

SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

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April 2010



SELF-IMPROVEMENT



Sat-Chit-Anand WATERSHOW

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SAT-CHIT-ANAND WATERSHOW

Vedic Yagna & Mahapuja

15 February 2010, Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar

On 15 February 2010, Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the Vedic Yagna and Mahapuja of a new unique attraction at Swaminarayan Akshardham in Gandhinagar: the Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow. It is a blend of modern technology and ancient spirituality of India, conveying the timeless wisdom of the Upanishads through the inspiring story of the child Nachiketa. The 45-minute Watershow is projected on a semicircular waterscreen with synchronized lasers beams, water fountains, fire, music, animations, video projections, recorded dialogues and performance of live characters.

On this auspicious occasion, Swamishri stated, "The work which has been done here conveys a spiritual message: *sat-chit-anand*. It is a true message from the Upanishads, that happiness is only possible by knowledge of *atma* and *Paramatma*."

The public opening of this exciting and inspiring Watershow is on Saturday 3 April 2010. Thereafter, there will be a show every evening at 7.45 p.m. (except Mondays).



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Self-improvement is one of the major problem-busters of life. Each one of us is what we are because of our good habits and bad habits. If there is an emphasis on teaching and integrating all that is good from childhood then our lives would become better, happier and successful. Good habits shape our attitudes, emotions, responses and destiny. Erasing that which is bad within ourselves requires personal effort and divine grace.

Sage Valmiki was a dacoit. Unaware of his sinful habit, he was once jolted by the words of Sage Narad. Naradji told him that the consequences of his sinful acts would have to be solely borne by himself. None of his family members would take responsibility for his crimes. After ratifying Naradji's words Valmiki gave up his unrighteous ways and became a great sage.

Verabhai of Upleta and Joban Pagi of Vartal were hardcore criminals. They realized the need for self-change after their association with Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his sadhus. They gave up their unrighteous ways to become sterling devotees.

In Gunatitanand Swami's time, a Brahmin, who lived in Junagadh, had a penchant for tasty food. He would brook no lapse in his food. The slightest flaw launched him in a fiery rage against his mother and wife. But all this changed when he saw and appreciated the simple diet of Gunatitanand Swami, who was the head of the Swaminarayan Mandir.

Hothiyo Patgar of Kundal was believed to be anger incarnate. His wrath was so uncontrollable that he bit a wagon after inadvertently bumping

(contd. on p. 6)

Celebrating Festivals in Gadhpur



Bhagwan Swaminarayan celebrates Diwali in Kariyani

In the previous instalment Shri Hari and the entire assembly of sadhus and devotees were moved by the painful narration of Swami Haridas's encounter. Maharaj insists upon nursing his wounds...

THE BURNS WERE INFLICTED ON MY BODY

Shri Hari's eyes overflowed with tears. He mused as to why there was such animosity for the name of Swaminarayan? What dharma did the perpetrators follow? And what brand of religion were they practicing? Their acts of violence reflected their sick minds.

Sanatan Dharma is the religion of the Hindus. It is believed to be eternal. It never gets destroyed, but whenever there is an ebb, God incarnates to re-establish it.

Shri Hari was still in deep thought. He was consoling Haridas by stroking him with his hands. Then Maharaj instructed his attendant, "Make a bed for him in my room, Akshar Ordi. I will remain in his service." Nityanand Swami and Brahmanand Swami requested, "Maharaj, we will take care of him. There is no need for you to take the trouble."

"I am deeply pained by Haridas's suffering. I feel as if the pincers were branded on my body. Despite the horrible cruelty inflicted upon him, this sadhu did not give up my name. How can I disregard this? I will stay with him and nurse him. When his wounds heal then only will I feel at peace."

Everyone in the assembly was stunned and dumbfounded. Haridas's tolerance was born from his deep faith in Maharaj. Everyone saw that Maharaj was fully inclined to one who tolerated for his sake. It was a lesson for all to remain resolute in matters of faith amidst severe trials and tribulations. Therein lies genuine discipleship and pride for Satsang.

Haridas was tended to by Maharaj, his sadhus and *parshads*. The women devotees, Laduba and Jivuba, prepared meals appropriate for Haridas and felt the satisfaction of serving Maharaj. After several weeks Haridas recovered.

CELEBRATING FESTIVALS IN GADHPUR

The month of Bhadarvo (September) passed and Aso set. Shri Hari celebrated the festival of Vijaya Dashmi (Dashera) with exuberance. Five days later there was a lunar eclipse on the full moon night. Shriji Maharaj discoursed, "When the moon is eclipsed it suffers pain. To alleviate its suffering we should engage in listening to *katha* and doing kirtan. Furthermore, during the eclipse the atmosphere gets polluted, which is why we should eschew from eating and even drinking water. Once the eclipse ends everyone should take a bath. The Hindu pundits have stated these rituals for one's spiritual benefit and purification." Thereafter, Shri Hari told the sadhus to sing bhajans. After the eclipse, Maharaj rode on his Rozo horse to take a bath in the river Ghela with his sadhus and devotees. After the ritual bath Shri Hari applied a *chandlo* on the forehead of Rozo, and then called for Pragji Dave. Maharaj applied a *chandlo* on Pragji Dave's forehead and donated the Rozo horse to him. The Kathi devotees were upset at this. They uttered, "Maharaj, how could you give away such a valuable horse in donation! You could have told us and we would have brought a couple of horses of an inferior breed." Shri Hari smiled and replied without any regret, "While donating one should give what is dear to oneself. To give away anything inferior in quality and value is a donation of the worst kind."

Shri Hari returned to Dada Khachar's *darbar* and presided over a spiritual assembly. Then Maharaj offered milk and flattened rice grains (*pauva*) to the *shalagram* (form of God) and served it as *prasad* to the sadhus.

DIWALI AND NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Hordes of devotees from neighbouring villages started flocking to Gadhada to celebrate the Diwali and New Year festivals. On the day of Diwali Maharaj donned golden clothes and jewellery to please the devotees. A beautifully decorated giant lamp with several tiers of flames was arranged in the assembly. On Maharaj's arrival *arti* and

dhun were sung. Then Brahmanand Swami sang a bhajan, "*Sakhi haide te harakh na māy, āj Diwāli re...*" The singing continued till midnight. Everyone absorbed the divine *murti* of Shri Hari in their hearts.

The next day, Maharaj celebrated the Annakut festival. Again Maharaj was dressed in his finest wear and Manki, his mare, was decorated for the celebration. Shri Hari mounted it and proceeded towards Radha Vav (a stepwell) on the outskirts of Gadhada. After addressing the New Year's Day assembly Maharaj returned to Dada's *darbar*. The *annakut* had been arranged before the *murti* of Vasudev-Narayan. Shri Hari praised the food items and said, "When one offers a feast to God with such intense devotion, God appears in his divine form."

"But you are already present before us," Brahmanand Swami added.

"Yes, that is true. But when God is not present before you in human form then you should believe him to be present in the *murti* and cultivate a devotional rapport with him." In conclusion, Maharaj performed the *annakut arti*. Thereafter, he took lunch and served the *annakut prasad* to all the sadhus and devotees.

SATCHIDANAND SWAMI USES HIS ALL-KNOWING POWERS

On the evening of New Year's Day an assembly was held. Shriji Maharaj declared that he would celebrate Dev Diwali (15 days later) at Jetalpur and invited all to come. Then Jhinabhai Darbar requested Maharaj to cancel the Dev Diwali celebration at Jetalpur and celebrate it in Gadhpur instead. He also offered to sponsor the celebration. Shri Hari agreed and sent Lakshmiram Vipra with a letter to Jetalpur saying that he would not be coming for the Dev Diwali celebration. The next day, Lakshmiram reached Kariyani, a village on the way to Jetalpur. He met Satchidanand Swami, who asked him the purpose of his coming. On informing him, Satchidanand Swami smiled and revealed, "The Dev Diwali festival at Gadhpur has

been cancelled and instead it will be celebrated in Jetalpur. There is no need to deliver the letter. Stay here for now because Maharaj will be coming here in a couple of days.”

Lakshmiram was astonished to hear this. He was left in a quandary: should he obey Shri Hari’s instruction and proceed to Jetalpur or should he stay there according to Swami’s word? Finally, he decided to stay there, believing Maharaj had spoken through Satchidanand Swami.

Two days later, Maharaj arrived in Kariyani. On seeing Lakshmiram, Maharaj immediately asked, “Why aren’t you in Jetalpur?”

“Maharaj, Satchidanand Swami told me to stay here because you would arriving here to go to celebrate the festival in Jetalpur.”

Satchidanand Swami blushed with anxiety at Lakshmiram’s disclosure. He felt Maharaj would reproach him. But, on the contrary, Maharaj smiled and told Lakshmiram, “It was good that you stayed here. Satchidanand Swami has used his powers for a good motive.”

FULFIL SURA KHACHAR’S HUNGER

Shriji Maharaj departed from Kariyani towards Jetalpur on Kartak *sud* 2. After having lunch at Amra Patgar’s house in Kundal, Maharaj left with a company of Kathi devotees. They travelled to Rojka, Pachchham, Sargamvada and then towards Javaraj. On the way, Sura Khachar asked, “Maharaj, where are we to dine this evening?” Shri Hari smiled and replied, “Dinner is at Kauka village. Till then do not bat a thought about it.”

On arriving at Javaraj village, Shri Hari let

go of Manki’s reins and allowed it to go freely to wherever it wished. The mare headed straight towards the square where the Kshatriyas lived. At that moment several servants were on their way to the farm to deliver cooked rice and *rotlo* to the farmers. Maharaj told them all, “I am Swaminarayan. Give me two *rotlas* each. Our devotees who are accompanying me are also very hungry. Serve them and satiate their hunger. By serving them I will believe that you have served me.” The servants then returned to their masters’ homes and told the ladies, “Bhagwan Swaminarayan has arrived unexpectedly in our village, and he is asking for food. He says that if we serve his Kathi devotees it would be equal to having served him.” The farmers’ wives were happy and told their servants, “Go and tell Maharaj that we have enough supplies of ghee, gur and wheat flour. The Brahmachari can make *shiro*.” Shri Hari told Mukund Brahmachari to make *shiro* and serve it to Sura Khachar. When the *shiro* was ready, Maharaj dismounted his horse and sat in the verandah of a house. The Kathi devotees accompanying him tethered their horses and sat opposite Maharaj for darshan. Then, Mukund Brahmachari served *shiro* to Maharaj and chapattis and *shiro* to the Kathis. After lunch Sura Khachar said happily, “Maharaj, we now feel satisfied because you have fulfilled our hunger.” Shri Hari smiled and told the women of the village to come to Jetalpur mandir to celebrate the Dev Diwali festival.”

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(Contd. next issue)

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

(contd. from p. 3)

into it one night. But he was transformed when he realized his flaw during a *satsang* with Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

“Be the change” and “Walk the talk” are the catchwords of today. We all feel the need for a sea change in the way we behave. The first step to self-transformation is to realize the need for improving ourselves. Don’t waste your time and

energy in clamouring and bickering for others to improve themselves. Gunatitanand Swami underscores the idea of self-change in a simple, lucid manner. He says if one does not read what is written then it is as good as not having written it; and if one reads it but gives no thought to it then it is as good as not having read it. And if a thought is given to it but one does not act upon it, then of what use is it!

◆

The Best Time for Self-Improvement...



When is the ideal time for personal growth? An adolescent's life without direction is aimless and unproductive.

During a Yuva Shibir in Navsari in 2006, Mahant Swami guides the youths...

SELF-DEVELOPMENT: WHEN IS THE MOST LOGICAL TIME FOR IT TO TAKE PLACE?

Mulji Sharma practiced *satsang* devotedly from a young age, much to the dismay of his father, Bholanath.

“Mulji! Such devotion should be practiced only when you are old. This is the time for you to eat, play and have fun,” said Bholanath. Instead of arguing, Mulji left the house, ostensibly to go out to play. However, instead, he made a round of the village to see if the elderly were actually engaged in devotion according to his father's words. His observations validated his reason for practicing *satsang* from a young age. Mulji returned home and explained to his father, “You asked me to worship God in old age, but I just went around the village and found that all the old people are sitting in the village square gossiping. None of them are remembering God. So if we wait till old age, we lose the opportunity of our precious youth.”

While it is never too late to improve, young

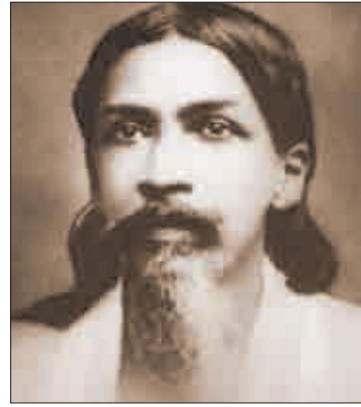
Mulji's argument strikes a chord in all those with a sincere desire to become better. There is no better time for personal growth than now, and there is no better age for it than youth. Personal growth on the spiritual and worldly path must occur from a young age; this is when we have the greatest potential to learn, to change, and to grow. Although many youths understand this principle and even know how they need to grow, they fail to do so. Cultivating positive qualities from a young age allows us to habitually uphold these qualities for the rest of our lives.

SELF-DEVELOPMENT: IMPORTANCE OF MAKING CLEVER CHOICES EARLY IN LIFE

Shri Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian nationalist and Nobel Prize-winning author, advocated harbouring positive virtues and an active lifestyle from a young age; he strongly believed in living a life in which one would not be constrained later by the bad habits developed during one's youth. He is



Nityanand Swami



Maharshi Arvind

absolutely correct about this. Our youth should be spent exploring, addressing and contemplating our own potential, choices, interests and ambitions in life. If a layer of poison is deposited evenly on the ocean floor, the entire ocean will be filled with this poison over an extended period of time; however if divine nectar is deposited on the ocean floor, the ocean's organisms will prosper throughout their entire lives. Similarly, if from a young age, we infuse our lives with positive activities and habits, they will never fade away. The same holds true if we expose ourselves to unpleasant habits from a young age. Do we want to pour poison into our lives from a young age or divine nectar?

A French author details the story of two friends, one of whom goes to jail from the age of 12 to 22. Upon being released from jail, the former inmate approaches his friend and asks him, "What have you done in the past 10 years?" The friend attempts to find a reasonable answer, but simply replies, "Nothing important." So, the former inmate replied, "The time I spent in prison was better spent than what you have done in the past 10 years." The inmate had come out transformed, because he had spent his time by repenting and giving up his criminal ways.

We often make the wrong choices on how to spend our time, who to associate with, and many times make choices that inhibit us from accomplishing our dreams. The choices we make have grave consequences; they take away our time – an element we can never get back once it is gone.

These illogical choices result in time loss that we will never get back. The time we spend in youth should be constructive, properly prioritized, and beneficial to our long-term aspirations. The decisions we make as youth affect not only our ability to grow in *satsang*, but also influence our ability to become constructive members of society. Do we want the choices we make today to accomplish something, or simply result in mediocrity?

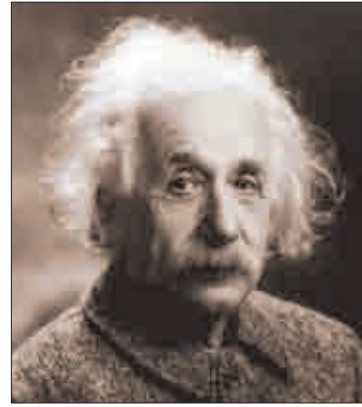
THE BEST TIME FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT? AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE!

Countless people have realized the paramount importance of adolescence and the fruitful benefits of spending one's adolescence positively and advantageously. The history of literature, fine arts, athletics, academics, etc., is filled with examples of youths who have accomplished great feats:

1. Nityanand Swami mastered the Vedas when he was only 11 years old.
2. Mahatma Gandhi began his non-violence movement at 23, when he was thrown out of a train for sitting in an area reserved for white people.
3. Thomas Edison began his quest to research electricity when he was 21 years old.
4. Jane Austen completed the manuscript of *Pride and Prejudice*, a world-renowned novel, when she was merely 21 years old.
5. Sant Jnaneshwar produced the *Jnaneshwari Gita* when he was only 16 years old.
6. Maharshi Arvind became a dynamic orator



Shankaracharya



Albert Einstein

in Latin and Greek when he was 15 years old and obtained every award available to students at the time at King's College, Cambridge University, England. Five years later, he had mastered German, French, English, Spanish, Italian, Latin and Greek.

7. Shankaracharya wrote commentaries on the Gita, Upanishads and Brahmasutra by the age of 20.
8. Albert Einstein introduced the Theory of Special Relativity at the age of 26.

These individuals etched their name in history with their accomplishments; however those accomplishments were only possible with much contemplation and introspection. Having a vision and a set of goals, from a young age they aggressively pursued their dreams. Mapping their lives from a young age allowed them to aggressively pursue their ambitions.

SELF-DEVELOPMENT: IMPORTANCE OF A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

William Pitt became the youngest Prime Minister of England in 1783 at the youthful age of 24. Upon hearing of Pitt's accomplishment, a 17-year-old Frenchman began weeping and introspecting on the worth of his own life. He wanted nothing but excellence in his life. The Frenchman, inspired by Pitt's success, decided to model Pitt and accept him as a mentor. This decision propelled the young Frenchman to become a great and respected statesman, just like his role model.

Often, we have a tendency to admire people for the wrong reasons; but we must strive to pick great role models. As *satsangi* youths, we do not need to embark on an extensive search for a proper role model because we have the privilege of knowing Pramukh Swami Maharaj – the best role model anyone could ask for. Looking at the life of Swamishri allows us to make the right choices and lead a productive life from a young age.

SELF-DEVELOPMENT: WHY AS BAPS YOUTH IT MUST OCCUR NOW?

Jawaharlal Nehru was asked to give a small group of teenagers advice on how to prosper in all realms of life. He said, "These are your golden years; reap harvest while the sun shines."

We must maximize our growth and abilities in our youth; developing new skills during later stages in life can be more difficult as our ability to make great changes diminishes. Many youngsters today are not able to develop strong habits because they do not have the proper guidance. Hundreds of thousands of young individuals lack direction; we are extremely fortunate in this regard because Swamishri provides the proper instructions and puts forth various activities for us to prosper from in young age. We are Swamishri's children; we are his youth and we must excel in all walks of life. Let us pray to Maharaj and Swami, that we are able to live up to the expectations Swamishri has for us, and that we are able to take advantage of the opportunities presented to us from a young age.♦

Role Model for Self-Improvement: Pramukh Swami Maharaj



Every moment of Swamishri's life carries a message that can help one to improve...

You are the stone. You are the chisel. You are the maker of your own happiness.

At Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi, the sculpture in the first exhibition hall profoundly states, “Man is the maker of his own happiness” to highlight a quintessential concept: self-improvement. Both the sculpture and its message serve as a constant reminder to visitors that individuals have the capacity to mould themselves and improve their lives.

Philosophers have contemplated upon self-improvement throughout history, each coming up with a unique definition. Greek philosopher Aristotle believed, “We are what we repeatedly do.” He believed in the idea that people are the product of their own actions. American writer Oliver Wendell Holmes opined, “The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand,

as in what direction we are moving.” Self-improvement is founded in the idea that success stems from personal development and positive attitude.

Self-improvement is essential in every aspect of life. It is necessary in our personal relationships, our careers, and most importantly, our personal *satsang*. Self-improvement is a process that requires inspiration, introspection, and implementation. It involves change and personal resolution. Change is simple and even welcome when it involves external factors. Positive internal change, however, proves to be the most difficult journey.

Self-improvement requires mental resolution and determination. One may ask, “How can I possibly even start this Sisyphean task of improving myself? After all, I am only human.”

TOOL 1: ANTARDRASHTI (INTROSPECTION)

*Gunātitam gurum prāpya,
brahmarupam nijātmanaha;
Vibhāvya dāsa bhāvena,
Swāminārāyanam bhaje.*

In Satsang, the root of self-improvement begins with the concept that we are not merely human. Every morning in puja, we affirm: “I am *atma*, I am like Brahman, I am not this body.” Puja is a powerful tool to connect with Bhagwan on a daily basis and move forward on the path to becoming an ideal devotee. Each day starts with introspection upon our true identity.

Introspection is the most valuable tool to embark upon the process of personal change because it helps identify immediate and long-term steps essential to reach a goal. Understanding where we stand is crucial in determining where we need to go.

“How exactly does one practice *antardrashti*?”

TOOL 2: LOOK TO THE SATPURUSH AS A ROLE MODEL

The aforementioned *shloka* stresses the importance of finding a Gunatit Guru and fully surrendering one’s self to him. Through the guru’s guidance and grace, an aspirant can realize the beauty and bliss of the *atma*.

In the 116th *shloka* of the Shikshapatri, Bhagwan Swaminarayan states that one must become *brahmarup* to truly worship Bhagwan.

What does it mean to be *brahmarup* and how can an aspirant attain this state?

The answer is simple. The Ekantik Satpurush serves as an ideal example for us to emulate. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is the living form of an ideal devotee and the Gunatit Guru. Through his life and actions we can attain personal and spiritual guidance.

The Shrimad Bhagvat describes the 39 virtues of God. During Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s lifetime, he exemplified these 39 virtues as described in the shastras. In order to continually inspire aspirants,



Bhagwan Swaminarayan established a spiritual lineage of gurus who exemplified these virtues.

Therefore, if we recognize the Gunatit Sadhu and imbibe his qualities, we can overcome our personal shortcomings and move closer towards becoming *brahmarup*.

The Gunatit Sadhu exemplifies many virtues. He is the ideal listener. When he listens, we feel as though he is our best friend attending to our every need. If we become ideal listeners, we can learn so much. The people around us have a great amount to teach us about life, school, and work. To some degree, we can learn through others’ experiences, regardless of their age and background. Through their experiences we can gauge what may or may not be right for us. Many *satsangis* have gone through hardships while still maintaining their personal faith. If we listen to their experiences of various situations, we may be able to use their techniques for ourselves, and in that manner, we may be able to progress in Satsang. Shrirang Swami experienced Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s ability as an ideal listener:

“In 1975, Swamishri told us youths to memorize Vachanamuts, Swamini Vatos, kirtans and verses from the Bhaktachintamani. When I heard that chapter two of the Bhaktachintamani was Swamishri’s favourite, I memorized it. Then, when I came to Atladra for the Vasant Panchmi festival I recited chapter two, which describes the greatness and qualities of a true Sadhu, in Swamishri’s puja. The verse, *‘Kām dravya ne*

mān chhe teha... – ‘Lust, ego and greed...’, came up, but try as I might I couldn’t recall the next line. So I sang the first half of the verse in the hope that I could jog my memory. I sang it three times but I still couldn’t remember it. Swamishri looked at me and realizing my difficulty, he completed the line: *‘Teha sāru nathi dharyo deha, jnān vairāgya ane āshesh, eva Sant ne nāmu hu shishh...’* – ‘Are not what we have been born for...’. I couldn’t believe it! Despite all the work and responsibility of running the Sanstha, he was still able to remember such a verse. I understood the meaning of the line, *‘Shrutvān mā sauthi saresh...’* – ‘One who listens attentively is the best of all listeners...’.”

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has the ability to make people feel as though they are being heard. Because of this incredibly unique quality, people feel as though they can trust him in any situation. When we feel like we have someone trustworthy by our side, we do not have a reason to turn away from him. Being a good listener allows us to be better people and by listening attentively, we can improve who we are.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj is also an ideal supporter, where if we continuously turn to him, we will constantly obtain his support. With his support, we should feel like we are able to accomplish anything. He is also our ideal leader. Pramukh Swami Maharaj goes through great lengths to support his devotees, regardless of how young or old they may be:

A young, poor boy had been in an accident in Valsad in December 1999. He was hospitalized at the Mahavir General Hospital in Surat. A week later, when Pramukh Swami Maharaj arrived in Surat, he remembered the ailing boy. Swamishri expressed his wish to visit the boy. Immediately, transport arrangements to the hospital were made. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was driven to the hospital, but both sides of the road to the hospital had been excavated for a new water line. Because of the narrow road, the car was unable to make it all the way to the hospital.

Subsequently, Pramukh Swami Maharaj walked the distance of about 150 metres during the busy, morning hours. He walked along the narrow, uneven path, between the shops and the excavated road. With the support of attendant sadhus, he leapt over the 2.5 ft-wide excavated trench to reach the hospital.

When he arrived at the boy’s bedside in the ICU ward of the hospital, he saw that the boy’s head was bandaged and IV fluids were being supplied through a tube in his arm. Pramukh Swami Maharaj gently placed his hand on the boy’s head and greeted him, “Prashant, Jai Swaminarayan...” Then he garlanded the boy and also placed sanctified flowers on his chest and head. He prayed for Prashant’s quick recovery. Pramukh Swami Maharaj reassured Shantilal, Prashant’s father, not to hesitate in asking for any help required. After coming out of the hospital, Pramukh Swami Maharaj again jumped across the trench and returned to the car. Disregarding the frailties of old age, Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s empathy and compassion reached out to a poor, ailing boy.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj shows that he is there for everyone and does anything in his power to show his support. We can progress in Satsang only when we have support through difficult times.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj is the perfect leader because he never asks us to do something that he is not already doing. Sometimes we feel that our teachers, bosses and parents ask us to do things that they do not do. On the other hand, whatever Pramukh Swami Maharaj asks us to do is something he already does, and would benefit us if we did it. No battle is won without sacrifice and hardships; if we are willing to face them, we will come out on top. Nikhilesh Swami had a firsthand experience of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s ability to be a great leader:

“In 1992 the final preparations for Yogi Shatabdi were in full swing. But there was so much left to do with so little time. Everywhere

one looked, there were volunteers, craftsmen and labourers toiling away at a frantic pace. Yet, in my mind I was doubtful if we could finish the work on time. Swamishri was staying in Gandhinagar at the home of Gordhanbhai Patel in Sector 29. However, I didn't have the courage to go and face him. If I went, he'd ask, 'How much work has been completed?' Obviously I'd have to give him a full report and reveal how much work was really left. And with only one week remaining before the opening ceremony, I was certain that he wouldn't be too pleased. Some of the sadhus were discussing possible solutions on how to finish the work on time. We weren't making much progress, so we thought that we may as well go and have darshan of Swamishri and then we'd sit down and think afterwards.

"Swamishri was having breakfast when we arrived. We prostrated before him and sat down. Since there were no visitors that morning he smiled at us and said, 'Come, sit closer...' Before we could say anything, Priyadarshan Swami said, 'Nikhilesh Swami is tense about whether or not the work will be finished on time.' I tried to defend myself, 'Obviously, at this stage there's going to be tension. All day all I think about is, 'Will the work be completed or not?'

"Calmly, Swamishri said, 'There's no need to worry. Understand that God will work through you and everything will be completed.'

"I said, 'But I'm not going to be able to do everything on my own, am I?'

"Swamishri encouraged, 'God will work through everyone 100 percent. Who are we to be able to complete such a great task? Put the entire burden on his shoulders.' Then he advised us, 'Look, just because we begin the festival, it doesn't mean that absolutely everything is ready. Just finish off what is necessary for the opening ceremony, and you can finish the rest of the work later. Keep Maharaj with you and keep going. It's Yogi Bapa's festival. He'll take care of everything.'

"Swamishri spoke so calmly that all our

tension seemed to just melt away. Hearing his words, we were inspired. Working day and night, we got the work finished. In such situations, any other leader would have been under great stress. And thus he would put even greater pressure on his men to get the job done. But Swamishri remained as calm and light as a spring breeze. True to his words he put the strength of God in all of us."

Good leaders provide people with the basic trust and understanding that they are reliable. Swamishri is reliable and dependable in all situations. He knows how to lead even in the most stressful of situations. We tend to trust people with such characteristics as they help us progress in Satsang.

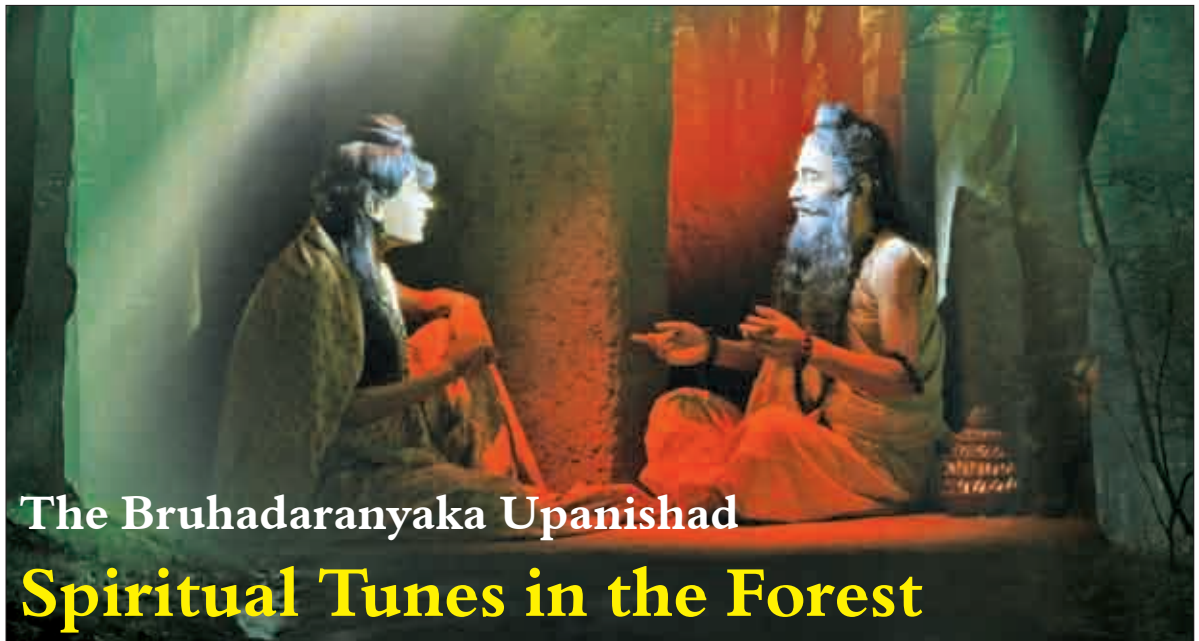
TOOL 3: STRIVE TO IMBIBE THE QUALITIES OF THE SATPURUSH

Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspires and transforms thousands just by his life. His words, actions and personality nurture and guide individuals to better their lives and attain spiritual bliss.

From education and professional aspirations to spiritual endeavours, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's incidents apply to all aspects of life. These few cases remind us that living life is human, but living inspired is divine.

To live like and attain the virtues of the Gunatit Sadhu is the ultimate goal of this life. Even living one moment like Swamishri invites infinite happiness and peace. If we want to live a meaningful life, then we need to do the things that bring us ultimate happiness. Ultimate happiness is not achieved through the luxuries, but through continually improving oneself towards the ideal of spirituality – Pramukh Swami Maharaj.





The Bruhadaranyaka Upanishad Spiritual Tunes in the Forest

Whether one is a *deva* or a human, a householder or a renunciant, male or female, all must realize *brahmavidyā*. Everyone desires happiness, and the road to happiness becomes visible only by *brahmavidyā*. This is repeatedly emphasized in the Upanishads. The Bruhadāranyakaa Upanishad is an example of this.

Through simple dialogues this Upanishad presents many ideas, such as, the clear conviction of a husband like Yāgnavalkya, the rich contemplative knowledge of a wife like Maitreyi, the rational intellect of Gārgi, and in a single syllable the duties of *devas*, humans and *asuras*. Let us take a closer look at some of these.

INTRODUCTION

This Upanishad is found in the Yajur Veda. It is encompassed in the Vājasaneyi Brāhman of the Shukla Yajur Veda. 'Bruhad' means great. Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman are *bruhad*, i.e., greater than *jivas*, *ishwaras*, *māyā* and *muktas*. Since this Upanishad radiates the light of *brahmavidyā* by explaining the nature of Aksharbrahman and

Parabrahman and is reflected and contemplated upon in a forest (*aranya*) setting, it is named the Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad.

This Upanishad is spread across six chapters (*adhyāy*), each of which is further divided into sub-chapters called *brāhmanas*.

THE STORY OF YĀGNAVALKYA AND MAITREYI

Yagnavalkya's son, Yāgnavalkya was a great rishi and had two wives, named Kātyāyani and Maitreyi. Of the two, Kātyāyani was more resourceful and was an expert when it came to looking after the house, making a variety of tasty meals, and welcoming and looking after guests. She was well reputed in the surrounding region for her resourcefulness. Maitreyi, however, was different. She was interested in *brahmagnān* and had a natural inclination for spiritual contemplation. Both Yāgnavalkya and Kātyāyani greatly respected her for this.

One day Yāgnavalkya thought of leaving home and renouncing the world. He decided to inform both of his wives of his decision. He met

Maitreyi and said, 'मैत्रेयीति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्य उद्यास्यन् वा अरेऽहमस्मात् स्थानादस्मि हन्त तेऽनया कात्यायन्याऽन्तं करवाणीति' – *'Maitreyeeti hovācha Yāgnavalkya udyāsyān vā are'hamasmāt sthānādāsmi hanta te'nayā Kātyāyanyā'ntam karavāneeti'* – 'O Maitreyi! I now wish to leave this place. Therefore, I want to share whatever means of livelihood we have – wealth, land, etc. between the two of you. With that you will be able to live comfortably' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/1).

Hearing this Maitreyi immediately asked, 'यन्तु म इयं भगोः सर्वा पृथिवी वित्तेन पूर्णा स्यात् कथं तेनाऽमृता स्यामिति' – *'Yannu ma iyam bhagoho sarvā pruthivee vittena poornā syāt katham tenā'mrutā syāmiti'* – 'O my husband, if the entire world was filled with wealth and given to me, what use would it be? Would I be able to attain immortality, i.e., liberation, with it?' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/2). Yāgnavalkya had not expected such a question, but the answer was clear. 'नेति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः' – *'Neti hovācha Yāgnavalkyaha'* – 'No, Maitreyi,' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/2), Yāgnavalkya clarified.

'O my husband, how will we benefit from these means of livelihood that you wish to give us?' Maitreyi asked.

'यथैवोपकरणवतां जीवितं तथैव ते जीवितं स्याद्। अमृतत्वस्य तु नाशाऽस्ति वित्तेनेति' – *'Yathaihopakaranavatām jeevitam tathaiva te jeevitam syād. Amrutatvasya tu nāsha'sti vittineti'* – 'Maitreyi, with these means of livelihood you will be able to live like a wealthy person. But the immortality that you ask for can never be attained by wealth, money, etc., which are just instruments of this world. With them you can accumulate conveniences, but they have nothing to do with liberation' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/2). Yāgnavalkya thus told her the truth.

Maitreyi's response even today gives us a glimpse into esteemed values of Indian culture. Maitreyi replied, 'सा होवाच मैत्रेयी येनाऽहं नाऽमृता स्यां किमहं तेन कुर्यां यदेव भगवान् वेद तदेव मे ब्रूहीति' – *'Sā hovācha Maitreyi yena'ham nā'mrutā syām kimaham tena kuryām yadeva bhagavān veda tadeva me brooheeti'* – 'What am I to do with that

which will not give me immortality? Moreover, won't what you desire to renounce and leave for us, bind us? Therefore, please explain to us the understanding with which you have decided to renounce all of this?' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/3). True spiritual curiosity could be heard in Maitreyi's words. Yāgnavalkya was overwhelmed, 'प्रिया बताऽरे नः सती प्रियं भाषसे। एह्यास्व। व्या यास्यामि ते व्याचक्षणस्य तु मे निदिध्यासस्वेति' *'Priyā batā're naha satee priyam bhāshase, ehyassva, vyākhyāsyāmi te vyāchakshānasya tu me nididhyāsasveti'* – 'Maitreyi, you are indeed dear to me, but upon hearing your feelings my affection for you has truly increased' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/3).

Yāgnavalkya explained the uppermost principles of a spiritual life by saying, 'न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति। आत्मनस्तु कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति।' – *'Na vā are patyuhu kāmāya patihi priyo bhavati. Ātmanastu kāmāya patihi priyo bhavati'* – 'O Maitreyi, I am your husband, but it is not for the desire of a husband that I am dear to you, but Paramātmā resides in us all, and it is only due to the wish of Paramātmā that a husband is dear to his wife' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/5). Moreover, 'न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति आत्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति।' – *'Na vā are jāyāyēi kāmāya jāyā priyā bhavati, ātmanastu kāmāya jāyā priya bhavati'* – 'You are my wife, but it is not for a desire of a wife that a wife becomes dear, but Paramātmā resides in one's wife as well, and only by the wish of Paramātmā is a wife dear to her husband' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/5).

In this first sentence, Yāgnavalkya has given a unique perspective on marital relations. Therefore, 'न वा अरे पुत्राणां कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति। ... न वा अरे वित्तस्य कामाय वित्तं प्रियं भवति। ... न वा अरे लोकानां कामाय लोकाः प्रिया भवन्ति। ...' – *'Na vā are putrānām kāmāya putrāhā priyā bhavanti... na vā are vittasya kāmāya vittam priyam bhavati... na vā are lokānām kāmāya lokāhā priyā bhavanti...'* (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/5). Meaning, whatever one cherishes, whether it is one's children, wealth, or other people is all due to Paramātmā. Yāgnavalkya then summarizes everything he has said in one sentence, 'न वा अरे

सर्वस्य कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति। आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति। – *Na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati*. *Ātmanastu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati* ‘Whatever in this world seems lovely, beautiful, or charming is due to Paramātmā’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/5).

Therefore, O Maitreyi, ‘आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः’ – *Ātmā vā are drashtavyaha shrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsityaha* (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/5). Meaning, one must endeavour to realize that Paramātmā; and in order to do that, ‘one must listen to his glory, his divine actions and incidents, his divine attributes, his divine powers, etc.’. Here, *shrotavyaha* (श्रोतव्यः) not only deals with listening, but also implies using one’s eyes, nose, etc. to understand Paramātmā’s greatness. Just like we hear his greatness with our ears, we should see him to be pure with our eyes, we should reveal his greatness with our speech, etc. In short, we should engage all of our senses in Paramātmā’s form.

Yet this is not enough for complete realization. This is just the first step. The second step is ‘मन्तव्यः’ – *Mantavyaha* – ‘Contemplation’. Whatever we have heard about Paramātmā, wherever and in whatever way we have seen or served him, should all be contemplated on. Even if something has been seen or heard repeatedly, if one does not contemplate on it, it is as if it has not been seen or heard at all. However, if something has been seen or heard once and thereafter contemplated on just once, it remains steadfast as if it has been seen or heard a hundred times over. Then what is to be said of something that is contemplated on repeatedly? Thus, the power of contemplation is not ordinary. Therefore, we should contemplate on whatever first hand experience we have had of Paramātmā.

We then move one step further. ‘निदिध्यासितव्यः’ – *Nididhyāsityaha*. *Nididhyāsan* means to practically imbibe the appropriate thoughts that one has heard or seen and contemplated. If one does *shravan*, *manan*, and *nididhyāsan* in this way, one attains *sākshātkār* – realization. In this

way, Yāgnavalkya has revealed the best way of realizing Paramātmā.

Yāgnavalkya then explains the priceless benefit gained by one who attains realization in this way, ‘मैत्रेय्यात्मनो वा अरे दर्शनेन श्रवणेन मत्या विज्ञानेनेदं सर्वं विदितम्’ – *Maitreyyātmano vā are darshanena shravanena matyā vignānedam sarvam viditam* (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 2/4/5). Meaning, O Maitrayi! One who has done *shravan*, *manan*, and *nididhyāsan* on Paramātmā properly and attained realization has known everything. There is nothing else for him to see, hear, know, or contemplate. Maitrayi! This is the knowledge to attain immortality. I have explained it to you and am myself eager to attain that realization. I have resolved to go to the forest so that I may peacefully do *manan* and *nididhyāsan* of Paramātmā.

Maitrayi felt grateful to her husband for having disclosed these precepts to her.

This spiritual discussion between a husband and wife has great philosophical significance.

THE STORY OF JANAK AND YĀGNAVALKYA

‘जनको ह वैदेहो बहुदक्षिणेन यज्ञेनेजे’ – *Janako ha vaideho bahudakshinena yagneneje* (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/1). There was a king named Janak of a region called Videha. He once performed a Bahudakshināk Yagna. A great number of Brahmins and scholars from the surrounding regions had gathered to attend this *yagna*. ‘तस्य ह जनकस्य वैदेहस्य विजिज्ञासा बभूव’ – *Tasya ha Janakasya vaidehasya vijignāsā babhuva* (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/1). Seeing so many Brahmins and scholars the king became curious. ‘कःस्विदेषां ब्राह्मणानामनूचानतम इति’ – *Kahasvideshām brāhmanānāmanoochānatama iti* (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/1). Janak asked, “Who is the wisest among all of these Brahmin scholars?” How should this be decided? The king had an idea ‘स ह गवां सहस्रमवरुरोध’ – *Sa ha gavām sahasramavarurodha* (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/1). He called for a thousand cows. These cows had ten gold coins on each horn – ‘दश दश पादा एकैकस्याः शृङ्गयोराबद्धा बभूवुः’ – *Dasha dasha*

pādā ekaiksyāhā shrungayorābaddhā babhoovuhu' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/1). The Brahmins were delighted to see this. The king challenged, 'ब्राह्मणा भगवन्तो यो वो ब्रह्मिष्ठः स एता गा उदजतामिति' 'Brāhmanā bhagavanto yo vo brahmishthaha sa etā gā udajatāmiti' – 'O respected Brahmins, whichever one of you knows *brahmavidyā* can take these cows' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/2). The challenge left the Brahmins speechless. Since they had not attained *brahmavidyā*, they were unable to take the cows. Just then, 'याज्ञवल्क्यः स्वयमेव ब्रह्मचारिणमुवाचैताः सो योदज सामश्रवा इति' – 'Yāgnavalkyaha svayamevabrahmachārinamuvāchaitāhāsomyodaja sāmashravā iti' – 'A Brahmin named Yāgnavalkya said to his disciple, "O Sāmashravā! Take the cows," and Sāmashravā began to lead the cows away. When the other Brahmins saw this they became jealous and burned with anger – 'ते ह ब्राह्मणाश्चुकुधुः' – 'Te ha brāhmanāshchukruduhu' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/2). They objected, 'कथं नो ब्रह्मिष्ठो ब्रुवीतेति' – 'Katham no brahmishtho bruveeteti' – 'How can Yāgnavalkya decide on his own that he knows *brahmavidyā* the most amongst all of us? He should be tested' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/2). A Brahmin named Ashval, who had been performing the rituals in King Janak's *yagna* asked Yāgnavalkya, "Are you really the best *brahmagnāni* amongst us all?" Yāgnavalkya calmly replied, 'नमो वयं ब्रह्मिष्ठाय कुर्मो गोकामा एव वयं स्म इति' – 'Namovayam brahmishthāya kurmo gokāmā eva vayam sma iti' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/2) – 'O Brahmins! Even I bow to the great *brahmagnānis*. I just wanted the cows.' Yāgnavalkya had a big ashram, and as a result, needed the cows so that arrangements could be made for guests and those who lived there. Because his need was genuine, he felt it was appropriate to take the cows. Moreover, as per the king's announcement he was a knower of Brahman. Therefore, there was nothing wrong in him doing so. Yet the other Brahmins could not accept this. They said, "If you want to take the cows, then you must give clear answers to the questions we ask in the presence of the king in this public assembly. If you do not

know an answer, then the cows will be returned to their pen." Yāgnavalkya accepted the challenge. Ashval made the first challenge. He asked eight questions, one after another, and Yāgnavalkya immediately answered them clearly. Hearing this, 'होताऽश्वल उपरराम' – 'Hotā'shvala upararāma' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/1/10). Meaning, Ashval became silent and could not think of what to ask next.

'अथ हैनं जारत्कारव आर्तभागः पप्रच्छ' – 'Atha hainam Jāratkārava ārtabhāgaha papraccha' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/2/1). Meaning: Seeing this, Ārtabhāg, born in the Jāratkāru lineage, took on the task of asking questions. He too asked many questions, and Yāgnavalkya satisfactorily answered them all. As a result, 'जारत्कारव आर्तभाग उपरराम' – 'Ārtabhāg also became silent' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/2/13).

'अथ हैनं भुज्युर्लाह्यायनिः पप्रच्छ' – 'Atha hainam Bhujyurlāhyāyanihi papraccha' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/3/1). Thereafter, Bhujyu, the son of a Brahmin named Lāhya, asked questions. Yāgnavalkya answered these too. Therefore Lāhya too became silent.

'अथ हैनमुषस्तश्चाक्रायणः पप्रच्छ' – 'Atha hainamushastashchākrāyanaha papraccha' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/3/1). Thereafter, Ushast, a Brahmin born in the Chakra lineage, took on the task of asking questions, but on getting answers, he too became quiet and returned to his seat.

'अथ हैनं कहोलः कौषीतकेयः पप्रच्छ' – 'Atha hainam kaholaha kausheetakeyaha papraccha' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/5/1). Thereafter, it was Kahol's, the son of a Brahmin named Kushitak, turn. He asked, 'य आत्मा सर्वान्तरस्तं मे व्याचक्ष्वेति' – 'Ya ātmā sarvāntarastam me vyāchakshveti' – 'Who is the *ātmā* that resides within all?' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/5/1). Yāgnavalkya replied, "That is Paramātmā. He resides within all by pervading all." That is why, 'तमात्मानं विदित्वा ब्राह्मणाः पुत्रैषणायाश्च वित्तैषणायाश्च लोकैषणायाश्च व्युत्थाय भिक्षार्चय चरन्ति' – 'Tamātmānam viditvā brāhmanāhā putraishanāyāshcha

vittaishanāyāshcha lokaishanāyāshcha vyutthāya bhikshācharyam charanti’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/5/1). Brahmins who realize Paramātmā, renounce their desires for children, wealth, and the world and live only on what they receive so that they can immerse themselves in Paramātmā’s meditation. Hearing this answer, even Kahol became silent.

All of the Brahmins were dumbfounded. Who would have the courage to ask next? To everyone’s amazement a Brahmin woman named Gārgi took on the task. ‘अथ हैनं गार्गी वाचक्वन्वी पप्रच्छ’ – ‘*Atha hainam Gārgi vāchaknavee paprachchha*’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/6/1). She was a learned scholar and well inclined to talking and asking questions. She asked, ‘यदिदं सर्वमप्स्वोतं च प्रोतं च कस्मिन्नु खल्वाप ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति’ – ‘*Yadidam sarvamapsvotam cha protam cha kasminnu khalvāpa otāshcha protāshcheti*’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/6/1). That much can be understood that everything that we see here as earth is immersed in water, and that there is more water than earth. The earth floats on water, but what is water immersed in? Yāgnavalkya replied, ‘In air.’ The questioning continued: “And air?” “In space.” “And space?” “In Gandharvaloka.” “And Gandharvaloka?” “In Ādityaloka.” “And Ādityaloka?” “In Chandraloka.” “And Chandraloka?” “In Nakshatraloka.” “And Nakshatraloka?” “In Devaloka.” “And Devaloka?” “In Indraloka.” “And Indraloka?” “In Prajāpatiloka.” “And Prajāpatiloka?” Yāgnavalkya replied, ‘ब्रह्मलोकेषु गार्गीति’ – ‘*Brahmalokeshu Gārgēeti*’ – ‘Gārgi, it is immersed in Brahmaloaka, i.e., Akshardhām’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/6/1). Yāgnavalkya’s implication was that this Brahmaloaka is greater and larger than all other lokas. Gārgi had a habit of asking; and as a result, asked further, ‘कस्मिन्नु खलु ब्रह्मलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति’ – ‘*Kasminnu khalu brahmalokā otāshcha protāshcheti*’ – ‘What is this Brahmaloaka – Akshardhām – immersed in?’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/6/1).

This questioned whether there is a place higher than Akshardhām. Hearing this, Yāgnavalkya gave not an answer, but a warning, ‘गार्गी!

मातिप्राक्षीर्मा ते मूर्धा व्यपत्तद् अनतिप्रश्न्यां वै देवतामतिपृच्छसि गार्गी! मातिप्राक्षीरिति’ – ‘*Gārgēe! mātiprākshēermā te moordhā vyapaptad anatiprashnyām vai devatāmatipruchchhasi Gārgēe*’ – ‘Gārgi! Now don’t ask too many questions. There is even a limit to questions. If you cross that limit, then you will lose your head’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/6/1). Yāgnavalkya’s tone was serious. This was not a matter of scaring, and Gārgi was not the kind to be scared; but this was a warning to Gārgi that she had crossed the limit by asking if there was a greater abode than the greatest of all abodes and the eternal permanent residence of Paramātmā – Akshardhām. Yāgnavalkya, who up until now had been readily giving the names of each loka in order of their greatness, felt that this question regarding something above Akshardhām was blasphemous, and thus answered in the way he did. There was no possibility of an answer. Gārgi understood. She wanted to keep her head safe and thus became quiet. Akshardhām proved to be the greatest abode.

Although, the opposition were trying their best, Yāgnavalkya was not even in the slightest set back. After Gārgi, Uddālak, the son of Arun, stood up and asked, “What is that omniscient entity by which the entire world is sustained and what is it like?”

Yāgnavalkya began, ‘यः पृथिव्यां तिष्ठन् पृथिव्या अन्तरो यं पृथिवी न वेद यस्य पृथिवी शरीरं यः पृथिवीमन्तरो यमयत्येष त आत्मान्तर्त्या यमृतः’ – ‘*Yaha pruthivyām tishthan pruthivyā antaro yam pruthivee na veda yasya pruthivee shareeram yaha pruthiveemantaro yamayatyasha ta ātmāntaryāmyamrutaha*’ – “That which resides in the earth yet is separate from it, that which cannot be known by the earth, that whose body is the earth and who controls the earth residing within it, is Paramātmā. He is omniscient and immortal’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/7/3).

After explaining this, Yāgnavalkya narrated in great detail how Paramātmā resides omnisciently in all the five great elements – earth, water, fire, air, and space – as well as within the body and

ātmās of all. Hearing this answer, Uddālak too became silent.

Just then, Gārgi stood up again as she had thought of a new question. She felt that her question will surely test Yāgnavalkya and that he will be defeated. She even announced to the assembly, “O Brahmins! I am going to ask Yāgnavalkya yet another question. This question is like a Sansantā arrow. If he answers it, then we must accept that no one can defeat him in this assembly.” Everyone became anxious. The Brahmins said, ‘पृच्छ गार्गीति’ *‘Pruchchha Gārgēeti’* – ‘Gārgi ask your question’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/1). Gārgi asked Yāgnavalkya, “Just like the son of a warrior of Kāshi or Videha strings his bow and takes an arrow in hand to battle against the enemy, I too stand in front of you with a question.” Yāgnavalkya was not intimidated by her words. He calmly said, “Respected Gārgi! Please ask as you wish.” Gārgi asked, “O Yāgnavalkya, what is that which is above Dyuloka, below the earth and between the two, immersed in?” Yāgnavalkya replied, ‘एतद् वै तदक्षरं गार्गी! ब्राह्मणा अभिवदन्ति’ – *‘Etad vai tadaksharam Gargi! Brāhmanā abhivadanti’* – ‘O Gārgi, that is Aksharbrahman. Even great *brahmagnānis* salute to that Akshar’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/8). ‘एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी! सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ विधृतौ तिष्ठतः।’ – *‘Etasya vā Aksharasya prashāsane Gārgē! Suryāchandramasau vidhrutau tishthataha’* – ‘Even the sun and the moon are under the control of that Aksharbrahman’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/9). ‘एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी! द्यावापृथिव्यौ विधृते तिष्ठतः’ – *‘Etasya vā Aksharasya prashāsane Gargi! Dyāvāpṛthivyau vidhrute tishthataha’* – ‘All the abodes – Dyuloka, the earth etc. – are under the control of that Aksharbrahman’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/9). Not only that, ‘एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी! निमेषा मुहूर्ता अहोरात्राण्यर्धमासा मासा ऋतवः संवत्सरा इति विधृतास्तिष्ठन्ति’ – *‘Etasya vā Aksharasya prashāsane Gargi! Nimeshā muhoortā ahorātrāṇyārdhamāsā māsā rutavaha samvatsarā iti vidhrutāstishthanti’* – ‘The divisions of time – seconds, minutes, night and day, bright half, dark half, months, seasons, years, etc. are all controlled by Aksharbrahman.

By the eternal wish of Paramātmā, Aksharbrahman is also the controller of all’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/9). That is why I say, ‘यो वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यविदित्वाऽस्मिंल्लोके जुहोति यजते तपस्तप्यते बहूनि वर्षसहस्राण्यन्तवदेवास्य तद् भवति’ – *‘Yo vā etadaksharam Gargyaviditvā’sminloke juhōti yajate tapastapyate bahūni varṣasahasrāṇyāntavadevāsya tad bhavati’* – ‘O Gārgi, without knowing Aksharbrahman, even if one performs *yagnas* and penance for thousands of years, it will all perish, i.e., one will not attain the eternal fruit of liberation’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/10). Moreover, ‘यो वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यविदित्वाऽस्माल्लोकात् प्रैति स कृपणः’ – *‘Yo vā etadaksharam Gargyaviditvā’smāllōkāṭ praiti sa krupanaha’* – ‘Gārgi! One who leaves this world without knowing Aksharbrahman is truly pitiful. He will once again have to wander in the world’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/10). On the contrary, ‘अथ य एतदक्षरं गार्गी! विदित्वाऽस्माल्लोकात् प्रैति स ब्राह्मणः’ – *‘Atha ya etadaksharam Gargi! Veditvā’smāllōkāṭ praiti sa brāhmanaha’* – ‘One who leaves this world knowing Aksharbrahman has nothing to worry about. He is a true *brahmagnāni*. He has attained ultimate liberation’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/10). In this way Yāgnavalkya sang the divine glory of Aksharbrahman and emphasized knowing that divine entity. Hearing this, Gārgi was left speechless. She accepted that Yāgnavalkya was a true *brahmagnāni*. That is why she clearly told the other Brahmins, ‘ब्राह्मणा भगवन्तस्तदेव बहु मन्येध्वं यदस्मान्मस्कारेण मुच्येध्वं न वै जातु युष्माकमिमं कश्चिद् ब्रह्मोद्यं जेतेति।’ – *‘Brāhmanā bhagavantastadeva bahu manyedhvam yadasmānnamaskārena muchyedhvam na vai jātu yushmākamimam kashchid brahmodyam jeteti’* – ‘O Brahmins! Believe it to be a great achievement, if you can even bow to Yāgnavalkya, and defeat him. He truly knows *brahmavidyā*. None of you will be able to defeat him in a debate’ (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/12). ‘वाचकनवी उपरारामा’ – *‘Vāchaknavee upararāma’* (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 3/8/12). Gārgi then became silent. All the Brahmins agreed with her. Yāgnavalkya was declared victorious, and the cows were taken to his ashram.

Indeed, 'येनाऽक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम् – 'Yenāksharam purusham veda satyam provācha tām tattvato brahmavidyām' (Mundak Upanishad: 1/2/13). Meaning, that by which 'अक्षरम् – Aksharbrahman – and 'पुरुषम् – Purushottam Parabrahman – are known is *brahmavidyā*. According to this definition of *brahmavidyā*, Yāgnavalkya is proved to be a knower of *brahmavidyā* because of his precepts on both divine entities Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman.

Thus, this story of the great Sage Yāgnavalkya is truly a philosophical jewel.

DA-DA-DA

'त्रयाः प्राजापत्याः प्रजापतौ पितरि ब्रह्मचर्यम् ऊचुर्देवा मनुष्या असुराः' – 'Trayāhā prajāpatyāhā prajāpatau pitari brahmacharyam ooshurdevā manushyā asurāhā' – 'Devas, humans and *asuras* were all Prajāpati's children, and they all became their father's disciples' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/1). The *devas* first asked, 'ब्रवीतु नो भवानिति' 'Braveetu no bhavāniti' – 'Please counsel us' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/1). 'ते यो हैतदक्षरमुवाच द इति' – 'Tebhyo haitadaksharamuvācha da iti' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/1). Meaning, Prajāpati gave the *devas* a one letter precept – 'da'. The *devas* heard this, and Prajāpati then asked, 'व्यज्ञासिष्टा इति' – 'Vyagnāsishthā iti' – 'O *devas*! Have you understood the meaning of 'da'?' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/1). The *devas* answered, 'व्यज्ञासिष्म इति होचुः। दा यतेति न आत्थेति। ओमिति होवाच व्यज्ञासिष्टेति' – 'Vyagnāsishma iti hochuhu. Dāmyateti na āttheti. Omiti hovācha vyagnāsishtheti' – 'O Lord! We understand. 'Da' means *daman* – control. You want us to divert our *indriyas* from sensual pleasures and control them' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/1). Hearing this Prajāpati affirmed that that is what he had implied.

'अथ हैनं मनुष्या ऊचुर्ब्रवीतु नो भवानिति' – 'Atha hainam manushyā oochurbraveetu no bhavāniti' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/2). After the *devas* left, the humans approached Prajāpati and requested him to give them advice. He said, 'ते यो हैतदेवाक्षरमुवाच द इति व्यज्ञासिष्टा इति' – 'Tebhyo

haitadevāksharamuvācha da iti vyagnāsishthā iti' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/3). Prajāpati also gave the humans the one letter precept 'da' and asked them if they understood what it meant. They said, "Yes, we understand, 'da' means 'dān' – to donate. Greed increases when one collects too much money, and greed is the doorway to Narak. You are instructing us to donate, so that we do not fall." Prajāpati was pleased and said, "That is correct; you have correctly understood what I have implied."

'अथ हैनं असुरा ऊचुर्ब्रवीतु नो भवानिति' – 'Atha hainam asurā oochurbraveetu no bhavāniti' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/3). After the humans had left, the *asuras* approached Prajāpati and asked him to counsel them. He advised, 'ते यो हैतदक्षरमुवाच द इति। विज्ञासिष्टा इति। विज्ञासिष्म इति। दयध्वमिति न आत्थेति' – 'Tebhyo haitadaksharamuvācha da eti, vigāsishthā iti, vignāsishma iti, dayadhvamiti na āttheti' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/3). Prajāpati gave the *asuras* the one letter precept 'da' too. He asked them if they understood anything from it. The *asuras* said, 'Yes we have understood, 'da' means 'dayā' – compassion. We are *tamoguni* and become easily angry, therefore you are telling us to keep compassion on all.' Prajāpati was content to hear this.

In conclusion this Upanishad says, 'तदेतदेवैषा देवी वागनुवदति स्तनयित्नु दं द द इति। दा यत दत्त दयध्वमिति' – 'Tadetadevaishā daivee vāganuvadati stanayintur da da da iti, dāmyata datta dayadhvamiti' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/3). It is as if these words echo the message of rumbling clouds, which tell us to control, contribute and be compassionate. 'तदेतत्त्रयं शिक्षेद् दमं दानं दयामिति' – 'Tadetattrayam shikshed damam dānam dayāmiti' (Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad: 5/2/3). Therefore, each spiritual aspirant should imbibe these qualities.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad is like a resonance of spirituality in the forest. Its every note enriches us with the wealth of the *brahmagnānis'* knowledge. ♦

Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan

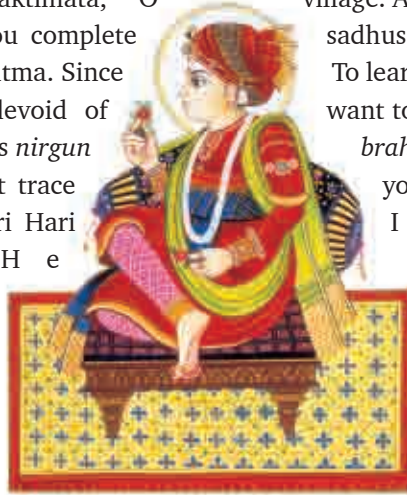
The Haricharitamrut Sagar is a detailed record of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's life, work and divine teachings written in several volumes by Adharanand Swami. A compilation of his teachings is presented in the Purushottam Bolya Prite... publication. The following is a translation from this publication of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's revelations about his true, supreme form.

1. Shri Hari revealed to Bhaktimata, “O Mother, now I will reveal to you complete knowledge of the form of Paramatma. Since Parabrahman Purushottam is devoid of *mayik* qualities, he is described as *nirgun* – there is not even the slightest trace of worldly qualities in him. Shri Hari is the master of Akshardham. He is immensely powerful and indestructible. He has a heavenly, divine *murti*. He is the atman of Akshar and others. His grand form is beyond Akshar. He is the indweller in all *jivas* and is supreme. His divine exploits and glory are limitless.”

2. Shri Hari said to Bahaktimata, “O Mother, Paramatma Shri Hari is the controller of all. Everyone is dependent on Paramatma. Such knowledge is attained by profound association with the Satpurush. Having attained it, there is nothing left to know. Whoever associates with the Satpurush overcomes all worldly attachments and instantly attains the divine abode of God.”

3. After bathing in the Unmatt Ganga (River Ghela) in Gadhpur, Shri Hari sat in Jiva Khachar's *darbar* and discoursed, “Akshardham is said to be beyond *maya*, and I have personally manifest from there. I have Akshardham [in human form] and *muktas* with me. Also, residents of Golok, Vaikunth and other abodes have come. Radha, Lakshmi and their servants have come, too. And *muktas* from Shvetdwp and Badrikashram have also come.”

4. Shri Hari stayed at Ranmalji's home in Moda



village. After sunrise, Shri Hari spoke to the sadhus, “Learn every virtue of a sadhu. To learn virtues is the way of the sadhu. I want to make you all, who have met me, *brahmarup*. So, be prepared, otherwise you will not survive. Since the day I came to Satsang, I have been consolidating your faith in my form. When firm faith in my form develops first, then one's own form is easily recognized and one experiences the highest enlightenment. Without the sun, darkness is not removed; similarly, without conviction in my form knowledge is not attained.”

5. In Vartal, Shri Hari talked about his own form to Joban Pagi, Narayan Giri and other devotees, “My supreme Akshardham is here with me, but by Hari's wish nobody is able to see him. There are countless *muktas* also, but none are interested in their miraculous powers; they also behave as humans.”

6. Shri Hari discoursed to the assembly in Methan, “I have resolved to grant the divine bliss of Akshardham to my devotees. That is why I travel in the Satsang. I have no other motives. None of my actions are for any personal gains. Even while eating, sleeping or dressing I do not forget the thoughts of my form. I do not think of anything except my form. I do not see anything superior to my form. I remove all barriers of *maya* merely by thought. I think about *moksha* for the *jivas*. None of the objects of the *brahmand* are capable of distracting me. I am blissful due to the bliss of my

own form. I believe all other [material] pleasures as sources of misery. Where there is fear of Time (Death), there is the shadow of misery. Only at the feet of God is there no fear. Today, all who have become *satsangis* have all become fearless. Those who do not understand my form, have no idea of what [true] bliss is. A king married a beggar woman and made her a queen, but her begging instincts remained. Similarly, devotees who do have understanding [of God's true form] are like that.

7. In Gadhada, Shri Hari was in Jiva Khachar's residence. Jiva Khachar prayed, "O Lord, do not ever become unhappy, and stay here." Shri Hari said, "It is difficult to keep me. My nature is that I will repeatedly scold those who I believe as mine. My affection naturally grows for one who, except for my wishes ignores the wishes of the *jiva*. The *jiva* runs towards material things, while my focus is on God. I know material things to be false (i.e., temporary), like a dream. Even an emperor perishes. The joy of all realms is similarly perishable. When one contemplates on the dissolution of the *brahmand*, attachment for God develops. God's abode is attained through practicing and understanding. Without these two, the bliss of God's abode is not experienced. This body is ever-changing and false; *atma* and *Paramatma* are true [and unchanging]. My *dham* is supreme. Those sadhus and devotees who fully understand this are intelligent. When they die, their atmans are seated in a *viman* and attain God's abode."

8. In Jhinjhar, Shri Hari said, "I, who am above all, am present, is Satsang. My best devotee and servant (Aksharbrahman) knows my form fully and contemplates on me. In all my talks, I express the wish that, except my *murti*, all *satsangis* shed the desire for all other objects, and that they do not have affection for other things as they have for my *murti*. I shower my affection on those devotees who do not think of anything except my *murti*. Apart from this, I have no affection for anything upto Akshardham."

9. In Sarangpur, Shri Hari said to the devotees, "Some do not believe in the bliss of God's *murti* and believe happiness to be elsewhere. So, they offered me golden palaces, the best quality foods and drinks, costly clothes, elephants, horses and other things, but I did not stay even for a moment. I forever remain with those who wish for nothing except me. That is why I have taken this birth."

10. Shri Hari went to Adhoi, Dhamadka and then to Bhachau, where he stayed at the home of a blacksmith devotee. That devotee was studying the Tulsi Ramayana. When Shri Hari asked the devotee to read, he had the darshan of Ramachandraji in Shri Hari. This darshan made the blacksmith devotee very emotional and, overwhelmed, he became tearful. Then Shri Hari granted him darshan of his supreme Parabrahman form in Akshardham. The blacksmith devotee saw innumerable avatars and their devotees paying their respects to Shri Hari. He experienced overwhelming joy. Then, all the avatars merged into the form of Shri Hari and so the devotee realized that Shri Hari was the cause of all the avatars.

Then Shri Hari said, "I, Bhagwan Purushottam, have manifest. I do not talk about myself, but those who have seen my glory talk about my form as it is."

11. In Kutch-Bhuj, Shri Hari discoursed to the assembly, "The all-doership of God is seen everywhere. All animate and inanimate creation observes his *niyams*. From Patal (the lowest realm) to Prakriti-Purush, none can step outside of his *niyams*. He is so powerful that he makes the infinite *brahmands* observe his *niyams*. He grants each *jiva* a body according to its karmas. He gives food to all according to their karmas. Without even the slightest delay, God carries out his duty and grants the fruits of their karmas to the *jivas*. He is all-knowing. To those who do good karmas, he gives a good destiny; to those who do bad karmas he gives a bad destiny. He has given eyes in the form of wisdom to man, yet those who keep them closed and proceed will suffer." ♦

PUSHPADOLOTSAV

Sarangpur, 1 March 2010

Over 80,000 devotees from India and abroad flocked to Sarangpur to enjoy the Pushpadolotsav (Fuldol Festival) in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj on 1 March 2010.

The evening celebration assembly began at 5.00 p.m. There were inspiring speeches by Viveksagar Swami: 'Glory of Pushpadolotsav'; Ishwarcharan Swami: 'Pragat Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj'; Dr Swami: 'Strengthening the Colour of Upasana'; and Mahant Swami: 'Benefits of Promoting Upasana'.

On this auspicious occasion the following new Swaminarayan Aksharpath publications were inaugurated: *Yogi Vani*, *Prasangam 2009*, *Valini Diary*, *Sanskar Suvas*, *Vachanamrut* (Deluxe



Edition), Gujarati Whiz (Card Game), Shikshapatri and Yogiji Maharaj (in Kannad), and an mp3 of Mahant Swami's discourses on Yogi Gita.

Then, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "God does not distinguish between the rich and poor, but goes where there

is devotion. God and his holy Sadhu wish to give happiness to all, since they have manifest to grant *kalyan* to all. So great is their generosity."

After his blessings, Swamishri performed *pujan* and *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj then he showered Thakorji with saffron-scented water using a small, decorated spray.

Thereafter, Swamishri showered all the devotees with the sanctified water, colouring everyone's heart with a rainbow of joy and peace. ♦

PRAYERS AND THOUGHTS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

PRAYER

All students pray daily after their morning puja, "O Bhagwan Swaminarayan, O Gunatitanand Swami, O Bhagatji Maharaj, O Shastriji Maharaj, O Yogiji Maharaj and O Pramukh Swami Maharaj please grant me strength, intelligence and good friends to progress daily in my studies."

TARGET AND FAITH

Recall the marks you got for each subject from your previous year, and increase your goals by 5% to 10%. Then read them once daily. Then pray, "Please grant me strength, intelligence and proper company to attain these marks."

To achieve your target pray positively, "With

your blessings and strength I aim to achieve those marks. I will, I will, I will get those marks."

VISUALIZATION

Daily visualize by closing your eyes and think about your goals, "I have attained them; I have attained them; I have attained them. By introspection, I will identify and avoid anything that hinders my studies."

MOTTO FOR STUDYING

Say to yourself daily, "Learn and earn to serve the world through BAPS." ♦

Sadhu Swayamprakashdas
(Dr Swami)

THE SWAMINARAYAN SCHOOL RAISES OVER £1,300 FOR 'HELP THE AGED' AND 'AGE CONCERN'

9 March 2010, London

The sixth-form pupils of The Swaminarayan School raised over £1,326 for 'Help The Aged' and 'Age Concern', two of the UK's leading charities for elderly people. The money will go towards helping "free older people from poverty, isolation and neglect... and enjoy a better life."

The money was collected through a series of specially-organized events and initiatives throughout 2009, comfortably beating the target of £1,000 that had been set at the outset of the project. Among the innovative ideas were running stalls at the School's annual summer fair, a talent show, and a cake sale. Everyone involved with this fundraising projects demonstrated determination



and motivation throughout the challenges, with generous contributions from many others making it all possible.

His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the founder of the School, has always emphasised the importance of serving others, and as such, the

School has engaged in a number of charity drives since its opening in 1992 to support the local community and other worthy causes.

The charities expressed their gratitude to the School for their efforts in a special certificate. It reads: "A huge thank you for getting involved with numerous events this year at your school from Summer Fairs to Talent Shows, this shows true dedication to charity work and fundraising." ♦

ORGAN DONATION ROADSHOW

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London

13 March 2010

The 'Hindu Organ Donation Faith Roadshow' was held at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir on Saturday 13 March 2010 with the help of BAPS Charities. The roadshow was organised by the NHS Blood and Transplant unit (NHSBT) as part of a nationwide campaign aimed at raising awareness about the lack of people on the national Organ Donor Register and encouraging them to sign up.

The Roadshow forms a part of a series of events being held by NHSBT at churches, mosques, mandirs, synagogues and gurudwaras to reach out to various faith-based and other communities.

Approximately 300 people attended the event at the mandir. From these, 113 signed onto the register with many others considering signing up in the near future.

Dr Mayank Shah, Head of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha's Health Services in the UK, shared: "Feedback from the roadshow was very positive with many Hindus rightly observing that signing the Organ Donor Register was indeed a good deed. The information that was distributed was also very useful and we hope people will use this to start a conversation about organ donation with loved ones."

- On average, 3 people who need a transplant die every day in the UK waiting for a suitable match.
- The need for a transplant in the South Asian community is 3 times higher than that of the general population.
- Yet only 1% of people on the NHS Organ Donor Register are from the South Asian community. ♦

BAPS CHARITIES DONATES TO UNICEF FOR HAITI EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FUND

15 March 2010, New York

The devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake, with 33 recorded aftershocks, in Haiti on 12 January 2010 killed more than 200,000 people, displaced over a million, and affected as many as 3 million people.

Since then, BAPS Charities raised \$47,000, and on 15 March 2010, presented the money to the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, launching the first-ever partnership between the two NGOs. Ed Lloyd, CFO of UNICEF said, "Every penny makes a difference. This is what we do. We are in the business of helping children. Luckily, today, we found an able and willing partner. This partnership shows what two giving organizations can do to help children in need."



Members of BAPS and UNICEF

Since forty percent of the Haitian population is children aged 14 and under, a large majority of the people displaced as a result of this earthquake is children.

During the aftermath of this earthquake, BAPS Charities partnered with UNICEF to provide aid and protection for children who lost their

family and friends. Together, they constructed over 400 camps for the displaced individuals in the affected areas. These camps provide children with education, protection, and health care services. The efforts of BAPS Charities and UNICEF have brought clean water to individuals living in remote areas, improved sanitation conditions to prevent the spread of disease, and provided 'baby tents,' for mothers to care for their babies. ♦



PUBLIC OPENING OF YOGI DWAR

26 January 2010

Dhari

In Dhari, the birthplace of Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj, a beautiful, artistic entrance gate to the town was inaugurated by local dignitaries on 26 January 2010. The gate was built jointly by BAPS and the Dhari Town Authority. ♦

SHRI HARIKRISHNA MAHARAJ SANCTIFIES MARYLAND SENATE ASSEMBLY

27 January 2010, Washington DC



On Wednesday, 27 January 2010 a session of the Maryland State Assembly was inaugurated with Hindu prayers and the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

BAPS devotees Bharatbhai and Hitendrabhai, together with pujari Kiritbhai arrived with the *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj at the Maryland State House in Annapolis, Maryland at 9:30 a.m. They were greeted by President of Senate, Mr. Mike Miller, and Senator Jim Rosapepe of District 21, where the local BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir is located.

Senate President Mike Miller recognized this day as a historic event in the Senate House. He requested the entire Maryland State Senate Assembly, which comprises of 47 state senators and other staff, to stand and participate in the prayer. Pujari Kiritbhai first tied a *nadachaddi* on the

president's right wrist and then began the prayer. Hitendrabhai Patel explained the rituals and translated the Vedic prayers.

Thereafter, on behalf of H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he wished all the members namaste and Jai Swaminarayan. Hitendrabhai Patel added, "Approximately 230 years ago, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the founder of the organization, had given blessings to the leaders of India at the time. Although the words were uttered many years ago, they are just as momentous today. He said: 'If you rule the country with morality and a sense of duty, the country will prosper.' The roots of America's prosperity can be found in similar precepts.

Then the devotees sang the Shanti Path and conveyed the message of H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj, "In the joy of others lies our own." ♦

HELMET AND MOBILE PHONE APPEAL

It is mandatory by government law for all riders of motorcycles or scooters to wear a helmet. Pramukh Swami Maharaj also appeals to all to do so. However, due to not wearing a helmet, eight BAPS devotees have passed away in the last few months. And by wearing a helmet, many have been saved from fatal injuries. BAPS appeals to all riders and passengers to wear a helmet for safety while riding on two wheelers.

A humble request to all devotees: during *arti*, *chestha* and *satsang* assemblies please switch off your mobiles or place them in vibration mode, since the ringtones and talking disturbs others. If you must use your mobile, you can do so where others are not distracted.

Thank you.

Sadhu Swayamprakashdas (Dr Swami)



DIKSHA MAHOTSAV, 10 March 2010, Sarangpur



On Wednesday 10 March 2010, over 4,000 devotees gathered to witness the auspicious Diksha Mahotsav in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Sarangpur.

The initial Vedic Mahapuja rituals for the Diksha Mahotsav were performed by Mahant Swami, the initiates and their parents. Thereafter, Swamishri performed the concluding rituals and gave the guru-mantra to all the youths. Swamishri initiated 21 youths, who had completed their initial training period, into the *parshad*-order, and ordained 21 *parshads* into the *sadhu*-order.

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, “*Diksha* is to surrender totally to God.

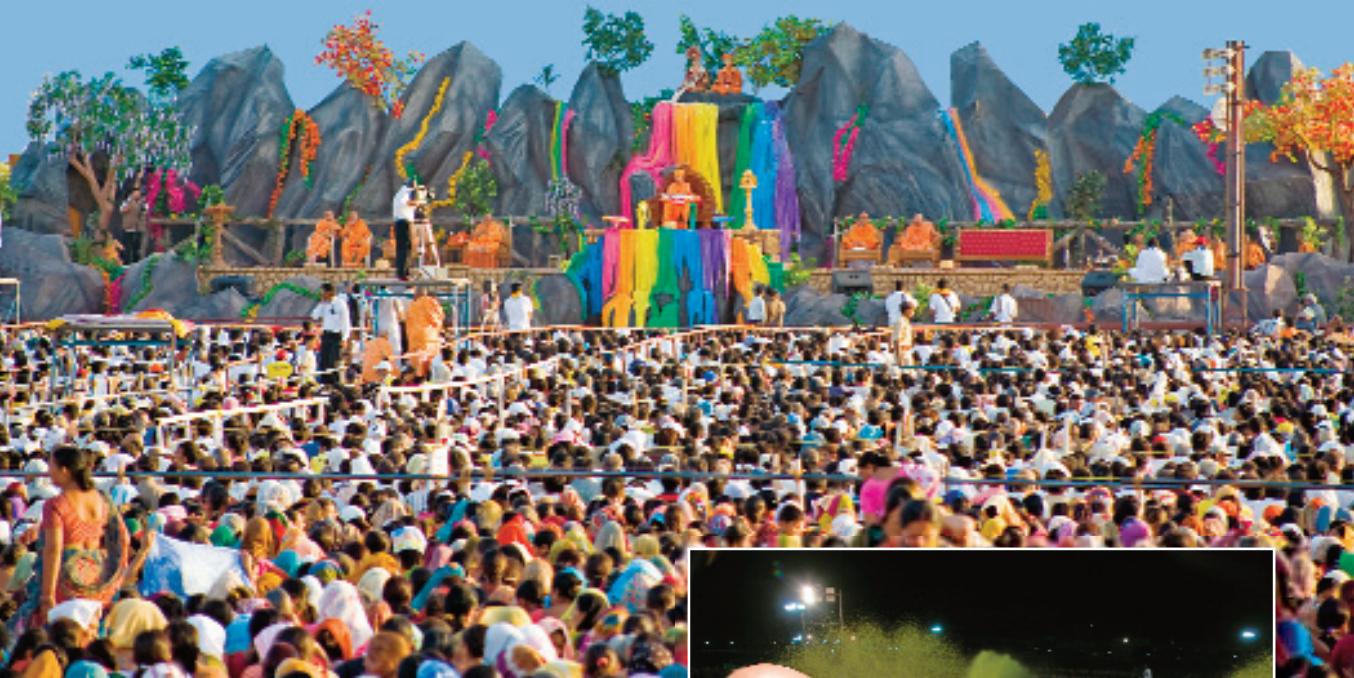
The youths are enthusiastic that they want to serve at the feet of God. Some parents have permitted their only sons. It is difficult (for parents) to do this. It is not an ordinary thing, but the parents have total faith that God will look after them. Shriji Maharaj will grant them happiness, peace, and physical, mental and financial well-being.

“Having become *sadhus*, they will help guide thousands onto the path of God.”

Top: Swamishri blesses the Diksha Mahotsav assembly.

Middle: Swamishri with newly initiated *sadhus*.

Bottom: Swamishri with newly initiated *parshads*.



FULDOL FESTIVAL, Sarangpur, 1 March 2010

Over 80,000 devotees from throughout India and the world gathered for the auspicious Fuldol festival in Sarangpur in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Top: Swamishri and senior sadhus on stage during the celebration assembly.

Bottom: Swamishri casts his divine glance upon the mammoth gathering of devotees from the main stage.

Inset: Swamishri sprays the devotees with sanctified water.