

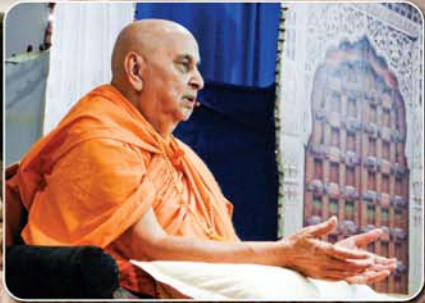
# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

February 2009  
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Gurukul: Guru teaches Vedas, Upanishads  
and other shastras to his disciples.

अथर्ववेद



**SWAMISHRI'S VICHARAN**  
**December 2009**

1. Swamishri greets the devotees during morning darshan, Tithal.
2. Swamishri blesses the *satsang* assembly, Navsari.



# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

February 2009, Vol. 32 No. 2

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## FIRST WORD

We celebrate and eulogize the lives of great people not only because of their extraordinary achievements and seminal contributions, but because of their faith, integrity, industry, selflessness, tolerance, wisdom, farsightedness and the spirit to do the highest good for mankind.

Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj (1865-1951) had a towering spiritual personality. As a child his play comprised of creating small mud mandirs. When he was six he refused to eat during a wedding because it was *ekadashi*. Four hundred people tried to persuade him, but little Dungar Bhakta remained resolute. He was fearless in treading the dark and eerie places on the village outskirts. When he was seven his visits to Vartal mandir fascinated many when they saw him read discarded scriptural manuscripts like a seasoned scholar. Even at school his sharp acumen, memory and enthusiasm to learn delighted his teachers.

He took *diksha* to become a sadhu when he was 17 and was named Yagnapurushdas. He was introduced to the glory of Akshar-Purushottam by his gurus – Vignananand Swami and Bhagatji Maharaj. He studied Sanskrit from great pundits like Rangacharya and Jivanram Shastri and became a learned scholar. At 28 he defeated the renowned Sanskrit pundit Mahidhar Shastri in a debate at Gadhada.

Shastri Yagnapurushdas encountered increasing opposition and hostility in his mission to spread the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. But he remained undeterred. Eventually, he had to leave Vartal in 1905. Swami was

(contd. on page no. 22)

# Fuldol in Botad

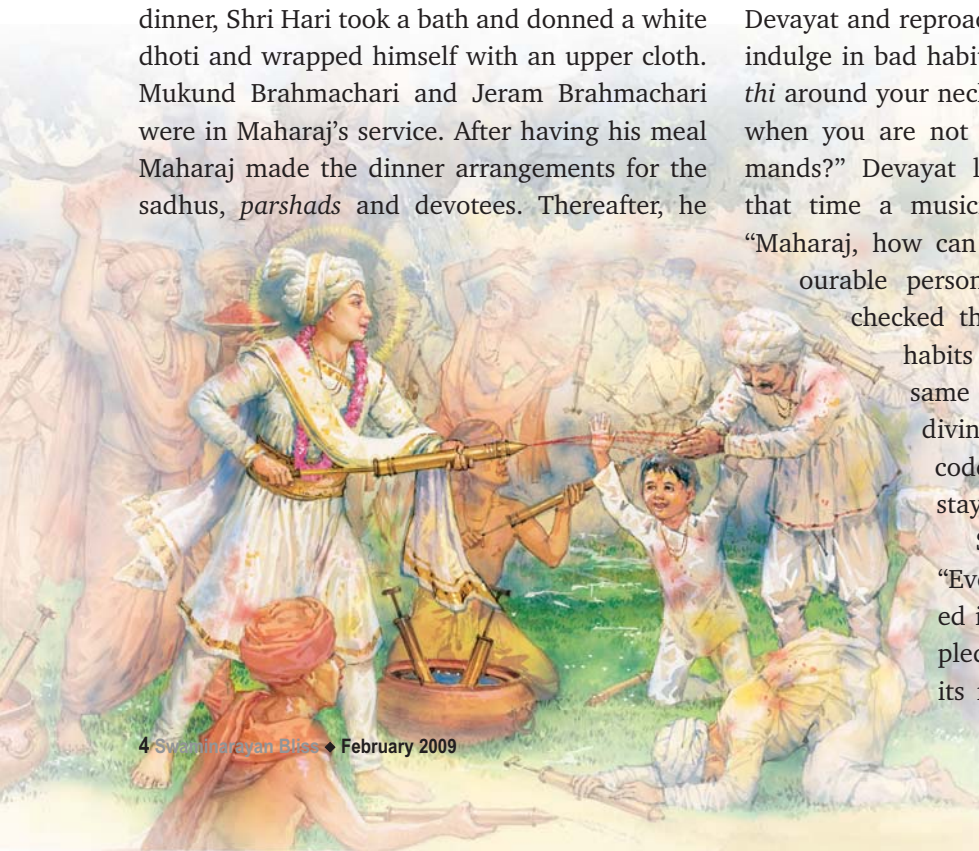
*After arriving in Botad Shriji Maharaj celebrated the festival of colours (Fuldol) with great joy and divinity...*

**M**aharaj called Bhaga Doshi (Sheth) and instructed, “Now allocate quarters to the guests. I believe you must have planned it all in advance. Where have you arranged Dada Khachar and his sisters’ stay?” Bhaga Doshi replied humbly, “They will be staying at my house. The other Darbars will be staying at the homes of prominent householders in Botad.” Shri Hari felt satisfied with the arrangements. Then Maharaj enquired with a smile, “Where have you arranged for my stay?” Bhaga Doshi replied, “At Hamir Khachar’s darbar.” At that very instance Hamir Khachar’s son, Daha Khachar, came and took hold of Maharaj’s hand to lead him to his house. Shri Hari took rest for a while and then visited Nanchand’s house where the kitchen and dining arrangements were made for everyone. Prior to dinner, Shri Hari took a bath and donned a white dhoti and wrapped himself with an upper cloth. Mukund Brahmachari and Jeram Brahmachari were in Maharaj’s service. After having his meal Maharaj made the dinner arrangements for the sadhus, *parshads* and devotees. Thereafter, he

went on a round to see the accommodation arrangements for the devotees. He also enquired about the stable and fodder arrangements for the horses and oxen. He wished that all the guests be well looked after; and their animals too. By the time Maharaj returned to his residence at Daha Khachar’s house it was late night.

The next day, after completing his ablutions and worship rituals, Maharaj walked to the assembly venue. Premanand Swami and other sadhus sang bhajans related to Holi. Shri Hari swayed to its tunes and words. Then he spoke, “When the devotional element of bhajans is imbibed in one’s life then only one experiences the joys of devotion. Otherwise, the mere joy of music stimulates the mind but does not transform one’s soul.” Then Maharaj saw Halida Devayat and reproached him, “Devayat, you still indulge in bad habits in spite of wearing a *kant*hi around your neck! How will you be liberated when you are not abiding by my moral commands?” Devayat looked down in shame. At that time a musician of Nasitpar countered, “Maharaj, how can you falsely blame an honourable person like Devayat.” Shri Hari checked the official, “I know of your habits too! You too are of the same lot. But this Satsang is divine. By transgressing moral codes you will not be able to stay in Satsang.”

Shri Hari often discoursed, “Even a sinner should be initiated into Satsang when he or she pledges to follow and abide by its moral disciplines. But when



he or she transgresses them repeatedly then the person is a sinner and should be excommunicated. One who spoils oneself and others should not be allowed to stay in Satsang.”

Jiva Khachar was seated in the assembly. He understood Shri Hari's words. He gestured to Devayat and the official to get up and leave. Then Jiva Khachar prayed to Shri Hari, “Maharaj, generally souls have base nature. You are God. If you look at their sins, how will they be liberated!”

Maharaj replied, “Bapu, it is true that souls have base nature, but after becoming *satsangis* when a devotee is vigilant of his faults and base nature and believes me to be *antaryami* (indweller) then God forgives him for his faults. But when he is irresponsible, indulgent and disobedient, then I do not take any responsibility.”

Jiva Khachar understood Shri Hari's words and remained quiet. At that time, Mukund Brahmachari came to call Shri Hari. Maharaj said, “Brahmachari will not allow me to discourse further.”

“But Maharaj you were just talking about abiding by rules and regulations. Should you not follow the rule decided for lunch time!” Shri Hari smiled and said, “Brahmachari has made us aware and alert.” He got up to leave to have lunch. The lunch was sponsored by Daha Khachar, the village chief. There were ladoos of *motaiya* and *jalebi* for the sweet course. Shri Hari had lunch and then served the sweet items to the sadhus himself. For the devotees, Maharaj instructed Bhaga Doshi to have the items served generously. “Make sure that no one is left out,” Shri Hari emphasized.

Bhaga Doshi (Sheth) was stout, but quite agile. Because of Maharaj's command he visited the lodgings of the devotees. Then he went to the stables, making arrangements for fodder and grains for the horses, oxen and camels. Thereafter, he returned to the dining area. Many were amazed by his brisk visits to all the places. Nanchand Sheth enquired, “Bhaga Sheth, I saw you some minutes ago at the lodgings of the devotees. The sadhus said that you had just come

to their residences, and others were saying that you were by the stables making arrangements before you left. And now you are here! How is it, despite your portly frame, you have easy mobility?”

Bhaga Sheth's assistants commented, “He is so supple that he can easily whirl around. Furthermore, he walks so briskly that even we cannot keep up with him.” Bhaga Sheth humbly added, “It is all due to Maharaj's grace. It is because of his blessings that I can move so quickly. Otherwise, I start puffing after climbing a staircase. Now, let's go and inform Maharaj about the arrangements.”

Bhaga Doshi came to Daha Khachar's *darbar*. Shri Hari was waiting for him. Maharaj asked, “Sheth, has everyone eaten?”

“Yes Maharaj, no one is hungry. Fodder has been provided to their horses, oxen and camels.” Shri Hari was happy to hear this. He told the *parshads*, “Did you hear that! The word ‘everyone’ does not mean only the devotees, but also their animals. Sheth has come after making their arrangements as well. One should cultivate such feelings of bhakti and care.”

“Now Maharaj, please take rest,” Bhaga Doshi requested and left.

The next morning Shri Hari performed his ablutions and worship rituals. Devotees from Surat had arrived for his darshan and worship. Shri Hari sat on a high cot. The devotees performed puja and offered him orange coloured clothes. Maharaj donned them. Bhaga Doshi and Nanchand Sheth came and requested, “We wish to celebrate the Holi festival in the whole town. Through your divine association Botad will become a holy place.” Shri Hari thus mounted onto Manki, ready for the procession. The music band was waiting to start. Shri Hari called Valibhai from the band and said, “Don't play any classical tunes now. Play bhajan tunes that inspire courage and bhakti, so that no mundane thoughts arise in anyone's mind.”

Bhaga Doshi, Daha Khachar and their men

had kept coloured water and *gulal* (kumkum) ready in carts in ample quantity. The procession commenced with the sadhus, *parshads* and devotees leading. The cartful of colours rolled behind them. The attendant *parshads* of Maharaj walked with vats of coloured water and baskets full of *gulal* on either side of Maharaj. Shri Hari was given a *pichkari* (a long pipe-shaped squirter). Naja Jogiya was holding Manki's reins and leading it while he walked. The band played the tunes of joy and courage. Shri Hari sprayed coloured water on the sadhus. Then he showered a vessel full of *gulal*.

The festival of colours intensified as the procession advanced through Botad. Maharaj sprayed coloured water on all. The tempo and pace of the festival rose as devotees showered colours upon each other. The people and businessmen of Botad witnessed the divine spectacle of colours and devotion. Many wished that Shri Hari spray coloured water on them. Maharaj fulfilled their wish.

The womenfolk stood on their balconies and terraces to see the divine occasion. They showered flowers to honour Maharaj and also with the hope that he would look up at them and spray coloured water upon them too. But Shri Hari did not spray water upon them. When a devotee requested that he spray coloured water upon the women devotees, Maharaj replied, "If I do so then in future male and female devotees will spray and shower each other with colours under the pretext of bhakti. I want to propagate the celebration of festivals in such a way that they foster both bhakti and moral discipline." Shri Hari had instructed that the womenfolk should remain as spectators and do darshan. If they wished to shower colours they should install a *murti* of Thakorji and do so among themselves.

The bazaar of Botad was awash with colours. There was sludge with *gulal* on the streets. The citizens heaped praises, saying they had never seen such a divine occasion before. There was a glow of bhakti on everyone's face. The procession finally

terminated by the Rangoli banyan tree. A raised platform had been set up for Shri Hari to sit on. Mukund Brahmachari was waiting with a pair of dry clothes for Maharaj to change into. But Shri Hari sat in his drenched clothes. Muktanand Swami requested that he change them. But Maharaj replied otherwise, "These wet clothes reflect the love and devotion of devotees, let all have darshan." After a few bhajans were sung Shri Hari started his discourse. At that time a citizen of the town asked, "You celebrated the festival of colours with your sadhus, *parshads* and male devotees. Why did you exclude the womenfolk? You are believed to be God. Therefore you are above all human weaknesses. Where is the problem for you?"

Shri Hari replied, "When one who establishes moral disciplines breaks them, then their significance becomes irrelevant and weak. However, by following them strictly they retain relevance and are thus followed by my disciples."

"But Bhagwan Krishna played *ras* (divine dance) with the *gopis*. He was God and you too are God," the citizen added.

"Yes, that is true. But after Shri Krishna's divine dance people failed to understand its spiritual significance. The blind imitation of the dance has led to immoral consequences. So, I have disallowed such *ras* and similar situations of intermixing of males and females."

The citizen was satisfied with the answer. He realized what Maharaj said was true, because he himself had seen the adverse results. He replied, "Maharaj, what you say is true. People are more impressed by pure living than by mere delivery of discourses."

"Yes. If one has purity in life then one's discourse will touch people's hearts. By doing so I have not blazed a new trail. It is ordained and sanctioned by our shastras." In conclusion, Maharaj announced, "Now, our festival has come to an end." ◆

(To be contd.)

Translation of Bhagwan Swaminarayan,  
by Shri Harshadbhai Dave

## INTRODUCTION

Opening the doors to the Upanishads we are greeted with the Shruti: 'ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्...' 'Everything is pervaded by a governor, controller or ruler.' What a declaration! It is a direct manifestation of experience! This first proclamation says it all. An incident regarding the words 'ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्...' comes to mind: Gandhiji said, "If India is once again subject to a cruel foreign attack. If all sadhus, ascetics and pundits are sent to their deaths. If all mandirs, ashrams and hermitages are brought to ruins. If the valuable Vedas, Upanishads and multitude of shastras are shredded, burnt or submerged in water. Then, if many years pass by, and one day, someone stumbles upon a shredded fragment of paper on which is written, 'ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्', and the reader understands the implication of these words, then, from just these few words hundreds of thousands of sadhus, crores of mandirs and the shastras could be revived to their full form. Such are these words." The Upanishads are eternal principles. The power of eternal principles is unlimited. The Ishāvāsya Upanishad is a reservoir of such power.

Ishāvāsya Upanishad is the last (40th) chapter of the Samhitā Pāth of the Shukla Yajurveda. As the first words of this Upanishad are 'ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्' – 'Ishā vāsyam idam sarvam' – it is named the 'Ishāvāsya Upanishad' or the 'Isha Upanishad'. Also, as this Upanishad is a Samhitā Pāth of the

# A Glance at the Ishāvāsya Upanishad

Shukla Yajurveda it is also known as the ‘Samhitā-Upanishad’ (Samhitā-Upanishad).

This Upanishad of 18 mantras wonderfully explains the rulership and pervasiveness of Brahman and Parabrahman. It talks about matters such as discrimination in indulging in sensual pleasures and the necessity of renunciation. Guidance is also given on the life-oriented approach of karma yoga, the balance of knowledge and karma in life and the benefits of imbibing these principles. The Upanishad concludes with humble prayers. Let us take a brief look at these precepts.

## PRECEPTS IN ISHĀVĀSYA UPANISHAD

### 1. ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्

‘*Ishā vāsyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyām jagat...*’ These are the first words of the Ishāvāsya Upanishad. The meaning of each of these words is as follows: *Ishā* – by that which rules and controls; *vāsyam* – is pervaded; *idam sarvam* – all of this; *yat kincha* – whatever there is; *jagatyām jagat* – in this world of nature. Thus, this stanza means: ‘This whole world is pervaded by its ruler and controller.’ There is nothing in this world in which *Isha* – the ruler – is not. Who is this *Isha* that has been referred to as the one who pervades the whole world? This curiosity can be satisfied by the Upanishads themselves. To understand one Upanishad we must refer to other Upanishads. By doing this, meanings and interpretations become clearer.

In the 4th chapter of the Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad, Maharshi Yagnavalkya says, ‘सर्वस्य वशी सर्वस्येशानः सर्वस्याधिपतिः’ – ‘Paramātmā keeps all in control, rules over all and resides as the superior above all’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 4/4/22). Therefore, one meaning of *Isha* is Paramātmā. Moreover, in the same Upanishad, Gargi asks, ‘Who is the ruler and supporter of all?’ To this, Yagnavalkya answers, ‘Gargi! That is Aksharbrahman.’ The original words are: ‘एतद् वै तदक्षरं गार्गी!’ – ‘*Etad vai tadak-*

*sharam Gargi*’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/8). But Yagnavalkya doesn’t stop there. He then also speaks of the glory and powers of Aksharbrahman: ‘एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी! सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ विधृतौ तिष्ठतः। एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी! छावापृथिव्यौ विधृते तिष्ठतः। एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी! निमेषा मुहूर्ता अहोरात्राण्यर्धमासा मासा ऋतवः संवत्सरा इति विधृतास्तिष्ठन्ति।’ – ‘O Gargi! The sun, moon, etc. remain under the rule of Aksharbrahman. The earth and all other worlds remain under the rule of Aksharbrahman. Seconds, hours, night, day, weeks, months, seasons, years, and whatever measurement of time there is, is under the rule of Aksharbrahman. Thus, Aksharbrahman is the ruler and controller of everything’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/9).

In this way, Parabrahman and, by his eternal wish, Aksharbrahman are both divine entities that are the *Isha* – rulers and controllers of the whole world. It is that Akshar and Purushottam that pervade everything by their power of indwelling (*antaryāmi shakti*). This is the meaning of the first stanza of this mantra.

Other Upanishads also affirm this pervasiveness. ‘ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्म पश्चाद् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण। अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैव’ – ‘Before us is Aksharbrahman, behind us is Aksharbrahman, on our right and left is Aksharbrahman, above and below... Aksharbrahman is everywhere’ (Mundaka Upanishad: 2/2/19). ‘स एवाऽधस्तात् स उपरिष्ठात् स पश्चात् स दक्षिणतः स उत्तरतः’ – ‘Paramātmā is beneath us, Paramātmā is above us, Paramātmā is behind us, Paramātmā is on our right as well as left’ (Chhāndogya Upanishad: 7/25/1).

Shriji Maharaj has also explained this pervasiveness of Akshar and Purushottam in the Vachanamrut, for example: ‘God is present in everyone as *antaryāmi*’ (Gadhada I-62); ‘That Brahman (Aksharbrahman) is the cause of all – Prakruti-Purush, etc. It is their supporter and pervades all through his *antaryāmi* powers’ (Gadhada II-3).



## SATPURUSH: THE LIVING COMMENTARY OF THE ISHĀVĀSYA UPANISHAD

Other mantras of the Ishāvāsyā Upanishad also clarify the omnipresence of Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman in different ways. For example, 'तद् धावतोऽन्यानत्येति' – 'They surpass all other moving things' (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 4). This means that just as in a race a runner will always see a superior runner in front of him, similarly, these two all-pervading entities are always in front of everything. Nothing can overtake them. That is why they have been called 'मनसो जवीयः' – 'Faster than the mind' (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad:4). Indeed, what can overtake that which is everywhere!

There is another trait of an omnipresent entity – it is very far as well as very near! Like space. This has also been written in this Upanishad: 'तद् दूरे तद् वन्तिके' – 'That Brahman and Parabrahman are far as well as near' (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 5).

To understand the pervasiveness of an omnipresent entity further we can look at its subtleness and magnitude. That which can become even subtler than the subtle can pervade everything. That which can accommodate everything within itself can pervade. Such are Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman. They, being even subtler than the subtle, pervade everything, and by pervading they accommodate everything within themselves. Therefore the Upanishad says, 'तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तद् सर्वस्य बाह्यतः' – 'They pervade everything from within and without' (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 5).

Thus the mantra 'ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्' (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 1) clarifies the principle that Akshar and Purushottam rule and pervade everything.

Let us call this principle the 'Ishāvāsyā concept'. We should try to imbibe this 'Ishāvāsyā concept' by perceiving Brahman and Paramātmā in everything. This is the essence of this concept.

This Ishāvāsyā concept can be easily understood through the life of the Satpurush (guru), since the very life of the Satpurush is a living commentary on the intangible words of the shastras.

One of Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj's traits was that even though he was himself the guru, he used to address all, even young children, with the title 'guru'. Once, when this happened in the village of Paatna, Jetha Bhagat said to Yogiji Maharaj, "Swami! I am your disciple, why do you call me 'guru'?" Yogiji Maharaj replied, "Guru! I perceive all as *gunatit* and see Maharaj in all; that is why I say 'guru'." This is the Ishāvāsyā concept.

"Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj reside in you all. That is why I should offer you flowers and perform your *arti*. This is my devotion to you." These are the opening words of guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj's address in front of hundreds of thousands of devotees during his 79th birthday celebrations on 16 December 1999 in Tithal.

Around the same time, there was a gathering for the *ādivāsi* (tribal) people in the district of Dharampur. In his blessings to them Pramukh Swami Maharaj said, "Paramātmā is the *ādi* (first) of all. His *vās* is in you (He resides in you). And you reside near him; therefore, you are *ādivāsi*." Only one who lives the 'Ishāvāsyā concept' can understand the true meaning of the word '*ādivāsi*'.

### The Benefits

The benefits of the noble, divine and liberating spiritual understanding of 'ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्' is not ordinary. In this Upanishad, the amazing benefits of this understanding have also been shown.

#### ■ 'न विजुगुप्सते'

'जुगुप्सा' (*jugupsā*) means to speak badly of or

have anti-feelings for someone. One who weds the Ishāvāsya concept is described as ‘न विजुगुप्सते’ – ‘*Na Vijugupsate*’ (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 6). This sentence has two meanings. First, one never speaks or feels antagonistic for anyone; and second, no one ever bears such anti-feelings for him. This is simple enough for everyone to understand. Negative behaviour is born from lack of the Ishāvāsya concept. There is no scope for it when an understanding of the Ishāvāsya concept is attained.

Yogiji Maharaj’s life demonstrates this. He once casually said, “I never have a feeling of dislike for even the smallest devotee. I never see their faults. I never let their faults be seen. I see them as *murtis* of Brahman.”

Indeed, with this ‘Ishāvāsya concept’ quarrels would no longer remain.

#### ■ तत्र को मोहः

‘तत्र को मोहः’ – ‘*Tatra ko mohaha*’ – ‘Where lies *moha*’ (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 7). *Moha* means delusion. To understand that which shouldn’t be understood. To not understand that which should be understood and, in fact, to understand it incorrectly is delusion. Understanding the *ātmā* to be the body, perceiving *manushyabhāv* (human traits) in Paramātmā or the Brahmaswarup guru and other false beliefs are all *moha*. Incorrect understandings or perceptions lead to incorrect behaviour and sin.

There is a famous story of a Sanskrit school. As a test, a guru gave two of his disciples a fruit each to eat, and told them to have it where no one could see them. One went to a solitary place, and believing that no one was looking he ate the fruit. The other student who had attained the Ishāvāsya concept – realizing that Paramātmā is everywhere and so observing him – through the guru’s teachings did not eat the fruit. One who knows the omnipresent entity, never commits sins, since he believes that he is never alone. He sees everything filled with

Brahman and Parabrahman. Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami said, “One who has such an understanding doesn’t even have bad thoughts, let alone bad actions. Whatever bad actions one performs simply reflects upon one’s ignorance.”

#### ■ कः शोकः

‘तत्र कः शोकः’ – *Tatra kaha shokaha*. – ‘How can there be grief in him?’ (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 7). This is an important result of the Ishāvāsya concept. All grief dissolves and eternal bliss is attained. Thus, one experiences liberation in this very life.

There is a well-known incident of Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj. Govardhanbhai was the administrator of Vartal mandir and had great authority and power. One day, he saw Bhagatji Maharaj – a man without a post, of average means, of an ordinary profession, of an ordinary caste, and often insulted. Yet the nobility of his heart could be seen on his face. Govardhanbhai felt, “This person has definitely got some kind of magic in his heart.” He asked, “Bhagatji! Why are you so happy?” Bhagatji replied, “I see everyone as the *murti* of Brahman.” This is the miracle of the Ishāvāsya concept. That miracle can take place in our lives too – it is just a matter of awakening that concept.

Let us now take a look at another such principle in the Ishāvāsya Upanishad.

#### 2. तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः

‘*Tena tyaktena bhunjithāhā*’ – ‘Enjoy but without forgetting renunciation’ (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 1). To enjoy pleasures is a common thing. But the art of enjoying is a different matter. This clause teaches us how to accommodate pleasures in life. If only Brahman and Parabrahman pervade all things, control all and rule, then what in this world is of my own? Nothing whatsoever. Everything is theirs. They have given to me. Hence, one meaning of this clause

is to enjoy with the renunciative attitude that 'nothing is mine'. Here, renunciation has not been put against pleasure, but together with it: 'तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः'

Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami used to say, "Don't indulge in everything that comes your way. Learn to renounce." The whole world enjoys pleasures. But to renounce, put the reigns of the shastras on them, is a much greater uniqueness of Hindu traditions.

Another message can also be understood from the sentence 'तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः'. 'तेन' means 'by Isha (the ruler or controller)'; 'त्यक्तेन' means 'by whatever body, location and things we have attained due to our karmas'; 'भुञ्जीथाः' means 'with that one should sustain one's life'. What is the need for more? Thus, this *shloka* suggests that desires have to be controlled and one must become satisfied.

### 3. मा गृधः कस्यस्विद् धनम्

'Mā grudhaha kasyasvid dhanam' (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 1). Only those who have forgotten the Ishāvāsyā concept and the 'तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः' viewpoint take 'another's wealth'. Here, the Upanishad restrains them. 'मा गृधः' means 'do not desire'; 'कस्यस्विद् धनम्' means 'another's wealth'. Here the word 'wealth' represents all worldly things. Only Isha is the true owner. It is Isha who gives us everything. Yet one who believes that 'this is my wealth' can be said to have taken someone's wealth. Truly, one who understands this will be rid of greed.

This is the meaning of the first mantra. Now, let us acquaint ourselves with the meaning of the second mantra.

### 4. कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतः समाः ।

'Kurvanneveha karmāni jijivishechhatam samāhā' (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 2). This mantra must be understood in addition to the concept of the first mantra. This teaching is for making things that hinder *moksha* into things that aid *moksha*. The influence of karma is widespread.

Shri Krishna himself has explained, 'न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्' – 'No one can pass even a moment without performing a karma' (Gitā: 3.5) Here, we are informed that if the spirit and attitude of 'ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्' is added to those same karmas, then they become a form of devotion and a means to liberation.

For example, if someone who doesn't know how to swim jumps into water, then, even though he flails about – he becomes tired, miserable and drowns. But when he learns the art of swimming, he no longer tires, becomes miserable or drowns. In fact, he then enjoys swimming. That which previously caused misery now brings happiness. The same applies in the matter of karma. It is necessary to learn the art of performing karmas in life. The shastras teach us that art. When karmas are performed seeing Brahman and Parabrahman in everything and with the intention of pleasing them, realizing them to be the all-doers, then those karmas become the means to supreme bliss and liberation. Such karmas attain the status of *seva*. That is why the Upanishad says, 'कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतः समाः' 'शतं समाः' means 'a hundred years.' We should do such *seva* for a hundred years, i.e. for as long as we live without any laziness or boredom. *Seva* is the essence of this mantra. We can see this wholly imbibed in the lives of our gurus. For years, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj would wait for devotees to arrive in the afternoon in Gondal, so that he could serve them by offering lunch. He would prepare their seats, bring them dishes and bowls and serve them personally. He would often say, "Shriji Maharaj and Shastriji Maharaj dine through the devotees." This is the Ishāvāsyā concept integrated into the action of serving.

### The Benefits

#### ■ न कर्म लिप्यते नरे

The benefit of such wisdom-filled karmayoga is 'न कर्म लिप्यते नरे' – 'Na karma lipyate nare'

(Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 2). This means he is not bound by any karma, i.e. he attains liberation. One only has to take another birth if one is bound by karma. This no longer remains for a *karmayogi*.

But for the person who does not imbibe this wisdom-filled karma-yoga in his life, the Upanishad says, ‘आत्महनो जनाः’ – ‘*Ātmahano janāhā*’ – ‘He is his own destroyer’ (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 3). Not only that, ‘ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति’ – ‘*Te pretyābhigacchanti*’ – ‘They go to joyless, extremely miserable demonic worlds’ (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 3).

In this way, these mantras teach us the lessons of karma-yoga and *seva*.

Now let us understand another important principle.

## 5. THE COEXISTENCE OF KNOWLEDGE AND KARMA

As we have seen above, words like ‘ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्’ better our understanding. And words like ‘कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि’ give us the beneficial advice to perform karmas with this lofty understanding. Only karmas performed with such an understanding lead to true success in life. This is what can be concluded when we combine both mantras. For this very reason, the next six mantras emphasize the co-existence of knowledge (jnān) and karma. Let us understand them briefly.

We will be able to understand this more clearly using ‘*Andhapangu Nyāya*’ – one man can see, but is lame; another can walk, but he is blind. If both get together, they can accomplish a task. This is called ‘*Andhapangu Nyāya*’. The same applies here to knowledge and karmas. Karmas alone are blind; knowledge alone is lame. They both need each other. The bliss of liberation can only be attained when they are both combined. This is a matter of eradicating laziness and ignorance. There are those who remain engulfed in worldly karmas without incorporating the

knowledge of Brahman and Parabrahman into their karmas. On the other hand, there are those who remain engulfed in theoretical discussions on the shastras and do not perform any karmas. Both have been harshly criticized in the Upanishad: ‘अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते। ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायां रताः ॥’ (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 9). Here, the word *vidyā* has been used for knowledge and *avidyā* for that which is different to knowledge, i.e. karmas. So, “Those who act without attaining the previously described knowledge become entangled in the intense darkness of *māyā*. While those who just talk about that knowledge and perform no karmas are pushed into an even greater darkness.”

However, for those who have achieved a balanced synthesis of knowledge and karmas; and have affirmed the importance of both, the Upanishad says, ‘विद्यां चाऽविद्यां च यस्तद् वेदाभयं सह। अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥’ – ‘One in whose life knowledge and karma co-exist, such a person overcomes death, i.e. attains immortality and liberation’ (Ishāvāsyā Upanishad: 11). Here, one learns that knowledge and karma are not antithetical or opposed to each other, but supplementary. Now let us acquaint ourselves with a few of the divine prayers that this Upanishad includes.

## 6. DIVINE AND HUMBLE PRAYERS

Hearing the eternal principles of ‘ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्’ and ‘कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि’, the spiritual aspirant becomes eager to realize them. He realizes that the true and best way of attaining these goals easily is through prayer. Prayer is the humble voice of surrender. Here are those words.

### ■ तत् त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु – ‘Unveil the face of truth’

‘हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्। तत् त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥’ – ‘O Paramātmā, the nourisher of all! The face of truth has been covered by a golden vessel. Unveil it so that I may

experience the virtues of truth' (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 15). 'Hiranya' means gold. Just like gold attracts and increases desire, so does *māyā*. That is why, here, *māyā* has been called a golden vessel. The word 'satya' implies *ātmā*, Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman – they are the forms of truth. The word 'mukh' implies form. The spiritual aspirant prays, "O God! The delusive barrier of *māyā* has covered the true form of my *ātmā*. That is why you, the Truth, Brahman and Parabrahman residing in my *ātmā*, have been left concealed for me. As a result, how will I experience the 'ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वम्' viewpoint? Please reveal that true form to me."

### ■ योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि – 'Let me become Brahmarup'

To directly perceive Purushottam one must attain the ability to directly perceive Akshar. Only one who becomes *aksharrup* can attain Purushottam. Bearing this principle in mind, the spiritual aspirant prays, 'यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि' – 'O Paramātmā! I wish to see your liberating form' (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 16). But if I do not become *brahmarup*, and you show that liberating form to me, then I will still not attain true bliss. Therefore, O compassionate one! 'योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि' (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 16). Here, the word *purush* is for Aksharbrahman. Thus, this means 'Please affirm in me the understanding that Aksharbrahman is my real form.'

### ■ ॐ क्रतो स्मर – 'Don't forget me'

The spiritual aspirant prays, 'अमृतमथेदं भस्मान्तमिदं शरीरम्' – 'O God! This body is temporal and only the *ātmā* is above death' (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 17). Further, 'ॐ क्रतो स्मर! कृतं स्मर!' – 'Do not forget whatever I have done to please you with this temporal body. Do not forget me either. I am yours. Please, do not forget' (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 17).

### ■ ते नमउक्तिं विधेम – 'A Humble Finale'

The finale is filled with humility, the spiritual aspirant falls to his knees, his heart speaks, 'अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान्। युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नमउक्तिं विधेम॥' – 'O God! Take us on the divine path of spirituality. You are omniscient. You know how to overcome *māyā*. Show us. Give us strength to battle against *māyā*, and make us victorious. O Paramātmā! We bow to you again and again. We bow to you' (Ishāvāsya Upanishad: 18).

What humility! What surrender! To imbibe whatever has been said in this Upanishad one must become humble. One must surrender to the manifest form of Paramātmā. There is no other way. This is the closing message.

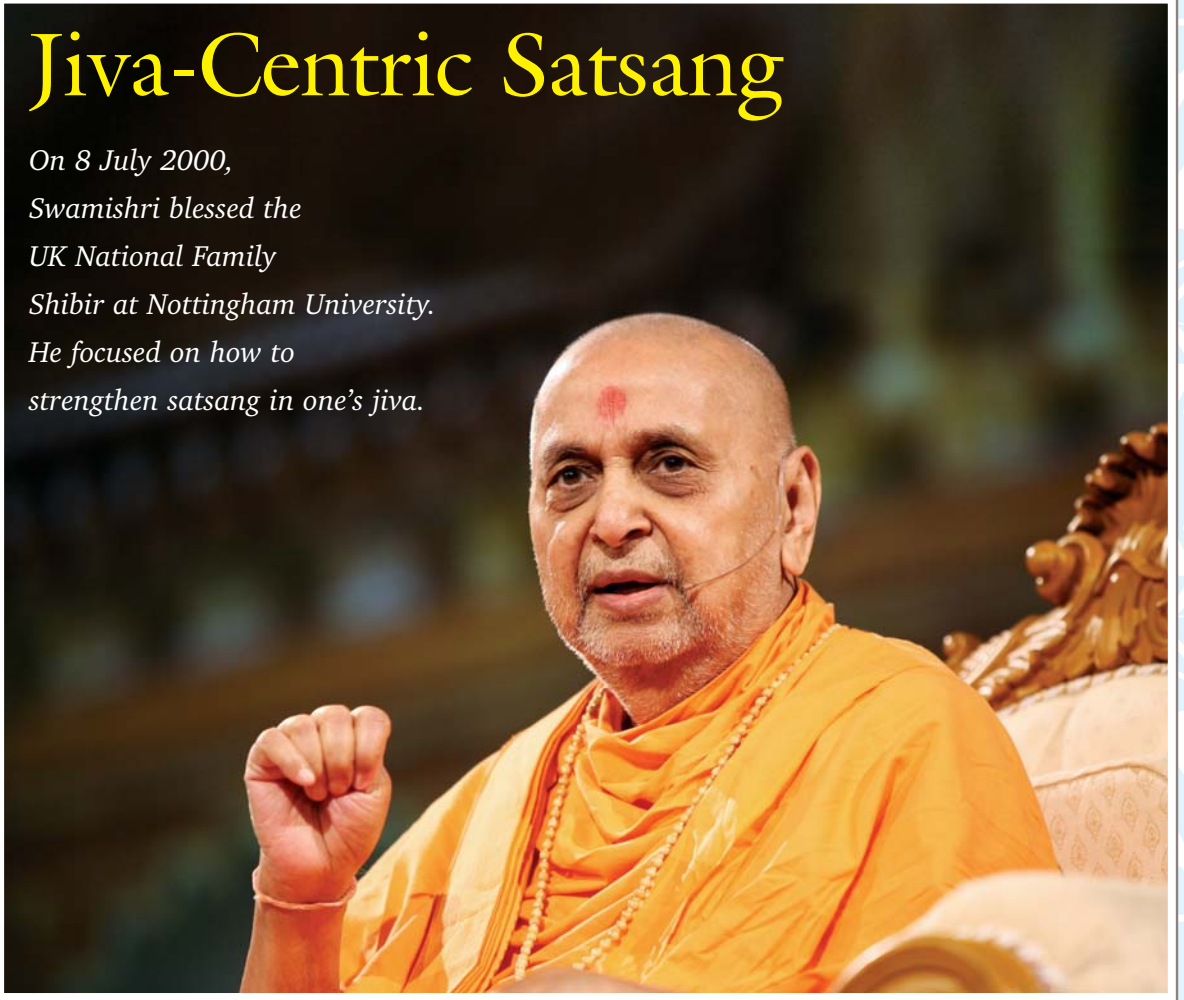
In this way, through the Ishāvāsya Upanishad, we realize the rulership and pervasiveness of Brahman and Parabrahman; we understand the glory of renunciation; we learn the secret of karma-yoga; we understand the importance of synthesizing knowledge with karmas, and we come to know of the importance of humble prayers.

*Bhadresh Swami is a scholar at the Yagnapurush Sanskrit Pathshala in Sarangpur, Gujarat. His academic qualifications include: MA in Sanskrit, PhD in Philosophy, Shaddarshan Acharya (equivalent to MA degrees in Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva Mimansa and Uttara Mimansa [Brahma Sutras]).*



# Jiva-Centric Satsang

On 8 July 2000,  
Swamishri blessed the  
UK National Family  
Shibir at Nottingham University.  
He focused on how to  
strengthen satsang in one's jiva.



**M**aharaj has said in the Vachanamrut that, primarily, one should practice *satsang* to attain *kalyan* for the *jiva*. One should not engage in *satsang* out of a desire for material objects, honour or fame. We practice *satsang* to attain *kalyan* and have sought the refuge of Maharaj, so we do not face any problems.

If one has developed *jiva-centred satsang* there will be no problems in serving, discoursing, devotion and doing other *satsang* activities. However, if one is body-centred, there will be many problems.

Our fundamental principle is to become

*atma-rup* or *akshar-rup*, and offer bhakti to Purushottam (God). Achieving this is '*jiva no satsang*'. Then, even if others rebuke or insult us, it will not deter us from *satsang*. Our faith in God will not diminish and we will not think ill of others.

However, if one's *satsang* is body-centred, then when one's wishes are not fulfilled, and one faces problems, one questions: despite practicing *satsang*, why do I get health, family, business and personal problems? In this way one falls back from *satsang*.

Gunatitanand Swami has said that the body is a home to illness. Diseases are latent in the

body. People may look well, but within there are diseases which may become troublesome at any time. This is the way of the world – some days bring joy, while some days bring misery. When such upheavals are faced, questions about *satsang* arise. However, the solution to all questions is to develop *jiva*-centric *satsang*.

Devji Bhagat of Nenpur had developed such *jiva*-centric *satsang*. When his only son passed away at 20 years of age, he reasoned that Maharaj had taken him early to save his son from worldly misery. Then, so that others would not come unnecessarily to mourn his son's death, Devji Bhakta went to his farm to offer bhakti and sent his wife to Gadhada to take some fresh ghee for Maharaj. Thus, because they both had true understanding, they had no problems. Those without true understanding would complain, "Even though I offer bhakti why did my son pass away?"

Those with *jiva*-centred *satsang* also willingly permit their sons to become sadhus. They also serve physically, financially and mentally. Whenever there is a need in the mandir they help. However, one without true understanding, will think about leaving *satsang*.

So, we should do like Bhagatji Maharaj. He asked Gunatitanand Swami, "I do not want wealth or anything else, except for my *jiva* to become focused on *satsang*, so that I never fall back." Bhagatji Maharaj said, "Gunatitanand Swami has so moulded me through *jnan*, discourses, dharma, *vairagya* and bhakti that my body and *atma* are separate. No matter how many difficulties or miseries arise, or whatever others say, I will never fall back from *satsang*. My devotion to Maharaj will never decrease."

Without firm *satsang*, one is immediately disturbed by what people may say to us. Someone may call us a fool and we become agitated and retaliate, leading to unnecessary trouble. However, if we reason that 'I am *atma*', and that 'I practice *satsang* to attain *moksha*, for the benefit of my *jiva*', then there will be no problems. If

one introspects in this way there will be no problems.

We are engaged in activities and so, naturally, questions will arise. But think about who we are serving. We are doing all this for God. He knows who is doing what, so there is no need to create conflict. By compromising, such questions can be resolved. These questions arise due to ego, so the first step is to strengthen *satsang* in the *jiva*, with the thought that we are doing *satsang* only to please God. All who have done this have never had any problems.

And this *samagam* (association) and these talks are to help strengthen *satsang* in the *jiva*. Such talks are in the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato. We do read and listen to them, but when the need arises to apply them, we forget them and so we get carried away.

However, remind yourself, 'I am *akshar*, I am *brahman*. I have come to please God only. I want nothing else.' By strengthening this, there will be no difficulties or misery and one will have greater enthusiasm each day. Thus, in this way, ensure that there are no ups and downs. Sometimes, when someone is on a high, he does a lot of service, but when he encounters some difficulties, he becomes inactive. He stops attending and has to be called, and even then he refuses to come.

So now, prepare yourself so that there are no fluctuations, and you are consistent and regular. Shriji Maharaj said that ever since Shuk Swami came to become a sadhu, his enthusiasm had continuously increased. Even Dada Khachar's and his family's enthusiasm increased daily. There were many such devotees, some of whom Shriji Maharaj mentions in Vachanamrut Loya-3. Even though they faced difficulties, they believed that God was with them.

Shuk Swami served by writing Maharaj's letters and also faced many tests. Maharaj sometimes displayed human traits, yet Shuk Swami's understanding that Maharaj is divine never wavered.

Staying together with others and understanding their glory is difficult. While we are apart, respect for each other remains. Just as from a distance mountains look beautiful, but when you go close you see the weeds and thorns. Similarly, when apart, respect for others is high, but when one stays with them, there is a clash of *swabhavs* and so there are quarrels. This happens between brothers, sisters, parents, children and friends.

That is why Gunatitanand Swami has said that to stay together and understand others' glory is the 'fifth obstacle'. But if one has developed *jiva*-centred *satsang* there will be no problems, and just as a lotus flower is able to remain afloat amid water, one will be active in *satsang*. And, as such talks are understood and practiced, one experiences greater happiness in *satsang*. That is *jiva*-centric *satsang*.

Further, one should remain continually alert so that the bhakti and services one has done are not wiped off. In Kathiawad there is a saying, "One sows seeds and proceeds, while behind a big roller squashes the seeds so that they will not grow."

Similarly, at first one enthusiastically sows seeds by doing good work, then one negates it by speaking ill of others – this is like running over the seeds with a roller. As an advance warning, Maharaj said that Alaiya Khachar brought 2,000 people into the *satsang*-fold, convincing them that Shriji Maharaj is God. He was very knowledgeable and strengthened their faith and refuge in Shriji Maharaj. However, when Shriji Maharaj played an innocent joke on him, Alaiya spoke ill of Maharaj and then began to say that he is not God. So, he left Maharaj's company and returned home. There, he discouraged people from going to Gadhada for Maharaj's darshan. Alaiya would discourage others, saying, "He is just a Purabiyo Brahmin and is of no consequence." As a result, even Maharaj had to warn devotees not to go past Jhinjhavadar, Alaiya's village, otherwise he

would stop them and talk ill of *satsang*, thus causing them to fall back from *satsang*.

This was all due to Alaiya's ego. He felt, "I have brought 2,000 into *satsang*, but Maharaj does not value me." But what is our value before God? We are nothing before God. Even if one does a billion times more, what is that compared to God?

God has created the infinite *brahmands* and possesses infinite powers. Who are we before him? It is like the 'value' of a gold ring compared to a mountain of gold.

We have little intelligence, yet due to ego we compare ourselves to God. But, we are insignificant before him.

As a result of what happened to Alaiya Khachar, Maharaj says in the Vachanamrut that one who previously used to praise turns to slander. He feels no peace and thinks about disrupting *satsang*. However, *satsang* belongs to God; so nothing will happen to *satsang*, but we will suffer. This happened to Alaiya Khachar and to Jiva Khachar (of Gadhada – Dada's Khachar uncle). God's work will never cease, no matter how hard one tries to disrupt *satsang*.

Maharaj warns that we do a lot and sow many seeds of *satsang*, but then we run a roller over it all by the negative statements.

So, what is this *satsang* for? It is for the *jiva*, for *kalyan* and to please God. If we can please God and his Sadhu, please Yogiji Maharaj, then everything is attained. Thus, develop such *satsang* with strong understanding that till the very end our *divyabhav* towards God remains, our refuge remains firm and bhakti remains sincere. We have attained Shriji Maharaj through sadhus like Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, developed refuge in him, understood his glory and developed *jiva*-centric *satsang*. Today, because all want to please God and his Sadhu, all serve physically, mentally and financially. This is all due to the fact that *satsang* has developed in one's *jiva*. May such *satsang* remain forever.





# Be Religious, Not Just Spiritual

In an article titled 'Religion, Self-Regulation, and Self-Control: Associations, Explanations, and Implications' in the *Psychological Bulletin* (Vol. 135, No. 1. (2009), pp. 69-93), University of Miami psychologists, Dr Michael McCullough and Brian Willoughby have analyzed over 80 years of research and found that religious belief and piety result in higher self-control.

Researchers throughout the world have often reported that devoutly religious people are more likely to succeed in studies, live longer and happier lives and have more satisfying marriages. These benefits are due in part to observing the rules believers are expected to follow and the social support of fellow devotees.

In this new study, the University of Miami researchers tested the proposition that religion gives people internal strength. Their survey of the vast body of literature reveals good and consistent evidence that religiousness corresponds to higher self-control.

Since the 1920s, researchers have shown in laboratory tests that religious children and adults are more self-disciplined, less impulsive, more law-abiding and have higher self-control.

Dr Michael McCullough commented, "Brain-scan studies have shown that when people pray or meditate, there's a lot of activity in two parts of the brain that are important for self-regulation and control of attention and emotion. The rituals that religions have been encouraging for thousands of years seem to be a kind of workout for self-control." He added, "When temptations cross their minds in daily life, they quickly



use religion to dispel them from their minds."

In one particular study, religious people were compared with spiritual people – those who felt their lives are 'directed by a spiritual force greater than any human being', but were not affiliated to any organized religion. The results showed that religious people scored higher in conscientiousness and self-control. Dr McCullough concluded, "The self-control effect seems to come from being engaged in religious institutions and behaviours."

Some of the conclusions of this article reveal: (1) strong evidence that religion is positively related to self-control as well as to traits such as Agreeableness and Conscientiousness that are considered by many theorists to be the basic personality substrates of self-control, (2) some religious rituals (e.g., meditation, prayer, religious imagery, and scripture reading) promote self-regulation and (3) religion's ability to promote self-control or self-regulation can explain some of religion's associations with health, well-being, and social behaviour.

This paper supports the scientific nature of Sanatan Hindu Dharma, in which our shastras and sages have advocated rites, rituals and worship routines for many millennia. These religious traditions of Hindu Dharma impart benefits for one's personal, family, professional, social and devotional life. ♦

# Dharma, Niyams, Good Character

*The Haricharitamrut Sagar, is the most extensive account of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's life, work and messages. It was composed by Siddhanand Swami from the diaries of Muktanand Swami. Bhagwan Swaminarayan's spiritual guidance on a wide range of topics relevant to all spiritual seekers is incorporated in this voluminous shastra. The quotations below are on the subjects of dharma, niyam and good character.*

**1.** In Shekpat, Shri Hari said to the sadhus, "My words bring peace. Those who believe happiness lies in my words never experience misery. If someone says they have experienced misery even after following my *agna*, then it is due to lack of understanding. Lack of understanding is immediately evident when they speak. Hypocrisy cannot remain hidden.

"It is the nature of all *jivas* to do a little of its own preference. Only when this is done is peace believed to be experienced. However, as long as one acts wilfully, one cannot be said to have obeyed commands. And as long as commands are not obeyed, peace is not attained. Believing that obeying commands brings misery reflects a lack of dedication. When one seeks to benefit from another, one follows his wishes day and night so that one's own desires are fulfilled. A person may be egoistic, vicious like a snake and arrogant like a lion, yet to satisfy one's desires, one becomes subservient to him."

**2.** In Mankuva, Shri Hari described the dharma of householders, "One must shun those whose company leads to loss of one's own good character. Never remain alone with your mother, sister or daughter except in an emergency. One's character is significantly blemished by the company of unrelated women. Even Bhav, Brahma, Indra, Chandra, Parashar and other greats have been affected. So, what is the capacity of an ordinary *jiva*?"

**3.** In Gadhada, Shri Hari said to Jiva

Khachar, "Those who do what pleases God are easily able to perform other endeavours."

**4.** In Bhadli, Shri Hari said to the renunciants, "Only those who observe the *niyams* are truly great. A thief may have more money than a businessman, but that does not turn a thief into a businessman. One who observes *niyams* is a businessman. One who does not observe *niyams* and dharma is a thief. As long as one is aware of one's hunger, thirst and body, one must obey the do's and don'ts. Those without the eyes of wisdom are considered blind and become bound in material desires. When they associate with a wise guru, then they are liberated from this bondage."

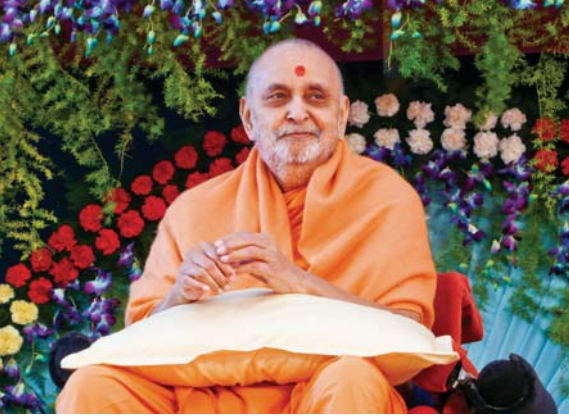
**5.** In Jetalpur, Shri Hari talked about observing *niyams*, "*Kusangis* do not observe *niyams*. But *satsangis* must never disobey *niyams*. *Niyams* are equivalent to the company of a sadhu. Upto Aksharbrahman, all follow my *niyams*. Those who do not follow them fear *kal*, karma and *maya*. Those who observe *niyams* have no such fears."

**6.** In the palace of Jetalpur, Shri Hari said, "Householders should observe the *niyams* of householders. *Satsangis* should daily keep the company of other *satsangis*. Have an addiction for the company of sadhus. Women devotees should practice *satsang* among themselves. Those who practice *satsang* and observe these *niyams* in mind, deed and speech will have darshan of this *murti* at the time of death." ◆

# Pramukh Swami Maharaj's VICHARAN

December 2008

Tithal, Navsari, Bhatiya, Dummas, Surat



*In Tithal*



*Swamishri performs puja of murtis for a  
kutir mandir, Navsari*

## **6 December 2008, Tithal; 88th Birthday**

Today was Swamishri's 88th birthday. Due to the terrorist attack in Mumbai (26/11) Swamishri had cancelled the celebrations in Mumbai and at all BAPS mandirs and centres. Swamishri had strictly instructed that no mention of his birthday be made after his puja, and no garlands be offered to him.

Swamishri performed his puja according to routine and gave audience to 128 devotees.

## **7 December 2008, Tithal**

According to the English calendar the day marked Swamishri's 88th birthday. After Thakorji's darshan he performed *abhishek* of Nilkanth Varni. Thereafter Swamishri performed his morning puja. The senior sadhus garlanded Swamishri. A souvenir 'Satpurush', prepared by sadhus and youths of Mumbai for Swamishri's 88th Birthday Celebration, was inaugurated by Dr Swami.

In the evening Swamishri attended the Sunday *satsang* assembly. After Viveksagar Swami's

discourse Swamishri was honoured with garlands. Thereafter Swamishri blessed the mammoth gathering, "One may acquire things of this world, but the darshan of God, discourses about God, an association of a true sadhu are rare. When one gets the association and refuge of a bona fide sadhu one's life becomes full of joy and inner satisfaction."

## **14 December 2008, Navsari**

The evening *satsang* assembly began with a concert of bhajans by sadhus. Thereafter, Swamishri was honoured with garlands. Finally in his blessings Swamishri inspired, "If you think, you will come to realize that ordinary people, and even kings and millionaires have all passed away. Despite knowing this, we never think and feel that we too are going to die and leave everything behind. It is because of ignorance that we become infatuated and attached. What is ignorance? The belief that 'I am the body.' Everyone's body dies, likewise ours too will die."



Swamishri performs arti of BAPS mandir, Bhatiya



Children's Day, Surat

### 28 December 2008, Surat

The preliminary rituals of mandir *patotsav* and *pratishtha* of the new guru *parampara mur-tis* were performed by senior sadhus. Swamishri performed the *patotsav* and *pratishtha arti* after completing his morning puja. More than 25,000 devotees had come for the morning puja darshan. Senior sadhus garlanded Swamishri and honoured him on his 70th *diksha* anniversary. An *annakut* was offered in all three shrines of Thakorji in the main mandir.

In the Sunday evening *satsang* assembly Viveksagar Swami and Kothari Swami discoursed to the mammoth gathering. The *kothari* of Surat mandir, Uttamprakash Swami, announced Swamishri's wish that with the prevailing financial recession, which has direly affected the diamond industry, there would be no Jholi Utsav, but a simple *satsang* assembly would be held. *Dhun* was sung, as prayers, to resolve the financial crisis. The *kishores* and *yuvaks* performed a cultural dance. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "You all came this morning for the *patotsav*, and have come again this evening for *satsang*. This reflects upon your heartfelt devotion and faith in God. Through these two things one attains inner peace. Presently, there is an economic recession and it is understandable that you are all very worried. But despite this, the important thing is

to have firm refuge in God. By having faith and trust in God you will be able to hurdle over the problems. God is the all-doer. When businesses are prospering one feels God is very gracious, but when such a crisis comes one feels that God is not doing anything to improve things. But this is not so. God does good for all. He comes on earth to liberate all..."

### HIGHLIGHTS:

#### December 2008

**12. Tithal:** The mandir's ninth *patotsav* (mandir opening anniversary) was celebrated in Swamishri's presence.

**17. Navsari:** Children's Day programme of recitation, speech, skit was presented before Swamishri in his morning puja.

**18. Navsari:** Youth Day programme of bhajans and speeches were presented before Swamishri in his morning puja.

**29. Surat:** Kishores celebrated Kishore Day by singing bhajans in Swamishri's puja.

**30. Surat:** Children's Day (rural) programme included kirtans, story telling, *sankirtan* and speech in Swamishri's morning puja.



- Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

Translation: Sadhu Vivekshivandas

# Living With Swamishri



## **IMPROVING ONE'S NATURE**

**1.12.2008, Tithal**

A devotee was prone to frequent bouts of depression. As a result, he was given the pink slip at work. In addition, he had daily spats at home. On top of this his daughter got divorced. These social tragedies multiplied his depression manifold.

His relatives brought him for Swamishri's blessings. After listening to the problem Swamishri advised, "Have patience. Nothing good comes out of having tension. You have the refuge of God, a holy Sadhu and *satsang*. Your *satsang*, too, is not ordinary. So live in accordance to God's wishes. You should not quarrel because of your base nature (*swabhav*). Empty your mind of other thoughts, and believe that whatever has happened is due to God's wish. Decide here and now that you don't want to get angry and quarrel

any more. Say 'Swaminarayan' and do *mala*."

A relative said, "He has become distraught after his daughter's divorce."

Swamishri added, "Believe it to be God's wish. Believe it to be due to her past karmas. It must be her fate to experience such pain and suffering. The main problem is that because of your nature others' minds become agitated, so you should understand and resolve it. If you mend yourself, your daughter will get an appropriate partner."

## **OVERCOMING FEAR**

**1.12.2008 Tithal**

A spiritually-inclined person narrated his apprehensions to Swamishri, "I just can't understand why I am always fearful. I keep feeling that I will die this very moment! On coming here to Tithal when I saw the ocean, I worried about what will happen to me!"

Swamishri pacified him with soothing words, “God is with you, so there is no need to fear. By being fearful one cannot accomplish anything. Engage yourself in daily effort and remember God. Nothing is going to happen to you.”

#### **GOD ALWAYS DOES GOOD FOR ALL**

##### **4.12.2008, Tithal**

A God-loving person expressed his problem through a fax addressed to Swamishri. He questioned as to where God was, “I applied twice for my visas. I feel that despite doing *satsang* God doesn’t give me success in my work. And for those who don’t do *satsang* and don’t believe in God, their work is done.”

Swamishri blessed him, “When your mundane wish is not fulfilled then understand it to be for your good. Sometimes God tests us. God always does what is best and will do so. Try again for the third time. Remember God and his glory when you go to the visa office. God will do good for you.”

#### **KEY TO GOD’S PRESENCE**

##### **16.12.2008, Navsari**

Nainesh, a *satsangi* youth of London, rang up Swamishri and said, “Financially, times are bad and critical for us here. You too are not coming here, so there is a bad time (crisis) for us in all aspects.

Swamishri replied, “God and his devotees never have ‘bad’ times. There are ups and downs in our world. During such times one must be patient and do bhajan.”

Nainesh added, “Your darshan here would bring joy to us.”

Swamishri advised, “Understand first that we are together. Learning and imbibing this spiritual knowledge will make you happy and joyous. Whenever you remember, while doing puja or visiting the mandir, God and his Sadhu are with you.”

Swamishri underlined to all pious seekers to foster spiritual understanding and consciousness. ♦

- Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

Translation: Sadhu Vivekjiandas

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(contd. from page no. 3)

about 40 years old. Thereafter, amidst all odds of having no money, people, resources of stones and grains, and facing terrible opposition, Shastriji Maharaj consecrated the first BAPS Mandir in 1907 in Bochasan. He enshrined the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam in the central shrine. The occasion ushered in a new beginning and a golden chapter in the annals of Swaminarayan history.

In 1911, Yogiji Maharaj left Junagadh and joined Shastriji Maharaj, to help him in his mission to spread true *upasana*. Shastriji Maharaj travelled continuously in Gujarat, bearing untold hardships to spread the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. His main goal was to establish mandirs. In 1916 he consecrated a grand three-storied *shikharbaddh* mandir in Sarangpur. In 1934 he inaugurated a beautiful mandir in Gondal. In 1945 he established a mandir in Atladra and finally, in 1951, he performed the *arti* of Akshar-

Purushottam *murtis* for the grand marble *shikharbaddh* mandir in Gadhada. In 1950 Shastriji Maharaj took the important decision of appointing 28-year-old Shastri Narayanswarupdas (Pramukh Swami) as the president of BAPS. Through his blessings and the indefatigable efforts of Nirgundas Swami, Maganbhai, Harmanbhai and others the fellowship flourished in East Africa. On 10 May 1951 Shastriji Maharaj passed away and was succeeded by Yogiji Maharaj.

Shastriji Maharaj founded the BAPS in consonance with the principles preached by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He endeavoured till the age of 86 years, adhering to the moral disciplines of a Swaminarayan sadhu and with complete saintliness and love for all.

A thousand prostrations to Shastriji Maharaj on his birthday anniversary on Vasant Panchmi (31 January). ♦

## ANNUAL KARYAKAR SHIBIRS, INDIA

December 2008-January 2009



*Satsang Pravrutti Karyakar Shibir, Tithal*



*Bal Pravrutti Karyakar Shibir, Bochasan*

### SATSANG PRAVRUTTI KARYAKARS

**13 December 2008 to 6 January 2009**

A total of 16 *shibirs* for *satsang* and *kishore* activity volunteers were conducted by the sadhus and volunteers of the Satsang Pravrutti Central Office between 13 December 2008 and 6 January 2009.

Based on the theme ‘Antarkhoj’ (Introspection), the *shibirs* were held at the BAPS mandirs in Bochasan, Gadhada, Junagadh, Sankari, Gondal, Tithal and Ahmedabad. Senior sadhus, Mahant Swami, Dr Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami, Kothari Swami and Tyagvallabh Swami graced the *shibirs* and guided the volunteers on ‘Introspection’, ‘Do You Like Negative Talks?’, ‘Attaining Family Harmony’ and ‘How to Please God and Guru’. Other learned sadhus spoke on ‘Do We Observe Disciplines?’, ‘Do You Surrender Your Mind?’, ‘Do We Practice Self-Control?’, ‘The Dedication of a Volunteer’. The *shibir* theme was further re-inforced through skits, debates and audio-visual presentations. Also, the annual calendar of projects and other administrative tasks were discussed. In all, over 5,750 men and 5,340 women volunteers involved in the *satsang*, *mahila*, *kishore* and *kishori mandal* activities attended the *shibirs*.

### BAL PRAVRUTTI KARYAKARS

**21 December 2008 to 9 January 2009**

Based on the theme ‘Guru Dakshina’, 11 *shibirs* were conducted throughout Gujarat and Mumbai by the Bal Pravrutti Central office. Over 80 sadhus and 5,845 *bal* and *balika mandal karyakars* from 200 regions attended these special training *shibirs*, each lasting 1½ days.

Elaborating upon the central theme, senior sadhus – Mahant Swami, Dr Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami and Kothari Swami – and other learned sadhus spoke on topics such as, ‘Our Obligations to Our Gurus’, ‘Obstacles in Devotion to Guru’, ‘Atmabuddhi in Our Guru’ and ‘Power of Surrendering to Guru’.

Senior sadhus also gave their experienced guidance on *satsang* and personal issues through question-answer sessions.

The *shibir* theme was further highlighted through skits, quizzes and audio-visual presentations. The *shibir* also featured training to help the *karyakars* efficiently and accurately complete their administrative responsibilities.

At the end of each *shibir*, the *karyakars* pledged to fulfil their obligations to guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj. ◆

# BAL-BALIKA KARYAKAR TRAINING & INDUCTION DAY

27 December 2008, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London



*Bal Karyakars*

**M**ore than 70 young volunteers attended the UK Bal-Balika Karyakar Training & Induction Day

on Saturday 27 December 2008 at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London. The event was organized to train new Bal and Balika Mandal volunteers and provide them with an insight into their roles and responsibilities.

They were guided on the importance of working with children, and that working with them was as much an opportunity to learn from them as it was to teach them.

The importance of teamwork and striking a balance between *satsang*, studies and social responsibilities was also emphasized.



## NATIONAL UK BAL-BALIKA WINTER TRAINING CAMP 2008

28 to 30 December 2008, London



*Balaks at the winter training camp*

**O**ver 100 *balaks* and *balikas* together with 15 *sanchalaks* and *sanchalikas* attended the three-day Winter Training Camp. They were provided special training and guidance by various speakers on key issues affecting their age group: Looking After Our Satsang, An Ideal Satsangi, How to Perform Smruti, Performing Seva through Thoughts, Actions and Words, Value of Education.

There was also an insightful Q&A session where further practical guidance on higher education was given.

The participants were also given training on public speaking and techniques to improve their presentational skills, which would be helpful in their future career as well as in *satsang*.

The training sessions were interspersed with fun and sports, including swimming, golf, ice-skating and bowling.

Throughout the three days, the *balaks* and *balikas* also had valuable opportunities to spend quality time with their mentors to freely discuss important topics such as peer pressure and other relevant issues.

Thus, this *shibir* provided children with a deeper insight into Satsang and education, inspiring them to progress in their *satsang* duties and studies.



# NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

8-10 January 2009, Atlanta, GA, USA



Over 800 BAPS youth volunteers from across North America attended the three-day Youth Leadership Seminar in Atlanta, which began on 8 January 2009. Based on the message ‘To Go Above and Beyond’, the seminar was held at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Lilburn. The participants ranged from talented students to young professionals.

The youth leaders attended lectures and participated in workshops designed to help them develop skills in management, public speaking, interpersonal skills, and youth counselling.

“This was an extremely motivating weekend for me,” said Rani Thakkar, an investment banker from Cleveland, Ohio. “This is my third such seminar and I am always amazed at how inspiring they are. I am able to apply what I have learned not just to my volunteer work as a youth group leader but in my professional capacity.”

Along with cultivating leadership skills, the youth leaders also took part in the ceremonies and rituals performed at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir. This interaction helped to strengthen their Hindu and traditional roots. Also, through classroom sessions conducted by experienced and learned sadhus the participants took away a sense of pride for their culture and heritage.

“We learned so much the last few days on how to fine-tune our leadership skills”, said Vipul Patel, a graduate student from Atlanta, Georgia, “Along with learning these skills, I also gained a sense of who I am and where I come from.”

The Seminar was more than just information and education, it was fun. It was an investment for the future, cultivating youths with a sense of leadership, morality, spirituality and responsibility. ◆

## BAL BALIKA SHIBIR

9-11 January 2009, Johannesburg

From 9 to 11 January 2009, 85 *balaks*, *balikas* and 12 *sanchalaks* from Johannesburg, Lenasia, Pretoria, Benoni and Botswana participated in the Annual National BAPS Bal-Balika Shibir at the Smilin' Thru Village Resort, 100km from Johannesburg. The resort is situated in a valley on the banks of the Vaal River, which is South Africa's primary river and has been sanctified by the *asthi* of Yogiji Maharaj.

The theme of this year's *shibir* was 'Shastra-Mandir-Sant'. In the *shibir* the *balaks* and *balikas* learnt about Hindu and BAPS shastras, the importance and symbolism of mandirs, the qualities of

a true Sadhu and how these qualities are all present in guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Members of the BAPS Yuvak Mandal of Johannesburg conducted workshops, presentations, discussions, collective puja and other activities to promote the theme of the *shibir*.

At the end of the three-day *shibir*, the *balaks* and *balikas* submitted their *shibir* workbooks which were marked by the *sanchalaks*. Prizes were awarded for the best individual workbooks, and team awards for the teams with the most points.

The *shibir* helped the children learn about key Hindu and *satsang* concepts. ◆

## VISHWA SHANTI SAMUH PUJA

17 January 2009 Sydney, Australia

On 17 January 2009 a special collective Morning Prayer service for world peace (Vishwa Shanti Samuh Puja) was held at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Sydney, in which over 100 children,

teenagers and youths participated.

Similar collective prayer sessions were held at Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Auckland to pray for peace, calm and stability around the world in the year ahead. ◆

## BAPS SWAMINARAYAN VIDYAMANDIR, RAISAN

B/h. IOC Petrol Pump, Koba-Gandhinagar Highway, Raisan-382009

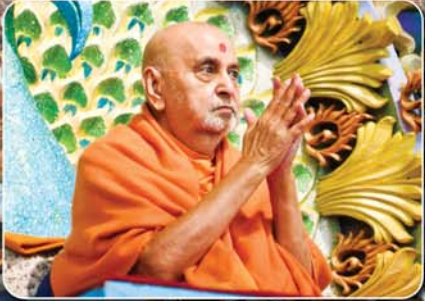
Phone: 23276700 / 23276500



Complete with modern educational facilities and a peaceful, natural environment, the BAPS Swaminarayan Vidyamandir at Raisan, near Ahmedabad, provides excellent value-based education using modern teaching methods for pupils from Nursery level to Standard 9.

The admission process for the new term beginning in June 2009 is now in progress. Boarding facilities are available for students studying in standards 5 to 9.

**Note:** Admission forms are available at above address by payment of Rs. 200 by cash or money order.



**SWAMISHRI'S VICHARAN**  
**December 2009**

1. Devotees engaged in darshan of Swamishri's morning puja, Dummas.
2. Swamishri bows to the devotees in the mammoth satsang assembly, Surat.



1. Murtis in the central shrine of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Surat:  
(L to R) Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Aksharmukta Gopalanand Swami.
2. An evening view of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Surat.