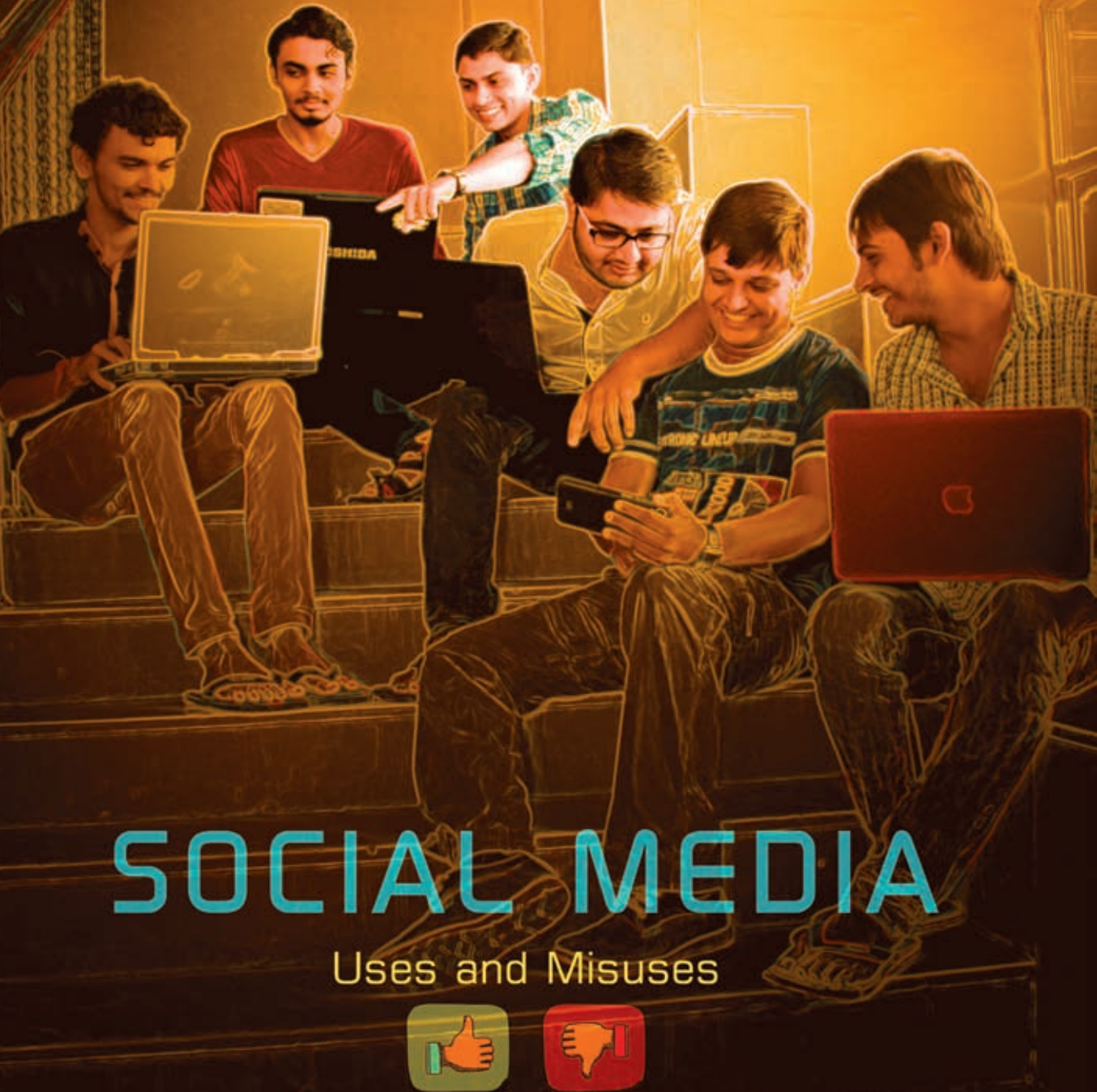


# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

September-October 2015  
Annual Subscription ₹80/-



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Uses and Misuses







1 2



3



4

## SWAMISHRI IN SARANGPUR, RATH YATRA CELEBRATION

18 July 2015

1. Devotees rejoice at Swamishri's darshan on the morning of *rath yatra* celebration.
2. Swamishri waves a *chhadi* to bless the devotees.
3. Swamishri performs the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the new BAPS *hari* mandir in Jalandhar, Punjab.
4. Swami Satyamitranandgiriji, Viveksagar Swami and other sadhus perform *arti* as Swamishri gives darshan to all during the Rath Yatra celebration in the evening.



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## SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

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Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj

In April 1978, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired and inaugurated the first issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The bi-monthly magazine serves to enlighten BAPS youths, seniors and well-wishers about the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy and the Gunatit guru *parampara*. It also seeks to inspire the universal values and traditions of Hinduism to pursue a happy and peaceful life by serving God and humankind.

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# FIRST WORD

A Sanskrit *shloka* from the *Hitopadesh*<sup>1</sup> says, “*Sthān brashthā na shobhante dantā, keshā, nakhā narāhā.*” It means when one’s tooth, hair or nail are out of place they lose their beauty.

When things are in place they have an aesthetic value and a functional value. It is easy to understand that when a person having healthy and well anchored teeth smiles, he or she exudes beauty. Furthermore, while eating one uses one’s teeth to tear and grind food – thus one’s teeth also have a functional value. But as soon as one loses a tooth, it loses its beauty and functional value. A fallen tooth’s fate is the dustbin. The same applies to one’s hair and nails.

By extrapolating the essence of this Sanskrit *shloka* the same principles apply to anything good or useful in life. The recent global surge in using the social media have brought to the fore its boons and curses. Smart phones and social media are alluring through their power and impact.

Recent statistics reveal that there are nearly 1 billion users of Facebook and 100 million of Twitter each day. The benefits include: keeping in touch with friends and relatives speedily and with minimal effort; making online friends easily; acquiring entertainment or means to relaxing; sharing knowledge; applying for crowd-funding, promoting one’s products, brands and services; shopping online; and locating and reaching destinations.

The downsides include: sharing trivial information; committing or becoming a victim of scams or frauds, wasting time; stalking and cyberbullying; becoming a victim of embarrassing photos and information, increasing self-centredness and individualism; and becoming habituated to non-physical human interaction.

It seems that social media has made us overly extroverted to the extent that we remain riveted to information and chat inordinately with friends and strangers. Thus social media dominates our minds, coercing us away from our immediate responsibilities and concerns. Too much information and too much communication not only clutters our mind but also leaves us with very little personal time and mental stamina to engage with oneself and family, and in spiritual sadhanas. In fact, over time, it leaves us disinterested and disconnected with our home, family and fundamental pursuits of life. Subsequently, it makes us more vulnerable to the vices and evils of the outside world and the base nature of our inner self.

The answer to a better, meaningful life is to exercise moderation and self-restraint while using social media. The great sage Valmiki writes in the Ramayan, “*Binu satsang vivek na hoy*” – “Without satsang one cannot attain the power to discriminate.” The power to decide what to do and what not to do, how much to do and not to do, and when to do and when not to do is attained through satsang – meaning the association of a God-realized guru. Pramukh Swami Maharaj advises us to use the social media with *vivek* (discrimination). It may not be possible to stop using social media, but some discretion helps avoid unnecessary hassles.

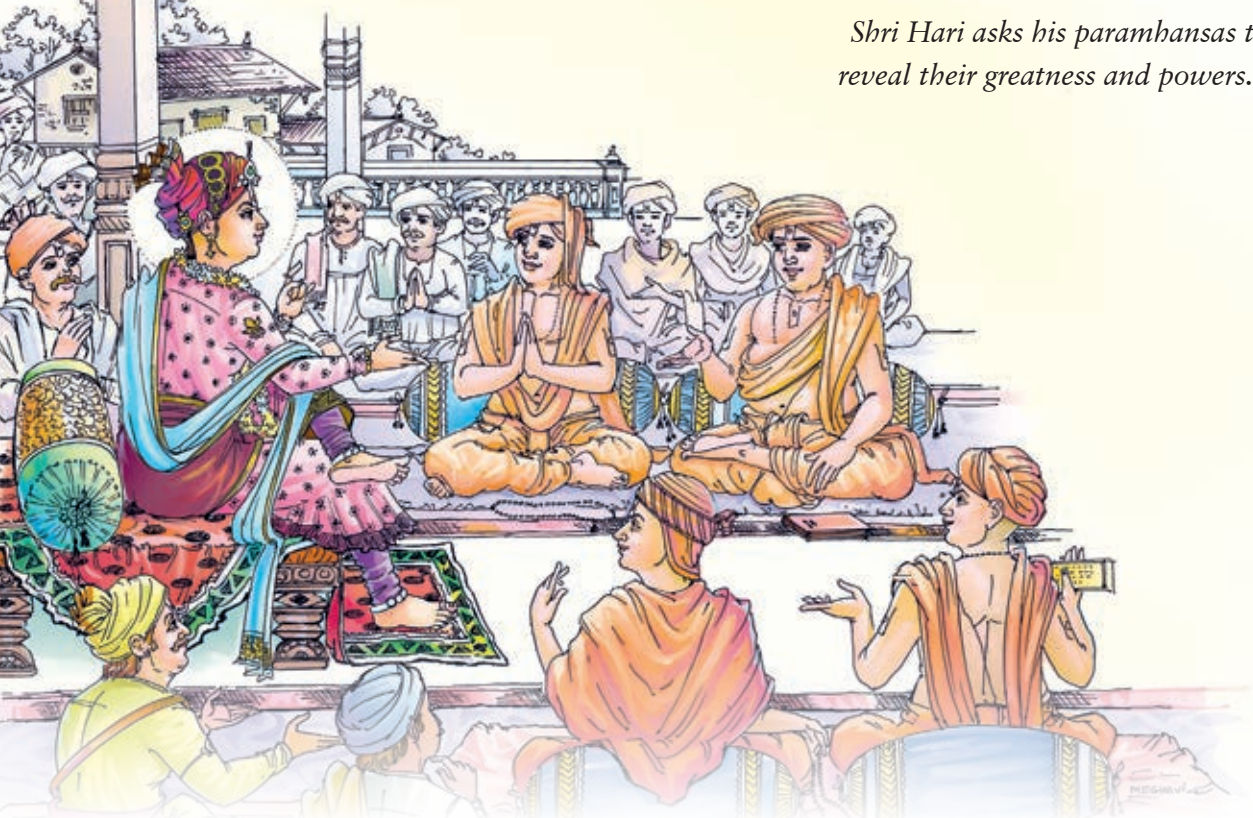
Remember, when things are in place they have an aesthetic value and a functional value. Let’s exercise a little self-control in using social media!

This issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* includes articles about social media and sage guidance on using the cellphone. ♦

1. *Hitopadesh* is a collection of fables and tales in prose and poetry. The tales are about values useful to life. It also contains many maxims and proverb-like statements.

# GREATNESS OF PARAMHANSAS

*Shri Hari asks his paramhansas to reveal their greatness and powers...*



Shriji Maharaj asked Brahmanand Swami, “Declare your virtues.” The latter replied candidly and wittily, “Maharaj, I’ll not take as long as Muktanand Swami to answer. But I confess that it is natural for me, with regards to my lineage, to sing my virtues and that of others too at great lengths. And the fact that you have asked me to do so, I shall gladly comply.”

Shri Hari smiled and quipped, “You’ve been in Satsang for so long and yet you have not given up the traits of your lineage!”

Brahmanand Swami responded instantly, “Maharaj, I’ve been trying to forget them, but since you have prodded me into revealing them today, I shall do so.”

Shriji Maharaj burst out laughing and permitted, “Now you may disclose your quality rooted in your lineage.” And so Brahmanand Swami

revealed, “When I create bhajans I do not use the same word again, but nevertheless I do not have to search for new words. Furthermore, the bhajans turn out appealing and flawless. This cannot be accomplished by any other poet.” Maharaj endorsed Brahmanand Swami’s talent, “What you have described is very true for all your bhajans.”

When it was Nityanand Swami’s turn, he spoke humbly, “Maharaj, the best of pandits in India cannot win against me in scriptural debate. I believe this is so because of your blessings and grace. That is why I am never anxious of being defeated in a scriptural debate. Whenever I take up the gauntlet for a debate, I remain dauntless through your grace.”

Shri Hari was pleased with Nityanand Swami’s revelation and approved, “You are peerless in scriptural debate, and that is why you are always

triumphant.” In conclusion, Shri Hari looked at Gopalanand Swami, who replied, “Maharaj, I know that without your wish not even a blade of grass can be moved. But if I so wish, I can move a blade of grass by your grace.”

Shriji Maharaj was happy with Swami’s frankness and confirmed, “You are right about it Yogiraj. You truly have those powers because you are a *mukta* from Akshardham.” Then Gopalanand Swami replied, “We have all declared our virtues because you asked us to do so.” Maharaj smiled and praised, “I wanted you all to reveal your unique virtues. I am proud of you all.”

### YOU ARE THE ATTENDANTS OF VAIKUNTHNATH

The following day, a group of wandering *khakhi bawas* came to Gadhada. They came to Dada Khachar’s *darbar* with the intention of securing a scrumptious meal of *dudhpak* (sweet milk) and *malpua* (sweet item). Since some of the *bawas* in the group were naked, the sadhus and devotees in the *darbar* took to their heels and disappeared. The womenfolk, too, frantically shut the doors and windows of their homes. Subsequently, the *bawas* became agitated. They angrily stamped and banged their tridents and pincers and roared, “Where is the one who calls himself Bhagwan Swaminarayan? If everyone runs away on seeing us, who will give us charity?”

A *parshad* came running to inform Shri Hari, “Maharaj, 200 unruly *khakhi bawas* are in Dada’s courtyard. They are banging their pincers and uttering foul words. Give us your order and we shall expel them instantly.”

Shri Hari calmed the *parshad* and instructed, “When we have guests at our doorstep we should not ignore them. Call Dada Khachar.” When Dada arrived, he humbly asked, “Maharaj, what is your command?” Shri Hari replied, “Make arrangements for food provisions to give to the *bawas*.”

The *parshad* replied surprisingly, “Maharaj,

they are demanding *dudhpak* and *malpua*!” Shri Hari responded, “If that is so, send Muktanand Swami to them. Only after meeting him shall we send the provisions.” The *parshad* went to Muktanand Swami and informed him, “Maharaj has conveyed that you calm the two hundred vexed *khakhi bawas* in Dada’s courtyard, who are demanding *dudhpak* and *malpua* for lunch.”

Muktanand Swami immediately went with a *mala* in hand to Dada Khachar’s courtyard. He stood outside the porch of Vasudev-Narayan’s room. The *parshad* told the *mahant* of the group of *bawas*, “Mahantji, he is our senior sadhu.” Muktanand Swami bowed to the *mahant* and welcomed him sweetly, “You are all the divine attendants of Vaikunthnath. Your arrival here brings great joy and pride. Pray tell me of what service I can be to you?”

Muktanand Swami’s courteous welcome instantly pacified the arrogant and furious *mahant*. He replied meekly, “Swamiji, we’d like something to eat. Can we get *dal* and *rotla*?” Muktanand Swami replied, “We will send provisions to your camp. But before you go, have the darshan of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.”

Muktanand Swami told the *parshad* to call Shri Hari. The *parshad* went and narrated to Shriji Maharaj, “Muktanand Swami has worked a miracle. All the *bawas* have become tranquil at Swami’s darshan.” Shri Hari was pleased and enquired, “What did Swami say to calm them?” The *parshad* described, “Muktanand Swami told them that they were all the divine attendants of Vaikunthnath. And that it was a matter of joy and pride to see them today.” Maharaj added, “There is something miraculous about Swami’s personality. His speech is so calming and impressive. With his words and darshan no one could remain unruly and agitated.” The *parshad* relayed, “Muktanand Swami has called you to give darshan to the *khakhi bawas*.” Maharaj immediately came to Dada’s *darbar*.

## DARSHAN OF NRUSINH BHAGWAN

On seeing Shri Hari the *mahant* of the *khakhi bawas* asked, “Swaminarayan, are you Bhagwan?”

Shri Hari smiled and replied, “Yes, I am Bhagwan.”

The *mahant* asked bluntly, “Then show us Bhagwan Nrusinh, who is our Lord. If you do so, only then will we believe that you are God.” Shri Hari shot a divine look at them all, and instantly the 200 *bawas* had the darshan of Bhagwan Nrusinh. The divine revelation lasted for a few moments. Thereafter, they humbly acknowledged, “Swaminarayan, you are truly God. We are very fortunate and blessed to have realized your divinity.” Shri Hari assured them, “We will be shortly sending you provisions for lunch to your camp.”

Thereafter, Nityanand Swami recalled, “Maharaj, yesterday Muktanand Swami had revealed his virtue and today you have vindicated his words. Now, you should arrange an event to prove Brahmanand Swami’s virtue.”

Shri Hari vividly reminded, “Swami, it seems you have forgotten about the incident during the festival in Siddhpur. At that time a renowned scholar, Chandramani Sharma, had prostrated before Brahmanand Swami after he sang a few *chhandas*. All the scholars were deeply impressed and acknowledged that they had never heard such a scholar-sadhu all the way upto Kashi.”

Nityanand Swami recalled the occasion and said, “Yes Maharaj, I remember the event. Pandit Chandramani was totally mesmerized with Brahmanand Swami’s rendition.”

## MAHARAJ’S OUTSTANDING QUALITY

Soon thereafter, Brahmanand Swami asked Shri Hari, “Maharaj, you had asked us about our unique virtues, but we would like you to reveal your outstanding quality. Since you are God you hide many of your powers and your glory from us.”

Shri Hari smiled and asked reluctantly, “Do

you really want to know?” Brahmanand Swami nodded. Maharaj began, “Whoever, after six months of intense effort, devises a knotty question to ask me, I can answer in a fraction of the time it takes me to mount and place my second foot in the horse’s stirrup.”

Everyone was deeply impressed with Shri Hari’s answer. But Brahmanand Swami opined, “There’s nothing so impressive about that. Maharaj is God, therefore he is the all-knower. It is we who are ignorant and puny that it takes us six months to arrange a tricky question.” Shri Hari simply smiled and the assembly concluded.



Thereafter, every morning and evening Shriji Maharaj discoursed to the assembly of *paramhansas* and devotees. Despite residing in Gadhpur, Maharaj fostered the faith of his devotees in far-flung places through his divinity. He had also ordered his sadhus to travel for the consolidation and spread of satsang values. With time and the efforts of Maharaj and his *paramhansas*, people in society started appreciating the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. They also realized that the Sampradaya was wedded to the principles taught in the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita. Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s purity, compassion and love, and the pure character and devotion of his *paramhansas* and devotees reflected well on people and followers of other faiths. They all thus felt hopeful and confident of a reformed society and a bright future.

Through their pristine lives and sincere efforts Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his disciples started instituting the foundations of Bhagavat Dharma or Ekantik Dharma in Gujarat. ◆

(Contd. in next issue)  
Translated from Gujarati text of  
Bhagwan Swaminarayan by Shri H.T. Dave



# SOCIAL MEDIA

Part 1



*In an age where social media has become the best friend of youth, we observe how youth have changed their perception of the world. Technology coupled with innovation will continue to impact and even shape our lives. First it was the radio, then television, then came the age of the internet, and presently, the age of social media. With rapid advances in technology, youth have undoubtedly captured the moment in making social media a way of life.*



## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is the collective of online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking and wikis are among the different types of social media.

## SOME PROMINENT EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Facebook:** A popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. According to statistics from the Nielsen Group, internet users within the United States spend more time on Facebook than any other website.
- **Twitter:** A free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.
- **Google+ (pronounced Google plus):** Google's social networking project is designed to replicate the way people interact offline more closely than is the case in other social networking services.



- **Wikipedia:** A free, open content online encyclopedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; registration is not required to edit articles.

- **LinkedIn:** A social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally.

- **Pinterest:** A social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions but the main focus of the site is visual.

- **Instagram:** A fast and fun way to share your life with friends and family through pictures and short video clips.

Social media has made the world more interconnected with an increase in the number of social media applications and sites, which are continuously released and updated for the convenience of the consumer. Social media plays a very modern and impactful role in the communities throughout the world and we see an increasing number of the world's population becoming dependent on social media. The different types of social media mentioned strongly demonstrates the success of different platforms, from no ownership of product or inventory. In addition, we as "social media consumers" are the most important in this world of social media and are responsible for the content creation and sharing (where type of content varies).

As much as youth have become increasingly independent, the surroundings undoubtedly impact the way they think and influence the way they go about living their lives. There seems to be a "need" for youth to remain "connected" with those around them at all times. The pertinent issue however is that this unrestrained "connection" seems to be causing a "disconnect" between

youth and society.

*Has social media changed the youths' perspective of life?*

*Has social media contributed to the development of youth?*

These are some of the questions that we will discuss in this article and the next.

## ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be a powerful tool when used correctly. The various social media sites allow youth to accomplish online many of the tasks that are important to them in their lives, i.e. staying connected with friends and family, making new friends, sharing pictures and other information, as well as exchanging ideas. However, these tasks can prove to be very dangerous if caution is not exercised as these are the very elements that lead to the disadvantages elaborated upon later.

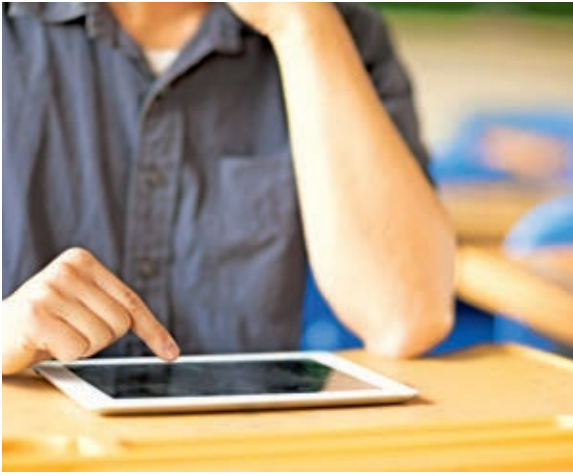
Social media has been seen to play a positive role in society, particularly amongst the youth, allowing them:

1. To develop through innovative and enhanced learning methods.
2. Opportunities for community engagement through raising money for charity and volunteering for local events.
3. To keep connected to satsang activities globally.

Let us explore each point briefly.

### 1. Social Media in Learning

Chalkboards are becoming extinct in schools and colleges and are being replaced by more sophisticated gadgets. In a recent study, it has been found that learning institutions are using social media as a means to impart knowledge to learners. The reason being that social media captures the attention of youth as opposed to the conventional means of teaching that seem rather mediocre to the youth of today's generation. The ability to use social media to best meet the needs of youth is something that has remained a focus for educational institutions.



## 2. Social Media in Relief Work

The recent earthquake in Nepal, which struck on 25 April 2015, killed over 8,000 people and left more than 250,000 homeless. The calamity left the small Himalayan nation scrambling to respond. A nation which had little disaster response infrastructure in place moved swiftly to organize an internet driven response via social media. Facebook activated its safety check feature giving quick safety updates with initial information being slow and the political leaders' largely remaining quiet. After several days, Facebook and Twitter exploded with requests for help, inundating social media feeds. A few days after the earthquake, although cellular networks were jammed, stranded individuals as well as individuals willing to assist were still able to post statuses and rescue calls on Facebook. One of the academics had set up a page to focus only on relief supply and demand information. A team of administrators, i.e. six volunteers from Nepal, United States of America and Canada, helped to edit and update information. Three days after the page opened, they had 129 posts that reached some 50,000 people on Facebook. Then, a day later, on 29

April the group coordinated the supply of 1,500 tents to the Sindhupalchowk and 400 to Dolakha, two of the most severely affected rural districts. The page's posts had reached 200,000 people by 3 May. These feeds were used by various volunteer groups to sort and channel their disaster relief and rescue efforts.

## 3. Social Media in Satsang

Social media has made it easier to remain connected with satsang activities around the world. Various forms of social media are used to share *prasangs*, remain informed of satsang activities from around the world and receive daily updates of H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The BAPS Channel on YouTube and the official Twitter handle (@BAPS) regularly provides the opportunity for devotees to have daily darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Social media has also served as a medium for devotees to get inspiration from other devotees around the world. An example of this was the visit of Pramukh Swami Maharaj to Robinsville, New Jersey, for the opening of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in August 2014, where many devotees shared their special moments which included preparations, arrival of Swamishri and festivities that took place over the duration of the mandir opening. This served as an inspiration to devotees around the world and made all devotees feel a part of the celebration.

As noted above, we saw the advantages of social media on learning, relief work and satsang. However, let us also explore in the next article about some of the disadvantages and consequences of social media on youth as well as Pramukh Swami Maharaj's advice in this context. ♦





A recent study revealing the alarming statistics of social media reflect just why social media seems to be taking over the lives of many:

1. Six out of every seven people in the world have internet access.
2. Nearly one in four people in the world now use social networks.
3. Number of social media users throughout the world:
  - North America: 181 million.
  - Asia: 777 million.
  - Mid-East & Africa: 209 million.

*Has social media changed the way we think?  
Is this due to social and peer pressure?*

These questions will be discussed in this article.

## DISADVANTAGES AND IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH

Social media is seen as a new set of cool tools for involving young people which when used well is good, but is potentially a source of harm. It is not only changing how we communicate, but how we interact with each other in daily life. Social networking affects our lives in many ways,

including our communication, self-expression, bullying, friendships, and even our own mental health. Much has been written on this, specifically highlighting the impact on youth. Some note the positive impact on youths' social life and others describe the negative consequences.

### DISADVANTAGES

- Loss of productivity – interrupts, disturbs and takes valuable time away from serious thinking and reading.
- Licence to be hurtful.
- Decreased face-to-face communication skills.
- Creation of a skewed self-image.
- Reduced family closeness.
- Distractions from studies or work.
- Private information becoming public, with potential for misuse.
- Laziness.

Let us further elaborate on the most pertinent disadvantages amongst youth:

1. Blurred Vision – inability to differentiate between right and wrong.
2. Cyberbullying.





## 1. Blurred Vision – Inability to Differentiate Between Right and Wrong

In a case study in a prestigious private school in Johannesburg, South Africa, the school's code of conduct and school regulations, which are underpinned by their ethos, make it clear that any form of verbal bullying or harassment is unacceptable, and that this includes any actions or comments made in any form of social media. Such actions constitute a major offence in their code of conduct.

Towards the end of October 2012, the school became aware that a number of false profiles of members of staff had been created on Twitter, with inappropriate comments being posted on these sites. Forensic investigators were called in to assist the School in establishing who had been involved, either as creators or followers of these sites. This process ran into the first few weeks of January 2013, and a significant body of information was collected and presented to the management.

On 12 February 2013 the students in the metric class (final year of high school) were addressed by the school executive about the investigation, the dangers of the irresponsible use of

social media, and of the legal repercussions of this type of behaviour. The boys were offered an amnesty of a lesser sanction if individuals involved came forward of their own volition. In a letter to the metric students' parents on the same day, the process was explained and it was stated that the actions of those individuals involved were illegal and they could face legal action as well as disciplinary action by the school.

A number of boys came forward after the meeting. Consequently, four boys attended disciplinary hearings, chaired by an outside chairperson, with regard to the creation and use of false Twitter profiles. Three other boys appeared before a disciplinary enquiry, also chaired by an outside person, for making completely unacceptable comments about members of staff on their Twitter accounts. The chairperson found that expulsion was a justifiable sanction, given the seriousness of the transgression by the boys concerned. However, because the boys had come forward during the period of amnesty offered by the School, this was taken into account in the final sanctions applied. The sanctions imposed on the boys included, depending on the level of transgression, the following:

- Suspension from school until the beginning of next term (May).

- The suspension of all awards and other forms of recognition bestowed by the School; this suspension would be up for review between August and December.

- The removal from all formal positions of responsibility which any of these boys may hold.

- Attendance at headmaster's detention on a Friday until the end of July.

- A formal apology to members of staff involved and to the Executive of the School.

- A letter of final warning that, should any of these boys transgress any other serious or major offences in the code of conduct, they will face further disciplinary action which may well lead to expulsion.

- Mandatory counselling to ensure the boys understand the unacceptable nature and seriousness of their actions.

- A set number of hours of community service to be completed before the end of July.

Through the above case, it is quite apparent that the inability to differentiate between right and wrong leads to the tendency to hitch onto what's popular without contemplating the consequences.

## 2. Cyberbullying

In a recent case study, a mother brought her teenage daughter to a medical doctor to test for pregnancy. The test proved negative, however the mother was concerned that her daughter was exhibiting signs of depression. Through further examination by the medical doctor, it was revealed that this depression was caused by cyberbullying at a local school in Johannesburg.

The cyberbullying was sparked when one day this girl felt nauseous at school and began vomiting. This triggered a rumour across different social media platforms (Blackberry Messenger, Whatsapp and Facebook) that the girl was pregnant. As a result, this continuous cyberbullying deterred her from going to school and led to depression.



While social media can be advantageous, we have also looked at how social media can be detrimental to youth if caution and discretion are not exercised.

Taking into account everything discussed above, let us understand the impact and importance of satsang with regards to the use of social media.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND SATSANG

When we post content that goes against our satsang values, what effect does this have on our satsang growth as well as the impact on others that view it? Ultimately, what message does it send?

- This fuels a culture where certain things become the norm. We send a signal to others that it's ok to do these things.

- Instead of excelling in our *niyam* dharma we not only hold ourselves back, but we also have an impact on others who may be trying to follow *niyam* dharma.

- We forget that *kishores* and *balaks* are also on social media. Whether we realize it or not, they look up to seniors as their role models.

- Swami ni Vat: "*Kalyanā mārgmā vighna karnārā ghanā che, tene olkhi rākhvā.*" ("There are many who create obstacles on the path to liberation (*moksha*). They should be recognized"). Let's not create our own obstacles or create obstacles for others.

With respect to social media, we will always be enticed to 'take a look' at different types of



content through different social media platforms and apps. Thus:

- We need to create a greater sense of awareness and do more *antardrashti* with respect to the type of content we view, and whether this content is helping us in satsang, or holding us back.
- There is no need to overload social media sites with satsang content, and we need to stop posting things that go against the *agna* and *ruchi* of our guru with respect to our *niyams*.
- As Gunatitanand Swami says, “There are many obstacles on the path to *moksha*.” If we don’t form a greater sense of awareness and have better discipline in using social media, it can become one of these obstacles.

What role does the content on social media play in our lives from a satsang standpoint? Does it help us or hurt us?

- How will we uphold our *stri-purush maryada* by viewing pictures, friending and forming close friendships with the opposite gender via social media?
- How will we stop eating out or watching TV if we continue to see them being promoted on social media?
- How will we overcome desires for materialistic things by constantly viewing them, and ‘liking’ them on social media?
- We should never think that we are so strong in satsang that the content we view on social media will have no impact on us.
- Vachanamrut Gadhada I 27: “If one indulges in the *panchvishays* thoughtlessly, without

distinguishing good from bad, then even if one is as great as Narad and the Sanakadik, one’s mind will surely become polluted.”

- The content on social media can pose many obstacles, many of which are hidden, that can hinder our progress on the path to *moksha*. We must be more aware of the type of content we are viewing.
- We have come into Satsang to eradicate our desires, *swabhavs* and become *brahmarup*. The bad content on social media sites and applications will only increase our desires and *swabhavs*.

## CONCLUSION

Taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of social media discussed, the effects of social media thus raises an important question. Where do we draw the line in allowing youth to make use of social media?

Pramukh Swami Maharaj answers this question through understanding the importance of social media and the discipline needed to maximize the benefit of social media. Swamishri says that social media should be used with discretion. Social media is important in the development of youths, however, excessive and unnecessary use could lead to ultimate destruction of character in youths.

Responsibility also lies with parents of youths, in ensuring that the youths are brought up in the best way possible, so that they are able to distinguish between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. These values of discretion, self-discipline and awareness of the effects of social media are critical in ensuring that social media is used in the appropriate way.

Our greatest *prapti* is that we have attained the *pragat* form of God. We have attained him; however we have not fully realized him. If we aren’t careful, the content on social media will cloud this realization. Use social media when necessary and to enhance your personal virtues, faith, education, knowledge and *seva*. ♦



# MOBILE MALAISE

Are You a Nomophobe?



## INTRODUCTION

Are you so keen on your cellphone that you just can't do without it? Do you stop dead in your tracks when there is no network coverage? Do you panic when the battery of your mobile gets low?

These are signs of the phobia that has engulfed people today, especially adolescents. Nomophobia is fear of being without your mobile phone.

If you are a nomophobe, beware of it. Read on to know some of the deadly signs of nomophobia.

Nomophobes feel disturbed at the very core of their being – they fear the low battery levels of their cellphones. The dread starts to flutter in the pit of their stomach. When in a plane or in the movies, they face restrictions in looking at their phones; they become frantic. The concept of not looking at one's phone is ridiculous and offensive to nomophobes.

US researchers have developed a questionnaire that can determine if you suffer from nomophobia. There are answers like, "I would feel uncomfortable without constant access to information through smartphones." "If I were to run out of credits or hit my monthly data limit, I would panic."

A new study warns that teens who use social networking sites for more than two hours daily may be at risk of poor mental health, high psychological distress and suicidal thoughts.

## DATA ON STUDENTS

Hugues Sampasa-Kanyinga and Rosamund Lewis from Ottawa Public Health in Canada analyzed data on students using social media in grades 7 to 12 from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health survey. What they found is alarming, both for the students and the parents:

### ■ Effects of Multitasking

Students who get involved in activities on social media sites while studying become victims of poor attention span, which in turn results in abysmal academic performance.

### ■ Decreases Human Contact

The more time the students spend on social media sites, the less time they will spend socializing in person with others.

### ■ Reduces Writing Skills

Students mostly use slang words or shortened forms of words on networking sites. They start relying on the computer's grammar and spelling check features. This reduces their command over the language and their creative writing skills.

### ■ Time Lost While Searching

While searching and studying from their smart phones, students get attracted to using social media sites and sometimes they forget why they are using the internet. This wastes their time and they are often not able to deliver their assignments in

the specified time frame.

### ■ Loss of Motivation

Motivational levels and social skills of the students using social networking sites dips as they rely on a virtual environment instead of gaining practical knowledge from the real world.

## DIGITAL AMNESIA

A survey by Kaspersky, an internet security solutions provider, reveals that 50 percent of users treat the internet as an extension of their brain, while 74 percent use their smartphones to connect to the information highway. This implies that because information can be accessed from the internet at anytime there is no need to remember the facts.

Another survey was conducted on a little over 1,000 Indian respondents and it was found that half of them were not interested in remembering facts as much as where they sourced the information. People form the habit of transferring most

## Ailments Due to Excessive Use of Cellphones & Computers

### TEXT NECK

An adult human head weighs 5 kg, but as the neck bends forward and down, the weight on the cervical spine increases.

At a 15-degree angle this comes to about 12 kg; at 60 degrees it's 27 kg. As we hunch over our smartphones, texting and checking social media, we are putting an incredible amount of stress on our spines.



### COMPUTER FACE

Cosmetic surgeons are reporting that excessive users are developing what is called "computer face", a combination of permanent frown lines, wrinkles as also squinting and double chins from looking down for long periods of time.



of their memory functions to their smartphones. This raises the spectre of what can be rightly called ‘digital amnesia’.

Says Altaf Halde, managing director (South Asia) at Kaspersky Lab, “It is very important to limit one’s dependency on smartphones, primarily because of its addictive properties.”

### DISTRACTED DRIVING

Do you drive while speaking on the cellphone? A driver’s crash risk is eight times higher if he is texting on a cellphone and, despite seeming safe, talking hands-free makes drivers four times more likely to be involved in a crash.

Nearly 25% of all traffic accidents involve someone talking on a cellphone. Talking on a cellphone while driving can make your reaction time as slow as that of a 70 year old.

### CODES FOR CAR DRIVERS

- Don’t use a mobile phone held in the hand while driving or when you have stopped with the



engine switched on – it is illegal.

- Stop to make or take a call or let it to go to your voicemail – even if you have a hands-free phone.
- If you must talk, keep conversations short or say that once you find a safe place to pull over you’ll phone back.
- If you’re an employer, then you should issue specific company advice on mobile phone use as part of your work-related road safety policy. ♦



### HEARING LOSS?

The widespread use of portable music devices is making early hearing loss quite an epidemic.

### COMPUTER VISION SYNDROME

Peering into a smartphone day after day can cause pain and discomfort to the eyes, blurred vision and headaches. The good news is that doctors agree that it does not cause permanent eye damage.





# INTERNET ADVICE BY SWAMISHRI



*On 10 August 2000, during the Kishore-Kishori Shibir at Perry (Georgia), a question-answer session on the subject of internet use was held with Swamishri.*

*The focused, practical and penetrating answers by Swamishri provide a very clear ethical guideline to all netizens.*

**Q: For what purpose should we use the internet?**

**A:** Science has advanced tremendously today. Before using anything we should exercise the power of discrimination (*vivek-buddhi*) as prescribed by our shastras. Such discrimination develops through the company of good people, the realized Sadhu and God.

The internet is both good and bad. With relation to business and academic studies, it is very lucrative. But in logging to academic sites, one is also influenced by its dark side. At present you should have only two priorities – studies and satsang.

Many are overconfident about themselves, thinking that nothing will happen by looking at

such things. But even the great have fallen. There are examples of people who were greater than us, from our Sampradaya and others, that have succumbed to such obstacles.

Ekalshrungi rishi was a recluse who was not even aware of the distinction between man and woman. From childhood his father had taken such care to seclude him. He was a person with a strong mind, yet he fell. Similarly, you may feel nothing will happen to you but these are enticing matters. A click of the button, then a brief glance and you feel like seeing a little more. And then you go deeper and get drowned in it. If there is no discrimination you will lose everything. You will decline in your studies and then ruin

your life.

New research and more discoveries will be made. First came the telephone, then TV, video, internet and now the website. And tomorrow morning something else will arrive and it will be faster! The element of 'speed' is demonic.

There are glamorous and pornographic videos published by people who want to earn money. They are not concerned whether your thoughts get corrupted, society gets spoilt and the country devastated. The authorities get taxes from them, so they will not be able to stop them. There is only one means to stop it – personal understanding, – to realize it yourself. When you realize that drugs, *gutka* and other addictions are poisonous, you will be able to shun them.

The only reason for such evils in life is the lack of discrimination in daily living. If you mentally resolve that you don't want to use it then liquor, *gutka*, etc. will not touch you. Otherwise they are demonic things that are so alluring that one gets enticed. Within oneself lies desires, so on contact with such things there is obviously a greater attraction. So no matter how strong you may be, you will lapse. Therefore, if you are vigilant you won't have problems. Be cautious and don't ever see and use the bad things on the website. Internet seems good but it is like slow poison. As you experience it more and more you spoil your life. Spread this message so that others may be saved. To save a drowning person is our duty.

#### **Q: Should we chat on the internet?**

**A:** You can chat on what is necessary, but not on unnecessary things. There is no objection to chat on academic or business aspects. If you want to know about religion you can chat.

There is no objection to chatting about things that enhance your character, culture, faith in religion and God, and make your life good and philanthropic. But there is no benefit in chatting about things that spoil your life, family and



society. This means that you should not chat and listen to bad things.

#### **Q: How much time should we spend on the internet?**

**A:** Today, we see that people get so absorbed on the internet that they spend hours and nights using it. And its influence is more on the youths.

You should use it for a little while. Once you get the answer to your question, you should stop. There's no need to prolong it further. And if it is related to your studies, satsang and business then work on it but otherwise don't waste your time.

Give all your attention when it is related to your academic studies. Secondly, spend time for devotion and satsang for it will shape your life and help control your mind. You will reap its benefits in future. You will not be affected by bad influence. And with the remaining time, serve your mother and father, do the household chores, respect your parents and please them by obeying their wishes. And there is nothing wrong in playing sports.

In brief, spend the amount of time necessary but don't waste it. If you spend a little more time in good things then there's no objection. If you spend 15 minutes extra in matters related to study or mandir then its OK. But you should not spend a single minute in bad things. ♦

# JAYDEV

*Distinguished scholars consider  
'Gitagovinda' by Jaydev as  
the last of the great Sanskrit poems.  
In 12 cantos the classic celebrates and  
extols the divine love of Radha and Krishna.  
Though his work is well known,  
the poet seems to have revelled in  
splendid anonymity.  
He provides scanty information  
about himself in the classic.*



Jaydev, the celebrated author of the *Gitagovinda* belonged to 12th century Bengal. He was a poet at the court of King Lakshmansen of Bengal, who was a contemporary of Bakhtyar Khilji; the last known date of the Sen ruler is 1205. As the king conferred the title of “Kaviraj” on the poet, it appears he was the chief among the poets at his court; Jaydev says his fellow poets were Umapatidhar, Sarankavi, Govardhan and Dhoyi. In the 12th canto, the poet says Bhojdev and Ramdevi were his parents.

In the first canto, the poet, referring to his wife, Padmavati, writes: “*Padmāvati charana charana chakravarti.*” (The purport of the verse is that Jaydev directed the steps of Padmavati). It appears Padmavati, who was left at the Jagannath Puri Mandir as a *devadasi* against her wishes, was subsequently married to Jaydev on the order of the deity and was trained to be a great dancer. She would dance to the songs contained in the *Gitagovinda*, whose raga and *tala* were set by Jaydev, who was also a musicologist.

While introducing the immortal work, the *Gitagovinda*, Jaydev invokes the attention of the lovers of poetry in the following verses :

“Yadi Harismarane sarasam mano yadi vilā-  
sakalasu kutuhalam,

Madhura komalakāntapadāvali srnu tadā  
Jayadeva Sarasvatim.”

- Gitagovinda , Chapter I, Canto 3

“If your heart fills with sublime joy at the utterance of Lord Hari’s name, if you take delight in poetry and artistic creations, endowed with soft, sweet, delicate and musical expressions of high poetical excellence, you are cordially invited to go through the verses of Jaydev, which may be considered to have come out from the lips of Sarasvati, the goddess of music and learning.”

From this it becomes clear that Jaydev meant his classic to be a religious work centred on Bhagwan Krishna and also a work dealing with divine love.

He informs in the third canto that he was born in Bindubilva, Bengal. But there is no consistency in the name of his birthplace. In some places it is given as Kindubilva, Kendubilva, and also Tindubilva. There are numerous claimants to the birthplace of the poet. One of them is Kenduli in the Birbhum district of West Bengal and another is in Orissa, near Jagannath Puri.



The Bengal village of Kenduli is also known as Jaideb-Kenduli, thus reinforcing the claim of those who maintain it to be the poet's birthplace. This, it is claimed, evolved to the name of Kendubilva. In the *Bhaktamala*, it is called Bindubilva. In the Bengal Kendubilva, a *mela* is held every year on Makarsankranti day, which is attended by fifty to sixty thousand people. The *mela* has been a regular feature for more than seven centuries. The faithful believe that a stream of Ganga merges with the Ajaya river on Makarsankranti because Padmavati had dissuaded people from going to Kashi for the holy bath on that day as Turks were wreaking havoc in the region. The couple prayed for Gangavataran (manifestation of River Ganga) in their place, and the river obliged them. It is also believed that the poet died near his house and lies buried there. He is said also to have composed the classic, *Gitagovinda*, there. Besides these two places, the people of Mithila and Tripura also claim Jaydev as their own.

The *Gitagovinda* begins by Nanda asking Radha to safely escort the boy Krishna home as darkness was approaching. Then the story unfolds against the backdrop of Yamuna; the pellucid waters of the river have turned turbid over the centuries but the classic retains its flavour. It has provided an unfailing repertoire to generations of artistes. Even to this day, the *ashtapadis* are sung and danced with verve.

Then the ten incarnations of Krishna (Vishnu), including the tenth, Kalki, which is yet to manifest, are described, to the refrain of *jayajagadisha hare*. The last avatar has a contemporary theme as it depicts Krishna routing Turushkas – the Turkish invaders threatening Hindu India at that time. It may be mentioned here that Jaydev's octogenarian patron, King Lakhmanasen, was a victim of it. He was forced to leave Navadwipa (Nadia) after a distinguished military career with Bakhtiyar Khilji and had to withdraw to East Bengal, where he died in 1205. The poet alludes to the valour of

his patron. Lakshmansen can, however, be accused of not protecting Nadia and escaping from it without putting up a fight.

Now about the classic proper, Radha feels jealous because Krishna was paying more attention to her companions. That forms an important part of the epic. In anger, Radha withdraws herself into a bower. One of her companions makes her give up her anger and finally brings about a union between the two lovers.

It is said that while composing a verse, Jaydev had a doubt about whether what he was going to write may offend Krishna. So, he left it incomplete and went for his bath to the river. Meanwhile, Krishna came on the scene dressed as the poet, completed the verse, and even accepted food from Padmavati! A disbelieving Jaydev after returning from the river asked Padmavati to fetch the verse and found the verse completed. The unfinished portion of the verse read: "*Dehi me padapallavamudarām.*" ("Give me the imprint of your feet.")

Besides *Gitagovinda*, Jaydev reportedly wrote *Karakavada*, *Ratnamanjari* and *Tattvachintamani*.

Tradition has it that the poet was a talented child. Being a Brahmin, in the normal course he would have been sent to a *pathshala*. But his parents felt that would tire out the child so they made him stay at home. With his sharp intellect and grasping power, he could pick up a lot by merely listening to his friends studying. His versatility without formal education astonished many. He was considered to be an incarnation of Veda Vyas. According to another version, Jaydev lost his parents in his childhood and became a recluse. A crook deprived him of his house and the boy found his way to Puri in the company of a friend, Parashar. He would visit the Jagannath mandir for worship and sing in praise of Krishna. According to one version, he heard Krishna playing the flute on the banks of river Kalindi. Parashar, too, heard the dulcet notes and that was the beginning of *Gitagovinda*. The Puri mandir became his home

as it were. His life is replete with miracles caused by Krishna's grace.

There is an interesting story about the *GitaGovinda*. It seems the reigning monarch of Odisha could not tolerate the acclaim the classic was receiving. So, he copied the poet's version and accused Jaydev of plagiarism. The poet suggested that both the works should be placed before Bhagwan Jagannath and the decision should be left to the deity; the Lord accepted Jaydev's work. By a royal decree of Prataparudra Dev (15th century), the *GitaGovinda* is sung in the Jagannath Mandir even to this day. It is considered a religious work by several Vaishnav sects, chiefly Shri Vishnu Swami and Vallabhacharya. They honour Jaydev as a guru. The poem became so famous that its verses have been inscribed on the side of the steps of Shri Venkateshwara Mandir, Tirupati.

Now about the miracles: some robbers cut off the limbs of the poet out of greed for the money he got from a wealthy merchant, whom he taught *brahmagnan*. The poet was then thrown into a disused well from which he was rescued by King Lakshmansan, who was passing by. His men noticed a glow coming out of the well and on inquiry found Jaydev at the bottom singing with abandon despite what the robbers had done to him. The ruler was greatly impressed by the saintliness and profundity of Jaydev and appointed him as the court poet.

Another incident refers to a feast held by King Lakshmansan for sadhus. The robbers, who disfigured Jaydev, came to the feast in the guise of holy men. When they saw Jaydev, they could easily recognize him. They wanted to escape. But the poet had no intention to harm them in any way. Jaydev asked the ruler to give him some money; the latter was more than willing to oblige him as the poet hardly asked for anything. The king pressed a lot of money on him. The poet bid farewell to his tormentors after loading them with the riches. The impostors were provided with an

armed escort. They asked the robbers why Jaydev was so considerate to them. They replied that they had saved the poet who was under a sentence of death by merely disfiguring him, and out of gratitude, the poet was giving them money. No sooner had they uttered the lie, the earth opened up and the robbers plunged into the chasm. Jaydev on the other hand, got back his limbs.

Another miracle concerns his wife, Padmavati. One day, she was sitting with the queen. The discussion veered round to a *pativrata* (a woman who shows the highest degree of fidelity). Padmavati said that merely committing *sati* would not do. A woman should at once die on hearing the news of her husband's death. The queen was intent on testing Padmavati. So, she played a trick. She proclaimed that Jaydev had been eaten by a lion in the jungle. On hearing the news, Padmavati dropped dead on the spot. There was lamentation all around. Soon Jaydev walked into the mourning crowd and by praying to Krishna, revived Padmavati. Such had been the life of the great poet. When they left King Lakshmansan's court, the couple returned everything they had received from the king and preferred to go by a bullock cart.

There are different versions about the poet's end. According to one source, both the husband and wife went to Vrindavan and died there; the other version claims they ended their earthly existence by taking *jalasamadhi* in the river Ajaya at Kenduli. ♦

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# BIPOLAR DISORDER

*A mental disorder that results in extreme moods like depression or hyperactivity and enthusiasm. What triggers bipolar disorder and how can it be treated?*

## WHAT IS BIPOLAR DISORDER?

Bipolar disorder, is a mental disorder that causes extreme shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out daily tasks. A bipolar disorder patient experiences mood changes between depression (severe lows) and mania (extreme highs). Shifts into mania or depression differ from normal mood shifts in that the highs and lows are extreme, making it hard to function normally. Unlike normal mood shifts, the mood of a bipolar disorder patient often doesn't level out, or may take a long time to return to normal. Medication is therefore used to bring the mood back within the normal range.

Bipolar disorder can worsen if left undiagnosed and untreated, impacting negatively on relationships, work, school performance and other aspects of life, leading to the possibility of

even suicide. Without treatment, episodes may become more frequent or more severe over time. Proper diagnosis and treatment by a medical professional, will help people with bipolar disorder lead healthy productive lives. In most cases, treatment can help reduce the frequency and severity of episodes.

## HOW IS BIPOLAR DISORDER DIAGNOSED?

The illness may not be easy to spot when it starts. Some people suffer for years before they are properly diagnosed and treated. Like diabetes or heart disease, bipolar disorder is a long-term illness that must be carefully managed throughout life. Episodes of mania and depression typically come back over time. Between episodes, many people with bipolar disorder are free of symptoms, but some people may have lingering symptoms.



Bipolar I disorder affects around one or two people in every 100. Initially, it often appears in the late teens or early adult years. At least half of all cases start before age 25.

Currently, bipolar disorder cannot be identified through a blood test or a brain scan, but these tests can help rule out other factors that may contribute to mood problems, such as stroke, brain tumour or thyroid conditions.

### SYMPTOMS OF BIPOLAR DISORDER?

Numerous symptoms form the diagnosis of a manic episode. According to the latest American Psychiatric Association publication, a manic episode consists of a distinct period of abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood, goal-directed activity or energy, lasting at least one week.

In addition, a number of other symptoms may be present during the episode:

1. Inflated self-esteem or grandiosity.
2. Decreased need for sleep (e.g. feels rested after only three hours of sleep).
3. More talkative than usual or pressure to keep talking.
4. Flight of ideas or feeling that one's thoughts are racing.
5. Distractibility (i.e. attention too easily drawn to unimportant or irrelevant stimuli).
6. Increase in goal directed activity (either socially, at work or school) or psychomotor agitation (i.e. purposeless non-goal-directed activity).
7. Excessive involvement in activities that have high potential for painful consequences (e.g. engaging in unrestrained buying sprees or foolish business investments).

The mood disturbance is sufficiently severe to cause marked impairment in social or occupational functioning or to necessitate hospitalization to prevent harm to self or others, or there are psychotic features.

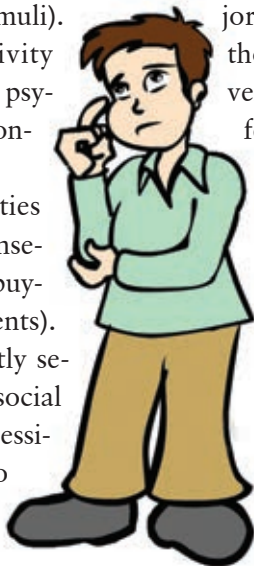
Depression is an integral part of bipolar illness presentation. It is characterized by:

- Depressed mood.
- Loss of interest and pleasure.
- Agitation or decreased activity.
- Poor concentration.
- Reduced self-esteem and confidence.
- Ideas of guilt and unworthiness.
- Pessimistic thoughts.
- Ideas of self-harm.
- Disturbed sleep: increased or decreased.
- Diminished or increased appetite.

Bipolar disorder can be present even when mood swings are less extreme. For example, some people with bipolar disorder experience hypomania, a less severe form of mania. During a hypomanic episode, they may feel very good, be highly productive, and function well. They may not feel that anything is wrong, but family and friends may recognize the mood swings as possible bipolar disorder. Without proper treatment, people with hypomania may develop severe mania or depression.

Bipolar disorder may also be present in a mixed state, in which patients might experience both mania and depression at the same time. During a mixed state, they might feel very agitated, have trouble sleeping, experience major changes in appetite, and have suicidal thoughts. People in a mixed state may feel very sad or hopeless while at the same time feel extremely energized.

Sometimes, a person with severe episodes of mania or depression has psychotic symptoms too, such as hallucinations or delusions. The psychotic symptoms tend to reflect the person's extreme mood. For example, if they are having psychotic symptoms during a manic episode, they may believe they are a famous person, have a lot of money, or have special spiritual powers. People having psychotic symptoms during a depressive





Ludwig von Beethoven

episode, may believe they are ruined and penniless, or that they have committed a crime.

## FAMOUS PEOPLE SPECULATED TO HAVE HAD BIPOLAR DISORDER

### ■ Ludwig von Beethoven

When the composer died of liver failure in 1827, he had been self-medicating his many health problems with alcohol for decades. Sadly, much of what he may have suffered from probably could have been managed with today's medications, including a serious case of bipolar disorder. Beethoven's fits of mania were well known in his circle of friends, and when he was on a high mania he could compose numerous works at once. But surprisingly it was during his down periods that many of his most celebrated works were written. Sadly, that was also when he contemplated suicide, as he told his brothers in letters throughout his life. During the early part of 1813 he went through such a depressive period that he stopped caring about his appearance, and would fly into rages during dinner parties. He also stopped composing almost completely during that time.

### ■ Winston Churchill

Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain



Winston Churchill

during World War II, dealt not only with international strife but his own mental struggles at the same time. In his 30s, he complained to his friends that he was hounded by the 'black dog of depression'. He sat in the Houses of Parliament and contemplated suicide. Churchill told his doctor that he had to be careful where he stood in a train station: "I don't like standing near the edge of a platform when an express train is passing through. I like to stand right back and if possible get a pillar between me and the train. I don't like to stand by the side of a ship and look down into the water. A second's action would end everything. A few drops of desperation."

The 'black dog' would follow him for the rest of his life. When in his mild manic phases, he was personable, but his moods could change quickly. During periods of high mania he would stay up all night writing, eventually producing 43 books on top of attending to his political duties.

## WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR DEVELOPING BIPOLAR DISORDER?

There is no single known cause, rather, many factors seem to act together to produce the illness or increase risk for developing it.

### 1. Genetics

Bipolar disorder tends to run in families.

People with certain genes are more likely to develop bipolar disorder than others. Children with a parent or sibling who has bipolar disorder are much more likely to develop the illness, compared with children who do not have a family history of bipolar disorder.

But genes are not the only risk factor for bipolar disorder. Studies of identical twins have shown that the twin of a person with bipolar illness does not always develop the disorder, despite the fact that identical twins share all of the same genes. It is likely that many different genes and environmental factors are involved.

## 2. Brain Structure and Functioning

Some imaging studies show how the brains of people with bipolar disorder may differ from the brains of healthy people or people with other mental disorders.

## TRIGGERS OF BIPOLAR DISORDER

Certain factors can precipitate mania or depression. Some of the most common triggers are described as follows. These don't cause bipolar disorder directly, but may predispose one towards it.

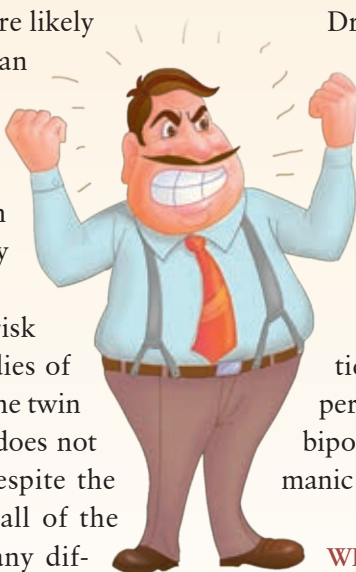
### 1. Stress

Stress can have a big impact on any person's mood. Even when stress is due to something good, such as a job promotion, it can trigger a major mood shift.

### 2. Disrupted Routine

Changes in routine can trigger mania or depression. This is especially true if a person's normal sleep-wake cycle (when someone goes to bed and when he wakes up) changes. For instance, if travelling to another time zone prevents a person from sleeping when he normally would, this disruption could trigger a manic episode.

### 3. Drugs and Alcohol



Drugs and alcohol can upset the chemical balance in the brain. Someone may use drugs or alcohol to feel good. Or he may be trying to avoid or numb the pain in his life. But using them, even just once in a while, can trigger a shift in mood.

### 4. Medications

Some medications (including antidepressants) can trigger mania. If a person stops taking his medications for bipolar disorder, this could also trigger a manic episode.

## WHAT ILLNESSES OFTEN CO-EXIST WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER?

Substance abuse is very common among people with bipolar disorder, but the reasons for this link are unclear. Some people with bipolar disorder may try to treat their symptoms with alcohol or drugs. Substance abuse can also trigger or prolong bipolar symptoms, and the behavioural problems associated with mania can lead to drinking too much.

Anxiety disorders, mental trauma-related disorders and stressor-related disorders can also occur with bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder can occur with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as well, which has some symptoms that overlap with bipolar disorder, such as restlessness and being easily distracted.

In addition, people with bipolar disorder are at higher risk for thyroid disease, migraine headaches, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and other physical illnesses. These illnesses may cause symptoms of mania or depression, or they may be caused by some medications used to treat bipolar disorder.

## HOW IS BIPOLAR DISORDER TREATED?

Bipolar disorder cannot be cured, but it can be treated effectively over the long-term. Proper treatment helps many people with bipolar



disorder – even those with the most severe forms of the illness – gain better control of their mood swings and related symptoms. But because it is a lifelong illness, long-term, continuous treatment is needed to control symptoms.

An effective maintenance treatment plan usually includes a combination of medication and psychotherapy.

### 1. Medication to Treat Bipolar Disorder

Different types and more than one medication may be used to treat the illness. Not everyone responds to medications in the same way. Several different medications in varying amounts may need to be tried before finding the optimal treatment regime. It is therefore important to take the medication as directed and to continue taking it.

The types of medications generally used to treat bipolar disorder include mood stabilizers, antipsychotics, antidepressants and anxiolytics.

**Mood stabilizers** are usually the first choice to treat bipolar disorder. In general, people with bipolar disorder continue treatment with mood stabilizers for many years.

**Anticonvulsants** are also used as mood stabilizers. They were originally developed to treat seizures, but they also help control moods.

**Atypical antipsychotics** are sometimes used to treat symptoms of bipolar disorder. Often, these medications are taken with other medications, such as antidepressants.

**Antidepressants** are sometimes used to treat symptoms of depression in bipolar disorder.

However, taking only an antidepressant can increase your risk of switching to mania or hypomania, or of developing rapid-cycling symptoms. To prevent this switch, doctors usually require patients to take a mood-stabilizing medication at the same time as an antidepressant.

**Anxiolytics** are used in the short term to sedate and calm the patient and are not recommended for long term use.

These medications may also be linked with rare but serious short and long-term side effects.



These need to be reviewed with a doctor as soon as they become evident.

### 2. Psychotherapy

When done in combination with medication, psychotherapy can be an effective treatment for bipolar disorder. It can provide support, education and guidance to people with bipolar disorder and their families.

### 3. Other Treatments

**Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT):** For cases in which medication and psychotherapy do not work, ECT may be useful. ECT, formerly known as “shock therapy”, once had a bad reputation. But in recent years, it has greatly improved and can provide relief for people with severe bipolar disorder who have not been able to recover with other treatments.

**Sleep Medications:** People with bipolar disorder who have trouble sleeping usually sleep better after getting treatment for bipolar disorder. However, if sleeplessness does not decrease, the doctor may suggest a change in medications. If the problems still continue, the doctor may prescribe sedatives or other sleep medications.

**Herbal Supplements:** In general, not much research has been conducted on herbal or natural supplements and how they may affect bipolar disorder.

**Value-oriented Life:** The mind-body connect is a well established scientific fact. Increasing evidence shows that the state of one’s mind is partly responsible for the health of the body. Behavioural patterns, food and lifestyle choices,

personal actions and thought processes result in good and bad health and good and bad karmas. To alleviate physical ailments it is necessary to modify one's lifestyle and diet, and also calm and purify one's mind.

Soaring ambitions and expectations, a muddled life and mundane desires lead to excesses, stresses and conflicts which affect one's personal health, family relationships and state of mind.

To perceive and live life properly the fundamental principles of social values, morals and spiritual sadhanas need to be practiced.

Observing morality i.e. the practise of *satya* (truth), *daya* (compassion), *ahimsa*, *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and *asteya* (non-stealing), makes for a happy life and a robust and peaceful mind. In addition, daily meditation, satsang, kirtan, spiritual knowledge and rituals like puja and *arti* play a pivotal role in cultivating patience, self-restraint and pacifying one's mind.

### CASE STUDY

Ms P, a project manager for a multinational company, was brought into a Delhi hospital casualty in the early hours of Saturday morning by her work colleagues and security staff of the hotel she was staying in. She was loud, jovial, distractible and extremely talkative. She paced around restlessly and struggled to sit still. At times she burst into song simultaneously insisting that there was nothing wrong with her.

Her work colleagues reported that they had all flown on Monday from Mumbai for an IT project and had been under pressure to complete the project by Friday which they had. They had gone out for dinner with the client the night before and returned to the hotel after midnight. Ms P, as the manager, had been working long hours daily and had not slept much. They had noticed that she had become more irritable as the week went by and had also been tearful. Although her energy levels increased as the week went by, she became less productive due to her distractibility.

At the dinner last night she was extremely boisterous, even though she had not consumed alcohol. She was not the quiet, studious manager they all generally knew her to be.

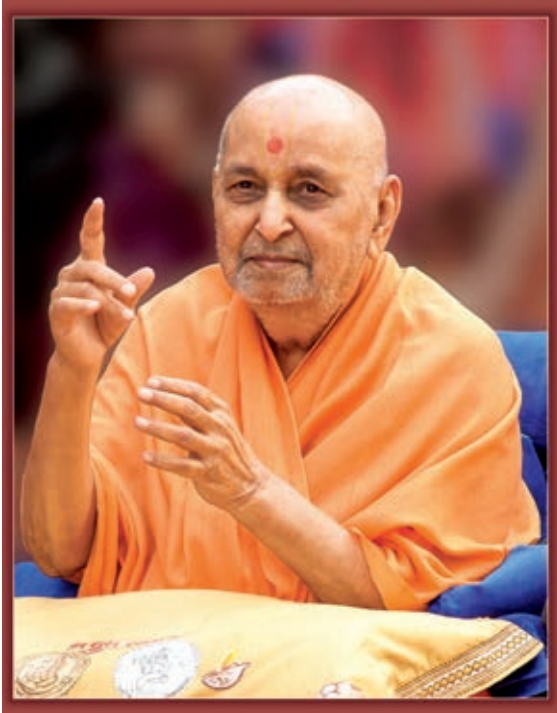
After much convincing and coercion, Ms P allowed medical staff to give her an injection to calm her down. Her family arrived the next day and informed the doctor that Ms P had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, following a similar episode, five years ago. She had been initiated on medication, but had stopped it on her own accord this year as she felt that she was well.

The family were advised that it was important that Ms P be educated as to the nature of the illness and to remain on the medication as advised by her doctor. She settled after three days on medication and was allowed to leave the hospital on medication and under family care. ♦

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# SAFEGUARD THE MANDIR WITHIN AND WITHOUT



*After the murti-pratishtha of the  
BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir  
in Cleveland, Ohio, USA,  
on 1 September 1996,  
Swamishri blessed the devotees  
in the satsang assembly...*

If you please God, he will grace you in all ways. God gives infinite times more than what we give. He gives Akshardham. However, when we perform *seva*, the only wish we should have is that we can please God. Only through his blessings will we have peace within us and in our worldly activities.

You have all endeavoured enthusiastically to set up this mandir. Now that the mandir is

complete, your responsibilities have increased. We now have the duty to continuously serve God. Even in family, work or business life you all have responsibilities.

When you don't have any expensive items you are tension-free, but when you do have such things, you worry about looking after them and protecting them. So, now that you have attained God and satsang, your responsibilities have increased. If you do not look after your valuable items, you will lose them. But if you look after them, they become more valuable. So, now that you have a mandir, what do you need to do? Strengthen your satsang. All our devotees should come regularly for darshan. Do not be lax in this. If you start a shop, stock it with goods to sell and then do not go to open it, what will happen? You will lose money and become bankrupt.

Everyone from miles around the mandir can come for darshan. Understand each other's *mahima*. If you serve and understand *mahima*, the desired fruits are attained. Maharaj inspires all to do the work of satsang, so understand everyone's *mahima*. Swami says if you take *avgun* of others, then the satsang you have attained will be lost. If such robbers enter within us, our *swabhavs* come to the fore and all our satsang is lost. So, in satsang, we must speak only about each other's *mahima* and care for each other. Then, others who come will take a positive message. Now that the mandir is complete, we have to look after the devotees who come here.

God looks after us, but we must look after God so that he does not leave us. If we do that which does not please God, he will go away. That is our big loss. Hence, if you preserve all this



and practise satsang, you will experience peace and happiness.

In Vachanamrut Gadhada III 9, Shriji Maharaj has said that we must remain at the gateway of awareness. If we have many valuables in our home, we remain alert to safeguard them. Even when a mouse or cat makes a noise we become vigilant. When the wind causes the windows to vibrate, we become attentive and take precautions. If you are carrying thousands of dollars in your pocket, you will repeatedly check to make sure the money is secure and that nobody has taken it.

So, just as we ensure the security of these worldly possessions, we should be vigilant to safeguard God who resides in our heart.

Yogiji Maharaj used to narrate the story of Bhagvatsinh Bapu, the chieftain of Gondal. He employed Viramji Bapu as a guard outside so that entry could be controlled. Once, Viramji Bapu dozed off and a dog entered, reaching the seat of Bhagvatsinh. He was annoyed and fined the guard. Similarly, if we lose spiritual awareness, by indulging in *abhav*-avgun talks all our hard-earned spiritual progress is negated.

We practise satsang to attain *kalyan*. So, instead of such negative talks, if we talk about each other's *mahima* then much good results. We do not practise satsang as a favour to others. If somebody tells us for our own good, we should not feel offended and leave satsang. If you are running a flourishing business and someone criticizes you for not doing things properly, would you just abandon it? We would try to improve. Similarly, in satsang, if someone tells us our mistakes, is it appropriate to leave this invaluable, divine satsang?

We engage in satsang to attain Akshardham, so we should adjust to any situations. Our goal is to please God and the Satpurush. They are the doorway to *moksha* and we should ensure that doorway does not close.

Our liberation is only possible through God

and his holy Sadhu. Only in this satsang will we find happiness. If, however, one develops *abhav* towards them, the door closes and one becomes trapped in the worldly cycle, and does not attain *moksha* and happiness. If a man sitting on a tree branch cuts that branch, he will fall and get hurt. Similarly, if we cut the satsang we are in, what will happen? The satsang, which is the source of happiness, peace and bliss, is lost.

So, just as in worldly life and business we compromise, have a similar understanding in satsang, no matter what happens. Believe satsang to be one's home and family. If *abhav* develops for one person, it will grow to include others and ultimately encompass God. So, constantly remain alert by talking about and listening to *mahima*. If you talk about good things, you will be happy and the listener will also be delighted. But if you talk negatively and only complain about things, then what is gained?

We come to the mandir for darshan and to offer devotion. If our requirements at home are not fulfilled, do we create a fuss? Treat satsang in the same way. Accept and adjust if the programme (*sabha*) runs late, we do not get a prime seat, food or accommodation is not to our liking, or we are not honoured. In satsang, our devotion and *seva* is performed to attain liberation. So, in satsang focus on God and the Satpurush and introspect to find our own faults and what we need to improve. God will oversee the others. God sees everything and everyone. One will reap the consequences of whatever one does – good or bad. God will give us the fruits of those actions.

We should constantly endeavour to remove our faults which hinder our liberation. That is why Maharaj says that we should do satsang for the liberation of our *jiva* and not for bodily or worldly gains, since worldly gains are only temporary.

If we come here to satsang for physical comforts, then when they are not given, we feel disappointed and stay away. But, think about the real

purpose for coming to satsang?

When people first come to America, even if they are well-educated, they often have to toil away doing menial jobs; but still they persevere. If this approach is applied to satsang, then one will not be affected if circumstances require hard work.

The body will perish and be cremated to ashes, but the *atma* is immortal. By engaging in discourses, devotion, discussions, bhajans and *seva*, there will be no problems. Understand everyone's *mahima*, focus on God and offer devotion. We have to remove our desires and *swabhavs* and develop virtues. We have to become *brahmarup* and serve Maharaj.

If we remain alert and focused, we can remove any flaw within us and see the *mahima* of others. Read Yogiji Maharaj's biography and you will see that he had only *mahima* for others. No matter what difficulties he had to tolerate because of others, he only highlighted their *mahima*. He never spoke about their flaws and mistakes. So, understand this as the wish of the Satpurush and act accordingly so that we can become like him. The great sadhus and devotees have done this. So, repeatedly read his biography to retain this awareness.

In the biographies of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj and Shastriji Maharaj you will read about and be inspired by how, amid the honours, insults, joys, miseries, and difficulties, they all sustained and nurtured satsang.

You have come to satsang to serve. So, whether you get to sit at the front or back, realize that you are seated in the presence of God, listening to discourses about God. Believe this as your good fortune. Sitting in front or back is of no relevance. Swami says that one who practises satsang with this understanding is great. In the Vachanamrut, Maharaj says that one who dedicates his wealth, property, family and life to God is regarded as great. Those with true

understanding are great – whether they sit at the front or back. Parvatbhai sat at the back – did that reduce his greatness? He used to do only that which pleased Maharaj, but in *sabhas* he would sit where told.

Once, he visited Gadhada. He daily sat in the assembly; he would sleep by the River Ghela, bathe there and do his puja. After the morning *sabha*, he would buy some grams from the market to eat. And again in the evening he would eat grams, have Maharaj's darshan and then go to sleep. After seven days, Maharaj asked him about his lodging and meal arrangements. After much persuasion he revealed the details. He said everything was really good since he was able to have darshan and listen to his discourses.

Maharaj asked Mulji Brahmachari if he had made any arrangements for Parvatbhai's lodgings and meals. He replied that since Parvatbhai was a guest at Dada Khachar's *darbar* the latter must have made the arrangements. Meanwhile, Dada Khachar, Laduba and Jivuba thought that Maharaj had made the arrangements. Then Maharaj instructed them to arrange, but Parvatbhai had no ill feelings for anyone. He had the understanding that he had come for his own liberation. So, what could be greater than having Maharaj's darshan? It was more important than lodgings or food. With this understanding, everyone will experience the peace and joy of satsang.

Now that you have a mandir here, these are the messages you must imbibe and recall daily. Learn to understand each other's *mahima*. And to sustain this, one must remove one's flaws and base natures. By this, God and his Sadhu are pleased. ♦

# HOW SATSANG INSPIRES



**H**ow has satsang influenced my life? In a busy lifestyle, it is easy to forget what influenced our decisions and how we ended up on our current path in life. With some introspection, I can see that satsang has always helped me in making some of my biggest decisions.

The earliest memory I have with Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Malawi, Africa, in 1999. I was seven years old and was delivering a speech in a *sabha* of approximately 200 *haribhaktas* in the presence of Swami. The final sentence of that speech was “I have never seen Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj or Yogiji Maharaj, but I know I can see them all through Pramukh Swami Maharaj.” I did not fully appreciate what this meant at the time, but as my understanding in satsang grew, that opportunity and sentence has become increasingly meaningful.

Learning about Bapa’s life through attending *sabhas* has both humbled and strengthened me to face the ups and downs of daily living. For example, having worked extremely hard at school, I achieved above the required grades<sup>1</sup> to attend medical school. Despite all my efforts, I was not granted an offer from any of my chosen universities.

Naturally, one is inclined to question any spiritual entity. However, growing up with satsang allowed me to remember a commonly taught lesson: When events turn out the way you planned, be happy. When they do not, be even happier as they are according to the plan of Maharaj. In other words, “Maharaj *ni ichha*.” Remembering this offers exceptional mental stability. As a result, and with Bapa’s blessings, I reapplied a year later with no guarantee that I would succeed. I

am now 4 years into medical school in a London university which I appreciate a lot more. Looking back, the extra year allowed me to spend three months in India where I was granted *seva* and worked closely with Bapa’s *santos* and *haribhaktos*.

Voluntary work has become a large part of my life. From an early age, I saw *seva* as an opportunity to meet new people and have fun whether it’s helping to construct a stage, photographing events, or cleaning. Fortunately, this has not changed much over time, but it also teaches one to be humble, united, and selfless. It is a method of learning one of Bapa’s main principles, “In the joy of others lies our own.” *Seva* also introduced me to new skills such as photography and art, as well as common interpersonal skills, which are so useful in daily life, especially for my particular career choice.

Finally, satsang instills a strong sense of community and family. In a busy life, it is difficult to make time for family, which is otherwise taken for granted. By encouraging *ghar sabhas* and weekly mandir visits, families of all generations are encouraged to spend time together. This naturally helped me to build a stronger relationship and solidarity with my family, both of which can otherwise be easily overlooked when individuals are absorbed in a fast paced life.

These are a few examples of how satsang has influenced my life personally, but it teaches so many other values and principles that many others have been able to utilize individually. As a result, the relationship we build with Bapa is so strongly intertwined with our daily life, that across thousands of kilometres and amongst millions of people, our faith in him doesn’t falter. Satsang continues to inspire the young and old to be the best, and work for a better life together. ◆

1. Maulik got 6A\*, 7As and 1B in GCSE (10<sup>th</sup> grade) and 4A\* and 1A in his A levels.



# Vicharan

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

May-July 2015, Sarangpur



MAY

3, Sunday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Radha-Krishna, Shri Sita-Ram, Shri Shiv-Parvatiji, Shri Hanumanji-Ganapatiji and the Guru Parampara (canvas *murti*) for the new BAPS *hari* mandir in Augusta, USA, and also of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj for the *hari* mandir in Mwanza, Tanzania. Swamishri touched the *suvarna shalaka* (gold-tipped ritual rod) on each of the *murtis* to infuse the Divine. The rituals prior to the *pratishtha* were performed by senior sadhus.

5, Tuesday

Today marked the second anniversary of Swamishri's stay in Sarangpur. In the evening assembly, highlights of Swamishri's stay were presented. The celebration started with Swamishri's arrival in Sarangpur, where he was honoured on the stage of Pramukh Darshan Vatika with a garland by Kothari Jnaneshwar Swami and *pujan* by Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami.

The highlights of the many festivals celebrated were then presented:

**Rath Yatra:** Swamishri celebrated the festival by driving a small decorated *rath* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj with a remote control console.

**Prabodhini Ekadashi:** Swamishri's wheelchair was placed in a makeshift vegetable shop. As per tradition, Swamishri showed each vegetable to the audience and then gave it to the senior sadhus.

**Shakotsav:** A large utensil containing brinjals were cooked on the Pramukh Darshan Vatika stage. The spices and brinjals were sanctified by Swamishri and placed into the vessel by Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami. Swamishri also witnessed several sadhus preparing *rotla* on the stage as part of the *shakotsav*.

**Shastriji Maharaj's Smruti Parva:** Swamishri served *dudhpak* through a remote-controlled arrangement to all the sadhus.

**Annakut:** While Swamishri was in his cabin an *annakut* was arranged and *thal* was sung. Senior sadhus offered *shiro* and *sata* to Swamishri.

**Sharad Punam:** Swamishri arrived on the stage and some sadhus played *ras* while circling him.

**Swamishri's Birthday Celebration:** Sadhus and devotees collectively performed *arti* and offered *mantra-pushpanjali* to honour Swamishri.

**Pushpadolotsav:** Swamishri pressed the switch of a spray to sprinkle the sadhus and devotees with coloured water.

7, Thursday

In the 'Pramukh Mandir' (cabin), Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Hanumanji-Ganapatji and the Guru Parampara (canvas *murti*) for the newly built BAPS *hari* mandir in Dharasana village (Tithal). Swamishri touched the *suvarna shalaka* to all the *murtis* and performed *arti* and *pujan*.

11, Monday

Swamishri inaugurated two new English



Swamishri blesses all during the Yogi Jayanti celebration. The mangoes sanctified by Swamishri were given as *prasad* to the devotees

publications – *Invaluable Scriptures of Brahnavidya: The Vachanamrut* and *Swamini Vato* and *Hinduism: Festivals, Rituals and Symbols*, published by Swaminarayan Aksharpath.

### 15, Friday; Yogi Jayanti

In the morning, Swamishri went for darshan at the Smruti Mandir and of Thakorji in the main mandir.

At 7.00 p.m. the Yogi Jayanti celebration was held at the Pramukh Darshan Vatika grounds. The stage decoration consisted of two sprawling artificial mango trees with mangoes. Around the trees were arranged basketfuls of fresh mangoes of different varieties. Swamishri sanctified the mangoes by showering flower petals. The Yogi Jayanti celebration was themed on “*Deto deto ne deto, Jogido...*” in which the contributions of Yogiji Maharaj in Satsang were presented:

**Bal Sabha:** A *bal sabha* was held wherein a story in Yogiji Maharaj’s voice was relayed.

**Yuvak Mandal:** Yogiji Maharaj had also established the weekly *yuvak sabha*, and through his love and training 51 youths took the saffron *diksha* in 1961. Senior sadhus, who had been trained as youths by Yogiji Maharaj, garlanded

and honoured Swamishri.

**Value-based Education:** Yogiji Maharaj had established the first *chhatralaya* in Vidyanagar. With the relaying of the bhajan “*Nav yuvāno...*”, the audience waved the BAPS flags.

**Sunday Satsang Sabha:** Yogiji Maharaj introduced the Sunday Satsang *sabha* for the development of faith in devotees. A *sabha* was arranged.

**48th Birthday Celebration:** Video blessing of Yogiji Maharaj during Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s 48th birthday celebration in Mumbai was screened. Thereafter, the senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with garlands.

Swamishri was offered mangoes by the senior sadhus and thereafter the evening *arti* was performed. The assembly concluded with the distribution of mangoes as *prasad* to all the devotees.

### 21, Thursday; Pramukh Varni Din

In the morning, Swamishri gave *parshad diksha* to 14 youths and *bhagvati diksha* to two *parshads*.

In the evening, the 65th Pramukh Varni Din celebration was held at the Pramukh Darshan Vatika. Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami smeared *chandān* on Swamishri’s forehead and the other senior sadhus also honoured Swamishri with garlands.



On Pramukh Varni Din Swamishri initiated 14 youths into the *parshad diksha*

After his appointment as president, the pledge that Swamishri made before Shastriji Maharaj was relayed in Swamishri's own voice. Thereafter, youths performed skits to show how Swamishri's services have catapulted the BAPS on to the global map. This was followed by speeches by Apurvamuni Swami, Atmatrupt Swami, Brahmadarshan Swami and Viveksagar Swami, expounding upon Swamishri's virtues. Thereafter the senior sadhus offered prayers to Swamishri. In conclusion, the senior sadhus offered *shikhand* to Swamishri. All the devotees were given *shikhand* for *prasad*.

### 25, Monday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *pujan* of the marble *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Calgary and Edmonton (Canada), Prempur (Himatnagar district), and Shihor (Madhya Pradesh). Swamishri touched the *murtis* and infused the Divine.

### 28, Thursday

This morning Pujya Mahamuni Nirmalanandnathji, the 72nd guru of the 1500-year-old Nath Sampradaya and successor of the late Pujya

Balgangadharnathji of the Adi Chunchungiri Math, came for Swamishri's darshan. Pujya Viveksagar Swami honoured him on Swamishri's behalf with a garland. During a personal meeting Pujya Nirmalanandnathji received the blessings of Swamishri and he opined, "The experience of compassion, divinity, kindness and love that I had during my guru's darshan in my dreams I have experienced today before Swamiji."

### JUNE

#### 3, Wednesday

Swamishri gave the *parshad diksha* to Bhavik Devaliya and named him Jaydev Bhagat.

In the evening, Shri Harshad K. Lal, the son of world-renowned magician K. Lal, performed several magic items before Swamishri, sadhus and devotees. Swamishri blessed Harshadbhai.

#### 6, Saturday

Swamishri prayed for the soul of Shri K.C. Patel (former chairman of BAPS Satsang, USA) who had passed away today. Pujya Viveksagar Swami eulogized his outstanding faith and *seva*. For details refer to *Swaminarayan Bliss*, July-August 2015, page 66.





Swamishri presides over a *parayan* on the Satsangijivan scripture during the holy Purushottam (Adhik) month

### 18, Thursday

Swamishri inaugurated an English publication by Swaminarayan Aksharpathi, *Impressions*, Part 3, a translation of *Shriji Charitra Vihar*, Part 1, by Gajendra Inamdar.

### 20, Saturday

At 12.20 p.m., Dr APJ Abdul Kalam arrived at Sarangpur and presented his book, *Transcendence, My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swamiji*, to Swamishri. For the detailed report refer to *Swaminarayan Bliss*, July-August 2015.

### 28, Sunday

Swamishri inaugurated two audio and video DVD, *Sadgun Sagar Pramukh Swami* (MP 3) and *Kafan*, respectively, published by Swaminarayan Aksharpathi.

### 29, Monday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Preston (UK). Swamishri touched the ritual gold-tipped stick amidst Vedic chantings to the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purshottam Maharaj, Shri Radha-Krishna Dev, Shri Sita-Ram,

Shri Hanumanji and Ganapatiji and the Guru Parampara (canvas *murti*).

### JULY

### 5, Sunday

Swamishri inaugurated *Bal Vikas*, a video DVD publication by Swaminarayan Aksharpathi.

### 10, Friday

There is a tradition of having discourses or *parayans* during the holy month of Purushottam in the Indian calendar. An occasion of one such discourse delivered by Swamishri in the past was arranged today before an assembly of sadhus and devotees at the Pramukh Darshan Vatika. A decorated small canopy or *mandap* was arranged. The *murtis* of Shriji Maharaj and Harikrishna Maharaj were arranged on a decorated pedestal.

Initially, Pujya Viveksagar Swami recalled how Swamishri had studied Sanskrit and thereafter, at the insistence of Shastriji Maharaj, had delivered discourses on the Satsangijivan scripture in Bhadra (1941), Babra (1942), Surat (1943) and other places.

Then Swamishri's wheelchair was arranged before a small platform with the Satsangijivan



Swamishri operates the remote controlled *rath* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj during the Rath Yatra festival

scripture. The preliminary *pujan* rituals were performed and thereafter an audio-recording of Swamishri's past discourse was relayed in the assembly. All cherished Swamishri's darshan and his discourse.

Similar arrangements were also made on 11 and 16 July where Swamishri's past discourses on the Bhaktachintamani and Vachanamrut were relayed respectively to the joy of all.

### 16, Thursday

Swamishri inaugurated two English print publications, *Realization of Brahmaavidya: Swaminarayan Theology* and *Hinduism: Sadhana, Great Devotees and Risi Scientists*, published by Swaminarayan Aksharpath.

### 18, Saturday; Rath Yatra Festival

At 9.20 a.m. Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Radha-Krishna, Shri Sita-Ram, Shri Shiv-Parvatiji, Shri Hanumanji-Ganapatiji and the Guru Parampara (canvas *murti*) for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Jalandhar (Punjab). Swamishri also blessed the 50 devotees of Jalandhar seated in

the assembly.

Thereafter, Swamishri also celebrated the Rath Yatra festival by operating the remote controlled *rath* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj.

At 8.00 p.m. Swamishri came out of his quarters to celebrate the Rath Yatra festival. After the *pujan* rituals of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Swamishri sat in a decorated *rath* along with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. The *rath yatra* commenced from Swamishri's living quarters. The spectacular festive procession was led by horsemen, followed by sword-wielding youths, peacock-dressed children, torchbearers, dancing youths, devotees of Jalandhar performing Bhangda, conch-blowing sadhus, *kartal*-playing sadhus, *mayur rath* with Thakorji and Swamishri, children dancing in costumes of devas, birds and flowers, and youths waving BAPS flags. The *rath yatra* proceeded towards the main mandir and then towards the Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir to finally halt at the open Yagnapurush Mandapam. Here, the *rath yatra* celebration assembly had started at 6.30 p.m. with Brahmadarshan Swami's speech. The chief guest of the celebration assembly, Pujyapad Shri Satyamitranand Giriji, blessed the gathering, "Today is a very holy day. Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj is the embodiment of God's form.





Devotees during the Guru Purnima celebration at the Pramukh Darshan Vatika

I have come here with a deep wish to have the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. You will benefit greatly by chanting the name of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, doing darshan of the mandir and meditating upon Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Your intellect will become pure. So, I request you that if you wish to cleanse your intellect, like you wash your clothes clean, then meditate on Pramukh Swami Maharaj. You are all very fortunate that you are here in Sarangpur.”

Thereafter, Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke about the festive occasion. The assembly concluded with *arti* and *prasad*.

Pujya Satyamitranand Swami met Swamishri in his living quarters.

## 27, Monday

At 8.00 p.m. Swamishri was informed that Dr APJ Abdul Kalam had passed away while addressing the students of IIM in Shillong. Swamishri grieved his demise and prayed for his soul's *moksha*.

In the evening assembly, Pujya Viveksagar Swami eulogized about Dr Abdul Kalam and his meetings with Swamishri

## 31, Friday; Guru Purnima

The morning Guru Purnima assembly was held

at the Pramukh Darshan Vatika. Adarshjivan Swami discoursed about Swamishri's greatness, followed by a discourse by Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami. A video on Swamishri's works was shown. Finally, Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke about the importance of a guru and the virtues of Swamishri.

At 10.54 a.m. Swamishri came to give darshan at the Pramukh Mandiram (cabin). A skit related to the occasion was performed by children and youths. Thereafter, senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with *pujan* and garlands, and offered prayers on behalf of all.

Swamishri inaugurated new publications by Swaminarayan Aksharpith: Video DVD of 'Akshardham Nirman-gatha', four DVDs on children's values and an MP3 on 'Paravidya'. Swamishri also gave darshan from Akshar Jharukho. Thereafter, devotees filed passed the stage for Swamishri's *samip* darshan. More than 15,000 devotees took *mahaprasad*.

In the evening, at 7.05 p.m., Swamishri gave darshan from his cabin, 'Pramukh Mandiram'. BAPS youths of Bhavnagar performed a traditional dance to welcome Swamishri. Thereafter, a drama was performed by youths depicting how Aruni obeyed his guru's words. ♦

# LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

July 2015



## TOTALLY DIVINE

1 July, Wednesday

An attendant sadhu asked Swamishri, “Swami, are you divine from head to toe?”

Swamishri replied, “Yes.”

The attendant elaborated, “God and his Sadhu’s actions like speaking, walking, eating and everything are divine!”

Swamishri added, “Yes, God and his Sadhu are totally divine.”

“Then your hands, feet and everything are divine.”

Swamishri replied, “Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj were divine.”

“But they are no different from you. You are all one. Is that true?”

Swamishri agreed, “Yes.”

## MEANS TO INNER JOY

7, Tuesday

Hariprakash Swami, an attendant of Swamishri,

asked, “Swami, one can perceive divinity and purity in you, but bless us so that we can have divinity towards all the sadhus and devotees.”

Swamishri replied tersely, “One should perceive divinity in all [sadhus and devotees].”

“But it is difficult to do so,” the attendant clarified.

“Why? You should have divinity for all,” Swamishri emphasized.

“But, I can’t maintain it.”

Swamishri gave his final answer, “Only when one does so, one experiences inner joy.”

## BEST FORM OF BHAKTI

21, Tuesday

Anandanand Swami, an attendant of Swamishri, was performing *pradakshina* of Swamishri while Swamishri was lying in bed. Anandanand Swami asked Swamishri, “Is it not best to do bhakti of the living form (*pragat*) of God?”

Swamishri replied, “Yes.”



To clarify further the attendant sadhu asked again, “Is it not best to perform circumambulations and offer bhakti to *pragat*?”

Swamishri said, “No.”

Anandanand Swami was perplexed at the contradictory answer. So, he asked Swamishri why he had said no.

Swamishri gave an enlightening answer, “Bhakti of *pragat* means devotion offered without perceiving any *abhav-avgun* in him. Offer devotion by eradicating one’s lust, anger and base nature. Bhakti done out of *divyabhav* (divine feelings for the Satpurush) is best.”

Swamishri underlined the importance of offering pure (*nirdosh*) bhakti towards the living form of God or the Satpurush.

## GOD’S DOERSHIP

24, Friday

An attendant sadhu asked Swamishri, “You have been administrating the Sanstha so well,

therefore who was responsible in moulding you for this task?”

Swamishri replied, “Shastriji Maharaj.”

“And who else?”

“Yogiji Maharaj.”

The attendant sadhu praised, “No one other than yourself can run the Sanstha so well.”

Swamishri responded immediately, “It is God who is running it.”

“But you run so many things despite sitting in a wheelchair.”

“It is God who is running everything. I’m not doing anything,” replied Swamishri.

All through his life and works Swamishri has never claimed doership over the administration of the BAPS. His humility towards and belief in the doership of Shriji Maharaj and his gurus have remained undiminished. He is an exemplary *sevak* of Shriji Maharaj and his gurus. ♦

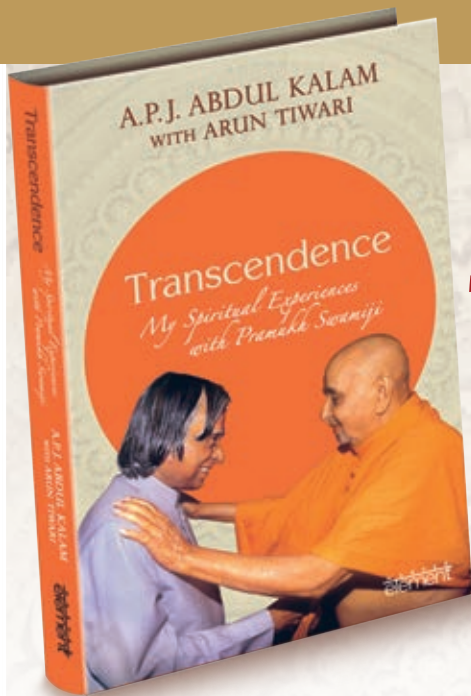
## ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT BAPS NEWS

In our modern age, the increasing use of social media, such as whatsapp, twitter, facebook and others, has made communication and the availability of information very fast and easy. Many devotees and well-wishers also digitally share and spread BAPS news sourced from official BAPS websites, social media and publications to relatives, friends and others.

We request all to believe any information about BAPS activities and H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj to be authentic only when published or released through the following BAPS media:

1. Magazines: *Swaminarayan Prakash*, *Swaminarayan Bliss*, *Premvati* and *Swaminarayan Balprakash*.
2. Monthly newsletters, namely, *Sahajanand Sudha*, *Nilkanth* and others published by the BAPS Central Satsang Cell in India and abroad, as well as official text messages.
3. Official websites of BAPS: [baps.org](http://baps.org) and [akshardham.com](http://akshardham.com).

Any other information or news about BAPS released personally by any individual through the social media should not be considered to be official BAPS news. Senior BAPS sadhus have instructed that no one should share or spread any such unofficial or unauthentic BAPS news.



# CELEBRATING Transcendence

July-August 2015, India

*Reports of celebration assemblies  
of Dr Kalam's book, Transcendence,  
held in some major cities of India*

Swami Maharaj's spirituality and his vision for the future. Then, at each event, the stage guests inaugurated the book and selected guests addressed the audience.

## NEW DELHI: 3 July 2015

Over 550 dignitaries and well-wishers attended the event held at Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi. The event was graced by Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, H.H. Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Chinna Srimannarayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji, Former Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Shri L.K. Advaniji, Dr S.S. Badrinath (Founder & Chairman Emeritus of Sankara Nethralaya), Shri A.S. Kiran Kumar (Chairman, Indian Space Research Organization), Shri B.V. Rao (Business Chairman, GMR Group) and Shri Mohandas Pai (Chairman, Manipal Global Education) and diplomatic representatives from eight embassies and high commissions in India.

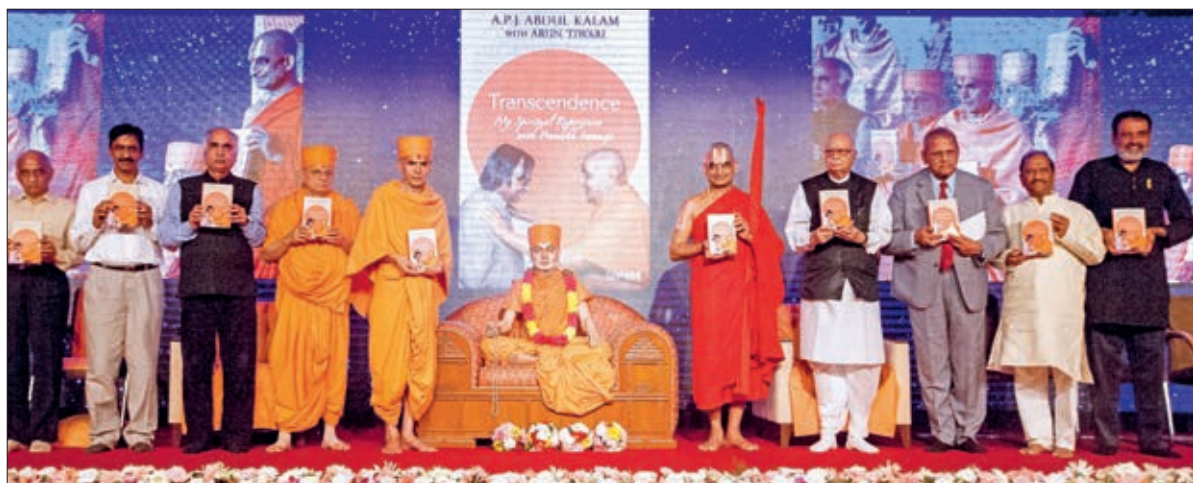
In his welcome speech Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami recalled the first meeting between Dr. Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Signifying the universal relevance of the book, diplomats representing various nations were felicitated and presented a copy of *Transcendence*.

Thereafter, Pujya Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swami,

On 20 June 2015, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam specially travelled from New Delhi to Sarangpur in Gujarat to present his last book, *Transcendence: My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swamiji*, to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Thereafter, one week later, a grand celebration of the book and the unique friendship between Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held in Ahmedabad on 28 June (see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, July-August 2015 for full reports). Since then, further such celebrations were held in New Delhi (3 July), Mumbai (11 July), Chennai (25 July) and Hyderabad (9 August).

The celebrations featured speeches by Brahnavihari Swami on the special 14-year friendship between Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Prof. Arun Tiwari (co-author of *Transcendence*) on how the book was written and Shri P.M. Sukumar (CEO, HarperCollins, India) on the publishing of and response to the book. The speeches were interspersed with videos depicting the stories of Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and extracts from the book revealing how Dr Kalam was touched by Pramukh



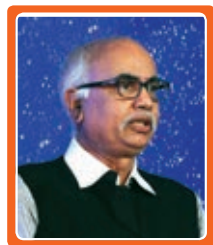
New Delhi: (L to R) Shri A.S. Kiran Kumar, Shri P.M. Sukumar, Prof. Arun Tiwari, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pujya Mahant Swami, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (*murti*), H.H. Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Chinna Srimannarayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji, Shri L.K. Advaniji, Dr S.S. Badrinath, Shri B.V. Rao and Shri Mohandas Pai

Hon. Shri L.K. Advani and other guests applauded the book and recounted their associations with Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Finally, Pujya Mahant Swami blessed the event, “*Transcendence* is a book that highlights higher values. The content is universal and transcends all human distinctions and barriers to make a person humane.”

## SPEECH EXTRACTS

### Prof. Arun Tiwari



During the writing of this book, I spent hundreds of hours with Dr Kalam in his house at 10 Rajaji Marg. There is a 100 year-old Arjuna tree. It's a very tall tree, very wide. We used to spend much time walking around that tree. Then I would come back and put it all into words, and we had many reviews. So, many hundreds of hours and that is how we put together all these words.

We took this book to Pramukh Swamiji... I was given a plaque of appreciation and, very rightly so, I took that plaque to my mother in Meerut, close to Delhi, and I gave that plaque to her. She told me that you have done a fantastic task. What is that task? She said that Pramukh Swamiji is an ocean

of love and Dr Kalam is an ocean of knowledge. And you have put two oceans in one book. I am proud of you my son. God bless you.

### Shri Mohandas Pai



*Transcendence* is a story of two friends who through their friendship and dialogue over a sustained period of time found a solution to the challenges that humanity faces today.

For all individuals the challenge is the realization of happiness, the realization of inner peace. In the eastern tradition, realization comes through a spiritual journey led by a great guru. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has told us that we can only get peace in a spiritual journey when the words ‘I’ and ‘want’ are reduced in our vocabulary. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has told us that conquest of the self is the greatest of all conquests.

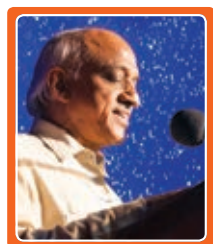
The word ‘want’ leads to this great challenge of sustainability. And for sustainability on this planet, we must control the word ‘want’. Eliminate the words ‘I’ and ‘want’ and you will get inner peace through a spiritual journey, you will have a sustainable planet and we will find great happiness. This is the mantra for happiness.





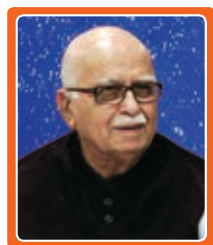
Celebrating Transcendence in the mandir assembly hall, New Delhi

### Shri A.S. Kiran Kumar



Here is an excellent example of a scientific mind and a spiritual mind forging a great understanding and bringing benefit to the society. This book personifies the traditional belief that it is only through guru that a disciple attains ultimate knowledge.

### Shri L.K. Advani



Our former President Dr Abdul Kalam has written a book in which he has incorporated both knowledge and faith and how they can lead to progress of the nation.

### H.H. Chinna Jeeyar Swami



People are finding more and more scientific devices by which to dominate the world and possess more. But what is the ultimate goal of science. It is not to dominate, but to share.

The more we share, the more we enhance. We see here a great scientist who wanted the missing component – that is, the mentality to

share with others. Dr Kalam found something he was missing – the spiritual element, which comes through gurus.

The more you understand this, the more you become humble and you feel like serving – not just helping – with love, concern and care.

Pramukh Swami gave Abdul Kalam the spiritual touch and brought him inner peace. This is the art of sharing. Swamiji has that peace and he is sharing it with everyone.

### MUMBAI: 11 July 2015

The celebration was held in the Yogi Sabha Gruh, Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Mumbai. The event was graced by Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Padma Vibhushan Dr Rajagopala Chidambaram (Principal Scientific advisor to the Government of India), Padma Bhushan Shri Vijay Bhatkar (Chairman of the Board of Governors of IIT-Delhi), Shri Mangalprabhat Lodha (MLA), Dr. Ashwin Mehta (renowned cardiologist), Shri Ashish Chauhan (MD & CEO, Bombay Stock Exchange), Jadavjibhai Shah (Anchor Group), as well as many social, educational, industrial and professional luminaries of Mumbai. After lighting the inaugural lamp Pujya Ishwar-charan Swami gave a welcome speech. Later Dr Rajagopala Chidambaram, Shri Vijay Bhatkar



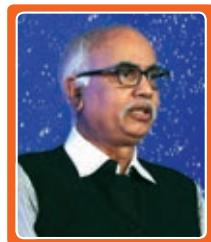


Mumbai: (L to R) Shri P.M. Sukumar, Shri Ashish Chauhan, Dr Ashwin Mehta, Shri Vijay Bhatkar, Dr Rajagopala Chidambaram, Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (*murti*), Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Prof. Arun Tiwari, Shri Mangal Prabhat Lodha, Jadavjibhai Shah

and Dr Ashwin Mehta, praised the book and narrated their personal experiences with Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Finally, Pujya Mahant Swami blessed the assembly.

#### SPEECH EXTRACTS

##### Prof. Arun Tiwari



Dr Kalam called me yesterday and asked, “You are going to Mumbai and you are praising the book to all. But, can you describe in one sentence my friend Pramukh Swami?”

I said, “Sir, some people learn the scriptures. Some people live by the scriptures and perform great works. But when I look at Pramukh Swami, he himself is a scripture. This is what is so special about Pramukh Swamiji.” Dr Kalam said, “Your answer is OK. But I give you only 50% marks.” So I asked him, “What do I need to do to get the other 50%?” He said, “When you go to the Mumbai function tomorrow, tell everyone that Pramukh Swamiji, who has thousands of followers, is the oarsman of their boat. By taking his name, his followers attain fulfilment. This is what is special about Pramukh Swami.”

##### Dr Ashwin Mehta



People ask me, “You have seen Pramukh Swami’s heart. What did you see in his heart?” I reply, “In his heart I saw all of you.”

The temples he has built are symbols of spreading good behaviour – *achar samhita*. This is what I kept on learning wherever I met him.

His inner strength is such that nothing disturbs him. Whenever I have met him, he spoke very little to me, but he spoke without speaking. It affected me. Since he tied a *rakhi* on me, I have always felt





Celebrating Transcendence in the mandir assembly hall, Mumbai

that God is with me, the blessings of Pramukh Swami are with me and I could not go wrong.

### Dr Vijay Bhatkar



This book is an embodiment, a realization of the synthesis of science and spirituality. Is it possible to integrate these two things in these difficult and tumultuous times? I think this book shows that indeed it is possible.

I think this book should be read by scientists, religious people, political leaders, social leaders and everybody to know that such a life is indeed possible. And this will sanctify your life.

This is one of the finest books I have ever read, since it is based on real experiences.

Real direction has to be shown to all humanity and peace has to be attained. *Transcendence* is that book, that experience and the practical way of doing it.

### Dr R. Chidambaram



I think one of the important things that India needs today is a self-belief which our youth must have. This is what Pramukh Swami Maharaj has been able to do among the young people of this country.

To make India a great country, or more correctly, to restore the greatness which was India's, India must retain its spiritual heritage. We need both science and spirituality and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, by encouraging science on the one hand and spreading spirituality on the other is doing exactly what India needs today. I consider him not just a great spiritual leader, but a great modern spiritual leader.

### CHENNAI: 25 July 2015

The event was held at the Image Auditorium in Chennai. It was graced by Pujya Anandswarup Swami, Justice S. Vaidyanathan (Madras High







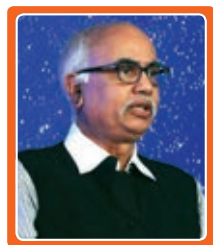
Chennai: (L to R) Shri P.M. Sukumar, Dr M. Manickam, Prof. Arun Tiwari, Pujya Anandswarup Swami, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (murti), Justice S. Vaidyanathan, Shri N. Vittal, Dr S. Subramanian, Dr N.R. Dave

Court), Padmabhushan N. Vittal, Padmashri Dr Nalli Kuppaswami Chetti (Nalli Silks), Dr S. Subramanian (Founder-Chairman, V.S. Hospital), Dr M. Manickam (Chairman, Sakthi Sugars), Dr N.R. Dave (President, Hindustan Chamber of Commerce) and over 800 dignitaries, well-wishers and devotees.

Dr N.R. Dave, Dr Nalli Kuppaswami Chetti, Dr S. Subramanian and Justice S. Vaidyanathan addressed the gathering, sharing their experiences of the evening. Pujya Anandswarup Swami also enlightened the audience with a speech.

## SPEECH EXTRACTS

### Prof. Arun Tiwari



Today, Dr Kalam called me and said, “You are in Chennai. While you are celebrating the book, I want to give you one very important task, which is still unfinished. Pramukh Swami told me in 2001 about the sixth element – spirituality.” Then he [Dr. Kalam] asked me how many children he had met so far. So I told him, “Sir, you have met about 20 million in last 15-20 years.” That is his specialty. Wherever he goes he meets children. So, he said, “The future of India and the future of humanity

lies with the children. And this task of how we bring this spirituality into children is still unfinished. So, buddy, go and while you are celebrating *Transcendence*, it is time you start working on another project and that is, introduce *ekantik* dharma to the children. And if you do that, God will bless you and I’ll be very happy.”

So, today, in this great city and on this great occasion, with the blessings of all gurus and saints here, I take this *sankalp* (pledge) that I will spend the rest of my time and energy learning about *ekantik* dharma, and presenting it to the children and our future generation.

### Dr N.R. Dave



In Sanskrit ‘transcendence’ means *gunatit*. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is *gunatit* or divine, through whom Shri Abdul Kalamji entered the realm of spirituality and his experiences have been enshrined in *Transcendence*.

## HYDERABAD: 9 August 2015

Sadly, before this event, on 27 July, Dr Kalam suddenly passed away. So, the occasion was held to pay tribute to him and celebrate



Hyderabad: (L to R) Shri Rameshwar Rao, Shri P.M. Sukumar, Dr K. Jayaraman, Prof. Arun Tiwari, Shri Ramoji Rao, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (*murti*), Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami, Dr P. Sudhakar, Shri Harikishan Eppanapally, Shri G. Krishnamurthy

his last work, *Transcendence*. The event was held at Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad, and was graced by Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami, Shri Ramoji Rao (Chairman Ramoji Group), Dr P. Sudhakar (Chairman & Managing Director, ECIL), Dr K. Jayaraman (Director, DRDL), Shri Harikishan Eppanapally (Founder & Chairman of Lead India, USA), Ch G. Krishnamurthy (Director, Apollo Hospital & Director, GVK Group), Shri Rameshwar Rao (Chairman, My Home) and more than 800 dignitaries, well-wishers and devotees. As everyone entered the venue, they offered a floral tribute to Dr Kalam by placing flower petals before his photo.

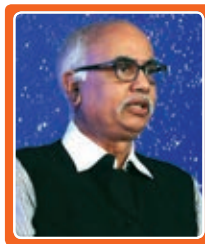
On this occasion Dr P. Sudhakar, Shri Harikishan Eppanapally and then Shri Ramoji Rao addressed the gathering, sharing their

experiences of the evening. Thereafter, Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami blessed and enlightened the audience with a speech.

The grand celebration event concluded with a floral tribute to Dr Kalam by the guests on the dais while the Shanti Path was recited.

## SPEECH EXTRACTS

### Prof. Arun Tiwari



When we were returning [to Delhi] after presenting the book to Pramukh Swamiji, I asked Dr Kalam, “Sir, what is your next writing project?” He surprised me by saying, “Buddy, I don’t want to write anything. Whatever I wanted to write I have already written. But, there is a job unfinished. I promised Pramukh Swamiji about the sixth element – faith in God. And what I understand is that it is still unfinished. So, you write a book on *ekantik* dharma – that is the four pillars for a good life: righteousness, knowledge, renunciation and devotion. If anybody follows these four traits there is nothing in this world which will not come to him. He will be filled with peace. So you write this book.” So, I told him, “I have always written books with you. Why do you want me to write this







Celebrating Transcendence at Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad

book alone?” So he told me, “Look buddy, today, when people talk about Pramukh Swamiji they say Yogiji Maharaj. They say Shastriji Maharaj. They say Bhagatji Maharaj. And, as people tell you that you are an Abdul Kalam guy, let there be a time that through your good work people say Kalam was his teacher. So that time has come.” I had not understood the meaning then, but now, by the time I have understood its meaning, he has gone. May his soul rest in peace.”

### Shri P.M. Sukumar



In an era of worldwide conflict and rampant materialism, the importance of a book like this cannot be overstated. It distils two diverse strands of the Indian ethos in a manner that only Pramukh Swami

Maharaj and Dr Kalam could have brought about. They emphasize the importance of religion in an increasingly modernizing society by bringing about the confluence of different religions for a better world, and the need to use spirituality in our everyday work.

The book is an important document about a great life by another wondrous life. I don't think the president or ex-president of any country has written about a spiritual head. And this is the

ex-president of the world's largest democracy writing about the spiritual leader of a worldwide spiritual organization.

### Shri Ramoji Rao



Beginning with *Wings of Fire*, Dr Kalam's books have received wide acclaim. I am sure *Transcendence* will receive the same kind of applause. His book transcends us to the world of his spiritual experi-

ences with Pramukh Swamiji. Pramukh Swamiji is a saintly guru renowned not only in India but across the continents of Africa, Europe and America. He is one of India's great spiritual leaders, commanding respect among many sections of people. The magnificence of Swamishri's vision is reflected in the splendid architecture of the Swaminarayan temples he has built in the various countries of the world. Swamiji is one of modern India's great spiritual leaders, while Dr Kalam made historic achievements for India's scientific advancement. Swamiji is worthy of all the reverence Dr Kalam has showered on him. The rich and diverse experiences related by Dr Kalam are lessons left behind by a great master. By establishing Pramukh Swamiji's personal values, Dr Kalam has shown to the world the values that are close to his own heart. ♦

**Correction:** In the last issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* (July-August 2015, p. 20) a printed error in Dr Kalam's speech to youths in Sarangpur is regretted. Instead of 'peace without fear of God' it should have been 'peace without fear of war'.

# Prime Minister of Canada, The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, visits BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir

Toronto, 17 August 2015



The Prime Minister of Canada, The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, visited the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Toronto for the third time on the occasion of India's Independence Day Celebrations.

The Prime Minister, with his wife, Mrs. Lauren Harper, arrived at 4:00 p.m. and were welcomed by the Directors of BAPS and dozens of children donned in colourful traditional dress.

Inside the mandir, the Prime Minister and Mrs. Harper offered their respects to the sacred images by offering flowers.

Pujya Doctor Swami traditionally welcomed the Prime Minister with a garland and presented him with Dr Kalam's book, *Transcendence*.

Mrs. Harper was also welcomed in the traditional manner by the ladies volunteers of BAPS after which she was shown around the mandir and was explained about the significance of the intricate marble and stone carvings and domes.

On their way to the beautiful *haveli*, the Prime Minister and Mrs. Harper paid a visit to the informative and educational Heritage Museum. In the assembly hall at the *haveli*, they were warmly welcomed by more than 1,100 devotees, well-wishers and dignitaries.

During his speech to the gathering, the Prime Minister said, "I remember fondly inaugurating this stunning mandir in 2007. I said then, that, this is one of the greatest pieces of architecture in our entire country! So I am truly delighted to be back."

In his tribute to the late former President of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the Prime Minister also acknowledged, "I was privileged to meet Dr. Kalam on his visit to Canada in 2008. In honouring his memory today, you are honouring one of the renowned figures of modern India, a brilliant and accomplished scientist, yet also a man of great simplicity." ♦



# SUVARNA SMRUTI MAHOTSAV

## 30th Anniversary of Guru Bhakti Din

8-9 August 2015, London, UK



In 1985, more than a million visitors from the UK, mainland Europe and as far as America and Africa flocked to London to witness the remarkable and historical Cultural Festival of India (CFI) inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj and organized by BAPS.

Over eighteen acres of lush parkland surrounding Alexandra Palace were transformed into a cultural wonderland bringing the sights, sounds, tastes and experiences of India to north London. For over a month – from 15 July to 18 August 1985 – traditional art, architecture, dance and musical performances as well as enlightening exhibitions helped visitors learn about the rich cultural heritage of India. A unique Suvarna Tula Mahotsav was also held on 20 July 1985 as part of this momentous event.

To commemorate the CFI's 30th anniversary, a special programme was organized at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in London on the weekend of 8-9 August 2015 in the presence of Sadguru Pujya Mahant Swami (Keshavjivan Swami), Sadguru Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pujya Atmaswarup Swami and visiting sadhus from India.

Golden memories of those present in 1985 were rekindled, and those who were not present became part of the unique and historic occasion



through a spectacular fusion of vibrant dances, enlightening sketches, devotional singing and emotive video presentations that brought the event to life.

The first part of the evening focused on the memories of volunteers, devotees and sadhus through speeches, interviews and video highlights – sharing their experiences about the planning, execution and management of the festival. They revealed eye-opening accounts of the tremendous challenges they had faced and how they overcame them with unity, determination, hard work and, above all, the blessings and guidance of Swamishri.

*Murtis* of Thakorji and Swamishri were then joyously welcomed into the assembly hall with a marching band and waving of flags from the audience. Thereafter, a devotional welcome dance was performed by youths, charging the prayer

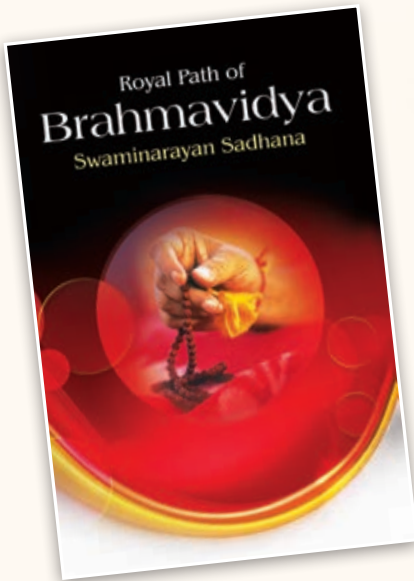
hall with divinity.

Ishwarcharan Swami spoke of the divine virtues of Swamishri by touching on some inspiring examples of his faith and conviction in God. He also offered practical guidance on how one can understand Swamishri's greatness. Mahant Swami spoke of the key messages of the evening's festivities, encouraging all present to lead pure and spiritually elevated lives, and to work together with unity in order to please Swamishri and thus keep these treasured memories alive.

Finally, the evening concluded with an emotional prayer incorporating a special video recording of Swamishri from Sarangpur.

All devotees then offered their personal devotion in the form of *sakar* (sugar crystals) to the *murtis* of Thakorji and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. ♦

## NEW PUBLICATION BY SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARPITH



Translation by  
Meha Patel and Rupal Patel (UK)

# Royal Path of Brahmaildya

## Swaminarayan Sadhana

Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his Gunatit Sadhus have lived and taught a unique and practical path of spiritual sadhana that leads to the realization of *atma* and Paramatma.

*Royal Path of Brahmaildya: Swaminarayan Sadhana* provides a detailed description of this special path of spiritual endeavour by which all aspirants can succeed in their spiritual quest and experience the ultimate bliss of God.

A must read for all *satsangi* youths and devotees.

Copies will be available at all BAPS bookstores soon.





## India

### NEW BAPS MANDIR

Kalatalav, District: Vallabhipur

21-23 April 2015



Between 1955 and 1959, Yogiji Maharaj frequently visited Kalatalav, sowing the seeds of BAPS satsang. A regular satsang *sabha* was started and as Satsang grew, a *hari* mandir was built. On 15 September 1975, Pramukh Swami Maharaj consecrated the painted *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Guru Parampara in the mandir.

BAPS sadhus from Gadhada regularly visited Kalatalav to strengthen satsang. With the continued expansion of satsang, a larger *hari* mandir became necessary. Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami performed the groundbreaking rituals for the new *hari* mandir.

As part of the *murti-pratishtha* celebrations a programme of devotional songs was held on 21 April.

On 22 April, 317 *yajmans* participated in the Yagna for World Peace. In the afternoon, the *murtis* were taken on a grand *nagar-yatra* through the town.

Previously, on 20 October 2014, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had performed the Vedic

*murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis*. On 23 April these *murtis* were ritually installed in the new mandir by Pujya Viveksagar Swami and Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami.

### FLOOD RELIEF WORK

Gujarat, June-July 2015



To help the villagers and townsfolk cope with the hardships caused by seasonal floods in some parts of Gujarat, BAPS sadhus and volunteers prepared food packets and essential items for distribution.

#### Gondal

BAPS sadhus and volunteers distributed 7,000 food packets to the flood-affected victims, and 5,000 more were given to the Collector's office for distribution.

#### Amreli

Over 1,200 food packets were distributed by BAPS volunteers.

#### Banaskantha & Patan Districts

Over 37,000 food packets and other supplies were distributed in 11 villages by BAPS sadhus and volunteers.

### INTER-CHHATRALAYA ADHIVESHAN

Bochasan, 11-12 July 2015

As part of the year-long celebrations to mark



the 50th anniversary of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha's educational activities (1965-2015) an *adhiveshan* was held for all current residential students of BAPS Chhatralayas (hostels) and students at BAPS Vidyamandirs (schools).

A total of 1,078 youths from 14 of the 30 BAPS hostels and schools participated first in a local *adhiveshan*, competing in the following competitions: speech, singing, skit (1 group per hostel/school), satsang knowledge quiz, and *mukhpath* (memorization) – Vachanamrut, Swamini Vato, *shloks-sakhis* and kirtans.

Of these, 425 were selected to compete in the Inter-Chhatralaya Adhiveshan in Bochasan on 11 and 12 July 2015 in the presence of Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami.

Prizes were awarded to the outstanding performers in each competition.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj blessed the participating youths by phone from Sarangpur.

#### YUVA SHIBIR

Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

1-2 August 2015



As part of Swaminarayan Akshardham's 10th

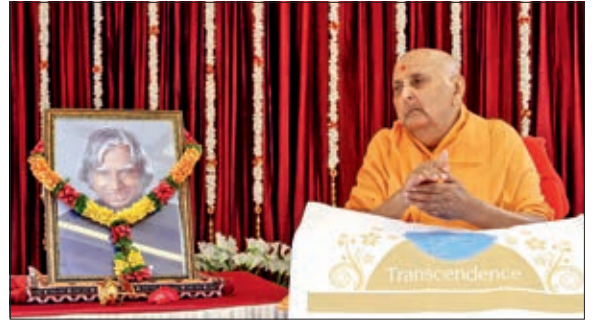
anniversary celebrations in New Delhi, *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from throughout the city participated in this *shibir*, titled 'Shreshth Bano' (Become the Best) in the presence of Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami.

Through speeches, group discussions, skits, audio-visual presentations and thematic dances, the *shibir* imparted valuable guidance to the youths on how to progress in their personal, professional and spiritual endeavours.

#### MEMORIAL ASSEMBLIES FOR

DR APJ ABDUL KALAM

2 August 2015



On 2 August, in the weekly Sunday satsang assemblies at BAPS centres worldwide, thousands of devotees, young and old, offered prayers and tributes to the late former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, who passed away on 27 July. Sadhus and devotees fondly recalled his spiritual association and experiences with Pramukh Swami Maharaj and also the great work he did for the progress and prosperity of India. A video of his various meetings with Pramukh Swami Maharaj was shown during the *sabhas*.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj personally paid tributes to Dr Kalam and expressed his condolences to his family.

#### KISHORE-KISHORI SHIBIR

Theme: Cultural Quotient

Kolkata, 15-16 August 2015

Over a hundred *kishores* and *kishoris* from Kolkata participated in the two-day *shibir* at the



BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Kolkata, based on the theme ‘Cultural Quotient’. Prior to the start of the *shibir*, Pramukh Swami Maharaj sent his blessings from Sarangpur on 12 August 2015.

The *shibir* included speeches presented by sadhus from Sarangpur on various topics, such as The Qualities of God, Karma and Punarjanma, Aparavidya, Vegetarianism, Murti Puja and The Importance of a Guru.

During the *shibir*, the youths took part in *maha-abhishek*, *samuh arti*, and other traditional Hindu rituals. They also participated in various team-building activities.

The *shibir* gave the youngsters a better understanding of Indian culture and their spiritual roots.

he endured in doing so, the need to develop a deeper understanding of Hindu scriptures, how Swamishri has furthered the work of the guru *parampara*, the need for working together and introspecting on one’s progress, the spiritual benefits of accepting one’s faults and serving others and the stories of dedicated *karyakars* in India whose personal endeavours, amidst even severe challenges, have made a positive impact on many lives.

Doctor Swami motivated the *karyakars* by emphasizing the necessity of conviction and sincerity in spiritual knowledge and observances, and on taking ownership and developing confidence in one’s *seva*.

## UK & Europe

### NATIONAL KARYAKAR SHIBIR, BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR London, 5 July 2015

In the presence of Pujya Doctor Swami and other visiting sadhus from India, more than 1,400 *karyakars* from across the UK and parts of Europe attended the National Karyakar Shibir at the BAPS mandir, London.

The *shibir*, titled ‘Upasak Karyakar’, was designed to support *karyakars* in imbibing key principles of spiritual knowledge in the *seva* activities that they undertake.

Speeches by the sadhus highlighted Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s personal efforts to impart spiritual wisdom during his *vicharan* and the hardships

## Africa

### EAST AFRICA KISHORE WINTER CAMP Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 27-31 July 2015



Around 160 selected *kishores* from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania attended the BAPS East African Kishore Winter Camp based on the theme ‘Dradh Priti’ (Profound Love) held in Dar-es-Salaam.



Under the guidance of sadhus, the youths took part in various activities and discussions aimed at cultivating *dradh priti* towards God and guru.

In the interactive classroom sessions, the *kishores* explored the concept of *dradh priti* as shown in the shastras and how to implement it in daily life by becoming better *satsangis* and strengthening their bonds with God and the Satpurush. Workshops and activities were held to strengthen teamwork. Teams were awarded 'Priti Points' in order to encourage cooperation and collaboration. Collective puja was performed daily, teaching the *kishores* how to make bhakti more meaningful and use it to strengthen their bond with God and guru.

Youths were also taught practical skills such as cooking classes to aid them in daily life.

The camp helped the youngsters establish new friendships and to increase their love for God and the Satpurush.

## USA & Canada

### A TRIBUTE TO DR APJ ABDUL KALAM North America, 15-28 August 2015



BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha organized special memorial assemblies across North America to pay tribute to the late former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. The event also honoured the legacy of Dr Kalam with the launch of his final book, *Transcendence: My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swamiji*.

Hundreds of community members joined to honour India's former president, scientist and

rishi. The memorial assembly began with prayers for Dr. Kalam followed by video presentations depicting the life story of Dr Kalam and the remarkable 14-year friendship between Dr Kalam and His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Community leaders spoke about their experiences with Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and the philosophical and spiritual guidance Dr Kalam received from Pramukh Swami Maharaj that helped shape his purpose and direction in serving India.

Speaking on this occasion, Pujya Doctor Swami said, "The best way to pay a tribute to Dr. Kalam's life is to live our lives like he lived his. A life of simplicity. A life of hard work. A life of devotion. A life filled with spiritual wisdom."

### KISHORE-KISHORI SUMMER SHIBIRS

North America, 18 June to 4 September 2015



Over 2,500 *kishores* and *kishoris* aged between 14 and 22 participated in the two-day *shibirs* held in Houston, San Jose, Robbinsville, Cleveland, Charlotte and Toronto, based on the theme 'Shanti: A Thought Away'. Each *shibir* also included an *adhiveshan* for which the youths had prepared using study packs and memorized selected passages from scriptures. The *adhiveshan* encouraged collaboration between the youths as they prepared and practiced for several months. It also taught them the importance of reading and understanding scriptures such as the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato.

Following the *adhiveshan*, the *shibir* featured lectures and group discussions exploring the *shibir*

theme in three parts: Shanti Through Smruti: finding peace through remembrance and meditation; Shanti Through Priti: finding peace through spiritual love; Shanti Through Antardrashti: finding peace through introspection.

Through these *shibirs*, the *kishores* and *kishoris* were guided on spiritual growth, and academic and personal success by creating daily habits that would help in the pursuit of *shanti*.

## BAL-BALIKA SUMMER SHIBIRS

North America, 22 June to 3 September 2015



The 2015 Regional Bal-Balika Summer Shibirs were held in Houston, Los Angeles, Robbinsville, Cleveland, Charlotte and Toronto. Over 2,500 children aged between 7 and 13 participated in the two-day *shibirs* titled ‘Shanti: Within Reach’. Each *shibir* included an *adhiveshan* (competition series) and classroom sessions focusing on the *shibir* theme.

The *adhiveshan* provided an opportunity for the children to strengthen their satsang knowledge and ultimately build a strong foundation for *shanti* (peace) in their lives by memorizing passages from the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato.

The interactive classroom session topics included: Shanti Through Smruti: finding peace through the remembrance of and meditation on guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj; Shanti Through Abhyas: finding peace through spiritual education and satsang reading; Shanti Through Swami Bapa: finding peace by understanding the greater meaning of spiritual tenets and following them in the pursuit of discipline.

The classroom sessions included inspirational stories presented as skits, speeches by sadhus, and individual and group practical activities and discussions that allowed the delegates to understand how the concepts can be imbibed and implemented in their lives.

The *shibirs* encouraged each participant’s personal and spiritual development.

## BAL-BALIKA & KISHORE-KISHORI NORTH AMERICAN SUMMER CAMP

Theme: Dradh Priti

Chicago, 5-13 July 2015



This summer camp, attended by 232 selected delegates and 200 volunteers from the US and Canada, focused on ‘Dradh Priti’ – enriching the relationship with guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The camp was the culmination of a rigorous four-year leadership training programme. Attendees participated in group discussions, workshops, lecture-style presentations and outdoor activities that were designed to provide an immersive experience, in which they could learn and grow both their leadership skills and spirituality.

The classrooms sessions highlighted the relevance of satsang and the *satpurush* in their lives, by presenting the idea of *dradh priti* as a tangible, attainable goal for all, through *seva*.

In the outdoor events, delegates participated in teambuilding activities and hiking, which each group documented in a digital photo journal.

During the concluding session, delegates recapped the classroom sessions, reflected on the

lessons learned, and created personal goals to pursue moving forward.

Through this camp, the delegates, who are on the verge of entering either high school or college, learnt how they could stay grounded in their spirituality as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

#### YUVA ADHIVESHANS AND SHIBIRS

Theme: Samjan: Life in Perspective

North America, 16 July to 23 August 2015



BAPS youths from throughout North America participated in the regional *adhiveshans* and *shibirs*, based on the theme 'Samjan', held in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Robbinsville and Toronto during July and August 2015.

The *adhiveshan* competitions tested the knowledge and skills of the youths, who had prepared for several months by studying central Swaminarayan texts and memorizing selected extracts from the Vachanamrut, Harililamrut and Swamini Vato. The *adhiveshans* consisted of writing, singing, presenting, story-telling, multimedia content development and other competitions. These skills are a key way in which youths are able to offer *seva* and bhakti in satsang.

Pujya Doctor Swami, and other sadhus from India, presided over the *shibirs* in each region. Lectures and workshops focused on putting various aspects of life into perspective in order to develop understanding and manage situations when things don't always go as planned. This resonated with the youth attendees who received valuable guidance on how to cope with their increasing

responsibilities and decision-making in life.

Doctor Swami inspired the youths by recalling pivotal moments from his own life that defined his experiences in satsang, and offered insights on how to serve the guru.

Through these conventions, youths across North America had the opportunity to connect with their faith and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's teachings in a profound way.

#### KARYAKAR ADHIVESHANS AND SHIBIRS

Theme: Samjan

North America, 16 July to 23 August 2015



Hundreds of BAPS *karyakars* from throughout North America participated in the regional *adhiveshans* and *shibirs*, based on the theme 'Samjan', held in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Robbinsville and Toronto during July and August 2015.

The *adhiveshan* competitions tested the knowledge and skills of the *karyakars*, who had prepared for several months by studying central Swaminarayan texts and memorizing selected extracts from the Vachanamrut, Harililamrut and Swamini Vato. The *adhiveshans* consisted of writing, singing, presenting and other competitions.

Pujya Doctor Swami, along with other sadhus from India, presided over the *shibirs* in each region. Aligning with the theme of the *shibirs*, lectures and workshops focused on developing the spiritual understanding, when faced with the ups and downs of life, that all things happen by the wish of Bhagwan.



Doctor Swami recalled pivotal moments from his own life that defined his experiences in satsang, and offered insights on how to serve the guru.

These regional *adhiveshans* and *shibirs* enabled the *karyakars* to strengthen their understanding of Swaminarayan satsang concepts such as *agna*, *upasana*, *samjan*, *nischay* and others.

## Middle East

### SATSANG SHIBIR: 'WE LOVE BAPA'

Kuwait, 18-19 June 2015



Over 110 delegates participated in the *shibir* held in a villa on the outskirts of Kuwait. The *shibir* theme 'We Love Bapa' provided an opportunity for all to reflect upon their understanding of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and strengthen their attachment to him. Relayed live via Skype, learned sadhus from India gave guidance through insightful speeches to the delegates. Through the exhilarating speech on 'Shanti no Rajmarg' by Brahmadarshan Swami, the delegates learned about leading a peaceful life through better relationships between family members and by nurturing the character of children. Thereafter, Acharya Swami delivered a discourse on 'Rajipo ane Niyam-Dharma' and 'Ek Nishaan Akshardham'. Before departing from the *shibir* devotees pledged to perform daily puja, apply *tilak-chandlo*, hold *ghar sabha*, perform daily *arti*, sing *chesta*, read satsang texts and regularly attend the weekly satsang *sabha*. The *shibir* was an enlightening and motivating experience for all.

## BAPS Charities

### ANNUAL WALKATHONS

North America, 4 April to 11 July 2015



Between April and July 2015, over 17,100 walkers at 53 BAPS centres across North America participated in the Annual Walkathons organized by BAPS Charities to support a wide range of local community, health, educational and humanitarian charities. These Walkathons provided inspiration for individuals to come together and build a better community, one step at a time.

Charities supported included: American Cancer Society, Marrimack Valley Food Bank, Cooper University Hospital, American Diabetes Association, Helen F. Graham Cancer Center of Christina Care, JFK Medical Center Foundation, Mitzpah Circle Foundation, Newington Volunteer Fire Department, Huntington Human Services Institute, The Virginia Beach Honor Guard, City of Manassas Fire Rescue, Carol G. Simon Cancer Center, Children's Hospital Foundation, Boys & Girls Club of Mercer County and The Township of Robbinsville, Beltsville Volunteer Fire Department, Boys & Girls Club of America. Metro Atlanta, Matthews Free Medical Clinic, Gold Coast Down Syndrome Organization, Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina, Make-A-Wish Foundation, All Blind Children of Texas, Sanford MSD Education Foundation, San Antonio Lighthouse, Wholekids Foundation, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and The Scarborough Hospital.

## **BLOOD DONATION DRIVE, AMERICA** **May to August 2015**



Between May and August, over 1,140 people participated in BAPS Charities annual blood donation drives held at 22 BAPS centres throughout the US. Over 900 pints of blood were collected and donated to local medical facilities. The blood donation drives helped to raise awareness in the community of the need for blood donors.

## **FOOD DRIVES, TANZANIA** **Buguruni School, 16 May 2015**

BAPS Charities in Tanzania conducted a food drive for the Buguruni School for the Deaf & Dumb, a home and school for young disabled children. Founded by the Government in 1974, the school is sustained by the Government, the Society for the Deaf and other well-wishers. The school provides free education for 200 students from all over Tanzania aged between 3 to 15 years, 130 of whom live as permanent residents.

## **Al Furqan Islamic Centre & Associated Islamic Orphanages, June 2015**



During the month of Ramadan, BAPS Charities

provided food supplies for the Al Furqan Islamic Centre, a home for disadvantaged children, located approximately 30 km from Dar-es-Salaam. The home caters for 45 children, aged between 3 and 12 years. The children receive free education at a nearby school.

Supplies for over 200 children were also provided to Umra Orphanage, Hairi Orphanage, Hisani Orphanage and associated Islamic charities.

## **Karibu Tanzania Foundation, 14 July 2015**

The Karibu Foundation Tanzania (FKT) is a non-profit organization supported by Foundation Karibu, Canada, FKT-MJR Catering Service and Terres des Homes along with other charity groups. The main objective of FKT is to eliminate domestic child abuse. They carry out their campaign by creating awareness and providing education in the community at all levels. They also manage rescue shelters for domestically tortured, abused and battered children providing them with temporary housing, rehabilitating them physically and psychologically. BAPS Charities donated food items to support their mission.

## **WINTER WARMER DRIVE, SOUTH AFRICA** **Johannesburg, 13 June 2015**



In this year's Winter Warmer Drive, BAPS Charities in South Africa provided clothes, blankets, and non-perishable foods to 200 underprivileged children at Fordsburg Primary School and 400 families at Barcelona Informal Settlement.

Cape Town, 17 June 2015



BAPS Charities volunteers visited the Lehlohonolo Educare Centre, a child day care facility for 40 children ranging in age from one month to six years.

Each child was provided a blanket, warm woollen hat, pair of gloves, track suit pants and jacket, raincoat, scarf and underwear. Chairs and tables were given to the facility so that each and every child is able to sit at a table and no longer has to sit on the cold, bare floor during daily activities. Groceries, such as cereals, rice, beans, lentils, peanut butter, jam and other non-perishables were also provided.

#### COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIRS

**BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandirs, London & Birmingham, July 2015**



BAPS Charities, in conjunction with various leading healthcare organizations and charities, held interactive community health fairs at the BAPS Mandirs in London and Birmingham.

A key objective of the event was to consolidate the extensive health awareness activities that are provided to the local community by BAPS

Charities throughout the year, and to convey important messages of safe and healthy living.

Screenings, seminars, workshops, exhibitions and information stalls available throughout the day at both venues included: Blood Pressure Screening, Cholesterol Screening, Body Fat and Glucose Screening, Cardiovascular Assessment, Carotid Doppler, Dietary Advice, Diabetes Care, Eye Checks, Feet Checks, CPR Demonstrations and Hands-On Training, Dental Care and Hygiene, Child Dental Checks, Cancer Awareness, Prevention and Screening, Organ, Bone Marrow and Blood Donation, Health and Well-Being for the Elderly, Dementia Awareness, Maternal and Children's Health Awareness, Allergies, Eczema and Asthma, Safety in the Home, Medicines Advice and Education, and Keeping an Active and Healthy Mind.

#### London, 11 July 2015

More than 475 people attended the event which was supported by many charity organizations, including Age UK, Alzheimer's Research UK, Anthony Nolan, Breast Cancer Care, British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK, Culture Dementia, Diabetes UK, London Ambulance Service, Mind, National Kidney Federation, NHS Blood and Transplant, and the Royal Free Hospital.

Guests present at the opening of the Fair included Leader of Brent Council Cllr Muhammed Butt, Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive of the British Heart Foundation, and Bridget Turner, Director of Policy and Care Improvement at Diabetes UK.

Michelle Laserna, a senior marketing coordinator for NHS Blood and Transplant, appreciated the efforts of BAPS Charities volunteers, "I'm in awe of the generosity, selfless acts of kindness and the general compassion you all have to just help people. It's incredible!"

#### Birmingham, 26 July 2015

Over 190 people attended the programme which was supported by Anthony Nolan, the



British Heart Foundation, Bowel Cancer UK, Gateway, and Health Exchange, and other charities and organizations.

Guests present at the Fair included Cllr Barry Bowles of Birmingham City Council, PC Paul Coates and PCSO Rebecca Stone from West Midlands Police, as well as Qaim Zaidi, BME Project Manager for the British Heart Foundation.

Qaim Zaidi presented BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir with a Gold Award as part of the British Heart Foundation's 'Social Cooking Project'.

Nick Jakowiak, a representative from Bowel Cancer UK, shared his appreciation of BAPS Charities volunteers. He said: "It's great to see so many people giving up their time to look after their community in the way that BAPS does."

#### **BAPS CHARITIES DONATES \$30,000 TO THE UN'S WORLD FOOD PROGRAM, USA** **9 July 2015**



BAPS Charities contributed \$30,000 to the World Food Program USA (WFP USA) for rehabilitation efforts following the catastrophic earthquakes in Nepal.

WFP has been working in Nepal since 1963. Since the earthquakes, WFP has provided food to over four million people and distributed tarpaulins and tents, as well as water purification tablets, on behalf of other humanitarian aid organizations.

#### **BAPS CHARITIES DONATES \$25,000 TO THE EMBASSY OF NEPAL IN USA** **21 June 2015**

BAPS Charities donated \$25,000 to the Prime



Minister's Defense Fund at the Embassy of Nepal. The fund will be used exclusively for the rescue, treatment and rehabilitation of victims affected in the Nepal earthquakes. His Excellency, the Ambassador of Nepal to the United States, Dr Arjun K. Karki received the donation at the BAPS Mandir in Chino Hills, CA.

#### **BAPS CHARITIES CHALLENGE 2015, UK**

The official partner for BAPS Charities this year is the British Heart Foundation, the nation's largest independent funder of cardiovascular research. The Challenge is also raising funds for Rosa, a charitable fund set up to support initiatives that benefit women and girls in the UK. In April, thousands of devotees and well-wishers from BAPS centres across the UK walked in the 10K Challenge.

The annual challenge has evolved since its inception over 20 years ago. A variety of physical challenges were arranged this year, including sky-diving, and the London to Brighton and London to Paris bike rides.

#### **Skydive Challenge, June-August 2015**



The sponsored skydive component took place at Reading, Nottingham and Lancaster on various dates between June and August 2015. More than 100 brave challengers took to the skies to raise funds for a variety of worthy causes.

Participants – from 18-year-olds to those approaching 60 – stepped up for the challenge. They were fully briefed and prepared for their task and arrived at their respective venues in high spirits. They all attended a short training course prior to boarding their aircraft which transported them to more than 10,000 feet into the air.

The dives were completed smoothly and participants shared their excitement after landing.



the London to Brighton Bike Ride. Riders began from Clapham Common, London at 7 a.m., cycling through country lanes before completing their 54-mile journey at Hove Lawns, Brighton. The ride took between 6-8 hours and was thoroughly enjoyed by all. ♦

### Bike Ride Challenge, 21 June 2015

Six energetic fundraisers embarked upon

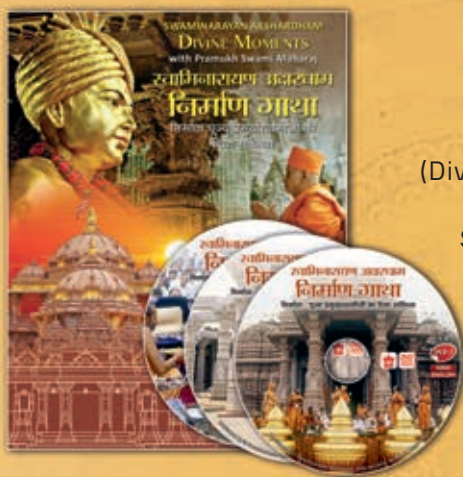
## NEW PUBLICATIONS BY SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARPITH



### BRAHMASANNIDHI 2013

Author: Sadhu Parmananddas

Inspiring incidents in Gujarati from  
Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *vicharan* during 2013,  
complemented by outstanding colour photographs.



### NEW DVD

### SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM NIRMAN GATHA

(Divine Moments with Pramukh Swami Maharaj)

Set of 3 DVDs featuring 7 hours of captivating and memorable footage that documents the creation of Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi, from acquisition of the land to its inauguration. They reveal the tireless efforts and profound divinity of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the creation process.





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## BAL, KISHORE, YUVAK SUMMER SHIBIRS IN NORTH AMERICA

June to September 2015

Thousands of BAPS children, teenagers and youths enthusiastically participated in the various *shibirs* and *adhiveshans* held at BAPS mandirs throughout North America.

1. Bal Shibir, Houston. 2. Bal Shibir, Atlanta 3. Bal Shibir, Atlanta





1. Swamishri pays tribute to Dr Kalam, who passed away on 27 July 2015, at the BAPS mandir in Sarangpur.
2. 'Celebrating Transcendence' – assembly at Image Auditorium, Chennai on 25 July 2015.
3. 'Celebrating Transcendence' – assembly at Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad on 9 August 2015. Tributes were also offered by all to the late Dr Kalam.

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