



Satsang e-Letter™

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Jay Swaminarayan

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1st April – Ram Navmi



Rama Navami falls on the ninth day of the shukla paksha, bright phase of the moon, in the lunar month of Chaitra (April-May).

The holy day of Rama Navami is a national holiday in India and is also widely celebrated all over the world.

Lord Rama was born at noon and is the embodiment of perfection, following Dharma and fulfilling all his duties towards everyone.

Rama was the first of the four sons of King Dasharatha of Ayodhya. When it was time for Rama to be made king, his stepmother, Kaikeyi, got King Dasharatha to send him to exile for fourteen years. His wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana accompanied him. Sita was kidnapped by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Rama, with help from Hanuman and the monkey army, built a bridge across the ocean to Lanka, killed Ravana, and rescued Sita.

1st April – Swaminarayan Jayanti

In Chappaiya in Samvat 1837 (2nd April 1781 AD) at 10.10 pm, Lord Swaminarayan took birth to Bhaktimata and his father was Dharmadev.

Lord Swaminarayan showed the mankind the path to salvation and how to live perfect and happy life here on earth. His Leelas (Divine acts) on the earth includes:

- ❖ He exhibited wisdom and superhuman powers, mastering the Vedas and other Holy Scriptures and challenged great Scholars in His childhood .
- ❖ Serving His parents up to their death and gave them Moksha.
- ❖ Leaving home at the age of eleven for a seven-year pilgrimage of India.
- ❖ Was declared by Ramanand Swami as the successor to the Uddhav Sampradaya.
- ❖ He personally installed various murtis (himself) at 6 temples namely Ahmedabad, Bhuj, Vadatal, Dholera, Junagadh and Gadhada.
- ❖ He established two Dioceses and appointed His two descendants (adopted sons) as their Acharyas and advised His followers to abide by their respective Acharayas.
- ❖ He stopped the practice of 'Sati', whereby a widow would burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband.
- ❖ He supported full freedom for Women, thereby starting the practice of Women Saints.
- ❖ He wrote the 'Shikshapatri', a jewel amongst all other scriptures, for the spiritual welfare of every soul.
- ❖ He inspired His saints to write several other scriptures, namely Vachanamrut, Satsangi Jivan, Bhaktachintamani and others in addition to thousands of poetic verses (kirtans).



He left his Mortal body for Akshardham on Jeth Sud 10 Samvat 1886 at Gadhada.

He remains manifested today in the Scriptures, Saints, Murtis and the Acharayas of the two dioceses.

The teachings of Lord Swaminarayan eradicates the evil within oneself and shows the true path to ultimate salvation.

Nilkanth Varni (The incredible journey of Lord Swaminarayan)



A Greedy Person Always Thinks About Money

Whilst travelling through a forest Nilkanth Varni came across a river. He decided to bathe in the river and perform his daily rituals. Near the riverbank, there was a Shiv Temple where he paid his respects to the deity of Vateshwar Mahadev present in the altar with special attention and sat down.

At the same temple, there was also a Brahmin (a member of the priestly class) who was performing austerity.

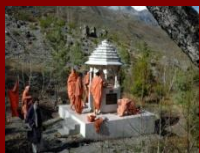
Vateshwar Mahadev gave the Brahmin a vision of himself and spoke: "As a result of your austerity the almighty lord himself has arrived. Tell him of any wishes you have and he will fulfil them."

The Brahmin went to Nilkanth Varni, touched his feet and with clasped hands said: "O' Lord, please give me a lot of money. I have prayed and observed tap (penance) for money so please be merciful to me and fulfil my wish."

Nilkanth replied: "Money is temporary. Having attachment and hunger for money is not good. Give up the hope of gaining money and ask for liberation, as you will experience great happiness."

Nilkanth Varni tried to persuade the Brahmin to change his mind but the Brahmin was determined to ask for money. Nilkanth ordered the Brahmin to start digging the ground on the right side of the temple and told him he would find a great deal of money there. Nilkanth also told the Brahmin to always remember him.

In this way, Nilkanth fulfilled the wish of the Brahmin.



6th April – Hanuman Jayanti



यत्र यत्र रघुनाथकीर्तनं तत्र तत्र कुतमस्तकाञ्जलिम् ।
बाष्पवारिपरिपूर्णलोचनं मारुतिं नमत रक्षसान्तकम् ॥

yatra yatra raghunāthakīrtanaṃ tatra tatra kṛta mastakāñjalim
bāṣpavāripāripūrṇalocanaṃ mārutim namata rākṣasāntakam



Bow down to Hanumān, who is the slayer of demons, and who is present with head bowed and eyes full of flowing tears wherever the fame of Rāma is sung.

Hanuman's birthday falls on Shukla Paksha Purnima, in the month of Chaitra (March-April full moon day). On this day, Hanuman is worshiped and the Hanuman Chalisa is recited.

His mother, Punjikasthala, was an apsara (beautiful celestial maiden) who was born on Earth as a female monkey due to a curse. She would be freed from this curse if she gave birth to an incarnation of Lord Shiva. Reborn as Anjani, along with her husband Kesari, she performed intense prayers to Lord Shiva so that she could give birth to an incarnation of Lord Shiva. Pleased with their devotion, Shiva granted them the boon they sought and was born as their son and was named Hanuman.

Lord Swaminarayan said that in the event of trouble by evil spirits, we should pray to God by means of the Narayana Kavacha and the only deity who may be worshiped in this case is Hanuman. It is believed that Hanuman is present wherever the Ramayana is recited.



Akhand Var (Eternal Husband)



What does dying mean? Baadshah (Great Ruler) Bajand was a great emperor and was living a life of such luxury that he did not know what dying was.

His greatness was measured in tumbda's (pots). When his army passed a place, a tumbdu was placed on the side of the road. The tumbdu would get filled with the dust rising because of the movement of all the soldiers, chariots, horses, elephants and camels passing by. When one tumbdu was filled another would be placed on the ground while the army was still passing. By the time the whole army had passed, sixteen tumbda's would have been filled just from the dust which had risen from the ground. This showed just how big and busy his kingdom was.

Such was the royalty and wealth of Shah Bajand, but Nishkulanand Swami says he left all these riches and pleasures because of one life changing event.

Once, the army of Shah Bajand was passing through a narrow road when they came across a dead camel blocking the road. The army stopped and the soldiers were thinking of how to move it. Shah Bajand asked why everyone had stopped. The minister told him that a camel has fallen dead on the road. Shah Bajand said "So what if it has fallen dead, make it move aside." The minister replied saying "It is dead, My Lord, we will have to work out a way to lift it and move it aside." Shah Bajand said "What do you mean 'dead'? Let me see".

Making his way forward, Shah Bajand came to where the camel was laying dead. He asked "What's wrong with it? I don't see anything wrong. Its head is intact, its legs are intact, there is no sign of it being cut or slain. What do you mean its dead?" The minister said "It's dead, My Lord, the life has come out of it. It can no longer move so we will have to move it ourselves." "Is this what happens when someone dies, it just drops dead and 'life' leaves the body?" asked Shah Bajand interestingly. "Yes, My Lord" replied the minister.

Shah Bajand asked, "Does this happen to all kinds of living beings or just some?" The Minister replied, "It happens to every living being, My Lord," The emperor then asked, "Will this same thing happen to me?" "My Lord, being your servant I cannot bring myself to say that you will die, but everyone must die one day," replied the Minister.

Shah Bajand was very shocked after knowing what death involved. He instantly realised he would have to die one day and wondered, 'What is the point of all this power and wealth? Why I should waste my valuable time getting attached to it when I will have to leave it one day?' He immediately told the Minister to take up all the responsibilities of his empire and became a 'fakir' (holy man) himself, deciding to spend the rest of his life devoted to Bhagwan.

Nishkulanand Swami says how easily Shah Bajand left all his empire after seeing a dead camel to devote his life to Bhagwan. We in turn have seen many people dead, not just animals. However, we do not get the understanding that we will have to leave everything behind, so why not get detached from it and get attached to what we will have eternally. Why do we get attached to the objects and the people of this life, who are only with us in this life but not with Bhagwan, who will ever be with us in this life and thereafter.

Haribhakta - Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

Question - What should be done to make a human life successful?

Answer (By Morari Babu) - Birth as a human being is due to supreme grace, so distribute love to all. Worshipping the Lord is good, but one should try to see Him in everything /everybody and spread love everywhere. 'Bhaav' (goodwill) towards all would remove every 'abhaav' (inadequacy) from your life.

A spiritual person should be joyful. Joy (aanand) is the nature of God. Be God-loving and not God-fearing. Five sutras to cultivate happiness:

- Try to remain pure (in the heart) as much as possible.
- Try to maintain the joy that comes with purity.
- Try to uphold the faith in your subject of devotion.
- Try to retain the sincerity in your conduct at every cost.
- Try to help others whenever possible.

By following the above five, you may come across adversities, but you won't feel the pain. All the situations will come as Lord's Prasaad.

Eleven Niyams – Rules or Laws (Continued)

'Chori na karni kahu ki..' by Premanand Swami.



Niyam Seven

'Chori na karni kahu ki' **Do not steal from anyone**

Who obeys this niyam? Is there any field where there is not stealing?



? Someone might think – in temple? Shoes get stolen from the temple! Many say that children are innocent in this matter, but they sometimes cheat in exams by taking notes in. It is difficult to find any field in which there is no stealing. Stealing goes on in both homes and schools. What gets stolen from the offices? If not anything, then time is stolen. If someone is gossiping unnecessarily in the office, and someone comes to get their file and you say, 'Come tomorrow', this is stealing time from office hours. If we do not work the hours we get paid for, then this is stealing.

Is stealing happening in shops? Cheating with weights and prices is stealing. There is stealing in accounting. It is said that there are two types of accounts kept for some businesses. In life, there is stealing going on in every field. Lord Swaminarayan says, 'Do not steal for your household, your own personal gain or for religious purposes.' Whilst walking, you come upon a house which has beautiful roses growing in the garden, and think that, 'I will take some flowers to temple from here so that God will be pleased. The flowers will otherwise be wasted' Lord Swaminarayan says that you should not steal even for religious reasons. If you do then this is not a good deed but stealing. The person who owns the flowers will get the 'punya' but you will be committing a sin and will have to bear the consequences of that sin.

Once a devotee of Lord Swaminarayan came to him and gifted a silver goblet to him. This devotee was a silversmith and was very busy with lots of work. He used to steal a little silver from each work he did and had made this goblet from the stolen silver.

Lord Swaminarayan asked, 'Is this your own silver?'

'It is my own silver, Maharaj.' The man replied. 'You should not count it as your own. Speak the truth.' Said Maharaj. The man said, 'I have taken a little silver from each customer and made this goblet for you. All the customers whose silver I have taken will have 'punya' and thus benefit. I will also benefit because I have donated this to you.'

'Your customers will benefit but you will not.' Maharaj said.

If you are walking through someone's fields and there is some crop there, you should not take it without permission. Shatanand Swami calls this the 'thinking of a mouse'. Many people have this habit.

The saints have said, 'one should not touch anyone else's unguarded possessions'.

If there is any unguarded possession belonging to someone such as a pen, a watch or a five pound note, do not think that I should pick it up and donate it in temple because by doing this we incur sin.

Once there was a follower of Lord Swaminarayan. His name was Ghelabhai and was from Loya. He was not educated and was suffering from extreme poverty. Once Muktanand Swami, who was his guru, said, 'Go to Surat and I will ask some devotees there to give you some work for a year.' Both husband and wife left for a journey on the road to Surat. They were both walking through a part where there was no one about. Ghelabhai was walking ahead and his wife was following.

On the road he saw a gold ornament. He thought, 'We are both very poor and if my wife sees this, she might want to keep it. This would be stealing.' So he stood there with one foot on the jewellery and waited for his wife to pass. 'What are you hiding? I know you are hiding something from me,' she demanded. Ghelabhai said, 'I saw this jewellery on the road and thought that since we are poor, you might succumb and take it. We are devotees of Lord Swaminarayan and we should not touch anyone else's possession and so I tried to hide it from you by putting dirt on it.'

The wife replied, 'You saw someone else's possession as gold? I see someone else's possessions as dirt anyway, so there is no need to hide it with dirt.'

Based on an article by: *Shastri Swami Harikeshavdas*

Health Benefits of Milk

The health benefits of drinking milk are often overlooked or unknown. The following is a summary about how milk can improve a person's health. Here, we will look at cow's milk but there are other milks which have similar benefits.



Bone health

Milk is a provider of calcium, phosphorous, magnesium and protein, which are all essential for healthy bone growth and development. Adequate consumption of milk can help to make the bones strong.

Teeth



The amounts of calcium and phosphorous in milk is also beneficial for the development and maintenance of healthy teeth. The most abundant protein in milk is casein and is protective as it forms a thin film on the enamel surface which prevents loss of calcium and phosphate from the teeth. In fact, dentists recommend that milk is the only safe drink to have between meals (except for water).

Milk and cardiovascular disease

A recent study of Welsh men, it was found that those who drank the most milk had fewer heart attacks than those who had little or no milk in their diets.

This connection could be due to many factors in milk, but epidemiological studies have shown that higher intakes of calcium in particular are linked to a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease. More specifically, studies have shown that high calcium intakes may reduce high levels of bad cholesterol in the blood, and increase low levels of good cholesterol both of which are known risk factors for cardiovascular disease.



Obesity

Contrary to popular belief, research has shown that people who consume milk are likely to be slimmer than those who do not.

Studies have also shown that consumption of milk as part of a calorie controlled diet is associated with increased weight loss.

This is particularly beneficial since excess fat around the trunk region of the body is associated with greater risks to health.



Type 2 diabetes

Studies suggest that regular consumption of low fat dairy products can help to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, which has been a longstanding problem in adults and is now becoming increasingly common in children and adolescents.

A recent study of more than 37,000 middle aged women found that those with the highest intakes of dairy had a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes.

Cancer

There is considerable evidence to suggest that milk has a protective effect on risk of both colorectal and breast cancer with increased intakes.

A recent study of 45,000 Swedish men reported that men who drank 1.5 glasses of milk per day or more, had 35% lower risk of the disease than those who had a low milk intake of less than 2 glasses per week.

Additionally a study of over 40,000 Norwegian women found that those who drank milk as children and continued to do so as adults, had a lower risk of developing breast cancer.

Health Benefits of breast-feeding

Breast milk is widely acknowledged as the most complete form of nutrition for infants, with a range of benefits for infants' health, growth, immunity and development. - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia

Studies have demonstrated a number of important health benefits due to breastfeeding. When children are breast-fed:

- They are more resistant to infection and disease early in life than formula-fed children
- They are less likely to contract various diseases later in life, including multiple sclerosis, juvenile diabetes, heart disease, and cancer before the age of fifteen
- Their mothers have less chance of developing osteoporosis later in life, are able to lose weight gained during pregnancy more easily and have a lower risk of uterine, breast and ovarian cancer

Mitesh Patel, Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

Festivals and Holy days – April 2012

**Ram Navmi
Swaminarayan Jayanti – 1st Apr**



**Hanuman Jayanti
6th Apr**



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Ekadashi

Kamda Ekadashi – Tuesday 3rd April 2012

Varuthni Ekadashi – Tuesday 17th April 2012

Mohini Ekadashi – Wednesday 2nd May 2012

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

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Jokes

A burglar broke in to a house, intending to steal. All of a sudden, he heard a voice, 'I can see you, and so can Jesus!'

The thief was startled and looked around. There was no one around and so he went on looking for valuable things to steal.

'I can see you, and so can Jesus!' the voice came again.

The thief jumps again, and this time he decided to look properly. In a corner, he found a cage with a parrot in it; 'I can see you, and so can Jesus!' said the parrot again.

'So what,' said the thief, 'you're only a parrot!'

The parrot replies, 'That maybe so, but the name of the Rottweiler guard dog is Jesus!'



Everyone gets a lift!



Human thigh bones are stronger than concrete!

Thomas Edison, lightbulb inventor, was afraid of the dark!

Like fingerprints, everyone's tongue print is different.