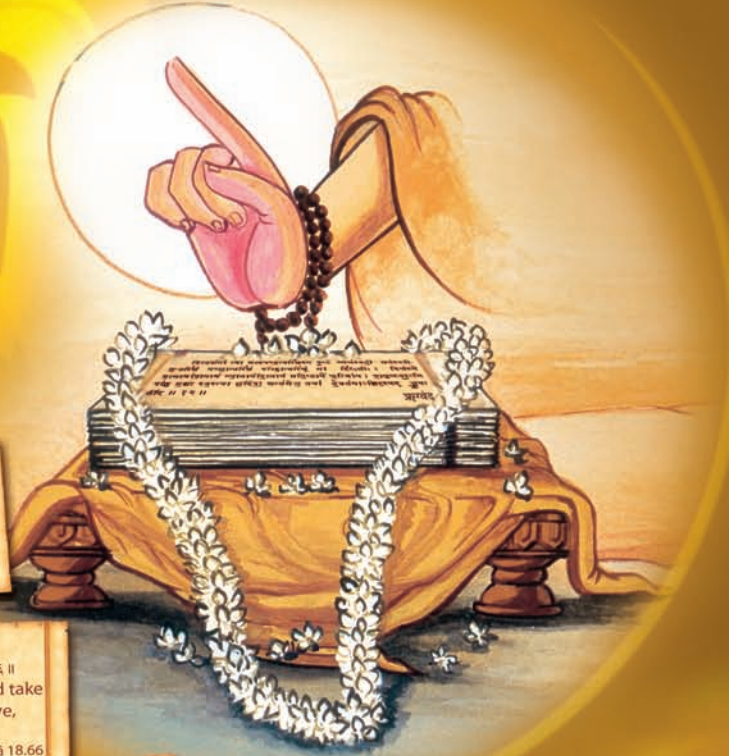


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‘आत्मा या अरे द्रष्टव्यः ज्ञातव्यो मनस्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः’  
One should experience Paramātmā;  
therefore one should listen to talks  
about him, reflect upon him and  
meditate upon him.  
- Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/5

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।  
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ ६६ ॥  
Renounce all other dharmas and take  
refuge in me alone. Do not grieve,  
I shall free you from all sins.  
- Bhagavad Gītā 18.66

अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा ॥  
Now, therefore, the inquiry into the real  
nature of Brahman.  
- Brahmasutras 1.1.1

Introduction to  
the Prasthāntrayi





**MURTI-PRATISHTHAS OF MURTIS FOR NEW BAPS MANDIRS IN TRIBAL REGIONS, SOUTH GUJARAT**



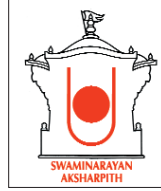
Following the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals, Swamishri performs *arti* of the *murtis* for the new BAPS Shri Swaminarayan *hari* mandirs in eight tribal villages of the Valsad-Dharampur district in south Gujarat. In the past two months, Swamishri has performed *murti-pratishthas* for five new mandirs while in Gondal, eight while in Bochasan and six while in Sankari.

**TORONTO POLICE SERVICE FELICITATE BAPS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES, 22 OCTOBER 2008, TORONTO**



Over 150 officers of the Toronto Police Service attended a special function to felicitate BAPS for its community services held at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Toronto on 22.10.08. On behalf of the police, Chief Bill Blair presented a citation to BAPS, which read, "In recognition of its many vital contributions and leadership in the social, economical, and cultural life of our city - and for the tremendous spirit of unity with the Toronto Police Service." Chairperson of the Toronto Police Service, Dr Alok Mukherjee, also congratulated the BAPS for inspiring individuals and the community.





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January 2009, Vol. 32 No. 1

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## FIRST WORD

Speech is a very important and powerful tool we humans have been blessed with and use so generously in our daily life. There are many aspects related to it: one of which is making comments or giving opinions. A great deal of the time we comment or share our viewpoint because people ask us or our work demands us to do so. In addition, we also comment to satisfy our desire to be social and involved. However, we should try to be careful that whatever we see, hear or know does not always necessitate us to pass a comment. Yet when there is an urge to say something helpful or positive we should share it with others. Avoiding untimely or unwanted comments saves time, energy and arguments.

Sometimes our comments are harsh, critical or negative in nature, and at other times they are complimentary, useful, necessary or entertaining. We should try to make a conscious effort in making positive and helpful comments.

Some make comments after careful study and contemplation, while some are knee-jerk reactions. We should be careful that the latter do not lead to hurts, arguments and confusions. Some of our comments are at best unnecessary and at worst counterproductive.

Spiritually, one requires more restraint in speech. Jaga Swami taught, "One should not look at the forms, actions and faults of others." It is because of this habit that we mostly generate comments and opinions. Furthermore, changing the way we perceive people and our world will help us think and speak positively and maturely. ♦



# Festival Preparations in Botad

*After celebrating Vasant in Gadhada,  
Shri Hari agrees to celebrate the  
Fuldol festival in Botad...*

The next day when Maharaj sat down for his puja he called for Ramchandra. Ratneshwar, his brother, informed, “He left this morning for Sardhar with Hasan to sell tobacco. Hasan has made him a partner in his business.” Shri Hari said with a frown, “Did Ramchandra come here for bhajan or to conduct business?” Immediately Maharaj called for Naja Jogiya and told him, “Send two horsemen towards Sardhar right now and bring Ramchandra back. Tell Hasan that Maharaj has said that Ramchandra is no longer his partner. He will have no stake in his profit or loss.” The horsemen left and in no time they caught up with Hasan’s bullock cart. They informed Ramchandra and Hasan of Shri Hari’s order. When Ramchandra returned Maharaj asked, “Why did you go with Hasan without asking me? And why did you abandon doing bhajan to put yourself in that hassle?” Ramchandra remained silent and crestfallen. Then Maharaj asked Ramchandra’s mother, “Would you be happy if I gave *diksha* to Ramchandra and Ratneshwar and initiate them as *brahmacharis*?”

“Maharaj, we have come to do your bhajan. If you initiate them as *brahmacharis* then they will be able to do more bhajan. You saved Ram-

chandra this time from being swindled. And if he ever thinks likewise again then he will forget to do bhajan,” replied Ramchandra’s mother.

Shriji Maharaj gave *diksha* to both brothers, naming Ramchandra as Purushottamanand Swami and Ratneshwar as Govindanand Swami. Then Maharaj called Ladha Thakkar, Dada Khachar’s administrator, and told him, “Hasan decided to do the tobacco business without informing me. Now if he incurs losses upon himself then people will come clamouring to us for their money. So go to the village square now and declare publicly that Hasan has nothing to do with Dada Khachar and his family.” Ladha Thakkar did as Maharaj bidded.

Shri Hari celebrated the festival of Vasant in Gadhada with great joy and devotion. The devotees of Botad requested him to celebrate the Fuldol festival in their town. Shri Hari gave his consent and told them to return and make preparations. The devotees of Botad, namely, Daha Khachar, Bhaga Doshi, Chakubhai, Karsandas, Nanchand, Mulchand, Hirabhai Vasani, Keshavji Parekh, Kansara Amarsi and others were pleased.

Shri Hari said, “We will invite the whole of the Satsang there, so make maximum preparations. Devotees will arrive by different means: by bullock cart, on horses, camels and even by foot. Therefore you’ll have to arrange for fodder. For the devotees you’ll have to arrange for



accommodation. Furthermore, to protect them and look after their belongings, you'll have to provide tight security. Nothing should be stolen during the festival."

Daha Khachar assured Maharaj, "My father, Hamir Khachar, is well known in our region for his toughness and fighting spirit. Kano Patel is the leader of twelve villages, and he too has great influence in the region. Bhaga Doshi is thinking of calling a platoon of Arab soldiers from Bhavnagar. We seek your blessings Maharaj. No thief or criminal will ever dare to come on the outskirts of Botad."

Shri Hari was pleased at Daha Khachar's courage and added, "To exercise one's bravery in the service of sadhus and devotees is also a form of bhakti. Joban Pagi will come with his team of brave men and the king of Ghodasar will come with his army of tribals (*bhils*).

Bhaga Doshi asked, "Maharaj, what other preparations do we need to make? We want to make this festival so memorable that it becomes etched in the annals of Satsang."

Maharaj replied, "We will celebrate the festival in Sandhgadh and conduct the discourses in Botad. So, make dual arrangements accordingly."

The devotees returned excitedly to Botad. Preparations for the Fuldol festival commenced with great sweat and joy. Everyone was happy that Shri Hari would spray all of them with holy, coloured water. Nanchandbhai had a new house constructed. The kitchen for the devotees was to be set up nearby. The makeshift accommodation for sadhus was to be arranged beneath a giant banyan tree in the village. An assembly hall was to be built in the shade of neem trees. The devotees of Botad engaged themselves in the preparations with alacrity.

Daha Khachar, Bhaga Doshi and other devotees started levelling the ground with shovels and pickaxes for the assembly hall. The people of Botad were surprised to see them labour when at home they had servants and labourers

to do their chores. Several Baniya businessmen tried to restrain them, "Bapu, if you allow us we will hire some labourers to do this. Why are you doing it all by yourselves?"

Bhaga Doshi replied, "Look, Ambrish was a great king. He had many servants and workers at his disposal. But he served the *murti* of Thakorji himself. He personally exerted himself in all the preparations. King Ambrish washed Thakorji's utensils, filtered drinking water, cleaned food grains, ground the grains into flour, prepared meals and offered them to Thakorji with devotion all by himself. But when he sat on his royal throne, he gave commands to his men to carry out their stately duties. Similarly, it would be fine for our hired men and labourers to perform the daily household chores, but when it comes to serving Thakorji, we have to do it ourselves as his servants. By serving God and his realized Devotee one attains the divine state."

Daha Khachar, too, had shed his pride of status and royalty for the preparations. His servitude and devotion was apparent through his labour of love. Such was the influence and glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Once the area was levelled and cleaned a canopied hall of cloth and bamboo was set up. A stage was built in it for Maharaj. The soil was sprinkled with water to cool it. Then burlap was spread on the grounds and cotton mattresses arranged for the devotees to sit on. Everyone was exultant and wished to give a royal welcome to all the invited guests, sadhus and devotees. Furthermore, everyone aspired to augment the fame and popularity of Bhaga Doshi as the town's prominent businessman and Hamir Khachar as the leader of Botad. However, the two leading lights of the town were oblivious of their status while performing their duties like servants.

As the days of Shri Hari's arrival approached the pace of preparations increased. The devotees hectically started completing their assigned

duties. Their thoughts and sentiments were awash with the imminent arrival of devotees and Shri Hari.

On Fagan *sud* 13 large groups of devotees from Gujarat started streaming into Botad. Each was conspicuous by their typical headgear and clothes. They arrived from Kutch, Halar, Khandesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and the southern and eastern regions of India. Their attires, dialects and languages no doubt varied, but their *tilak-chandlo* and humble greeting of 'Jai Swaminarayan' gave them a common identity. Some even hugged one another with camaraderie. With Bhagwan Swaminarayan as their chief focus, all borders and differences were erased to form a relationship of unity and respect.

Each of them was allotted living quarters with required facilities. Security guards were posted at each residential cluster.

The people of Botad witnessed the Swaminarayan culture at close quarters. The devotees, who had arrived from far-flung places, were awaiting Shri Hari's arrival. He was to arrive from Gadhadra the next day, on the evening of *sud* 14. The following day, Maharaj had sent his *sadhus* beforehand. Soon thereafter, Shri Hari was seen arriving with a large retinue. The air on the outskirts of Botad broke with the welcome sounds of shenais, bhungals, drums and rifle shots. Escorting Maharaj were the Kathi devotees, astride on their impressive thoroughbred horses. Behind them followed 100 armed *parshads* on their horses. Amid the *parshads* was Shri Hari, riding on his mare, Manki.

The chief of Botad, Hamir Khachar, his son Daha Khachar, and several leading devotees of Botad were eagerly waiting to welcome their Lord. The women devotees of Botad were singing auspicious songs in welcome and honour of Maharaj. When Maharaj arrived the devotees of Botad prostrated on the ground. Shri Hari dismounted from Manki, embraced and blessed the devotees of Botad. The devotees of Merai offered beautiful clothes to Maharaj. Instantly Shri Hari

donned them and fulfilled their devotion. He gave away his former clothes to Mayaram Bhatt. Then Shri Hari climbed onto Manki and the procession proceeded. Following behind him were Dada Khachar, Vasta Khachar, Allaiya Khachar, Somla Khachar, Sura Khachar, Jiva Khachar and other Kathi devotees. The local devotees proclaimed Shri Hari's name aloud in honour. The musicians played their auspicious tunes to welcome Shri Hari Maharaj. The Kathi devotees fired their rifles in salutation. The people of Botad rushed out of their homes and onto galleries and terraces to watch the divine spectacle with astonishment and joy. The women folk showered flower petals and rice grains as Maharaj passed by. Some even welcomed him by showering tiny gold and silver balls. The whole of Botad celebrated Shri Hari's arrival. The procession terminated at the banyan tree in town.

An assembly was arranged. Shri Hari briefly blessed the gathering. Thereafter, on seeing Valibhai arrive with his shenai, Maharaj told him to play it. His rendition captivated Maharaj and his *sadhus*, some of whom were expert musicians. Shri Hari praised his performance, "On hearing you play the shenai even Tumberu's pride must have been dissolved." Valibhai replied with modesty, "Maharaj I am blessed when you are pleased with me. It has not been in Tumberu's fate to perform before you, whereas, you have listened to my rendition." Shri Hari was pleased with him and told him to ask for something. But Valibhai remained quiet. Maharaj asked him thrice. Valibhai's eyes welled up with tears. In a voice overwhelmed with love for Maharaj he said, "Maharaj, I ask for your grace." Shri Hari removed a gold armlet from his arm and gave it to him. Valibhai felt honoured and replied, "My Lord, you have graced me with this ornament. This will forever be my priceless treasure." Then Valibhai touched the gold armlet respectfully to his head, heart and eyes. ◆

(To be contd.)

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PRASTHĀNTRAYĪ

*The practical and spiritually elevating philosophy of Akshar-Purushottam revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781-1830 CE) in the early nineteenth century is a unique contribution to the annals of Sanātana Hindu Dharma. It is rooted in the Vedas and is also contained in the Prasthāntrayī: the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gitā and Brahmasutras...*

## WHAT ARE SHASTRAS?

‘शास्ति च त्रायते च इति शास्त्रम् ।’

‘That which rules and protects is a shastra’. Hindu shastras have continuously taught eternal principles to make man’s feelings become more spiritual, more stable, more profound and more enlightened. They have all along inspired rituals that are relevant to those principles, and prohibited those that seem contradictory to them. They guide us by distinctly describing the means that enable one to follow those rituals.

There is a saying in Sanskrit:

अनेकसंशयोच्छेदि परोक्षार्थस्य दर्शकम् ।

सर्वस्य लोचनं शास्त्रं यस्य नास्त्यन्ध एव सः ॥

‘Shastras destroy all doubts and make principles that seem imperceptible tangible. They are the true eyes of man. Therefore, one who does not read and associate with shastras is certainly blind.’ In India, there are many Hindu shastras. In this article, we will acquaint ourselves with the three foremost shastras collectively known as the *Prasthāntrayī*, which have been stamped with authority as philosophical treatises.

## PRASTHĀNTRAYĪ

*Prasthān* means a shastra that establishes principles, and *trayī* indicates the quantity three. The three shastras: The Upanishads, Shri-mad Bhagavad Gitā and Brahmasutras are known as the *Prasthāntrayī*.

It is only through them that a philosophical principle is established firmly (*prasthāpan*), hence these shastras are called *Prasthān*. Therefore, from ancient times, a unique tradition has continuously prevailed whereby Hindu *sanātana sampradayas*, using the above three shastras, establish, support and promote their philosophical principles. Hence, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Vallabhacharya, Ramanandacharya and all the other *ācharyas* have written their commentaries on these shastras. In the same way, commentaries on these three shastras have also been written in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya as well.

Now we will describe in detail these three *prasthān* shastras, which are considered as supreme authority in matters of philosophy.

## THE FIRST PRASTHĀN: THE UPANISHADS

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer says: “From every sentence deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole shastra is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit.... In the whole world there is no study, except that of the originals, so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. And therefore the Upanishads have been the solace of my life, they will be the solace of my death.”





**A gurukul in Upanishadic times**

Supporting these words, German scholar Max Muller said: “If these words of Schopenhauer need any confirmation, I willingly give mine.”

Swami Vivekanand says, “We need strength. Who will give us strength? The Upanishads are a treasury of strength. They are capable of giving strength.” There are many such dignitaries who have studied and experienced the Upanishads with astonishment.

Truly, the Upanishads are the world’s greatest literature. The Upanishads liberate people mired in countless miseries and inspire them onto the path of eternal peace and happiness. They truly reveal that ‘तरति शोकमात्मविद्’, ‘One who attains the knowledge of Paramātmā overcomes grief’ (Chhândogya Upanishad: 7/3/1). Moreover, ‘अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति’, ‘The resolute person who, having attained the *brāhmi-sthiti* (*brāhmic* state) of *adhyātma yoga*, contemplates upon and offers his devotion to Parabrahman, becomes detached from worldly delight and grief’ (Katha Upanishad: 1/2/12). Such mantras lead man further in the direction of eternal peace and happiness. What is that Paramātmā like? ‘यो वै भूमा तत्सुखं नाल्मे सुखमस्ति’, ‘Only Paramātmā, who is the greatest of all, is full of bliss. The whole of creation,

which is inferior to him, contains no bliss’ (Chhândogya Upanishad: 7/23/1). How can we attain Paramātmā? The Upanishads disclose, ‘ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्।’, ‘One who becomes *akshar-rup* (*brahmarup*) attains Parabrahman’ (Taittiriya Upanishad, Ānandvalli, Mantra-1). And finally giving such counsel as ‘न पश्यो मृत्युं पश्यति न रोगं नोत दुःखताम्’, ‘Disease, misery, birth and death no longer remain for one who has attained *brahmavidyā* (the true knowledge of Brahman and Parabrahman)’ (Chhândogya Upanishad: 7/26/2). Such teachings bestow man with *moksha*.

They give spiritual proclamations such as ‘आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः’, ‘One should experience Paramātmā; therefore one should listen to talks about him, reflect upon him and meditate upon him’ (Bruhadāraṇyaka Upanishad: 2/4/5). One cannot but be convinced that the Upanishads are truly an ocean of eternal principles and an indisputable source of utmost peace and supreme happiness. Since time immemorial, their pure, divine streams have gifted the world with serene peace.

### **WHAT DOES ‘UPANISHAD’ MEAN?**

‘उपनिषद्यते प्राप्यते ज्ञायते ब्रह्मविद्या अनया इति उपनिषद्।’, ‘That by which *brahmavidyā* can be known and attained is Upanishad.’ This is the philosophical meaning of the word. On a literal level *upa* means ‘near’ and *nishad* means ‘to sit’. It means ‘to sit near’. So ‘Upanishad’ can also mean *upāsanā* (since, *āsana* also means ‘to sit’). The Upanishads are the shastras of *upāsanā*. Therefore the message of accepting the discipleship of the *brahmaswarup* guru, attaining *brahmavidyā* from that guru and offering *upāsanā* to Parabrahman echoes from the very word ‘Upanishad’.

### **THE LOCATION OF THE UPANISHADS**

The base of the Upanishads are our Vedas. The Upanishads are, in fact, a specific part of the Vedas. The deep philosophical principles of



the Vedas have been concisely collected in them. That is why they are also known as Vedānta.

### WHO CREATED THE UPANISHADS?

In Sanātana Dharma the Vedas are revered as being without beginning, eternal, and of divine origin. The Upanishads are a part of the Vedas. Therefore, questions regarding who wrote the Upanishads and when they were written do not arise. Our *sanātana* shastras clearly explain that at the beginning of a *kalp* Paramātmā himself sequentially manifests them as they were before (Shrimad Bhāgavat: 3/12/37-38). For this reason the Nirukta, a supporting shastra of the Vedas and, in effect, a Vedic lexicon, states that the rishis have been inspired to reveal the Vedic mantras, but they are not the composers (Nirukta, Naigamkānd: 2/11). Maharshi Parashar also says, 'न कश्चिद् वेदकर्ता', 'There is no creator of the Vedas.'

Therefore, questions regarding the sequence of the Upanishads – which was created first and which later? – are inappropriate and run counter to *sanātana* Vedic principles. Moreover, great, wise rishis, like Maharshi Manu, have called the Upanishads 'अनादिनिधना दिव्या वाक्', 'eternal divine precepts' (Manusmriti). Though this may not be grasped by scholars brought up in the Western culture, or to some modern Indians who have been influenced by their ideas, Hindu spiritual traditions accept that the Upanishads are without beginning, eternal, and not of human origin. Bhagwan Swaminarayan also mentions in his discourses that the Upanishads are eternal shastras.

### THE STYLE OF THE UPANISHADS

The Upanishads are discourses that lead to *moksha*. These discourses may be between two people, like that between father and son, as in the Chhāndogya Upanishad; or between many people, such as that between the *devtās* and

Yaksha in the Kena Upanishad. Sometimes we may even find a discourse with oneself like that in mantras such as 'अहं ब्रह्मास्मि' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 1/4/10). In some places we find a philosophical question-answer discussion, like that between six disciples and their guru, Pip-palad, as in the Prashna Upanishad; and in some places we find affectionate words of wisdom naturally flowing from the guru's heart, like those of Sanatsujat. In other texts we come across the spiritual contemplation of great meditating yogis, like in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad; and in other places we come across discussions regarding *brahmavidyā* between wise learned rishis: like that between Yagnavalkya, Ashwal, Artbhag, Ushast, Kahod and others in the assembly of King Janak in the Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad. In this manner, the Upanishads are sometimes a school, sometimes a contemplation chamber and sometimes an assembly.

The Upanishads are full of a variety of examples and illustrations. Through many short stories they have made deep spiritual knowledge comprehensible. Clear logic and meaningful presentations make them stand out. Moreover, whatever has been taught in the Upanishads has been taught in the lap of nature, on the undefiled banks of a river, under a great banyan tree, in the extremely peaceful caves of great mountains like the Himalayas, or under a clear, open, glittering sky, thus making the discourses more natural and more spiritual. Perhaps, that is why their mantras captivate, focus and calm the mind.

### THE NUMBER OF UPANISHADS

Today, more than 108 Upanishads can be found in book form. Nevertheless, we cannot say that there were only this many. Looking at the extent of the Vedas we can affirm that the collection of Upanishads in the Vedic branches must be just as extensive. It is unfortunate that we have lost a lot due to cruel foreign attacks

and our own negligence. However, whatever has survived is ample.

Of the Upanishads that are available today, there are some which almost all the great *acharyas* and scholars of the Hindu *sampradayas* equally accept as authoritative. There are ten such Upanishads. A well-known *shloka* contains the names: ‘ईश-केन-कठ-प्रश्न-मुण्ड-माण्डूक्य-तित्तिरिः । एतरेयं च छान्दोग्यं बृहदारण्यकं दश ॥’, ‘The ten Upanishads are: Ishāvāsya Upanishad, Kena Upanishad, Katha Upanishad, Prashna Upanishad, Mundaka Upanishad, Māndukya Upanishad, Taittiriya Upanishad, Aitareya Upanishad, Chhāndogya Upanishad, Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad.’

Of these ten Upanishads the Aitareya Upanishad is the only one from the Rig Veda. The Ishāvāsya, Katha, Taittiriya and Bruhadāranyaka Upanishads are from the Yajur Veda. The Kena and Chhāndogya Upanishads are both from the Sama Veda. The Prashna, Mundaka and Māndukya Upanishads are from the Atharva Veda.

The mantras of the Upanishads are known as ‘Shruti’, and for this very reason the Upanishad *prasthān* is also known as the *shruti-prasthān*.

### THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE UPANISHADS

The Upanishads are the shastra of *brahmavidyā*. *Brahmavidyā* is the main subject matter of the Upanishads. What does *brahmavidyā* mean? Defining it, guru Angira tells his disciple, Shaunak, ‘येनाऽक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम्’ (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/2/13). This sentence gives the definition of *brahmavidyā*: ‘That by which Akshar and Purush are known in their actuality is *brahmavidyā*.’ Here, the word ‘Akshar’ refers to Aksharbrahman, and ‘Purush’ refers to Purushottam, Parabrahman. This implies that the main aim of all the Upanishads is to philosophically explain the divine form, virtues and grandeur of Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman in order to liberate every spiritual aspirant from worldly bondage. By reading the Upanishads one

will experience how clearly, simply and naturally this explanation has been given.

Now let us acquaint ourselves with the second *prasthān*.

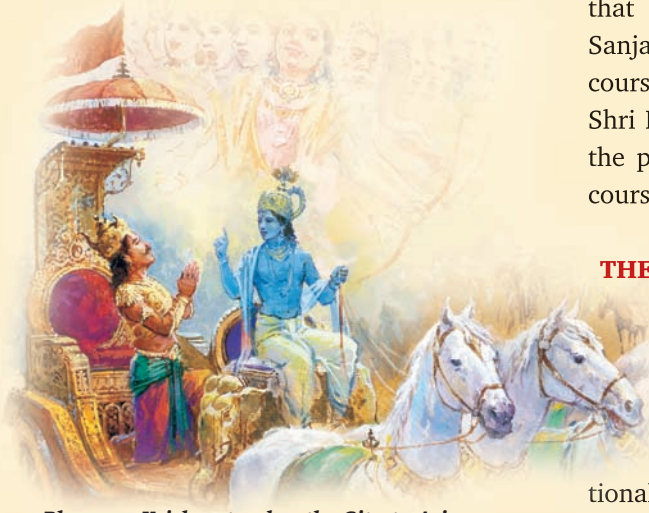
### THE SECOND PRASTHĀN: THE SHRIMAD BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

The Bhagavad Gītā is the second *prasthān* in the *prasthāntrayi*. From philosophers of India to those throughout the whole world, all have realized this shastra to be a means to gain a direction in life. After contemplating on it they have surrendered to it, and have never tired of praising it with utmost wonder. For example:

- The Gītā is the greatest treasure of mankind. Reading sentences like ‘सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।’ (Gītā 6/29) my heart becomes overjoyed. – *Emerson*
- This small book contains the solutions to all the problems of my life. – *Henry David Thoreau*
- For ethics to reach the pinnacles of greatness the Gītā’s precepts are second to none. – *Warren Hastings*
- The mother who gave birth to me has passed away. But in troublesome times I have learnt to go to Mother Gītā. There is no room for depression for a person who becomes a devotee of the Gītā. He always remains blissful. I wish that the Gītā not only be taught in government schools, but in each and every educational institution. It should be a shame for a single Hindu boy or girl not to know about the Gītā. – *Mahatma Gandhi*
- My body has been nourished by my mother’s milk, but more than that, my heart and intellect have been nourished by the milk of the Gītā. – *Vinoba Bhave*

### GĪTĀ: COMPOSED BY VYASA IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

Let us bear in mind that the Bhagavad Gītā



**Bhagwan Krishna teaches the Gita to Arjuna**

is a historical shastra of India. It is not an imagined or concocted fable invented for the purpose of giving counsel. This shastra has been included in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahābhārata, which contains eighteen *parvas* in total and is written by Shri Badarayana Vyasa. The twenty-fifth chapter (*adhyaya*) of the Bhishma Parva is the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gitā.

### **THE FORM OF THE BHAGAVAD GITĀ**

Containing 18 chapters, this shastra consists of 700 *shlokas*. Of these, 1 *shloka* is spoken by Dhritarashtra, 41 by Sanjaya, 84 by Arjuna and 574 by Shri Krishna.

### **THE STYLE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITĀ**

The Gitā is a discourse. A divine discourse between an incarnation of God and a devotee. Therefore it is a dialogue. This dialogue has been composed in verse using poetic metres like *anushtup* and others. From a literary point of view the Gitā is full of poetic virtues: melody, depth of meaning and propriety. This may be the reason why it has become the poem that truly touches man's heart.

The Gitā is the third discourse in the Mahabharata. The Mahābhārata itself is a discourse

between Vaishampayana and Janmejaya. Within that discourse we find the discourse between Sanjaya and Dhritarashtra. Within that discourse, Sanjaya speaks of the discourse between Shri Krishna and Arjuna. In this way the Gitā is the pre-eminent discourse of this triplet of discourses in the Mahābhārata.

### **THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE BHAGAVAD GITĀ**

‘इतिहासपुराणाभ्यां वेदं समुपबृंहयेत्’, ‘To clarify and nourish the meanings of the Vedas by means of history and the Puranas.’ In accordance with this traditional principle, the work of the Gitā is to clarify and nourish the meanings embedded in the Vedas and Upanishads. So it can be said that *brahmavidyā*, regarding the forms of Brahman and Parabrahman that have been mentioned in the Upanishads, has been further clarified in the Gitā. The only difference is that the philosophy that has been given in the Upanishads is *paroksh* (indirect), whereas in the Gitā it is *pratyaksh* (direct). For this important reason the Gitā, as well as being presented as the shastra of *brahmavidyā*, has also been presented as a ‘Yoga Shāstra’. Yoga means attachment or communion. This is a shastra that joins or attaches one with the manifest form of Paramātmā. Perhaps that is why the manifest form of God, which possibly may not be understood from the Vedas and Vedantas, etc., even after an in-depth study, has been explained in the Gitā very clearly, without hesitation, repeatedly, and resolutely. Hence, it has been said for the Gitā, ‘सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः। पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत्॥’, ‘The entire Upanishads are like a cow, Krishna is the milkman, Arjuna is the calf on seeing which milk flows into the udders of the cow, and the milk of that cow is the nectar-filled Shrimad Bhagavad Gitā, which the intelligent devotees also drink.’

Also in the Gitā are: valiant talks that make



cowards courageous; precepts regarding *ātma*-consciousness that abolish body-consciousness; calmness even in the midst of the ferociousness of the worldly ocean; extraordinary clarification of the roots of bondage – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*; the *gunātī* state (*brāhmi-sthī*) of the pure *ātma* above those three *gunas*; the *brāhmic* state; the devotion that has to be offered to Paramātmā once one has attained that state and clear guidance regarding that devotion, etc. What isn't there in the Gitā? Truly, the Gitā is an ocean in a pitcher.

The Gitā follows the Upanishads. Therefore it is known as the *smṛuti-prasthān*. Many commentaries have been written on this *smṛuti-prasthān*. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has also given the Bhagavad Gitā a place amongst his eight principal shastras (Shikashapatri 94). In his discourses he has from time to time quoted references from it. In some places he has given original and profound meanings of some *shlokas*. He has time and again recited the Gitā and has had it recited. That is why we find that in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya much literature has been written based on the Gitā. This in itself shows the spiritual value of this shastra.

Now let us acquaint ourselves with the third *prasthān*.

### **THE THIRD PRASTHĀN: THE BRAHMASUTRAS**

The Brahmasutras are the third *prasthān* of the *prasthāntrayi*. Shri Badarayana Vyasa, the son of Parashara, is the author of this shastra. This shastra has been written and based on the *shrutis* of the Upanishads and the *smṛuti* shastras.

### **THE NAME 'BRAHMASUTRAS'**

*Sutras* that describe Brahman and Parabrahman are the Brahmasutras. In other words 'brahmasutras' are those in which *brahmavidyā* (which describes Brahman and Parabrahman as in the precepts of shastras like the Upanishads and the Gitā)

has been logically proved and decorated.

### **THE FORM OF THE BRAHMASUTRAS**

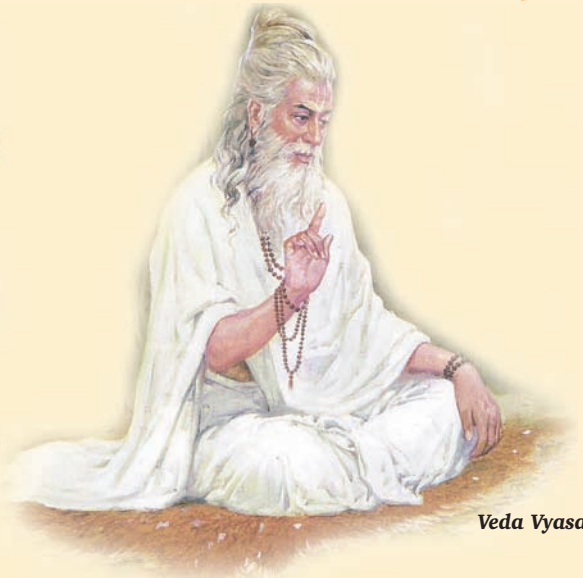
This shastra has been written in *sutras*. 'अल्पाक्षरमसन्दिग्धं सारवद् विश्वतो मुखम्। अस्तोभमनवद्यं च सूत्रं सूत्रविदो विदुः॥', 'That which has just a few syllables, doesn't contain big sentences, is able to contain the essence of what is to be said, is not confusing, etc. are attributes of a *sutra*.' Maharshi Vyasa has written this shastra according to these attributes, thus it is a *sutra*-shastra. The shastra comprises four chapters (*adhyāyas*), each of which has four sub-divisions called *pāds*, each *pād* consists of sub-topics called *adhikarans*. Each *adhikaran* consists of one or more *sutras*.

### **THE STYLE OF THE BRAHMASUTRAS**

The style of the Brahmasutras is based on logic. The principles that have been taught in the Upanishads have been presented here in a logical manner. In the whole shastra, whenever a principle has to be clarified or proved, the author first establishes the point of discussion, then presents the possible doubts, putting contrary ones first. Thereafter, refuting them with strong logical arguments, he presents the right argument. Then, finally, he announces the conclusion. Due to this rational style, the Brahmasutras have become famous as the *tark-prasthān*. Also, as the extremely detailed and extremely profound principles of Vedānta are discussed in this shastra in an intellectual debate form, this shastra is studied and discussed more by scholars than by lay readers.

### **THE BRAHMASUTRAS AS VEDĀNTA-DARSHAN, UTTARA-MIMĀNSĀ**

Sāṅkhya-darshan established by Maharshi Kapil, Yoga-darshan established by Maharshi Patanjali, Nyāya-darshan established by Maharshi Gautam, Vaisheshik-darshan established by Maharshi Kanad, and Purva-mimānsā established by Maharshi Jaimini are five well known *darshans* in India. Each *darshan's* *sutra*-



Veda Vyasa

shastra, written by their *acharyas*, is also renowned. In this same sequence of *darshans* is Maharshi Vyasa's Brahmasutra.

The Upanishads are called *vedānta*, and since their principles are shown here they are also known as Vedānta-darshan. Furthermore, this has been written after the Purva-mimāṃsā (the prior-mimāṃsā), *sutras* written by Shri Jaimini based on rites and rituals. Therefore, these *sutras* are also known as the Uttara-mimāṃsā (the latter-mimāṃsā).

### THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE BRAHMA-SUTRAS

The *brahmavidyā* that has been expounded in the Upanishads has again been proved here in a logical form. If we take an overview of the shastra we find that in the first chapter decisive conclusions have been given on who is the creator of the world? Why it was created? Who is the supporter of everything? Who is omniscient? Who controls all? Why? And other questions which have baffled the minds of men throughout history. Sometimes doubts that are raised from the *shruti* mantras themselves are also solved.

The second chapter is prominently refutation-al. Here, doctrines that are contradictory to Vedic

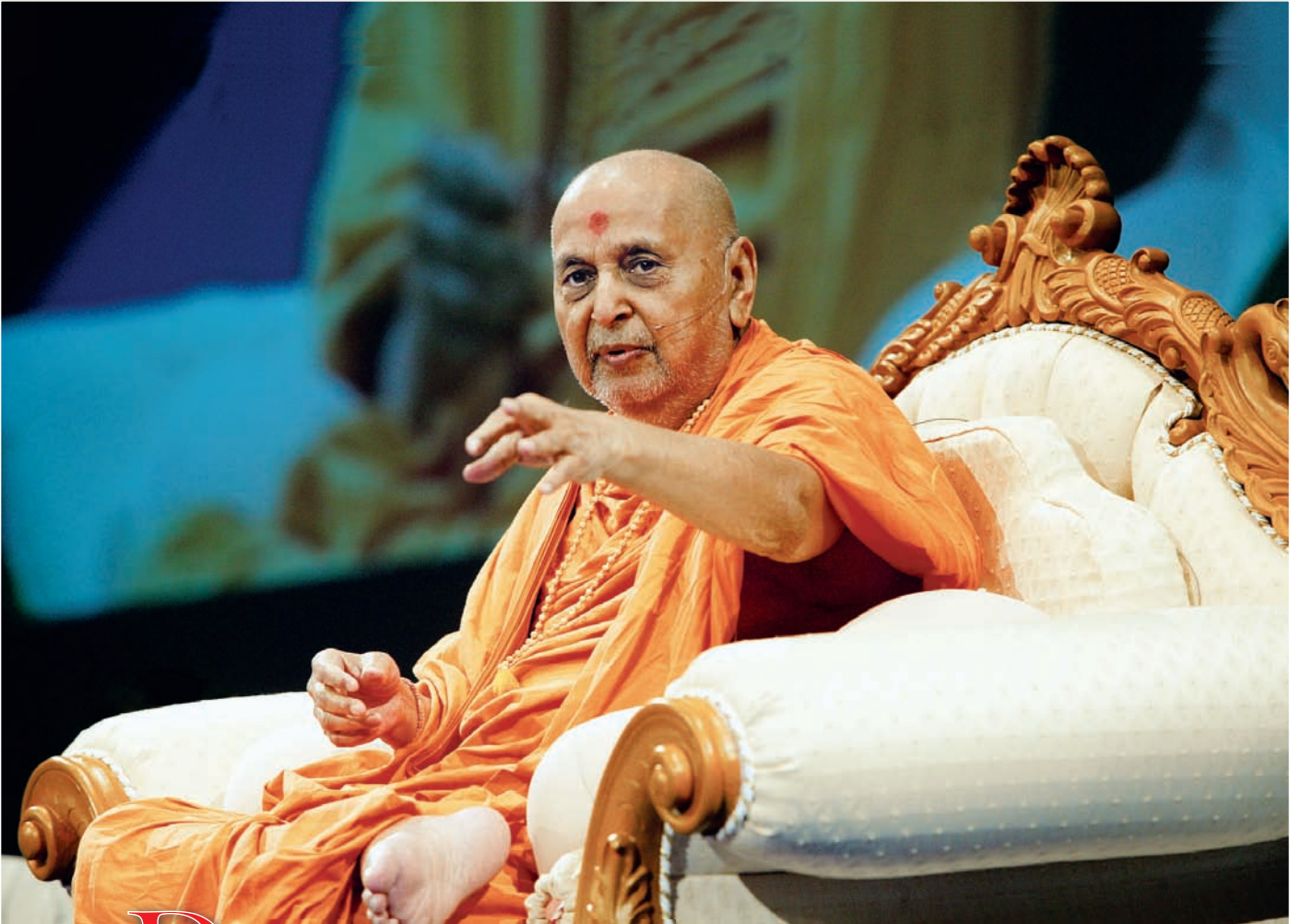
Sanātana principles (like that of *nirbij* Sāṅkhya and Yoga) are thoroughly tested with logic. The logical flaws, misunderstandings, misconceptions, or hindrances to *moksha* are pointed out in the contradictory doctrines. Then, using true arguments the principles that are in accordance with the *shrutis* are authentically declared true. As a result the principles have become more sturdy, powerful and effective.

The third chapter of the Brahmasutras is a chapter on endeavours. Ultimate *moksha* is the goal of all spiritual aspirants. *Upāsana* – devotion to Paramātmā – is the chief endeavour to attain that goal. Here, we find the method of that devotion explained. Moreover, one who wants to offer devotion to Paramātmā must attain the state of *akshar* or *brahman*. How can one perfect this endeavour which has been established in the *shrutis* and *smrutis*? For this, how should one's relationship with the *brahmaswarup* guru be? How should one control one's mind and senses? Also, other matters regarding spiritual endeavour have been presented here with extreme clarity, resoluteness and responsibility.

The fourth chapter has been called 'the chapter of results'. The result of all endeavours, the form of supreme *moksha*, has been expounded here. That which the Upanishads have called the route of *archi*, etc., the path by which *muktas* who attain *moksha* move towards Akshardham, has been explained here. Declarations in which way a *mukta* attains a divine body and experiences supreme happiness for eternity doing the darshan and devotion of Parabrahman in Akshardham have been given here.

Truly, having created such a shastra based on logic, Maharshi Vyasa has given today's scholars a direction of true thought.

In this way we have briefly described the *prasthāntrayi*: The Upanishads, Shrimad Bhagavad-Gitā and Brahmasutras. Now in later issues we will see how eternal principles have been established from these three *prasthāns*.



# Dedication

*Following the inauguration of the newly built Haveli at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Chicago on 23 October 2000, Swamishri blessed the assembly and acknowledged the dedicated services of all...*

Our tradition is based on renunciation. Today, that tradition is visible through your dedication and contributions. You have all served humbly with body, mind and wealth, solely with the wish to please God. You have understood the glory of God, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj as it is, otherwise it is very difficult to leave your personal attachments and worldly work to engage in this service.

In the olden days people had a foot-high threshold at the front door. Gunatitanand Swami used to say that although it was only a foot-or-so high, crossing that step to engage in mandir service was as difficult as climbing over a wall millions of miles high. It is possible only



if one understands the true glory of God from deep within one's heart, and that ultimately this is what has to be done, and that one day all this work, business and wealth will be left behind. If one has not realized the glory of God, where will one go?

So, from the time of Shriji Maharaj, many people have served with true understanding. For example, Samat Patel from the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and many others upto today have maintained this tradition. In Shastriji Maharaj's time there was Bhudharbhai of Nagasar, Ashabhai (Mota Swami), Ishwarbhai, Motibhai Bhagwandas (of Anand). Their dedication and sacrifice were exemplary. They did not wish for worldly pleasures or fame, but only that God is pleased. They believed that everything they had was God's, and so should be used for him. Our body, mind, wealth, family and everything else belong to God.

What are the characteristics of a true *satsangi*? In the Vachanamrut, Shriji Maharaj has said that one who dedicates one's wealth, property and family to God is a true *satsangi*.

Even now, we have seen that whenever occasions like this arise people have offered service by delaying their personal work, leaving their jobs and adjusting time from their businesses. People have even delayed their marriages to serve. This is because people have realized the importance and glory of their service and that such an opportunity will not come again. They realize that money can be earned later, but such an occasion to please God will not come again.

After countless births, we have this opportunity to serve Bhagwan Shriji Maharaj, his abode Gunatitanand Swami, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj with this human body. Without a worthy recipient one's sacrifices are useless. However, your sacrifice here will bear fruit since the Lord of Akshardham, Purushottam Narayan Bhagwan Shriji Maharaj, is the acceptor and he will bless you. Yogiji Maharaj was also such a worthy acceptor of our services.

To guide us, Devanand Swami has written a bhajan: '*Viveki narne em vichārine jovu...*' He describes that the wise realize that to donate to unworthy people is like planting seeds in salty land – it will not bear fruit. Such unworthy people do and see things that are inappropriate. The wise realize that serving such people does not bear fruit and does not give peace, just as a wise businessman realizes what will give profits and what will result in losses.

Similarly, on the path of *moksha*, serving at the wrong place is like trying to pass through a wall by banging one's head against it. It is not possible. But if one uses the door one can easily pass through; the God-realized Sadhu is the doorway to *moksha*. Pleasing such a Sadhu pleases God. Serving such a Sadhu bears fruit because he has no worldly desires, no wish for worldly fame or glory. He is focused only on God. We have seen Yogiji Maharaj – his life was totally God-centred and he had no material desires. So, he was a worthy recipient.

In the Mahābhārata, there is the story of Draupadi. She tore a strip of her expensive sari to tie on Bhagwan Shri Krishna's injured finger. In return, Bhagwan Krishna protected her from humiliation by the Kauravs with an inexhaustible supply of saris. Also, Sudama gifted grains to his childhood friend, Shri Krishna, and received a golden palace in return.

So, by serving a worthy recipient, you will attain peace in worldly life and God will come to take you to his abode afterwards so you will attain Akshardham.

Again, one who possesses true wisdom and discrimination will not give to dishonest and unworthy people. They realize that just as roasted seeds are incapable of sprouting if planted, similarly giving to unworthy people does not result in any gain.

So, our objective is to gain control over the five *indriyas* and mind. This is difficult to do. However powerful a person may be, this is not possible except by surrendering to God or his

holy Sadhu – who have control over the *indriyas* and mind.

Once, Gunatitanand Swami was in Surat with a group of sadhus led by Muktanand Swami. In a house opposite their lodgings was a monkey, which constantly moved around distracting all the sadhus in the assembly, except Gunatitanand Swami since he had total control over his *indriyas* and mind. Gunatitanand Swami was focused on the discourses taking place in the assembly. When we sit in the assembly, we observe who comes and goes and so our mind wanders. But we should remember that we are seated to listen to the discourse on God, to have his darshan and worship him.

If we have control over the five *indriyas*, we will not do bad things, not see bad things, not listen to bad things, not say bad things. Also, the mind troubles us. It is very mischievous and fluctuates like a flag in the wind. Even while seated here in the assembly and having come to listen to the discourses, it will think of other things. This spoils both things, since neither is done properly.

Shukdevji told king Parikshit, “Forget all your royal responsibilities, wealth, body and listen attentively to the discourses believing that you are the *atma*.” In this way Parikshit attained *moksha* in seven days. When we realize the glory of God, the *indriyas* and mind can be controlled.

A sadhu who has attained such control is a suitable recipient. So, whatever we do for him is returned infinite-fold. That is, one will not lose out at all. The greatest thing of all is that one will permanently escape from the cycle of births and deaths and attain the bliss of Akshardham.

So when the need arises, one should contribute. This will give one inner peace. Yogiji Maharaj used to sing, “*Avsar āvyo re rana ramvā tano...*”, meaning, the time has come to enter the battlefield and fight. At such times the courageous are eager to go to battle. They do

not think about what will happen to their family, wealth or property. They are focused on winning the battle. For them it is win or die. For us, also, when an opportunity to serve arises, do not let it pass. If you drag your feet and keep making excuses, then it is not possible to serve. One has to sacrifice for this. If we sacrifice with a true understanding of his glory, God is pleased. God does not ask for everything we have. He only asks for ten percent. By contributing this much you will attain peace. So, one should serve according to one’s capacity.

Dubli Bhatt was a poor Brahmin and begged for alms to make ends meet. He had saved 13 *dokdas* (a currency in use at the time) – an insignificant amount even then. This was all he had and he donated them all to Shriji Maharaj for the Gadhada mandir. Maharaj was delighted and blessed him profusely.

So whenever the occasion arises, serve in whatever way you can through mind, body and wealth. Maharaj will be pleased.

Even those who see the good in this service will be redeemed. When Shriji Maharaj built the Gadhada gate, one shepherd held his turban, looked up to the top of the towering gate and praised it wholeheartedly, realizing that Shriji Maharaj was God. As a result, Maharaj came to liberate him at the end of his days. So, even from such ordinary services, *moksha* is possible. Since, there are none as worthy as God and his holy Sadhu to offer our services to.

You all have attained that opportunity. May Maharaj bless you and grant you eternal peace.



*Translation: Sadhu Amrutvijaydas*

# SATSANG

*Muktanand Swami, 23 years older than Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781-1830 CE), had witnessed his divine exploits from the time Bhagwan Swaminarayan had entered Ramanand Swami's ashram in Loj. For many years Muktanand Swami maintained a personal diary, recording the divine incidents and spiritual teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.*

*These extensive details were used by Siddhanand Muni (also known as Adharanand Swami), one of Muktanand Swami's disciple-sadhus, to compose poetic verses in a variety of metres in the Hindi-Vraj language. This voluminous, comprehensive and authoritative work is famously known throughout the Swaminarayan Sampradaya as Haricharitamrut Sagar. It describes in great detail the life, work, incidents and teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.*

*Unfortunately, Siddhanand Swami passed away before he could complete writing about the last five years of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's life.*

*The Haricharitamrut Sagar (HCS) is revered as one of the most important shastras of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. The HCS comprises 29 major sections called Purs. Each is subdivided into chapters called Tarangs. Within each tarang are verses in a variety of poetic metres.*

*About 40 years ago, a handwritten copy of the 29 volumes of HCS was located by Brahma-swarup Yogiji Maharaj. He arranged for the entire shastra to be accurately scribed by Krishnabhai and other devotees of Nadiad.*

*Since then, a concise Gujarati translation has been published, focusing mainly on the divine incidents of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. However, the HCS is also a unique and rich store of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's divine teachings.*

*Thus, with the blessings of Pragat Brahma-swarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and under the guidance of Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pujya Aksharjivan Swami undertook a thorough review of the HCS to extract the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. These nuggets of spiritual treasure were translated into Gujarati and sorted into a variety of topics, such as, Satsang, Dharma, Abhav-Avgun, Bhakti, Ekantik Dharma, and others. Subsequently, this compilation of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's inspiring and insightful spiritual teachings has been published in Gujarati under the title Purushottam Bolya Prite.*

*With this issue of Swaminarayan Bliss, we begin a series featuring the English translations of these teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.*

## SATSANG

**1.** Shri Hari said to the senior devotees, "The ignorance due to attachment is overcome by the Sun in the form of satsang. This satsang is of two types: of God and God's devotee. By engaging in satsang, (worldly) attachment is

overcome; and when attachment is overcome, the material pleasures seem like poison. Only one who has resolute determination and an inner wish can persevere in practicing satsang. One should daily inspect to ensure that one's determination for satsang is not reduced.



“One who practices *satsang* throughout life with the highest determination and sincerely observes the *niyams* and dharma, will go to Akshardham.”

**2.** At the home of Bhagwan Thakkar in Sankali village, Shri Hari said, “In the evening, all devotees should get together daily to hold spiritual discourses and should shun *kusang*. *Adharma* is *kusang*. Dharma enhances (the glory of) *satsang*. One who practices *satsang*, overcomes the ocean of life. A person of any background who practices *satsang* will certainly be liberated from the cycle of births and deaths. The manifest form of God travels throughout the *Satsang*.”

**3.** In Gadhada, Shri Hari said to King Abhay, “When one renounces *satsang*, I, too, renounce them. While practicing *satsang*, you will remain fearless. By serving me, you will not suffer for want of food and clothes. But by leaving *satsang*, you will experience misery.”

**4.** In the village of Ingorada, Shri Hari narrated the glory of *satsang*, “The talks of *satsang* are like the Sudarshan Chakra. Devotees who listen to them and imbibe them are protected day and night by them.”

**5.** In Sarangpur, Shri Hari revealed the glory of *satsang*, “One who practices *satsang* easily attains Akshardham, which is beyond the infinite *brahmands*, and masters the *jiva*. Countless such yogic powers are attained by *satsang*. Otherwise, even one who dedicates his life to attaining *ashtang-yoga*, tolerates many physical hardships, or lives on air and fruits is inferior. Without *satsang* it is not possible to cross the ocean of life. The merits of those who practice *satsang* (at present) are indescribable. The sole purpose of the *indriyas* and *antahkaran* is to practice *satsang*.

“The (countless) *jivas* lament for those who having attained a human body remain aloof from *satsang*. Whatever pleasures have been enjoyed exist only upto Prakruti-Purush; and even they are destroyed by Time. Those who

practice *satsang* understand this talk.”

**6.** In Methan, after lunch, Shri Hari returned and said to the devotees, “In this world, the *jiva* repeatedly attains everything: mother-father, son, wife, property, elephants, horses, and whatever else it wishes, but it is difficult to attain the association of a Sadhu. There is no joy greater than that of the association of a Sadhu; I have given this joy to all. Imprint this talk in your hearts. If you forget, it is of no use. If one has a *chintamani* and remains poor, then one has not recognized it. Understand such a person to be of worldly (inferior) outlook.”

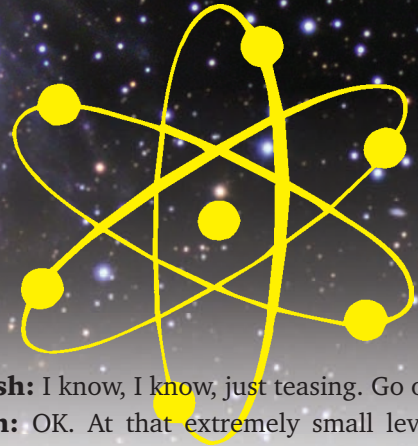
**7.** In Gondal, Shri Hari sat on a swing in the palace of Hathisinh and said, “For one who, in this fleeting human body, has attained *satsang*, all miseries are forever banished. Thus, preserve *satsang*.”

**8.** In Junagadh, Shri Hari talked to the Nagars about the glory of *satsang*, “Without *satsang*, the seed of *moksha* never sprouts. Grains may be stored in containers for thousands of years, but without soil and water, they will never sprout. Similarly, no work is accomplished without *yoga* (association) – not today and not even after countless births.

“A favourable time is attaining *satsang* and the darshan of a sadhu. Apart from that, all is unfavourable time. By practicing *satsang*, the *jiva* becomes different – it attains purity. *Satsang* is where there are no other talks except those related to *moksha*, where there are daily spiritual discourses and bhajans about God, where there is no place for worldly objects and where there is a natural attraction for God. That which makes one forget about God is all *kusang*. An inner wish for any thing other than God is also *kusang*. That which yokes the mind to God is *satsang*.”

**9.** Speaking to the villagers of Babra, Shri Hari, said, “The sins of all who practice *satsang* are destroyed. An inner wish for anything except God is a sin. Such sins are washed away by the association of a Satpurush.” ◆

# Subatomic Particles and Multiple Universes



**Ashish:** Hey, dad! Good to see you back. How was your sales trip to the north?

**Mukesh:** Oh, just the usual, son. How was school today?

**Ashish:** It was interesting. We had some advanced physics lessons.

**Mukesh:** And what did you learn?

**Ashish:** Well, it isn't really part of our school course, but it included some interesting lessons on what quantum physics is all about.

**Mukesh:** That sounds interesting, tell me about it.

**Ashish:** Well, some of it was maths which you wouldn't understand, but I'll try to explain it in simple terms....

**Mukesh:** I like your honesty in saying that!

**Ashish:** The first thing is that quantum physics deals with very, very small particles – sizes which we can't even imagine. It's like smaller than protons and neutrons.

**Mukesh:** I thought you were more concerned about huge worldwide issues like global warming, why bother about such small things?

**Ashish:** Because these small things make up the big things!

**Mukesh:** I know, I know, just teasing. Go on.

**Ashish:** OK. At that extremely small level, scientists have begun to really understand things only in the last 30 to 40 years. They already know a lot about the physics which controls large things like planets. They're trying to understand the physics of small things and put it together with the physics of big things.

**Mukesh:** Can't each size of things just have its own rules, like baseball has one set of rules and basketball has different ones?

**Ashish:** You really weren't your science teacher's favourite student, were you?

**Mukesh:** I don't know, I rarely saw her anyway – I was usually running away from school somewhere. . .

**Ashish:** Lay off on the jokes, will you, dad. The scientific rules that govern all of our world are connected, but the scientists still need to figure out a lot to fill in the gaps and combine everything into one 'grand unified theory'. This theory will explain everything, including gravity, the big bang and the behaviour of atoms and smaller particles.

**Mukesh:** Like finding the holy grail will



solve all of humanity's problems?

**Ashish:** This is science, dad, not religion.

**Mukesh:** Well, religion can include science, and its knowledge does exceed that of science.

**Ashish:** Don't kid me. Religion is nice, but its about values, ethics and prayer. Not scientific facts.

**Mukesh:** Well then, do you know that Bhagwan Swaminarayan, two hundred years ago, described quite a bit of physics? In some ways, he talked about discoveries which scientists have made only recently. I could give you many examples, from his explanation of the *atma* to his talks about *maya* and Akshardham.

**Ashish:** Show me.

**Mukesh:** Okay, first, he said that his abode, Akshardham, is eternal, and then described it in many discourses with the sadhus and devotees. It is clear from his description that he is speaking of a place outside our universe, outside what Einstein and others have described as space-time. There is no 'time' in Akshardham, it is forever.

**Ashish:** Okay. Any more proof, say, from the Vachanamrut or something that's written down?

**Mukesh:** Here's the Vachanamrut – open it to Gadhada I-45. Read it. Maharaj says that even if you split an atom many times, you will end up with *akash* – space. And what did Rutherford realize after his experiments in 1910, about a hundred years after Maharaj? That the atom was mostly empty space! And even this was not really proved until later.

**Ashish:** Yeah, our science teacher told us last month that if an atom was the size of a huge dome like the one in Rome's St. Peter's Basilica, the nucleus at the centre would still be the size of a grain of sand, with its electrons and neutrons circling it at the dome's perimeter. That's a lot of empty space in between.

**Mukesh:** Yes, it is, and that's what Shriji Maharaj explained to mostly uneducated, but extremely fortunate villagers in Gujarat, two centuries ago.

**Ashish:** I never realized that Bhagwan Swaminarayan would've spoken about science and physics.

**Mukesh:** Oh yes, and there's quite a bit of that in the Vachanamrut and even in Gunatitanand Swami's Vato. For example, Maharaj and Gunatitanand Swami often mention multiple *brahmands*.

**Ashish:** That's multiple planets, right?

**Mukesh:** No, its multiple universes. Read those passages again. It's clearly about multiple – infinite, actually – universes, with millions of planets and stars in each.

**Ashish:** And what did they say about these infinite universes?

**Mukesh:** Gunatitanand Swami often mentions in his Vato that we are extremely fortunate to have darshan of Maharaj and the Satpurush in our world, from among the infinite universes. We are lucky to be here on earth, which he has selected from among the countless *brahmands* to manifest. And you know, this is even newer than the space-inside-atoms concept. Scientists are still discussing this, though there are many, like Britain's Astronomer Royal Martin Rees who believes in this on the basis of theoretically strong mathematics and physics.

**Ashish:** I will have to read our scriptures in a different light now. Imagine if I could find some scientific facts even more exciting than these.

**Mukesh:** I'm sure that you'll be going on a voyage of discovery in the shastras. To help you begin, I'll give you two clues. One, look for 'fire in water', which Maharaj mentions more than once in the Vachanamrut, but was not known to science till the 1970s. And two, look for an even better physics theory than the one we've discussed.

**Ashish:** Hey, that's an interesting assignment. Give me a couple of weeks, I'll find out if there's a reference to the Superstring Theory in the Vachanamrut, or maybe even something more advanced. And I'll find that 'fire-in-water' too. ◆



## Tāro Chatak Rangilo Chhedlo Albelā Re...

**S**hriji Maharaj had introduced a new rule. He kept a *berkho*, a *mala* made of small betel nuts, and he would throw it at anyone caught dozing during an assembly.

Once, a discourse by Shriji Maharaj was in progress during an assembly in Gadhada. Maharaj noticed that Brahmanand Swami had fallen asleep. So, without delay, Maharaj threw the *berkho* at him. As soon as it hit him, Brahmanand Swami was startled awake and questioned, “Maharaj, why did you hit me with the *berkho*?”

“Because you were sleeping. After all, a rule is a rule!”

“But... Maharaj! I wasn’t sleeping, I had my eyes closed and was composing a bhajan,” countered the witty Brahmanand Swami.

Maharaj laughed at Brahmanand Swami’s attempt to clarify about himself and said, “Then let us hear the bhajan.”

“OK, Maharaj. But on one condition. I will sing one line and then everyone has to repeat it in chorus,” Brahmanand Swami said.

“Yes, yes. We agree. But now quickly start to sing,” Maharaj said impatiently.

So, the instant poet Brahmanand Swami began,

“*Tāro chatak rangilo chhedlo Albelā re...*”

One after another, Brahmanand Swami composed a verse while the previous one was being sung by the assembly. In this way he composed four *pads*. Maharaj was pleased and admitted, “Swami! I made a mistake. You were intently meditating on my form, yet I struck you with the *berkho*.”

Maharaj knew the truth, but wanted Brahmanand Swami to reveal it himself. So, on hearing Maharaj’s apology Brahmanand Swami

admitted, “No Maharaj! You have not made a mistake. Using my poetic skills I composed each verse while the assembly sang the previous one. So you were actually right in throwing the *berkho* at me.”

The whole assembly exploded with laughter on hearing Brahmanand Swami’s honest explanation.

The lyrics of the first verse Brahmanand Swami instantly composed are:

*Tāro chatak rangilo chhedlo Albelā re;  
Kāi naval kasumbi pāgh rangnā relā re...tek  
Shir ajab kalangi shobhti, Albelā re...  
haidāmā rākhyā lāl...rang 1*

*Molidu chhāyu motie Albelā re...*

*Fuldā ni sundar for...rang 2*

*Ghere range guchchh gulābnā Albelā re...*

*Joi bhramar bhame te thor...rang 3*

*Tāri pāghaladinā pechmā Albelā re...*

*Māru chittadu thayu chakchur...rang 4*

*Brahmānand kahe tāri murti Albelā re...*

*Vanadithe ghelitur...rang 5*

O Lord! The bright red colour of your new turban is overflowing...

It looks supremely resplendent on your head; in my heart all I see is red (1).

O Lord! Pearls are studded on the headgear; and the fragrance of flowers spreads everywhere (2).

Tassles of deep red coloured roses dangle from the headgear; seeing them how can the eyes wander away? (3).

O Lord! My unstable mind has been trapped and stabilized by the net of your turban (4).

O Lord! Says Brahmanand, on seeing your *murti* one will become ecstatic (5).



# Pramukh Swami Maharaj's VICHARAN

November 2008

Gondal, Limbdi, Bochasan, Sankari, Tithal (Kosamba)



*Murti-pratishtha arti for new  
BAPS hari mandirs, Porda,...*



*Devotees engaged in Swamishri's  
puja darshan, Sankari*



*Prayer Assembly for victims of  
Mumbai Terrorist Attack, Tithal*

### **3 November 2008, Gondal; Labh Pancham**

Prior to his morning puja Swamishri blessed the large family of the late Daji Babu. Altogether, 42 members, from 7 years to 76 years, had pilgrimaged by foot from Rajkot to Gondal.

After his morning puja Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of puja and *arti* of the Nilkanth Varni *abhishek murti* to be consecrated at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Rajkot. Swamishri inaugurated the decennial celebration of Rajkot mandir by waving the BAPS flag.

During the last five days a *parayan* was sponsored by Shri Chhotubhai Ajmera. Every morning Brahmadarshan Swami explained the Vachanamrut and in the evenings Viveksagar Swami elaborated upon the Bhaktachintamani. Today was the concluding day of the *parayan*. Swamishri blessed the evening assembly, "Gondal is a great *tirtha* like Akshardham. Shriji Maharaj and Gunatitanand Swami are divinely present in Akshar Deri. Yogiji Maharaj had said, 'Maharaj will bless one with liberation for whatever good deeds one performs here. This is the glory of Akshar Deri.' Bhaktachintamani contains the divine incidents of Maharaj. It

describes how God sat, ate, bathed, met others, brought joy to them and played *raas*. It may all seem ordinary to us, but the devotees perceived them with divine glory. All actions of God blesses one with *moksha*."

### **9 November 2008, Bochasan; Dev Prabodhini Ekadashi**

Today was Dev Uthi Ekadashi. The memorable day also marked the appointment of Shriji Maharaj as the head of the Sampraday and successor by his guru Ramanand Swami, and the *parshad diksha* of Swamishri by Shastriji Maharaj. A variety of vegetables (*shakotsav*) were arranged before Thakorji. Swamishri did darshan and performed *arti* of Thakorji in the three shrines. Thereafter Swamishri performed his morning puja with a variety of fresh vegetables arranged around him. Viveksagar Swami discoursed about the history and significance of the occasions that marked the day. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Today is Prabodhini Ekadashi. God is always awake. He never sleeps. He keeps us awake and vigilant so that we do not commit any moral lapses. He

protects us and awakens us from slipping into addictions and bad habits. We celebrate festivals to please God and the joy we experience is due to God. Happiness does not lie in worldly objects but in God. Whatever is associated with God becomes divine and lustrous.” Swamishri then took a brinjal, *galka*, *ambalu* and ginger, one by one, and spoke about their benefits. Then he added that all should remember this occasion, for it would give inner peace.

### **13 November 2008, Bochasan; Kartaki Punam (Dev Diwali)**

A grand *annakut* was arranged in all three shrines of Thakorji in the main mandir. Swamishri performed *arti* at all three shrines.

The celebration assembly commenced at 8.00 a.m. Swamishri arrived at 10.00 a.m. Viveksagar Swami narrated incidents of Swamishri with respect to the Bhagavad Gitā’s karma yoga. Ishwarcharan Swami elaborated upon Swamishri’s deep belief in God as the all-doer. Tyagvallabh Swami narrated incidents of Swamishri’s understanding of God’s glory. Kothari Swami discoursed about how the Shikshapatri is weaved into Swamishri’s life. Mahant Swami talked about Swamishri’s *brāhmīc* state and Dr Swami explained about what remained to be done after attaining association with a guru. Thereafter, several invited guests were honoured on stage. Then, senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with garlands, during which BAPS youths from the town of Adas performed a traditional dance. An offering of mantra *pushpanjali* was made to Thakorji and Swamishri by everyone.

Finally, in his blessings Swamishri said, “While performing your worldly duties always keep God in the forefront and remember that you are doing everything to please him. Science has gifted us with many blessings. But they have been achieved due to God’s powers. He is the all-doer. One who feels egoistic, nourishing

the feeling that ‘I did it’, will fail to progress. Instead, one should nourish feelings that whatever one has been able to achieve is all due to God’s doership.”

Twenty-four thousand devotees took *prasad*.

### **14 November 2008, Bochasan**

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Radha-Krishna *dev* and Guru parampara for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Sojitra, Danteli, Porda, Valasan, Bakrol, Ranoli, Badalpur and Bhadarmiya. For most of the *hari* mandirs mentioned the former *murtis* would be replaced by the newly consecrated ones.

### **15 November 2008, Bochasan, Sankari**

At 4.45 p.m. Swamishri departed from Bochasan and travelled 235 km to Sankari. En route, devotees of Vasad, Dabhoi, Rajpipla, Netrang, Mandvi and Kadol had assembled by the roadside for darshan. Swamishri arrived at the BAPS mandir in Sankari at 8.35 p.m., after travelling for 3 hours and 50 minutes. Swamishri was briefly welcomed with garlands.

### **16 November 2008, Sankari**

A welcome assembly was held in the evening. A traditional Swagatam dance was performed by children. After speeches and bhajans by BAPS youths, Swamishri was garlanded by senior sadhus. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Yogiji Maharaj daily prayed in the Akshar Deri for Satsang, sadhus and mandirs to increase manifold. At that time it seemed that Yogi Maharaj was merely uttering words. But today we see, through his grace, the immense growth of Satsang. The aim of our birth is to become *akshar-rup* and worship Purushottam. You may do your daily work but you must have one aim. It’s like a businessman who has one target – how to earn more! Those who study at college have the aim of acquiring



a degree. One should perform such works in life that God becomes immensely pleased. By doing good work in the day one gets sound sleep...”

More than 18,000 devotees attended the *sat-sang* assembly.

### **19 November 2008, Sankari**

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of six BAPS *hari* mandirs; Sirpur and Sahada (Khandesh region), Khanjroli, Madharkui, Kamalapor and Sathvav.

### **23 November 2008, Kosamba (Tithal)**

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Nani Vahiya, Lilapor, Fadvel, Sirpur (Khandesh) and *kutir* mandirs in Magod and Marla.

### **25 November 2008, Tithal**

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

At 10.45 a.m. Swamishri and senior sadhus performed the *re-pratishtha* rituals of the *abhishek murti* of Nilkanth Varni in the *rang mandap*. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the *pratishtha* assembly.

### **27 November 2008, Tithal**

After informing Swamishri of the terrible news of a terrorist attack in Mumbai he performed *abhishek* of Nilkanth Varni and prayed for peace.

In the evening Swamishri sat in a meeting with senior sadhus and instructed that no festival be celebrated in Mumbai (Swamishri's 88th birthday celebration and silver jubilee of the BAPS mandir in Dadar) and a prayer assembly be arranged instead at all Satsang centres. A cancellation announcement of Swamishri's birthday celebration was posted on the Sanstha's website.

## **PRAYERS FOR PEACE**

### **28 November 2008, Friday, Tithal**

A prayer assembly was held from 5.30 p.m. for the peace of those killed and an early recovery for those injured in the terrorist attack. Brahmadarshan Swami, Viveksagar Swami and Dr Swami addressed the assembly. Thereafter Yogicharan Swami sang “*Vaishnav jan to...*” and “*Sant param hitkari...*”. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Today, you have gathered here in large numbers. This reflects your faith in God, faith in dharma and faith in the preachings and bhajans of our rishis and great devotees. We have gathered to pray for peace to prevail everywhere. When the sentiments of doing good to others are consolidated in us then there will be peace within and without. By reading or listening to the teachings of Rama and Krishna, the Vedas and Upanishads, and stories of devotees in the Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Gita one gets auspicious thoughts. The shastras are our culture and mandirs are also a part of our culture. They have given us good thoughts; thoughts of doing good for others.

“Our guru, Yogiji Maharaj, was a great *sant* and very holy. He always used to say ‘May God do good of all.’ He never wished otherwise, even for those who insulted him or pained him. God or his Sadhu do not wish ill of anyone. It is because of one's base natures (*swabhavs*) that one performs bad deeds. And then one has to suffer for one's sins. The more good one does for others, the more benefit one gets. We pray to Shriji Maharaj in this prayer assembly for the good and happiness of all.”

A peace prayer (*shanti paath*) and *dhun* were sung for those who were killed in the terrorist attack. More than 40,000 devotees participated in the peace prayer and *arti*.



- Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

Translation: Sadhu Vivekjiandas

## PRAYERS FOR PEACE

29 November 2008, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London



Prayer assembly, London, UK



Prayer assembly, Toronto, Canada



Prayer assembly, Mumbai, India

After the horrific and tragic series of terrorist attacks in Mumbai between Wednesday 26 November and Saturday 29 November 2008, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, UK, held a Special Prayer Assembly at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden, London, on Saturday 29 November 2008.

The assembly was organized for people of all faiths and local communities to join in prayer for all those killed, injured and affected by the deplorable acts, and for peace and normalcy to be restored as soon as possible.

In remembrance of each of the innocent lives lost in Mumbai, 195 candles were lit along the central aisle of the haveli Prayer Hall.

The evening began with a traditional religious recital that was sung by all those gathered as an invocation to the Divine. This was followed by a recital of ancient Vedic verses and peace prayers by sadhus, youths and children of BAPS, London.

Many dignitaries, Members of Parliament, well-wishers and supporters had sent their messages of condolence and sym

The Prime Minister of Great Britain, The Rt.

Hon. Gordon Brown MP, had also sent a special letter of condolences for the occasion in which he stated, “Temples serve as a place of reflection and comfort as thousands gather to pray together following the callous attacks in Mumbai.”

In his keynote address, Yogvivek Swami also relayed the message of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj: “We pray that no country, people or community ever have to deal with such a horrific attack again.... Violence is not the answer to terrorism. We encourage people around the world and especially in Mumbai to stay calm and at peace. BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha will continue to offer its support in this time of tragedy.”

The assembly concluded with two minutes of silence and the *arti* ceremony.

Such prayer assemblies for the victims of the Mumbai terrorist attacks and their families were held at all BAPS centres in India, UK, North America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region.



# BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

6 December 2008, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Sydney, Australia



**B**APS Swaminarayan Sanstha in Sydney organized a blood donation drive with the help of the Australian Red Cross Society on 6 December 2008 at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir.

The Red Cross provided a donor mobile that was capable of collecting blood from four individuals at a time. Each donor was registered

before they were able to donate their blood. The entire process from registration to collection lasted approximately one hour per donor.

The response to the drive was tremendous. By the time the donor mobile left the Mandir at 5.00 p.m., at least 60 people had been able to donate blood. More than 40 individuals were asked to donate at the local Parramatta Blood Bank that afternoon or later in the week.

Healthy vegetarian snacks and light refreshments were served to all donors throughout the day.

Jane Whitfield of the Australian Red Cross Society commended BAPS on the well organized blood donation drive and reiterated the importance of giving blood and the many lives saved by such contributions. ♦

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### Eternal Virtues

**Spiritual Attributes of  
Pramukh Swami Maharaj**

**Translation: Yogi Trivedi**  
**Pages: 264 ISBN: 81-7526-395-4**

God and his holy Sadhu are a source of infinite eternal, divine virtues. By observing their lives and applying their messages, all spiritual seekers can experience the ultimate Truth.

*Eternal Virtues* reveals the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj based upon the divine virtues described in the Shrimad Bhagvat. His life guides all towards contentment, divine joy and spiritual fulfilment.

### Vegetarianism

**A Hindu Perspective**

**Author: Sadhu Mukundcharandas**  
**Pages: 92 ISBN: 81-7526-390-3**

Over 12 million in the USA, 3.5 million in the UK and hundreds of millions more worldwide are totally committed to a vegetarian diet. More are joining them everyday. It is now the thinking and caring person's diet.

*Vegetarianism: A Hindu Perspective* is a concise overview of the health, environmental, economic and spiritual benefits of adopting a vegetarian diet.





### PRAYER ASSEMBLIES FOR PEACE AND CONDOLENCE, NOVEMBER 2008

Following the tragic terrorist attacks in Mumbai, Swamishri appealed to all BAPS centres in India and abroad to hold prayer assemblies for peace and condolence to the victims and their families.

Thousands of devotees in India, USA, Canada, UK, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and other countries attended these prayer assemblies. In addition, many local and national dignitaries joined the devotees in prayer.

In these prayer assemblies, Vedic prayers for peace were recited.

The photographs are from prayer assemblies at BAPS Swaminarayan Mandirs in the USA:  
1. Charlotte, 2-3. Edison.





#### **PRAYER-CONDOLENCE ASSEMBLY, TITHAL, 28 NOVEMBER 2008**

Due to the Mumbai terrorist attacks, Swamishri's 88th Birthday and Mumbai Mandir's Silver Jubilee Celebrations were cancelled. Also, Swamishri instructed that all BAPS centres worldwide cancel his birthday celebration and hold prayer assemblies instead. Thus, in Tithal (Valsad), over 40,000 devotees gathered for the prayer-condolence assembly in Swamishri's presence and joined him in prayer for the victims and their families.