

SWAMINARAYAN

BLISS

June 2009

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SWAMINARAYAN MAHAMANTRA

Glory and Benefits



OPENING OF HAVELI, BAPS SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR, LA

Based on intricate wooden Haveli architecture, the magnificent new Haveli at BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Chino Hills, Los Angeles, USA was inaugurated with a traditional Vedic *mahapuja* ceremony on 26 April 2009.

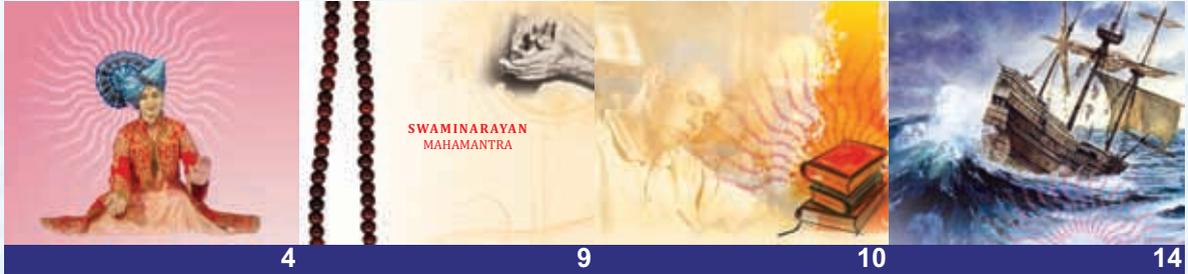
Title Cover: Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Akshardham, Gandhinagar



SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

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The Swaminarayan Mahamantra articles in this special issue are translations by Yogi Trivedi, USA, from the *Swaminarayan Prakash* April 2009 issue.





THE SWAMINARAYAN MAHAMANTRA

A Blessing in Disguise

*Bhagwan Swaminarayan gave us a very special gift.
Do we realize its value? The Swaminarayan mantra
was given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan to the paramhansas and his
devotees over 200 years ago.*

*Since then, many more have made use of it and benefitted
from it in the past 200 years. The Swaminarayan mantra has
worked wonders to help stabilize, control, and develop the minds,
bodies and souls of countless individuals. It has proved
valuable to all those who have endeavoured to make the most of it.*

Do we realize its value? Its utility?

*Gujarati Text: Sadhu Aksharvatsaldas
Synopsis & Translation: Yogi Trivedi, USA*

BHAGWAN SWAMINARAYAN

The primary appraising factor for a gift is an introduction of the giver or donor. Bhagwan Swaminarayan was born on 2 April 1781 in Chhapaiya, a small village on the banks of the Saryu River in Uttar Pradesh, India. He was recognized by the British as one of the most influential persons in Gujarat, and was hailed as one of the most dedicated and dynamic reformers to groom India's spiritual, social, and cultural personality. His disciples included some of the greatest poets and sadhus of India – Brahmanand, Premanand, Muktanand and Nishkulanand. Bishop Heber and Sir John Malcom, representatives of the Anglican Church and British Raj in India, were among the first to meet and write about him. In fact, word of his work and reform had sailed across the Indian Ocean to England and inked its way into numerous journals and publications.^{1,2} He influenced literary and historical minds such as Prof. Monier Williams of Oxford University,³ Françoise Mallison,⁴ and the famous Gandhian, Kishorelal Mashruwalla.⁵ Mahatma Gandhi took Bhagwan Swaminarayan's contributions seriously too, "Sahajanand has reformed Gujarat more so than any Government has or ever will."⁶ Most importantly, countless people worshipped him as God or Bhagwan while he was alive – something that was never heard of before.

MANTRA-JAAP IN SANATANA DHARMA AND OTHER WORLD RELIGIONS

The second appraising factor is the value of the gift as judged by past recipients. In this case let's take a look at the value of mantras in various traditions, as assessed by sages, learned men, and communities. Mantra-jaap or chanting is an ancient spiritual practice at the foundation of Sanatana Dharma and various world religions. The Sanskrit word 'mantra' refers to something that is repeatedly chanted for protection and cleansing of one's mind, body and soul. The first mantra known to man is found in

the Rig Veda.⁷ It is known as the sound of creation and the voice of God. It is the foundation of Sanatana Dharma and the spirit in all of us – ॐ, Aum. Various other mantras were given or discovered by the ancient sages, like the Gayatri mantra by Sage Vishwamitra⁸ over 10,000 years ago. In fact, every verse of the Vedas was then known as a mantra. The chanting of these mantras became a ritual and form of worship for spiritual aspirants. Thousands of years later in the Puranic era, a specific type of mantra gained prominence – a mantra that sang God's glory and greatness, a mantra that is a form of God – his name. In the Brahmaand Purana, Veda Vyasji says, "There is enough power in the mantra-jaap of God's name to cleanse and purify the highest amount of sins committed by the entire universe's living beings."⁹

Many people ridicule the idea of so much power in a single word or name. How can anyone's or anything's name be so powerful? The answer is simple. Let's take the example of trying to meet a celebrity. You may try to call his office, email him, and if you are desperate enough, even try to stalk him, but chances of getting even within 100 feet of him are pretty slim. However, if you were to know a friend of his, a co-star or a public official who was willing to let you use his name as a reference, you may have a better shot at receiving an audience. The public official's name is enough to get you through to the celebrity. Similarly, God's name carries his strength and energy. The mantra is one of his forms. Chanting the name of God or his mantra is the same as being constantly in his company or in communion with him. It is as if you are with God himself. The mantra carries God's power and strength. It is God.

The Vamana Purana says, "If God's name is constantly in the hearts, minds and lips of a devotee, there is no need for him to go to any of the pilgrimage places. He has earned the merits of numerous Ashwamedh yagnas, and he

has learned the knowledge of the Rig Veda too.”¹⁰ The various *acharyas* of the Bhakti Sampradayas, such as, Ramanujacharya, Vallabhacharya, Nimbarkacharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, along with the *bhakta*-poets, such as, Tulsidas, Surdas, Mirabai, Sant Jnaneshwar, and Narsinh Mehta also emphasized the need for chanting God’s name or what is also known as mantra-*jaap*. Today, Hindus from all across the sub-continent not only practice mantra-*jaap*, but think of it as an irreplaceable means to attaining God.

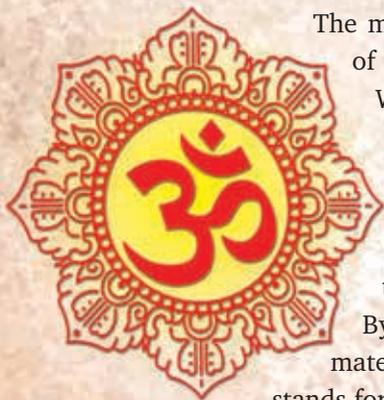
Sanatana Dharma also influenced Buddhism and Jainism. The renowned Jain mantra ‘Om Namoh Arihantaanam’ and the Buddhist mantra ‘Om Manipadme Kavachaay Hum’ are chanted by millions of followers around the world. As Buddhism made its way through trade routes into Japan and China so did mantra-*jaap*. Mantra-*jaap* is known in the Chinese tradition as ‘Zhenyan’ and in the Japanese as ‘On’yomi’. Similar influences are seen in the Zoroastrian, Sikh, Islamic and Christian traditions. The Sufi poets of Islam based their spiritual routines on the chanting of the 99 names of Allah. Between the 9th and 13th centuries, Chanting and Gregorian Chanting developed in various forms among Christians.

In the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, mantra-

jaap carries a lot of importance. Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami said in one of his sermons, “Today, there is no mantra more powerful than the Swaminarayan mantra. It makes even the poison of a black cobra ineffective and dispels the desire for material pleasures. With it, one becomes *brahmarup* and is freed from the bondage of *kal*, karma and *maya*. That is how powerful this mantra is. Therefore, always chant it” (Swamini Vato 1.153). Hard to believe? Recall the incident of Yogiji Maharaj, the cobra, Gondal Akshar Deri, and the Swaminarayan mantra. Yogiji Maharaj was cured of the poisonous venom by the power of chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. There are many incidents that demonstrate the healing power of the Swaminarayan mantra. More of those stories are mentioned on page 20.

In another one of his sermons Gunatitanand Swami says, “What should one do when in difficulty? This question was asked. The answer, chant ‘Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan,’ so that the worry is resolved” (Swamini Vato 1.272). There are thousands of examples of how chanting of the Swaminarayan mantra has brought peace, solace, progress, and stability to individuals in their personal, family, social, educational and professional lives. A few of these inspiring and motivating incidents have been published

AUM



The most sacred symbol in Hindu Dharma, Aum (OM), is the sound of the infinite.

When you pronounce AUM: A – emerges from the throat, originating in the region of the navel, U – rolls over the tongue, M – ends on the lips. It is the sum and substance of all the words that can emanate from the human throat.

Aum is said to be the essence of all mantras; Aum is said to be the essence of the Vedas.

By sound and form, Aum symbolizes the infinite Brahman (ultimate reality) and the entire universe. A stands for Creation; U stands for Preservation; M stands for Destruction or dissolution.

“One who chants AUM, which is the closest form of Brahman, approaches Brahman. This liberates one from the fear of the material world.” - Rig Veda

in the article beginning on page 14.

Today in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life reflects his immense faith in the power of mantra-*jaap* and the Swaminarayan mantra. His faith in the Swaminarayan mantra has lifted many individuals around the world away from blind faith, superstition, and the intimidating ways of sorcerers, deceptive astrologers and phony psychics. Some of these moving incidents have been collected and shared in the article starting on page 26. These stories demonstrate the power of mantra-*jaap* in establishing true faith towards God and his *gunatit* Sadhu.

The ancient spiritual tradition of mantra-*jaap* is arguably one of the most common and widespread spiritual practices around the world, but it does not lack a scientific basis. The positive effects of mantra-*jaap* have been noted by physicians, medical journals and media outlets.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE SUPPORTING MANTRA-JAAP

Scientific evidence also adds some limited value in showing the importance and effectiveness of this gift of mantra-*jaap*. The first such study was published by Dr Herbert Benson of Harvard University in 1970. His study stated the positive and substantial effects of meditation and mantra-*jaap* on medical patients suffering from a variety of ailments. Medical professionals were awestruck

at first. However, numerous studies since then have demonstrated the power and influence of mantra to heal, stabilize and help people. In fact, *The Boston Globe* refers to Benson's study saying, "It (mantra-*jaap* or chanting) can bring scientifically demonstrable benefits."¹¹

The following examples further demonstrate the effect of mantra-*jaap* on our lives as accepted by leading scientists and research institutes.

The Telegraph, a reputed daily published in the UK, published an article on an American Neuroscience and Biochemistry Conference in 2005. In front of 34,000 colleagues from around the world, a group of neuroscientists presented their research on the positive effects of chanting and meditation, such as, substantial improvements in sleep disorders, anti-aging effects on the body and mind and countering symptoms of attention deficit disorder.¹²

A similar study at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston showed that 20 individuals who regularly chanted a mantra were able to better develop the part of their brain that is directly connected with long-term and short-term memory and effective decision making.¹³

Dr Alfred Tomets, a French neurolinguist conducted a study with a few monks from the Benedictine Monastery in France. The study showed that those monks who incorporated chanting and meditation as part of their daily routines were able to focus and work more effec-

GAYATRI MANTRA

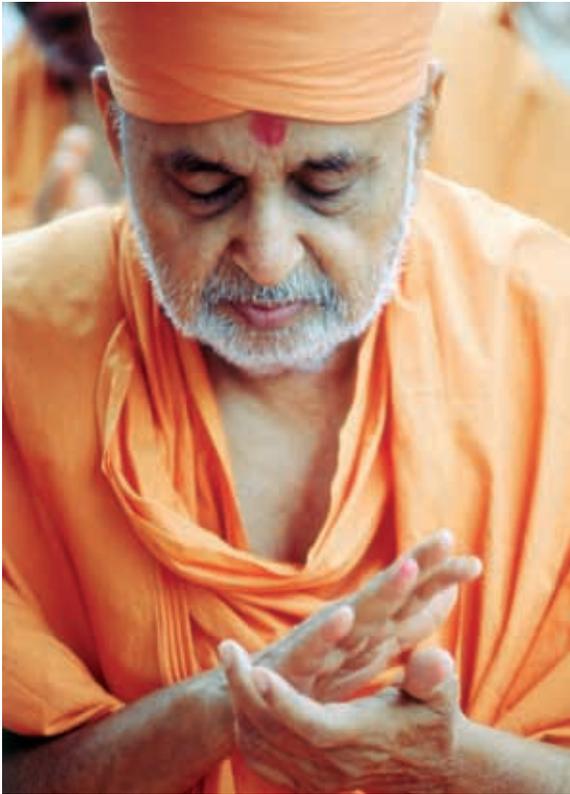
The Gayatri Mantra inspires wisdom: May Almighty God illuminate our intellect to lead us along the righteous path. The mantra is also a prayer to the giver of light and life, the sun (*savitur*).

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं । भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Aum bhoor bhuvah svaha, tat savitur varenyam;

Bhargo devasaya dheemahi dhiyo yo naha prachodayāt.

O God! Thou art the Giver of Life, Remover of pain and sorrow,
The Bestower of happiness, O! Creator of the Universe,
May we receive thy supreme sin-destroying light,
May Thou guide our intellect in the right direction.



tively. To prove his point, a few monks were instructed to stop the chanting for a lengthy time period and were noticed to be more prone to being lazy, less-efficient, and more afflicted with minor illnesses.¹⁴

A study published in the *Indian Journal of Physiology & Pharmacology*, and conducted at the Vivekanand Yoga Centre and Research Foundation in Bangalore explores the benefits of chanting the 'Aum' mantra on a regular basis. The study states that those who chanted the mantra regularly had a steadier heart rate, were more alert and able to enjoy deeper relaxation.¹⁵

In 1998, the same researchers published a study stating that the chanting of a spiritual mantra or God's name bears these positive effects. However, the same cannot be held true for the chanting of ordinary names, combination of words, and numbers.¹⁶

We mentioned earlier that these scientific studies and publications add limited value. They are of limited value since, though many of these incidents have been noted in reputed journals

and publications, these incidents are just names and numbers until, of course, they touch your heart and home. Facts tell and stories sell.

In this issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* and the next, we will share stories that illustrate how mantra-*jaap* and the Swaminarayan mantra have changed individuals around the globe and helped them prosper in their personal, family, social, educational, professional and spiritual lives. These stories are testaments to the power and relevance of the gift of the Swaminarayan mantra today, though it was given to us by Bhagwan Swaminarayan over 200 years ago. These stories will reveal how the Swaminarayan mantra is not an ordinary gift – it is truly a blessing in disguise, but only by using it does it bring benefit.

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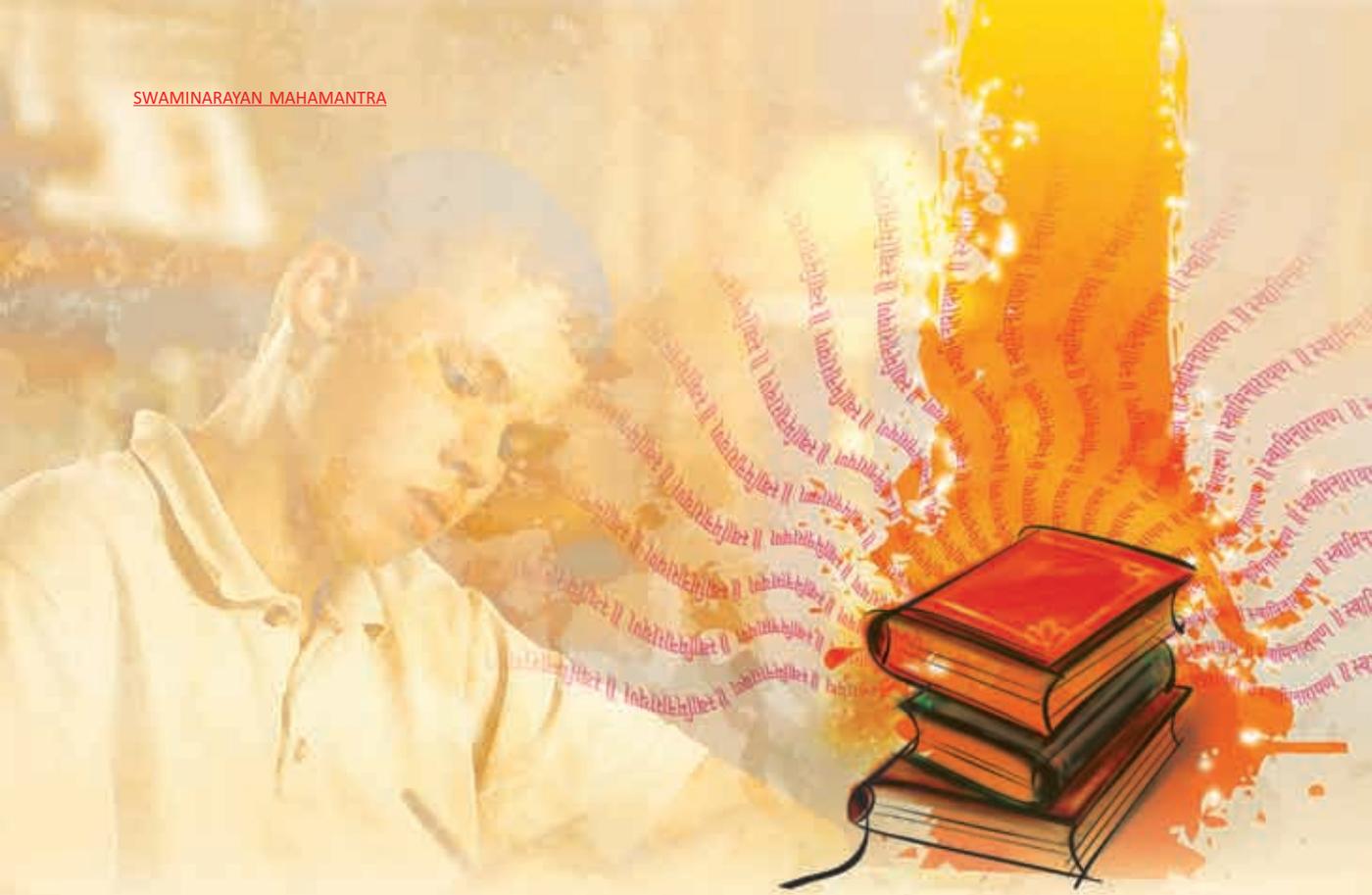


SWAMINARAYAN MAHAMANTRA Personal Experiences

Machines and technology offer convenience, luxury and power. Yet, neither of them inspires inner strength, energy and the desire to succeed. The mantra is the source for all of these. The Swaminarayan mantra has inspired strength in millions of individuals over the past 200 years. The following articles tell true stories of faith, courage, excellence, stability, patience, loyalty and perfection inspired by the Swaminarayan mantra. They show the power of the Swaminarayan mantra if put to work by an individual.

These personal experiences are not from 200 years ago. They are the experiences of our peers living in the same world as we do. They share the same difficulties, pains and sufferings as we do.

They were able to experience the bliss, success and joy that we all desire and aim for. These men and women relive these experiences with each passing day, because these experiences have been etched in their minds and hearts forever. These experiences have taught them the way. We pray that they will do the same for you...



EDUCATION

Climbing to the Top

Every student wants to succeed. When was the last time someone took a test to fail?

No one starts to climb a mountain so that they can quit half way up.

So then why do students drop out, get left back, and at times even commit suicide?

Not everyone has the capacity and ability to always do well.

Even the brightest students often feel they lack the drive or the energy to keep going, to get to the top. The following stories share the personal experiences of a few who found the energy, drive, and motivation to keep going. They were able to succeed.

They were able to handle failure. They were able to stop for a short breath when needed and continue the hike. They were able to climb to the top.

How? Let us see...

RECOVERING FROM SHOCK

Keeping steady in the most shaky circumstances...



Anand Rajendrabhai Patel

B.E. Electronics and Communications, Nirma Institute of Engineering

The world was getting ready to tear the March 2008 calendar page. I was getting ready to do a lot more. I was going to complete my final year exams in engineering. I was prepping for my finals and getting ready for graduation. I couldn't wait. But it was on the first day of April that the unexpected happened. My family was preparing for a *sat-sang* assembly at our house. My uncle and grandfather were making last minute arrangements for the sadhus. They were coming to do *katha* today. My father walked into the house, smiled at me, and asked me how the exams were going. I responded positively. He started to help my uncle. A few minutes passed, when suddenly I saw my father double over in pain and collapse. It all happened so quickly. I was not used to seeing my father in pain. He had never even complained of a cold or a headache before. We rushed him to the hospital. The doctors tried to revive him but weren't hopeful. In just a few minutes after reaching the hospital, my father died of cardiac arrest. He suffered his first and last heart attack at 43. My family was in shock. My mother, little sister, uncle, aunt, grandmother and grandfather were in tears. I tried to keep strong, but it was no use. I couldn't hold up against their tears. I broke down. In a few minutes, we received a phone call from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He said, "Rajendrabhai was a great devotee. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has taken him to Akshardham."

Those words brought a feeling of peace and satisfaction in our hearts. The next day family members started arriving from around India and the world. Everyone was gathering at my house for my father's last rites. There was only one problem. Amidst all that chaos and the whirlwind of people, I realized that my last engineering exam was on the day of the funeral. I was rattled; I was not in the mental condition or capacity to take the exam. What was I going to do? I remembered what my father had told

me once – the power of mantra-*jaap*.

I went to the crematorium and finished the last rites. I took a shower and headed straight to college for the exam. On my way to college all I did was mantra-*jaap*. I walked into the examination room and sat down. I folded my hands, closed my eyes and did *dhun*. I prayed to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I asked them to stay with me. I felt a sense of energy and stability. The past couple of days had been traumatic. I hadn't had a chance to look at my coursework. I finished the exam, without as much as an urge to look over my neighbour's shoulders. I won't lie. The exam was difficult, but I had faith. I felt the presence of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj with me the entire time.

A few weeks after the exam, I learned that I ranked number one in the entire college. I graduated my four years of engineering school with honours throughout. I was awarded the gold medal for my educational excellence. My friends, classmates, and family members showered me with praises, but I knew the truth. The only way a student can succeed is if he remains calm and stable during an exam. Most students are a nervous wreck a few hours before an exam. I realized that I was able to remain calm because of mantra-*jaap* and prayer. I was able to focus, keep steady, and maintain composure even during these shaky circumstances.

This experience will stay with me forever. I will cherish it for a lifetime. If it wasn't for the Swaminarayan mantra, I don't know if my family and I would have been able to get through the shock of my father's death. I can't imagine those few days without the Swaminarayan mantra.

My father wanted me to succeed. I was able to, despite the circumstances. The Swaminarayan mantra helped me to succeed.

GIVING CREDIT

Ranking first in the entire state...



Dr Vrajlal P. Patel

MD, Pramukh Swami Health Care and Research Centre, Ahmedabad

If there is one thing that I have learned from Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, it is having faith in the Swaminarayan mantra. A few experiences have proven to me that faith in the Swaminarayan mantra helps achieve peace, success, and perfection.

My daughter, Upasana, is now a doctor. However, since she was in high school, my wife and I made it a point to teach her about the power of the Swaminarayan mantra. Most students like to cram last minute information into their heads before an exam, others like to joke and relax a few minutes before an exam. We tried to get her to do something different. Before every exam, we made it a point to put all her books and notes away for about an hour. We would encourage her to do mantra-*jaap* or listen to kirtans or sing the Swaminarayan *dhun*. This soon became a habit. She would stop studying an hour before every exam, and focus on praying to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. We never had to force her. She noticed the difference.

Upasana was preparing for her 12th grade exams. It's a big deal in India. She worked hard and studied, but we hadn't set a specific goal for her, nor did we tell her to work extra hard for it. We figured she would get a decent score; a score good enough to get into a good college. The day of the exam, she stopped studying an hour before she was to leave. She started singing the Swaminarayan *dhun* and prayed. She left all her notes and textbooks at home and did mantra-*jaap* all the way to school. Once she was given the exam paper, she folded her hands and prayed. She chanted Swaminarayan five times and started writing. A few weeks later, I got a call from one of her teachers. Upasana had ranked highest in the whole state! Upasana wasn't the least bit surprised. She

knew that it was the Swaminarayan mantra that had helped her perform to the best of her abilities. This is probably why she continued to excel in medical school too.

Upasana's experience wasn't much of a surprise. I had experienced something similar when I was in medical school of MS University in Vadodra. It was my final exam before graduating. The format was deadly. The professors would bring in a patient from the local Pratsinhji Hospital and ask a barrage of questions regarding the symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment for his/her illness. Every year, the professors would usually test the students with a tuberculosis patient. This year wasn't any different. There were twelve of us students. I was the last on the list. Waiting is sometimes the greatest test. I was starting to get fidgety, but then realized that I needed to stay calm. I started chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. I closed my eyes and performed mantra-*jaap*. It helped. Finally, it was my turn to go in. I walked in the door and noticed that the professors were laughing and joking. I immediately realized that something was wrong. The patient brought in for my particular examination was not a tuberculosis patient. He was an asthmatic patient. It turned out that there were only 11 tuberculosis patients in the hospital, so they picked up a random patient for my exam. The professors thought they would be able to stump me. I closed my eyes and chanted the Swaminarayan mantra five times. They rained a series of questions one after another. I answered them confidently. They fired more, but I was able to hold my ground, sometimes answering questions before they finished asking them! They were astounded. They praised my ability to answer the questions. One of them even asked how I was able to retain so much information. I just

smiled and remained silent. Actually, the truth was that my wife had been an asthma patient for the last three years. I had dived so deep into the symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment options available that this was a piece of cake for me. I realized that there was no way I would have been able to perform this well, if a tuberculosis

patient had been presented in front of me. I immediately closed my eyes and thanked Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The Swaminarayan mantra had come to my rescue again. My daughter, Upasana, and I believe that mantra-*jaap* is the key to success in a student's academic career.

ONWARD BOUND

The strength to keep going and going...



Kaushal Rajendrabhai Dave

Electrical and Communications Engineer, Portland, Oregon, USA

I graduated from an engineering college in Gujarat and made my way to California in 2005. I came to America with one mental note – the Swaminarayan mantra works wonders when you need it most. Let me celebrate.

I was trying to get admission into the engineering college in Ranpur, Gujarat. They only accepted around a hundred from the six thousand applicants. It seemed impossible. I used to worry about it every day. Would I get accepted? I couldn't stop worrying. In those days, I made it a habit to go to the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Ranpur every evening. I would chant the Swaminarayan mantra while doing *pradakshina* around the *murtis*. I felt confident and calm when I was doing the mantra-*jaap*. I started taking out more time every evening. I noticed a change. I was able to focus better in school. I was more energetic and driven to succeed.

I succeeded. I ranked 93 out of the 6,000 students and was accepted into the engineering programme. I finished four years of engineering college and then decided to pursue further education in the United States.

I was accepted in the Masters programme at the reputed University of Southern California. I was ready to take on the world. Things changed. High with my acceptance into such a reputed programme, I started to lax in my efforts. I started taking everything easy, preparing less for exams, and skipping classes. It cost me. My grades started dropping and I wasn't learning everything that

I should have been grasping. I didn't realize it till the last semester. I was assigned to work on a project to design a specific communications chip. I didn't have a partner. I started to work on the project, but realized that I lacked the knowledge needed to complete the assignment. I spent long sleepless nights at the labs and drank pots of black coffee, but it was no use. I couldn't get it to work. I was starting to get frustrated. How was I going to face my family and friends back home? How was I going to repay the financial loans, if I didn't pass and find a job? How was I going to continue living if I failed miserably? I started to get depressed. I was losing ground. I remembered my days at Ranpur. I started chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. I would stand on one leg in front of a *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj in my apartment. I would do mantra-*jaap* and *mala* for long periods. It made a difference. I started to gain courage. I started to believe in myself. I decided to give the project one more shot. I am glad that I did. I achieved the desired results. In fact, I got the highest possible grade on the project. I was cleared to graduate. I made it. I was able to work hard and pull through with the help of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the Swaminarayan mantra.

Today, I work in one of the most reputed engineering firms in the world. I make a decent living and work hard for my company. ◆



CAREER AND DEVELOPMENT

Smooth Sailing

*Most people work to put food on the table.
A few work to make a career and to put something into their life.
Irrespective of the reason that we work, each of us faces difficulties.
Each of us faces ups and downs – a set of crests and troughs that buffet
our mental stability resulting in stress, pressure and frustration.
The experiences shared here reveal how these people were able to
ride the waves. They were able to sail smoothly
and land ashore. How? Let us see...*

SOARING HIGH

30,000 feet into the sky and not alone...



Dhaval M. Patel

Flight First Officer, Kenyan Airways, Nairobi, Kenya

I remember the first time I had to fly solo. I enrolled in an aviation school in Florida in 2004. I won't deny it; I was scared. Most people are when they have to fly alone for the first time. I walked into the cockpit and placed a small *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan next to me. I closed my eyes and prayed. I chanted the Swaminarayan mantra and did *dhun*. I started to feel relaxed. It knew it was going to be just fine. In fact, I distinctly remember enjoying that flight. No one enjoys their first solo flight! I made it a routine. Every time I boarded a plane and entered the cockpit, I would place the *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan next to me, close my eyes, and chant the Swaminarayan mantra. I would pray to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj for their blessings and constant company. I always felt as if they were with me.

I was born and raised in Nakuru, Kenya. I was introduced to the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1995. The sadhus who had come to Nakuru told me to do puja daily and chant the Swaminarayan mantra while doing *mala*. I decided to comply. It was a smart choice.

Throughout my flight career I have always experienced positive flying conditions. Shortly after graduating from aviation school, I joined the United Nations as a mission's pilot. My first assignment might well have been my last. I was assigned to fly humanitarian aid and personnel to war-torn Somalia. It was scary. The country was divided by strife and ethnic hatred. At times, even our humanitarian operations were viewed as enemy operations. Now, more than ever, I realized the importance of the Swaminarayan mantra. I would chant the Swaminarayan mantra during take-off and landing. I

continued on the mission flights for seven long months. Each flight seemed like eternity, but I never encountered any accidents, attacks or mishaps. While I was working for the United Nations, I received an offer I couldn't turn down. Kenyan Airways invited me to join their commercial flight staff. I left the United Nations position. Three days after I stopped flying for the UN, I was told that my flight had been attacked by terrorists. They kidnapped my former co-pilot, and tortured and mutilated him to death. I was in shock. I had lost my friend. I would have been on that flight, if it wasn't for some sort of divine intervention.

I didn't change my routine at Kenyan Airways. I continued taking the *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan with me and chanting the Swaminarayan mantra before take off. I used to get all sorts of questions from the staff, and I would patiently explain my little prayer routine to them. Some of them would even join me!

When I first started with Kenyan Airways, I was assigned to fly propeller jets. Propeller planes aren't the easiest planes to fly. In fact, they can be quite tricky. The twin-propeller plane that I would fly often had started to become a nuisance to all of the other pilots. Everyone would complain about some sort of mechanical problem, except for me. For some reason, I never experienced any technical difficulties; not a single warning light or indicator flashed on my shift. My colleagues were surprised that I never experienced any sort of issues with the aircraft. They would ask me what my lucky charm was. I smiled and told them about the Swaminarayan mantra. It wasn't something I could explain or talk about. It was something they would have to experience for themselves.

Soon after, I was promoted to Flight First Officer on the international route. I fly all over the world, but never forget to take my *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan along. I always perform my puja everyday, and don't take a sip of water without doing it. I am very careful about following all of my *niyams*, including *tilak-chandlo*, eating vegetarian food, not eating

onions and garlic, and even singing *chestha* every night before going to bed. I believe that following these *niyams* gives me the strength to have faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and the Swaminarayan mantra. It helps me to realize that even 30,000 feet in the sky, I am never soaring alone. I know I am in good hands.

HAVING A HEART FOR PRAYER

A cardiac surgeon's greatest asset...



Dr Harikrishna M. Doshi

Heart Surgeon, Golden Jubilee National Hospital, Glasgow, Scotland

After completing my post-graduate studies in surgery, I went to Vellore Medical College to further perfect my paediatric cardiac surgery skills. My professor was Dr Roy John Corula. He was one of the best in the country. He always asked his students a question on the first day: what do you think is a cardiac surgeon's greatest asset? Everyone had different answers – a lion's heart, ladyfingers, judgment, courage, etc. I can avidly recollect him saying, "You are all fools. Everything you mentioned is important in performing cardiac surgery, but the most important thing is God's grace. If you don't have God's grace, then you can never become a good cardiac surgeon!"

I decided to take his advice. Technically, I had been hearing this all along. I grew up in *satsang* as a child. I was told how important it was to pray and to chant the Swaminarayan mantra. And this incident was the convincing factor. I started each and every surgery with a prayer to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I started every surgery with the *dhun* of the Swaminarayan mantra.

A few months later, I was performing cardiac surgery on a small child with Dr Corula. We completed a major portion of the surgery and were trying to get the child's heart to pick up, or start beating on its own again. The heart wouldn't pick up. We tried everything. We lis-

tened to everything. Dr Corula instructed us to perform a series of procedures to get the boy's heart to beat. Nothing seemed to work. After a few moments the heart picked up. We were all relieved. Dr Corula asked us if they had noticed what he did to get the heart to start beating again? We started naming all the procedures he had performed. He started to laugh and said, "That was all obvious. What I really did was pray. I continued praying throughout the procedures. If you don't pray as a cardiac surgeon, you cannot survive on your own."

This incident changed the intensity of my prayers and faith in the Swaminarayan mantra. I started to chant the Swaminarayan mantra while I scrub in for a surgery and don't stop until I scrub out. I realized that it provided a sense of comfort and ease. I was able to perform surgeries without any anxiety or worry. It had a calming effect.

Today, I am where I am at one of the largest cardiac treatment centres in the United Kingdom because of my success as a cardiac surgeon – because of the Swaminarayan mantra. More than 40 of the nation's best cardiac surgeons applied for the position; I was excited when I was selected.

OPERATING EFFICIENTLY

Venturing successfully into the innermost areas of the body...



Dr V. G. Panchal

Senior Neurosurgeon, Mumbai

I have been operating on the brain and some of the human body's most vital organs for over 35 years. Needless to say, they are the hardest places in the human body to operate on. I have operated at some of Mumbai's most reputed hospitals – K.E.M. Hospital, J.J. Hospital, Nair Hospital, and Sion Hospital. Each operation is more complicated than the previous. When I look back and reflect, I realize that I was able to get through each of them because of the Swaminarayan mantra.

I was introduced to the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha in 1955. In 1982 Dr Kiran Doshi brought me closer to the Sanstha and to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It was through Pramukh Swami Maharaj's constant guidance and blessings that I realized the importance of the Swaminarayan mantra. I started praying and chanting the Swaminarayan mantra before every single surgery. I would close my eyes and pray for the patient's well-being before, during and after the surgery. There are a few incidents in the past 35 years that have touched my heart.

In 1997, I was Head of the Neurosurgery Department at one of Mumbai's busiest hospitals. I was scheduled to operate on a patient's pituitary gland. It is one of the most vital glands in the body. Its location alone is what makes it so vital. The pituitary gland is located in the centre of the brain. We had to move the front part of the brain to the back before operating. We started the operation. It was business as usual, until we noticed that the anesthesia wasn't working properly. It was essential that the brain be completely relaxed before we proceeded any further. We tried a few different medications, but were not able to get the patient's brain to relax. A few medications were tried to

bring about the desired effect, but without success. All the other physicians were worried. I knew what to do. I closed my eyes and started chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. I sang *dhun* for a few minutes and noticed that the patient was reacting to the sedation. We were able to complete an otherwise lost case!

I noticed something similar in a relatively complicated surgery on a patient's spine. All the physicians had lost hope and were trying to figure out what to do next. I closed my eyes and my mantra-*jaap* yielded an option that was most beneficial for the patient. We succeeded in completing the surgery.

Another unusual case that comes to mind is that of a trauma patient. The patient had slipped into a coma shortly after he was brought into the emergency room. We tried to revive him through numerous medical procedures. They didn't work. I decided to order a set of injections that were only available outside India. While I was waiting for them to come by an Air India flight from England, I decided to try my one and only fixed prescription. I closed my eyes and started doing *dhun* of the Swaminarayan mantra near his bedside every day. The patient gained consciousness in just a few days – before the injections arrived!

These are just a few of the many incidents that I have experienced in the past 35 years. I have realized that the Swaminarayan mantra is what adds value to everything else that we medical practitioners do.

ALWAYS WITH ME

All the way to the Supreme Court...



Sandeep Rajnikant Mehta

Attorney, Partner at a prominent Indian Law Firm, Mumbai

I have experienced the efficacy of the Swaminarayan mantra as a fact. With Pramukh Swami Maharaj's grace, I was able to gain faith in the Swaminarayan mantra. There are a few specific incidents in my life .

I was preparing for the Bar exam. It was tedious. There were no guide books, study guides or special classes. I had to read through about 25,000 pages in 6 months – and of course, remember it all! I had to pass each individual exam segment in order to get my license. I tried everything, but if there was one thing that was with me all the way – it was the Swaminarayan mantra. While I was preparing for the exam, Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Doctor Swami and Pujya Kothari Swami told me to chant the Swaminarayan mantra every day. They told me that it would help me focus and get through all my exams. They were right. I passed my Bar exams with flying colours.

Even after I started my career as an attorney, the Swaminarayan mantra has been the key to my success and stability. There is one incident that moves me every time I think about it.

The year was 2004, a labour union from Uttar Pradesh had filed a petition to the Supreme Court in the name of public safety. In fact, it was just a plot to stop some much needed development my client was going to do in the local community. I knew the case was complicated. I had known since the day I was assigned to it. The petition that they had submitted required a swift and efficient response. The Supreme Court's order would affect the overall project. I worked for many sleepless nights and was starting to get worried. I needed help, and I needed it badly.

It just so happened that Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Mumbai at the time. I went for

his darshan and asked for his blessings. I told him that I needed to win the case soon. Swamishri smiled and said, "Make sure you chant Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan and do mala."

I started chanting the Swaminarayan mantra and doing *mala* every day. I would wake up in the middle of the night and start doing *mala*. I would put my documents in front of the *murtis* in my puja and chant the Swaminarayan mantra and do *dhun*. I was sure to find a solution.

I started doing 50 *malas* every day. I started to feel rejuvenated. I wasn't tense or stressed anymore. I felt confident. The day came. We made our way to the Supreme Court in New Delhi. The attorneys representing the labour union were aggressive. Just a few minutes after they presented their case, one of the Supreme Court Justices said to the others, "I think we should order a stay on the project..." My heart stopped beating for a second. It was over. They were convinced. All of the attorneys on our side started to think in desperation. I closed my eyes and started praying to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I started chanting the Swaminarayan mantra in my mind. I was sweating profusely. I was worried beyond any words can describe.

I was standing next to our Chief Attorney, Harish Salve. We looked at each other. We knew we had to do something. Before I could say anything, he presented some impressive visual evidence that made the Justices say, "I don't think we can order a stay on the project..." It all happened so quickly. We were saved. My face lit up and I immediately said, "Swaminarayan Bhagwan *ni jai!*" The case was eventually dismissed, and we were able to help our client benefit the community.

After that day, whenever I was congratulated for winning that case, I would say, “The *mala* did the magic!”

I often say, “When a plane has to land, it has to land on the runway. If you land too early, it is a crash. If you land too late, it is a crash.” My

profession mirrors that saying – timing is everything.

My experiences tell me that the Swaminarayan mantra has helped me to avoid many crashes and land safely.

PUTTING OUT THE FIRE Inside and out...

Subhashbhai Patel

Industrialist, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania



My life prior to 1995 is not worth talking about. It was filled with vices and violence. I was everything that defined indecent. In 1995, I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the first time; my life changed forever. I was able to give up all my vices, and I started living a moral and spiritual life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj instructed me to keep a *mala* with me and constantly chant the Swaminarayan mantra. With his blessings, I was able to believe in the Swaminarayan mantra and its power.

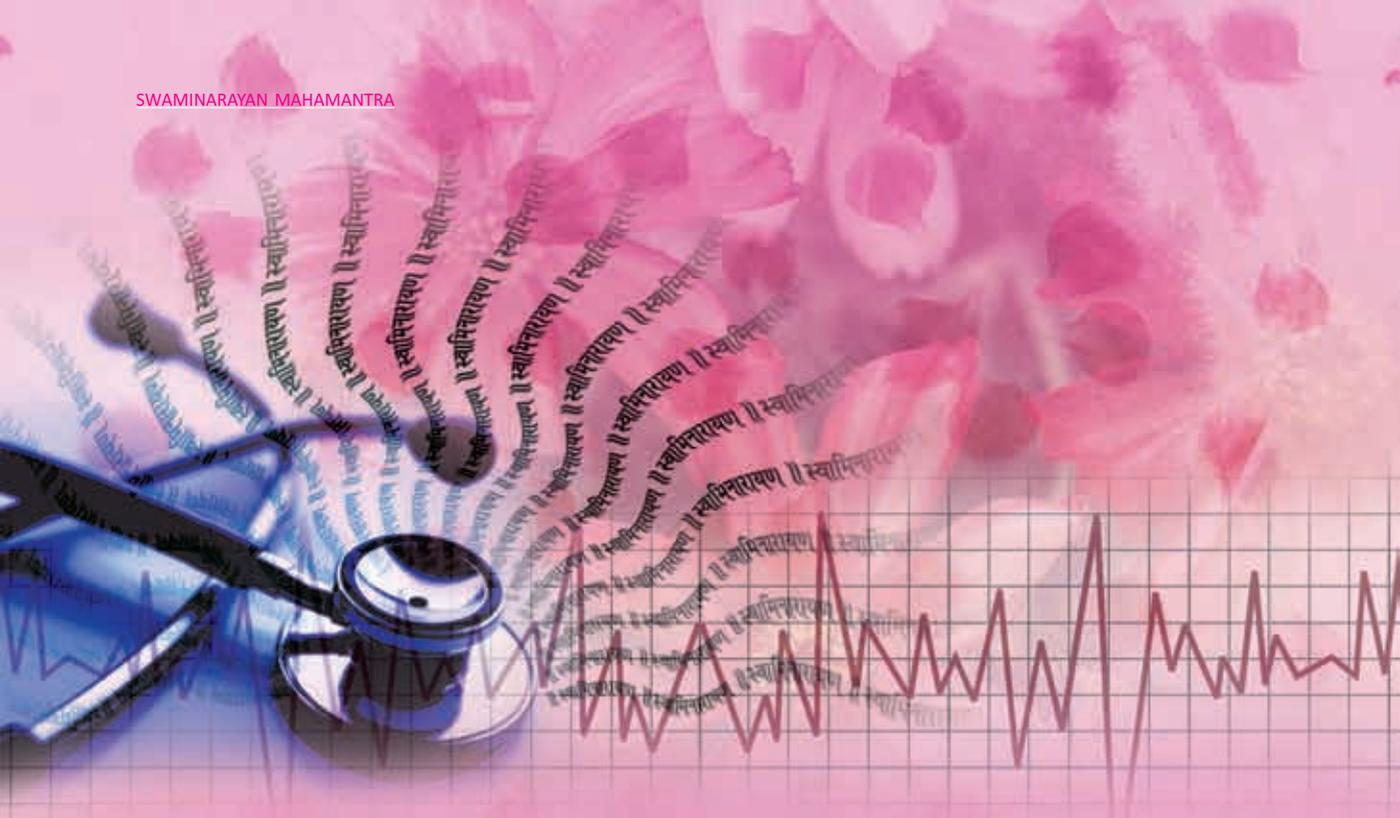
I own a factory in Tanzania called the MM Steel Mill. One summer day in 2004, a fire started in the factory. In just a few moments the factory was ablaze. Five fire engines arrived to douse the fire. They used up all of their reserve water and 250,000 litres of water from the factory tank, yet the fire was still out of control. In just a few minutes, we ran out of water. I gave up hope. I truly felt that my factory was finished. I closed my eyes and prayed to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I said, “Only you can help me. Please help us put the fire out.” I started to sing the Swaminarayan mantra out loud. I started to sing at the top of my lungs, when I noticed that the skies were crowding with clouds. Before any of us could figure out what was happening, it started to pour. The fire was put out and the rain simmered to a drizzle before it completely stopped. We were all surprised. It doesn’t usually rain out of season. I knew it was a miracle. The Swami-

narayan mantra had come to our aid.

I had a similar experience in 2007. We have a five-star hotel in Tanzania by the seashore called the Sea Cliff. I was in America at the time to drop my son off at his college in Philadelphia. It was around noon, when I got a call from Tanzania. The Sea Cliff was burning. The fire department was working hard to put out the fire, but was having trouble because of the winds. The real problem was that there was a huge petroleum tank not too far from our hotel. If that caught fire, there would be a huge explosion. Hundreds of homes, buildings and businesses would be destroyed. A few local leaders were at the scene trying to calm the crowds and assess the situation. After assessing the fire, they decided to clear the area and evacuate homes. They thought the fire would spread for many kilometres. I was getting regular updates on my phone from the scene. I decided to call Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He was in Edison, NJ, at the time. He calmed me and said, “We will say the *dhun* for you and pray for you. Chant the Swaminarayan mantra. Bhagwan Swaminarayan will take care of everything.” I started doing the *mala* and chanting the Swaminarayan mantra.

In Tanzania, the winds were making it impossible to control the fire. After a few minutes, I got a call that surprised me. The winds were settling down and the fire fighters were

(contd. on page 31)



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Staying Healthy Physically, Mentally and Emotionally

*We try to live healthy and well-balanced lives,
but living a healthy life is a blessing.*

*We take medications, dietary supplements, exercise,
and even undergo different types of emergency medical procedures.
However, all of us have experienced that there is a time when none of
these things make a difference. It is as if we have lost all control.
People and even physicians turn to a higher power – they turn to
divine intervention. Here are a few experiences when people have
turned to the Swaminarayan mantra in their time of medical need
and have found their answer..*

SURVIVING AN ANEURYSM With me in the operating room...



Jayantibhai J. Patel

Industrialist, Naranpura, Ahmedabad, India

I was born and raised in *satsang*. I have had several experiences that reveal the greatness of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the Swaminarayan mantra. Yet, there is one incident that changed my life, and more so my wife's life forever. I will share it with you in her words:

My name is Manju Jayantibhai Patel. I am 62 years old. I was introduced to the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and Pramukh Swami Maharaj after I got married. I have been fortunate to be blessed in my social, financial and marital life. I have been able to live a contented life with his grace.

In November 1998, I had a face to face meeting with death. I finished cleaning up after lunch and decided to read a little. While I was reading a religious publication, I happened to doze for a few hours. I woke up to a sharp pain in the back of my head. I called out to my husband for help, "Please give me a pain killer; it feels like I am having a brain haemorrhage. My husband dismissed the severity of the situation saying, "How would you know what a brain haemorrhage would feel like? It's not that you are a doctor!" That's the last thing I can remember. My husband tells me that I passed out on the floor in my room. My mouth started to foam, and I was unconscious. They called the family doctor, who said that my blood pressure was dangerously high and I had to be rushed to the hospital. I was rushed to Karnavati Hospital, where I was examined by a team of doctors and put through a series of tests. The test results revealed that I had a brain haemorrhage resulting from an aneurysm.

After going through preliminary treatment at Karnavati Hospital, they decided to transfer me to Navrangpura Sushrusa Hospital. The doc-

tors at Navrangpura decided that I needed an operation as soon as possible. There was one very important question. Should I get the operation done in Mumbai or Ahmedabad? All of my family members were debating the pros and cons. Fortunately, my husband decided to call Pramukh Swami Maharaj and ask him. Swamishri was extremely calm on the phone. He told my husband to get the surgery done in Ahmedabad. He said that Bhagwan Swaminarayan would make everything alright.

The date was set. I was going to have my operation done at Ahmedabad's Rajasthan Hospital. I wanted to go to the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir for darshan before my surgery. The doctors were against it, but I was adamant. I was sure that Bhagwan Swaminarayan would get me through this complicated surgery. I was carried on a stretcher to the mandir, where I sang the Swaminarayan *dhun* for a few minutes before heading towards the hospital.

I was admitted to the hospital and was waiting for my neurosurgeon, Dr Pragnesh Bhatt, to return from a conference in Mumbai. He examined my medical records and was convinced that the surgery would be a difficult one. He asked my husband if he understood the risks of such a surgery and whether he wanted him to continue the operation. My husband recalled Swamishri's blessings and nodded his head in approval. They rolled me into the operating theatre (OT) and started to operate. Outside the OT, my family members had all started to sing the Swaminarayan *dhun*. A few minutes later, Dr Bhatt came outside with a grim look on his face. He told my husband that the operation was complicated. He wasn't sure if I would pull through without permanent damage. Dr Bhatt consulted with my daughter's father-in law, who

also happens to be a doctor. They were debating whether or not to continue the operation. He was afraid that I would either lose my vision, slip into a coma or become paralyzed. My husband overheard them speaking and decided to call Pramukh Swami Maharaj again.

Swamishri told my family members to continue with the operation and to continue chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. He said everything would turn out for the best.

The operation dragged on for ten hours and then I was finally transported to the ICU to recover. The doctors tested my body for reflexes and noticed that all my body parts were working just fine. A few days later while I was recovering, I had an attack of paralysis. Once again, my family members chanted the Swaminarayan

mantra and I recovered from it in no time.

Six months later, I was going to Dr Bhatt's office for my last and final check-up. He said to me, "I am an atheist. I don't usually go to mandirs, nor do I believe in miracles. But your operation was nothing but a miracle! I want to have Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan. I was able to get through your operation with his blessings. There was no way I could have done it alone. It was such a complicated case."

I later found that he had said something similar to another physician in the elevator on the day of my operation: "I felt Pramukh Swami's presence in the OT."

I am a healthy 62-year-old now. I chant the Swaminarayan mantra regularly every day. I mean, that is how I survived.

STAYING STRONG

A beaming smile after 10 surgeries in a span of 18 months...



Valmikibhai P. Patel

Businessman, Ahmedabad, India

I was touched by the selfless service of the BAPS Charities volunteers during the aftermath of the 2001 Gujarat Earthquake. I found myself coming in closer touch with the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and Pramukh Swami Maharaj after that. As the years flew by, I started giving up the political work that I did and started serving the organization to my fullest capacity. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's persona continued to amaze me with each interaction. It was his divine guidance and one incident in my life that helped me further understand the greatness of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Swaminarayan mantra.

I was driving to the festival site in Chandkheda, Ahmedabad. It was just a few months before the BAPS Centenary Celebrations to be held in December 2007. I was going to the site to get some work finished, when my motorcycle was swiped by a car. The accident was serious. Most of the onlookers didn't think I had sur-

vived. Fortunately, there was a *satsangi* physician driving by who noticed the accident and stopped. He arranged for me to be rushed to a local hospital. I was unconscious. The sadhus and devotees arranged for my medical treatment and were extremely hopeful. It wasn't till three days later that I regained consciousness and was told that I had been in a terrible accident. Amidst the chaos of the accident and the hospital, there was only one calming factor – Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings. He had called me and told me to stay strong. It was a foreshadowing of some sort.

The doctors decided to operate on my fractured leg. They decided to operate again. I stayed in the hospital for 22 days and came home to recuperate. My doctors had advised that I rest and stay off my feet. I was starting to feel bored. A few sadhus had suggested that I read our guru *parampara's* biographies. I started reading the biographies of Gunatitanand

Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, and even various books on Swamishri's life. It really helped. I was so engrossed in the reading that I barely noticed the time fly by and my leg ache.

However, that was just the beginning. A serious complication arose with the healing in my leg. A few experts decided that it would be best to operate – again. In fact, the operations continued for months – 10 operations in just 18 months. There came a point that even the surgeons were getting tired of operating on my leg. There was one thing that surprised them. Every time I was brought into the operating theatre, I was calm, composed and ready to take on the scalpels. I wasn't the least bit frustrated or negative. There was a secret to my courage. I would chant the Swaminarayan mantra continuously for hours on end. It brought solace to my mind. I was able to relax and think of pleasant things. I was at peace.

After my ninth operation, the doctors decided that they would have to amputate my leg at the thigh. They had lost all hope in saving my leg. I was starting to lose hope too. I called Swamishri for his blessings. He gave me courage and told me to show some other doctors for a second opinion. The doctors operated

on my leg for the tenth time in December 2008. I came home and was reading Yogiji Maharaj's biography one day when something hit me. I was reading the incident about the black cobra that had bit Yogiji Maharaj in Gondal. Yogiji Maharaj survived the snake's venom with the power of the Swaminarayan mantra. Why couldn't my leg be saved too?

I was in a room by myself for months to avoid catching an infection. I sat in solitude chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. I would pray to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the strength to stay positive. It helped. Staying strong and positive is one of the most important medications for a patient with a long-term illness. One of the most crucial benefits of chanting the Swaminarayan mantra was that I was always positive. Not once did I feel alone, lost or forlorn. I knew I would get through this situation and I did.

After 10 surgeries and 24 months of rest and recovery, I am finally able to stand on my feet and even take small steps. The biographies, Swamishri's blessings and the chanting of the Swaminarayan mantra have been a source of constant strength and energy for my family and me. Not only did I get through these past 2 years, but I did so with a smile!

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Surviving a severe heart attack after a major bypass surgery...



Pankaj Balkrishnabhai Patel

Delta Airlines, Atlanta, USA

In 2000, my father, Balkrishnabhai Patel had been severely affected by a grave medical illness. When everyone around us was trying to find the right combination of medical treatments for him, my family and I were able to stay calm with the help of the Swaminarayan mantra. The experience is best described in a letter written by my sister, Dr Minaben Patel:

'Dr Donald Glover performed a coronary artery bypass on my father at the Duke Univer-

sity Medical Center on 13 June 2000. I had worked with Dr Glover and at the ICU there before, and was well acquainted with the staff and the treatment facilities.

Three days after the bypass, my father's heartbeat was abnormal. Doctors diagnosed him with ventricular tachycardia. It was serious. They rushed him into the ER and started giving him shock treatment, CPR, and other forms of emergency cardiac treatment. The doctors

thought that my father had suffered another heart attack. I knew what that meant. A heart attack after a serious bypass surgery was usually always fatal. I called my brother and family members and explained the seriousness of the situation. They all rushed to the hospital.

The next two days were extremely difficult. My father was put through a series of CPR and advanced cardiac life support treatments. Dr Glover asked me to prepare to get the Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order ready. Dr Glover was sure that my father wouldn't survive. He thought that even if he made it through, he wouldn't live more than two months in the ICU.

My 18 years of medical experience told me that my father wouldn't survive, and even if he did, he would suffer memory loss or paralysis...'

As stated in the letter above, my sister told all of us about the situation. We had all lost hope. There was nothing we could do. The medical treatment continued and we went home. As soon as we got home, all of our family members sat down together and started singing the Swaminarayan *dhun*. We called Swamishri

for his blessings. He said, "Balkrishnabhai still has to build a mandir in Dholka. Therefore, all of you sing the Swaminarayan *dhun*. Bhagwan Swaminarayan will protect him."

We started to sing the Swaminarayan *dhun* and noticed two benefits. Firstly, we were able to stay calm. None of us were in shock. Secondly, we were convinced that whatever Bhagwan Swaminarayan decided to do will be for our father's benefit. We continued to sing the Swaminarayan *dhun* for days. Our father survived.

It has been nine years since that day. Our father is well and can move around and function on his own. He can even drive around and take care of the family businesses. He has never suffered from memory loss or paralysis. He has even single-handedly provided the monetary *seva* to build a *shikharbaddh* mandir in Dholka. Surprised? So is Dr Glover.

We will never be able to forget what Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the Swaminarayan mantra did for us.

A RATTLING EXPERIENCE

A near-fatal snake bite...



Ramanbhai C. Sonawala
Florida, USA

Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami has said in his sermons: "The Swaminarayan mantra can rid one of the effects of a black cobra's venom." I have read and heard this sermon many times. I also witnessed it at work in my son's life.

My son, Bhavesh, works for FOX Networks as the VP of Digital Media. On 9 September 2004, Bhavesh had gone hiking with two of his friends in upstate New York. Two-and-a-half hours into an internal trail, Bhavesh was bitten by a rattlesnake (one of the deadliest snakes). Bhavesh doubled over in pain and collapsed. He started to pray to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and

Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He had coiled up and started to feel his body stiffening. He tried to sit up and perform a few yogic breathing exercises, but was unable to do so. He turned to his friends and asked them to get him to a hospital. It was not an easy task. They were two-and-a-half hours away from the nearest road! Bhavesh was going in and out of consciousness. He needed help and he needed it fast. His friends were trying to figure out how to get him out of the jungle, when Bhavesh said to them, "I see two people standing out in the distance. They seem to be familiar with the trails. Ask them for help." His friends ignored him. They didn't see

anyone. Bhavesh repeated his request thrice. The last time he almost shouted. His friend looked in that direction and noticed two faint figures in the distance. Chandresh ran in the direction of the figures and asked the young men for assistance. One of them helped carry Bhavesh down a shortcut trail to the main road. The other called ahead to arrange for an ambulance. It was as if they were godsent.

Bhavesh was rushed to a medical centre. I was on a business trip in Florida and so Bhavesh's friends contacted my daughter. My daughter got hold off me and told me about the incident. I knew that rattlesnake venom was fatal. I called Pramukh Swami Maharaj and explained the situation. Swamishri said, "He has been protected and Bhagwan Swaminarayan will protect him yet again. I will pray for him. Chant the Swaminarayan mantra. All will be well."

I recalled the incident when Yogiji Maharaj had been bit by a snake and Shastriji Maharaj had chanted the *dhun* in the Akshar Deri at Gondal. I took inspiration from that incident and started to chant the Swaminarayan mantra.

I rushed to New York on the next flight.

I was startled by what I saw in the hospital in New York. Bhavesh's entire body was swollen. His body kept going into spasms and jolting on the hospital bed. They had to tie him down. I didn't even recognize him at first. I asked the doctors how he was doing. They didn't sound too positive. They were confused. They didn't know what to do next. I called Swamishri again. He said, "I have been singing the Swaminarayan *dhun* and praying to Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He will protect Bhavesh." We followed Swamishri's lead and started chanting the Swaminarayan mantra at the hospital.

The situation seemed to be worsening. Bhavesh's entire body below the knee turned green and then black. His blood count was constantly dropping. Nine physicians were dealing

with his case and trying to figure out what to do next. I had been chanting the Swaminarayan mantra continuously for the last 36 hours.

As more and more devotees started finding out about Bhavesh's condition they too started chanting the Swaminarayan mantra and doing *mala*.

I called Swamishri one more time. I told him that the medication wasn't working. Swamishri was calm. He said, "The medication will work. Just keep chanting the Swaminarayan mantra."

That is exactly what we did.

The doctors consulted a physician in California and decided to try a different medication. Within an hour of administering it, Bhavesh's condition started to improve. His blood count started to rise and the swelling subsided. The chief doctor was surprised. He said to me, "I have been dealing with venom cases for the last 20 years, but I have never seen anything so surprising. His situation improved in just a few hours!"

Bhavesh was released on the third day. We went to the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Flushing, New York, and did Thakorji's darshan. Our family members and relatives started coming over to visit Bhavesh. They talked to us for a bit and said, "Where is he? We want to see him!"

Bhavesh wasn't home. He had gone to China for business! In less than one week after his close call with death, Bhavesh had the strength and courage to carry on with his work – thanks to the Swaminarayan mantra and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.





SUPERSTITION

Blind Faith

Tantra, sorcery, and superstition exist in every ethnic culture. History tells us that people feel inclined to fear anyone that claims to be a wizard, sorcerer or possessed. The experiences mentioned here illustrate quite the contrary. People armed with the Swaminarayan mantra and faith in God, have been able to withstand sorcerers, superstitious beings and even ghosts...

REVERSING THE EFFECT

My tantric powers turning against me...



Ranjeetsinh Parmar

Surat, India

I was always a believer in black magic and tantra, but in 1991 there was a turn for the worse. I ran into a famous tantric from Uttar Pradesh, India, named Ramcharandas. He accepted me as his disciple and taught me four different types of sorcery. First, he taught me how to invoke Sarasvati Devi. Invoking Sarasvati Devi is the first step to learning sorcery. It gives you the power to have others act according to your wishes, and it also gives you the ability to put a spell on other people. Second, he taught me how to read people's minds through Karnapishachini Sadhana. Third, he taught me how to invoke Bhairav or the leader of all ghosts and evil spirits. By invoking him, I was able to haunt people with ghosts. Lastly, he taught me how to invoke Mahakali. This part gave me the ability to beat people without actually hitting them with my hands or with a weapon. After mastering these four facets of sorcery, I started practising them on the poor people of that region. I was successful for the most part.

In 1993, I experienced defeat for the first time. I tried to throw tantric seeds at an individual with the hope of having him beaten. To my surprise, I felt a burning and thumping sensation in my chest. It was as if the seeds were attacking me. I ran to my guru and asked him what to do. He sat in meditation for a bit and then opened his eyes. He told me to recall the mantra. I was surprised. Why was he admitting defeat? I asked him if I had made a mistake in invoking Mahakali. He said, "You haven't made a mistake, but you have picked the wrong target. That individual seems to be a disciple of Swaminarayan. He is our enemy, but we won't be able to harm him." I was dazed. This was the first time my guru was actually admitting

defeat. I started questioning my abilities. Maybe a devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan was more powerful than I was.

A few days later, I happened to pass by Adajan Road in Surat. The magnificent *shikharbadh* mandir hadn't been built yet, but there was a smaller mandir. I decided to visit the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir. On 15 December 1994 I walked into the mandir. It turned out to be one of the most important days in my life. A *satsang* assembly was in progress. I sat down and listened to Ghanshyamcharan Swami deliver his discourse. He spoke on having faith in God. After the assembly, I walked up to Swami and asked him to make me a *satsangi*. He placed a *kanthi* around my neck and instructed me to take home a copy of the Vachanamrut. He told me to read Gadhada II-38 before I came back next week.

I don't know what it was, but something compelled me to comply. I went home and read the Vachanamrut. It didn't make much sense to me, but I read it anyway. That was the beginning of my true test. My former guru Ramcharandas found out about my change of heart. He stormed into my house and started to shout at me, "Break that *kanthi* right now. We are tantric sorcerers. We are not allowed to become *satsangis*." His voice was loud and frightful. I tried to calm him. I asked him to give me one week to think about it. He reluctantly agreed.

After a week, Ramcharandas stormed into my house again. He asked me whether I had made a decision. As a matter of fact, I had. I was going to remain a *satsangi*. As soon as I voiced my mind, Ramcharandas pulled a piece of black chalk from his pouch and wrote a date on the wall. He told me that I would perish by that date. It was only 15 days away.

I was terrified at this point. I knew what Ramcharandas was capable of. I had seen him destroy people with my own eyes. I hurried to the mandir and asked the sadhus for advice. They told me to write to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I wrote a detailed letter about my past and narrated the incident at my house. Swamishri replied in a few days. He said, "The tantric won't be able to hurt you. Chant the Swaminarayan mantra. God is with you."

I was relieved. I felt a sense of satisfaction. The marathon had begun – I chanted the Swaminarayan mantra continuously for the remaining days. The date passed, not a single hair on my body was damaged! That was the last I heard from Ramcharandas.

In 1996, I had the fortune of meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj in person for the first time. I told him about everything that I had done in the past and asked him to forgive me. I asked him for direction. What did he want me to do?

Swamishri gave me blessings and told me to help those troubled by the powers of black magic, sorcery, and tantra by chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. I was able to help dozens of people. Initially, I was surprised by the power of the Swaminarayan mantra. I would hear ghosts say, "The power of the Swaminarayan mantra is unbearable. I am leaving this body for good. I would like to have your guru's darshan. He is a God-realized person on this earth!"

One specific incident that comes to my mind is that of a security guard's daughter in Surat. The security guard had tried numerous ways to rid of his daughter of a ghost, but had failed each time. He tried to get one of the most famous sorcerers in the whole region to come and help. The sorcerer came and started to walk up the steps to his apartment. The ghost attacked him and the sorcerer started coughing and vomiting blood. The sorcerer was frightened and retreated. Someone told the security

guard to consult the sadhus at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir. After hearing him out, the sadhus pointed him towards me. I was glad to be of assistance. I was warned by a few people about what happened to the sorcerer. I wasn't scared. I had no need to be; Bhagwan Swaminarayan was with me. I walked into the apartment and started singing the Swaminarayan *dhun*. I sprinkled some holy water on the girl and the ghost started screaming and burning. He left her body for good. Quite a few people witnessed and noted this incident.

Another incident that I think of quite often is about Jayesh, a simple villager who migrated to Surat from a small village named Surka, near Gadhada. Many years ago, Jayesh's forefathers had bought some land in a village called Pipaliya, near their own village. The story behind that land is as follows. A group of Muslims and Kathi Darbars fought over that land. The Kathis killed the commander, Ali Akbar, and his troop of 30 men. After Jayesh's forefathers bought that land, the dead started to possess different people in his family. They had been doing so for about 130 years! They drove some to death and disrupted the social and family lives of dozens more. Jayesh inherited those spirits from his father. They would enter him at anytime, shouting, cursing and causing him to do dangerous things to those around him. Jayesh had lost all hope. They had ruined his life. Someone urged him to write a letter to Pramukh Swami Maharaj for blessings. Swamishri wrote back saying, "Bhagwan Swaminarayan will protect you..." In the due course of time, the ghost found out about Swamishri's blessings. He stopped possessing Jayesh's body rashly. He would enter once in a while to say, "I won't bother you anymore, but I won't leave until you take me for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan. There is no other sadhu like him on this earth. Just take me for his darshan once and I will leave forever." His family members told the ghost that they would take him within

the year. The sporadic attacks stopped. He only entered occasionally to remind them of their promise.

Swamishri was scheduled to arrive in Surat in December 2008. Jayesh came for Swamishri's darshan on 12 December 2008. He entered the room and started shouting from a distance in Urdu, "Allah ho Akbar!" He started wailing and came close to Swamishri. He bashed his head on the table before him and started to say, "I have been waiting for this day. Please accept Ali Akbar's Jai Swaminarayan!"

He started pacing back and forth. He was out of control. He slammed his hand on the steel table with such force that I was sure he would have broken his hand if he wasn't possessed. He looked at Swamishri and said, "You have blessed me with your darshan. I will leave now that I have had your darshan..."

People had gathered around him in that mid-sized room. Everyone was anticipating his next move. Swamishri started to sing the Swaminarayan *dhun* and said, "We will pray for your *moksha*. Everything will be all right. Pray to Bhagwan Swaminarayan..."

Ali Akbar's spirit said, "I have killed three of Jayesh's forefathers. His family members keep asking me what I want. They want to appease

me. I said to them that I don't want anything from them. I want it from Pramukh Swami. I want his darshan." He slammed his hand on the table – again. "I will leave for good today. I have had Pramukh Swami's darshan. Please bless me..."

He came near Swamishri. Swamishri put his hand on Jayesh's head and blessed him with holy water. Jayesh was calm. It was as if he was a totally different being. He stopped shouting, jumping, slamming and wailing. He was at peace. Ali Akbar had left him for good. Swamishri blessed him and said, "Pray to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and chant the Swaminarayan mantra. No ghost will ever trouble you again..."

Jayesh smiled for the first time in years. He walked out of the room saying to me, "This is the first time I have experienced peace in years..."

Incidents such as these make me wonder how I could have ever been a sorcerer. The Swaminarayan mantra changed my life forever. It also helped me change the lives of hundreds of other individuals. It also helped me realize the true greatness of Pramukh Swami Maharaj – a Gunatit sadhu who has lived with constant faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Swaminarayan mantra.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Pulling my family together with the Swaminarayan mantra...



Dhirubhai Mohanbhai Patel

Bhomapardi, Valsad, India

I live in a small tribal village. I became a devotee of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1981, but my wife wasn't the least bit influenced by *satsang*. She did not take a liking to it.

In 1990, my wife was possessed by a ghost. The situation seemed to worsen by the day. She was out of control; she would start shouting, having spasms, and at times she would ask for alcohol and raw meat! When we refused, she

would cause chaos in the house. We even tried beating the ghost out of her, but the ghost held up. The situation had destroyed our family life.

A few days after Diwali, I had brought some *annakut prasad* home for my family. I gave it out to all my family members. When I approached my wife with the *prasad*, she started to spasm. She said, "Break that *kanthi* around your neck and then we will see who wins!" I calmly replied, "My guru Pramukh

Swami Maharaj has given me this *kanthi*, so I will never break it.” She started to spasm even harder than before. I realized then and there that I was safe. The *kanthi* around my neck was protecting me.

A few months later, Mahant Swami was visiting our village. Kiranbhai, the local BAPS volunteer, told Mahant Swami about my ordeal. Mahant Swami came to my house and started to sing the Swaminarayan *dhun*. We all joined in. He moved around the house sprinkling holy water and chanting the Swaminarayan mantra.

That is all it took. Things changed for the better. The ghost left my wife alone forever. Things settled down at home and my wife’s per-

sonality took a turn for the better. She started cooperating with everyone in the family, and even started to come to *satsang*. She started doing *seva* and became a *karyakar* during the Amrut Mahotsav celebrations in 1995 and served during the BAPS Centenary Celebrations in 2007.

My wife and I had six children prior to this incident, all of which were still born. After the incident, we gave birth to two lovely children – a son and a daughter. They are both adults now.

I owe this peace and happiness to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the Swaminarayan mantra.

UNTOUCHED

A failed abduction and tantric attack...

Vitthalbhai Somabhai Gariya

Tribal Villager, Nali Madhni, Valsad, Gujarat, India

I have a small family-owned business. We grind flour for people in our village and the surrounding areas. We live in a very hilly area. One night, I closed my shop and headed home. On the way, I stopped to answer the call of nature. I noticed that seven people dressed in black were heading my way. I knew what they were after. They were sorcerers. They would try to kidnap me and practice their black magic on me. There was nowhere to run. I gave in to their demands. They surrounded me and took me to a hill across my village. They sat down in a circle and tried to practice their sorcery on me. They noticed that I had a *kanthi* around my neck and tried to break it with their tantric hymns. It didn’t even loosen. I was scared. I started chanting the Swaminarayan mantra in my mind and prayed to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. They figured that their tantra didn’t work on me because they hadn’t bathed. They took me to another hill where there was a lake. They bathed in the lake and started to practice their magic on me again. They did not succeed.

In the meantime, I heard the sound of the *arti* being sung at a distance. I listened closely and realized that it was from a village about 13 kilometres away from us. Lakadmad is a nearby village where Vivekratna Swami and Amrutmuni Swami go regularly for *satsang sabha*. They must have been singing the *arti* at the end of the *sabha*. I was rejuvenated. I knew that this was a sign – Bhagwan Swaminarayan was with me. I started to chant the Swaminarayan mantra with vigour.

Their tantric hymns had no effect on me. They decided to try one more place. They beat me and dragged me to a cemetery. It was spooky, but I maintained my composure by chanting the Swaminarayan mantra. Just at that moment, a *satsangi* from my village was passing by on his scooter. The headlight from his motorcycle scared the sorcerers away. They ran away out of fear. I made the most of that moment and ran all the way home. My family and friends had been looking for me all over. I came home and explained what had happened. They



were relieved to know that I was okay. The next day, I went to the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Tithal and narrated my story to the sadhus. They prayed for me in front of the *mur-tis*.

This incident has become a beacon of faith in my life. It reminds me that black magic, sorcery, and blind faith are powerless against Bhag-

wan Swaminarayan, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the Swaminarayan mantra. Today, I live a spiritual life. My family and I do *ghar sabha* everyday. I have even started doing *tilak-chand-lo* everyday. Ever since I became a *satsangi*, I stopped drinking alcohol, eating meat and substance abuse. I live a physically and morally sound life. ◆

(contd. from page 19)

able to gain control of the fire in just 20 minutes. What amazed everyone was that the winds picked up right after the fire had been put out. I knew that the fire was put out with Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings and the chanting of the Swaminarayan mantra.

There is one more experience that I would like to share. It is about a fire, but of a different kind. The two fires I mentioned above were far more controllable than the one that burns inside me. My temper was the bluest flame anyone had ever seen. I used to be a regular participant in brawls, beatings and violence. I was one of the hottest heads my family and friends had ever seen. I used to hunt game and kill for

a passion. Yet, with Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings and his instruction to do *mala* regularly, I was able to calm my mind and soul. I am not saying that I don't ever get mad, but now, I am able to immediately calm myself and walk away from the situation.

I went from living an extremely materialistic life to a very simple one. I make the twenty-hour trip from Tanzania to America a few times a month, but I never even bother to take the headphones offered to watch movies and listen to Hollywood or Bollywood albums. I have been able to change my tastes and preferences with the help of the Swaminarayan mantra. It has transformed my life. My favourite pastime? Saying the *mala*. ◆

CHATURMAS NIYAMS

3 July to 29 October 2009

As instructed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Shikshapatri and by the wish of *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj, devotees should undertake extra spiritual observances through the four holy months of *chaturmas*. This year *chaturmas* is from 3 July 2009 (Ashadh *sud* 11) to 29 October 2009 (Kartik *sud* 11). To please Bhagwan Swaminarayan and *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the following extra observances should be undertaken: **1.** One month *dharna-parna*, *chandrayan*, etc. or *ek-tana* during the month of Shravan (22 July to 20 August 2009). **2.** Extra *malas*, *dandvats*, *pradakshinas* as per one's faith. **3.** Daily read one extra Vachanamrut and five Swamini Vato. **4.** Read detailed biography of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami and *Purushottam Bolya Prite*. **5.** In accordance with the wish of senior sadhus, those who have facilities should listen to 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Amrutvani', Samput 13. **6.** Inspire five people to give up addictions, become *satsangis*, attend *satsang sabha* and conduct a daily *ghar sabha*.

Note: During Chaturmas, devotees should not eat brinjals, white & red radish, sugarcane or *mogri*.



THE PRASHNOPANISHAD A Conversation on Spirituality

‘शरीरम् आद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम्।’ –

‘Shareeram ādyam khalu dharmasāadhanam.’ –

‘This human body is the foremost tool for observing dharma.’

Therefore it should be cared for.

This fact has been clearly stated in our shastras.

The Prashna Upanishad is a unique example of this, in which we learn the art of using our mortal bodies to gain an immortal goal. The ability to perceive the body not only as a tool for enjoying material pleasures but also as a means for moksha can be attained from this Upanishad.

Let us acquaint ourselves with it.

INTRODUCTION

The Prashna Upanishad is contained within the Atharva Veda. This Upanishad is recited in the 'Pippalād' *shākhā* of the Atharva Veda *brāhmaṇa* chapters. This Upanishad is a compilation of the remarkable questions of six disciples to their guru and the equally remarkable answers to those questions. That is why the Upanishad has become known as the Prashna Upanishad (*prashna* means question).

THE STORY

The sons of six rishis – Sukeshā of Bharadwāj, Satyakām of Shibi, Sautrāyanee of Garga, Kaushalya of Ashvalāyana, Bhārgav of Vidarbha and Kabandhee of Katya – became disciples of Maharshi Pippalād with the desire to learn the spiritual knowledge. These disciples were of no ordinary calibre. Their speciality has been described here, saying, 'ब्रह्मपरा ब्रह्मनिष्ठाः परं ब्रह्मान्वेषमाणाः' – '*Brahmaparā brahmanishthāhā param brahmānveshamānāhā.*' – 'The lives of these disciples were centred around Brahman [as they] endeavoured to attain the *brāhmic* state and realize Parabrahman', i.e. they strived to become *brahmarup* and offer worship to Parabrahman (Prashna Upanishad: 1/1). Maharshi Pippalād accepted these six illustrious rishi-sons as his disciples. However, Maharshi Pippalād knew very well that no aspirant can grasp spiritual knowledge without suitability. Therefore, to enable his eagerly enquiring disciples to become capable of grasping this knowledge, he laid down the first requirement, 'भूय एव तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण श्रद्धया संवत्सरं संवत्स्यथ।' – '*Bhooya eva tapasā brahmacharyena shraddhayā samvat-saram samatsyatha.*' – 'O Disciples! First of all, all of you stay in this ashram for one year and performing austerities, observe *brahmacharya* and have faith' (Prashna Upanishad: 1/2). Thereafter you may ask whatever you wish to ask. If I know the answers, I will indeed reveal them to you.

Learning this first lesson of humility from a

very wise person, the six disciples readily agreed to practice the spiritual endeavours of austerities, celibacy and faith.

THE FIRST QUESTION

As the guru had commanded, one year of spiritual endeavours passed by. Now all six disciples had the right to ask questions. Therefore, of the six, Kabandhee asked the first question, 'भगवन्! कुतो ह वा इमाः प्रजाः प्रजायन्त इति' – '*Bhagavan! Kuto ha vā imāhā prajāhā prajāyanta iti*' (Prashna Upanishad: 1/3). '*Prajāyante iti prajāhā*' – 'That which is born is call *prajā.*' One who is born has a body. This question has been asked in regard to those bodies, 'O Gurudev! Who makes this body?' Maharshi Pippalād gave a direct and definitive answer, 'प्रजाकामो वै प्रजापतिः' – '*Prajākāmo vai prajāpatihi*' – 'The master, governor, controller of all *prajā* – Paramātmā himself' (Prashna Upanishad: 1/4). All these bodies have been created only because of Paramātmā's wish to do so.

Paramātmā created these bodies, and so cares for and nourishes what he has created. Pippalād explains this saying, 'Son, compassionate Paramātmā himself has created useful things like the sun and moon in order to nourish our bodies. The sun and moon nourish plants, which we eat and thus our bodies are nourished. In this way, the creator, Paramātmā, is also the carer. Moreover, that very Paramātmā divides time into day and night, bright half and dark half, *uttarāyan* and *dakshināyan*, and years, and in this way he moves us along our bodily journey.'

Maharshi Pippalād answered the first question and his disciple Kabandhi was satisfied with the answer.

THE SECOND QUESTION

The sun, moon and others care for and nourish our bodies externally, but has Paramātmā arranged something inside our bodies which would maintain the body throughout life? This

is the inclination of the second question, posed by Vidarbha Rushi's son, Bhārgava, 'भगवन्! कत्येव देवाः प्रजां विधारयन्ते कतर एतत्प्रकाशयन्ते कः पुनरेषां वरिष्ठ इति' – *'Bhagavan! Katyeva devāhā prajām vidhārayante katara etatprakāshayante kaha punareshām varishtha iti.'* – 'O Gurudev, how many devas sustain the body, who gives the body the energy to work, and amongst those devas, who is the best?' (Prashna Upanishad: 2/1).

Pippalād answered that it is by Paramātmā's inspiration that the five elements – earth, water, fire, wind and space; the five organs of action – which enable speech, handling, walking, excretion and procreation; the four *antahkarans* – the *man* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *chitt* (contemplation) and *ahamkar* (ego); the five organs of knowledge (*jnan indriyas*) – eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin; and the *prāna vāyu* (breath) work together to sustain the body and illuminate it. Amongst all of these, it is the *prāna vāyu* – the vital breath – which is the most superior. Since, even in the absence of organs such as speech, eyes, ears, etc., the others can still survive and the body still survives. But without *prāna* the body and organs cannot operate at all. Therefore, O disciple! It is this *prāna vāyu*, created by Paramātmā, that this bodily journey is dependent on. Hearing the answer, Bhārgava was pleased.

THE THIRD QUESTION

Kaushalya asked the third question, 'भगवन्! कुत एष प्राणो जायते कथमायात्यस्मिन् शरीर आत्मानं वा प्रविभज्य कथं प्रातिष्ठते' – *'Bhagavan! Kuta esha prāno jāyate kathamāyātyasmin sharira ātmānam vā pravibhajya katham prātiष्ठate'* – 'O Gurudev! From where does this *prāna vāyu*, which holds the chief place in the body, originate? How does it relate with the body? How does it divide and work throughout the body?' (Prashna Upanishad: 3/1).

Maharshi Pippalād answered, 'आत्मन एष प्राणो जायते' – *'Ātmana esha prāno jāyate'* – 'This *prāna*

originates from Paramātmā', i.e. Paramātmā himself creates the *prāna* which is able to sustain the whole body, and he makes the association between it and the body for the entire life span (Prashna Upanishad: 3/3).

To explain how the *prāna vāyu* works in different parts of the body by being divided, a nice metaphor is used: 'यथा सम्राडेवाधिकृतान् विनियुङ्क्त एतान् ग्रामानेतान् ग्रामान् अधितिष्ठस्वेत्येवमेवैष प्राण इतरान् प्राणान् पृथक् पृथगेव सन्निधत्ते' – *'Yathā samrādevād-hikrutān viniyunkta etān grāmānetān grāmān adhitishthasvetyevamevaisha prāna itarān prānān pruthak pruthageva sannidhatte'* – 'Like an emperor appoints officers in different areas of his kingdom, the chief *prāna* appoints the *apāna*, *vyāna* and other *prānas* over different parts of the body' (Prashna Upanishad: 3/4). Due to this, that part of body is able to function. In this way the five *prānas* – *prāna*, *apāna*, *samāna*, *vyāna* and *udāna* – play an important part in our bodies.

Hearing appropriate answers to each of his questions, Kaushalya was satisfied. Thus, this Upanishad reveals that in India there was an established study of the *prāna* from ancient times.

THE FOURTH QUESTION

Paramātmā creates, cares for and nourishes the body. Through the answers to questions we have learnt about matters regarding the work of the organs of action, the organs of knowledge, the *antahkaran* and the way the *prānas* move inside the body. The fourth question asked seeks even deeper knowledge.

The disciple named Sautrāyan asks, 'भगवन्! एतस्मिन् पुरुषे कानि स्वपन्ति कान्यस्मिन् जाग्रति कतर एष देवः स्वप्नात् पश्यति कस्यैतत् सुखं भवति कस्मिन्नु सर्वे सम्प्रतिष्ठिता भवन्तीति' – *'Bhagavan! Etasmin purushe kāni svapnāt pashyati kasyaitat sukham bhavati kasminnu sarve sampratishthitā bhavanteeti.'* – 'When a person sleeps, which faculties sleep? Which faculties are still awake? And, during

sleep, who is it that watches the dreams? Who enjoys the happiness of that sleep? And whoever is asleep, whoever is awake, whoever is watching the dream – by whom are they all sustained?’ (Prashna Upanishad: 4/1).

Hearing the question, the guru was pleased. He started to reply with a distinct example. Just as when the sun sets, its rays also retract, the same happens to man. When a person sleeps, then all his organs retract from their work. That is why when a man sleeps his hands, feet, eyes, ears and all the *indriyas* sleep. Thus, his eyes no longer attempt to see, his ears no longer attempt to hear, his hands and feet no longer attempt to move. Everything becomes quiet. This is what is called sleep. In this way at the time of sleep, the tired *indriyas* rest. That is when a man is said to be asleep.

However, even during sleep, there is one part which is always awake and working. That is the five *prānas*: ‘प्राणाग्नय एवैतस्मिन् पुरे जाग्रति’ – ‘*Prānāgnaya evaitasmin pure jāgrati*’ – Meaning that the flame of the sacred fire in the form of the five *prānas* is alight even then (Prashna Upanishad: 4/3). Through the *āhuti* (offerings) of breaths, every action of the five *prānas* remains alive and ongoing. By this the mechanism for life becomes well organized. Thus, Pippalād’s words indicated the importance of *prānāyām*.

Many a time dreams are seen during this sleep. The seer of that dream is the *ātmā* itself. What does it see in that dream? ‘दृष्टं चाऽदृष्टं च श्रुतं चाऽश्रुतं चाऽनुभूतं चाऽननुभूतं च सच्चाऽसच्च सर्वं पश्यति’ – ‘*Drushtam chā’drushtam cha shrutam chā’shrutam chā’nubhootam chā’nubhootam cha sachchā’sacha sarvam pashyati*’ – ‘What one has or has not seen before, what one has heard or not heard before, what one has experienced or not experienced before, everything can be seen in a dream’ (Prashna Upanishad: 4/5). ‘एष हि द्रष्टा स्प्रष्टा, श्रोता, घ्राता, रसयिता, मन्ता, बोद्धा कर्ता विज्ञानात्मा पुरुषः’ – ‘*Esha hi drashtā sprashtā, shrotā, ghrātā, rasayitā, mantā, boddhā kartā*

vignānātmā purushaha’ – ‘The *ātmā* itself becomes the viewer of the dream, listens to the discussions in the dream, smells the fragrances in the dream, enjoys the tastes, contemplates, knows and does a variety of other actions’ (Prashna Upanishad: 4/9). However, it is also true that the *ātmā* watching the dream has no control over the dream world; it is Paramātmā himself who creates and dissolves the dream world according to the karmas of the *ātmā*. The *ātmā* just sees and experiences the dream.

In this way dreams are experienced during sleep. Now when a person enters deep sleep, he does not even dream. This is called *sushupti*. Then, Paramātmā himself compassionately awakens the *ātmā* again from deep sleep and re-establishes all the experiences, memories, knowledge, etc. as existed before.

Now who is the sustainer of those organs which rest during sleep and of the *prānas* that continue to operate and of the *ātmā* who watches the dream? That is Paramātmā: ‘स यथा सोम्य वयांसि वासोवृक्षं सम्प्रतिष्ठन्ते। एवं ह वै तत्सर्वं पर आत्मनि सम्प्रतिष्ठते’ – ‘*Sa yathā somya vayānsi vāsovrūksham sampratishthante. Evam ha vai tatsarvam para ātmani sampratishthate.*’ – ‘Birds fly from here to there all day, but in the evening they come back to their tree to stay and sleep peacefully; in the same way during sleep Aksharādhpati Paramātmā is the refuge of all’ (Prashna Upanishad: 4/7). It is Paramātmā who lets them experience the peace of sleep, and arouses them at the due time to awaken with their previous wealth of knowledge.

Sautrāyan was pleased with Pippalād’s analogical answers and was satisfied.

THE FIFTH QUESTION

We have learnt about the inner workings of sleep, dreams and deep sleep. Now, let us move on to actions that take place whilst awake. One action performed whilst awake is *dhyan* – meditation. The disciple named Satyakām wants to know about the secrets of meditation. Man is

inspired to meditate from time to time. Satyakām seeks guidance on the true form of meditation, clarification about what is to be meditated on and a distinct means to perfecting true meditation. So he asks, 'स यो ह वैतद् भगवन्! मनुष्येषु प्रायणान्तम् ॐकारम् अभ्यध्यायीत कतमं वाव स तेन लोकं जयतीति' – 'Sa yo ha vai tad Bhagavan! Manushyeshu prāyanāntam aum-kāram

abhyadhyāyeeta katamam vāva sa tena lokam jayateeti.' – 'O Gurudev! Whosoever meditates using the word 'ॐ' (Aum), what world does he attain? What fruits does he get?' (Prashna Upanishad: 5/1).

Guru Pippalād heard the question. He could see an important spiritual principle attached to this matter. Therefore, before talking about the fruits, he felt it necessary to explain another important matter first. That was to clarify the meaning of the word 'ॐ'. If one doesn't know its meaning then what can come of meditating on it? Therefore Maharshi Pippalād said, 'एतद् वै सत्यकाम! परं चापरं च ब्रह्म यद् ॐकारः।' – 'Etad vai Satyakāma! Param chāparam cha Brahma yad aum-kāraha.' – 'O Satyakām! In fact, there are two meanings of this ॐ. The first is 'परं ब्रह्म', i.e. Paramātmā, and the second is 'अपरं ब्रह्म', i.e. distinct and minor to Paramātmā – namely Aksharbrahman' (Prashna Upanishad: 5/2). In other words ॐ implies the two divine elements: Akshar and Purushottam. Therefore, from now on whenever we meditate reciting the word ॐ we should surely bear this divine meaning in mind. The complete fruit cannot be attained by just knowing the literal meaning. Meditation done with a correct understanding of the meaning gives a supreme divine fruit. Therefore, Maharshi Pippalād says, 'तस्माद् विद्वान् एतेनैवायतनेन एकतरम् अन्वेति' – 'Tasmād vidvān etenaivāyatanena ekataram anveti' – 'That is why a wise person

MEANING OF AUM

‘O Satyakām! In fact, there are two meanings of this ॐ. The first is ‘परं ब्रह्म’, i.e. Paramātmā, and the second is ‘अपरं ब्रह्म’, i.e. distinct and minor to Paramātmā – namely Aksharbrahman.’

- Prashna Upanishad: 5/2

knows that ॐ means both divine entities, Brahman and Parabrahman' (Prashna Upanishad: 5/2). So, when he sits to meditate, he unites ('एकतरम्' – 'ekataram') with either of the two and meditates on it. In other words, reciting the words ॐ ॐ ॐ he meditates on Paramātmā, or on Aksharbrahman in whom Paramātmā constantly resides. The appropriate divine form

of Aksharbrahman to meditate on is the manifest guru. In this way the principle of meditating and doing the mānsi puja of the manifest brahmaswarup guru, just like is done of Paramātmā, has been clearly advocated here.

Thus, after explaining this important matter, Pippalād describes the fruits of doing such meditation properly, 'यथा पादोदरस्त्वचा विनिर्मुच्यत एवं ह वै स पाप्मना विनिर्मुक्तः स सामभिरुन्नीयते ब्रह्मलोकम्' – 'Yathā pādodarastvachā vinirmuchyata evam ha vai sa pāpmanā vinirmuktaha sa sāmabhirunneeyate Brahmalokam.' – 'Like a snake sheds its skin, the person who meditates in this way is shed of all sins, i.e. being freed from the miseries of māyā he experiences utmost peace. He attains Brahmalo, i.e. Akshardham' (Prashna Upanishad: 5/5). Moreover, 'स एतस्माज्जीवघनात् परात्परं पुरिशयं पुरुषमीक्षते' – 'Sa etasmājjeevaghanāt parātparam purishayam purushameekshate.' – 'He realizes Paramātmā who resides in Akshardham and is above Aksharbrahman, who is above all jivas.'

Satyakām thus attained the true secret to spiritual endeavours. He was very satisfied.

THE SIXTH QUESTION

Sukeshā, son of Bharadwāj Muni, asked the sixth question. He presented the question with an incident. 'O Gurudev! Once, a prince named Hīranyanābh asked me if I knew a person who was complete in all sixteen aspects. I did not

understand what he was trying to ask, neither did I know anything anyway, therefore I could not answer the question. Therefore, ‘तं त्वा पृच्छामि क्वासौ पुरुष इति’ – ‘*Tam tvā pruchchhāmi kvāsau purusha iti.*’ – ‘Please tell me who this complete person is’ (Prashna Upanishad: 6/1).

The sixteen aspects are *prana*, *shraddha* (faith), *pruthvi* (earth), *jal* (water), *tej* (light), *vayu* (wind), *akash* (space), 5 *jnan indriyas*, *man* (mind), *anna* (food), *virya* (semen), *tapa* (austerity), *mantra*, *karma*, *loka* (worlds), *loka-nām* (names of objects in the worlds). These are the sixteen things associated with bodies, they have been described in this Upanishad.

The guru said, ‘षोडशकलाः पुरुषायणाः’ – ‘*Shodashakalāhā purushāyanāhā.*’ – ‘Paramātmā is complete in all sixteen aspects’ (Prashna Upanishad: 6/5). Due to his grace, he himself created all of these aspects so that the *ātmā* could experience the fruits of its actions. And ‘इहैवान्तःशरीरे सोम्य स पुरुषो यस्मिन्नेताः षोडशकलाः प्रभवन्ति’ – ‘*Thaivāntahshareere somya sa purusho yasminnetāhā shodashakalāhā prabhavanti.*’ – ‘Paramātmā himself also resides in the very body in which these sixteen aspects – earth, water, fire, etc. reside (Prashna Upanishad: 6/2). Moreover, ‘अरा इव रथनाभौ कला यस्मिन् प्रतिष्ठिताः । तं वेद्यं पुरुषं वेद यथा मा वो मृत्युः परिव्यथा इति’ – ‘*Arā iva rathanābhau kalā yasminan pratishthitāhā. Tam vedyam purusham veda yathā mā vo mrutyuhu parivyathā iti.*’ – ‘Just like all the spokes of a wheel are held by the hub of the wheel, in the same way Paramātmā resides in our bodies. If you all realize this all-supporting Paramātmā, then you will no longer have to suffer the misery of death. You will be free from births and deaths’ (Prashna Upanishad: 6/6).

Learning that Paramātmā is the supporter of all the sixteen aspects, Sukeshā was satisfied.

PRASHNA UPANISHAD

The Prashna Upanishad teaches us the unique perspective that the body is not a tool for indulging in material pleasures, but a means to liberation.

CONCLUSION

In this way, Maharshi Pippalād gave the answers to all six of the disciples’ questions. Concluding, Pippalād then said, ‘एतावदेवाहमेतत् परं ब्रह्म वेद नातः परमस्तीति’ – ‘*Etā-vadevāhametat Param Brahma veda nātaha paramas-teeti.*’ – ‘O Disciples! I know this much about Parabrahman Paramātmā. There is no

entity greater than Parabrahman’ (Prashna Upanishad: 6/7). Saying this much, Pippalād brought an end to his discourses. All six disciples deeply thanked him by doing his *pujan* and said, ‘त्वं हि नः पिता’ – ‘*Tvam hi naha pitā*’ – ‘O Gurudev! You are our true father’ (Prashna Upanishad: 6/8). So, like a father gives his son sound, loving advice and tells him something for his own good, in the same way you have given us advice on spiritual matters. Therefore we bow to you again and again, we bow to you: ‘नमः परमऋषिभ्यो नमः परमऋषिभ्यः’ – ‘*Namaha paramarushibhyo namha paramarushibhyaha*’ (Prashna Upanishad: 6/8).

In this way, the Prashna Upanishad teaches us the unique perspective that the body is not a tool for indulging in material pleasures, but a means to liberation. The conversation between the guru and disciples reveals the knowledge of creation, the outer and inner aspects of the body and other details useful in spiritual endeavours. We gain true advice on meditation and become convinced that Paramātmā is the support of all. ◆

- Gujarati text: Sadhu Bhadreshdas, Ph.D.
Translation: Sadhu Paramvivekdas

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's **VICHARAN**

20 April to 7 May 2009, Mumbai



MUMBAI

25 (Sat), Welcome and Appreciation Assembly

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in the Mumbai suburbs of Ghatkopar and Bhayandar.

At 11.40 a.m. industrialist Shri Anilbhai Ambani came for Swamishri's darshan and blessings at Dadar Mandir. Swamishri blessed him and praised him for his devotion to and faith in God and his parents. Swamishri also remembered his late father, Shri Dhirubhai Ambani, and how he was blessed by Yogiji Maharaj.

The evening Sunday assembly was held to

welcome Swamishri and to appreciate the devotees who had observed various austerities and offered devotion to Thakorji. Thousands of devotees did *mala*, *pradakshina*, *dandvat*, chanted the Janmangal Namavali, read the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato, sang *dhun* and visited the mandir for Thakorji's darshan. They had observed austerities and performed devotion to celebrate Swamishri's 88th birthday in December 2008.

During the assembly BAPS children performed an exciting traditional welcome dance. Then some inspiring incidents of the sacrifice of devotees were briefly narrated. Thereafter a short video was shown about the devotees' devotion and services to Harikrishna Maharaj.

Swamishri was garlanded by senior sadhus. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “It was heartening and joyful to see the service, sacrifice and devotion of the devotees of Mumbai. I congratulate you all for your sacrifice which resonates with the words of Shriji Maharaj in Vachanamrut Loya 3. Because of your devotion you invited Thakorji to sanctify your homes, and that too with great festivity. The children performed a welcome dance with intense joy and enthusiasm. All were ecstatic. Such ecstasy is possible when one has realized the glory of God. For the last one year everyone has offered devotion and *seva* beyond their capacities. This is possible when one has heartfelt love and devotion.” Swamishri also elaborated upon Dada Khachar’s devotion to Shriji Maharaj and how Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj celebrated festivals. Then he blessed all to further understand the glory of all and cultivate *samp*, *suhridaybhav* and *ekta*.

The assembly concluded at 8.10 p.m. and 7,000 devotees were served *mahaprasad*.

27 (Mon); Pratishtha of Nilkanth Varni and Guru Parampara Murtis

At 7.30 a.m., prior to his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of Nilkanth Varni and Guru Parampara *murtis* in the Varni *mandapam*. The pre-rituals of *pratishtha* were performed by Kothari Swami and Tyagvallabh Swami. Over 140 devotees participated in the *mahapuja* rituals. The final rituals were performed in Swamishri’s presence. Swamishri performed the consecration rituals of Nilkanth Varni and the senior sadhus performed the rituals of the *murtis* of Guru Parampara. Then Swamishri and senior sadhus performed *pujan* and *arti* of the *murtis*. Swamishri then performed the first *abhishek* of Nilkanth Varni. Thereafter the holy water was sprinkled upon all the devotees.

Swamishri arrived for Thakorji’s darshan in

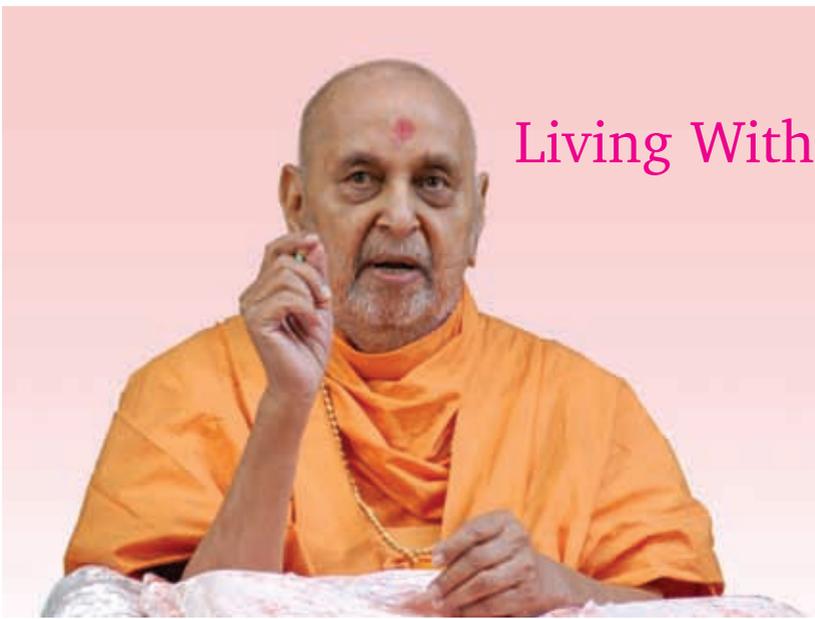
the mandir. An *annakut* was arranged before Thakorji in all the three shrines. After completing his morning puja in the Yogi Mandapam Swamishri blessed all, “Today is a day of immense joy and celebration because Nilkanth Varni has been consecrated. We pray that the wishes of whosoever does darshan of Nilkanth Varni and performs his *abhishek* be fulfilled. All of you have offered great service for this occasion and the sadhus too have put in a lot of effort, so may God fulfil your wishes. May Maharaj liberate your 71 generations, make you happy and grant you with peace of mind.”

3 May (Sun)

Shri Amitabh Bachchan, the renowned film star, came for darshan of Thakorji and Swamishri at Dadar mandir. It was his second visit. Swamishri blessed him and gave him an *abhishek murti* of Shri Nilkanth Varni, a *mala* and tied a *nada-chhadi* on his wrist. Swamishri performed *abhishek* of the *murti* and told Shri Bachchan to perform *abhishek*, and also to do one *mala* daily. The next day he wrote of his meeting with Swamishri in his blog, “I had visited him earlier many years ago on a similar trip. A quiet, pious and soft spoken human. I had also visited the famous and grand Akshardham Temple complex in Delhi. An architectural wonder, run by devoted and disciplined Swamis. All of them working for equality and peace and education, following codes and principles that bring benefit to society.

“Guruji spoke mostly in Gujarati, gave his blessings and various little tokens of affection and love for the family. I sat there humbled and silent. What does one say in the presence of divinity.”





Living With Swamishri

HOW TO OVERCOME DEPRESSION

24 April, 2009, Mumbai

A youth was depressed because of his failed marriage. He was afraid to marry again due to doubts and uncertainties assailing his mind. He kept on worrying whether it would work out or not. Someone described his situation to Swamishri.

Swamishri reassured him, “Remember God and everything will turn out to be fine. Be brave and strong-hearted. Pray. God will run your life well. Do not entertain any doubts. Remember Maharaj and marry again.”

The youth expressed his mental turmoil because of his failed marriage, “Many times, I wonder how long should I tolerate and how much? It would be better to liberate myself from all this by committing suicide.”

Swamishri stressed, “Don’t ever think of that. Remember God. Have faith in God and make efforts. You will become stress-free and free from obstacles. You have done a lot of *seva* and *satsang*. Things will turn out well.”

Swamishri bolstered the youth’s confidence in life by telling him to have courage and faith in God.

THREE MEANS TO OVERCOME DEPRESSION

28 April 2009, Mumbai

Swamishri advised a youth who was

depressed, “Be strong. Forget whatever that has happened and pray to God. Your depression will go away.”

Swamishri prescribed three principles to dissolve depression.

ADDICTION IS POISON

6 May 2009, Mumbai

A youth who had an addiction came to Swamishri. He ate *ghutka* (shredded tobacco with flavour).

Swamishri questioned, “Do you feel that your addiction is wrong?”

“Yes.”

“Then give it up. How long does it take to quit for someone who thinks it is wrong!”

“I’ll give it up slowly,” the youth replied mildly.

“Will you take poison if I give it to you?” Swamishri asked explicitly.

“No.”

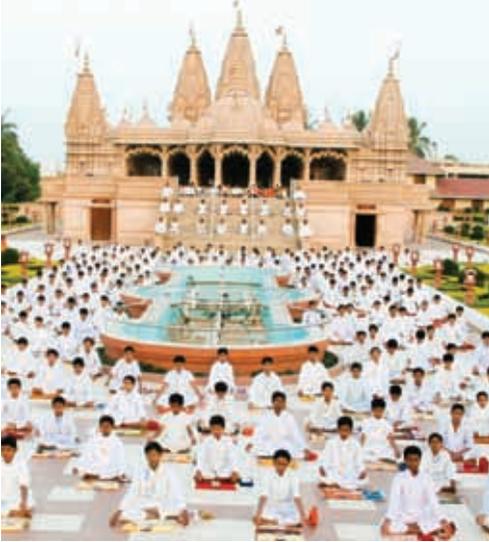
“Tobacco is poison. You shouldn’t give it up slowly. If someone were to tell you to go to America after all the arrangements were made, would you go slowly? Similarly, you should quit in one go. Pray to God and you’ll be able to give it up.”

Swamishri blessed the youth.



BAL-BALIKA SUMMER CAMPS

April-May 2009, India



During the April-May 2009 summer vacation, over 30,000 *balaks* and *balikas* from throughout Gujarat and Mumbai, benefitted from special summer training camps. The camps, were held for 5 or 7 days, and children from 4,920 Bal and Balika Mandals participated. Organized by the BAPS Children's Activities Central Office, the camps focused on the all-round development of children, giving training and guidance on *satsang*, education and personality development. The children learned general knowledge, study techniques, yoga, *pranayam*, English, public speaking, monoacting, dance, music and computing. A variety of presentation techniques were used to teach the children in an entertaining, interesting and informative way. ♦

KISHORE-KISHORI SAMMELANS

April-May 2009, India



During April and May, over 8,800 *kishores* and 9,100 *kishoris* from 61 regions throughout Gujarat and Mumbai participated in the separate Kishore and Kishori Sammelans.

The day-long get-togethers featured a variety of speeches by sadhus and experienced volunteers, audio-visual shows, discussions, question-answer sessions, skits, interactive quizzes, and other entertaining and educational items. ♦

New Publication
for Children



Basic Mukhpath

The essential verses and basic information that should be memorized by all BAPS children.

First Edition: February 2009

Pages: 20

SATSANG EXAMINATIONS

March 2009

PRIZE WINNERS

In this year's March Satsang Examinations 6,502 devotees from over 102 centres abroad appeared for exams. The prize winners for each level of the exams are listed below. Congratulations to all for their notable achievement.

BAL – 1

Rank	Name	Centre	Total
1	Pranati P. Parikh	St. Louis	91
2	Heemani K. Brahmhatt	Chicago	90
3	Prince A. Patel	Edison	89
4	Aneri M. Brahmhatt	Chicago	88
5	Kirtan V. Buddhdev	San Jose	87
5	Akshay P. Popat	Mwanza	87
5	Nikita P. Patel	Westchester	87

BAL – 2

1	Sneh J. Amin	Atlanta	97
2	Bhaviben V. Bhagat	San Jose	96
3	Kaushali S. Thakkar	Atlanta	94
4	Aesha R. Shah	Mwanza	93
5	Megha S. Sharma	Dar-es-Salaam	91
5	Vraj H. Patel	Toronto	91

PRARAMBHA

1	Priyankaben Y. Patel	Lubbock	99
2	Khyati R. Pathak	Nashville	98
3	Jignesh Patel	Little Rock	97
4	Arpita H. Thakkar	Toronto	96
4	Ruchi S. Trivedi	Houston	96
4	Saritaben A. Patel	Kuwait	96
5	Julie M. Dholaria	Clifton	95
5	Jitendra J. Badiani	Sydney	95
5	Meghana K. Brahmhatt	Virginia Beach	95

PRAVESH

1	Krishna K. Vasani	Dar-es-Salaam	143
2	Meeta J. Patel	Toronto	141
3	Gopal P. Vyas	Edison	140
4	Kokilaben B. Patel	Chicago	139
5	Shital I. Patel	Toronto	138

PARICHAY

1	Sarojben S. Adroja	Edison	141
2	Pinal A. Patel	Tampa	139
3	Snehal J. Patel	Toronto	138
4	Kaminiben R. Patel	San Jose	137
4	Varun H. Mathuria	Houston	136

PRAVIN

1	Hemangini R. Panchal	Perry	187
2	Bhumikaben A. Patel	Kuwait	185
3	Radhaben S.	Bahrain	178
3	Mehul N. Patel	Nairobi	178
4	Gitaben K. Patel	Los Angeles	173
5	Ravajibhai C. Patel	Nashville	171
5	Deepa D. Borkhataria	Dar-es-Salaam	171

PRAGNA – 1

1	Parul D. Upadhyay	Sydney	155
2	Renuka Patel	New Zealand	154
3	Sanjaybhai Pandav	Los Angeles	153
4	Pallaviben G. Patel	Kampala	151
5	Sarojben H. Patel	Cherry Hill	148

PRAGNA – 2

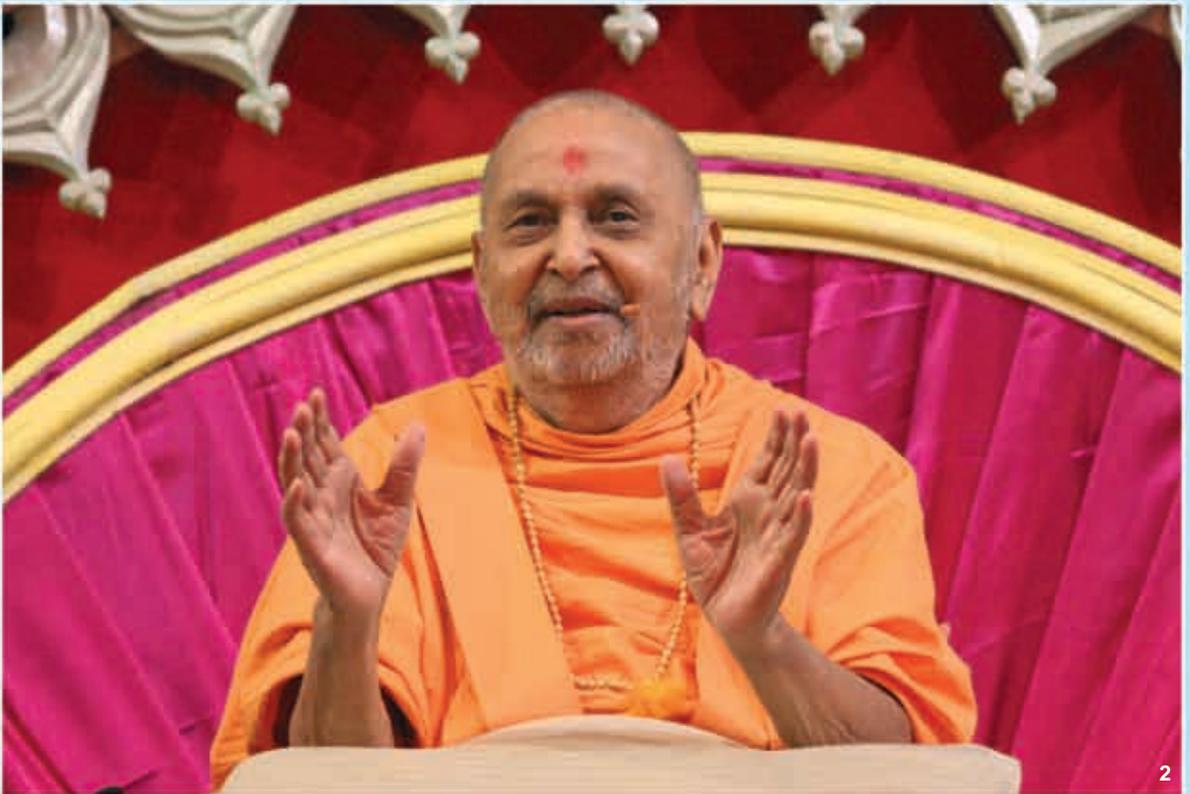
1	Rajubhai Patel	Jackson	178
2	Jay M. Patel	Harrisburg	162
3	Kishorkumar Gajera	New Zealand	159
4	Purvi P. Parikh	St. Louis	158
5	Jaiminiben N. Patel	Mombasa	157

PRAGNA – 3

1	Anitaben J. Shah	New York	162
2	Krishna J. Bhavsar	Dar-es-Salaam	160
3	Pushpaben S. Patel	Dallas	158
4	Indu R. Patel	Houston	157
5	Lilaben R. Patel	San Antonio	152
5	Bhumikaben R. Patel	London	152



1



2

WELCOME ASSEMBLY
26 April 2009, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Mumbai

1. Children and youth perform a traditional welcome dance. 2. Swamishri blesses the devotees during the assembly.
Photos: Sadhu Yogicharandas



**MURTI-PRATISHTHAS OF NILKANTH VARNI & GURU PARAMPARA
27 April 2009, Mumbai**

1. Swamishri performs the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the Nilkanth Varni *abhishek murti* and offers *abhishek* to the newly consecrated *murti*. 2. Senior sadhus perform the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the Guru Parampara *murtis*.

