

(Under Shree Nar Narayan Dev Temple, Bhuj Kutch)



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'Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment, full effort is full victory'.
- Mahatma Gandhi

Jay Swaminarayan

SHIBIR
(YOUTH RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE)
26TH AUG - 29TH AUG 2011
AT
Bristol University
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE

FACEBOOK.COM / CARDIFF.MANDIR
WWW.SWAMINARAYANWALES.ORG.UK
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The Cycles of Life (Shibir - Youth Religious Conference)

Did you know that according to the scriptures our human journey is divided into 4 cycles? Our scriptures also outline many critical points within this journey i.e. when we should start studying, who to marry, how to bring up our children, when to retire etc. There will be many other perplexing questions during the course of these cycles that lead to stress, unhappiness and may result in a sense of unfulfillment in life if the incorrect decision is made.

Attend this event where each and every cycle of life will be discovered and the essence revealed.

The Yuvaks at Shree Swaminarayan Mandir Cardiff have organised this conference in association with Swaminarayan Mandirs across the UK. The aim of the conference is for all devotees to unite under one roof, in order to learn and share their experiences of our religion. Knowledgeable Saints from Swaminarayan Mandir Bhuj will also grace the event and provide blessings to all attendees.

Cost of Shibir

- From Fri to Mon - £50 (3 Nights 4 days)
- Day trip (Sat/Sun) - £10 (1 day)
- Friday night - £20 (1 Night, 2 days)
- Saturday night £50 (1 Night, 2 days)
- Sunday night - £20 (1 Night, 2 days)
- All ages permitted and cost for 3 and under is free.



As I have travelled all over India, I have seen that one of the prime reasons for many of the social and environmental problems of the country is not the culture itself, but it is the distancing or even a disconnection from it. Remaining fixed in the true principles of your own indigenous culture, which has gone on for thousands of years, is often the means of keeping social problems to a minimum. But that also means staying educated in what your culture actually teaches and handing that knowledge down to younger generations so that it never becomes lost. - Stephen Knapp

Nilkanth Varni (The incredible journey of Lord Swaminarayan)

Think before you take a donation



Nilkanth Varni is in Shirpur. One day a learned brahmin from Teland came and pleased the king. The king Shidvalabh was famous for giving donations and gave an elephant to the brahmin. As soon as the brahmin accepted the elephant, he turned black in colour. People began to tease him and taunted him for accepting the elephant. It is said that you should not accept the donation of an elephant because it is considered as a sin, but the brahmin did not know this. He tried everything to turn back to his normal colour but did not succeed.

He tried to find out how he can redeem himself from this sin. He tried to chant Gayatri mantra but this did not help. He became very depressed and thought of committing suicide. Someone told him that he should not worry and go to seek the help of a divine young yogi who has come here and helps people.



The brahmin went to Nilkanth and told him about his problem and begged him to help him. Nilkanth chanted a Krishna mantra in the ear of the brahmin, who immediately changed back to his normal colour. The brahmin recognised Nilkanth as being the supreme God and bowed as said, 'You saved my life. I would have committed suicide but you have given me new lease of life. Please show me the true way to achieve salvation. I will be devoted to you for rest of my life.'

Nilkanth said, 'You are a learned brahmin. You should only accept the donation after much thinking. Do not accept donations out of greed. Do bhakti (devotion) and help others to achieve salvation too. Without bhakti even the learned people will go on the wrong path. With bhakti, you need gnan – knowledge, vairagya – detachment and conviction.'

Nilkanth stayed in Shirpur for further four months.

The unsung Heroes

It was the India-Pakistan war of 1970. The military airport of Bhuj had its runways seriously damaged by the enemy planes continuously dropping bombs on to them. The Indian airforce was unable to stop the bombardments since its planes were unable to take off from the damaged runway.

They tried to repair the airport but did not have enough people to do the job. The Indian airforce people went to the citizens of Bhuj and surrounding villages and asked them to come and repair the runways so that they can take off and chase away the enemy.

No one volunteered because the bombs were targeted on the runways. The enemy planes were attacking the airport and Bhuj without any challenge. The situation was getting desperate and soon the Indian fighter planes would be destroyed.

Some women from Madhapur near Bhuj heard this plea for help, gathered other women together and went to Bhuj repair the runways, against the wishes of their families. None of the men from Bhuj or any other villages went.

The women worked very hard to repair the runways under heavy bombardment from the enemy. When the enemy planes came overhead and dropped the bombs, the sirens were sounded and the women jumped under cover of safety in the holes dug on sides of the runway. As soon as they finished repairing the runways, the Indian fighter planes took off chasing the enemy planes away.

When the war ended, the head of Indian army visited Bhuj and asked firstly to see the women of Madhapur, who helped to repair the runways in Bhuj. He carried a message of special thanks from the prime minister Indira Gandhi. He met them and personally thanked and praised them. He also gave them 50,000 Rupees, as reward for their bravery, but the women refused to accept it and said that they did this for their country and not for the money.

People of Kutch, even the whole of India, should be really grateful for their courage, bravery and selfless service of these women.

Ravji Patel Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

'A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history' – Mahatma Gandhi

'As long as your body is healthy and under control and death is distant, try to save your soul; when death is immanent what can you do?' - Chanakya

Eleven Niyams – rules or Laws

'Nirvikalp utam ati, Nishchaya tav Ghanshyam..' by Premanand Swami.



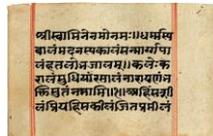
Whether we look at our body or the universe, every thing has to work according to their rules. In our body the breathing and the heartbeats function precisely as needed. The earth, the sun, the moon and the stars rotate and travel according to their laws. When we drive a car, we should obey the highway code and use the controls be used properly.

The rules are important in material world and should be important in our spiritual life. In Vachanamrut, Lord Swaminarayan says that whoever has Niyams - rules, Nischaya - conviction and Paksha – side (of good), is a firm devotee or Satsangi. Once you have conviction and have taken side, then these stay firm. Once you have conviction that this is a Neem tree then that conviction is firm. Once you have firm conviction about God, then there are no doubts and if there are doubts, then it was not a true conviction. Similarly, Paksha stays firm once obtained. Tulsidas had firm Paksha and said that even if a devotee utters Ram's name by mistake, he would do anything for him.



With Niyams, we should always be on our guard and keep them sharp. The weapons should be regularly inspected and tested even at times of peace so that they don't become rusty. Similarly, if we relax Niyams, they would become 'rusty'. In Satsangi Jeevan, Lord Swaminarayan said that the Jiva (Soul) finds it hard to stay in Niyam and finds other things easier to follow. Lord Swaminarayan says that to follow Niyams is like walking on a sword's edge.

The Niyams should be kept all year round and not just for a short period such as the month of Shravan. Someone might go to temple everyday during the month of Shravan and then not go at all. In Bhakti (devotion) the Niyams should be kept all the time.



Lord Swaminarayan gave us Shikshapatri which has six hundred and seventy two commands, of which eleven are very important. If someone asks that what Niyams he or she should keep to become a good Satsangi (devotee) of Lord Swaminarayan, you should tell them about these eleven Niyams. Every Satsangi should know these.



Lord Swaminarayan instructed Premanand Swami to create a prayer which has these eleven Niyams and could be recited daily by the devotees so that they are constantly reminded about them. The prayer, 'Nirvikalp utam ati, Nishchaya tav Ghanshyam..', is sung every evening in our temples. Premanand Swami says that every devotee of lord Swaminarayan should act according to the rules of the Shikshapatri and from these eleven are very important.

Sashtri Swami Harikeshavdas

In the subsequent issues of Satsangi e-Letter, we will look at these eleven Niyams, first of which is 'Himsa na karni jantu ki..' - Do not kill any living being.

Speed of Light

Sayana (c. 1315-1387) was a minister in the court of King Bukka I of the Vijayanagar Empire in South India; he was also a great Vedic scholar who wrote extensive commentaries on several ancient texts. In his commentary on the fourth verse of the hymn 1.50 of the Rig Veda on the sun, he says:

Tatha cha smaryate yojananam sahasre dve dve shate dve cha yogane ekena nimishardhena kramamana namo 'stu ta iti

Thus it is remembered: (O Sun), bow to you, you who travers 2,202 yojanas in half a minute. The Puranas define 1 nimesha to be equal to 16/75 seconds. 1 yojana is about 9 miles. Substituting in Sayana's statement we get 186,000 per second.

source: *The Wishing Tree* - By Subhash Kak

Vachanamrut of Lord Swaminarayan (Gadhada PP 1)

Vachanamrut 1 – Gadhada First chapter, First Sermon

Q2 – What is the form of Maya?

We commonly see this described as illusion. However it's quite difficult to explain this in a concise manner. This is the kind of question which many scholars have researched and tried explaining yet arrived to different conclusions, as they could not come to an answer which covers all aspects of Maya.



Lord Swaminarayan in his eloquent yet precise manner explains this in a sentence. He says "anything that (thoughts, living beings or objects) distracts one from focussing on Bhagwan is Maya".

Let us expand on what these objects, living beings or ideas/concepts etc. would be. What if we are thinking about good things such as serving saints, work that needs to be done in the mandir etc? Is this still Maya?

The answer to this is quite simple. Lord Swaminarayan specifically says 'anything that distracts'. So apart from God's divine form, anyone, anything or any other thoughts which come in the way whilst focussing on his divine form, is Maya.



Do you ever find that it's when you're trying to focus on Bhagwan that all these thoughts that you would never normally think of, tend to crop up, out of nowhere, in your mind?

This is the effect of Maya and the reason why we have these thoughts and are unable to control them is due to misunderstanding. This misunderstanding is the belief that we are the body yet in actual fact we are the soul.

Through this belief of being the body, we are exposed to the weaknesses of bodily attachments – the people around us, materialistic lifestyle etc. If we believed that we are the soul then we would understand that the soul has no relations or attachments as these or only connections to the body but not the soul. Understand this concept and Maya will no longer affect you whilst focussing on Bhagwan's divine form.

Another interesting fact is that Bhagwan Swaminarayan chose this as the second question, which has an interesting link to the first question. In the first question we are told that the most difficult achievement is to have constant reflection on God. You would think that Bhagwan may go on to explain how we achieve that feat. However, Bhagwan explains that the Maya is the major threat in achieving Akhand Vrutti (constant concentration) on God.

It is fascinating to decipher as to why Bhagwan may have chosen this approach. It may be due to the fact that when approaching any task we should identify potential threats which may hinder us from achieving our goal, because if we do not understand them then we are going into the task blind.

This may result in us being attacked and defeated by Maya without even realising it. Akhand Vrutti is not easy, in fact it is a difficult battle and with every battle, to be successful, you must know your enemies and plan your strategies accordingly. Here Swaminarayan Bhagwan teaches us that in order to achieve Akhand Vrutti we must understand the threat (Maya), only then can we overcome it.

Pradyuman Halai, Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

My life belongs to the Lord Krishna now. I'm just the servant of Krishna. I've never been so humble in all my life, and I feel great. - George Harrison

Raksha Bandhan - Shravan Sud 15



Raksha Bandhan means a 'bond of protection'. It is a festival which celebrates the special relationship between a brother and a sister.

On this auspicious day, brothers make a promise to their sisters to protect them from harm and the sisters in turn pray for the protection of their brother from all evil. The festival falls on the Shravan Purnima which comes generally in the month of August. Sisters tie the a thread called Rakhi on their brother's wrist and traditionally receive some gifts or money from their brothers.

Shree Krishna Janmashtami



Devaki, sister of king Kansha, was married to Vasudev. However, after the wedding, Kansa heard a prophesy that he will be killed by his sister's eighth son. After Kansa heard this, he was afraid. He immediately imprisoned Devaki and her husband.

Each time Devaki gave birth to a child, Kansa apersonally killed the child. When Devaki became pregnant for the eighth time. In Vrindavan, Yashoda, the wife of Vasudev's friend Nand, was also pregnant.

In the prison cell, Krishna appeared at the stroke of midnight, in his four-armed form of Lord Vishnu. He advised Vasudeva to take him to the village of Gokul in Vrindavana and exchange him with a girl that had just been born to Yashoda. Then He turned Himself into a baby.



As soon as Vashudev put baby Krishna in to a basket, the guards in prison fell asleep, and all the iron shackles, chains and locks were opened. Vasudeva took Krishna and departed for Vrindavana. It was raining heavily on that very dark night. A huge snake, Anant, protected Krishna from the rain by standing like a canopy over the basket.

On the way to Vrindavan Vashudev came to the bank of rive Jamuna, which was flowing with full force. Krishna touched the river waters with his foot and the river waters parted to allow Vasudeva to carry Krishna across to Vrindavana. When Vasudeva reached the house of Nanda, everybody were in deep sleep. He placed his own son on the bed of Yasoda and picked up her newborn girl and returned back to the prison. The chains and the prison doors locked again.

Next day, Devaki pleaded with Kansa not to kill the baby, but Kamsa pulled the baby girl from her arms and threw her against a stone. The girl slipped from his hands and rose above his head as the eight-armed form of Goddess, dressed in fine garments and jewels. She said, 'You can not harm me. The one who will destroy you is elsewhere'.

On the morning, everyone in Gokul celebrated the birth of Lord Krishna.

The baby girl born to Yashoda represents Maya - illusion. When Vashudev holds Krishna, the chains and the prison doors open automatically. When we hold God in our heart our obstacles in reaching salvations disappears. When we embrace 'Maya', we are tied again, as was Vasudev when he bought the baby girl in to the prison.



In Sheemad Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna says:

Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion, at that time I descend Myself.

In order to deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I appear millennium after millennium.

e-Notice Board
www.swaminarayanwales.org.uk

Festivals and Holy days – August 2011



Shree Hari Jayanti – Sunday 7th Aug

Raksha Bandhan – Saturday 13th Aug

Hindola Ends – Monday 15th Aug

Indian Independence day – Monday 15th Aug

Naag Panchmi – Friday 19th Aug

Shree Krishna Janmashtami – Monday 22nd Aug



Ekadashi

Pavitra Ekadashi Fast – Tuesday 9th Aug 2011
 Aaia Ekadashi Fast – Monday 25th Aug 2011

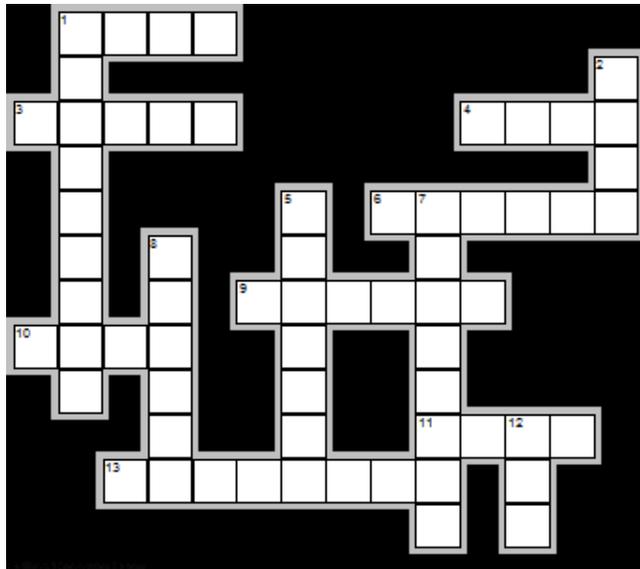


If you have any interesting facts, stories, jokes, or feedback for our next issue of Satsang e-Letter, please email them to us at sstym@swaminarayanwales.org.uk

e-Fun

e-Knowledge

Crossword



Across

1. Teacher
3. Demon who kidnapped Sita
4. One who practices yoga
6. Place of worship
9. Lord Ram's brother
10. Has 108 beads
11. Lord Ram's wife
13. One of Lord Swaminarayan's names and also a name for Lord Shiva

Down

1. Lord Swaminarayan's name when he was young
2. Number of senses
5. Head of Swaminarayan sampraday
7. We fast or eat fruit on this day
8. Devotion
12. Number of Acharyas in original Swaminarayan Sampraday

Clever counting

Once there was a man who wanted a necklace of gold coins. After collecting twenty gold coins, he went to a jeweller and said, 'I have collected twenty gold coins. Can you make me a necklace of gold coins?' 'I will make you a nice necklace, give me the coins and I'll count them' said the jeweller.

The man gave him the bag with twenty gold coins and the jeweller began to count them. 'One, two, three.. and nineteen,' he said and slipped a coin under his desk and no one saw him do it. The man knew he had twenty coins and the jeweller must have hid one.

'Oh, I thought I bought in twenty coins. Let me count them again,' said the man. He began to count. 'One, two, three.... nineteen. You are right, I'm sorry there are only nineteen coins here,' he told the jeweller. No one saw him hide a coin while he was counting. the jeweller took the coins and said, 'I'll make you the necklace of your nineteen coins. Please collect them in a week.'

When the jeweller started to make the necklace, he found only eighteen coins and realised that his customer had hidden a coin too. He had to put back the one he stole in the first place to make nineteen coin necklace.

Crossword answers

Across 1. GURU 3. RAVAN 4. YOGI 6. TEMPLE 9. BHARAT 10. MALA 11. SITA 13. NILKANTH
Down 1. GHANSHYAM 2. FIVE 5. ACHARYA 7. EKADASHI 8. BHAKTI 12. TWO