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SWAMINARAYAN BLISS



Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj

Inspiring Childhood Incidents



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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF BAPS SWAMINARAYAN MANDIRS IN UGANDA

The grand golden jubilee celebrations of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandirs in Uganda were recently held in Kampala from 9 to 14 December 2010. In 1960, Yogiji Maharaj had consecrated BAPS mandirs in Kampala (1-2), Tororo (3) and Jinja (4). With his divine and affectionate approach, Yogiji Maharaj strengthened and spread the Satsang. Everywhere he went devotees honoured him in a grand procession through their cities, as shown in this photo of the procession in Jinja (5). The sadhus accompanying Yogiji Maharaj during the 1960 Satsang Tour of East Africa (6) were, to his left, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Balmukund Swami; to his right, Santvallabh Swami and Vinu Bhagat (Mahant Swami).



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FIRST WORD

Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj (1865-1951), the third spiritual successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, was innately born with a slew of talents, intelligence, virtues and spiritual lustre. All these attributes became evident as he grew up, from childhood to the years as a sadhu and the leader of the BAPS. He was born to accomplish the formidable mission of enshrining the principle of Akshar-Purushottam in the central shrine of mandirs. In all, he built and consecrated five towering mandirs in Gujarat.

The *murti-pratishtha* of the first BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir was held in Bochasan, Gujarat, on 5 June 1907. In the morning, erudite Brahmins recited the traditional Vedic verses, guiding Shastriji Maharaj and others through the *yagna* rituals. Then the auspicious time for the *murti-pratishtha* arrived. The life-sized metallic *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan was borne from the *yagna* hall and installed in the central mandir shrine. Then, the sadhus and devotees tried to place the *murti* of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami. But, even though it was lighter, the *murti* would not budge. More help was called for, but the *murti* could not be lifted. They tried again and again, but without success. Finally, they approached Swamishri and apprised him of the situation. He immediately got up and accompanied the devotees to the *murti*. Swamishri prayed to the *murti* of Gunatitanand Swami, "O Swami! We have left Vartal for you, and tolerated much abuse, hardship and danger. So please shower your grace on us by taking your rightful place."

(contd. on p. 13)

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A Senior Sadhu Passes Away

In the last issue, Shri Hari had sent Dada Khachar away from Gadhada because of the looming war instigated by Jiva Khachar. The latter's attempt to confiscate Dada Khachar's land was foiled. Shri Hari rebuked Jiva Khachar...

"I AM DADA'S PROTECTOR"

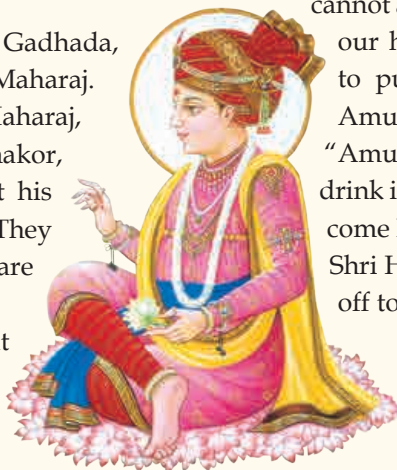
No sooner had Dada arrived in Gadhada, Jiva Khachar came hurriedly to Maharaj. To save his face he entreated, "Maharaj, save me, save me! Vajesinh Thakor, the king of Bhavnagar, has sent his battalion to attack Gadhada. They fought outside my house and are still waiting there."

Shri Hari knew fully well that he was lying. He told Naja Jogiya to bring his mare. Maharaj went to Jiva Khachar's *darbar* and saw the battalion of soldiers from Bhavnagar. Shri Hari forthrightly told Jiva Khachar, "Bapu, it seems that you have hosted the battalion, and yet you say that the battle took place outside your house!"

Amulaba, the daughter of Jiva Khachar, confessed and regretted, "Maharaj forgive me. The ruckus was Jiva Bapu's work. His mind is perverse and he schemes obsessively to take over Dada's property."

Jiva Khachar stood like a rock, unaffected by Shri Hari's rebuke and his daughter's confession. He glanced at Maharaj from the corner of his eyes. Maharaj raised his eyebrows and reprimanded him sweetly, "Bapu, how can you have your way before God when the likes of Hiranyakashipu, Ravan, Kansa, Shishupal and the Kauravs failed? I am Dada's protector. No one can harm him. Tell me, will you ever succeed in your conspiracies?" Shri Hari mounted his Manki.

Amulaba offered, "Maharaj, have a glass of buttermilk. You have come to our door, and I



cannot allow you to go without accepting our hospitality." Shri Hari was about to pull the reins of Manki. He told Amulaba in no uncertain words, "Amula, come to Dada's house. I shall drink it there. The only reason why I had come here was to see Jiva Bapu's ploy." Shri Hari pulled the reins and galloped off to Dada Khachar's *darbar*.

A few days later, Maharaj left Gadharpur with Dada Khachar and others, and headed off towards Jhinjavadar. Mr Bolton (a British official) was at Jhinjavadar. Maharaj told Dada to meet Mr Bolton and then join him at Kariyani.

Mr Bolton had heard about the attack on Dada's *darbar*. He asked Dada, "Why were you attacked? Was it because of enmity towards you or was it to settle a score?"

Dada Khachar candidly replied, "I have no debts left to pay. Neither is there any bad blood from my side. I believe it is all because of jealousy on the part of Jiva Bapu."

Mr Bolton was impressed by Dada Khachar's honesty and believed what he said. He reassured him, "I shall thoroughly investigate this case and let you know."

Dada Khachar proceeded to Kariyani and informed Shri Hari about his conversation with Mr Bolton.

RAMDAS SWAMI DECIDES TO GO TO AKSHARDHAM

Shri Hari blessed Muktanand Swami and told

him to go on a satsang tour (*vicharan*). Muktanand Swami went to Ramdas Swami (also Bhai Ramdas), who was resting in Gadhada. He was a senior sadhu initiated by Ramanand Swami. Muktanand Swami prostrated before him and said, "At Maharaj's behest I'm going for *vicharan*."

Ramdas Swami declared, "Swami, with my present state of ill health I believe I'll not live for long. We may not meet again, so I bid you my final Jai Swaminarayan."

Muktanand Swami's eyes became clouded with tears. He prayed, "Swami, do not think of it. Because of your presence Shriji Maharaj feels at ease. Furthermore, your experienced talks and advice pleases him and as a result there is peace in Satsang."

"For matters of life and death, it all lies in the hands of Maharaj," Ramdas Swami expressed.

Muktanand Swami became poignant because he saw Ramdas Swami did not wish to live any more. Finally, Ramdas Swami blessed him, "Now the responsibility (as senior) rests upon you. Be strong and patient."

On Jeth *sud* 5, Ramdas Swami became stricken with a severe fever. The next day he became still and seemingly lifeless. At the time Shri Hari was in Kariyani. Naja Jogiya was sent to call Maharaj back to Gadhada. On seeing Naja Shri Hari was surprised and asked, "What makes you come here so unexpectedly?"

"Maharaj, Ramdas Swami is in critical condition. Two days back he had fever, and yesterday he suddenly became silent. I've been sent to call you back to Gadhada.

"We will leave early next morning." The next day, Maharaj reached Gadhada at 6.00 a.m. He went straight to Ramdas Swami. Swami was deeply absorbed within himself. When Shri Hari spoke to him, he opened his eyes. On seeing Maharaj, Ramdas Swami smiled with joy and declared, "Maharaj, my time has come. I was yearning for your darshan. I also wish to see all the sadhus and devotees." Shri Hari called everyone. Then he felt Swami's pulse. It was weak; and sometimes his

heart missed a few beats. Shri Hari saw that Swami would not live much longer.

I WANT TO WORSHIP MAHARAJ

After seeing the sadhus and devotees, Ramdas Swami said, "Bring the waters of Unmat Ganga (Ghela River). I'd like to do puja of Shri Hari. Bring some sandalwood paste (*chandan*) and a *pitambar* (a silken red or yellow cloth)."

Ramdas Swami washed Maharaj's feet with the holy water and prayed to him to wear the *pitambar*. Then he worshipped Maharaj by smearing *chandan* on his forehead and offered a garland of flowers. Finally, Ramdas Swami placed fruits before Shri Hari and performed his *arti*. After this he was exhausted. Maharaj told him to sleep and rest.

"Maharaj, I want to absorb your *murti* within my heart and share a few final words of advice with the sadhus and devotees."

SHRI HARI PERMITTED HIM TO SPEAK

Ramdas Swami spoke to a special gathering, "O sadhus and devotees, listen to what I have to say. Many times I have been questioned by sadhus, 'Is Maharaj Krishna himself?' But I had never given a reply, simply because if I had, and if the listeners did not believe it, then the sin of rejection would befall upon them. But now, since I'm on the brink of death, hear me and take my words to heart. If you fail to do so, you will be at great loss despite being in Satsang." With these words Ramdas Swami became breathless and weak.

Maharaj advised, "Swami, you are tired. Rest for now, and the sadhus will do bhajan."

"Maharaj, if they realize your divine form only then will they harvest the true benefit of bhajan. Otherwise, they will attain spiritual elevation according to their own perceptions. So allow me to say what I want today." And with these words Ramdas Swami revealed, "Hear me sadhus! Shriji Maharaj appears to us like another human being, but he is the supreme God, the incarnation of all incarnations. He is the cause of even Ram

and Krishna. He is the controller of *kala* (time) and *maya*. He possesses divine powers, and he is the ocean of all the liberating virtues. When you understand Maharaj to be supreme, only then will you be blessed with ultimate liberation. I believe there is no one above him. If I have uttered the slightest untruth, I swear upon the 500 *paramhansas* and incur upon myself the sins of destroying hundreds of universes.”¹

RAMDAS SWAMI PASSES AWAY

After his brief song in praise of Maharaj Ramdas Swami was tired. On catching his breath back, he looked at Shri Hari and entreated, “O Lord, place your holy feet on my chest and bless me.”

Maharaj replied, “You are the best of all sadhus and also a brother-disciple. I cannot place my feet on your chest.”

Ramdas Swami touched Maharaj’s feet and praised, “You are the Guru of all gurus. Please place your holy feet like you do on other sadhus and devotees.”

Shri Hari fulfilled Ramdas’ final wish, which greatly calmed his heart. Maharaj then drank a little sweet water and gave it to Ramdas Swami. Then Shri Hari told the sadhus to sing bhajans.

On 22 June 1820 (Jethsud 11, A.S. 1876) Ramdas Swami passed away and his soul ascended to Akshardham. Shri Hari performed the pre-crematory rituals of bathing the dead body with water and applying *chandan*. He also performed *arti* and then took the body on a palanquin for the crematory rites. Thereafter Maharaj bathed in River Ghela, returned to Dada’s *darbar* and eulogized upon Ramdas Swami’s service and devotion.

A LIFELESS SATSANG CANNOT GIVE MOKSHA

A month had passed since Muktanand Swami was in *vicharan*. In Etola he heard of Ramdas Swami’s demise. He sadly told the sadhus of his

group, “Ramdas Swami was a pillar of Satsang. He strictly observed the disciplines of Satsang. One who abides by the moral rules prescribed by Shriji Maharaj, be he a sadhu or devotee, is a pillar of Satsang. And when these disciplines are broken, Satsang becomes lifeless and powerless to bestow *moksha*.”

Muktanand Swami travelled to Atladra. The village devotees, Jijibhai, Vitthalbhai and others, were pleased to see him. But Muktanand Swami did not wish to stay the night there. He was in a hurry to reach Gadhada. After his meal, he left and went to Sankarda and Umreth. From there he proceeded to Vartal and reached Gadhada after five days.

On hearing that Muktanand Swami (Mukta Muni) had arrived, Shri Hari came out of his residence, Akshar Ordi. Swami started prostrating to Maharaj. Shri Hari embraced him and garlanded him. Muktanand Swami expressed his sympathies for Ramdas Swami and praised his pure faith.

Shriji Maharaj asked Muktanand Swami about his *vicharan* and about Satsang in Surat. Swami gave a detailed account and described that Munibawa, the guru of Ardeshar Kotwal (the head administrator of Surat), was opposed to Satsang. Thus Ardeshar cannot follow Satsang in spite of his inclination for it.

Maharaj suggested, “I will tell Brahmanand Swami (Brahmamuni) to go to Surat. With his bardic (*charani*) knowledge, he will be able to transform him. Munibawa is internally inclined towards spirituality, but because of others’ negative words he gets entrapped and fails to discriminate truth from untruth. But Brahmamuni will explain to him.”

Muktanand Swami was pleased and added, “Maharaj, the obstacle will be removed.”

“Yes we want to resolve it,” Shri Hari replied with a smile.

◆
(Contd. in next issue)
From Gujarati text of
Bhagwan Swaminarayan
by H.T. Dave

1. Durgapur Mahatmya.Ch.78.

SHASTRIJI MAHARAJ

VIRTUOUS FROM CHILDHOOD



As a part of his recreation Dungal Bhagat built mandirs of sand and performed arti

From a young age, Shastriji Maharaj had a positive and profound impact on all who came into his contact. His childhood revealed his friendly, but firm, focused and decisive approach to life. In any situation his clarity of thought distinguished him from others. Yet, the most important qualities he possessed were his absolute faith in and devotion to God. Even while playing with his young friends, he would build small mandirs of sand, place murtis in them and devoutly offer arti and thal.

His every activity echoed his subservience to and admiration for God. It was this combination of devotion and decisiveness that enabled him, in later years, to boldly, yet humbly, tolerate all hardships and overcome all obstacles to promote the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. On the auspicious occasion of Shastriji Maharaj's 146th birth anniversary on 8 February 2011, we pay tribute to his many virtues in the following articles...



Dungar Bhagat fearlessly goes to the family farm in the middle of the night

Nightfall spread its thick cloak over Mahelav as the midnight hour struck. Dungar Bhakta awoke from his slumber to find his father absent. Guessing he may have gone to tend to the fields, young Dungar quietly climbed out of bed and got ready to help his father. With a cane in hand and the Swaminarayan mantra on his lips, Dungar made his way to the fields. The path was a familiar one during the day, but at the nightly hour it morphed into a path of uncertainty. The blue moonlight played shadow puppets with the trees, creating illusions that would wet the brow of any brave soul. The rustling and shuffling of nocturnal creatures ambling through the woods was mind-jarring, but not for young Dungar Bhakta.

Fear. It is a feeling that all human beings experience at some point in their lives. Be it present as a phobia, stage fright, anxiety, or any other form, the end result of fear is a disturbance of the mind that puts you in a state of painful uneasiness. Fear can be as temporary as a simple 'Boo!' or it can be as indefinite as a recurring nightmare. It grips you and will manipulate your existence according to its presence. But why do

we get scared? Why do we fear things? What do we have to be scared of? Ultimately, all of our fears (including that of death) root from a fear of the unknown. When we don't know what will happen next, that uncertainty shakes the very ground we stand on. It is not being able to see through the opacity of uncertainty that causes us to be afraid. Dungar Bhakta walked through the eerie moonlit path completely unfazed, all the way to his father's field. Why wasn't Dungar scared? The darkness that possessed the woods and created an illusion of fear was unable to do anything to Dungar Bhakta...Why?

Dungar Bhakta's father, Dhoribhai, asked his son this very question after seeing him arrive alone on such a dark night, "Weren't you afraid of coming here alone at such a late hour?"

Dungar's reply revealed the secret behind his fearlessness, "Maharaj protects those who chant 'Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan' and if I had bumped into a ghost I would frighten him away with this stick!"

So that is it. That is the key. Faith. Faith in our Swaminarayan mantra, the chanting of which symbolizes our trust that God protects those who seek shelter under his wings. It is a mantra that infuses power, strength and bravery. The mantra upon chanting shines so much light into our life that the darkness of fear and uncertainty dissolves away. This may seem a little far-fetched, superstitious even – but this is not a 'touch-wood' remedy, nor is it a 'rabbit's foot' keepsake. It is real.

We know it is real because the fearlessness Dungar Bhakta showed at a young age later became his biggest strength in his fight against the suppression of the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. This time there was no unknown, the consequences were imminent. Yagnapurushdas (Dungar Bhakta) knew death stalked him in Vartal as he preached that God is *pragat* on earth today. He knew hardships and misery awaited his company as he left the gates of Vartal for

good. Yet he was calm; he wasn't afraid. When he left Vartal, he remained immune to the fear of the unknown because, "Maharaj protects those who chant 'Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan'"

Yagnapurushdas knew that because he was at God's refuge he would be protected when

building the mandirs in Bochasan, Sarangpur, Gondal, Atladara and finally Gadhada. When times got tough, Shastriji Maharaj drew power from the Swaminarayan mantra – a declaration of refuge at the feet of the one and only supreme being. ♦

INNATE DETERMINATION

Sadhu Viveknishtadas



Ravjibhai tries to persuade Dungar Bhagat to stay in his house

What differentiates an extraordinary man from an ordinary one?

They share the same earth, breathe the same air, drink the same water, eat the same food. They both have two eyes, two ears, two hands, two legs, one brain. For both, a day is 24 hours, a week is 7 days, and a year is 12 months.

What differentiates them, however, is the extraordinary man's clearly defined purpose in life.

Shastriji Maharaj had remarkable clarity about his purpose in life. In Sarangpur, when he was eighty years old, Shastriji Maharaj said: "As a young child, I had gone to Akshardham. But Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami and other *muktas* told me 'You have been sent on earth specifically to spread the pure *upasana* and to liberate many souls. We want to accomplish many tasks through you, so go back.'"

Shastriji Maharaj directed all of his effort into getting what he would need to succeed in his mission.

His aim was "I should be number one in studies and in *sadhuta*."

Dungar studied *sampradayik* and other shastras, like the Vachanamrut, Bhaktachintamani, Dhiraj Akhyani, Nishkulanand Kavya, and the fifth and tenth chapters from the Shrimad Bhagvat. He learned from sadhus who frequently came to Mahelav. When there weren't any sadhus at the mandir, Dungar would do the *katha*.

Whenever he would go to Vartal on the day of Purnima, he would collect the discarded handwritten pages of shastras and study them with keen interest.

Seemingly born to learn, he mastered the advanced Sanskrit grammar text, *Sarasvat*, in four months. He once said, "What others would have needed 50 years to study, I had studied in just three years and that too with numerous breaks in between." This feat was a testament to his resistance to temptation.

Ravjibhai Patel, a rich merchant resident in Mahelav, was conscious of the one scarcity in his life. He had no children, and thus, could not resist watching the small, brave and dashing Dungar going to and coming back from school.

He once proposed, "Dungar! Will you stay with me? I will send you to study at Petlad's English medium school and make you a reputed officer in the British administrative services." Dungar waved away the offer and said "After studying so much, if one has to remain under someone else's dominion, what is the use of such

education? I want to become a sadhu, a scholar and teach *brahmavidya* to many."

SCHOLARLINESS

He was so clear in his understanding that he even understood what constitutes a true education – *Sā vidyā yā vimuktaye* – knowledge is that which liberates. He chose *brahmavidya* – the ultimate knowledge.

Once Vignananand Swami asked Dungar, "Do you want to study music or the shastras?"

Dungar quickly replied, "Shastras."

Of course, shastras were part and parcel of his life. In childhood, he did Mahabharat *katha* for one month. By hearing him many were drawn to him.

Even his scholarship had purpose; it was not to earn fame or adulation. He used his scholarship as a tool to explain the true meanings of the shastras and strengthen the understanding and practice of *upasana* in everyone who came in contact with him.

While studying under Jivanram Shastri in Rajkot, Yagnapurushdasji explained to him the *Ramanuja Bhashya* on the Brahmasutras and awakened in him interest for the Vishishtadvaita

philosophy.

While studying under Vedanti Rangacharya in Vadodara, he explained the *sakar* form of Bhagwan with references from the Shruti and Smruti shastras.

On the very first glimpse of Shastriji Maharaj, a Vaishnav devotee, Champaklal Banker, decided that he would believe Swamiji as the true Satpurush if he would explain Madhvacharya's philosophy. Swamiji fulfilled his wish and also explained that Ramanuja's philosophy is widely renowned.

During the Ishnav case, Swamiji told Maganbhai to do research and make a list of the principles of *upasana*, as stated in the scriptures. Confused, Maganbhai went to sleep early that day. At midnight, Swamiji woke him up and dictated *upasana* principles from the Upanishads, the Vachanamrut, the Satsangijivan and other scriptures for seven days, while divine light emanated from him.

Shastriji Maharaj saw that the path to promoting the Akshar-Purushttam *upasana* would require a thorough education. The benefits of his hard work can be seen in the Sanstha today. ♦

WORLDLY DELUSION SNIPPED

Sadhu Shantyogidas



Dungar Bhakta convinces his father of the true nature of soul and body and receives permission to renounce

Under no circumstances would Dhoribhai have allowed his son to forsake materialistic life and accept renunciation. After all, the passing away of Dungar Bhakta's mother, Hetba, a few years back had further constricted Dhoribhai's love for his youngest son. That tight emotional bond directed from the father could not be unravelled. He was just being, what one may acceptably call, a loving, maybe overprotective, father. Why else would he have disrupted Dungar Bhakta's repeated attempts at pursuing this path of life?

Dungar Bhakta, eternally endowed with all spiritual traits, deemed it appropriate to allow his self-suppressed *vairagya* to finally exhibit itself. With the sharpness of his intrinsic wisdom, Dungar Bhakta was prepared to sever Dhoribhai's

knot of worldly delusion. It all happened on the final oxen-cart ride home.

Addressing his father while standing tall on the moving cart, Dungar Bhakta imparted spiritual wisdom that was completely natural to him. "To believe you are my father and I am your son is a state of complete ignorance," he declared in his opening statement. Dungar Bhakta explained how the body is subject to destruction along with bodily affiliations.

He outlined the ultimate goal of human life: this body is a gift from God, but those who keep themselves attached to this world and their homes are stuck in a dark hole; the only successful end of the human frame is to apply intelligence to the task of searching for the true sadhu; one must stay in communion with the true sadhu; it is vital to shatter the sense of ownership one maintains for the perishable body; and it is necessary to practice devotion towards God.

Dhoribhai, with tears trickling down his cheeks, had his gaze fixed on Dungar Bhakta. His son's words had penetrated his heart. Despite having associated with senior sadhus of the Sampradaya countless times, no one proved as effective as his young son.

Dungar Bhakta's wisdom did not represent a mere arrangement of knowledge-filled words and sentences. It was not something learned over a fixed period of time. It was an inherently deep conviction that leapt out at a climactic moment.

Dhoribhai combatted his heartfelt emotions and permitted principle to finally govern his decision.

Dhoribhai ultimately succumbed to his son's strong inclination. Finally acknowledging that love towards family members is transitory and a cause for subsequent births, Dhoribhai was left with no choice but to allow Dungar Bhakta to relinquish secular life. ♦

THE VARTAL OF HIS CHILDHOOD

Sadhu Aksharatidas



Shastriji Maharaj departs from Vartal with five sadhus and about 150 devotees

Imagine. It is November 13, 1905. We are gathered at Shastriji Yagnapurushdas's *asan*

in Vartal. The leading devotees have just come back from the Acharya's room. "Who'd give him a letter to travel the villages? The whole country is lying open. He can go wherever he pleases!" The Acharya's response was far from what they had expected.

It seems the moment foretold by the events of the last few days is here at last. Only yesterday, when Krishnaji Ada finally convinced Shastri Yagnapurushdasji to part from Vartal, everyone had found such relief in the possibility of this instant. Yet now, no one is saying a thing.

Shastriji Maharaj is quiet as well. But his silence is different, untainted by turmoil. He simply sits still in the middle of an emotional storm, and one cannot help but try to follow his distant gaze and search for the thoughts that occupy his mind. It is then, in that moment, that



Dungar Bhagat collects and reads the discarded manuscripts of Bhaktachintamani and Vachanamrut

I feel brushed by the wind of a little boy running down the hallway.

His name was Dungar and he had always come to spend his time at the sadhus' residences. In this very hallway, he had met countless sadhus initiated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself. He would run from seat to seat bowing down to each of the great *sadgurus*. After meeting them all, he would go to Adbhutanand Swami. Here, he would serve Swami and then sit to listen as Adbhutanand Swami spoke on *vairagya* and the fickleness of this world.

As Dungar fades down the hallway, Shastri Yagnapurushdas finishes speaking to Purushottamdas Swami; he is going to have to stay behind in case the Acharya changes his mind. A few of the devotees depart to pass the word that the time has come – "Shastri is leaving Vartal." Swami stands up and in his footsteps follow Narayancharandas Swami, Niranjandas Swami and three other sadhus. They begin to pack their *potluis*. Swami is the lead sadhu of Vignananand Swami's group and heir to his seat and belongings in Vartal. Today, he searches inside Vignananand Swami's cabinet for the last time. As he gathers the few things that might be

called his, he probably doesn't see the boy that fills my eyes.

Dungar was at the cabinet 25 years ago. Vignananand Swami's arrival in Vartal had ended his search for a great *paramhansa* of Shriji Maharaj to make his guru. It was Swami who had first asked him, "Child, do you want to become a sadhu?" Dungar's heart had leapt with joy. He followed Swami to Surat, received *diksha* on Swami's recommendation, and began his studies of Sanskrit; it was Vignananand Swami who had loved him like a father, trusted him with the responsibilities of managing Surat mandir, and even supported his embrace of the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* and Bhagatji Maharaj.

All of that had started right around this cabinet. And now Swamishri is closing it for the last time. He steps out of the sadhus' residences and into the grand quad of the mandir. I can only marvel at his steps – steady, purposeful, unashamed; his stride is so much like a lion's gait, except that his strength does not come from arrogant nonchalance but from the humility of accepting a greater will. Five brave sadhus quietly follow him. About a hundred or so of us trail behind them. Devotees and sadhus are looking on from the balconies above us. Sadhus speaking in the assembly hall abruptly stop; their eyes and the eyes of their audience are fixing on Yagnapurushdas. It seems that almost everyone has something to whisper to someone else, but what they think are quiet pronouncements are collectively becoming a hum echoing from the compound's structures. Some, who think themselves bold, jeer as Swami passes. Others, like Gordhandas Kothari, are brave enough to recognize Swamishri's integrity and saintliness. Mentally or physically, they fold their hands and bow their heads. Some even let tears flow. And amid them, amongst their humming, their jeers, and their sighs and sobs, I hear the laugh of Dungar.

Every *ekadashi* and *punam*, since the age

of seven, Dungar had come running into this compound, sometimes led by his brothers and father, but most times leading. How many times had he walked around the square searching for the discarded pages of the mandir scribes? Dungar could hardly keep count. But every time he found some pages, he would take them and sit down, reading them in the style of a pundit. This was also the square that used to echo with his laughter as he ran away from his family to meet the sadhus in their residences. It was amongst these very walls, that he had discovered the relics of Shriji Maharaj and had their darshan. It was here, in front of the *sabha mandap*, that he had boldly told Bechar Bhagat to become a sadhu from within. He had climbed the stairs of the Acharya's haveli so many times that the *parshads* and even the current Acharya's father called him by name.

But today is a different story. Swami does not climb the stairs to the haveli; he climbs the stairs across from them, to the mandir. He does darshan of all the *murtis* with great love. But in front of Harikrishna Maharaj he pauses more than anywhere else. This is the *murti* Maharaj has consecrated himself. It is one of the most sacred *murtis* of the Swaminarayan faith. Swami folds his hands, "Maharaj! We don't even remotely wish to separate, but if this is your wish then please always stay in our assistance; stay with us eternally." It was his last prayer to this *murti* – a *murti* he had spoken to since he was a boy.

What he prayed for no one could tell. Fear

was not a feeling Dungar had known. Worldly things did not entice him. But, nonetheless, Dungar had stood in front of this same *murti* countless times as a child. Dungar's puja, his meditation, even his mind's free moments all focused on this form.

Shastriji Maharaj turns away. He climbs down the same stairs. His puja, his saffron robes, one or two books – those few things one might call his – hang over his right shoulder in his *potlu*. A *pagh* covers his head. His face is calm. He neither frowns with grief nor smiles with any pretense. Before anyone truly realizes what has happened, 41-year-old Swamishri, five sadhus, and about 150 devotees walk out the main gate of Vartal mandir for the sake of Akshar and Purushottam.

To truly transport oneself to that time is currently impossible. However, one thing seems certain. It is impossible to imagine that fateful day in 1905 without marvelling at the depth of Shastriji Maharaj's faith in Akshar and Purushottam, the strength of his conviction to live for his faith. One is left in awe at the mettle of his detachment from all things other than Maharaj and Swami because the Vartal he was leaving was not just the throbbing heart of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya; it was not just a seat of power and authority; it was not just a place of comfort and honour; it was also the Vartal that had filled his childhood, the place he had spent his happiest childhood moments in devotion. Today, among all those other Vartals, he was leaving the Vartal of his childhood. ♦

(contd. from p. 3)

Then, Swamishri took a small chisel and inserted it at the base of the *murti* and slightly lifted it off the ground. The sadhus and devotees were amazed and happy at the miracle. They then lifted the *murti* and installed it in the central shrine.

Finally, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals. In this way, for the first time,

the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj were consecrated in the central shrine. Everyone hailed the names of Akshar-Purushottam, and Swamishri for his historic role in establishing the principle of Akshar-Purushottam as propagated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

We pay our tributes to Shastriji Maharaj on his 146th birthday on 8 February 2011. ♦

Brahmi Sthiti Yoga

Part 2

Recap: With the words,

'Kutastvā kashmalmidam vishame samupasthitam.

Anāryajushtam asvagaryam akirtikaram Arjuna.

Klaibyam mā sma gamaha Pārtha naitat tvayyupapadyate.

Kshudram hradayadaurbalyam tyaktvotishtha parantapa' (Gita 2.2-3).

Shri Krishna had described Arjuna's decisions for not fighting the war as not worthy of the noble, inconsistent with dharma and those that would only cause dishonour.

Moreover, these decisions were impotent and the result of a weak heart.

Thus he ordered him to put all of this aside and arise to face the challenge before him.

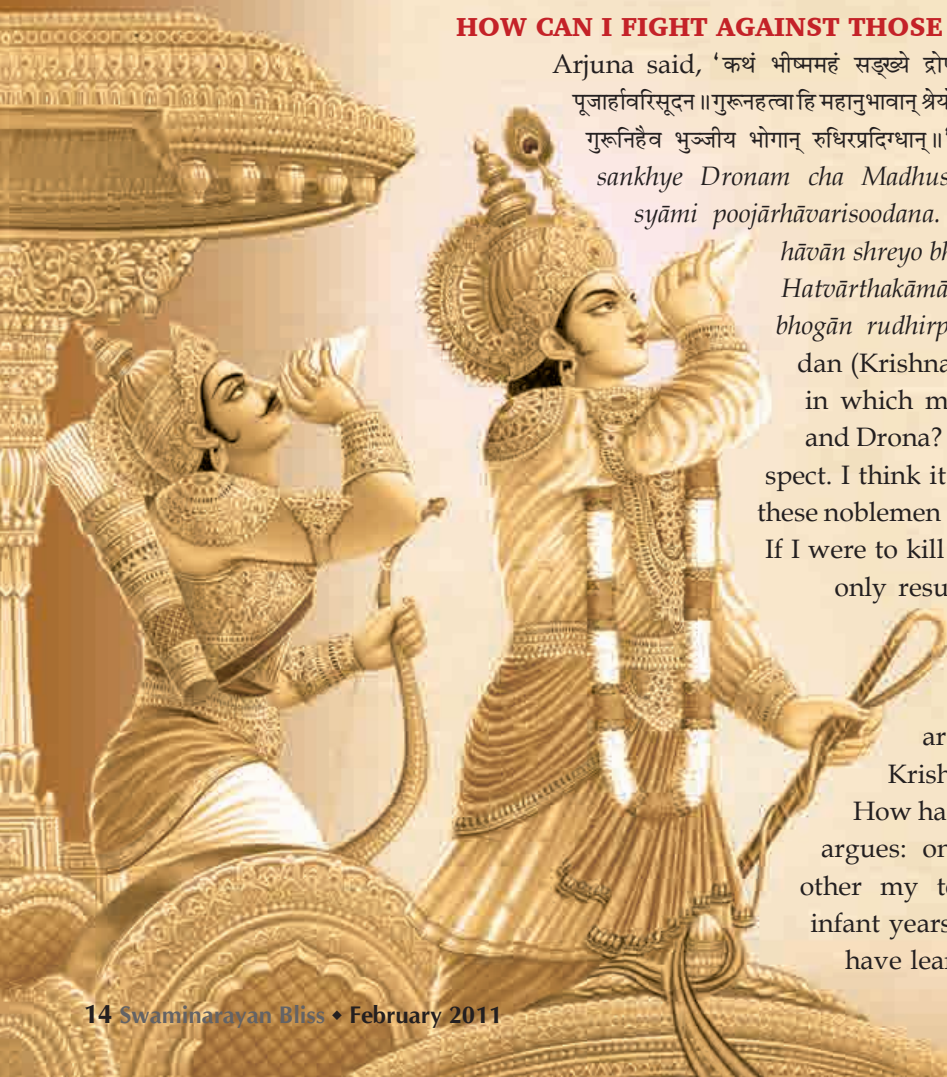
We will now take a look at Arjuna's response.

HOW CAN I FIGHT AGAINST THOSE WORTHY OF RESPECT?

Arjuna said, 'कथं भीष्ममहं सङ्ख्ये द्रोणं च मधुसूदन। इषुभिः प्रतियोत्स्यामि पूजार्हावरिसूदन ॥ गुरुनहत्वा हि महानुभावान् श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके। हत्वार्थकामांस्तु गुरुनिहैव भुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रदिग्धान् ॥' – *'Katham Bheeshmamaham sankhye Dronam cha Madhusoodana. Eshubhihi pratiyotsyāmi poojārḥavarisoodana. Guroonahatvā hi mahānub-*

hāvān shreyo bhoktum bhaikshymapeeha loke. Hatvārthakāmāmstu guroonihaiva bhujjeeya bhogān rudhirpradigdhān' – 'O Madhusudan (Krishna)! How can I fight in a war in which my arrows oppose Bhishma and Drona? They are both worthy of respect. I think it would be better not to kill these noblemen and live my life as a beggar. If I were to kill these elders, then it would only result in living by money and pleasures smeared with their blood' (Gitā 2.4-5).

This is Arjuna's argument against Shri Krishna's question, "O Arjuna! How has this come of you?" Arjuna argues: one is my grandfather, the other my teacher. I have spent my infant years in the lap of the first, and have learned many skills under the



guidance of the second. Now, you tell me, is it appropriate for a courageous person to pick up weapons against such respected people? And if I do not, is that cowardice? Therefore, O Krishna! My reluctance to fight is not due to cowardice. Cowards fall back due to fear. I am not afraid of dying. Having contemplated on right and wrong, I oppose the war. Therefore, do not call my righteous decision the result of a weak heart. Moreover, I feel that this step is more worthy for me. Therefore, it would be wise for you to drop your insistence that I change my decision. In this way, Arjuna has found a fitting reply. Indeed, it is difficult to understand the often suicidal behaviour of the mind. It can cheat us in any form. To prove itself right it can comprise innumerable arguments that seem just and good. Arjuna's mind has taken this approach and is justifying itself with intelligent tricks.

Nevertheless, Arjuna is not able to stand on his arguments alone. His own decisions are being clearly opposed by his well-wishing, honest and trustworthy best friend Shri Krishna. This causes him to doubt himself. He is affected by Shri Krishna's words. As a result, even after giving the above arguments, he says, 'न चैतद् विद्मः कतरन्नो गरीयो यद्वा जयेम यदि वा नो जयेयुः । यानेव हत्वा न जिजीविषामस्तेऽवस्थिताः प्रमुखे धार्तराष्ट्राः ॥' – '*Na chaitad vidmaha kataranno gareeyo yadvā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuhu. Yāneva hatvā na jijeevishāmaste-avsthitāhā pramukhe Dhārtarāstrāha*' – 'We do not know whether it is better to fight or not. We do not know whether we will win or not. But we certainly do not want to live by killing those sons of Dhritarashtra who are on the opposite side' (Gita. 2.6).

These are the thoughts of a confused mind: I may be wrong, my beliefs aren't taking me in the wrong direction, are they? Once there is confusion, there is no longer peace (of mind). It never lets one rest. Moreover, confusion is the main force behind wavering thoughts. Arjuna's weak thoughts are subject to disarray, as if he is becoming more and more restless.

Despite all this it seems like something good

is taking shape. Arjuna has realized his situation. He discards thoughts of what he cannot do, and starts to think about what he can do. What he subsequently thought of, and acted upon, turned the entire table of events.

Arjuna thought of discipleship. To surrender at once! And a thrilling event took place. A great warrior became the disciple of a charioteer!

I AM YOUR DISCIPLE

'*Shishyasteham*' – 'I am your disciple.' This is a simple sentence, but with a deep meaning. It is like an eternal engraving in gold of the ultimate means to all knowledge; the elixir of bestowing relaxation, composure and supreme bliss. It is a mantra worth reciting continuously in one's mind. This discipleship is the gateway to upliftment. Discipleship is the source of power, adventure, understanding and enthusiasm. Discipleship is not ignorance or dependence, but is extreme intelligence and ingenuity. To decide on discipleship is to invite peace and happiness, and to see the end of worry. Discipleship lacks nothing. One who becomes a disciple receives all riches. But it is not easy to become someone's disciple. Only one who can crush his ego can become a disciple. Only one who can accept his ignorance can become a disciple. The arrogant cannot become anyone's disciple. They cannot surrender to anyone. They cannot crush their ego. They are unable to become ignorant. As a result, their doubts, ignorance and misery are never healed. They falsely believe that they will never face problems in life, and if they do they will be able to overcome them on their own. They are not the type that would accept someone else's advice or experience. Lack of the eyes of faith makes them stumble in life. They believe that a guru is for those who lack intelligence; and since we are intelligent we do not need to become someone's disciples – we do not need a guru. They are forever engulfed in such ignorant foolishness.

Arjuna has not been such a fool. He does not hold the false belief that he will train himself

without the help of someone capable. He knows that his thoughts can take him anywhere; that they can make anything of him. He realizes that Krishna is the wise sculptor who will shape his life. Thus, seeing the opportunity, he seizes it. He makes the decision to surrender to Shri Krishna, to make Shri Krishna his guru. Truly the most important decision of life.

He humbly says to Shri Krishna, 'कार्पण्यदोषोपहतः स्वभावः पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसंमूढचेताः । यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥' – '*Kārpanyadoshopahataha svabhāvaha pruchchhāmi tvām dharmasanmoodhachetāhā. Yachchhreyaha syānnishchitam broohi tanme shishyasteham shādhī māṁ tvām prapannam.*' – 'O Lord! I am overcome by the cowardice of my instincts and in matters regarding dharma my intellect has been overcome by infatuation. I ask you to decisively tell me what is best for me. O Lord! I am your disciple. Please instruct me! I have surrendered to you.'

This is Parth's inner plea. It is a display of his self-interest; a reflection of his readiness; and his eagerness to be uplifted. It shows us his. In fact, this is the true shield of protection for Arjuna. It is as if he is forcing Krishna to take on the responsibility for his life, for he has surrendered to Krishna.

This surrender of Parth is not an ordinary event. It is of paramount importance and its significance is reflected by his words.

PARAMOUNT SURRENDER

Many surrender to a guru. But there are many different types of surrender. Although we may surrender physically, we often overlook the subtle aspects of surrender. Therefore we cannot achieve surrender in its entirety. As a result of this we are deprived of the great fruits of surrender. Arjuna's surrender inspires us to think a lot more in this direction. Let us take a look at some of its special features.

1. Seeing One's Own Flaws

It is not easy to see one's own faults. They say

that one's faults are written on one's back. We are often scared to even think about our own faults. Time and time again, we see ourselves making mistakes, but we do not make a conscious affirmation of these as mistakes. It is as if we are afraid to see our true selves and therefore keep ourselves ignorant of our own flaws.

Moreover, we go one step further and try our best to disguise our flaws as qualities. We engage ourselves in trying every trick possible, and we let all of this happen naturally. This is indeed the harmful nature of our thoughts. It is this harmful behaviour that has stopped our progress. Therefore, there is no alternative but to change this behaviour.

Arjuna's approach in this matter can inspire us. He has become conscious of his faults. He says, '*kārpnyadoshovahanasvabhāvaha*' – 'I am overcome by the cowardice of my instincts'; and '*dharmasanmoodhachetāhā*' – 'My intellect has become confused in matters of what to do and what not to do.' This is the result of a true, honest and deep inspection of oneself. It is the first fruit of surrender: the realization that the root of one's misery and problems is within oneself. One's own flaws are the cause of one's hinderance. Arjuna clearly sees this. Thus Arjuna has secured the rare achievement of seeing his own flaws. But he does not stop there; he goes one step further and freely confesses his faults to his guru.

2. Confessing One's Faults

'*Kārpnyadoshovahanasvabhāvaha*' or '*dharmasanmoodhachetāhā*' are not just thoughts in Arjuna's mind. They are words that he has said in front of Bhagwan Krishna. To see one's own faults is a great achievement, but it is a greater achievement to confess these faults clearly in front of one's guru. There is no room for deceit here. Many who introspect become aware of their flaws, but of those only a few are able to confess them in front of their guru. To do this requires a battle against one's ego and an honest relationship with one's guru. Arjuna is able to crush his

ego. His relationship with Shri Krishna is honest and pure. He does not have the slightest deceit. He knows well that Krishna is all-knowing. Nevertheless, he confesses in front of the omniscient Krishna in clear words.

Thus, having seen his own flaws and by confessing them, Arjuna is true to himself and to his guru.

But the surrendered Arjuna's openness has reached an even higher state than this.

3. Accepting One's Flaws Shown by the Guru

To acknowledge the flaws that one's guru shows us is an even higher step than finding one's flaws and confessing them in front of one's guru. Often we accept only those mistakes that we ourselves feel are really mistakes, but not because somebody tells us. If we do not feel it appropriate we do not accept it, even if our guru tells us. We may not outwardly convey this, but there is a mental nonacceptance. But it is not the case that self introspection can make us realize all of our mistakes, it may be a mistake even if we do not personally feel it to be one. We should accept such mistakes on someone else's words. A guru shows a disciple such mistakes, and a true disciple should trustfully accept them. Even many who introspect falter in accepting their own faults. Subtle ego misdirects them, and a rift remains between them and the guru. Therefore, this is the true test of discipleship: if my guru shows me mistakes I should accept them without a doubt. Only one who passes this test has truly surrendered. Arjuna is special because he passes this test too. With the words '*klaibyam mā sma gamaha... kshudram hradayadaurbalyam*' (Gita 2.3) Shri Krishna speaks of Arjuna's cowardice, and with the words, '*Kārpnyadoshopahatasvabhāvaha*' (Gita 2.7) Arjuna accepts it. Even though he is a Kshatriya, a mighty warrior and an unparalleled archer, he has not found it hard to accept his guru's notion of him being a coward. He has not been stopped by what others will think. Thus Parth's (Arjuna's) discipleship is of a high calibre.

Let us take a look at another aspect of Parth's great discipleship.

4. I Ask You

'Pruchhāmi tvām dharmasanmoodhachetāhā...'
– 'O Krishna! I, whose intellect has become infatuated regarding matters of Dharma, ask you...' Parth now concentrates. He prepares himself to hear what is for his good. He separates himself from his intellect and arguments, and his notions of justice and injustice. Not only that, he also no longer wants to take the refuge of just the shastras. Now, he wants to listen just to Krishna. We can hear his words of firm trust, 'That's it, for me, whatever you say is the ultimate truth.' It is surprising that Arjuna has been able to do something that even Bhishma and Drona, who are said to be authorities in matters of dharma, have not been able to do, and that is to go to Shri Krishna, who is the upholder of dharma, and ask him about dharma.

Indeed, true discipleship can only be attained by one who can break free of the notions of his intellect and overcome self-conceived beliefs and limitations.

5. Decisively Tell Me What Is Best

'Shreyaha' means good or liberation. Arjuna says, '*Yachchhreyaha syānnishchitam broohi tanme*' – 'Decisively tell me what is best for me; what will lead to liberation.' Arjuna wants upliftment, not worldly pleasures. He does not ask to be told something he would like to hear, but instead to be told something that would do him good, something that would lead to liberation. Moreover, Arjuna does not ask for justice, he asks for liberation. He has understood that there is no end to the squabble of justice and injustice.

With the words '*nishchitam broohi*' – 'tell me decisively', Arjuna has given Shri Krishna complete freedom in his decision. He has given him complete responsibility. He himself has not decided on anything. He is not insistent on anything. Often, one surrenders with a pre-

conceived decision or desire in mind, and as a result one presents in a manner that would favour what is in mind, and thereafter one expects an accordingly favourable reply. Arjuna has not done this. He is open even in this matter. There is no blending of his own desires. Pramukh Swami Maharaj often says, "We should practice satsang on his (God or guru) terms and out of one's need."

Saying this, Parth finally says, '*Shishyasteham shādhī mām tvām prapannam*' – 'I am your disciple. Please instruct me! I have surrendered to you.'

6. Instruct Me, I Have Surrendered to You

A disciple is someone who you can direct. By saying '*Shishyasteham*' – 'I am your disciple', Arjuna has given Shri Krishna complete power to control him. He has given him permission to order without hesitation. With the words '*Mām tvām prapannam*' Arjuna has reminded Krishna of the maxim of a cat and a kitten (*mārjarshishunyāya*). There are two popular maxims, one of a monkey and its child and the other of a cat and its kitten. A monkey's child has to cling on to its mother; it is more the responsibility of the child. This is called *markatshishunyāya*. A cat, however, itself picks up its kitten; the kitten has no responsibility. This is called *mārjarshishunyāya*. Arjuna has followed the path of *mārjarshishunyāya*. And Shri Krishna is also ready to take care of him.

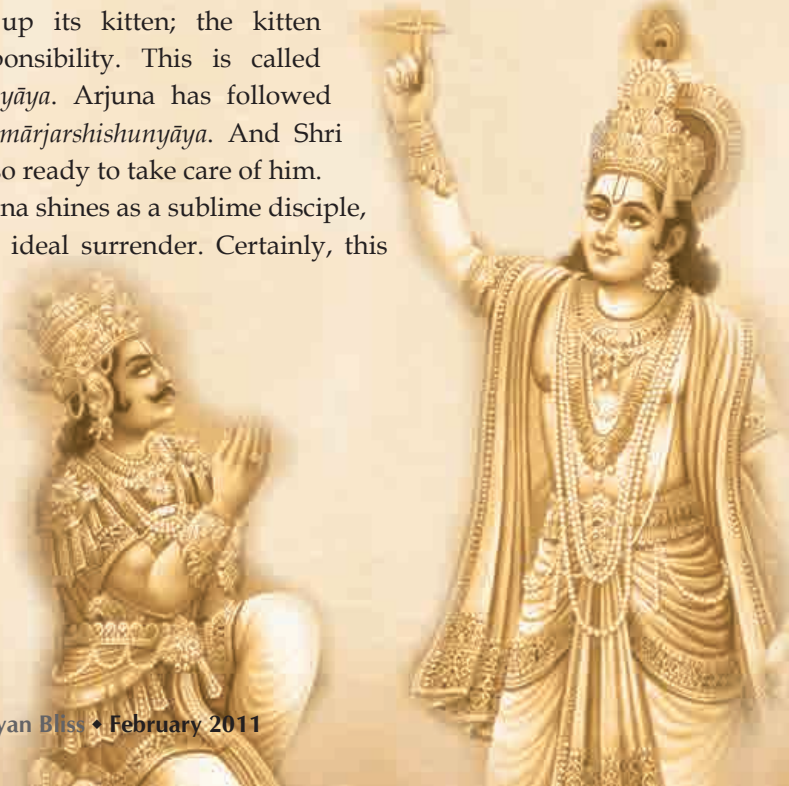
Thus Arjuna shines as a sublime disciple, exemplifying ideal surrender. Certainly, this

surrender will be the first sound of victory over his ignorance.

Here, there is something that requires thought. Arjuna said, '*Shishyasteham*' – 'I am your disciple.' Does that mean he was not a disciple before this? He was, but not of this kind. That is why he came across such difficulties in life even though Bhagwan Krishna was with him. Nevertheless, Arjuna's wisdom is in the fact that he understands that friendship has pleasant benefits. That Shri Krishna is his friend, is his great fortune, and he also has a good rapport with Shri Krishna. However, to remove one's flaws is a different matter. That requires true understanding, and there is no other means to understanding than discipleship. Moreover such discipleship should not be taken lightly, but treated as a serious matter. Arjuna has done accordingly.

Indeed, Parth's discipleship is to be praised and his surrender acclaimed.

We are all fortunate that just like Parth found Shri Krishna in person as his guru, we have also found Pramukh Swami Maharaj as a guru to be the charioteer of our chariot of life. Now all we need to do is accept discipleship and surrender like Parth. ♦



PRINCIPLES OF SATSANG: SAMP

An Analysis of Conflict Part 2

The classroom broke into a heavy bustle as small groups of children tightly huddled together in deep, heated discussions. The quiet ones nodded as the type-A's stood on chairs professing the validity of their decisions like seasoned politicians. At the end of fifteen minutes each student was to present a list of what he or she believed to be the "Seven Wonders of the World". The initial loud discussions faded to a murmur as each student prepared a list and reasons for their nominations. Many protested about the sequence, but all converged under the tactful guidance of their elementary school teacher. The following places expectedly received their status as the Seven Wonders of the World: 1. Egypt's Great Pyramids, 2. The Taj Mahal, 3. The Grand Canyon, 4. The Panama Canal, 5. The Empire State Building, 6. St. Peter's Basilica, and 7. The Great Wall of China.

However, while gathering the students' lists, the teacher noticed that there was one student who was hesitant to present her list. She asked the girl if she was having trouble. The girl replied that she was and couldn't make up her mind because there were so many things to choose from. The teacher suggested, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help." The girl cowered, then read, "I think the 'Seven Wonders of the World' are: 1. to see, 2. to hear, 3. to touch, 4. to taste, 5. to smell, 6. to believe, and 7. to love."

Sometimes in life we take the obvious for granted and forget its significance. The principles that have founded the very bedrock of this Sampradaya, and without which we cannot experience satsang in its truest sense, are also such wonders. Among them, as we saw previously, are *samp*, *suhruddhava*, and *ekta*. Our attempts to

understand the nature of *samp* in the previous issue led us to realize that *samp* necessitates something more than merely working or living together. We discovered that it instead requisites having our intentions, values and attitudes being in sync with others. As we saw from Yogiji Maharaj's life, to maintain *samp* requires personal sacrifice, empathy, and humility.

To further clarify our understanding of *samp*, it is necessary to understand what happens when there is a lack of *samp*. What happens between individuals when *samp* breaks down? A closer analysis will reveal that there is still something missing in our understanding of *samp*.

NATURE OF CONFLICT

Conflict is like an acid test. Where there is conflict there is no unity. This seems obvious, but is conflict always bad?

Stephen P. Robbins, a professor from San Diego State University, analyzes in *Essentials of Organizational Behavior* the nature of human conduct when working in groups. In his analysis he very succinctly defines conflict as, "a process in which an effort is purposely made by A to offset the efforts of B by some form of blocking that will result in frustrating B in attaining his or her goals or furthering his or her interests."¹ Notice, 'conflict' here does not necessitate involvement in a brawl, but rather refers to merely an expression of differing interests.

Thereafter, Robbins, while explaining the cause of conflict, states, "Resources – money, jobs, prestige, power, for example – are not unlimited, and their scarcity encourages blocking behaviour. The parties are, therefore, in opposition." He

1. Robbins, Stephen P. *Essentials of Organizational Behavior*. Sixth Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000.

explains that since there is always a shortage of resources and incompatible interests, conflict inevitably results. It seems that the world we live in is doomed to be a world of conflict.

How can we maintain *samp* when we live in a world that has limited resources for people with divergent goals, which inevitably result in conflict? This questions our notion of *samp*. *Samp* no longer mandates a state of no conflict. In fact, to ask for such a state would be nearly impossible. The solution lies in understanding the nature of conflicts – are all conflicts bad?

THE TWO TYPES OF CONFLICT

Contrary to our initial beliefs, conflicts are not as bad as we think. Robbins explains that unlike states of no-conflict, some conflicts improve “the quality of decisions, stimulate creativity and innovation, encourage interest and curiosity among group members, and provide the medium through which problems can be aired and tensions released, and foster an environment of self-evaluation and improvement” (174).

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Shriji Maharaj agrees to Brahmanand Swami’s and Muktanand Swami’s affirmation that it is better to serve God and risk engaging in conflict, than to become unproductive.²

Robbins supports, “The current view toward conflict, [which] is the ‘interactionist perspective’,” encourages conflict on the grounds that a harmonious, peaceful, tranquil, and cooperative group is likely to become static, apathetic, and nonresponsive to needs for change and innovation (169). Conflict is an antidote for groupthink.

In fact, researchers have shown that the lack of conflict can actually be detrimental to individual and organizational growth. Sears, Roebuck and GM have all been cited as examples where a lack of conflict have caused decreased sales. “They hired and promoted individuals that were ‘yes men...’” (174).

Studies have also shown that groups that

have constructive conflict progress significantly more than those that do not. J.Hall and Ms. Williams observe in “A Comparison of Decision-Making Performances in Established and Ad-Hoc Groups”, “When groups analyzed decisions that had been made by the individual members of that group, the average improvement among the high-conflict groups was 73 percent greater than that of those groups characterized by low-conflict conditions.”³

This is the mantra that Bill Gates chants when explaining the reason for his success. In his book *The Road Ahead* he explains that the question he gets asked most during interviews is, “What is the secret to your success.” His answer is simple, but one that gets us to think differently about conflict. With a chuckle he answers, “I surround myself with people who are far more intelligent than me.” Meaning, he invites conflict.

The CEO of Larsen and Toubro has built his empire around the same principle. He once came to meet Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Akshardham in Delhi. After seeing the monument, its exquisite craftsmanship, and thoughtful exhibitions he asked Swami for an assistant – someone who could be with him all of the time and help him achieve what Swami has achieved. Swami found his request interesting and inquired, “What kind of assistant would you like?” He thought for a moment and said, “I want someone who reflects what I don’t have. When I give an idea, he should criticize my suggestion to strengthen it.” Swami laughed and looked at the sadhus surrounding him and said, “These people don’t become billionaires just like that.” They invite conflict and learn from it. Perhaps this is what Yogiji Maharaj was thinking when he said, “I take delight when others criticize me.” Greatness seems to wed those that embrace differing opinions.

Nevertheless, not all conflicts result in construction. We are well familiar with these destructive conflicts and wish to avoid them.

3. J. Hall and Ms. Williams, “A Comparison of Decision-Making Performances in Established and Ad-Hoc Groups,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, February 1966, p. 217.

2. Vachanamrut, Gadhada I 31.

What ensures that these conflicts become constructive?

SAMP: AN IDENTITY OF PURPOSE

The answer then lies with dealing with conflicts appropriately. Conflicts happen, but how we deal with those conflicts determines whether they become constructive or destructive. This is where *samp* plays its important role.

What makes conflict constructive is *samp*; remember, *samp* is having our intentions, values, and attitudes being in sync with others.

Consider Abraham Lincoln's relationship with Edwin Stanton. Prior to Lincoln's nomination as President, Stanton publically humiliated Lincoln on numerous occasions and was known to be outwardly opposed to him. However, soon after Lincoln was appointed as Commander-in-Chief he had instated Stanton as the nation's Secretary of War. When questioned regarding his decision to empower his condemner, Lincoln reasoned that although Stanton did not approve of him, the country would be best served under Stanton's leadership as the Secretary of War.

The conflict between the two didn't end there. Lincoln once issued a command to transfer certain regiments during America's Civil War in order to appease a certain politician. When the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, received the order, he refused to carry it out. Not only that, but he announced that the President was a fool for issuing such an order. When Lincoln was informed of Stanton's criticism he simply responded, "If Stanton said I'm a fool, then I must be, for he is nearly always right. I'll see for myself." When the two talked, the President became aware of his mistake and withdrew his order without hesitation.

While describing their relationship, a biographer writes, "Stanton's career as a lawyer had given him no direct experience of army affairs. He showed, however, exceptional ability, great will power, and an enormous capacity for work. He was ambitious, self-willed, and most

arbitrary in deed and in speech... His judgment in regard to men was in fact very often at fault. He came into early and unnecessary conflict with his chief (Lincoln) and he found there a will stronger than his own. The respect of the two men for each other grew into a cordial regard. **Each recognized the loyalty of purpose and the patriotism by which the actions of both were influenced.** Lincoln was able to some extent to soften and modify the needless aggression of the great War Secretary, and notwithstanding a good deal of troublesome friction, armies were organized and the troops were sent to the front."⁴

Their relationship exemplifies perfectly Robin's characterization of constructive conflict: the recognition of each other's "loyalty of purpose and patriotism." These ideals that each shared, brought to the surface the unity that made their conflicts constructive. Unity in purpose is the essential element of *samp* that renders conflicts as constructive. After all, Gunatitanand Swami often said, "*Ek ruchivālā bej hoy to hajāro ne lākho chhie ne te vinā to hajāro ne lākho hoie topan eklāj chhie em samajvu.*"⁵ Meaning, "If there are two that are driven with the same purpose, they are equivalent to thousands; but without such a purpose, even if there are thousands, believe them to be alone."

OUR UNIFYING PURPOSE

Whose purpose should we identify ours with?

When Pramukh Swami Maharaj was younger, he had received Shriji Maharaj's sanctified *mala* (rosary) as a gift from his guru, Shastriji Maharaj. Once in Bocharan, Chhaganbhai from Mumbai came to know that Swami possessed such a rare *mala* and requested Swami if he could borrow it to show it to his relatives. Swami innocently lent the *mala* to Chhaganbhai, who never returned it. Swami sent letters requesting, if not pleading, Chhaganbhai to return the *mala*, explaining that

4. Putnam, George Haven, *Abraham Lincoln - The People's Leader in the Struggle for National Existence*. 1909, p. 20.

5. Swamini Vato 1.335.

it held great sentimental value because it was a token of Shastriji Maharaj's grace. Whenever they met during festivals, Swami would remind him about the *mala*, but his attempts remained unfruitful. After one such attempt, Chhaganbhai became frustrated and went to Yogiji Maharaj to complain about Swami's persistence, "Please tell Pramukh Swami to not ask me for the *mala* again!" Yogiji Maharaj calmed him and assured him that Swami would no longer ask him.

Sometime later, Pramukh Swami was performing puja in Ahmedabad. Yogiji Maharaj came to the room holding Chhaganbhai's hand and requested, "Swami! Since Chhaganbhai now has the *mala* that Shastriji Maharaj gave you, please do not ask for it from him anymore." Without a thought, Swami folded his hands and said, "It was you who gave it to me, and it is you who have taken it from me. If it is your wish, I will not insist upon it." Swami relinquished his ownership and never articulated any ill-feeling because of his purpose to obeying and pleasing Yogiji Maharaj.

If one shares the intentions, values, and attitudes of the Satpurush, then one experiences peace even in states of conflict. Swamishri makes explicit his secret for overcoming conflict in Vidyanagar on 18 July 1982. An inquisitive *kishore* asked Swamishri, "What thought drives you to continue doing *vicharan* even at this age?" Swamishri revealed, "I want to please Shastriji Maharaj. I want to do *seva*. I have decided that no matter what happens, whether I am praised or humiliated, I want to serve him without thinking about anything else. I have dedicated my life for him.... If one desires to please Bhagwan then difficulties and conflicts don't feel like obstacles." Swamishri reveals that the secret to overcoming conflicts and difficulties is doing whatever we do to please Bhagwan and the Satpurush.

On 16 June 1981 in Ahmedabad, Swamishri reinforces the same point during his blessings in a regional *shibir*, "From the beginning it was my goal to please Shastriji Maharaj. I haven't had

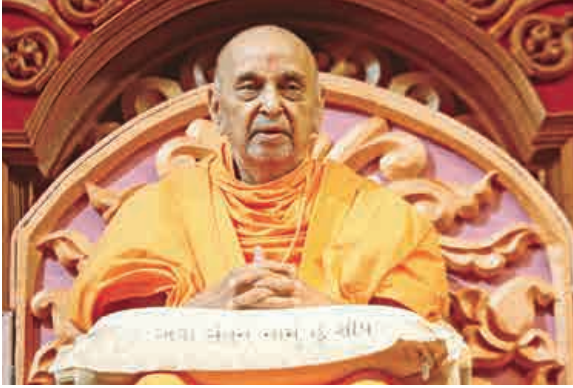
a purpose other than that. When I was young, I didn't understand many things, but when I grew up and was given responsibility of managing the *kothar*, there were many conflicts and difficulties that I had to face. Mota Swami would insist that things be performed differently; and as a result, I would sometimes find myself at ends. However, I was resolute in doing only what Swamishri wanted. During Yogiji Maharaj's time, the same types of situations would arise. He would have partiality for Gondal and others would oppose him. It was difficult for me, but it was fixed in my head that even if people called me inept, I only wanted to do what will please Yogiji Maharaj. I don't have any malice for them,... since I only want to please Yogiji Maharaj." Swamishri's words reveal how aligning his purpose with that of the Satpurush helped him not only overcome moments of conflict, but also maintain respect for those that caused conflict.

Unifying his purpose with Shastriji Maharaj's and Yogiji Maharaj's purpose has not only rendered conflicts in Swamishri's life as constructive, but also gifted him with success. Swamishri explains during an interview in Sarangpur on 8 February 1986, "There is only one secret to success: attaining a guru's blessings (*rajipo*). If one meets such a guru and moulds one's life according to his wishes, then one easily attains success. A guru's grace, beneficence, and blessings are the only three means of success; not one's efforts, intelligence, or abilities." To please the Satpurush is the secret to developing *samp*, progress and ultimately attaining success.

In summary, *samp* does not mandate a state of no-conflict. Conflicts will happen. However, *samp* assures that among the two types of conflict: those that are functional and those that are destructive, the outcome will be constructive. *Samp* is what makes conflicts constructive. When one shares the Satpurush's values, one develops *samp* and progresses even in conflict. To have *samp* means to answer 'yes' when asked, Will Swami approve and shower his blessings (*Swami raji thashe?*). ♦

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's VICHARAN

December 2010
Bochasan, Mumbai



Swamishri blesses the evening satsang assembly at Yogi Sabhagruh, Mumbai

DECEMBER

1-3: Bochasan

4: Bochasan, Mumbai

5-31: Mumbai

4, Saturday, Bochasan, Mumbai

Swamishri was feeling fine today after having chest pain a few days ago. However, doctors advised him that he should have a check-up in Mumbai.

At 4.00 p.m. Swamishri departed from Bochasan and arrived at Harni Airport in Vadodara at 4.50 p.m. The flight landed at 6.30 p.m. in Mumbai. On arriving at the mandir in Dadar thousands of devotees welcomed Swamishri. After Thakorji's darshan, Swamishri went to the Nilkanth Abhishek Mandapam for darshan. Thereafter Swamishri inaugurated the newly built 'Pramukhsadan' by untying the *nadachhadi* amidst Vedic chantings.

After having dinner Swamishri was checked by Dr Ashwinbhai Mehta, a renowned cardiologist. Dr Mehta told Swamishri and the sadhus that there was nothing to be worried about.

5 to 31, Mumbai

Swamishri's daily routine included darshan of Nilkanth Varni and Guru Parampara in the Abhishek Mandapam and then of Thakorji in the mandir. After giving darshan to the devotees Swamishri performed his puja. During the day Swamishri would be engaged in attending to letters and phone calls from devotees.

From 16 December, with the commencement of Dhanurmas, Swamishri wrote an inspiring message each day. The message was displayed after his morning puja and before Thakorji.

6, Monday

Swamishri's health was fine. He did his routine darshan of Thakorji, performed morning puja and attended to phone calls and letters.

At 7.15 p.m. Dr Lotlikar took a 2-D echo cardiogram of Swamishri's heart. The result showed that Swamishri's heart was fine and there was no reason to worry.

7, Tuesday

According to the English calendar today marked Swamishri's 89th birthday and his

entry into his 90th year. Youths and devotees had decorated the pathway and walls outside his room with greetings, balloons and candles. They greeted Swamishri on his arrival by singing “*Abhinandan, abhinandan,...*”

8, Wednesday

Prior to his morning puja Swamishri entered the Abhishek Mandapam for darshan. Pujya Dr Swami, after having arrived from his eight-month Satsang tour, came near for Swamishri’s darshan. Swamishri got up and embraced him, blessed him and greeted him with a garland. Swamishri was overwhelmed with emotions of joy and praised, “You have travelled all over America for satsang. You have pleased the sadhus and devotees immensely.” Swamishri also blessed the accompanying sadhus: Premvadan Swami, Apurvamuni Swami and Yogvijay Swami.

26, Sunday

Swamishri arrived at the Yogi Sabhagruha (hall in mandir) for the evening satsang assembly. Since it was the last Sunday of the year, a video depicting Swamishri’s annual achievements was shown in the assembly. In all, Swamishri had accomplished 42 projects, ranging from social, educational to spiritual. Pujya Viveksagar elaborated upon Swamishri’s 2010 *vicharan* in his discourse.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly. He spoke about having profound faith in God, the service of Bhagatji Maharaj, the steadfastness of Maharaj’s *paramhansas* in spite of insult and persecution, and understanding the glory of God and his devotees. ♦

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas
Translation: Sadhu Vivekjiandas

Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s 90th Birthday Celebration

13 December 2010 Monday

It was the dawning of an auspicious day. Swamishri had completed 89 years and was entering into his 90th year. Sadhus and devotees rejoiced and greeted Swamishri. Outside his room, devotees and sadhus had set up a festive ambience by staying up till late night. Swamishri’s pathway and the walls were decorated with colourful designs of *amrut kumbh*, traditional oil lamps, balloons and flowers.

When Swamishri came out he first offered his humble *pranams* and prayers to the *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Then he bowed to the devotees, and youths performing a welcome dance.

Swamishri entered the Abhishek Mandapam. Pujya Viveksagar Swami was discoursing on Swamishri’s virtues. The entire celebration was being relayed live worldwide through Aastha TV channel.

Swamishri performed *abhishek* of Nilkanth Varni and then did darshan of Guru

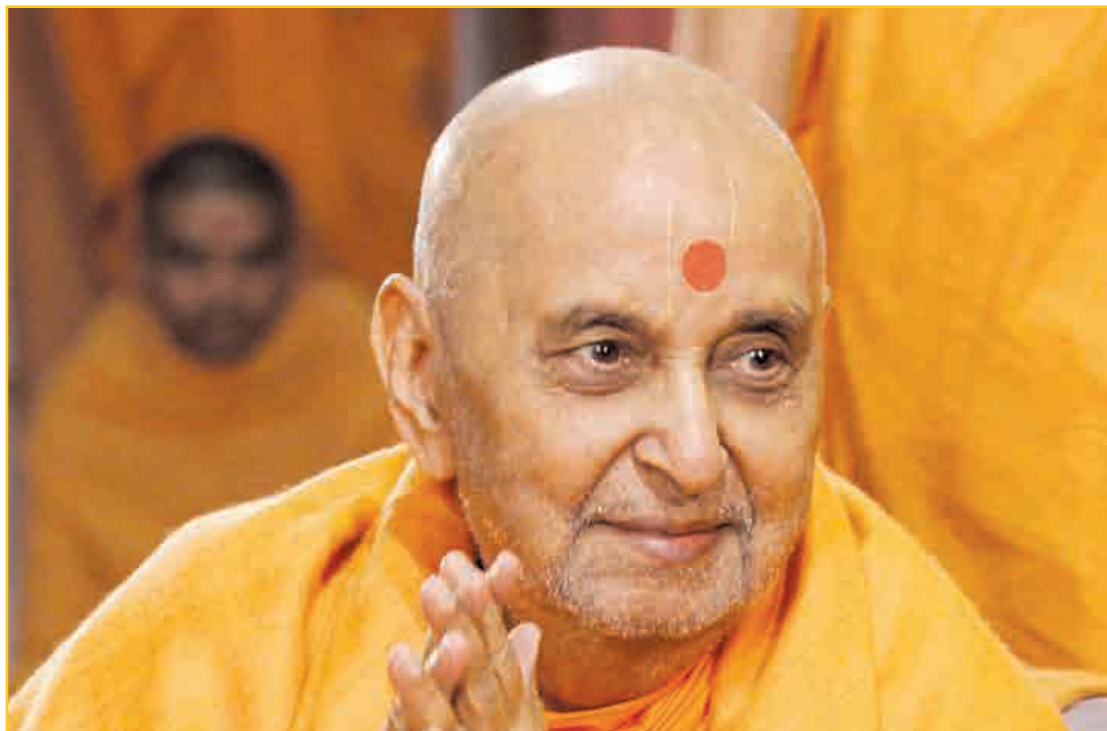
Parampara. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the devotees while the greeting of “*Abhinandan*” and “*Ghanu jivo ho jivan adhār...*” was being sung. In the meantime an *annakut* was arranged before the *murti* of Nilkanth Varni. Then Pujya Viveksagar Swami offered a garland and greeted Swamishri on behalf of all. The kirtan “*Sadgun sāgar Pramukh Swami...*” was being sung, with the accompaniment of beats played by the renowned percussionist, Shivamani.

The celebratory spirit inspired divine euphoria in all. Swamishri arrived before Thakorji and performed *arti*. A beautiful *annakut* was arranged in all the three shrines. Today also marked the inaugural anniversary of the mandir (*patotsav*). Then Swamishri performed his morning puja in his room.

For the rest of the day many sadhus, devotees and dignitaries telephoned Swamishri to greet him and wish him well. ♦

LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

December 2010



GURU BHAKTI

14, Mumbai

Swamishri's *ishta* and guru bhakti (devotion to God and guru) is the cornerstone of his life. These profound sentiments in his life have become apparent on many occasions and situations.

Today, Jnanpurush Swami and Adarshmuni Swami, who tour the Asia Pacific region, brought an English booklet on basic satsang elements to memorize for children and teenagers. Swamishri flipped a few pages and saw the photo of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj in the front and his own photo on the back. Finding something to be seriously missing, he commented, "The photos of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj should also have been included." Then Swamishri pointed out that they should be placed next to Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj or on the back page. Now they are being omitted. How would children living abroad come to know about Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj?"

Precedence to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his gurus in all matters has been the essence of his life.

THE SIMPLEST WAY TO MOKSHA

19, Sunday

Nimish Thakkar, a devotee, asked Swamishri by phone, "What should I do to attain *moksha*?"

Swamishri replied briefly, "Have refuge in God. Do bhajan and bhakti, and observe moral disciplines; you will get *moksha*. Also, never doubt God's doership."

PRIORITY IN LIFE

20, Monday

Swamishri is profoundly wedded to spirituality. Despite all his activities, doing bhajan is an intrinsic part of his persona.

This morning Swamishri finished his bathing rituals earlier than usual. Since he was before time the attendant sadhus requested him to rest

for a while. In response Swamishri replied, “It’s better to do bhajan than to lie down.” Swamishri turned the *mala*, chanting the Swaminarayan mantra, for 25 minutes.

EVER-BLISSFUL

21, Tuesday

Amrutnayan Swami phoned Swamishri from abroad to wish him a happy birthday. In his conversation he added, “I’m late in greeting you, but I felt I should do so anyway.”

Swamishri replied out of his inner spirit of joy, “I am above all greetings. There is neither birth nor death. I am ever-blissful.”

Amrutnayan Swami agreed, “You do not desire for any birthday greetings, but we wish to greet you.”

Swamishri is forever absorbed in the spiritual joys of *atma* and Paramatma. He remains unaffected by and undesirous of honour, fame, and the material joys and gains of life.

BLESSING A LOST SOUL

22, Wednesday

A devotee from America explained on the phone, “Swamishri, my son (Yogi) used to regularly do his puja and observe the satsang disciplines. But since the last one-and-a-half years he has stopped doing puja. His mother has explained to Yogi to start again, and he did his puja today.”

“Give him the phone,” Swamishri requested. Yogi came on the phone and Swamishri lovingly explained, “You are virtuous since childhood. You used to do puja before. And now that you have started, do it properly. Good sense has prevailed over you because of your devotion. I bless you for treading the right path and for inner strength and peace in life.”

GURU IS THE ROOT OF PROGRESS

23, Thursday

Whenever Swamishri is praised for all his works and achievements he credits everything to his gurus Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj.

His appreciation rises from the wellspring of his guru bhakti.

Adarshjivan Swami informed Swamishri, “Sant Swami (a senior sadhu) used to say that you have accomplished ten times more than what Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj had done.”

“The wish [for all projects] was ultimately theirs, because they dreamed for more mandirs and an increase in Satsang. This is why such works are accomplished.”

“Yes, they willed, but to make efforts in realizing their wishes is of no lesser importance,” Adarshjivan Swami added.

Swamishri replied, “It was their wish, and that’s why things get done. There is power in their wishes.”

Adarshjivan Swami stated, “In spite of the potential power in a seed, one needs someone to nourish it with water and nutrients. Only then will it flourish into a tree.”

Swamishri argued, “But when the seed is genuine, then only the nutrients and water will lead to fruition.”

Then Adarshjivan Swami rattled off an inventory of Swamishri’s 42 accomplishments in the year 2010.

Swamishri answered, “Ultimately, the roots of all these achievements lie in the wishes of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. They wished for the increase in numbers of sadhus and the growth of Satsang. Yogiji Maharaj chanted *dhun* in the Akshar Deri for the growth of Satsang and in the number of sadhus. And that is why we see the growth.”

Krishnavallabh Swami asked, “But if you had not travelled extensively and made such great efforts, how could all of this have happened?”

Swamishri repeated the same idea, “Yogiji Maharaj had wished for an increase in Satsang, and that is why we had to travel and make efforts.”

Swamishri’s humility, guru bhakti and detachment from all his accomplishments is simply amazing! ♦

Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas
Translation: Sadhu Vivekivandas

SWAMISHRI'S Message of the Day

December 2010, Mumbai

With the commencement of Dhanurmas on 16 December 2010,

Swamishri wrote an inspiring message each day for one month.

The message was displayed on an electronic screen after his morning puja.

They are as below:

DECEMBER

16: *Bhanva jevi to ek Brahavidya chhe. Mate te vidya bhanvi.*

The only knowledge worth learning is Brahavidya (spiritual knowledge). Therefore, learn that knowledge.

17: *Roj tilak-chandla sahit puja karvi.*
Do puja with tilak-chandlo daily.

18: *Ek Vachanamrut ane panch Swamini Vato nitya vanchva.*
Read one Vachanamrut and five Swamini Vatos daily.

19: *Athvadik sabhama niyमित samaysar javu.*
Attend the weekly (satsang) assembly regularly and on time.

20: *Natak cinema jova nahi.*
Do not watch plays and films.

21: *Darek ekadashi khabardar thaine karvi.*
Observe each ekadashi with fortitude.

22: *Vyasan ane dungri-lasan no hamesha tyag rakhvo.*
Forever renounce all addictions, onions and garlic.

23: *Athvadiye ochhama ochha be divas to ghar sabha karvi ja.*
At least do ghar sabha (home assembly) twice a week.

24: *Ghar mandir ma roj thal-arti karva.*

Daily offer thal (food) and arti (to God) in one's ghar (home) mandir.

25: *Vaali tatha santano ae ek bijane samji ne vartvu.*
Parents and children should understand each other and act.

26: *Bhaja Bhagvantam cha satyam, priyam cha hitam vada.*
Worship God and speak the truth, speak kindly and speak with beneficence.

27: *Katha ane seva nu ang dradh rakhvu.*
Be tenacious in the practice (of listening to) katha and (doing) seva.

28: *Saday guna grahak thavu.*
Always see the good qualities (in others).

29: *Samp, suhradaybhav ane ekta dradh rakhva.*
Keep harmony, friendship and unity firmly (in life).

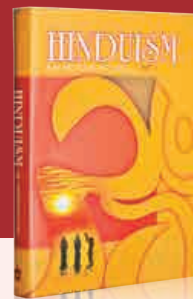
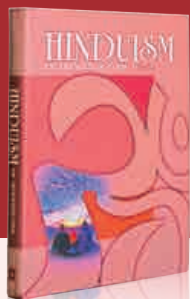
30: *Man dharyu muki sant kahe tem karvu.*
Give up one's willfulness and do what the Sant says.

31: *Satsangni vat apna yog ma avnar ne karta rahevu.*
Talk about satsang to those who come in your contact.

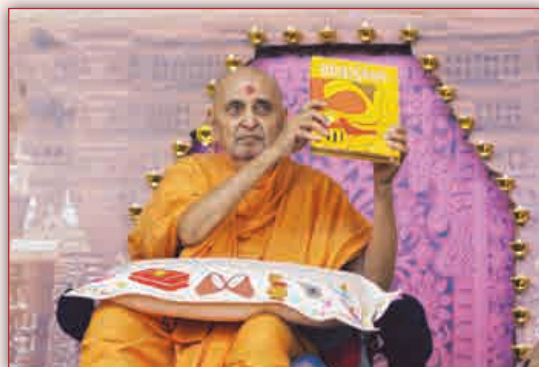


HINDUISM

AN INTRODUCTION



REVIEWS



Hinduism, An Introduction,

is an excellent primary source of information on the history, traditions, philosophies, festivals, deities, devotees and many other aspects of Hinduism.

The book is in two volumes, with a combined total of 712 pages and 748 photographs.

The publication was inaugurated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Gondal on Diwali (5 November 2010). Since then several revered spiritual leaders and distinguished scholars, judges, doctors, scientists and other public figures have reviewed the book and kindly sent their opinions.

With deep appreciation for their reviews, we wish to share them with our readers.

From this issue we start with the reviews of two of the many illustrious spiritual masters.

Swami Vimalananda

President, The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

Om Namo Narayanaya!

The main aspect of Hinduism is that it allows you to participate in the higher experience that it speaks of. One can verify for oneself what it speaks of. Whereas in other religions one cannot question the authoritative of what they declare. Hinduism includes and invites everyone to participate and it doesn't contradict with one's

own belief. It covers every subject under the sky – and even beyond the sky to be appropriate. Many important inventions and discoveries of the modern science were declared long back by our saints and seers of ancient times.

But unfortunately the importance of Hinduism would have slowly faded away in the present day time had it not been for the several

devoted personalities, one among them the sadhus of Swaminarayan *parampara*, who kept it alive. Books like these would definitely keep up the spirit of Hinduism. This book speaks lucidly about the value of our heritage and tradition and also gives an insight into the wisdom of our scriptures. Most importantly the book reveals what Hinduism can contribute for the humanity – to show the means for the Ultimate Liberation,

H.H. Swami Satyamitranand Giri

Bharat Mata Mandir, Haridwar

Since ancient times, the Hindu – Sanatan – Dharma has been the most appropriate and naturally oriented way of life. Unlike other religions, it is not a man-made one. Rather, it has originated through the collective divine inspiration of realized god-men – the rishis and sages. Beyond the concept of modern secularism, its broadminded global approach offers the scope to every individual to exist, survive and prosper in whatever environment and surroundings he or she may be living.

This liberal outlook has elevated the Hindu religion to the status of a global religion. This unique theme is being highlighted through the concept of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ (Whole world as one family).

Indian culture has been acclaimed as one of the holiest cultures in the universe. Religion, spirituality, yoga, physical and metaphysical sciences, music, art, medicine, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, navigation and other such faculties had been in practice in the ancient India since the dawn of history. The main focus of Indian psyche is towards the spiritual uplift through religion, spirituality and yoga. These disciplines aim at spiritual and psychological refinement. Such refinement guides the human mind towards the supreme goal of existence i.e. union of the individual soul with the Supreme or Cosmic Consciousness. Practising meditation and performing one’s righteous duties bring about a balance between body, mind and soul.

with which all the sufferings come to an end. The topics about the Saints and Sages are very inspiring and interesting, which would definitely influence all those who read. I offer my reverential prostrations and appreciation to all the sadhus of Swaminarayan Sampradaya for their effort in presenting to the world about the significance of Hinduism through this book.

I wish this book a wide circulation. ◆

This helps in negation of duality.

Indian culture covers the entire span of human activities. There are four ‘Purusharthas’ in human life – Dharma (Righteous Duty), Artha (Worldly Achievements), Kaam (fulfilment of worldly desires) and finally Moksha (Liberation). These goals aim at eliminating evil tendencies, imbibing virtuous attitude and recognition of Divinity.

Swami Vivekananda always stressed on the need of building a strong, bold and energetic society where youths would possess pure characters, lion-hearts, sharp minds and steel-hard bodies.

The publications titled *Hinduism, An Introduction* in two parts, authored by Sadhu Vivekjivandas, are quite extensive, informative and elaborate depictions of Hinduism. While going through these publications, the reader is presented with a panoramic view of the Indian ethos.

The span of Hindu religion is so vast and enormous that it sometimes poses a problem for a novice in comprehending it in its entirety. Mostly, people get lost in the outer perceptions of this great religion and get confused about the core notions and concepts. Seen in this light, the author has done a great service to the society. I am sure the work will go a long way in helping the masses in a proper comprehension of Hinduism and getting a firm grip of the topic.

May God bless all. ◆

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF SATSANG IN UGANDA

9-14 December 2010, Kampala, Uganda



Senior sadhus perform the *murti-pratishtha* the new murtis, Kampala



Devotees participate in the Vedic consecration rituals, Kampala

From the early years of the 20th century BAPS devotees went to reside in East Africa. With the blessings of Shastriji Maharaj, the affectionate guidance of Yogiji Maharaj, the inspiring letters of Nirgundas Swami and the efforts of leading devotees such as, Shri Harmanbhai, Shri Maganbhai, Shri Tribhovanbhai, Shri C.T. Patel, Shri A.P. Patel, Shri R.U. Patel, Shri C.M. Patel, Shri Mahendrabhai Barrister and others, satsang flourished.

In 1955, Yogiji Maharaj visited East Africa for the first time and consecrated the BAPS mandir in Mombasa, Kenya.

During his second visit in 1960, Yogiji Maharaj consecrated mandirs in Uganda at Kampala, Jinja, Tororo and Gulu.

In 1972, however, due to Uganda's adverse political situation, all Indians had to leave the country. Then, in 1991, the political situation became favourable and Indians began to return. The President of Uganda honoured Pramukh Swami Maharaj and returned ownership of the BAPS mandirs to the Sanstha.

Through frequent Satsang tours to East Africa, Swamishri and senior sadhus have continued to inspire the devotees. At present, there are 19

BAPS mandirs throughout East Africa.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the BAPS mandirs consecrated by Yogiji Maharaj in Uganda, grand celebrations were held in Kampala between 9 and 14 December 2010.

With Swamishri's blessings Pujya Doctor Swami, Pujya Kothari (Bhaktipriya) Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and over 60 sadhus participated in the historic event. Devotees from throughout East Africa and other countries also attended the celebrations.

9 December:

POLICE APPRECIATION ASSEMBLY

On 9 December 2010, officers of the nearby police department and fire brigade were honoured and appreciated by the senior sadhus for their services to the community.

10 December:

WELCOME ASSEMBLY

The senior and other sadhus, and devotees from East Africa and other countries were warmly welcomed to the golden jubilee celebrations. A vibrant welcome dance was performed by



Devotees welcome senior sadhus and 60 other sadhus from India to the golden jubilee celebrations



balaks and *kishores* and the celebrations' souvenir magazine was inaugurated by Dr Swami.

11 December: SWAMINARAYAN MAHAYAGNA FOR WORLD PEACE

From 8.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., 250 couples participated in the Swaminarayan Mahayagna for World Peace in the presence of the senior sadhus. The new *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj, Shri Radha-Krishna Dev, Shri Nilkanth Varni and the Guru Parampara to be installed were also worshipped during the *yagvna*. In India, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had previously performed the *pujan* and *arti* of all the *murtis*. At the end of the *yagna*, Kothari Swami addressed the participants and other devotees.

NAGARYATRA

In the afternoon over 3,000 devotees joyously participated in the colourful *nagaryatra* of the *murtis* through the streets of Kampala. The procession comprised of the *murtis* to be installed in various decorated *raths*, *balaks* dressed as *devas*, *kishores* performing traditional dances, the Yogi Marching Band from Nairobi, devotees carrying banners of their various centres, African native male dancers, *balikas*, *kishoris* and *yuvatis* performing traditional dances, women carrying the auspicious *kalashes* and shastras on their heads and groups of devotees singing bhajans.

The procession stretched for half a kilometre from start to end. Thousands of onlookers lined the two kilometre route from River Valley Station to the BAPS Mandir to enjoy the grand sight of the *nagaryatra*.

12 December: MURTI-PRATISHTHA CEREMONY

From early morning the senior sadhus began the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the new *murtis* for the mandir in Kampala. On completion of the traditional rituals, the first *arti* of the *murtis* was performed with the youths of Yogi Marching Band melodiously playing to hail this auspicious moment.

A grand *annakut* devoutly prepared by the women devotees was offered to the newly installed *murtis*. Devotees also performed *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni.

In the *murti-pratishtha* assembly, the senior sadhus addressed the gathered devotees.

WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY

From 2.00 to 4.00 p.m. a special assembly for women devotees was held in which *balikas*, *kishoris*, *yuvatis* and elder women presented an inspiring dance-drama titled 'Mirabai'. The assembly also featured bhajans, speeches and discussions by senior women devotees.

EVENING ASSEMBLY

In the evening assembly, the progress in



Inauguration of the special souvenir magazine tracing the history of satsang in Africa.

society due to the contributions of the mandir was presented. There were speeches by the sadhus and narration of personal experiences by devotees. Peter, a native African devotee, revealed, "Even if the entire world becomes secular, I will always remain a devotee of the Swaminarayan Sampraday." An informative video of the social activities performed by BAPS was shown and a traditional dance was performed by *kishores*. After felicitation of the invited dignitaries, the assembly concluded with a speech by Dr Swami.

13 December:

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

This auspicious day began with the video darshan of Swamishri, who was in Mumbai, India. The devotees of Kampala had decided to honour Swamishri's beloved Shri Harikrishna Maharaj on this day and devotees of all ages participated.

To commemorate Swamishri's birthday, the local municipality declared that the road passing in front of the BAPS mandir would henceforth be named 'Swaminarayan Road'.

In the evening, over 3,000 devotees attended Swamishri's birthday celebration assembly. The assembly featured traditional dances performed to the bhajans "*Lago chho pyārā...*," and "*Akshar-Purushottamnā dankā digantmā sambhalāy chhe...*" and a drama. Also, there were speeches by

the sadhus, including: Anandswarup Swami – 'Removing Inner Ignorance', Kothari Swami – 'Swamishri's Humility', Tyagvallabh Swami – 'Swamishri's Saintliness' and Dr Swami – 'Creator of a Brighter Future – Pramukh Swami Maharaj'.

The young girls and women devotees had devoutly prepared garlands of many varieties. These were offered by the senior sadhus to a *murti* of Swamishri. Then a 90-ft. garland was offered to the *murti* of Swamishri by all the sadhus and the leading devotees of East Africa.

All the 3,000 devotees then participated in the *samuha arti* offered to Swamishri. A spectacular round of fireworks ended the memorable birthday assembly.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION ASSEMBLY

Although few in number, the devotees of Kampala had served with great affection and dedication to ensure the success of the golden jubilee celebrations. A special assembly was held to honour and appreciate their selfless services. Dr Swami addressed the assembly stressing the message, "BAPS – One family".

15 December:

SHIBIRS

After the successful conclusion of the celebrations, the volunteers who had served in the festival and their families participated in a three-day shibir at the Munyonyo Resort. The attendees were divided into three groups by age:

- *Balaks* – shibir theme: 'Be Adarsh';
- *Kishores* – shibir theme: 'One Step Ahead';
- *Elders* – shibir theme: 'Pillars of Satsang'

Through speeches by the sadhus, enlightening and entertaining audio-visual presentations, discussions, interactive sessions and question-answer sessions, the messages of the various *shibirs* were effectively conveyed.

Thus, with the grace and blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the golden jubilee celebrations of Satsang in Uganda were marked with great fanfare. ♦

KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

15 December 2010 to 17 January 2011, Gujarat, India

A total of over 12,000 BAPS men and women volunteers participated in the 18 two-day Karyakar Shibirs held at seven venues throughout Gujarat between 15 December 2010 and 17 January 2011.

Between 650 and 700 *karyakars* were present in each *shibir*, in which they were guided by senior sadhus (Mahant Swami, Dr Swami and Ishwarcharan Swami), and other learned and experienced sadhus on the theme 'Pratigna' - 'Pledge' - through speeches and question-answer sessions.



The speech topics included: Niyam-Dharma, Tolerance, Purity of Speech, Reading Sampradaya Texts, Upasana, Dedication, Obedience, The Will to Act.

The *shibir* message was elaborated upon through audio-visual presentations and discussions. The *karyakars* were also given a calendar of activities for the forthcoming year and were guided on how to execute their administrative responsibilities more efficiently and effectively. ♦

BAL KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

17 December 2010 to 9 January 2011

A total of over 7,000 *Bal* and *balika mandal* volunteers and sadhus attended the annual Bal Karyakar Shibirs held at 11 venues throughout Gujarat between 17 December 2010 and 9 January 2011. The theme of the *shibirs* was 'Thaiye Swami Jeva' - 'Let us Become Like Swami'.

Through speeches by senior and learned sadhus, audio-visual presentations, skits and other interesting presentations, the volunteers



gained a deeper insight into Swamishri's life work ethic, devotion to guru and other aspects of his saintly life.

They also received guidance on how to conduct their *sabhas* better and also participated in various competitions.

At the end of each *shibir*, volunteers pledged to strengthen their personal satsang and strive to cultivate virtues like Swamishri's. ♦

THE SWAMINARAYAN SCHOOL RANKED AS TOP INDEPENDENT SCHOOL IN LONDON

13 January 2011

The Swaminarayan School, founded by His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1991, ranked first in London and fourth in England in the Independent Schools League Table published by *The Daily Telegraph* on 13 January 2011.

Further, the BBC's Secondary Schools Table, using a slightly different system, showed that The Swaminarayan School ranked 20th in England from over 4,000 secondary schools of all types - independent, selective and state. ♦

The league tables chart the performance of English secondary schools in GCSE examinations taken in summer 2010. Despite finishing two places below last year's overall ranking, the School actually achieved a higher performance score of 620, compared to the previous year's

score of 609, demonstrating the continued improvement at the School.

Congratulations to the staff, students, parents and all associated with the School for this outstanding achievement. ♦

ASIA PACIFIC KISHORE-KISHORI INDIA TRIP AND SHIBIR 'SANSKRUTI 2010'

20 December 2010 to 10 January 2011

From 20 December 2010 to 10 January 2011, more than 66 youngsters from the Asia Pacific region participated in an educational Satsang trip to India and a Kishore-Kishori Shibir.

The trip started in New Delhi with a stay at Swaminarayan Akshardham and a pilgrimage to Chhapaiya, the sacred birthplace of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The youngsters, from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, then went to Sarangpur for a 5-day *shibir*. The theme of the *shibir* was 'Sanskriti - Mandir, Shastra, Sant'. Learned sadhus gave enlightening lectures, presentations and speeches on a variety of topics. There were many interactive activities, question-answer sessions and group discussions on how to advance in satsang and meet the challenges of daily life. The evening sessions included an interesting story-telling presentation and a melodious Kirtan Bhakti performance by



sadhus. The *shibir* provided the youngsters a cultural experience with practical lessons of life in India, cooking and a visit to the nearby village of Tajpur to experience traditional village life.

The *shibir* motivated all the *kishores* and *kishoris* to take positive steps towards preserving their satsang values, culture, language and traditions.

The group then pilgrimaged to many of the BAPS *shikharbaddh* mandirs in Gujarat, during which they learnt about the history of the mandirs and the dedication of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj in creating these mandirs.

The 20-day India experience culminated with Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan and guidance in Mumbai. Overall, the India trip and *shibir* left the youngsters feeling enriched, enlightened and eager to come again. ♦

PRAYERS FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

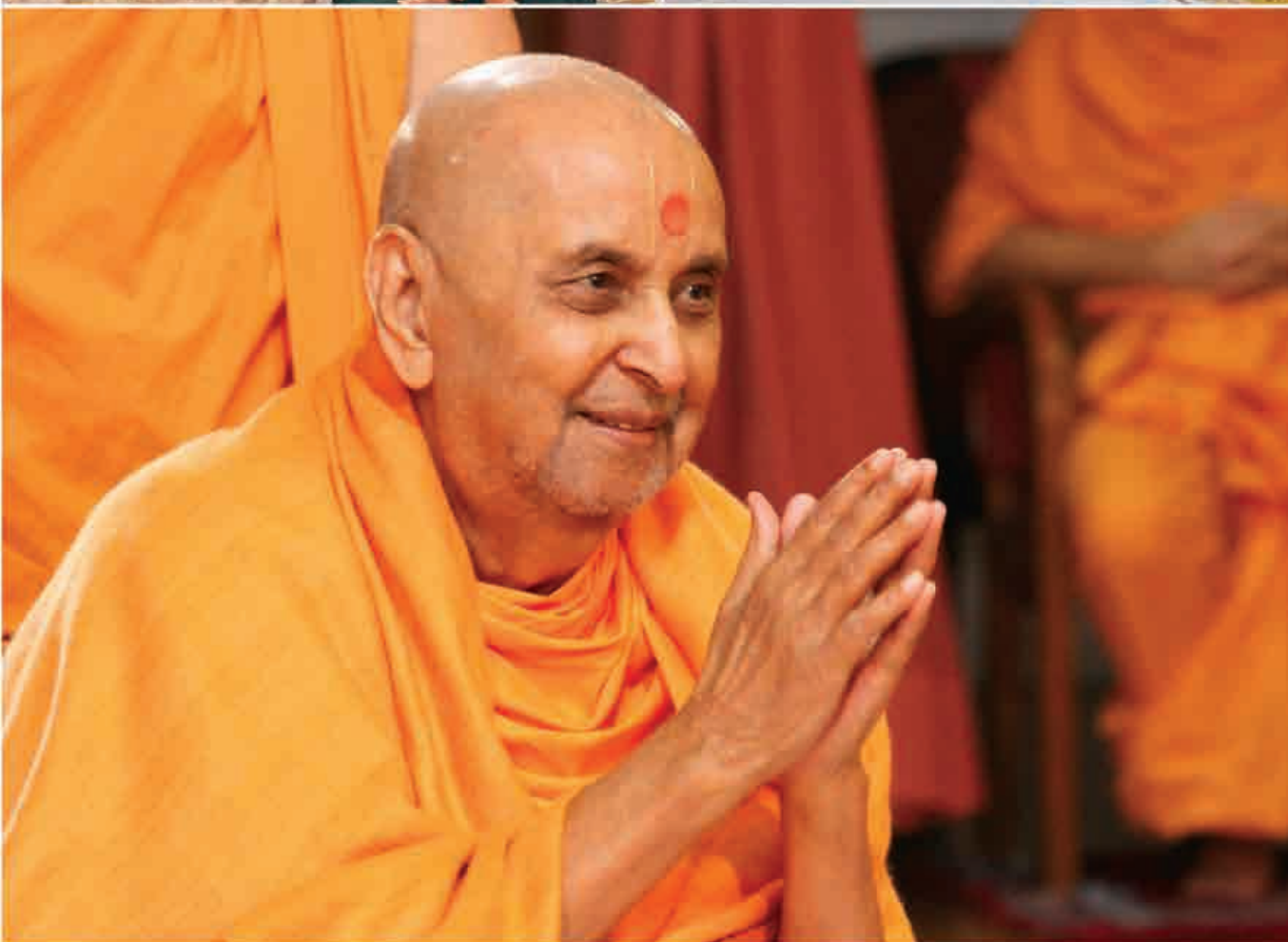
23 January 2011, Melbourne, Australia

Following the recent massive floods in Australia which have disrupted the lives of many people across the nation, BAPS balaks and balikas in Melbourne gathered together to pray for the victims.

On 23 January 2011, 30



balaks and balikas participated in the samuha puja held to offer prayers for peace and stability for the flood victims. As part of the prayers, balaks also recited the Shantipath, Vedic prayers for world peace and harmony. ♦



SWAMISHRI IN MUMBAI December 2010

Every morning during his stay in Mumbai, Swamishri would first have darshan of Shri Nilkanth Varni in the *abhishek mandap* while a sadhu offered *abhishek* to the *murti*. Then, Swamishri would touch the sanctified water to his eyes (1) and have darshan of the guru *parampara murtis*, also in the *abhishek mandap* (2).

Thereafter, Swamishri would have darshan in the main mandir, while sadhus sang a bhajan. Then Swamishri would perform his morning puja in the Yogi Hall, during which sadhus and distinguished professional artistes gave vocal and instrumental performances. After puja, he would bid 'Jai Swaminarayan' to everyone (3) and then reveal his inspiring daily message for Dhanurmas. Devotees daily expressed their joy at Swamishri's puja darshan and good health.

'PRAMUKH PRASAD' INAUGURATED IN MUMBAI

The BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir Complex in Dadar, Mumbai, comprises of the Mandir, Akshar Bhuvan, Yogi Sabha Hall and now the new Pramukh Prasad building (centre).



UTTARAYAN IN MUMBAI

(Below, Inset) After his morning puja, Swamishri hails the traditional call of "Swaminarayan Hare.... Sacchhidanand Prabho..." on Uttarayan Day in the presence of thousands of devotees in Yogi Hall (14 January 2011).

