

# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

May 2009

Annual Subscription Rs. 60



Parents *and* Teenagers



**SWAMISHRI AT SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM, NEW DELHI  
February 2009**

1. Balaks present a traditional dance on Children's Day.
2. Swamishri sprays Shri Harikrishna Maharaj with saffron-scented water to symbolically celebrate the Fuldol festival.
3. Swamishri blesses Nobel Laureate Shri Rajendra Pachauri.
4. Swamishri blesses Shri Shreedharan, Chief of Metro Rail project.
5. Volunteers of the Catering Department demonstrate their duties to Swamishri as he goes for darshan of Thakorji.
6. Volunteers of Swaminarayan Akshardham with Swamishri and senior sadhus.



# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

May 2009, Vol. 32 No. 5

## CONTENTS

- 4 Parents and Teenagers  
**Parents and Teenagers**  
*Establishing a bond...*
- 7 Parents and Teenagers  
**Teenagers and Love**  
*Preventing problems...*
- 9 Parents and Teenagers  
**Peer Pressure:  
A Teenager's Perspective**  
*Remaining firm in one's ideals...*
- 12 Parents and Teenagers  
**Swamishri Shows the Way**  
*Practical guidance...*
- 16 Philosophy – Swaminarayan Vedanta  
**The Secret of Life After Death  
Katha Upanishad, Part 2**  
*Atma, Aksharbrahman and Paramatma...*
- 24 Letters  
**Resolving Conflict**  
*Advice to a senior...*
- 25 Vicharan  
**Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Vicharan**
- 28 Inspiring Incidents  
**Living with Swamishri**
- 29 BAPS News
- East Africa Adhiveshan, Tanzania
  - Blood Donation Drive, Melbourne
  - National Shishu Shibir 2009, London
  - National Sponsored Family Walk & Fun Run 2008, UK

**Website:** [www.swaminarayan.org](http://www.swaminarayan.org)

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

**Founder:** HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
**Editor:** Sadhu Swayamprakashdas  
**Contributors:** Sadhu Vivekjiandas, Sadhu Amrutvijaydas  
**Designer:** Sadhu Shrijiswarupdas  
**Published & Printed by:** Swaminarayan Aksharpath,  
 Shahibaug, Ahmedabad-380 004, India.

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES Outside India (By Air Mail)

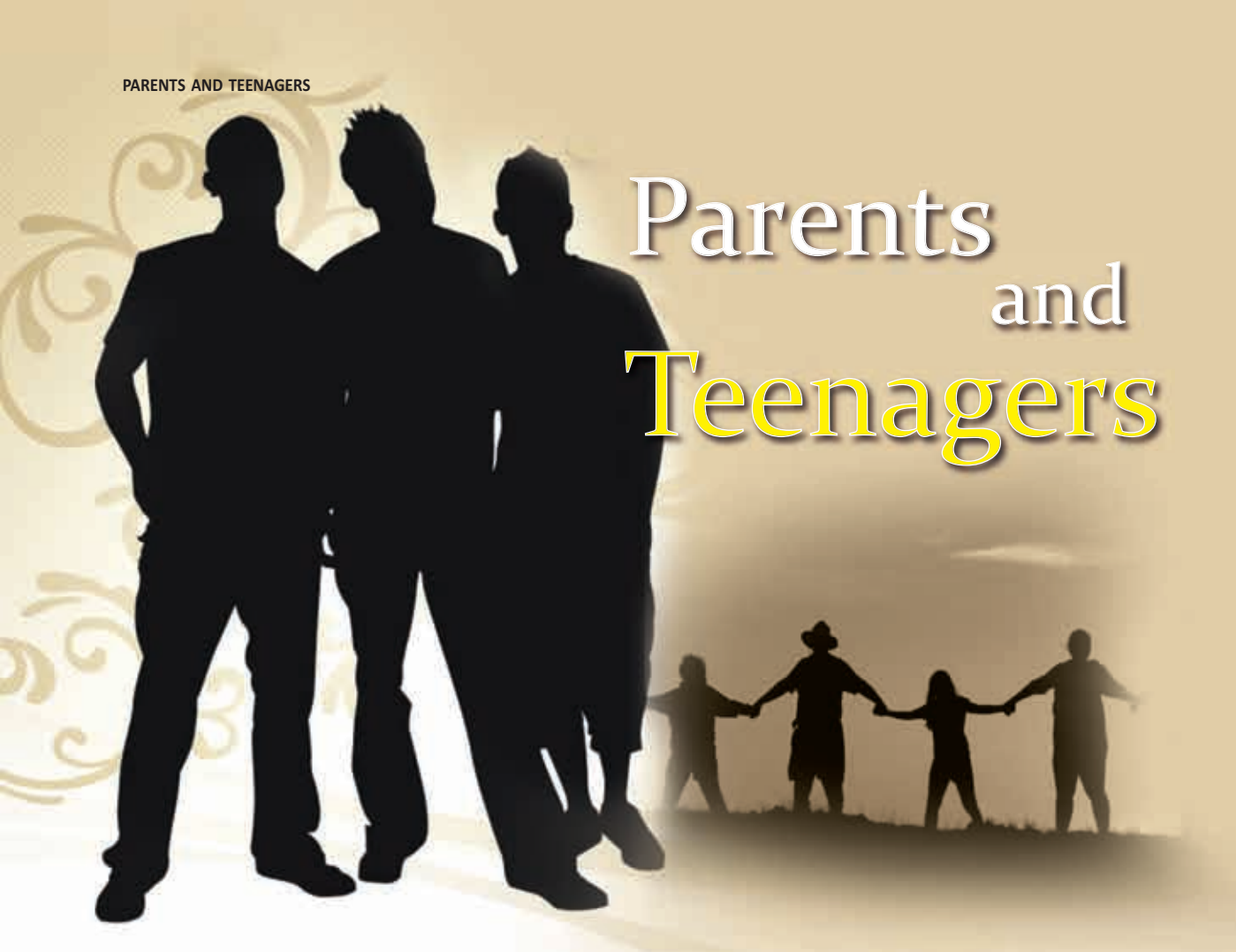
	Rupees	Pounds	US Dollars	India Rupees
1 Year	400	6	10	60
2 Years	800	12	20	110
3 Years	1200	18	30	160

## FIRST WORD

In her book *Positive Discipline* Dr Jane Nelsen, an expert on child-rearing, stresses that children should be raised with “encouragement, love and respect instead of blame, shame and pain.” It is wrong to think that by making one’s child feel worse one is prodding him or her to improve or do better. One should not stifle the self-esteem of a child. Yes, one may criticize the action but not the child.

Once, a child was crossing over a fence into his neighbour’s side against his mother’s instruction. On getting caught his mother scolded him by calling him “stupid, disobedient and spoilt.” A better way to deal with such a situation is to criticize his action instead. The mother could have told him that he was trespassing, or if he would have hurt himself badly or suffered a fracture it would have put him out of action for a few weeks. This approach criticizes the action and doesn’t hurt the child’s self-esteem.

To take a positive approach one needs a spiritual dimension in life. Once, Yogiji Maharaj was in Anand, delivering a discourse to devotees in a mandir. A child came running upto him and told him that he wished to have a *chandlo* applied on his forehead. Someone told him not now. But Yogiji Maharaj asked the child to wait. On applying the *chandlo* the child said, “Not this. I want a yellow one.” The devotees fumed with anger. But Yogiji Maharaj patiently got up and opened his puja, took out the *chandan* and *orisiyo*. After preparing a thin paste he applied a *tilak* on the child. The child went away happily. A spiritual dimension is important for a cordial relationship. ◆



# Parents and Teenagers

**T**he relationship between mother and child begins with conception itself. In the Hindu tradition the *gharbhadhan*\* ritual is performed by the parents by praying to God, “May we beget a child that will bring glory to our family, elevate himself and the society and become a great devotee of yours.”

Modern science says that a mother begins to visualize about her unborn child right from conception. Sometimes she strikes up a conversation with the child. This one way communication is significant in building up a relationship

---

\*A ritual concerned about the purification of the seed and the womb so that the child will be blessed with good health, intelligence and character.

with the child to be born. The child in the womb registers this interaction with the parents and responds to it after birth at an appropriate time.

If the parents do not want a child and yet if they procreate, that ‘unwanted’ feeling is also received by the child. This feeling leads to a lifelong unhealthy relationship between the parents and the child. After birth, the absence or neglect of either of the parents also affects the mind of the child. The child should be protected and nourished by both parents. If a son does not get the protective umbrella of his father, he seeks a role model from the society who can protect and guide him. If he doesn’t get one, he

chooses bad friends. This could happen to a daughter as well if she doesn't get the protective umbrella of her mother.

Therefore, the child needs both parents and their co-ordinated parenthood.

Children often observe how their parents behave. They sense whether they are at loggerheads and lack co-ordination. They may not analyse it then, but when they become teenagers, it shows. In this age period the generation gap sets in.

Take for example a cricket team with two coaches. Both coaches have their own methods of coaching. So the team is likely to get confused about whom to follow. This example can be likened to a family. Parents are the coaches and their children are the team members.

The parents should together educate the child. If the parents are not united in their approach, the family will not remain united.

Therefore, both parents should be involved together in caring for and raising their children. Feuding parents leave a terrible impact on the minds of children.

In the case of extended families, the parents and grandparents have to be more alert and integrated to ensure that the children are raised in a loving and upright way. Since, in larger families, children sometimes take advantage of their grandparents who favour them. This is not liked by the parents. And sometimes the parents favour their children which may not be liked by the grandparents. This leads to disunity between the parents and grandparents and leaves an unhealthy impact on the minds of children. The taunting of parents by the grandparents and vice versa creates discord. As a result teenagers lose respect for them all. Hence such children become independent and do not care for any of their elders.

The only way out is planned co-ordination. If the family can't agree on a point, it should be

frankly debated. This gives proper direction and strength to children.

Secondly, parents should know the likes, dislikes, habits and abilities of their children. They should appreciate their positive qualities from time to time and draw attention to their weaknesses. This balance should be maintained through a coordinated effort by the parents. Teenage children cannot bear the imbalance between parents.

Taunting children in an attempt to improve them also affects their mind. They feel that their parents do not understand them. Over a period of time, such feelings distance them from their parents.

In many families, the father is away from home for the whole day or sometimes for longer periods. The mother remains with the children at this time, during which she might find faults in the children. When the father returns home, the mother complains about the children. The father thinks he is being burdened with what his wife should be taking care of. So, he gets angry on the children. He begins to shout. And when shouting no longer works, physical violence is used.

Thus, the children become rebellious. So, take care before it is too late. Know your children's sensibilities and behave with them accordingly.

Thirdly, match your expectations with the abilities of your children. Know their abilities in studies and arts and educate them accordingly.

For example, you cannot fit a rickshaw engine into the Mercedes. Not all have the ability or wish to become doctors, engineers or accountants. That does not mean they will fail in life. They still can lead a happy, successful life. As parents you should feel satisfied.

Fourthly, know your children's interests and inclinations. Whether they are interested in

sports or arts? If you insist that your child becomes a doctor, but he wants to be an engineer then problems will arise sooner or later. You should not impose your expectations on your children. Let them choose the career they like and they will certainly perform to the best of their abilities.

However, despite this if they fail in their chosen direction support them. Don't remind them of mistakes made earlier. Also, do not use mean words like idiot, fool, etc. especially in the presence of others. Teenagers have their own esteem, which parents should be careful not to break. Point out only their mistakes gently and with constructive ideas for improvement. If they are repeatedly ridiculed, children will become impudent.

Do not expect that your children will succeed in all fields. Even brilliant students have their limitations. However, there are ways in which you can encourage them: Don't taunt them. Give them love and patience. Don't allow exams to become the end point of their lives.

Parents prescribe a straitjacket for their children and schedule their time accordingly. They become over-protective or pro-actively control them in every aspect of their lives. They keep the child engaged all the time and don't allow any relaxation. This proves fatal.

Let the children feel free. Your motive may be good but the method needs to be reviewed.

When teenagers go to college, they seek freedom. They make friends and are attracted to the opposite gender. They keep much of their college life secret and this leads to a generation gap.

The fifth point is whether the parents' behaviour deserves the respect they expect. Teenagers readily analyse the behaviour of their parents. If their behaviour does not match their own words, then children become confused and they lose respect for their parents. Such parents

want their children to do whatever they say, not do what they do.

Teenagers often feel shy in touching the feet of their parents. Offering respect to parents is a long-standing tradition of Sanatan Dharma and should be continued at all times.

All this has one solution – know your children, understand them and then educate them.

Spare quality time for them. By going to the theatre with your children you have passed your time with them, but you have not spent quality time with them.

To give quality time, the best way is to do a *ghar sabha* – daily family assembly.

One aged parent sadly said, "When our son had the time, we didn't, and now when we have the time, our son doesn't have it."

As parents you should think about the all-round development of your children. Pramukh Swami Maharaj prescribes: (1) educational, (2) physical, (3) cultural and (4) spiritual aspects as the foundations upon which you should construct and inspire the life-edifice of your children. ◆

*Gujarati text: Dr Harshad H. Patel (Atlanta),*

*Dr Harshad C. Patel (Pennsylvania)*

*Swaminarayan Prakash, January 2009*

*Translation: Kaushik Joshi*



# Teenagers and Love

**T**here is an adage that a child is hungry for love. This feeling gets stronger in a teenager or adolescent. There are positive and negative aspects of this.

The positive type includes love for parents, brothers and sisters, friends, nation, sadhus and God. The negative type refers to boys and girls getting attracted towards one another, thus leading to perversion of physical enjoyment. That is not love but lust.

Due to hormonal secretions, the teenage boys and girls are subject to physical and mental changes. This gives rise to attraction towards the opposite sex. On the other hand, the colourful atmosphere in schools and colleges, the impact of TV and films, obscene videos and peer pressure also add fuel to the fire within them. Against this backdrop, given an opportu-

nity, they feel attracted towards one another, sometimes crossing all limits. The impact of film scenes is so strong on their minds that they do not realize what they do.

We can find its impact in schools with teenage students.

Like in Western countries, it is now regarded as abnormal in cities like Surat and Ahmedabad for a teenager not to have a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

Modern parents feel that it is their age to enjoy. But the same parents feel shocked when their daughter elopes with her boyfriend. Sometimes the son's actions also make them feel ashamed. They feel betrayed.

How can this problem be sorted out? The parents can play an effective role in solving it. They have to take the following steps.

## 1. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS

The father and mother should discuss consciously that their son or daughter is now entering into the teen years or becoming an adult. They should guide them on what is right and what is wrong.

## 2. ANTICIPATE TEENAGERS' QUESTIONS

The parents should educate their sons and daughters that it is natural to feel attracted towards the opposite sex at their age but they should concentrate on studies. They should also tell them that should it happen, they should not keep it a secret and that they will guide them. Sometimes the boy and girl get deeply involved and feel they can't live without each other and think of suicide. The parents should help them out before they reach that state.

## 3. MONITORING FRIENDS

Parents should be aware of what their sons and daughters do and who their friends are.

## 4. SEEKING THE TRUTH

When they grow in age, the children tend not to divulge details of their school or college life. The parents should not over trust them, but should try to find out the real situation.

## 5. OVERWHELM THEM WITH LOVE

The teen years are a sensitive period when youngsters are hungry for love. They should get it from the family or parents first. When they don't find it in the family, they seek it elsewhere. It could be from their peers or even their teachers. Parents do not realize this and criticize their children more, saying that they've gone astray. But this makes the problem worse.

## 6. DISCRETION IN SPENDING

Parents pamper their young sons and daughters with mobile phones, vehicles, computers

and the internet. Some of these things are often necessary, but some can be avoided. Parents should be vigilant about it. They should know about who they speak to on the mobile, the amount of the bill and what use they make of Internet.

## 7. POSITIVE PEER PRESSURE

In this age, peer pressure plays a greater role. Parents should encourage positive peer pressure for good habits and good rituals.

A 14-year-old *satsangi* girl in the USA was pressurized by friends in school to eat eggs and meat. But she proudly said, "We are Hindus and belong to the BAPS. We are vegetarians and for us it is a sin to eat eggs and meat." So, the friends relented. Where did she get this strength from! From the positive peer pressure of the BAPS. She thought, "There are 500 boys and girls like me in the BAPS who do not eat eggs and meat. I am not alone." Such positive peer pressure should be cultivated for observing discipline between males and females.

Respecting Pramukh Swami's direction, thousands of BAPS youths keep Navratri evils at bay every year. Parents should provide positive peer pressure, should spare time for their children and pro-actively guide them. ◆

*Translation: Kaushik Joshi  
from Swaminarayan Prakash  
January 2009*





# Peer Pressure: A Teenager's Perspective

On a warm sunny day, a steady breeze wafted through the high school courtyard where a young *satsangi* boy was standing among a group of his friends. Wearing a light green American Eagle shirt and washed-out faded jeans, the *satsangi* youth and his friends were relaxing after school had been dismissed on a Friday afternoon. This scene was nothing out of the ordinary for high school students across America. Yet, there was one unique element in this situation: the small box of cigarettes that was being passed around the group.

Eventually, the box landed in the *satsangi* youth's hands as his friends looked on in anticipation. As one of his friends handed him a cigarette, he took it into his hands and thought, "What am I doing? I don't smoke. I don't even want to be seen with a cigarette in my hand." As these thoughts were running through his head, a friend offered to light his cigarette and within seconds the *satsangi* began smoking it. The moment the cigarette hit his mouth and he took his first puff, he thought, "Disgusting, I am

never going to smoke anything from now on." This is the force of peer pressure.

Teenagers like me, both boys and girls, face situations like this everyday. I have always been taught in mandir the negative impact of peer pressure on our lives. Every day, *satsangi* youth across the country struggle to overcome peer pressure. We are faced with so much temptation that to remain firm in the face of it all is truly a difficult feat.

Peer pressure is the stress felt from friends and family to act, behave, think, or look a certain way. Peer pressure can have both a positive and negative influence, but there are more situations of the negative outcomes of peer pressure than positive ones. Now don't get me wrong: there are many peers that can have a positive influence. Most of the time when I am given positive pressure, it is mainly from my true friends. Adults have often told me, "Always choose your friends wisely." This advice is especially true when it comes to pressure from your peers.

One example of positive peer pressure hap-

pened during my freshman year of high school. I was struggling with geometry and wanted to give up. However, I had a best friend who was always there for me no matter what. Whenever I felt like giving up, she would tell me that giving up is not going to get me anywhere in life. Many times, we would stay up all night and try to help each other. That is the type of positive influence that every teen needs in her life.

However, friends can influence in a negative way too. When this happens, we often behave in a manner that makes us ashamed later. One of my really good friends had selected a group of friends that she thought would not pressure her into doing things that she did not want to do. However, before long, she found herself at one of their houses for a birthday party where they began passing around beer. She was soon offered one yet she remained firm in her *niyams* and did not take it.

### **EFFECTS OF PEER PRESSURE**

Peer pressure plays a big role in a teen's life and parents are the best adults to help any teen overcome the negative influences effectively. During my early teenage years, I had a friend who always wanted to spend every weekend just hanging out at the mall. I went the first couple of weekends thinking that I would have fun. After a couple of the times, I realized that this friend was just using me because I was a cover for her to be able to meet up with her boyfriend. She didn't actually want to hang out with just me. I decided to talk to my mom, who was able to give me some really good advice on how to handle the situation. I eventually told my friend that I didn't want to hang out with her over the weekend anymore.

For any teen, having to stand up to a peer is difficult. Studies have shown that parents can help teens resist negative pressure.<sup>1</sup> The number one step parents can take is to set a good exam-

1. McCoy, Kathy. "Helping Your Teen Resist Peer Pressure." The National Parenting Center 2004.

ple. If parents smoke or drink, their children will automatically assume that it is acceptable to do so as well. Parents can also effectively teach their children how to say no affirmatively by recognizing their child's positive traits and building their confidence. Having strong self-esteem will impact the teenager's hobbies, interests, and activities, helping to resist peer pressure.

### **WHY FALL INTO PEER PRESSURE?**

So if peer pressure is an experience that most high school students wish to avoid, then why do so many fall into it? The answer is simple: everyone wants to feel liked or needed in this world. No matter one's background, age or religion every human wants to feel that "I fit in". However, this desire to fit in should not force anyone to make negative decisions. Everyone who faces peer pressure on a daily basis has the ability to work around it.

### **PEER PRESSURE AND BEING SWAMINARAYAN**

As a devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, I am faced with more challenges of peer pressure than others, especially because I don't eat meat, eggs, onions or garlic. I also do not eat out. When I tell other people about my being a committed vegetarian, they think that I am crazy and am going to die at a young age. But they are not aware I can get my nutrition from Indian food and do not realize it is a part of my religion. They start saying things like "Just try it, no one is going to find out," and try to pressure me into eating meat. Even after all the pressure from others, I know I am able to resist and not fall into peer pressure. Whenever I am pressured to eat meat I explain why I cannot, and that in fact I am quite happy not to eat it. Plus, I always tell them it's good for the environment...better than recycling!

And while questions about being vegetarian and not drinking alcohol have become easier to answer over the years, the main issue most


teenagers like me don't know how to address is dating. In high school, dating is the gateway to social acceptance. And what kinds of situations come up in the high school dating scene?

Well, let's travel to Lakeside High School on Valentine's Day. On this day, the halls of the high school were filled with hearts and decorations of deep red. A *sastangi* youth was in Language Arts when suddenly, someone knocked softly on the wooden door. Standing outside the door was a member of the school bookstore, which sold Valentine's Day goodies. The store employee had a single red rose in her hand. The teacher answered the door and handed the *sastangi* the rose. Along with the rose was a sweet note saying "Will you go out with me? Love Amber." The *satsangi* was in total shock when he read this note to himself. Soon the whole class, realizing what the note said, started pressuring him into saying yes to Amber. The *satsangi* youth knew everyone wanted him to say yes and start a relationship with Amber. However, he decided to follow Swamishri's words and explained to Amber that this is the time for him to focus on his studies and that dating would distract him from his education. He said that they could be friends but nothing more at this

time. The *satsangi* was able to resist the peer pressure from his classmates and still able to keep a friendship with Amber.

## CONCLUSION

Whether I am Swaminarayan or not, it is easy to fall into peer pressure. But I have to keep reminding myself there are always ways to overcome it. Peer pressure is extremely hard to avoid in our fast-growing world, but I can try to lower the chances of even being pressured. I believe the best way peer pressure can be avoided is by hanging out with other teens who have the same boundaries as me. And if I do make friends with different boundaries, I have to make sure that they understand and respect mine. What helps me the most is that I always stay aware of my feelings and always have a trusted friend by my side with similar goals and interests who can help steer me in the right direction if I were to stray. And most importantly, I must have the courage to say no, the confidence to explain why, and the faith to know that I have made the right decision. With Swamishri in my life, I know that I can overcome peer pressure. ♦



**New Publication**

**Reflective Quotations**  
**'For Me, My Family and Friends'**  
Compiled by: UK Parenting Team  
Pages: 234  
ISBN: 81-7526-397-0

The words of the great and experienced provide a beacon of light to guide us all through the minefield of life.

*Reflective Quotations: 'For Me, My Family and Friends'* is an excellent collection of 201 quotations that will guide and inspire people of all ages to tackle everyday issues and realize their true potential in life.

# Swamishri Shows the Way



**W**hen did you last run your fingers through the hair of your child? When did you last appreciate your child, even for a small achievement? When did you last listen to your child for ten minutes at a stretch?

Nowadays, it cannot be denied that communication is dwindling between parents and children. The children live among their friends and yet feel lonely.

There are many factors which sap the energy of the youth today: family disputes, study load, exam pressure, lacking competence to realize ambitions, comparisons with friends, peer pressure, economic constraints, disharmony between father and mother, immature love at young age and others.

In the Mahabharata we learn about the seven battle arrays designed by Kauravas to defeat Abhimanyu, son of Arjun. In this modern age also there are such arrays designed by the modern materialistic Kauravas to make the sons of India shorn of valour, work (duty) and religion.

These are those arrays eating up the modern youth:

TV channels dishing out deformities of various countries.

Attacks on the Hindu traditions and faith in the family.

Media making a mockery of Hinduism.

Mean policies to discount moral values and spiritual thoughts and conduct.

Making heroes of sportspersons and film actors.

The unabashed use of gambling (Janmasthami), liquor (Ganeshotsav), bhang (Shivaratri) and wanton free-play at Navratri and other festivals.

Resorting to money, mobiles, MacDonaldis, malls, multiplexes and male-female friends to crush respect for parents, education and Sanatan Dharma.

A student in a youth hostel once admitted frankly that he used to see and read obscene things on the internet. Then Swamishri advised him to make healthy use of technology. Swami's way is to take a deeper interest in the activities of youths.

### **HIGH-TECH GENERATION AND SIMPLICITY**

E-mails, SMS, MMS, You Tube, parties, boyfriends and girlfriends are the virtual reality of this generation.

Technology pervades every layer of society. It has brought entertainment and merry-making nearer, but distanced parents, social interactions and elements that could satisfy mind and heart. In the course of chatting on the net, a Patel girl from Junagadh eloped with a non-Hindu boy and came back with great difficulty but with ruination. Today she is the victim of blackmailing.

Today parents cannot match with the youths of the Internet age. So, the youths take their own decisions and then regret them.

Swamishri's advice to a teen student in Mombasa, who said he couldn't concentrate on studies, was, "Live a simple life. Don't waste time on TV and mobiles."

But the parents also allow their sons and daughters to buy gadgets. They feel that they did not have all this, but should let their children have it all. Most parents of a leading public school of Delhi thought liquor should be served at a birthday party of teenagers; otherwise it would be a dry party.

Dr. Avdhesh Sharma, a leading psychiatrist

of Delhi feels that parents are responsible in spoiling their own children on several counts:

1. They themselves are addicted to tobacco and other things. So, their children will learn from them.

2. They allow children to remain out till late in the evening.

3. They give bikes or cars to their minors.

4. They encourage children to keep pace with the material world at home and so marginalize religion.

Therefore Swamishri sounds a warning, "If you do not regularly expose your children to spirituality and moral values, a time will come when you will lose both your wealth and offspring. There should be talks on culture in every home. If the younger generation strays from our traditions, history and sages then culture and values will not remain. But first the parents must stop their merrymaking at clubs and parties. From childhood, children should be taught lessons of simplicity, restraint and *satsang* so that you can live peacefully in old age."

### **MISTAKES OF THE YOUNG AND FORGIVING THEM**

When parents do not trust their sons and daughters and can't forgive them, they become crushed, fearful and aimless.

Swamishri's way is to forgive the young and guide them when they make mistakes. This becomes a stepping stone for them.

### **WINNING OVER WITH LOVE**

All guardians are worried about the future of their children, but their lives are filled with struggles. So, though they live with them, they feel separated.

Indian families are increasingly becoming self-centred. There are now more and more nuclear families. The benefits of a joint family

cannot be experienced in such divided or nuclear families.

A youth named Amit Trivedi came to see Swamishri in Atladra. He was preparing for the I.A.S. exams, but was poor, economically. So, Swami consoled him and offered to help.

Swami was not a member of his family, but the intimacy he showed speaks for itself.

Swami can play both father and mother for the young. That is his way of endearing the youth.

### **WORK AND FAMILY**

One reason for the split of families in this modern age is our more and more women are taking to professions or doing jobs due to economic necessity. The mother feels tired at the end of the day and cannot strike a balance between home and her job.

Then the harmony in the family gives way to discord.

A widowed mother wrote to Swamishri that she wanted to find a job to support her family with two sons. She said she was worried about their upbringing if she went to work.

Swamishri advised her to do some home-based job and be with the children.

### **SPARE TIME**

These days, parents don't have time to listen to their children.

Swamishri's way is to listen patiently to one



and all, since one who listens makes the other person feel better.

### **HOUSEHOLD DISCORD AND UNREST**

The lack of love and warmth in the family leads to loss of trust and exchange of allegations.

Recently, an 84-year-old man sought advice from Swamishri for divorce and a 70-year-old man said that he was going to divorce his wife.

Therefore Swamishri advises, "Rigidity and ego will ruin the

family. Lessons of service, faith in God and peity should be taught to the children. Parents should shed their ego and love their children."

### **SWEET ADVICE**

What baffles most parents today is the sensitive mind of teenagers. They are afraid of asking them why they come late or about their rising mobile bills. They threaten to commit suicide if such inquiries are made.

So, parents avoid confrontation with their teenagers. They do not stop them from falling into harmful habits for fear of backlash. But, this eventually jolts the parents, ruining their own future.

Swamishri often has to goad teenagers for their various errors. He does this with a correct blend of emotions, strictness and discipline in such a way that the youth feels he gained the guidance with sweetness.

A youth came to garland Swamishri in Bahrain, but Swamishri insisted that he would

accept his garland only if he agreed to wake up early, perform puja and bow to his parents daily. The youth readily agreed and then Swamishri accepted his garland.

Swamishri's way is to touch upon the dignity of the individual so that he realizes the need to mend his ways. Swamishri's directions are not mere words, they are laced with emotions and spiritual purity.

### **THE BREATH OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

The young and the old need encouragement. Without encouragement, the young become depressed.

Swamishri never fails to appreciate the talents of youths. He readily recognizes their achievements, whether it is a speech, stage decoration or recital of Sanskrit verses or bhajans.

Schools rarely prepare the children for the real challenges that lie ahead in life.

A reader in English at Lucknow Vishwa Vidyalyaya, Ms Nishi Pandey, says that our schools do not educate the students that disappointments, failures and hurdles are also a part of life and to cross them really means success in life.

When students of average intelligence fall prey to peer pressure, lack of personality and financial insecurity, failure and feelings of inferiority stare them in the face and devour them.

In 2008, nine students in India committed suicide in the two weeks before March, the month of exams.

Now, even girls take to drugs because of parental pressures to succeed and for want of warmth. The universities of Delhi, Pune, Mumbai and Bangalore are notorious for this, and the trend seems to be spreading to Gujarat.

Mrudula Kayal, psychiatrist of Bharatiya Ayurvedigyan Sansthan surveyed some 33 youths

disappointed on account of several reasons. She says that 90 per cent of such youths who had gone astray and improved were supported by their parents. Only 10 per cent did not improve because their parents did not show any interest or were too busy with their jobs or professions.

The essence of this survey is that it is the parents who are responsible in making or marring their children.

Swamishri eagerly congratulates parents who care for their children.

If a sadhu, who has renounced the world, can shape the youth with love, warmth, discipline and by forgiving them, then parents can surely do it for their own children.

Parents should not merely remain biological parents, but they should be spiritual parents to their children too as guided by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. ◆

*Gujarati Text: Sadhu Vivekpriyadas  
Swaminarayan Prakash, January 2009*

*Translation: Kaushik Joshi*

# The Secret of Life After Death

## Katha Upanishad, Part 2

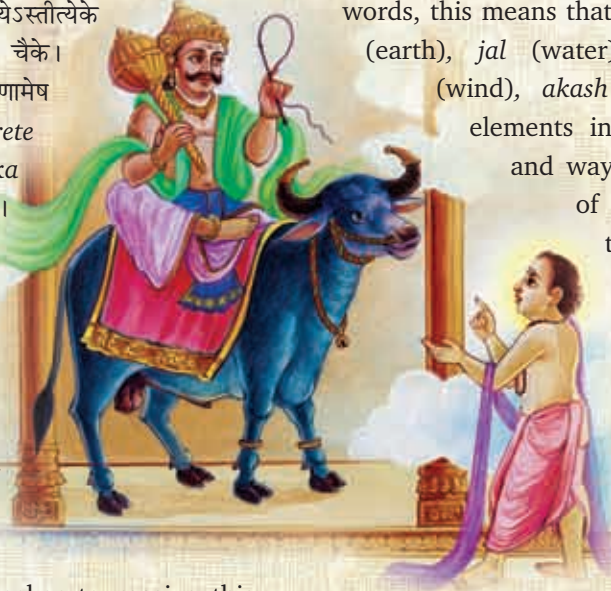
‘येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्येऽस्तीत्येके  
नायमस्तीति चैके।  
एतद्विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाऽहं वराणामेष  
वरस्तृतीयः ॥’ – ‘*Yeyam prete  
vichikitsā manushye’steetyeka  
nāyamasteeti chaike।  
Etadvidyāmanushshista-  
stvyā’ ham varānāmesha  
varastruteyaha ॥* (Katha  
Upanishad 1/20).

In this third boon, the child Nachiketa requests knowledge of the secret of life after death. Yama Raja thoroughly tested the suitability of the young seeker to receive this profound knowledge. Nachiketa passed the tests admirably, so Yama Raja agrees to fulfil his wish.

Now we will discuss the profound knowledge revealed by Yama Raja, which forms the main message of the Katha Upanishad and which encompasses the whole of spiritual wisdom or *brahmavidya*.

### KNOWING THE FORM OF ATMA

There are many differences of opinion on what happens when a person dies. One of these is related to the separate existence of the *atma*. Does the *atma* exist after the death of the body? Some say no. They reason that when a flame is extinguished the light does not remain. They say that this body is itself the *atma*; the feelings of happiness and misery are associated with the body; and so there is no reason to believe that the *atma* is separate from the body. In other



words, this means that a mixture of *pruthvi* (earth), *jal* (water), *tej* (light), *vayu* (wind), *akash* (space) and other elements in certain proportions and ways leads to the ‘birth’ of an *atma*. Then, with the death of the body, the *atma* also perishes. So, the *atma* does not exist after death.

So, Nachiketa requests, “O Yama Raja, please clarify on this issue.”

The reply Yama Raja gives is a defining revelation in philosophy.

### ETERNAL EXISTENCE

Yama Raja replies, ‘न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चिन्नायं कुतश्चिन् बभूव कश्चित्। अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥’ – “*Na jāyate mriyate va vipashchinnāyam kutaschinna babhoova kaschit। Ajo nityaha shāshvato’yam purāno na hanyate hanyamāne sharire ॥* – ‘This luminous *atma* which possesses a variety of knowledge is not born and nor does it die. There is no creator of this *atma*. It is unborn. Everlasting. Immortal. Ancient. Also, it is ‘हन्यमान’ – ‘*hanyamāna*’, that is although it lives in a perishable body, when the body perishes, it never perishes’ (Katha Upanishad 2/18).

Further emphasizing the immortality and imperishability of the *atma*, Yama Raja says, ‘हन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तुं हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम्। उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥’ “*Hantā chenmanyate hantum*



*hataschenmanyate hatam! Ubhau tau na vijāneeto nāyam hanti na hanyate ॥*

“If a slayer believes that ‘I have slain this *atma*’ or if the *atma* believes that ‘I have been slain by someone’, then both have a wrong understanding. Since, this *atma* does not slay anyone and is not slain by anyone” (Katha Upanishad 2/19). This principle is reiterated in the Bhagavad Gita, with a few word changes: ‘न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः। अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥’ – ‘*Na jāyate mriyate vā kadāchinnāyam bhutvā bhavitā vā na bhuyaha। Ajo nityaha shāshvto’yam purāno na hanyate hanyamāne sharire ॥*’ (Gita 2/20). ‘य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम्। उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥’ – ‘*Ya enam vetti hantāram yaschainam manyate hatam। Ubhau tam na vijāneeto nāyam hanta na hanyate ॥*’ (Gita 2/19).

### **ANALOGY OF THE CHARIOT AND CHARIOTEER**

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि – ‘*Ātmānam rathinam viddhi*’ – ‘Understand the immortality of the *atma*.’ Now, Yama Raja explains the separate nature of the body, *indriyas* (senses) and *antahkaran* (mind, intellect, ego). He uses the analogy of a chariot and its driver to clearly explain the distinct identity of each. He says, ‘आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु। बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रगहमेव च ॥ इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयांस्तेषु गोचरान्। आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥’ – ‘*Ātmānam rathinam viddhi shariram rathameva tu। Buddhim tu sarathim viddhi maraha pragahameva cha ॥ Indriyāni hayānāhurvishayānsheshu gocharān। Ātmendriya-manoyuktam bhoktetyāhurmaneeshinaha ॥*’ – ‘O Nachiketa! This body is the chariot and this *atma* is its owner, the charioteer. The *buddhi* is its driver. The mind is its reins. The *indriyas* are the horses pulling the chariot. The objects of taste, touch, etc. are its path. Thus, the *atma* uses the *indriyas* and *antahkaran* as a means to

enjoy worldly pleasures. Understand in this way’ (Katha Upanishad 3/3-4).

So, the owner is separate from the chariot, driver, horses, reins, path and everything else. He is called the master of the chariot. Similarly, this *atma* is totally different from body, *indriyas*, *antahkaran* and other things, and is the master, or head, of them all.

This analogy clearly describes the form of the *atma*. The existence of the *atma*, its immortality, its unchanging nature, its separateness from the body, and its other qualities are unique features of Sanatan Dharma philosophy. And this knowledge is available to us through the Katha Upanishad. For thousands of years this wisdom has been taught; it has not required any change or improvement. It is truly an eternal principle. As times passes, this ancient wisdom of India is gradually being realized by all to be the best and most modern wisdom of all. This is the power of the Upanishadic principles. Those who do not understand this wisdom will stray further from the truth and lose all strength.

That is why, Bhagwan Swaminarayan repeatedly consolidated the knowledge of the form of the *atma* among his devotees.

In Vachanamrut Sarangpur-12 he says, “Once a person has clearly understood the distinction between the body and the *atma*, it cannot be forgotten.... Also, childhood, youth, old age, stoutness, thinness, birth and death are all aspects of the body; so, they should never be thought of as belonging to the *atma*. On the other hand, being uncuttable, being unpierceable, not aging, being immortal, being the embodiment of *jnan*, being the embodiment of bliss, and being characterized by eternal existence are all aspects of the *atma*; they should in no way be considered to belong to the body. Instead, those attributes should be understood to belong to the *atma*.”

Thus, even after death (of the body), the *atma* does not perish. It continues to exist. This is the first principle explained by Yama Raja.

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE FORM OF PARAMATMA

Another point of discussion about matters after death is whether or not there is a controller over the *atma*. After death, does anyone control the destiny of the *atma*? Is there a higher entity than the *atma* which is liberated from the body and the cycle of births and deaths? Or is there no such entity? Death means that *mukti* or liberation has been attained. To whom should one offer worship, *upasana*, even in liberation? And what is the need for this?

Nachiketa requested Yama Raja to clearly explain. The answer by Yama Raja describes the form of Paramatma.

### ETERNAL EXISTENCE OF PARAMATMA

First, Yama Raja explains that just, like the *atma*, Paramatma exists eternally: 'नित्यो नित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानामेको बहूनां विदधाति कामान्' – '*Nityo nityānām chetanashchetanānāmeko bahunām vidadhāti kāmān*' – 'Paramatma is eternal and is superior even to the eternal *atmas*. That Paramatma is animate and so is different from all that is inanimate. It is beyond even the animate *atmas*. There is only one Paramatma, yet is able to fulfil the wishes of all' (Katha Upanishad 5/13).

Thus, Yama Raja undermines the arguments of atheists. Then Yama Raja begins to describe the other qualities of Paramatma.

### FOREVER THE CONTROLLER OF ALL

Yama Raja describes that Paramatma is the controller of all.

'ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य' – '*Ishāno bhootbhavyasya*' – 'This Paramatma is the controller of all that is happening, has happened and is yet to happen' (Katha Upanishad 4/12-13). That is, Paramatma

controls the destiny of all who assume a physical body, even before birth and also after death.

### OMNIPRESENT

The quality of omnipresence is always linked to the quality of control. So, since Paramatma controls all, he is also omnipresent. Explaining this, Yama Raja says: 'अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयानात्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम्' – '*Anoraniyān mahato mahiyānātmāsyā jantornihito guhāyām*' – 'This Paramatma is subtler than an atom and pervades and resides even within the atom. Paramatma is greater than the greatest. By his *antaryami* powers he pervades and resides everywhere' (Katha Upanishad 2/20).

Yama Raja explains the pervasive quality of Paramatma through various examples. He says: 'अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव। एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥' – '*Agniryathaiko bhuvanam pravishto roopam roopam pratiroopo babhuva। Ekastathā sarvabhootāntarātma roopam roopam pratiroopo bahishcha ॥*' – 'Just as the one fire enters various subjects of the world and appears in those forms, similarly, Paramatma pervades and resides in the entire world' (Katha Upanishad 5/9).

### RESIDENT IN ALL; SEPARATE FROM ALL

By residing in all, the possibility of being affected by that association arises. It is generally experienced that one is affected by that in which one resides. For example, one who falls in water will get wet. Does this not also apply to Paramatma? Paramatma resides in all animate and inanimate things, so does that association affect him? The answer to this question is in the Katha Upanishad.

Yama Raja gives the analogy of the sun and resolves all doubts: 'सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुर्न लिप्यते चाक्षुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः। एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः ॥' – '*Suryo yathā sarvalokasya chakshur-n lipyate chākshushairbāhyadoshaihi। Ekastathā*

*sarvabhootāntarātmā na lipyate lokdukhena bāhyaha* ॥ – ‘The sun is the eyes of all. Through its rays it enters everyone’s eyes, yet this contact with the eyes does not affect the sun in any way. Similarly, Paramatma is the indweller in all, yet he is not affected at all by miseries of the world’ (Katha Upanishad 5/11).

This is a special attribute of Paramatma in which he resides in all, yet is separate from all.

### **INDWELLER OF ALL, YET HAS HUMAN FORM**

Yama Raja also explains that Paramatma is all pervasive, yet is not formless – *nirakar* – but is *sakar* – has a definite form. How does Yama Raja explain this? By using the word *purush*. Repeatedly in the Katha Upanishad, Yama Raja uses the word ‘पुरुष’ – *purusha* to refer to Paramatma.

‘पुरुषः परः’ ‘*Purushaha paraha*’ (Katha Upanishad 3/11), ‘पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि’ – ‘*Purusho madhye ātmani* (Katha Upanishad 4/12), ‘पुरुषो ज्योतिरिवाऽधूमकः’ – ‘*Purusho jyotirivā’dhoomakaha*’ (Katha Upanishad 4/13) and so on.

In this way, Yama Raja explains to Nachiketa that Paramatma, the all-pervasive indweller of all is *sakar* – has a form. And his form is not like an animal or bird or round, oval or square, but he has a human form.

### **ALL-DOER**

Yama Raja continues to describe Paramatma’s qualities. Paramatma is the doer and cause of all creation.

Yama Raja says: ‘एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा एकं बीजं बहुधा करोति यः’ – ‘*Eko vashee sarvabhootantarātmā ekam beejam bahudhā karoti yaha*’ – ‘The indweller of all, Paramatma, is the controller of the all creation and merely by the power of his divine wish, Prakruti, which is in a seed form at the time of dissolution, takes countless forms and this visible creation takes form’ (Katha Upanishad 5/12).

### **IMMORTAL DESTROYER**

One who creates is also the destroyer. Yama Raja, the god of death, himself describes the Great Destroyer. Actually, Yama Raja has a close association with all who die, since all who take birth are destined to die. However, Yama Raja reveals to Nachiketa the truth about where even he has no influence. He says: ‘यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च उभे भवत ओदनः । मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनम्’ – ‘*Yasya brahma cha kshatram cha ubhe bhavat odanaha! Mru-tyuryasyopasechanam* – ‘O Nachiketa! These bodies of the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and other communities and whatever creation you see spread around you is all food for Paramatma; that is, at the time of dissolution Paramatma consumes (destroys) them all’ (Katha Upanishad 2/25).

Also, for Paramatma I, (Death), am ‘*upasechanam*’. *Upasechanam* refers to the accompanying items, such as, chutney, sauce, pickles, etc. which add taste to the main food item, such as, *dhokla, fafda*, etc. Similarly, when Paramatma consumes the countless *brahmands* and destroys them, Death serves as the accompanying (or subsidiary) item, *upasechanam*. So, Paramatma consumes even that which is the consumer of others, Death, and hence is the Great Destroyer. Thus, Yama Raja frankly describes Paramatma as the all-doer and destroyer of all. Therefore, Paramatma is the supreme of all entities.

### **NONE GREATER THAN PARAMATMA**

One who is the controller of all, the doer of all and destroyer of all is naturally the supreme among all. Still, Yama Raja felt it necessary to state this fact explicitly. And his presentation of this also brings delight to the mind. Yama Raja says: ‘इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः । मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान् परः ॥ महतः परमव्यक्तम्’ – ‘*Indriye-byaha parā hyarthā arthebhyascha param manaha । Manasastu parā buddhirudherātmā mahān*

*paraha* || *Mahatha paramvyaktam* – ‘The *parchvishays* are superior to the *indriyas*. Superior to the *panchvishays* is the mind. The *buddhi* is superior to the mind. The *atma* is superior to the *buddhi*. And superior to the *buddhi* is ‘Avyakta’. And superior to Avyakta is Purush or Purushottam or Paramatma’ (Katha Upanishad 3/10-11). Thus, showing one thing to be superior to be preceding, Yama Raja shows that Paramatma is superior to all.

Now, is there anything superior to Paramatma? To quell any doubts regarding this, Yama Raja says: ‘पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित् । सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ।’ ‘*Purushāna param kinchit* । *Sā kāshthā sā parā gatihi* । – ‘There is nothing superior to this Purushottam or Paramatma. This Paramatma is the supreme of all. Paramatma is the highest attainment’ (Katha Upanishad 3/11). Thus Yama Raja firmly establishes the supremacy of Paramatma.

So far, we have learnt that Paramatma is eternal, the controller of all, all pervasive, separate from all, the all-doer, the destroyer of all and is supreme among all.

Thus, Yama Raja has described the nature of *atma* and Paramatma to Nachiketa. However, these two are not the only entities described in the Katha Upanishad. So now, he describes another divine entity that is distinct from both *atma* and Paramatma.

### INTRODUCTION OF AKSHARBRAHMAN

One of the discussion points regarding what happens after death is about the existence of a divine place. After shedding its body does a liberated *atma* roam aimlessly or does it go to a specific location? Is there is a place on this earth where it can go and stay forever?

Nachiketa realized the importance of this point and was eager to get an answer. Yama Raja was also keen and first pledges that he will give the answer. And in the answer, Yama Raja

identifies the ‘Aksharbrahman’ entity and clearly its glory so that inquisitive spiritual seekers do not overlook it.

### THAT ABODE IS AKSHARBRAHMAN

Yama Raja says: ‘सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद्वदन्ति । यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तते पदं सङ्ग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत् ॥ एतद्भ्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्भ्येवाक्षरं परम् । एतद्भ्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ एतदालम्बनं श्रेष्ठमेतदालम्बनं परम् । एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥’ – ‘*Sarve Vedā yatpadamāmananti tapānsi sarvāni cha yadvadanti । Yadichchhanto brahmacharyam charanti tatte padam sangraheṇa bravbhyomityetat ॥ Etadhyevāksharam Brahma etadhyevāksharam Param । Etadhyevāksharam jñātvā yo yadichchhanti tasya tat ॥ Etadālambanam shresthametadālambanam param । Etadālambanam jñātvā brahmaloke maheeyate ॥* – ‘That place whose glory is sung in the Vedas – to attain which rishis and *munis* perform countless varieties of austerities and observe *brahmacharya* – such a place I will briefly describe to you. It is known by the name ॐ, Aum. Nachiketa! That place is known as the eternal entity, ‘Akshar’. So, it is called Akshardham. Also, it is called ‘Brahma’. So, it is also known as Brahmadham. Thus, Aksharbrahman itself exists in the form of this abode. O Child! This Akshardham is the highest place. Those who know Aksharbrahman in this way attain whatever they desire. Also, this Aksharbrahman is the best support. One who knows about this support, that *brahmajnani*, enjoys the divine bliss of Brahmalo, Akshardham’ (Katha Upanishad 2/15-17).

Why is so much glory of this place sung? Yama Raja says: ‘तद् विष्णोः परमं पदम्’ – ‘*Tad Vishnoho paramam padam*’ – ‘It is the abode of Paramatma’ (Katha Upanishad 3/9). What is that abode like? Yama Raja says: ‘न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः । तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥’ – ‘*Na tatra suryo bhāti na chan-*

*drakārakam nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagnihni । Tameva māntamanubhāti sarvam tasya māsā sarvamidam vibhāti ॥* – ‘In that Akshardham the sun is unable to shine; the moon and stars are unable to shine; this lightning is also unable to shine; so, in this realm, how can an ordinary flame give light. Truly, the sun, moon, stars, lightning and whatever else in this world is luminous, shines because of the luminence of Akshardham. Since, Akshardham is the source of all light’ (Katha Upanishad 5/15).

Thus, Yama Raja praises the Aksharbrahman entity. Nachiketa, too, listens attentively and eagerly to these amazing attributes.

### BEHOLDER OF INFINITE BRAHMANDS

Describing another form of that same Akshardham, Yama Raja says: ‘तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते । तस्मिंल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तद् नान्त्येति कश्चन’ – ‘*Tadeva shukram tad brahma tadevāmruta-muchyate । Tasminlokāhā shritāhā sarve tadu nāntyeti kaschana*’ – ‘O Nachiketa! That Aksharbrahman is extremely luminous, extremely pure and eternal. All these people say that infinite *brahmands* are supported by Aksharbrahman. And apart from Paramatma, none can supercede Aksharbrahman. That is, it is all-pervasive’ (Katha Upanishad 5/8, 6/1).

So, Aksharbrahman is the divine abode of Paramatma and that Akshar pervades the infinite *brahmands*. The shastras describe this form as *chidakash*. The knowledge of this form is attained here.

Now, Yama Raja declares a special position occupied by Aksharbrahman. This special position is as a medium which establishes the true ideals of life, provides support on this difficult path, bestows eligibility to offer the highest *upasana* and gives an experience of the manifest Paramatma to all. In short, the place of the guru. Now Yama Raja describes the place of Akshar as the *brahmaswarup* guru.

### BRIDGE BETWEEN SAMSARA AND PARABRAHMAN

Yama Raja says: ‘यः सेतुरीजानानामक्षरं ब्रह्म यत्परम् । अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं नाचिकेतः शकेमहि ॥’ – ‘*Yaha seturee-jānānāmaksharam Brahma yatparam । Abhayam titeershatām pāram Nāchiketas shakemahi*’ – ‘For a spiritual aspirant who wishes to escape from the vortex and forceful flow of *maya*, Aksharbrahman serves as a bridge’ (Katha Upanishad 3/2). Just as a bridge serves as a medium to help one cross easily over from one side of the river to the other, Aksharbrahman manifests as the guru and serves as a bridge (*setu*). He saves us from drowning in *maya*, helps us to cross the ocean of *samsar* and helps us attain Paramatma in the abode of Paramatma.

This principle has also been described by Angiras Rishi to his disciple, Shaunak, in the Mundak Upanishad: ‘अमृतस्यैष सेतुः’ – ‘*Amruta-syaisha setuhu*’ – ‘This Aksharbrahman is the bridge to attain eternal Paramatma’ (Mundak Upanishad 2/2/5).

Yama Raja also describes the *brahmaswarup* guru as ‘वरान्’ – ‘*varān*’ – ‘The best of men’ (Katha Upanishad 3/14).

### GREATER THAN ALL, BUT SERVANT OF PARAMATMA

While describing the various forms of Aksharbrahman, Yama Raja explains the greatest of that divine entity. As we have seen, the *indriyas*, *panchvishays*, mind and *buddhi* are each superior to the preceding entity, and superior to them all is *atma* – ‘आत्मा महान् परः’ – ‘*Ātmā mahān paraha*’ (Katha Upanishad 3/10). Then Yama Raja says: ‘महतः परमव्यक्तम्’ – ‘*Mahataha paramavyaktam*’ – ‘The Avyakta entity is superior to the *atma*’ (Katha Upanishad 3/11). This Avyakta is Aksharbrahman. This is clarified in the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita: ‘अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तः’ – ‘*Avyakto’kshara ityuktaha*’ – ‘That Avyakta is Aksharbrahman’ (Bhagavad Gita 8/21). Also, in

the twelfth chapter of the Gita, Arjun says, 'अक्षरम् अव्यक्तम्' – 'Aksharam Avyaktam' (Bhagavad Gita 12/1) and Shri Krishna Bhagwan says, 'अक्षरम् अनिर्देश्यम् अव्यक्तम्' – 'Aksharam Anirdesham Avyaktam' (Bhagavad Gita 12/3), thus further identifying Avyaktam as Aksharbrahman. Hence, the meaning of 'महतः परम् अव्यक्तम्' – 'Mahataha param Avyaktam' is 'superior to even the great *atma* is Aksharbrahman' (Katha Upanishad 3/11).

Then, next in the line of superiority is Paramatma. 'अव्यक्तात् पुरुषः परः।' – 'Avyaktāt Purushaha paraha!' – 'Greater than that Aksharbrahman is Purushottam Paramatma' (Katha Upanishad 3/11). And there is nothing superior to Purushottam – 'पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित्। सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः।' – 'Purushānna param kinchit। Sākāshthā sā parā gatihi।' (Katha Upanishad 3/11). So Paramatma is the supreme of all.

Analysis here reveals that Aksharbrahman is that entity between *atma* and Paramatma who is superior to *atma* but below Paramatma. There is no entity between Aksharbrahman and Paramatma which is superior to Aksharbrahman. So, this means that Aksharbrahman is superior to all *atmas* but subservient to Paramatma.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan was the first to highlight to the philosophical world this glory of Aksharbrahman described in the Katha Upanishad. Bhagwan Swaminarayan says in Vachanamrut Gadhada II-3, "That Brahman is the cause of all – Prakruti-Purush, etc. It is their supporter and pervades all through its *antaryami* powers.... Transcending that Brahman is Parabrahman, Purushottam Narayan, who is distinct from Brahman, and is the cause, the supporter and the inspirer of Brahman."

This is the knowledge of *atma*, Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman imparted to Nachiketa by Yama Raja.

## SADHANA – ENDEAVOURS

Yama Raja still continues. The purpose for which all this description was necessary is the attainment of *moksha*. And, Nachiketa had intelligently asked about *moksha* in his question regarding events after death. So, Yama Raja, an expert teacher, does not fail to mention the details of sadhana – endeavours.

What is the benefit of mere information? Can *moksha* be experienced with just information?

For this *sakshastkar* – realization – is necessary: of one's own *atma*, of Aksharbrahman and of Paramatma. Then all miseries will be resolved, and the highest bliss attained. When this happens, *moksha* is said to have been attained. For this, sadhanas are necessary. These sadhanas are now described.

## SUPREME UPASANA VIA SPIRITUAL YOGA

The highest of all sadhanas is to become *aksharup* and offer *upasana* to Purushottam. So, Yama Raja says: 'अध्यात्म-योगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति' – 'Adhyātmayogādhipamena devam matvā dhirau harshashokam jahāti' – 'Instill the virtues of Brahman in one's *atma* and attain the state of *brahmarup*. Then offer *upasana* to and contemplate on Paramatma. One who, thus adorned with the virtues of Aksharbrahman, offers *upasana* and contemplates on the God of gods, Paramatma Parabrahman, becomes free of the dualities of worldly happiness and misery' (Katha Upanishad 2/12).

So, it is clear that to attain *moksha* or Paramatma, it is necessary to offer *upasana* to him. Thus, one who desires *moksha* must know Paramatma. To become eligible to offer this *upasana*, one has to become *brahmarup* and so must know Aksharbrahman. And to attain this state of *brahmarup*, one has to know the *atma*.

Thus, with great thought, Yama Raja has narrated the above knowledge.

## GOD IS ATTAINED BY HIS GRACE

It is not easy to attain God. Mere sadhanas do not result in the attainment of God; his grace is necessary. The power of mere endeavours is insignificant. And to highlight one's endeavours at the forefront is ego. Even to practice the endeavours, the grace of God is required. When, by his grace, one acquires the body, mind, *indriyas*, one can endeavour to please him. So, in whatever endeavours are performed, the strength of God is to be kept at the forefront. Explaining this, Yama Raja says: 'नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन। यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूँ स्वाम्॥' – '*Nāyamātmā pravachanena labhyaha na medhayā na bahunā shrutena। Yamevaisha vrunute tena labhyastayaisha ātmā vivrunute tanum svām ॥* – 'O Nachiketa! This Paramatma cannot be attained through merely speeches, intelligence, scriptural study or other such endeavours. He is attained only by those on whom he showers his grace' (Katha Upanishad 2/23).

So, Yama Raja explains that Paramatma is not attainable through mere endeavours, but through grace and that on the path of endeavours (sadhanas), faith in the form of God is most important.

## EVERYTHING ATTAINED THROUGH ASSOCIATION WITH GURU

To know the *atma* or become *brahmarup*; to know Parabrahman or become eligible for his grace, one must bow one's head and surrender at the feet of the manifest guru. Explaining this, Yama Raja says: 'उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत। क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति॥' – '*Uttishthata jāgrata prāpya varānnibodhata। kshurasya dhārā nishitā duratyayā durgam pathastatkavayo vadanti ॥* – 'The path of spirituality is difficult like walking on the edge of a sword. So, shun all lethargy and laziness, arise, awake, and attain the manifest *brahmaswarup*

guru and realize *brahmavidya*' (the word 'वरान्' – '*varān*' refers to a wise guru) (Katha Upanishad 3/14).

Such a wise guru is equal to the form of Narayan himself. One should associate with him. He is able to know, identify and change our inner feelings. So, one should do as he says. By doing this everything is attained.

Thus, Yama Raja teaches the principle of surrendering to a guru.

## CONCLUSION

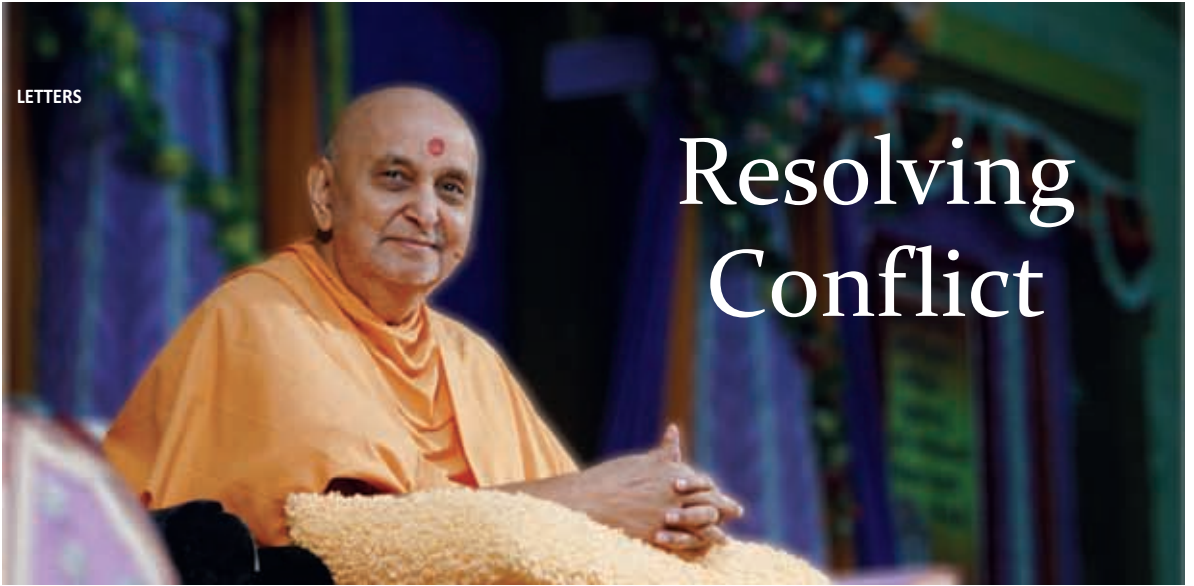
The real essence of what happens after death is the secret of life.

Eventually, Yama Raja connects the essence of what happens after death to the life one lives. Philosophy is not a credit note to cash in later. It is cash. One can experience *mukti*, liberation, while alive. So, concluding, Yama Raja says: 'For one who perfectly practices the talks I have revealed to you, he does not have to wait for *moksha* after death. He has already attained Akshardham' – 'अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते' – '*Atra Brahma samashnute*' (Katha Upanishad 6/13).

Concluding, Yama Raja says: 'एतावदनुशासनम्' – '*Etāvanushasanam*' – 'OK Nachiketa! That was my feeling. I give this teaching to you as the third boon' (Katha Upanishad 6/15).

Hearing this, young Nachiketa is satisfied and expresses his pleasure. The Katha Upanishad concludes here.

Thus, this Katha Upanishad is like a star shining in the firmament of philosophy and its teachings of death transports us into deep thought about life and what happens after death. ♦



# Resolving Conflict

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj's advice to the senior-most member of a family, 11 March 2009, Sarangpur.*

**P**ramukh Swami Maharaj (Swamishri) gave sage advice to the senior-most member of a family about restraining his harsh tongue. Though the person's services to society were proverbial his scathing speech had created a group of opponents. Swamishri advised him personally, "Blessings to you. You perform good services for the benefit of society. Everyone is aware of it. Even your adversaries know of it. The reason for bad blood and differences between you and them lies in your nature. Hence the opposition. And once opposition arises there is no seeing as to who is right and wrong. So one should always take the advice of others and proceed. One should cultivate cordial relations with others. Address all with respect and equality. Then your boat will sail smoothly ahead. The root of opposition lies in your own base nature (*swabhav*). By speaking harshly you hurt another's ego. You should talk calmly. If you don't want to do someone's work still listen to him twice. This will make him feel satisfied. Those who work for us have different natures and attitudes. Don't expect everyone to follow your wishes and inclinations. By being humble in your work you will be able to win the hearts of all. What a difference there is in saying 'My father's wife,' and 'Mother'. Similarly one should be polite in one's speech. When some-

one comes to you with a complaint don't react with a blunt no. Instead, say that you will see to it or think about it. By exercising restraint in one's speech half the work is accomplished.

"Maharaj's blessings are upon you. Yogiji Maharaj and my blessings are also upon you. God has endowed you with talent and great capabilities. You have accomplished tasks, and that too with ethics. That is why God is happy with you, but when situations turn sour you should correct your speech.

"From now onwards forget the opposition of your opponents. Be friendly with them and take their advice. Then they will start supporting you. Do not harbour any prejudice towards your detractors. Nothing good comes out in having prejudice for someone. And speak calmly. During any meeting, if you allow others to speak 50% of the time they will listen to what you have to say. So make efforts in such a way that all issues get resolved. One should compromise when working with others. Taking another's advice doesn't make one small or inferior by taking another's advice. On the contrary, one's greatness will spread and shine. So bear this in mind."

Swamishri's sound advice reflects the depth of his spirituality, experience and finesse in dealing with conflicts and issues of life. His practical advice is like a priceless prescription for all humanity. ♦

*Noted by Sadhu Priyadarshandas*



# VICHARAN

9 to 28 February, 1 to 31 March and 1 to 19 April 2009

Vadodara, New Delhi, Bhavnagar, Sarangpur

## NEW DELHI: February

**10:** Swamishri reached Swaminarayan Akshardham at 8.45 p.m. and was welcomed by youths dressed in local dresses of various states where Satsang is flourishing: New Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu Kashmir, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Nepal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, etc. There was also a fireworks display.

**11 to 20:** Swamishri had a bad cold. Also, due to the cold wave prevailing in New Delhi he performed his morning puja indoors. Each day, as Swamishri went by for Thakorji's darshan the Akshardham staff and volunteers briefly demonstrated their duties in various departments. Swamishri blessed them and expressed his joy at their dedicated services.

Swamishri gave audience and blessed aspirants and dignitaries who were impressed by their visit to Akshardham. During the day, Swamishri remained busy attending meetings and writing letters.

**15 (Sun.):** BAPS children sang bhajans and performed *bhangra* dance in Swamishri's morning puja to mark Children's Day. In the evening assembly *balaks* played two games, hot potato and musical chairs before Swamishri and the audience. Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, "It was Yogiji Maharaj's wish to instil values in children. By so doing they progress and attain perfection in their family, society and religion. We find that pride for one's country, family and religion are gradually fading. The reason lies in the adverse circumstances. We have good schools and colleges but they merely give education. Formerly, in the ashrams of rishis children used to be groomed in values. Science has given us speed but not direction. Getting true

direction is of prime importance. Direction means values."

**20. (Fri.):** Swamishri and sadhus chanted *dhun* from 10.30 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.

**22 (Sun.):** Swamishri performed his morning puja in the mandir hall. A one-day *satsang shibir* was held for local and regional devotees. In the afternoon at 5.40 p.m. Swamishri visited Akshardham.

Then Swamishri blessed the evening Sunday *satsang* assembly, "When Bhagwan Rama and Krishna came on earth people were unaware of their glory. Hanumanji introduced Tulsidas to Rama's glory. Veda Vyasa wrote the Shrimad Bhagvat scripture on Naradji's instructions and experienced inner peace. The spiritual knowledge of Akshar-Purushottam is clearly shown in the Vachanamrut. But people think that it is new. One also finds it in the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita."

**23 (Mon.):** Members of the Women's Wing celebrated Women's Day today. They had prepared an *annakut* of 175 items that was offered to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. They also honoured Swamishri's Thakorji.

Swamishri also visited the Akshardham complex this morning and performed the re-inauguration rituals of Narayan Sarovar with the holy waters of 151 rivers of India.

**25 (Wed.):** At 5.00 p.m. Swamishri visited the Akshardham complex.

**28 (Sat.):** After his morning puja Swamishri celebrated a symbolic Fuldol festival. He sprinkled saffron-scented water on Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and thereafter he called the senior and other sadhus to sprinkle coloured water on Thakorji. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly.

During Swamishri's stay many dignitaries received his blessings: Shri Rajendra Pachauri, Nobel Peace Prize winner (12/2), Shri Shreedharan, Chief of Metro Rail Project (15/2), Retired Supreme Court Justice Shri Lahoti (18/2), H.H. Swami Vimalanandji, Head of Divine Life Society (18/2), David Frawley, Scholar of Ayurveda, Yoga and Astrology (20/2), Shri L.K. Advani, Opposition Leader (25/2) and others.

### **BHAVNAGAR & SARANGPUR: March**

**1 (Sun.):** At 6.10 p.m. Swamishri left New Delhi and arrived in Bhavnagar at 7.20 p.m. Swamishri was welcomed with garlands.

**4 (Wed.):** During Swamishri's morning puja *kishores* demonstrated the troubles Swamishri has taken in spreading Satsang. They also performed a traditional dance.

**5 (Thu.):** *Annakut* was offered to Thakorji in the central shrine, a variety of fruits were offered to Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj and different vegetables (*shakotsav*) were arranged before Shri Harikrishna Maharaj in the mandir shrine.

**6 (Fri.):** Today, Children's Day and symbolic *rangotsav* were celebrated in Swamishri's puja. Firstly, BAPS children sang bhajans during puja. The stage was decorated with vats of coloured water, bowls of *gulal* and coloured powder and *pichkaris*. In the end Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Hold *ghar sabha* daily. Just as one accomplishes one's worldly works together, similarly *ghar sabha* should be held for the liberation of one's soul. Through it one attains knowledge, understanding, bhakti and the blessings of the *satpurush*."

Around 6.00 p.m. Swamishri departed from Bhavnagar and mid-way towards Sarangpur he observed the mandir construction at Vallabhipur. At 7.00 p.m. Swamishri arrived in Sarangpur amidst a warm welcome. After having darshan at the Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir, he proceeded towards the mandir for Thakorji's

darshan. On the way Swamishri blessed all sadhus and devotees.

**9 (Mon.):** Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* to be installed at the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Bareja and Kaaligam (*re-pratishtha* of renovated *hari* mandir, Ahmedabad).

**11 (Wed.):** The festivals of Bhagatji Maharaj's birthday and Fuldol were celebrated in the evening from 5.15 p.m to 8.30 p.m. Swamishri blessed and sprayed more than 60,000 devotees with sanctified coloured water. (Details in April 2009 issue).

**12 (Thu.):** Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of Nilkanth Varni *abhishek murti* for the BAPS mandir in Atlanta.

**13 (Fri.):** At 6.15 a.m. the preliminary rituals of *parshad* and *bhagwati diksha* of 13 youths from abroad began before Swamishri's puja. During Swamishri's puja the rituals continued and thereafter bhajans were sung. At 8.35 a.m, the final part of the *diksha* rituals commenced. Senior sadhus gave each of the youths a *kanthi*, upper cloth, *pagh*, smeared *chandan* on their forehead, and gave a flower and *prasad* box to their parents. Swamishri finally administered the *diksha* mantra. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed all, "To take *diksha* as a sadhu is a great thing. All praises for their parents for sacrificing their son. This is possible only when one has deep faith in God and the understanding that God looks after everyone and everything. The youths who have become sadhus and *parshads* must have had great worldly ambitions. They have been brought up abroad in a materialistic culture yet they have left all the attractions. To give this up is a difficult thing. Let us pray that they all become very good sadhus, offer bhakti and inspire others to do so and become happy. May Maharaj bless their parents with happiness and good tidings."

**18 (Wed.):** Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Kakamega (Kenya) and Udanch (Navsari district).

**25 (Wed.):** Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for the renovated BAPS *hari* mandir in Swamini Bhichari (Rajkot).

### **SARANGPUR: April**

**1 (Wed.):** Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Sonvada (Tithal region), Koth (Dholka region) and Sabarmati (Ahmedabad, re-*pratishtha*).

**3 (Fri.):**

#### **229th Shri Hari Jayanti Celebration**

After having darshan of Thakorji, where *annakut* was offered to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Swamishri arrived on the festival stage. A beautiful giant replica of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's house in Ayodhya formed the backdrop of the stage. The celebration assembly programme included speeches by Ghanshyamcharan Swami, Dr. K.C. Patel, Mahendrabhai Barrister, Siddheshwar Swami (Shriji Maharaj – an establisher of principles) and Viveksagar Swami (Shriji Maharaj gave the Gunatit Sant as his successor). A drama on Joban Pagi's transformation was enacted by BAPS youths from Botad. Swamishri inaugurated the sub-domains of the Sanstha's website, *baps.org*, for BAPS mandirs in Houston and Atlanta. Then Swamishri was honoured with garlands. The *kishores* and *yuvaks* of Bhavnagar performed a traditional festive dance. Finally, blessing the august gathering Swamishri said, "We are all blessed here today for celebrating the birthday of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Sarangpur, which is like Akshardham. On comparing ourselves before God we realize how insignificant we are. How great are God's powers and how ordinary we the *jivas* are. But because God showers his mercy and grace the *jivas* become liberated. It is due to his compassion that we have got such an opportunity. Till the *jiva* does not become *brahmarup* it cannot become liberated from the elements of *maya* and is thus unable to experience peace. Maharaj has said that you understand and realize my divine form, understand the form of Akshar and the *muktas* and make it known to

others. Shastriji Maharaj obeyed his instruction by revealing their glory to others. He had resolved it to be true through the Vachanamrut, Vato, senior sadhus and other shastras. And that is why he established mandirs and consecrated the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam and made it known to others."

**7 (Tue.):** A one-day *shibir* was held for devotees of the Sarangpur region. Swamishri blessed the *shibir* participants after his morning puja. He explained about how to attain peace of mind, "Because of I-ness and Mine-ness we get embroiled in conflicts and experience misery. To overcome them one should engage in listening to spiritual discourses and doing bhajan and kirtan."

**9 (Thu.):** Swamishri performed *arti* and *mantra pushpanjali* rituals to commemorate the *patotsav* of Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir. During his puja the *diksha* ceremony for 31 *parshads* and 16 *sadhaks* was conducted. Finally the senior sadhus gave each a new *kanthi*, upper cloth, *pagh*, smeared *chandan* on their forehead, and gave a certificate of Swamishri's blessings and *prasad* to each parent. Swamishri gave the guru mantra to each of the newly initiated youth. In his blessings Swamishri praised the parents for their sacrifice and devotion and inspired the newly initiated sadhus and *parshads* that they had married God and henceforth their duty was to engage in service, devotion and listening to discourses.

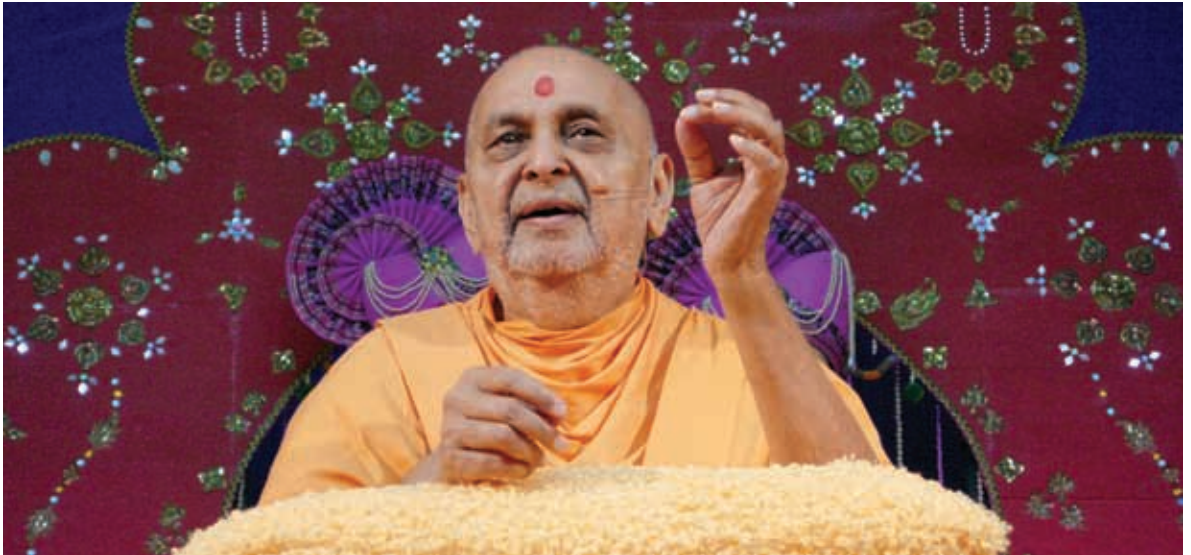
**15 (Wed.):** Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra pushpanjali* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Kheda Brahma (re-*pratishtha* of new *murtis*), Lodhva, Manjipura Road (Nadiad).

**17 (Fri.):** Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Kotiya village, which had been sanctified by Gunatitanand Swami. Furthermore, Swamishri also performed the foundation-stone laying rituals for the guru *shikhar* shrines of Gondal mandir. ◆

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

Translation: Sadhu Vivekjiandas

# Living with Swamishri



## THINKING OF OTHERS

**20 February 2009, New Delhi**

Swamishri sat in his chair to chant the Swaminarayan *dhun*. An attendant sadhu suggested that the *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj be placed before him for darshan. Swamishri said, “Keep him on one side.”

The attendant sadhu explained, “By so doing your neck will become stiff on having the darshan of Thakorji from one side.”

“But then everyone will not be able to have darshan (if he is kept in front of me),” Swamishri reasoned. All realized that Swamishri was thinking of everyone’s arrangement for darshan. Finally, he himself suggested that Thakorji be placed by the wall opposite to him. This solved the problem.

Swamishri remained engaged in chanting *dhun* for three hours, from 11.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.

## TRUE GOAL OF LIFE

**1 March 2009, Delhi, Bhavnagar**

Shri Manavsingh runs a business of renting chartered planes. Swamishri flew from Delhi to Bhavnagar in one of his planes. On the way

Manavsingh asked Swamishri, “As a householder I do my duty of taking care of my family, but what is the true goal of life?”

Swamishri replied, “God has endowed one with a human body, so one has to maintain one’s relationship with others in accordance with one’s karma. Our shastras prescribe that one should have the goal of attaining God while fulfilling one’s worldly duties. The final goal is to become *atmarup* and offer bhakti to Paramatma. If we so wish and desire for it then God will help us. One becomes blessed with the association of a Satpurush, and through *satsang* with him one attains *mukti*. So, to unshackle one’s soul from the bondage of *maya* and engage it in the service of God is the true goal of life.”

Manavsingh: “To merely liberate one’s own soul, does it not amount to being selfish?”

Swamishri: “No. The more we purify our inner self and realize the knowledge of *atma*, the more service we are able to offer selflessly and with perfection. One who is not selfish can help another better. So, by attaining knowledge of self (*atma-jnan*) one can serve others properly.”

## REMEMBER GOD AND MAKE EFFORTS

4 March 2009, Bhavnagar.

A student came to seek Swamishri's blessings. Because of his academic burdens and pressures he had become depressed. As a result he slept all day. Whenever he sat down to read he felt sleepy and because of his depression his thoughts revolved around committing suicide. Swamishri reassured him, "There is no need to worry too much. Remember God and make efforts. If you fail you can study and re-take the exams. Don't think of committing suicide!"

## ONE BAD HABIT, A PAIN TO ALL

15 March 2009, Sarangpur

A youth from USA came to seek Swamishri's blessings. He was a drug addict and was ruined economically and socially. His relationship with his parents were strained. His wife and children had left him. Swamishri had blessed him before and inspired him to give up his addiction.

This time Swamishri patiently explained again, "Because of your single addiction you have made everyone miserable. Your wife has gone away, and your parents are unhappy. Give up your addiction and you will make everyone

happy. Just think about it. Do five *malas* and pray every day."

## A LOST SOUL RECLAIMED

16 March 2009, Sarangpur

An aspirant wrote a letter to Swamishri repenting for his bad acts, "I became a *satsangi* in 1986. In 1999 I fell from Satsang due to bad company of a person who was averse to spirituality. I ate non-veg food and became partially paralysed in 2002. I became miserable. Now I regret what I had done. If you accept me then by your strength and blessings I'll be able to restart coming to *satsang* and please God. Forgive me. Make me into a *satsangi* like I used to be before."

Swamishri replied, "God will forgive you for your mistakes. Start coming to *satsang* and abide by the moral disciplines (*niyams*) of *satsang*. Give up your addictions. Do bhajan and bhakti. God will bless you with happier times."

The aspirant's repentance earned him the blessings and grace of Swamishri. ♦

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

Translation: Sadhu Vivekjiandas

# B A P S BAPS NEWSN E W S

## EAST AFRICA ADHIVESHAN

Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 11-12 April 2009

Over 350 devotees from Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kakamega, Kampala, Mwanza, Arusha, Kericho, Dar-es-Salaam and other BAPS centres in East Africa participated in the East Africa Adhiveshan held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, on 11 and 12 April 2009.

On the morning of 11 April, the Jnanvardhak Prasnotari and Prathmik Mukhpath competitions were held.

Then, in the afternoon the Prasang Narration,

Speech and Nirupan competitions were held.

The results were declared on the morning of 12 April. The prizes won by the various participating centres were as follows:

Dar-es-Salaam – 34

Nairobi – 33      Mombasa – 20      Kampala – 19

Kisumu – 16      Mwanza – 9      Nakuru – 7

Eldoret – 2      Arusha – 1      Kericho – 1

The devotees performed commendably in the competitions and benefited from the knowledge they gained. ♦

## BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

**11 & 13 April 2009, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Sanstha, Melbourne, Australia**

**B**APS Swaminarayan Sanstha in Melbourne organized a blood donation drive with the help of the Australian Red Cross Society on 11 & 13 April 2009 at the La Trobe University Medical Centre, Bundoora.

The Red Cross Society provided necessary facilities at the centre and during the two days of the camp 80 people donated blood. Healthy vegetarian snacks and light refreshments were

served to all the donors.

A spokeswoman for the Red Cross said that, "We are grateful to BAPS that they have done this tremendous job by giving us this opportunity today. We look forward to working with BAPS in the future."

The drive was a tremendous success, inspiring many new donors to donate blood regularly. ◆

## NATIONAL SHISHU SHIBIR 2009

**Saturday 18 April 2009. BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London**

**O**n Saturday 18 April 2009, the National Shishu Shibir entitled 'Ghanshyam Jeva Thaiye' was held at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London. Over 100 pre-*shishus* (upto 3 years age), 180 *shishus* (3-8 years) and approximately 220 parents attended the *shibir*.

The *shibir* focused on inspiring the children to become like Ghanshyam – the ideal role model for all *shishus*.

Through lively speeches, an entertaining drama, audio-visual presentations, storytelling

and games the *shishus* were taught about behaviour at home, school and mandir, respect for parents and teachers, Satsang values, and their ideal daily routine.

The parents attended a special interactive Parenting Seminar where they were able to learn the importance of spending time and interacting with their children.

All the children thoroughly enjoyed the fun and games, and understood how to become an ideal *shishu*. ◆

## NATIONAL SPONSORED FAMILY WALK & FUN RUN 2008

**26 April 2009, UK**

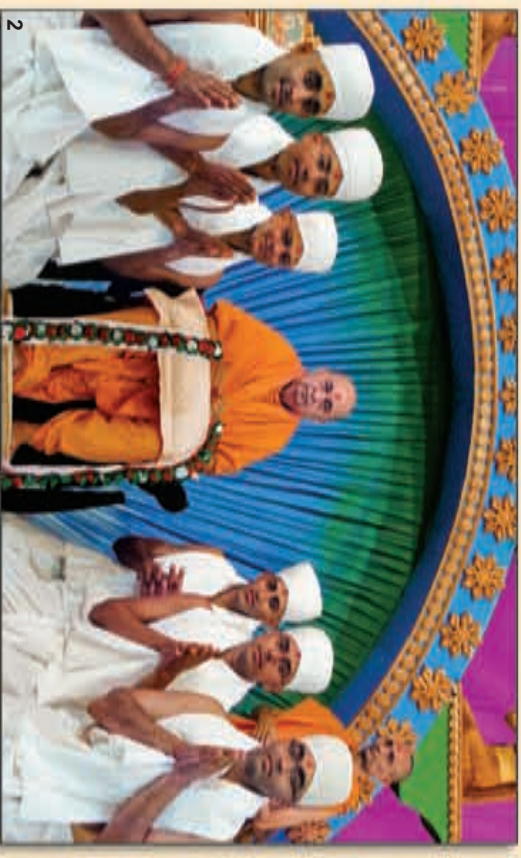
**O**ver 4,000 walkers, from young children to 90 years of age, participated in the Annual BAPS Sponsored Family Walk and Fun Run held at 13 BAPS Swaminarayan Mandirs and Centres across the UK on Sunday 26 April 2009. This year's event was organized in conjunction with The Anthony Nolan Trust, the charity that treats leukaemia through recruiting bone marrow donors.

Guests present for the opening ceremony in London included Cllr Ralph Fox – The Worshipful The Mayor of the London Borough of Brent and Cllr. John Nickolay – The Worshipful The

Mayor of the London Borough of Harrow, as well as local MPs, Dawn Butler (Brent South) and Sarah Teather (Brent East).

Following the traditional Vedic ceremony, the 10 km walk commenced at 9.00 a.m. from the Ceremonial Gate of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir.

The route was stewarded by volunteers with provisions for medical assistance and refreshments at various rest points. In addition to The Anthony Nolan Trust, walks held at other BAPS Centres throughout the UK helped to support various local charities. ◆



**SWAMISHRI GIVES DIKSHA TO YOUTHS**  
**March-April 2009, Sarangpur**

Two diksha ceremonies were held during Swamishri's stay in Sarangpur.

1-2. Swamishri blesses the 13 newly initiated sadhus and parshads on 13 March.

3-4. The 31 new sadhus and 16 parshads honour Swamishri with a garland and flower shawl and receive his blessings on 9 April.



**SHRI SWAMINARAYAN JAYANTI**  
**3 April 2009, Sarangpur**

1. On the occasion of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's birthday celebration a giant replica of his childhood home in Ayodhya was set up on the main stage.
2. Swamishri blesses the assembly of over 7,000 devotees.
3. Swamishri performs the birth celebration *arti*.