

(Under Shree Nar Narayan Dev
Temple, Bhuj Kutch)



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'If we have listening ears, God speaks to us in our own language, whatever that language be.' Mahatma Gandhi

Jay Swaminarayan

Are we losing it?

संस्कृतं



Are we losing our language, culture, traditions and heritage?

Not forgetting our language is very important in keeping our culture. Some people argue that in the United Kingdom, you don't have to read, write or talk in our native language because there is no need.

Many people of Indian origin speak only in English. English is the first language for children born in the UK and so it is easier for them to speak in English. Many Indian parents speak to their children in English only, even though they themselves are not good at speaking English.

Many people do not realise the importance of keeping their own language.

In some temples outside of India, the youngsters speak in English only and find it easier to have congregations, presentations and shibirs in English only. The meanings of the religious translations are sometimes approximated and the devotees do not gain the full benefit. The young generation is finding it hard to understand the katha (religious discourses) and kirtans (songs) because of the lack of native language. We would get more understanding from the Santos (saints) from India if we knew the language properly.

We should be able to read and write in our own language, as well as English, because our language is part of our culture. We can translate everything in English, but we would lose some things in translations because there will not be any meanings for some words in our language.

We should talk in our own language 'as much as possible.'

It is true that extra effort would be needed to learn and practice our language, but the benefits are tremendous.

Ellen Bialystok is a cognitive neuroscientist whose research has shown that speaking two or more languages on a regular basis from a young age can have a positive effect on the brain. Not only does it enhance cognitive abilities, being bilingual can also delay symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

Ravii Patel Shree Swaminarayan Temple. Cardiff

Where is God?

Once a disciple asked his Guru where he could find God. 'God is everywhere, in everyone and everything,' answered his Guru.

That evening, as the disciple was walking in the street, he saw an elephant charging towards him.

'The elephant has gone mad! Get out of the way, get out of the way,' shouted the elephant-driver.

The disciple thought 'My guru said that God is everywhere. He is in me and in the elephant too. In that case would God attack God? No, I don't think the elephant will attack me.'

The disciple stood firmly in the middle of the street. The elephant picked him up in his trunk, swung him from side to side and flung him on to the ground. He was shaken up and was badly bruised.

Seeing what had just happened, the Guru helped the disciple to get home and made him comfortable. The disciple complained to the Guru and said, 'You said that God is everywhere and everything but as you saw, the elephant still attacked me. According to you, God is in me and he is also in the elephant.'

'Yes, God is in everyone and everything,' said the Guru. 'He is in you and the elephant, but he is in the elephant driver who warned you to get out of the way. Why didn't you listen to him?'



Nilkanth Varni (The incredible journey of Lord

Pibek



The long journey brings Nilkanth Varni to Assam where he met a Brahmin called Pibek. Pibek was evil and practiced black magic. He had lots of followers. Nilkanth was among some yogis at the time. Pibek told Nilkanth and the yogis to become his disciples or else he would kill them all. All the yogis were terrified but Nilkanth told them not to worry because he would protect them from his evil magic.

Pibek got angry and threw a handful of urad dal on to a tree. The leaves on the tree turned yellow and the tree died immediately. The yogis got really scared but Nilkanth stood defiantly in front of Pibek. Pibek threw another handful of urad dal on to Nilkanth but nothing happened.

Pibek then summoned an evil spirit, Kalbhairav, and ordered him to kill Nilkanth. But as Kalbhairav ran towards Nilkanth, he felt unbearable heat and turned towards Pibek to attack him.

Kalbhairav beat up Pibek senseless. Nilkanth intervened and saved Pibek. Pibek realised that this was no ordinary person and asked for forgiveness. Nilkanth taught him the true way to worship God and become a good person. When the people of that region found that Pibek had been transformed into a good person and will not harm them any more, they were overjoyed.

Nilkanth stayed in the town of Malikpur for a month and then set off onwards on his incredible journey.



Bad Temper

There once was a little boy who used to get angry all the time. His mother gave him a hammer and some nails and told him that every time he got angry, he must hammer a nail into the fence.

On the first day, the boy had hammered fifty nails into the fence. Over the next few days, as he practised to control his anger, the number of nails hammered in the fence was reduced every day. He found it easier to control his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

One day, the boy did not get angry at all and told his mother that he could now control his temper. His mother asked the boy to pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

Many days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his mother that all the nails were gone. The mother took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. She said 'you have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one.'

Lord Swaminarayan said in Vachanamrut (Loya 1), 'If a tiger were to come and roar at the outskirts of the village, then even if it does not harm anyone, everyone would feel terror, and no one would come out of their house. Similarly, even if a trace of anger were to arise, it would still be a source of great misery.'



We must make sure we control our temper the next time we are tempted to say something we may regret later.

One of the ways we can control our anger is to slowly count to ten when we get angry, or even better, recite God's name in your mind ten times. The way this works is that when we get angry, we think with the part of the brain which is at the back of the head, same as the animals do and snap out at others. But when we wait, we think more clearly with the part of the brain which is at the top of the head, and will start to think clearly again.

'Anger and intolerance are the enemies of correct understanding.'
Mahatma Gandhi

Eleven Niyams – rules or Laws

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



Niyam one

'Himsa na karni jantu ki..' – Do not kill any living being.

Himsa means violence, harmful act, hurt or killing. Jantu means living being and it also means insect.

We should no kill or harm any living being.

Shikshapatri Shlok 11/12

My disciples shall never kill intentionally any living creature, not even small insects such as lice or bugs.

They shall never kill any living creature as sacrifice for the Yagna of deities and ancestors, as non-violence is declared by scriptures to be the highest of Dharma.

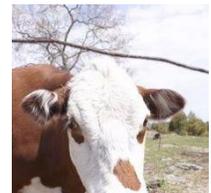
We should follow the advice of scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita (17. 7010) to eat only high-quality food, because the food shapes the mood, mind and personality. Meat is said to promote laziness and ignorance which leads to an undesirable mental state known as *tamas*, while a pure vegetarian diet promotes the desirable *sattvic* qualities essential for progress towards salvation.

In Mahabharat, Bhisma says that:

- Those high-souled persons who desire beauty, excellence of body, long life, understanding, mental and physical strength, and memory should abstain from acts of injury.
- Abstention from injury is the highest religion. It is again the highest penance. It is also the highest truths from which all duty proceeds.
- Flesh cannot be had from grass or wood or stone. Unless a living creature is slain, it cannot be had. Hence is the fault in eating flesh.
- That man who abstains from meat is never put in fear by any creature. All creatures seek his protection. He never causes any anxiety in others, and he himself has never to become anxious.
- The man who kills living creatures kills them for the sake of the person who eats flesh. If flesh were regarded as inedible, there would then be no slaughter of living creatures. It is for the sake of the eater that the slaughter of living creatures goes on in the world.
- Since the period of life is shortened of persons who slaughter living creatures or cause them to be slaughtered, it is clear that the person who wishes his own good should give up meat entirely.
- The purchaser of flesh performs *himsa* (violence) by his wealth; he who eats flesh does so by enjoying its taste; the killer does *himsa* by actually killing the animal. Thus, there are three forms of killing. He who brings flesh or sends for it, he who cuts off the limbs of an animal, and he who purchases, sells, or cooks flesh and eats it—all of these are to be considered meat-eaters. (Mahabharata 13.115)



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'Ahimsa, non-violence, comes from strength, and the strength is from God, not man. Ahimsa always comes from within.' Mahatma Gandhi

Vachanamrut of Lord Swaminarayan (Gadhada PP 1)



Vachanamrut 1 – Gadhada First chapter, First Sermon

Q3 – What body does a devotee of bhagwan receive once he has left his body made up of five elements and is ascending to bhagwan's abode?

Muktanand Swami asks this question to bhagwan. Shreeji Maharaj answers by saying that a devotee of bhagwan through bhagwan's wishes receives a divine body.

Bhagwan then goes on to say that when the devotee leaves his body made up of the five elements, the divine soul goes upon garuda (divine eagle), chariot and plane as a mode of transport to reach the divine abode. Also all this can be seen by those who perform yogasamadhi (attached to bhagwan's form).



What are the 5 elements that this body is made up of?

Pruthvi – Earth, Jal – Water, Tej – Light, Vaayu – Wind, Akaash – Space.

50% is made up of earth and the other 50% is the remainder of the elements.

When we die, the body is cremated so the soul which resides inside the body is freed and moves on to the next destination. This can be to the next form of life if the soul has not been freed from the cycle of life and death, or for a devotee of bhagwan, attain liberation and ascend towards the divine abode.

Bhagwan then through his wishes provides the devotee with a divine body as the former body made up of the five elements no longer exists.

The devotee is now ready to ascend to akshardham and bhagwan explains in the vachanamrut that they get there by using the vehicles such as Garuda, chariot and aircraft.

You may think 'why do they need to go on a vehicle to get to the divine abode, why can't they get there automatically within a flash?' Surely bhagwan can do this.

The truth is that they can in an instance, however it seems that bhagwan may be fulfilling their wishes.

Doesn't that then mean that the devotees have some form of desire and therefore cannot attain the divine abode as only those free of all desires attain the divine abode?

We must remember the example of Dhruv here. Dhruv performed meditation and when bhagwan was pleased and asked dhruv for anything that he desired, dhruv didn't ask for anything. However bhagwan had understood what dhruv deserved and gave this to him in the form of the kingdom which rightfully belonged to him.

In the same way even though the devotees may not have any desire as such to sit upon a vehicle, yet bhagwan gives his devotees what they deserve - The experience of ascending to his abode upon a vehicle with other devotees and perhaps even bhagwan himself escorting the devotee on this divine journey.

Pradyuman Halai, Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

Prasad



The food offered to the god is called prasad. In Sanskrit prasad also means kindness and mercy.

We can make the preparing, offering, and the eating of the food offered into Bhakti (devotion).

When we offer our food to God with devotion before eating it, we make spiritual progress by eating the offered food. Our devotion, and God's grace, subtly transforms the food offered from material nutrition to spiritual mercy or prasad.

Guidelines to Prepare Prasad

Before we offer any food to God, we must follow some important guidelines while preparing the food:

- God only accepts purely vegetarian offerings - offerings that are acquired without pain and suffering on the part of any living being. So, we have to strictly avoid any meat (including chicken; a bird is not a vegetable!), fish and eggs.
- We can't offer any onions or garlic. The Vedic scriptures, as well as the ancient natural medicinal system of Ayurveda, explain that these foods excite the more passionate elements of the human psycho-physical constitution. These are considered 'Tamsi'.
- Food should not be tasted before it is offered to God. The preparing of prasad is done as an active devotion so the goal is to prepare delicious foods, not with our own satisfaction in mind, but thinking only of the satisfaction of God. Therefore, He should be the first to 'taste' the fruits of our labour.
- Making prasad is a devotional act and hence it is important to have an atmosphere in our kitchen that helps this. We should be in a calm, peaceful and contemplative frame of mind while preparing food for God, thinking to ourselves as we prepare the food that we are acting for God's satisfaction, and not just our own. Many people sing devotional songs while cooking.
- We should have a high standard of cleanliness while preparing, cooking, and offering the food. The kitchen, utensils and foods used should be clean. We ourselves also should be clean and bathed before preparing the food.

When we follow these steps with bhakti in mind, God will gladly accept our offering.

How to Offer Food to God

- We should have a mandir (altar) set up with a sacred image of God in His sacred form. For example, an image of any of His incarnations such as Rama, Krishna, Swaminarayan or any other form, such as Srinathaji. If you don't have an altar, then placing an image of God somewhere special will be sufficient.
- When the food is ready, take a sample of each food along with a glass of water and place them all on a special plate that is used only for offering food to God. This plate must never be used for any other purpose than offering food to God. Place the plate of food before the sacred image. Offer a little incense to God. Then, in a meditative and devotional state of mind, sit with eyes closed in meditation and request the Lord to accept your offering. You can recite several sacred mantras or sing a thal (special devotional song for offering food to god).
- The food that you have cooked is now sanctified and considered to be prasad, food transformed into the grace of God. By partaking in such food, we show our devotion to God, and thus make spiritual advancement.
- The food on the plate should be re-merged into the food in the pots. Having thanked the Lord for accepting your offering, the prasad can now be eaten. The food should also be eaten with meditative awareness, peacefully and respectfully.

All the snacks and meals we prepare should be offered to God first. This means that the food should be vegetarian and satvik.

Ravji Patel Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

Festivals and Holy days – September 2011



- Ganesh Chaturthi** – Thursday 1st Sept
- Rushi Panchmi** – Friday 2nd Sept
- Vaman Jayanti** – Thursday 8th Sept
- Shraadh Starts** – Monday 12th Sept
- Shraadh Ends** – Tuesday 27th Sept
- Navratri Starts** – Wednesday 28th Sept



Ekadashi



- Parivartini Ekadashi Fast – Thursday 8th Sept 2011
- Indira Ekadashi Fast – Saturday 24th Sept 2011

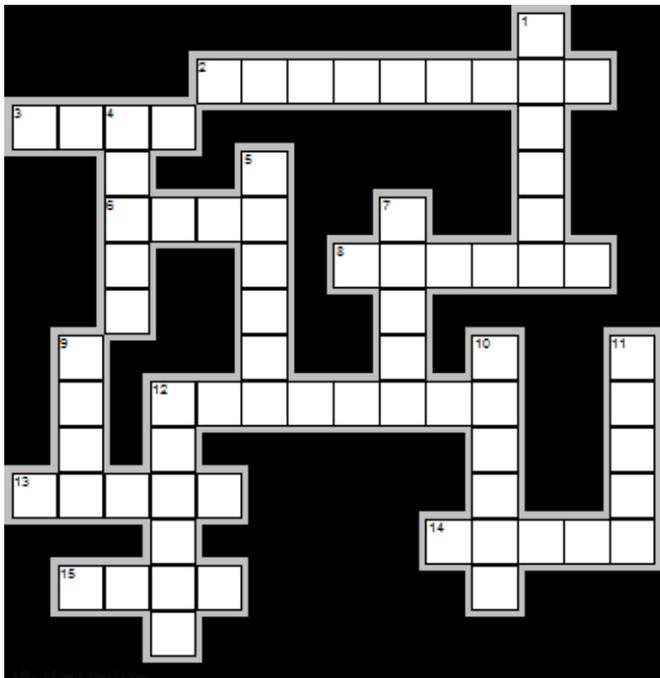


If you have any interesting facts, stories, jokes, or feedback, please email them to us at sstym@swaminarayanwales.org.uk

e-Fun

e-Knowledge

Crossword



Across

- 2. Lord Swaminarayan's childhood name
- 3. Very big
- 6. An act of worship
- 8. Food offered to God
- 12. Name of Lord Swaminarayan when he went on a long journey throughout India
- 13. Lord Krishna's friend
- 14. A holy river
- 15. Teacher

Down

- 1. Formula of prayer
- 4. Lord Krishna's name as the protector of cows
- 5. Lord Swaminarayan wrote shikshapatri there
- 7. Krishna drove his chariot
- 9. King Janak's daughter
- 10. Lord Ram's brother
- 11. Ravna's country
- 12. First prime minister of India



Crossword answers

Across: 2. GHANSHYAM 3. HUGE 6. PUJA 8. PRASAD 12. NILKANTH 13. RADHA 14. GANGA 15. GURU
Down: 1. MANTRA 4. GOPAL 5. VADTAL 7. ARJUN 9. SITA 10. BHARAT 11. LANKA 12. NAHERU