovar, which contains water from 151 holy rivers across India.

The family then performed *abhishek* of the sacred *murti* of Bhagwan Neelkanth.

Thereafter, the President and her family visited the Hall of Values exhibition, the Giant Screen

show and the boat ride exhibition portraying Indian culture.

Sharing her experience in the opinion book she wrote: “Today, on the very sacred Guru Purnima day we had the great fortune to have darshan and offer our homage to Bhagwan Swaminarayan. We thoroughly enjoyed every show. The life, penance, and challenges of Shri Swaminarayan tell us about his tremendous spiritual strength. I congratulate each and everyone who had contributed to this extraordinary monument. This creation was due to the inspiration of Pramukh Swamiji, who is worthy of praise by the nation.”

In honour of her visit, President Patil and family were gifted Akshardham mementos.

The President and her family enjoyed the two-and-a-half hour visit to Swaminarayan Akshardham. ◆



#### SWAMISHRI PERFORMS MURTI-PRATISHTHA ARTI, MUMBAI

After performing the *pratishtha* ritual of puja, Swamishri performed *arti* of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Al-gadh (Surat district) on 21 May, and Barshi, Dahanu, Jamge, Nanded and Kankrali on 27 May.



#### BAPS RELIEF WORK DURING MONSOON FLOODS, July 2009

Through the inspiration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj the volunteers of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha offered yeoman service in the monsoon flood affected towns and villages of Saurashtra and South Gujarat. The volunteers distributed food packets and provided other aid.



#### SWAMISHRI IN MUMBAI, May-June 2009

BAPS children and youths presented excellent cultural programmes, dramas and dances at Yogi Sabhagruh before Swamishri and devotees in the Sunday evening assemblies.

Swamishri addressed children and youths, inspiring them to remain steadfast in bhakti, seva and moral disciplines. He also added that they should serve their parents and society, and sincerely endeavour in studies.

