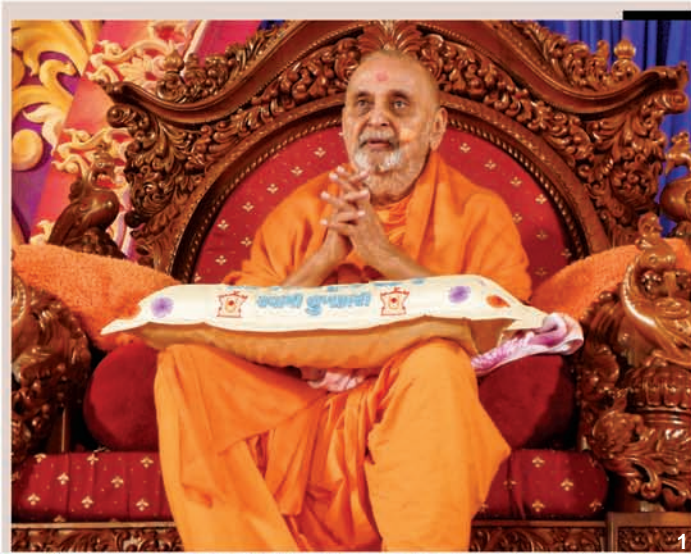


# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

Annual Subscription Rs. 60  
January 2010



Divine Impact of  
Shastriji Maharaj



**SWAMISHRI'S VICHARAN:** Gondal, Rajkot, Bochasan, October-November 2009

1. Sharad Purnima Celebration – the birthday of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami. Swamishri blesses the assembly of 29,000 devotees in Gondal (4 October).
2. Swamishri performs the final Sharad Purnima Celebration arti (4 October, Gondal).
3. Swamishri presides over the *hathdi* of fruits and vegetables in the Prabhodini Ekadashi assembly (29 October, Rajkot).
4. Devotees during the evening Prabhodini Ekadashi assembly in Rajkot (29 October).
5. Swamishri performs *pujan* of the *murtis* for the new BAPS *hari* mandir in Maalod (13 October, Gondal).
6. Swamishri performs *murti-pratishtha arti* of the *murtis* for new *hari* mandirs in Amalsadi and Sarbhan (27 November, Bochasan).

Photos by: Sadhu Yogicharandas and BAPS Youths



# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

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Website: [www.swaminarayan.org](http://www.swaminarayan.org)  
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## FIRST WORD

Every New Year we offer gifts and greet each other with happiness and prosperity. Other than money and riches, there several forms of prosperity like contentment, freedom, generosity, fearlessness, security, confidence, wisdom, trust and faith in God. Though they are difficult to quantify and measure they lie at the root of the human experience of eternal joy and peace.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan blessed thousands of aspirants and devotees with both mundane and spiritual prosperity. The heart of his teachings and works lie in not only understanding the glory of God, but also in associating with the God-realized Sadhu. He referred to him as Akshar, Aksharbrahman or Ekantik Sant in many of his discourses. He sung the glory of Akshar as one to be served on par with him, that such a Sadhu sustains and maintains all life, and by serving him equally as one does God liberates the devotee of his base nature in this very birth instead of 100 births.

One many occasions Bhagwan Swaminarayan extolled the glory of Akshar and revealed him to be Gunatitanand Swami. The philosophy of Akshar-Purushottam was given a tangible shape by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. The saga of Shastriji Maharaj's trials and tribulations shine out all the more because of his pure saintliness. His sterling character, faith, tolerance and the will to do good to even those who opposed him lies at the foundation of the BAPS organization that he established. His pristine saintliness touched the lives of all, even those who were antagonistic to him.

History is a priceless inheritance, and imbibing its fundamental principles and values blesses us with a destiny of eternal joy. ◆

**Founder:** HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj,  
**Editor:** Sadhu Swayamprakashdas,  
**Contributors:** Sadhu Vivekijivandas, Sadhu Amrutvijaydas,  
**Designer:** Sadhu Shrijiswarupdas  
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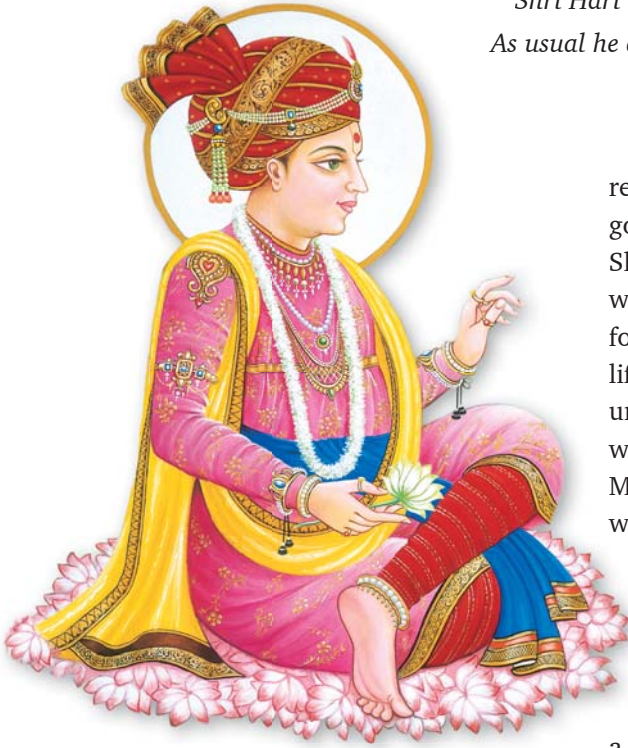
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# Uka Khachar's Service

*Shri Hari was staying at Dada Khachar's darbar. As usual he discoursed under the shade of the neem tree. One morning a problem arose...*



**I**t was July 1820 (Ashadh, A.S. 1876). The first drops of rain heralded the monsoon season. Everyone had been waiting for the rains. Since several weeks many had been asking Maharaj when they would have rains. But Shri Hari did not reply. One day, however, he revealed, "This year there was going to be a drought, but because of your good merits (*punya*) the rains will wet the earth."

Shri Hari decided to spend the next four months (*chaturmas*) in Gadhada. He celebrated the *ekadashi* of Ashadh (Dev Podhi Ekadashi), and gave special *niyams* to sadhus and devotees to observe in the next four months (*chaturmas*). Then at Maharaj's behest the sadhus tied a bead each of *rudraksha* and *tulsi* around their neck. The sadhus questioned its purpose. Maharaj

replied, "To protect you all from Rudra Deva, the god of death. Wear it till I tell you to remove it." Shri Hari gave a *shalagrama* (sacred black stone worshipped as Bhagwan Vishnu) each to the four *sadgurus*. "Worship the *shalagrama* all your life," Maharaj instructed. The rest of the sadhus understood that bhakti or devotion lay in ritually worshipping one's God. To sustain this tradition, Maharaj had thus told the *sadgurus* to offer worship. This would also inspire devotion in their disciples.

One morning, Shri Hari finished his morning puja rituals. He told his attendants to arrange his seat beneath the neem tree in Dada's *darbar*. The attendants informed that a dog had answered nature's call there, and that after cleaning the area they would place his seat and call him.

The question was why had no one cleaned the faeces till then. Everyone till then had simply noted and cursed the dog for littering the place. But when Uka Khachar arrived to touch the sacred neem tree someone warned him, "Don't go any further. A dog has spoiled the ground." In response, Uka Khachar took the faeces in a metal sheet, disposed of them and cleaned the area. Then he went to have his bath again in the River Ghela to purify himself. After returning to the *darbar*, he prostrated before the sacred neem, touched it, did darshan of the *murti* of Vasudev-Narayan and proceeded to the Akshar Ordi for Maharaj's darshan. On seeing him Shri Hari smiled gracefully, "Look, the owner of the house has arrived."

The attendants asked Maharaj, “Why do you call him the owner?” Maharaj explained, “Everyone simply avoided cleaning the dog’s faeces, whereas Uka Khachar cleaned it himself. This shows his sense of ownership. He did not wait for someone else to do it!”

Everyone understood Maharaj’s message and realized their folly.

Shri Hari asked Uka Khachar, “You have rebathed and returned, but do have your own puja? You should do it daily.”

Uka Khachar replied, “Yes Maharaj. I perform puja every day.

“How many *murtis* (images) do you have in your puja?” asked Shri Hari.

“500!”

Shri Hari was amazed by his answer. He asked further, “Do you know their names?”

“Not all, Maharaj. But I know the main ones.”

Maharaj asked him to say as many as he could remember.

Uka Khachar replied, “I daily worship the images of Muktanand Swami, Gopalanand Swami, Nityanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami and others.” Shri Hari was pleased with his practice of understanding everyone’s glory. Maharaj explained that by worshipping God alone it is known as puja, and by worshipping his devotees along with him it is called *mahapuja*.

Shri Hari celebrated the Janmashtmi celebration of 1820 in Gadhada.

Once, Shriji Maharaj was in Akshar Ordi his room. *Aparshad* (attendant) informed, “Maharaj, a businessman (Sheth) from Gadhadi has arrived, and he wishes to have your darshan.” Maharaj told him to bring him in. The Sheth came and touched Maharaj’s feet. He sat on the ground near him and began to look at him steadily. Shri Hari retorted, “Amba Sheth, you will not understand me!”

Sheth was struck with astonishment. He wondered how and when he came to know his name. He replied, “What you say is right. But I have come to know who you are through

the sound of your voice.” Shri Hari smiled and acknowledged, “What you say is true. But remember, the measure for Godliness does not lie in knowing another’s name through the power of all-knowership (*antaryami*). The reason is that a few may have this power through my grace, or acquire it through the practice of yoga. So, one should not believe in such a person to be God.”

“Maharaj, I had heard your voice in a jungle saying, ‘God has taken birth in human form. Go to the village of Gadhada, which lies next to yours. There, you will find God.’ That voice and yours is the same. Thus, I am convinced that you had summoned me to you.”

“Yes, Amba Sheth I had called you. I call those who are my devotees, wherever they be. You have been my devotee from your previous life. But because of some lapse and weakness you have been born again.”

“What weakness do I have, Maharaj?” Amba Sheth asked, eager to make amends.

Shri Hari advised him, “Believing someone to be God or a bona fide guru simply because of his power of knowing or any other powers, then that person will liberate you only up to the spiritual level he has attained himself. But such a person cannot liberate you fully and bless you with ultimate *moksha*. Since you desired for ultimate *moksha* I have called you.”

Amba Sheth appreciated the essence of Maharaj’s words. But Shri Hari elaborated further, “Our Hindu shastras have described the qualities of God’s incarnations and his supreme form. This enables devotees to understand the differences between them and realize the supreme form of God.”

Amba Sheth was ignorant and naive in these matters. He candidly replied, “Maharaj, I do not have such knowledge.” Shriji Maharaj reassured him, “That is why I reveal it myself, so that aspirants can realize the truth.”

Amba Sheth was enthused on having Maharaj’s darshan and listening to his discourses. Thereafter

he felt a burning desire to serve and earn Shri Hari's divine grace. For the next few minutes Amba Sheth was absorbed in thought.

Shri Hari asked, "What are you thinking?"

"Maharaj, I have recently completed building my new house. I wish to have it sanctified by you and offer a meal to all. I request you to come to Gadhadi tomorrow with your sadhus and *paramhansas!*" Shri Hari smiled and tried to restrain him, "Sheth, you are by nature inclined towards bhakti. I hesitate in accepting your invitation because you will spend too much on us. And remember that the times are not favourable for the present."

"But Maharaj, for us your very presence will spell good tidings. I will arrange items of your choice for lunch."

"Prepare only *dal* and *rotla*."

Amba Sheth became happy with the prospect of Maharaj's arrival to Gadhadi. He then bowed at Maharaj's feet and left.

The next day Shri Hari arrived at Gadhadi with 300 sadhus. The village was small, with only a few houses, and the presence of so many sadhus brought joy to the villagers. Amba Sheth led Maharaj to his new home. Shri Hari praised the construction and blessed Amba Sheth. The latter prayed, "Maharaj, by inviting you here I believe my entry into Akshardham has been guaranteed. This house of mine is made of mortar and stone. It will crumble one day. Your home visit today has laid the foundation of my future in Akshardham." Shri Hari was pleased at Amba Sheth's understanding and reverence for him.

"Maharaj, come and sit down here for lunch," Amba Sheth requested. A large plate full of items was placed before Maharaj. There was no *dal* and *rotla*. When Shri Hari enquired about them the host replied, "Maharaj, my wife forgot to add turmeric to the *dal* and the *rotla* have become a shade darker. And according to our tradition as Baniyas I have placed pickles, *papad*, chutney and other things in another plate." The reality was that

Amba Sheth had prepared *dudhpak* and *malpuda* instead of *dal* and *rotla*. Maharaj and all the sadhus took lunch, and pleased him. Amba Sheth was overwhelmed with joy. After lunch was over Shri Hari sat for a while. Sheth brought a vessel full of sugar crystals for Maharaj to distribute them among everyone.

"But we have all just had lunch. Where is the need to distribute sugar crystals?"

"Maharaj, people serve sugar crystals in celebration of the birth of a boy in the house. Today I have given you a new name and that is why I want you to distribute sugar crystals in the whole village."

Shri Hari averred, "People know me by the names of Swaminarayan, Sahajanand, Narayanmuni, Harikrishna Maharaj and Shriji Maharaj. What other name have you given me?"

"Maharaj, it is difficult for us villagers to say your long names, so I have given you the name of 'Nyalkaran'. It signifies the fact that you have made us happy and fulfilled. You release us from the bondage of *maya* and bless us with Akshardham. This is not an ordinary thing. So first you have a few sugar crystals and then give the rest to others."

Shri Hari personally ate a few crystals and gave the rest to everyone.

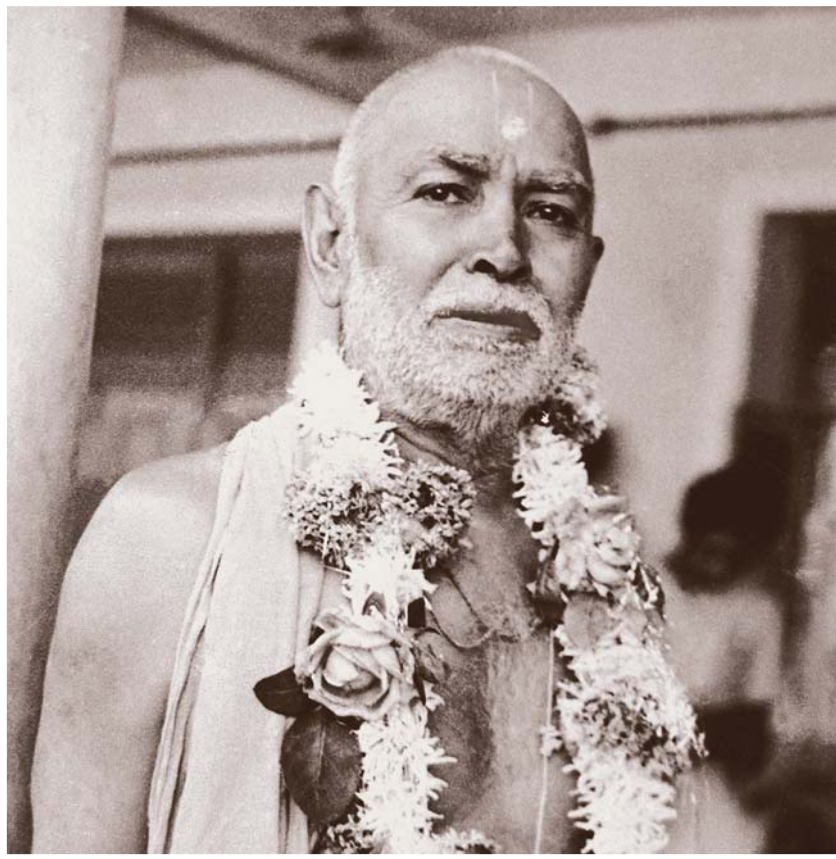
That evening Maharaj left for Gadhada. A devotee was waiting there with a letter from Damodarbai of Ahmedabad. Shri Hari called the devotee to Akshar Ordi. After prostrating to Maharaj he gave the letter to him. Shri Hari told Shukhmuni Swami to read it. ◆

(Contd. next issue)

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

# Shastriji Maharaj:

## In the Eyes of...



*From the most junior to the most veteran and experienced followers of the Sampradaya, Shastriji Maharaj touched the minds and hearts of all. He was scholarly, logical and convincing.*

*Yet he was also humble, devout and helpful.*

*On all he made a lasting impact that transformed them totally – their thoughts, talks and actions.*

*The foundation of his charisma was his firm faith in the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy and humble devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan. To commemorate Shastriji Maharaj's 145th birth anniversary on 20 January 2010, the following articles reveal how Shastriji Maharaj touched the lives of his contemporaries and describe how his saintly virtues and commitment to cause won their admiration and assistance...*

# Gordhanbhai Kothari

*Gordhanbhai Kothari (1824-1920), one of Vartal's most influential administrators, set aside his philosophical differences with Shastriji Maharaj because he saw him as an ideal sadhu and the future of the Sampradaya.*



**G**ordhanbhai Kothari was one of the most powerful men in the Vartal Sanstha. As Vartal mandir's *kothari*, or chief administrator, he held power over approximately 500 mandirs under Vartal's jurisdiction. He served as *kothari* for more than 60 years, under five different *acharyas*. Every major decision, including ones made by *acharyas*, required his approval. He was incorruptible, celibate, and so highly respected that even sadhus prostrated to him.

Shastriji Maharaj, on the other hand, was just a newly initiated sadhu. He was more than 40 years younger than Gordhanbhai, and he had no official position in the Sampradaya. Moreover, he was a leading proponent of the very same Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* that Gordhanbhai had vowed to stop.

Despite the differences, Shastriji Maharaj had Gordhanbhai's attention like no other sadhu did. Gordhanbhai promoted and protected Shastriji Maharaj, knowing that he was the Swaminarayan Sampradaya's future. An eloquent

speaker, an expert manager and brimming with saintly virtues, Shastriji Maharaj exemplified the Sampradaya's ideals.

## DISCOVERING SHASTRIJI MAHARAJ

Shastriji Maharaj was a 17-year-old *parshad*, little more than a child, when Gordhanbhai Kothari discovered him. The two were in Vadodara and Shastriji Maharaj, known as Dungar Bhakta, had come to the *kothari's asan*<sup>1</sup> to collect his belongings. Dungar Bhakta caught the *kothari's* attention, who noticed his confident stride and his eyes, which reflected a deep intelligence and enthusiasm. The *kothari* thought that he would make the perfect assistant. Dungar Bhakta, however, politely refused the prestigious offer.

As years went by, Gordhanbhai learned that Shastriji Maharaj was much more than he appeared. He was talented, but more importantly, he was so firm in observing his vows of renunciation of women and wealth that nobody could cast a finger of doubt upon him. Gordhanbhai had not seen such a pure sadhu throughout the decades he had spent as an administrator in Vartal. Shastriji Maharaj's *sadhuta* so impressed him that he proudly announced amidst crowded assemblies, "Amongst the 2000 sadhus here in Vartal, I have not yet seen anyone who has renounced women and wealth as completely as Shastri Yagnapurushdas."

## PROMOTING AND PROTECTING SWAMISHRI

Gordhanbhai's admiration for Shastriji Maharaj grew into affection for him as he realized how much he meant to the Sampradaya.

Although the two initially disagreed with regards to Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*, Gordhanbhai appointed Shastriji Maharaj as

1. A place where a person stayed in a mandir, whether as part of a room, common dormitory or office block.



Mahant of the Sarangpur Hanuman mandir. Within months Shastriji Maharaj made vast improvements and additions to the mandir by purchasing new property and constructing new buildings. This led to a staggering tenfold increase in the mandir income. Shastriji Maharaj ran the Sarangpur Mandir just as Gordhanbhai would have liked, thus earning him the *kothari's* approval and praise.

Along with promoting Shastriji Maharaj, Gordhanbhai also used his powers to protect him. Shastriji Maharaj's *sadhuta* and enlightening discourses drew countless devotees to him. Crowds gathered to hear him speak wherever he went. But his increasing popularity, as well as his insistence on spreading the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*, earned him the wrath of many fellow sadhus. Amidst this opposition and despite his own failing health, Gordhanbhai did his best to protect Shastriji Maharaj.

Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj passed away in 1899. Thereafter, Gordhanbhai called Shastriji Maharaj and said, "You know very well that I love you. Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj had great affection for you as well. And so, when someone would complain about you to him, he would say, 'He listens to the Kothari. Take your complaint there.' And when the complaint would come to me, I would say, 'He listens to the Acharya, so take your complaint there.' In this way, we would turn away each complaint that was lodged against you."

Gordhanbhai's protection continued even when Shastriji Maharaj went against him by helping the sadhus who were building a mandir in Vadhvan. Gordhanbhai vehemently opposed the new mandir because it was being built in rebellion towards the Ahmedabad Acharya and because it was to contain the Akshar-Purushottam *murtis*. When Shastriji Maharaj brought him news that the mandir had at last been inaugurated, Gordhanbhai was visibly upset. He shut his eyes and cast his withered face downward, losing himself in thought.

"I had sworn to myself to never allow the

*murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam to be consecrated so long as I lived," Gordhanbhai revealed.

Shastriji Maharaj quickly shot back, "And I had vowed that Maharaj and Swami would be consecrated specifically in your lifetime."

The Kothari became filled with rage and ordered Shastriji Maharaj to leave his office. Yet, Shastriji Maharaj's confidence, charisma and his dedication to the truth had left the Kothari in awe. Thus, not only did he call Shastriji Maharaj back to learn how he had succeeded, but he did not even have the slightest interest in punishing him.

When Shastriji Maharaj left Vartal that same year, Gordhanbhai was heartbroken. Through a stream of tears, he lamented that Vartal had lost its crown jewel.

### **ENSURING THE SAMPRADAYA'S FUTURE**

After Shastriji Maharaj had left Vartal, Gordhanbhai continued to support him because amidst the old Sampradaya's growing shadows, he saw Shastriji Maharaj as a beacon of hope.

Shastriji Maharaj had left Vartal by his own will, but opponents had later tried to excommunicate him. Gordhanbhai, however, had never signed their excommunication order. The order was worthless without his signature. Manchharambhai, a respected judge and devotee, once came to Gordhanbhai to convince him to sign the order. He began prostrating to him. About 90 years old at the time, Gordhanbhai had gone blind, and was physically weak. But when he was informed that Manchharam had come, he sternly said, "I know why you are here. No matter how many *dandvats* you do, I won't sign."

Gordhanbhai inspired others to protect Shastriji Maharaj as well, fully knowing that he would soon be no more. Hira Mukhi, a notorious bandit from Bochasan whom Shastriji Maharaj had inspired to give up his immoral ways, once met the Kothari in Vartal.

"Hirabhai, what will you do for Yagnapurushdas?" the Kothari asked.

"He is in my village, and so I will help him

build a mandir there,” Hirabhai responded.

“Do you give me your word?” Gordhanbhai eagerly asked.

“Yes, I give you my word,” Hirabhai promised.

At last, Gordhanbhai felt he could retire peacefully to Akshardham. He was confident that his work was done, and that Shastriji Maharaj would be safe. In the end, Gordhanbhai’s love for Shastriji Maharaj allowed him to see the truth of the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*.

Because he was a man of principle and character, Gordhanbhai’s love for Shastriji Maharaj

transcended their philosophical differences. Shastriji Maharaj was an ideal sadhu of the likes Gordhanbhai had never seen. Thus, Gordhanbhai saw immense potential for the Sampradaya’s future under Shastriji Maharaj’s leadership.

Gordhanbhai’s foresight turned out to be remarkably true. The young boy he once knew as Dungar Bhakta – the sadhu he once knew as Yagnapurushdas – built five majestic mandirs and established a Sanstha that has spread the Swaminarayan Sampradaya the world over. ◆

## Jaga Swami

*A stalwart of the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy, Jaga Swami endured many restrictions until Shastriji Maharaj boldly removed all barriers.*



**H**e lay in bed staring at the ceiling with a glow typical of those whose journey had come to a meaningful end. At a distance, a decaying flame cast unrecognizable shadows on the wall. There was no passion, purpose, or even pattern behind their graceful, yet fleeting dance. They simply lived and died, leaving no trace of their existence. As he watched them, an appreciative smile crept across his face. He was grateful. His life would not be a shadow for he not only had a purpose, but also had seen it come

to fruition. Hope had given meaning to his life. Shastriji Maharaj had become the embodiment of his hope by bearing the Akshar-Purushottam baton.

Jaga Bhakta’s purpose was revealed several times throughout his life. Before he was born, Gopalanand Swami foretold that Amarabhai’s son would liberate thousands from this world. Once, as a child, when Jaga Bhakta went to the river to bathe, Shriji Maharaj appeared before him and revealed, “I want you to guide others to attain *moksha*.” Jaga Bhakta also acknowledged his own purpose as spreading the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. Once, when it was decreed that no one should meet Jaga Bhakta and that he would be isolated from the rest of Junagadh Mandir, Jaga Bhakta grieved, “If I’m not allowed to discourse or meet devotees, then what is the point of living. Let Maharaj take me to *dham*.” For Jaga Bhakta, emergence of the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* and ensuring its future was his life’s purpose. Jaga Bhakta was born to carry the Akshar-Purushottam baton.

However, with this responsibility came urgency, moments of strife, contention, and fear that the *upasana* would not persist. At times, these moments left him heartbroken. Others before him unsuccessfully tried to preserve the

faith. Sadguru Balmukund Swami attempted to consecrate Akshar-Purushottam *murtis*, but failed when Gordhanbhai Kothari from Vartal thwarted his attempt. Narayandas Swami also met a similar fate when he sought permission to build a *shikharbaddha* mandir at the Akshar Deri in Gondal. The building of a mandir and consecration of Akshar-Purushottam *murtis* were the means to ensure that the faith would persist. However, this dream was beginning to fade. Jaga Bhakta was fighting a losing battle. Even conveying the Akshar-Purushottam faith through discourses was becoming an increasingly unrealistic proposition. Jaga Bhakta was falsely accused of promoting unrighteousness and having disregard for tradition because he, despite being a *parshad*, was discoursing to sadhus. Those who were envious of the reverence Jaga Bhakta was receiving, pushed through a petition forcing his isolation, and as a result, Jaga Bhakta was banned from discoursing on the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*.

Jaga Bhakta was devastated. Hope for keeping the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* alive through discourses was vanishing. How would he be able to explain Shriji Maharaj and Swami's greatness to people when they were afraid to even be seen with him? *Katha* was his life, his strand of hope, and without it he had nothing to live for. He explained later in his life that a prolonged isolation would have prevented many from attaining *moksha*.

Soon after, however, Bhagatji Maharaj was given an honourable reception at Junagadh during the Janmashtmi festival in 1897 (V.S. 1953). Acharya Maharaj and Jibhai Kothari both acknowledged Bhagatji Maharaj's greatness. Since Bhagatji Maharaj, who had up until then been criticized for spreading the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*, was now being honoured, the faith had gained new hope for survival. This event rekindled Jaga Bhakta's hope. He saw it as an opportunity to fulfil his dream and sent a message to Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj saying that he would bless him with two great sons if the Acharya consecrated Akshar-Purushottam *murtis* and supported the writing

of a text like the Satsangjivan that explained the greatness of Akshar and Purushottam. Acharya Maharaj responded saying that he knew Shriji Maharaj would fulfil Jaga Bhagat's blessings, but he was powerless to fulfil Jaga Bhakta's wish so long as Gordhanbhai, the Kothari of Vartal, and Bhimjibhai, the Kothari of Gadhada, were alive. Shastriji Maharaj later describes Jaga Bhakta's reaction as equivalent to having been shot. His hopes were hurdled with disappointments.

However, in his moments of strife, Shastriji Maharaj brought back every bit of lost hope. When Jaga Bhakta was isolated, Shastriji Maharaj travelled over one hundred kilometres from Rajkot to Junagadh to clarify the misunderstandings spread by Jaga Bhakta's opponents. Even though no one was permitted to meet Jaga Bhakta, Shastriji Maharaj fearlessly strode into his room announcing to those challenging his defiance, "The prohibition does not apply to me." His fearlessness melted to humility as he approached Jaga Bhakta. After offering his *dandvat pranams*, he comforted Jaga Bhakta, "Your isolation ends today. Don't worry, I will talk to Jibhai and clarify his misunderstanding." Jaga Bhakta was beaming; Shastriji Maharaj had given him life, since he would now be able to continue to spread the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*.

When Acharya Maharaj declined Jaga Bhakta's request to consecrate Akshar-Purushottam *murtis*, Shastriji Maharaj relit his hope. Jaga Bhakta had placed hope in the Acharya because the Acharya had faith in the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. But those who seemed capable, proved to be unable to do so. The Acharya's refusal was a staggering blow to Jaga Bhakta. He turned to Shastriji Maharaj, who was standing next to him and appealed, "Wouldn't you do it?"

Taken aback, he replied, "Do what?"

"Install the Akshar-Purushottam *murtis* in a *shikharbaddha mandir*."

His request was not baseless. Ten years before, Shastriji Maharaj had expressed his eagerness to Jaga Bhakta. In 1887 (V.S. 1943), during the

Ram Navami celebration in Vartal, when Shastriji Maharaj first met Jaga Bhakta, Vignandas Swami revealed Jaga Bhakta's greatness, "He has pleased Gunatitanand Swami and lives according to Swami's wishes." Shastriji Maharaj correctly inferred that Jaga Bhakta would support his efforts for spreading the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. In acknowledgement of their shared purpose Shastriji Maharaj prepared and presented a dish of *jadarya* ladoos. He had topped the pile of ladoos with a small replica of a mandir's *shikhar*, a symbolic gesture representing his eagerness to spread the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* by constructing mandirs.

Although Shastriji Maharaj was prepared to accept the responsibility, he expressed his reservations. He explained that even when he asked for a postcard from the *kothar* he would

have to justify his need, tolerate insults, and wait quietly until finally, a postcard was thrown at him. Constructing a *shiksharbaddha mandir* under these circumstances seemed unrealistic. However, Jaga Bhakta urged, "I will fulfil whatever you ask for this purpose, therefore, resolve to do this."

Shastriji Maharaj stood with folded hands and accepted his request. Jaga Bhakta's eyes welled with tears of fulfilment knowing that Shastriji Maharaj would carry the baton. Shastriji Maharaj had given Jaga Bhakta's life meaning by giving him hope.

During his last moments he expressed his contentment to Shastriji Maharaj when he revealed, "My work here is complete. Now, Maharaj and Swami will help you in your task." These few words explained the happiness he experienced in his last few moments – the happiness of having lived a content, meaningful life. ♦

## Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj

*Shastriji Maharaj filled a gaping hole in the Acharya's life.*



Like his grandfather, Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj, Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj knew that the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy was Maharaj's established principle. Although he enjoyed great success as an *acharya*, his success was marred by the lack of a son. With no heir

to personally groom, who would champion the truth? The answer to his problem was a small boy just down the road.

In 1880 (Samvat 1936), Viharilalji Maharaj visited Mahelav, just three kilometres from Vartal. During his stay, many devotees served the Acharya, but his eyes fell especially on the 15-year-old Dungar, whose radiant personality and dexterity in *seva* impressed him.

Dungar desired to become a sadhu and repeatedly left home for Vartal despite resistance from his father. Remembering Dungar from his visit to Mahelav, the Acharya welcomed Dungar, yet to appease his father the Acharya often had to reproach Dungar for leaving home without permission. The Acharya, however, was sure that Dungar would continue with his efforts to renounce home.

Once, the Acharya instructed him to display his skill in turning the *mala* – something he had learned from his guru, Vignananand Swami, in Surat. Dungar's divine manner captivated the

Acharya, who in turn instructed those who were already sadhus to learn to turn the *mala* the same way this youngster did. Each encounter increased the Acharya's desire to prevent Dungal from becoming a sadhu and keep him as a personal aide. Envisioning this, he even asked Dungal, "Why don't you become a *parshad* and assist me in administration?"

The Acharya made numerous attempts at convincing Dungal to join him, but Dungal's desire to become a sadhu was firm. When Dungal earned his father's consent to become a sadhu, he rushed to Vadodara where both the Acharya and Vignananand Swami were in attendance for a festival. The Acharya was happy to see him, but not wanting to deal with Dungal's father again, commanded him to return home. Realizing Vignananand Swami's wish to make Dungal a sadhu, Gordhandas Kothari eventually pressured the Acharya to allow him to stay, and to consider him as a candidate for receiving initiation. The Acharya was still holding on to his agenda for Dungal. So, he stipulated that Dungal would first have to join the fundraising efforts in the villages of Vadodara. Dungal obediently followed these instructions and was not dissuaded by the Acharya's attempts to delay his initiation. He was eventually reunited with Vignananand Swami in Surat where he commenced his Sanskrit studies. A year after Dungal had left home, Vignananand Swami requested the Acharya to give Dungal initiation. Using a technicality, Viharilalji Maharaj made a final attempt at keeping Dungal by stating that Dungal had not completed his one-year probationary period. His unwarranted refusal caused Gordhanbhai Kothari and a few senior sadhus to intervene on Vignananand Swami's behalf. Respecting Gordhanbhai's and Vignananand Swami seniority, the Acharya reluctantly agreed to initiate Dungal into the sadhu-fold and named him Sadhu Yagnapurushdas.

During his training with Vignananand Swami, Yagnapurushdas was introduced to Bhagatji

Maharaj and got his first exposure to the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. From then on, spreading this knowledge became his mission. Yagnapurushdas' sharp intellect and oratory prowess brought him great attention. Even while studying he was often called upon to defend the Sampradaya in philosophical debates with other scholars, often overwhelming opposing intellectuals.

The Acharya took notice of his achievements. It was after Yagnapurushdas had defeated the great scholar Mahidhar Shastri that the Acharya thought of nurturing Yagnapurushdas in higher studies so that he would be of immense benefit and great service to the Sampradaya. The Acharya took greater interest in his education. He confided in Bhagatji Maharaj that, "Yagnapurushdas's education is essential to the advancement of the Sampradaya." Years later, a devotee named Ullasram Pandya reminisced in a letter written to devotees in Africa that Viharilalji Maharaj "often denied permission and financial support to many sadhus who wished to study, yet never hesitated in paying for any of Yagnapurushdas's fees". And to prevent disruptions in his study of the *Shri Bhashya*, the Acharya denied devotees' requests for Yagnapurushdas to hold discourses in Nadiad. Though he had lost Dungal as an assistant, Viharilalji Maharaj realized this young sadhu's crucial role in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya as the torchbearer of knowledge and took every step possible to ensure his progress.

Unfortunately, his support was not uncontested. Jealous sadhus were spiteful of the Acharya's favour of Yagnapurushdas. Devotees from every corner of Gujarat yearned to hear Yagnapurushdas's discourses, another fact these sadhus found intolerable. Bhimji Kothari, an opponent of the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy, caused unrest by instigating complaints to the Acharya. Sadhus from Junagadh sent the Acharya a letter threatening to shut down the kitchens and *kothars* of the mandir if he did not put an end to Yagnapurushdas's education in Rajkot. To maintain order within the Sampradaya, Viharilalji

Maharaj succumbed to the pressure and suspended Yagnapurushdas's education.

Despite the uproar, Viharilalji Maharaj never lost confidence in Yagnapurushdas. In response to the Rajkot incident, he told Yagnapurushdas to accompany him to various villages around Gujarat. In Umreth, Viharilalji Maharaj sat Yagnapurushdas on the stage and encouraged him to speak freely about Maharaj's supremacy and Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. The same arrangements were made in Khambhat and Bhavnagar.

Acharya regularly fulfilled Yagnapurushdas's requests. Despite opposition, he invited Bhagatji Maharaj to Gadhada for the Jal-jhilani festival since it was the wish of Yagnapurushdas. For Bhagatji Maharaj's grand reception in Junagadh, Viharilalji Maharaj acknowledged Yagnapurushdas's request to warn adversaries against plotting to ruin the

festival. The Acharya wrote a letter, which was read out loud in the public assembly. The Acharya may have had to postpone Yagnapurushdas's studies, but under his protective eye, he allowed him to continue his mission.

Even though he did not live to see the height of Yagnapurushdas's achievements, over the twenty years they were in contact, Yagnapurushdas eased the Acharya's worries about his legacy for the Sampradaya and earned his faith. When put in perspective, perhaps not having a son of his own allowed Viharilalji Maharaj to focus his attention on nurturing Yagnapurushdas. The Acharya's adopted son had full faith in the Akshar-Purushottam doctrine. Thus, the Acharya could rest knowing that Yagnapurushdas, who had captivated him even as a young boy, would be the true heir and guardian of Maharaj's eternal wisdom. ♦

## Nirgundas Swami

*Nirgundas Swami surrendered his genius, personality and standing at the feet of Shastriji Maharaj, who he humbly served until his last breath.*



**I**t was 4:00 a.m. A peaceful darkness had engulfed Vadodara mandir. But as the pujari made his way to wake up Thakorji, he heard faint sounds coming from the mandir's

*pradakshina*. There, he was astounded to see that Shastriji Maharaj was still talking to the devotee he had been with since 4:00 p.m. the previous day. Shastriji Maharaj had stayed up all night, explaining to this devotee the glory of Akshar-Purushottam and Bhagatji Maharaj.

The devotee was Jethabhai, a bright young engineering student at Vadodara's Kalabhuvan University. In 1894, Jethabhai had met Bhagatji Maharaj and to honour Bhagatji's wish, he later became a *parshad* and served under Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj, eventually becoming the Kothari of Mumbai mandir.

Jethabhai held a lot of influence in the Sampradaya because he was an expert administrator who was highly educated. In fact, he was one of the Sampradaya's few English speakers at the time. Moreover, he had an uncompromising personality.

But Jethabhai soon learned that Shastriji

Maharaj was so much more than him in every way. Not only was Shastriji Maharaj talented, but he was an ideal sadhu and the only person who could grant him *moksha*. The two were relative equals in terms of age and status in the Sampradaya, yet Jethabhai was inspired to set aside his genius, personality and standing for Shastriji Maharaj, in whose presence he felt forever humbled.

After Bhagatji Maharaj passed away, Jethabhai accepted Shastriji Maharaj as his guru. Jethabhai often described the relationship he had developed with Shastriji Maharaj by this time. Referring to his own resolute nature, he writes, “No one had the guts to tell me to wear saffron [to become a sadhu]. But Shastriji Maharaj did. He told me that my knowledge and working skills would shine more in saffron than in white. These words touched me and I became a sadhu.”

In 1907, about six months after Shastriji Maharaj left Vartal, Jethabhai was initiated as a sadhu and given the name, Nirgundas Swami. Shastriji Maharaj had convinced him, with little more than a hint, to sacrifice personal ambition for a greater cause.

After joining Shastriji Maharaj in Bochasan, Nirgundas Swami poured his soul into spreading the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* and Shastriji Maharaj’s glory. He underwent extraordinary hardships for Satsang, travelling to villages to meet devotees, discoursing and writing letters that sometimes were over a hundred pages long. Shastriji Maharaj often credited him with almost 90 percent of our Satsang’s growth.

Despite this praise, Nirgundas Swami remained Shastriji Maharaj’s humble servant, forever seeing him as divine no matter what tests he put him through.

A passionate speaker, Nirgun Swami often did *parayans*. As is tradition, devotees gifted him with dhotis at the conclusion of his *parayans*. He would redirect these gifts to Shastriji Maharaj. Once, when Nirgundas Swami really needed new dhotis, Shastriji Maharaj refused to give him a pair and instead gave them to a sannyasi who had

wandered into the mandir.

“Why did you say no to me when you gave them to that sannyasi?” Nirgun Swami asked.

“He has no one to look out for him, where as you do,” Shastriji Maharaj explained.

The clothes had come to the mandir through Nirgundas Swami’s efforts, yet Shastriji Maharaj refused to give them to him. Nirgun Swami, however, saw no fault in Shastriji Maharaj and honoured his wish.

In a letter to Nanda Saheb, on 28 July 1949, Nirgundas Swami proclaims, “Shastriji Maharaj was never influenced by anyone and was able to control such free-willed people as me.”

In his later years, Nirgundas Swami once asked the Sarangpur Mandir *kothari* to install a urinal near his room for convenience. When Shastriji Maharaj found out, he vetoed Nirgundas Swami’s request. Nirgundas Swami tried to reason with him, but Shastriji Maharaj replied, “Whatever the case is, we are not going to make one.”

Shastriji Maharaj denied Nirgundas Swami’s request, but again, Nirgundas Swami did not say a word and instead, he simply bowed to Shastriji Maharaj’s wish.

Nirgundas Swami accepted Shastriji Maharaj’s decision. But he also enjoyed a special working relationship with Shastriji Maharaj. When decisions regarding the Sanstha were being made, they would often have differences of opinion. This did not reflect internal conflict, but, rather, their love for the Sanstha and a desire to arrive at the best possible solution. Eventually, their discussions would always end with Nirgundas Swami following Shastriji Maharaj’s wish.

In 1936, the trustees of Vartal filed a case against BAPS. After three years of court hearings the judgement went against BAPS. Sometime thereafter, Shastriji Maharaj was in Bhavnagar at the home of a devotee named Chimanbhai. There, Nirgundas Swami suggested to Shastriji Maharaj that they should file an appeal. Shastriji Maharaj told Nirgun Swami that he would consider it with Maganbhai, the Sanstha’s secretary.

“What does Magan know?” Nirgundas Swami heatedly replied. “There is no need to ask him. It is due to him that we lost the case!”

But Shastriji Maharaj calmly told him that if he did not like his decision, he was free to leave. Nirgundas Swami took up the offer. But a devotee named Jayantibhai urged him to at least take lunch before going. Nirgundas Swami complied. He then went upstairs and began the morning discourse. Anyone who had witnessed his exchange with Shastriji Maharaj, however, would have been astonished to hear his *katha*. In it, he freely described Shastriji Maharaj’s glory and greatness like never before, as if the earlier argument had never happened.

He always saw his interactions with Shastriji Maharaj as being sacred events in his life. In a letter to a devotee named Harshadbhai Dave, he once wrote, “All of these incidents are divine, and by recalling them, sins are burnt to ash. Everyone can see that there is no end to Shastriji Maharaj’s supremacy and greatness.”

Often it seemed as though Shastriji Maharaj disregarded Nirgundas Swami. In reality, he had great affection for him and an overwhelming appreciation for his contributions to the Sanstha. On 13 September 1943, he wrote in a letter to Nirgundas Swami, “When I am away from you, I think of you constantly, because you and Yogiji Maharaj rank first as leaders of the Gunatit mandal. And you look after everyone through your letters and through the physical hardships you undergo. Shriji-Swami and Bhagatji Maharaj will be very pleased upon you.”

Nirgundas Swami was just one of the many powerful and talented administrators who left Vartal to dedicate their lives to Shastriji Maharaj. He was one of the many who saw that Shastriji Maharaj was ideal in every way, and that he alone held the power to grant. What was special about Nirgundas Swami was that he held this regard for someone who was like his best friend. ♦

## Narayanswarupdasji

*Narayanswarupdasji, later known as Pramukh Swami Maharaj, saw Shastriji Maharaj as his mother, father and more.*



Shastriji Maharaj gave Swamishri this experience of being ‘all-in-one’ – a mother, father, and so much more. Shastriji Maharaj was his everything. For Swamishri, Shastriji Maharaj epitomized the famous *shloka*:

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव ।  
त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्वं मम देव देव ॥  
Tvameva mātā cha pitā tvameva  
tvameva bandhuscha sakhā tvameva ।  
Tvameva vidya dravinam tvameva  
tvameva sarvam mama deva deva ॥

God! You are my true mother, father and friend. You are my true knowledge and wealth. You alone are my everything.



### **TVAMEVA MATA...**

A mother nurtures a child and gives him the strength to face upcoming challenges.

Thousands of devotees would gather for festivals during Shastriji Maharaj's time. Many of them would stay the night, but mattresses were scarce. Swamishri, then known as Shantilal, would often come late from *seva*, when all the mattresses had been taken. When he found out, Shastriji Maharaj began keeping an extra mattress under his bed for Shantilal, waiting for him to return. When he arrived, Shastriji Maharaj would awake and give it to him. Shastriji Maharaj had begun taking care of him even before Swamishri became a sadhu.

In 1939, Shastriji Maharaj was at Amla Vali Pol in Ahmedabad. One evening, he heard that Shantilal had a fever and immediately found him upstairs. There, he sat next to him and lovingly pressed his aching body, saying that Maharaj would cure him shortly. The following morning, Shantilal's fever disappeared and Shastriji Maharaj initiated him into the *parshad*-fold, renaming him Shanti Bhagat.

Shastriji Maharaj fed Swamishri as well. Swamishri has always had a small appetite. But when he first became a sadhu, Shastriji Maharaj would insistingly feed him and set aside sweets for him whenever possible. Initially, Narayanswarupdasji would refuse, but eventually, Shastriji Maharaj's persistent love would conquer Swamishri's refusals.

### **TVAMEVA PITA...**

A father holds his child's hand and guides him.

When the Sarangpur mandir gate was being built, Shastriji Maharaj had decided to make the bridge leading to the gate twenty-four feet wide. But Narayanswarupdasji, who was Kothari of the Sarangpur Mandir, felt that for a village this small, a sixteen-foot wide bridge would suffice. So he went to Altadra to get Shastriji Maharaj's approval.

Instead of discussing it, Shastriji Maharaj set the issue aside. Later, he told Narayanswarupdasji to read the 86th chapter of the *Bhaktachintamani*, which details how even the great *devas* follow God's commands. Narayanswarupdasji understood Shastriji Maharaj's message and told his guru he would make the bridge twenty-four feet wide. Through incidents like this, Shastriji Maharaj instilled values and gave Swamishri vision.

A father encourages his son to leave mistakes in the past and move ahead.

Shastriji Maharaj was once in Sarangpur. Narayanswarupdasji, who was in his service, gave him medicine to help digestion. Afterwards, everyone realized that there had been a mix-up. The medicine he gave was a topical preparation for arthritis, and if consumed, it was poisonous. Narayanswarupdasji cried in a corner, horrified at the potential consequences. Shastriji Maharaj was discoursing in the assembly when he heard that Narayanswarupdasji was crying. He immediately stopped speaking and went over to assure him that he would be alright. Shastriji Maharaj's reassurance relieved Narayanswarupdasji while his unconditional forgiveness comforted him.

During *vicharan*, Shastriji Maharaj would teach Narayanswarupdasji how to manage the Sanstha's affairs. When he assigned him the task of keeping accounts, Narayanswarupdasji accepted the responsibility. Once, he made a small error and grew concerned, feeling he had made a terrible mistake. He came to Shastriji Maharaj and said, "I cannot handle these transactions. Please relieve me of my responsibility. This is God's money. There is no room for error." But Shastriji Maharaj consoled him and said he would learn over time. Six months later, Shastriji Maharaj made him Kothari of the Sarangpur Mandir.

Shastriji Maharaj envisioned Narayanswarupdasji's future and moulded him so that he could attain it, as a father does his son.

(contd. on p. 22)

## The Taittireeya Upanishad

# The Testimony of a Complete Education Part 2



a student lives in an ashram. For a number of years, the students learn from teachers experienced in various subjects and attain proficiency in a variety of fields. When their education is over, a convocation ceremony is held. The teacher himself ceremoniously announces the degrees of the students. This convocation ceremony is the students' final class. From that day on, these profound young men will leave the ashram and take their first steps in society for the good of all. They will

start a new life. Therefore, the teacher fondly gives them his last words of advice. These precepts are themselves the convocation ceremony. They encompass the essence of all education. Let us see what this uplifting convocation ceremony contains.

‘वेदमनूच्याचार्योऽन्तेवासिनमनुशास्ति’ – *Vedamanoocyahyāchāryo’ntevāsinamanushāsti* – ‘The teacher instructs the students who have completed their study of the Vedas’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 1/11). He instructs them, ‘सत्यं वद। धर्मं चर। स्वाध्यायान् मा प्रमदः।’ – *Satyam vada; dharmam chara; svādhyāyān mā pramadaha* – ‘Speak the truth. Abide by your dharma. Never be idle in your studies’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 1/11). ‘मातृदेवो भव। पितृदेवो भव। आचार्यदेवो भव। अतिथिदेवो भव।’ – *Matruvedo bhava, pitruvedo bhava, atithidevo bhava* – ‘Know your mother to be like a goddess (i.e. serve her and please her as if she were a goddess), know your father to be like a god, know your teacher to be like a god, know a guest to be like a god’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 1/11). ‘यान्यनवद्यानि कर्मणि। तानि सेवितव्यानि। नो इतराणि।’ – *Yānyanavadyāni karmāni, tāni sevityāni,*

### THE GLORY OF EDUCATION

Where there is education, there is progress and upliftment. Where there is no education, there is no progress; there is degradation, and society has to confront misery. That is why, since Vedic times, we have been continually inspired to study. This is evident in this Upanishad. The words of the mantra are: ‘ऋतं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। सत्यं च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। तपश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च। दमश्च स्वाध्यायप्रवचने च।’ – *Rutam cha svādhyāyapravachane cha; satyam cha svādhyāyapravachane cha; tapashcha svādhyāyapravachane cha; damashcha svādhyāyapravachane cha* (Taittireeya Upanishad: 1/17). *Svādhyāya* means the act of learning, to study; *pravachana* means to teach. Thus, the shastras command us to teach and to learn. We should ever preserve this heritage of ours.

### THE CONVOCATION SPEECH

The tradition of convocation ceremonies has been with us since Vedic times. One notices this in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter (*anuvāka*) of the Shikshāvalli. According to our Vedic educational traditions,

*no itarāni* – ‘O disciples! Only do those actions which are in accordance with the shastras and society. Do not perform actions that oppose this’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 1/11). ‘यान्यस्माकं सुचरितानि तानि त्वयोपास्यानि । नो इतराणि । ये के चास्मच्छ्रेयांसो ब्राह्मणाः । तेषां त्वयाऽऽसनेन प्रश्वसितव्यम् ।’ – ‘*Yānyasmākam sucharitāni tāni tvayopāsyāni, no itarāni, ye ke chāsmachchhreyāṅso brāhmanāhā, teshām tvayā*’ sanena prashvasitavyam’ – ‘Moreover, only adopt our good conduct, nothing else. After leaving here, if you find a teacher better than us, then respect him, pay homage to him by offering him a seat’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 1/11). In this way, having given a priceless lesson, the teacher finally says: ‘एष आदेशः । एष उपदेशः । एतदनुशासनम् । एवमुपासितव्यम् ।’ – ‘*Esha ādeshaha, esha upadeshaha, etadanushāsanam, evamupāsitavyam*’ – ‘This is our final command. This is the teaching. Go forth, live according to this’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 1/11).

On completion of the convocation speech, the Shikshāvalli ends with a further prayer for peace.

Thus, in the Shikshāvalli, we see the noble outlook on life and rich philosophical thought in our Sanatana Vedic tradition.

In this Upanishad, after the Shikshāvalli, we find the precepts of spirituality – *brahmavidyā* – in the Ānandavalli. Let us take a glimpse.

## THE ĀNANDAVALLI

### A Promise: Who Knows Brahman Attains Parabrahman

As the Ānandavalli begins, the first words herald the Akshar-Purushottam principle. The Taittiriya Upanishad commences trumpeting the words of the Shikshāvalli: ‘ॐ ब्रह्मविद् आप्नोति परम्’ – ‘*Aum Brahavid āpnoti Param*’ – ‘One who knows Brahman, i.e., Aksharbrahman, attains Param, i.e., Parabrahman’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/1). Knowing Aksharbrahman does not mean just information, but realization. We must become *brahmarup* or *aksharrup*. This is a pledge to the attainment of Parabrahman for one who becomes *brahmarup*. The same point was explained to Arjuna: ‘ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति । समः

सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥’ – ‘*Brahmabhootaha prasannātmā na shochati na kāṅkshati, samaha sarveshu bhooteshu madbhaktim labhate parām*’ (Gitā: 18/74). For this very reason, Bhagwan Swaminarayan reaffirms this point saying that only one who becomes *brahmarup* has the right to offer devotion to Paramātmā. (Vachanāmrutam Loya 7). Moreover, Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami has explained the supreme goal of life with the same principle: “We are born to accomplish two things. One, to become *aksharrup*; and two, to join with Paramātmā” (Swamini Vāto: 4/101).

Thus, in this way, by saying ‘*Brahmavid āpnoti Param*’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/1) it is as though *brahmavidyā* in its entirety has been given here concisely.

### Acquaintance with Brahman

The Upanishad does not just stop after saying that it is necessary to know Aksharbrahman in order to attain Parabrahman. So that Aksharbrahman can be known easily, it also acquaints us with the divine form of Aksharbrahman. The Upanishad says: ‘सत्यं ज्ञानम् अनन्तं ब्रह्म’ – ‘*Satyam jñānam anantam Brahma*’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/1). Aksharbrahman is *satyam*, i.e., its form and characteristics remain in existence forever, with no change whatsoever. Aksharbrahman is *jñānam*, i.e., it is the form of knowledge, ever undefiled by *māyā*. This is why the Aitareya Upanishad sings the glory of Aksharbrahman with the words ‘प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म’ ‘*Pragnānam Brahma*’ (Aitareya Upanishad: 2/1). Aksharbrahman is *anantam*. *Anta* means end, that without an end is *ananta*, i.e., indestructible. *Anta* also means boundary, *ananta* means without a boundary. Aksharbrahman pervades everything by its omniscience and is therefore *ananta*.

### Experiencing the Bliss of Parabrahman with Aksharbrahman

‘सोऽश्नुते सर्वान् कामान् सह ब्रह्मणा विपश्चितेति’ – ‘*So’shnute sarvān kāmān saha Brahmanā vipashchiteti*’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/1). The gist of this mantra is that just like Aksharbrahman

experiences the supreme bliss of Paramātmā, so does the *brahmarup* devotee who has realized that Aksharbrahman.

This Upanishad also informs us of what happens if one does not know that Aksharbrahman. ‘असन्नेव स भवति। असद् ब्रह्मेति वेद चेत्’ – ‘*Asanneva sa bhavati; asad brahmeti veda chet*’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/6). Meaning, he who believes Aksharbrahman to be non-existent, he who does not know the existence of Aksharbrahman, loses the purpose of his own existence.

In this way, the Aksharbrahman entity, necessary for gaining the *brahmajnān* required to attain Parabrahman, is described.

### Paramātmā: Blissful

The glory of Paramātmā has been sung here as blissful. ‘तस्माद्वा एतस्माद् विज्ञानमयाद्। अन्योऽन्तर आत्मा आनन्दमयः’ – ‘*Tasmādvā etasmād vijñānamayād*’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/5). In this mantra, the word *vijñānmaya* refers to the *ātmā*. Paramātmā Parabrahman, who omnisciently resides within the *ātmā* and is the *ātmā* of all *ātmās*, is full of bliss. ‘रसो वै सः’ – ‘*Raso vai saha*’ – That Paramātmā is blissful. (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/7). Not only that, with the words ‘रसं ह्येव लब्ध्वाऽऽनन्दी भवति। एष ह्येवाऽऽनन्दयति’ – ‘*Rasam hyeva labdhvā”nandee bhavati, esha hyevā”nandayati*’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/7). This blissful Paramātmā is the cause of the bliss of all. Bliss is only experienced by attaining him. He is the one who makes everyone blissful.

Can the bliss of Paramātmā, who is ever blissful and the cause of the bliss of all, be described? What is that bliss like? To what extent? This has also been contemplated on here.

### Contemplation on the Supreme Bliss

‘सैषाऽऽनन्दस्य मीमांसा भवति’ – ‘*Saishā”nandasya meemānsā bhavati*’ – ‘Let us now contemplate on the supreme bliss’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/8). With these words a meaningful attempt has then been made to measure the bliss of Paramātmā by using a scale in which a human’s bliss is counted

as ‘one bliss’.

Explaining a human’s bliss, the Upanishad says: ‘युवा स्यात् साधु युवाध्यायकः। आशिष्ठो दृढिष्ठो बलिष्ठः। तस्येयं पृथिवी सर्वा वित्तस्य पूर्णा स्यात्। स एको मानुष आनन्दः।’ – ‘*Yuvā syāt sādhu yuvādhyāyakaha; āshishtho balishthaha; tasyeyam pruthivee sarvā vittasya purnā syāt; sa eko mānusha ānandaha.*’ – ‘If one were of a young age, well-natured, intelligent enough to teach, hopeful, optimistic, not pessimistic, healthy enough to eat and digest everything, strong-bodied as well as strong-willed; not only that, if the whole Earth were filled with wealth and that wealth were all his, i.e., if he were the emperor of the entire world; all this together in one person would be a human’s one bliss.’ Thereafter, it says, ‘ते ये शतं मानुषा आनन्दाः। स एको मनुष्यगन्धर्वाणाम् आनन्दः।’ – ‘*Te ye shatam mānushā ānandāhā; sa eko manushyagandharvānām ānandaha*’ – ‘A hundred such human’s blisses are equal to a *manushyagandharva*’s one bliss’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/8). After *manushyagandharvas* come *deva-gandharvas*, then *pitrus*, then *devas* such as *Ājānaja*, then *karma-devas*, then other *devas*, then Indra, then Bruhsaspati, and Prajāpati. The ‘one bliss’ of each being is a hundred times greater than the one preceding.

Finally, it says, ‘ते ये शतं प्रजापतेरानन्दाः। स एको ब्रह्मण आनन्दः।’ – ‘*Te ye shatam Prajāpaterānandāhā, sa eko Brahmana ānandaha*’ – ‘A hundred such Prajāpati’s blisses together are Aksharbrahman’s one bliss’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/8). In reality ‘*anantam Brahma*’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/1) represents the infinite qualities and powers of Aksharbrahman; therefore, its bliss is also infinite. But to show the superiority of Paramātmā’s greatness, this has been defined as Aksharbrahman’s one bliss just to help give a comparison.

Thus, showing each entity’s bliss to be a hundred times greater than the preceding, from humans all the way to Aksharbrahman, it makes a conclusion on the bliss of Paramātmā, saying: ‘यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते। अप्राप्य मनसा सह’ – ‘*Yato vācho nivartante, aprāpya manasā saha*’ (Taittireeya Upanishad: 2/9). The bliss of Paramātmā is indescribable,

words fall short, even the mind is insufficient, that is to say that the bliss of Paramātmā is unlimited; completely unlimited; completely and totally unlimited. No one can estimate it. He continuously and effortlessly (*sahaj*) experiences this infinite (*ananta*) bliss. He is *anantānanda*, *sahajānanda*.

In this way, the second *valli* simply describes the blissful form of and the infinite divine bliss (*ānanda*) of Paramātmā and thus this *valli* of the Taittiriya Upanishad is called the 'Ānandavalli'.

The capabilities of that supremely blissful Paramātmā has also been described here.

### The Creator of All

‘सोऽकामयत। बहु स्यां प्रजायेय। स तपस्तप्तत्वा। इदं सर्वमसृजत। तत्सृष्ट्वा। तदेवानुप्राविशत्।’ – ‘*So’kāmayata; bahu syām prajāyeya; sa tapastaptvā; idam sarvamasrujata; tatsrushtvā; tadevānuprāvishat*’ – ‘That supremely blissful Paramātmā resolved to make creation. According to that resolve, he created all of this, and he permeated that creation, i.e., he dwells as the controller and supporter’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/6). Thus, the ever blissful Paramātmā is the creator, controller and supporter of the entire creation. Moreover, ‘भीषास्माद् वातः पवते। भीषादेति सूर्यः। भीषास्माद् अग्निश्चेन्द्रश्च। मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चम इति’ – ‘*Bheeshāsmād vātaha pavate; bheeshādeti sooryaha; bheeshāsmād agnishchendrashcha; mrutyurdhāvati panchama iti*’ – ‘It is due to the fear of that blissful Paramātmā that the wind blows, the sun rises, and the *devas*, such as Agni and Indra, obey commands. It is by his command that even death remains active’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/8). Having said this, the authority of Paramātmā is then established.

### The Fruit: Attainment of Blissfulness

In this way, the Ānandavalli commences with ‘*Brahmavid āpnoti Param*’ – ‘One who knows Brahman, i.e., becomes *brahmarup*, attains Parabrahman’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/1), and describes the form of Aksharbrahman so that it may be easily known. Thereafter, the form

of Paramātmā, which is attained by a devotee who becomes *brahmarup*, realizing the form of Brahman, is also described as blissful. Now, to conclude, the fruit attained by one who understands these precepts truly is then shown: ‘स य एवं वित्’ – ‘*Sa ya evam vit*’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/8), one who truly understand the aforesaid precepts himself becomes *brahmarup* and ‘आनन्दमयम् आत्मानम् उपसंक्रामति’ – ‘*Ānandamayam ātmānam upasankrāmati*’ – ‘Attains the ever blissful Paramātmā and experiences supreme bliss’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 2/8).

Thus, we have now seen the essence of the Ānandavalli in the Taittiriya Upanishad. Now let us see the essence of the third, ‘Bhrugevalli’.

### Bhrugevalli

With the words ‘अधीहि भगवः’ – ‘*Adheehi bhagava*’ – ‘Please teach me *adhyātmavidyā*’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 3/1). Bhrgu becomes his father’s, Varuna Rishi’s, disciple. Pleased, his father teaches his son and disciple *adhyātmajñān*. Bhrgu is the listener to this part of the Taittiriya Upanishad, therefore it is called the Bhrugevalli. Furthermore, his father, Varuna, is giving him this knowledge, therefore ‘सैषा भार्गवी वारुणी विद्या’ – ‘*Saishā Bhārgavee Vāruneey vidyā*’ – ‘This *vidyā* is also known as *Bhārgaveey-vidyā* and *Vāruneey-vidyā*’ (Taittiriya Upanishad: 3/1).

### The Blissful All-doer of Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution

Preceding this, in the Ānandavalli, Paramātmā was described as blissful and it informed us that the creator of the world is this same blissful Paramātmā. Here, in the Bhrugevalli, the same precept is given, but in a slightly different way. At the start of the *valli*, Varuna tells Bhrgu: ‘यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते। येन जातानि जीवन्ति। यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति। तद्विजिज्ञासस्व’ – ‘*Yato vā imāni bhootani jāyante, yena jātāni jeevanti, yatprayantyabhisānvishanti; tadvijignāsasva*’ – ‘You should know him due to whom all creatures are produced, due to whom everything is alive and

sustained, and in whom everything is engulfed at dissolution' (Taittiriya Upanishad: 3/6). Saying this, he then himself says who this is: 'आनन्दाद्ध्येव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते। आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति। आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्तीति' – *Ānandāddhyeva khalvimāni bhootani jāyante; ānandena jātāni jeevanti; ānandam prayantyaabhisavishanteeti* – 'Indeed, it is due to the ever blissful Paramātmā that everything is produced, it is due to the ever blissful Paramātmā that everything is alive and sustained, and dissolution also takes place due to this ever blissful Paramātmā.' That is, the ever blissful Paramātmā is the all-doer of creation, sustenance and dissolution (Taittiriya Upanishad: 3/6).

Thus, the main subject of the Bhṛuguvalli is the ever blissful Paramātmā.

## Conclusion

In this way, we have discussed the essence of the Taittiriya Upanishad in short. We can at least see that our Vedic educational system is not limited to mundane knowledge. *Adhyātmavidyā, brahmavidyā*, is combined into every field of education. And any education that includes *brahmavidyā* is, of course, beneficial for all, all-liberating and entirely blissful. Indeed, this Taittiriya Upanishad which is found in the Yajurveda is a wonderful example of this. ♦

(contd. from p. 17)

## TVAMEVA SARVAM MAMA DEVA DEVA...

The Shvetashvetara Upanishad (6/23) states,

यस्य देवे पराभक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।  
तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥  
*Yasyā deve parābhaktir-  
yatha deve tathā gurau ।  
Tasyaite kathitā hyarthā  
prakāshante mahātmanaha ॥*

One should have the same devotion towards one's guru as towards God; a devotee who offers such devotion has nothing left to achieve. In other words, such a devotee is complete.

Shastriji Maharaj 'completed' Narayanswarupdas in this way. For Narayanswarupdasji, Shastriji Maharaj was the manifest form of God.

When Swamishri was young, as Shantilal, he once sat in Bochasan to hear discourses from a devotee who, it was rumoured, sent people into samadhi.

When Shastriji Maharaj found out, he questioned Shantilal about why he wanted to enter samadhi at all and said, "That which you wish to see in samadhi with your eyes closed is right in front of you." Shastriji Maharaj thus informed Shantilal that he was the manifest form of God. And although he only said it once, Swamishri kept this lesson close to his heart.

Years later, Narayanswarupdasji was once in Gondal. He heard that Shastriji Maharaj had come, and so he ran up to the mandir to see his beloved guru. But instead, before his own eyes, the *murti* of Ghanshyam Maharaj came to life and lay down in a bed. However, rather than get excited, he calmly asked, "Where is Shastriji Maharaj?"

"He is downstairs," Ghanshyam Maharaj replied. Narayanswarupdasji ran downstairs, but he did not see Shastriji Maharaj there. And so he ran back up and finally saw him doing darshan. Shastriji Maharaj and Ghanshyam Maharaj then merged into one.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was once asked why he ran to find Shastriji Maharaj when Ghanshyam Maharaj had come to life before his very eyes. He replied, "I was so attached to Shastriji Maharaj that I experienced God through him."

In 2002, youths from Mumbai asked Swamishri to describe Shastriji Maharaj in just one sentence. Without a moment's hesitation, Swami replied, "Write it down. He was the form of God."

Shastriji Maharaj loved Narayanswarupdasji like a mother, moulded him like a father, and fulfilled him as only God could. And so, Shastriji Maharaj was many things to many people, but to Narayanswarupdasji, his ideal disciple, he alone was everything. ♦

## Pramukh Swami Maharaj's

# VICHARAN

1 September to 30 November 2009

Ahmedabad, Gondal, Rajkot, Bochasan

- ◆ 1-30 Sept. : Ahmedabad
- ◆ 30 Sept.-26 Oct.: Gondal
- ◆ 26-31 Oct.: Rajkot
- ◆ 31Oct.-30 Nov.: Bochasan

### SEPTEMBER: AHMEDABAD

**6; Sunday:** In the evening satsang assembly a traditional dance was performed to welcome Thakorji and Swamishri by children and teenage members of the Dehgam Satsang centre. Then senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with garlands. Thereafter a drama 'Vajesinh Darbar's Hoko' was performed by the youth members of Ahmedabad Satsang centre. Blessing the congregation, Swamishri said, "Normally, we find that people take pride in being rich, in having a high position or power. Many times people are in high spirits after returning from a trip abroad or seeing a film. They feel elated in such ordinary things. But their joy is short-lived and does not bring peace to them. All material happiness is fleeting, whereas God's divine happiness is inexhaustible and eternal." More than 18,000 devotees attended the Sunday *satsang* assembly.

**8; Shastriji Maharaj's Memorial Day:** Swamishri came for Thakorji's darshan prior to his morning puja. In the central shrine of the mandir a scene of Dada Khachar's *darbar* was displayed. The *murtis* of *paramhansas* were arranged with bowls of *dudhpak* before them. The entire ambience was related to the commemoration. When Swamishri came on stage he was welcomed by a traditional dance and bhajans on the glory of Shastriji Maharaj. A panel of large photoprints on canvas, mainly on Shastriji Maharaj, spanned across the stage in memory of Swamishri's guru.

During Swamishri's morning puja sadhus sang bhajans in praise of Shastriji Maharaj. Thereafter

senior sadhus garlanded Swamishri. Swamishri then blessed the devotees, "We heard about Shastriji Maharaj's extraordinary work in the kirtans that have been sung just now. He was a great person who came on earth and accomplished a unique mission. We have all gathered here because of him. This celebration is important because it has a divine association. Shastriji Maharaj explained the principles of *upasana*. His mission was genuine and he preached the truth. He made mandirs, shastras and sadhus for us. He consecrated the *murtis* of Akshar and Purushottam in mandirs."

More than 19,000 devotees were served *mahaprasad* after Swamishri's morning puja.

**10:** Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of pujan and *arti* for the new *murtis* of the BAPS *hari* mandir in Himatnagar.

**13:** The main programme of the evening *satsang* assembly was a debate by children and volunteers of Ahmedabad Bal Mandal in which the subject was the Vedic and eternal nature of the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. Children aged between eight to twelve recited Vedic mantras and *shlokas* from the Upanishads to show that the Akshar-Purushottam principle is based on our ancient shastras. The 45-minute programme captivated the entire assembly. In conclusion Swamishri praised the performance and blessed the assembly.

**20; Sunday:** The highlight of this evening assembly's programme was a drama based on the story of Nachiketa written by Aksharvatsal Swami. Swamishri praised the theme and drama performance by youths of Ahmedabad. In his blessings Swamishri elaborated upon the glory of God and his all-doership.

**22:** Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of puja and *arti* of the *murtis* for the new BAPS *hari* mandir in Vastral, a suburb of Ahmedabad.

### **OCTOBER: GONDAL & RAJKOT**

**2:** Swamishri got up with a shivering fever of 102.8°F. After taking medicine he completed his daily ablutions and went for Thakorji's darshan. Thereafter he performed his daily puja. In the evening he attended to the correspondence from devotees.

Swamishri's medical report showed that he had malaria. By evening the fever had subsided but Swamishri was feeling weak.

**4; Sharad Purnima Celebration:** The day marked the 75th inaugural anniversary of Gondal Mandir, the 225th birthday celebration of Gunatitanand Swami and the bicentenary year of Gunatitanand Swami's *diksha*.

The grand celebration was held in the mandir precincts where more than 29,000 devotees participated. Despite ill health Swamishri attended the celebration assembly. The programme included speeches, dance and dramas:

- ◆ Speech: Purpose of Gunatitanand Swami's birth – Pujya Shrihari Swami
  - ◆ Drama: "Gunatitanand Swami's Saintliness"
  - ◆ Speech: History of Gondal Mandir – Pujya Siddheshwar Swami
  - ◆ Drama: "Pandade Pandade Maharaj and Swami"
  - ◆ Speech: Difficulties during Gondal Mandir construction – Pujya Adarshjivan Swami
  - ◆ Drama: Shastriji Maharaj plays *dilruba*
  - ◆ Video: Yogiji Maharaj
  - ◆ Speech: Reminiscences of Yogiji Maharaj in Gondal – Pujya Ishwaracharan Swami
  - ◆ Traditional Dance: Local youths
  - ◆ Speech: Memories about Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Gondal – Pujya Viveksagar Swami
  - ◆ Blessings: Swamishri
- Swamishri said, "Shriji Maharaj took birth

on earth to liberate countless souls. He brought Gunatitanand Swami with him. The reference of Akshar is found in Vachanamrut Gadhada I-71. By offering bhakti to God along with the Gunatitanand Sadhu one's inner weaknesses and failings are dissolved in this birth instead of 100 births. This was the reason why Shastriji Maharaj had installed the *murti* of Gunatitanand Swami."

The assembly programme was interspersed with five *artis* performed by devotees, senior sadhus and Swamishri.

**13:** Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of puja and *arti* of the *murtis* for new BAPS *hari* mandirs in Meta Khambhaliya, Malod and Bavavala suburb (Jetpur).

**17; Diwali:** Akshar Mandir, Gondal, was illuminated with lights and decked with decorations for the Diwali festival.

At 6.25 p.m. Swamishri arrived on the main stage in the mandir grounds to participate in the *mahapuja* ritual and *chopda* puja. The rituals concluded at 7.40 p.m. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Akshar Deri is a great, sacred place. All our wishes are fulfilled here. Yogiji Maharaj had blessed that Maharaj would fulfil the wishes of whoever comes here for darshan and *seva*. May the New Year usher in happiness and peace in the lives of everyone. Life is full of ups and downs. Difficulties arise but they are resolved by having firm refuge in God. For this one must have faith and trust. One has trust in other things, but not in God. When in misery one questions why God allows such misery. But believing God to be the all-doer, one becomes liberated from such thoughts."

**18; Annakut Festival:** At 11.30 a.m. Swamishri went to the mandir shrines to participate in the offering of *annakut* to Thakorji. The scion of Gondal, Shri Jyoti Bapu, and 200 other guests and devotees were seated beneath the mandir dome, engrossed in *annakut* darshan. After singing five *thals* Swamishri performed Govardhan puja and *arti*. Thereafter



Swamishri went to Akshar Deri for *annakut* darshan and *arti*. In all, 17,000 devotees came for darshan.

**19; New Year's Day:** After performing his morning puja, Swamishri blessed the devotees, "Today, the New Year has dawned. Gondal is a great, sacred place. Here we have the memorial shrine to Gunatitanand Swami. This place was also very dear to Yogiji Maharaj. He had celebrated many festivals here and brought joy to all. All of you have come here from many parts of India and the world and you will depart after darshan of Akshar Deri. This will make your year happy, peaceful and full of bhakti for God." Thereafter Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior sadhus.

**29; Rajkot; Prabodhini Ekadashi:** The day marked Swamishri's 70th *diksha* anniversary and the offering of fresh vegetables (*hathdi*) to Thakorji. After darshan Swamishri performed *arti* of Thakorji.

At 6.40 p.m. Swamishri attended the festive assembly. The stage backdrop comprised of fresh vegetables, cutouts and giant photos of vegetables. More than 8,000 devotees were seated in the giant assembly hall. Viveksagar Swami addressed the assembly. Then a traditional dance was performed by teenagers. Thereafter senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with garlands. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "By celebrating festivals we enhance our devotion to God. We do everything for our body. One prepares and decorates oneself for a marriage ceremony and other occasions. But a devotee of God nourishes the single thought of what he can do for God. We celebrate such festivals to increase our devotion and earn the blessings of God."

## NOVEMBER: BOCHASAN

**2; Dev Diwali:** A grand *annakut* was offered to Thakorji in celebration of Dev Diwali. Swamishri performed *arti* in all the three mandir shrines.

At 10.00 a.m. Swamishri arrived at the celebration venue on the grounds of Akshar-Purushottam High School. The assembly theme commemorated the

Bicentenary Diksha Ceremony year of Gunatitanand Swami. The assembly programme comprised of discourses and traditional dances:

- ◆ The significance of the *diksha* festival: Pujya Satyaprakash Swami
- ◆ Gunatit *diksha* means *swarupnishtha*: Pujya Anandswarup Swami
- ◆ Gunatit *diksha* means *seva, samarpan* and *bhakti*: Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami
- ◆ Traditional Dance: Youths
- ◆ *Diksha* means initiation into *brahmabhav*: Pujya Kothari Swami
- ◆ Pramukh Swami Maharaj – the embodiment of Gunatit *diksha*: Pujya Viveksagar Swami
- ◆ Traditional Dance: Youths
- ◆ Senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with garlands
- ◆ Swamishri's blessings

Swamishri said, "Our Hindu shastras consider this day to be very sacred. It is believed that God returned to earth from Patal. His darshan brought joy to devotees. That is why lamps are lighted and crackers are ignited to celebrate one's joy.

"Whatever is offered out of devotion to God pleases him and liberates one from vices and base nature."

**22:** Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for new BAPS *hari* mandirs in Charvi (Vansda district, Navsari), Jamalpor (Navsari region) and Nimeta (Vadodara rural region).

**25; Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 89th Birth Celebration:** Swamishri's 89th birthday was celebrated on a small festive and devotional scale. (Details: *Swaminarayan Bliss*, December 2009, p.23).

**27:** Swamishri consecrated the *murtis* for the new BAPS *hari* mandirs in Amalsadi and Sarbhan with rituals of puja and *arti*. ◆

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas  
Translation: Sadhu Vivekshivandas

# LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

## A SIMPLE WAY TO GOD-REALIZATION

### 4 September 2009, Ahmedabad

A teenage devotee asked Swamishri, “How can I realize the true glory of Shriji Maharaj?”

“By studying daily (in college) you acquire a degree, similarly, by doing bhajan you will attain realization.”

Swamishri gave a simple and guaranteed means to attaining the heights of spirituality, which is otherwise difficult even after doing penance, pilgrimage, charity and meditation.

## RESPONDING WITH GREAT CARE

### 7 September 2009, Ahmedabad

Swamishri was attending to his daily correspondence. He was going through the letter of a devotee from a nondescript village near Bhavnagar. He wished to have a new well on his farm. He requested Swamishri to make a mark on the enclosed site plan. Swamishri studied the plan for five minutes and then made a mark.

In a similar letter from the town of Ahawa in Dang district a tribal devotee wished to drill a bore well on his farm. He, too, had sent a site plan of his small farm. Swamishri spent five minutes thinking about it and finally made a mark on the plan.

## MEANS TO STABILIZE ONE’S MIND

### 25 September 2009, Ahmedabad

A city official came with his son for Swamishri’s darshan and blessings. His son asked, “My mind wavers a lot.”

Swamishri blessed him and advised, “Never ever get depressed. Work hard and pray, and your mind will become stable. Turn five *malas* daily. Everything will work out fine. Do not despair.”

## DILIGENCE IN WORK

### 3 October 2009, Gondal

Swamishri read the letters of three devotees of

Jamnagar, each asking him to put a mark on their site plans for drilling bore wells. Swamishri said that the annual rainfall in Jamnagar was quite good, so why do the devotees wish to have bore wells. To satisfy his enquiry Swamishri telephoned Dharmanidhi Swami, who is in charge of Satsang activities in Jamnagar. Only then did Swamishri make a mark on their site plans.

Swamishri is meticulous in all his works and spends time to fully understand the problems and wishes of devotees.

## SWAMISHRI’S COMPASSION

### 10 October 2009, Gondal

Yogiswarup Swami, the Kothari of Rajkot mandir, informed Swamishri of a devotee’s terminal illness, “In Yogiji Maharaj’s time, Mathurbhai had done a lot of *seva* in Gondal mandir. At present he is in a hospital in Rajkot suffering from cancer. His relatives are not able to take care of him. So, we send food daily for him from the mandir and take care of him.”

Swamishri acknowledged Mathurbhai’s *seva*, “We must take care of him. He has done a lot of *seva*.”

“But Swami, he does not follow the doctor’s prescribed diet,” Yogiswarup Swami added.

“Send food only in accordance to the doctor’s advice. And, serve Mathurbhai regardless of his nature and inclinations.”

Swamishri never forgets a devotee’s service for Satsang. In times of need he helps and showers his compassion upon all.

## FOR A DEVOTEE’S HAPPINESS

### 17 October 2009, Gondal

Ramanbhai, a devotee of Rabod village, had asked in his letter to Swamishri to bless him for a new bore well he wished to have on his farm. After going through the detailed letter Swamishri made a mark and placed two sanctified flowers

on it. Then Swamishri told Dharmacharan Swami, “Take this letter and sanctify it in the Akshar Deri and also get it blessed by touching it to the *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj.”

The special care and time that Swamishri takes for his devotees reflect his care and concern for their happiness.

### **FAITH IN GOD AND GURU**

#### **3 November 2009, Bochasan**

Prior to his afternoon rest Swamishri takes his routine rounds in his room. Yogicharan Swami, who takes care of Swamishri’s health needs, explained the meaning of ‘sure-footed’. He said, “Whatever some people do in life they do it properly. They never retreat or flinch from an act because they make decisions after due thought and with foresight. For example, when Shastriji Maharaj appointed you as president of BAPS he said he has never regretted any decision he had made so far. Similarly, it is the same with you. Looking at your work and effort you have travelled vigorously for the benefit of all. You have visited so many villages but never ever have you stumbled in your stride. The same applies to the decisions you make.”

“It is all due to Yogi Bapa’s wish,” Swamishri said instantly.

The attendant added, “Only once in L.A., your toe nail turned black when a door banged into it because of a boy’s error.”

“Such things happen in a physical body,” Swamishri replied casually.

“In comparison to other 90-year-olds your health is fine,” Yogicharan Swami praised.

“Yes, it is due to God’s grace.”

“Keep yourself well for more years to come,” Narayancharan Swami prayed.

“That is not in my hands. Everything is in God’s hands,” Swamishri replied.

Swamishri’s conversation reflects his absolute devotion, faith, and focus on Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his gurus.

### **PRACTICAL APPROACH**

#### **4 November 2009, Bochasan**

Dr Harendrabhai of Dakor asked Swamishri, “A female devotee of a village has given me a substantial sum of money to look after. Since it is all she has she believes that the money would come to use in her dire times. And after she dies she wants it to be donated to the Sanstha. But I explained to her to donate it now to Thakorji in the presence of Swamishri, and whenever she needed money her sons would send it to her. She agreed and I have brought the money to donate it on her behalf.” Dr Harendrabhai placed the sum before Thakorji.

Swamishri stopped him and advised, “There is no need to give it now. Even though her sons live abroad she may not, in times of emergency, be able to get the money immediately. And furthermore is there any guarantee that she will get help from them? What will happen to her when she needs it and doesn’t have any? Take the money back, and according to her wish, donate it after she passes way.”

Swamishri’s practical and caring approach is exemplary.

### **EMPHASIS ON LISTENING TO KATHA**

#### **7 November 2009, Bochasan**

At all BAPS students hostels in India the attendance for morning and evening *arti* and *katha* (discourse) is compulsory for all students. A few sadhus looking after the administration of the Vidyanagar hostel (APC) gave a report to Swamishri. “Those who fail to attend the assemblies have to pay a small fine. But there are still a few who do not attend because they are lazy.”

Swamishri advised, “You must be more diligent. Those who remain asleep should be woken up by some other boys, or if need be you should go yourself. Some students do not attend because they are lazy and they do not like *katha*.”

Someone explained, “Students are generally habituated to reading late at night, so it is difficult to wake up early.”

Swamishri emphasized again, “You should not be just satisfied when they pay their fines. If they

do not cultivate the habit of listening to *katha* they will lapse in life. You must explain to them that the purpose of the fine is not to collect money, but to make them sincere in attending the assembly. Are they not punctual at school and college! In that case they do not think it would be alright to pay a fine. You must habituate them into attending *katha*. Along with education it is important that they imbibe values in life.”

A sadhu who supervises the hostel praised the students, “Many observe fasts to please you.”

Swamishri reasserted, “That’s fine, but it is more important to attend the *katha* punctually. They should be nourished with the sentiment of regularly attending the discourses and *arti*. Then slowly they will become habituated and read and do *katha* wherever they go.”

Another sadhu who oversees the students informed, “We also see to it that the students memorise the *arti* and *ashtaks*.”

“That’s okay, but basically it is important to make them attend the *katha* regularly. Only then will they be able to remain steadfast and strong in other aspects of life.”

Swamishri’s inclination for students to become habituated to listening to *katha* for consolidating personal spiritual faith and understanding is apparent from his dialogue.

## **FAITH IN GOD**

### **19 November 2009, Bochasan**

In a telephone conversation with Swamishri a devotee asked for guidance, “My relative’s daughter likes a boy and wishes to marry him. The boy too has agreed. But the astrologer has forecasted that their marriage will break up after three months. What should we do?”

Swamishri blessed the devotee, “Since you have firm faith in Shriji Maharaj chant the Janmangal *paath* five times every day. Any obstacle will be resolved. Everything will work out well. Chant Swaminarayan *namaha*, Sahajanandaya *namaha*. Have faith and trust and proceed ahead with their engagement and marriage.”

Swamishri liberates devotees from obstacles by virtue of their firm faith in and prayers to God.

## **FIVE PLEDGES**

### **21 November 2009, Bochasan**

A devotee from Los Angeles asked Swamishri through a fax, “I do my puja daily, but to make me feel that you are with me give me five pledges to follow. I will observe them unfailingly.”

Swamishri replied, “1. Read the Vachanamrut daily, 2. Read five Swamini Vatos, 3. Never smoke or drink, 4. Do *ghar sabha*, and if you are alone read *satsang* books and 5. Read the biographies (of Maharaj and guru *parampara*).”

## **KEY TO RESOLVING WORLDLY DESIRES**

### **23 November 2009, Bochasan**

An aspirant requested Swamishri, “Bless me that my inner faults and nature get dissolved.” Swamishri replied briefly, “Read the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato daily.”

## **FAITH AND BHAJAN**

### **23 November 2009, Bochasan**

Swamishri was reading a fax from a devotee in America: Since the last eight years he has been going through severe trials at work, business and in other areas of life. He is facing a financial crisis. Physically and mentally he is going through one torturous problem after another. Swamishri was moved and said, “He is going through a severe test!” He blessed him, “It has pained me to know that you are facing problems in your business and personal life. You and your entire family have firm faith, understanding and *satsang*. Devotees of the past had unshaking refuge in God, yet they had to go through obstacles and suffering. So, be patient and do bhajan. Shriji Maharaj is the all-doer, and whatever he does is for your good. Maharaj will do good for you.”

Swamishri sympathized with him and consolidated his patience and spiritual faith. ◆

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas  
Translation: Sadhu Vivekivandas

## 11TH ANNUAL BLOOD DONATION DRIVE BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Sydney, Australia

5 December 2009



**B**APS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Sydney, organized its 11th annual blood donation drive with the help of the Australian Red Cross Society (ARCS) on 5 December 2009.

Two giant Red Cross donor mobiles were stationed outside the BAPS Mandir in Parramatta

from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Many donors who had pre-registered had been allocated a specific time during the day to come to donate their blood.

Hon. Tanya Gadiel MP and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly inaugurated the drive. In her address she emphasized the importance of donating blood, describing it as a selfless contribution to society. She congratulated BAPS on organizing the blood donation drive and for their overall contribution to the local Parramatta community.

Over 100 people donated blood. BAPS thanks everyone for their generous support. ♦

## SATSANG TOUR OF UK, EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST BY DR SWAMI

29 July to 20 November 2009



*Dr Swami receives the Queen's Award on behalf of BAPS from Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant*

**B**etween 29 July and 20 October Pujya Dr Swami visited BAPS centres in the UK and Europe to strengthen *satsang* among devotees of all ages.

In the UK he inspired all through his discourses in the regular daily assemblies and *shibirs* for



*Dr Swami inaugurates the Kishore-Kishori Shibir at Warwick University*

children, youths and seniors.

In Wellingborough, he inaugurated the new BAPS Mandir by installing the new *murtis* sanctified by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Also, on 3 October 2009, he presided over the special assembly in which Her Majesty's Lord-

Lieutenant for Greater London, Sir David Brewer, presented the prestigious Queen's Award to the UK BAPS Bal Mandal for its exemplary children's activities.

Among the centres Dr Swami visited were Leicester, Ashton, Preston, Birmingham, Nottingham, Oldham, Coventry and Leeds. He also went to Lisbon (Portugal) and Paris (France).

After celebrating Diwali and Annakut at London Mandir he departed for the Middle East.

From 21 October to 20 November 2009, Pujya doctor Swami and sadhus visited the UAE, Oman,

Bahrain and Kuwait, where they provided *satsang* inspiration and guidance to many devotees and well-wishers.

In all they visited 11 centres, conducting 56 *satsang* and public assemblies as well as two *shibirs*. They also sanctified 250 homes.

The highlights of the visit included the inauguration of the new Satsang Bhavan in Sharjah and a special assembly in Bahrain for 450 invited guests, among whom were 60 leading Arab dignitaries.

This month-long visit helped strengthen *satsang* among devotees and established much goodwill. ◆

## SATSANG VICHARAN IN AFRICA BY MAHANT SWAMI AND SADHUS

24 July to 27 November 2009



*Evening satsang assembly, Uganda*



*Annakut, Lenasia, South Africa*

**F**rom 24 July to 27 November 2009 Mahant Swami and a team of eight sadhus, as well as the resident sadhus in Nairobi visited a total of 56 BAPS centres in 10 African countries: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Sudan, Burundi and Rwanda.

During the *vicharan*, Mahant Swami discoursed every morning on the *Yogi Gita* and in the evening *satsang* assembly.

He inaugurated two new mandirs, in Kakamega and Kiguli, and consecrated the *abhishek murti* of Shri Nilkanth Varni Maharaj in two mandirs – Nairobi and Kisumu. ◆

The sadhus discoursed on the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy, spiritual endeavours, family unity, Hindu Dharma and other topics.

*Shibirs* and special spiritual camps were held for children, youths and seniors. The sadhus also presented kirtan *aradhana* programmes in many centres and performed over 3,000 *padhramanis*.

Through this *vicharan* personal and family *satsang* was strengthened in all. ◆



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**SATSANG VICHARAN IN AFRICA  
BY PUJYA MAHANT SWAMI & SADHUS  
July to November 2009**

With the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Mahant Swami led a team of sadhus to ten countries in Africa for a four-month Satsang Tour. They strengthened the *satsang* among devotees through daily *satsang* assemblies, *shibirs*, public assemblies, kirtan *aradhanas* and home visits. New mandirs were also inaugurated and many festivals celebrated.

1. Annakut Celebration, Nairobi
2. Satsang Shibir, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.



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3. **Diwali at 10 Downing Street:** During the Annakut celebration at 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister of UK, Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown, is presented with a model of the BAPS Mandir in London by BAPS trustees.
4. **President of Mauritius at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi:** President of Mauritius, Shri Anerood Jugnauth, visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi on 29 November 2009. He commented, "The values he (Bhagwan Swaminarayan) preached and taught are being followed by millions of people and have changed and improved lives. With God's blessings may this continue forever."



Above: Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Bochasan.

Below: Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj built and consecrated the first BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Bochasan in 1907.

