



Jay Swaminarayan

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4th May – Narshimha Jayanti

After extreme penance (Tap), Hirnakashipu achieved a boon in which he had asked, 'I would not die during day or night nor would I die inside or outside my home. I would not die on earth or in the sky. I would not be killed by anything which is wet, dry, weapon, human, animal, living or dead.' When he was granted this wish, he felt invincible and told every one that they should worship him instead of Lord Vishnu.

Hirnakashipu's young son Prahlad continued to do Bhakti (devotion) of Lord Vishnu against the wishes of his father, who then tried to kill him in so many ways, but failed.

'Where is your God?' asked his father. 'He is every where', answered Prahlad. Becoming very angry, Prahlad's father, king Hirnakashipu, heated up an iron pole until it was red hot and told his son to embrace it. 'You say that your god is every where, then he must be in this red hot pole too.'



Prahlad was scared but overcame his fear after he saw row of ants going up the pole. As he embraced the pole, there was a mighty thunder and the pole split open. Lord Narshimha (Half man and half lion) appeared from the pole, roared angrily as he leapt on Hirnakashipu and held him on his knee on the door step. 'I can not be killed, I have the boon', said Hirnakashipu.

Lord Narshimha reminded him that it was evening and so it was neither day nor night. He was held on his knee in the doorway. He will be killed by claws which are not living or dead, wet or dry, living or dead. Lord Narshimha who was neither man nor animal, roared angrily and killed Hirnakashipu. But afterward Lord Narshimha was still raging and roaring. Every one was scared and tried to calm him, but he was still very angry.



Then they requested Prahlad to try and calm him. Prahlad said prayers and calmed Lord Narshimha. God does not like anyone persecuting his devotees.

Prahlad was not scared because he had bhakti (devotion). Bhakti enables us to get through difficult times without fear.

Question: Why don't we recognise the Mahima or 'greatness' of God, even though we do religious activities and regularly go to temple?



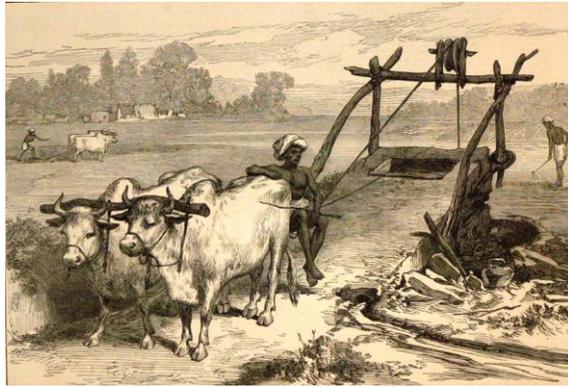
Answer (by Mahapurush Swami): When we constantly think about the greatness of God and all the things God kindly provides for us, then we would recognise his greatness. If someone kidnaps your wife, kills your mother or burns down your house, you would think about getting your revenge. This thought would be very intense. This is the kind of constant intensity we should have when we reflect on the greatness and kindness of God.



We should think about how he gives us life and provides for all our basic needs such as food, clothes and other material things. You should constantly contemplate the greatness of God and not just whenever you go to temple.

In the olden days, people used to get water from the well, using a rope which when pulled, rubs against the stone. If they use the rope every day, then there will be deep impression in the stone. Similarly, when we constantly think and meditate on the greatness of God, we would recognise his Mahima.

Nilkanth Varni (The incredible journey of Lord Swaminarayan)



Nilkanth Varni was travelling through a great forest. After some time, he came upon a village. On the outskirts of the village there was a well. There the lord went to drink water. At the same place there was also a farmer getting water out of the well by using a kos (A very large leather bag pulled by bullocks).

The lord said, 'I am thirsty, I want to drink water. If you have a rope, can you give it to me, so I can pull up water using my pot. I don't drink water from a kos because it is made of leather.'

The farmer said, 'A lot of people come and drink water here. If you don't drink water from a kos then at least you should keep a rope with your pot.' Nilkanth said, 'I will show you how to get the water out without using a rope. At that moment the water from the well had started to rise.'

As Nilkanth reached out in the well with the pot, the water from the well overflowed and Nilkanth filled his pot with water. After Nilkanth had filled the pot, the water in the well went back to the previous level. Nilkanth filtered the water with a piece of cloth, offered it to Shaligram (Lord in the form of a stone) and drank it.

People were amazed after seeing his powers and thought that this child brahmchari (celibate) is divine. They bowed to him and said you are not an ordinary yogi but parameshwar (the supreme controller) himself.

A smashing thought

A rich businessman was in his brand new car, driving through a deprived area of the town. There were many children playing in the street and not watching the traffic properly. He slowed down, in case a child ran in front of his car. He noticed something coming towards the car from the side. It was too late to stop when he realised it was a brick. It smashed the side of his new car. Slamming on the brakes, he jumped out of the car and spotted a boy on the pavement. He grabbed the boy and shouted angrily, 'Why did you do that? That is a brand new car and someone is going to pay for the damage.' The man was shaking with anger. The boy said, 'I'm sorry sir. I needed help and did not know what to do. I tried to stop the cars so that the people can help me, but no one was stopping and so I threw the brick.'

The boy was crying now and pointed behind a parked car. 'My brother has fallen from his wheelchair and is badly hurt. I can't get him up. Could you please help me', said the boy.

The man calmed down and helped to get the boy's handicapped brother back into the wheelchair.

'Thank you sir, God bless you', said the boy.

'I'm sorry I shouted at you son', he said. He went back to his car and looked at the very noticeable dent in the side of his car. He never repaired the dent. He kept the dent because it would remind him of the very important lesson he learnt from it.

Do not rush so fast through your life that people have to throw bricks to ask for help.

Jaadish Gorasia, Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff





Akhand Var (Eternal Husband)



Akhand Var (Eternal Husband)

Continued from Issue 19

The great King of Ujjain, Bharthari, had many wives. Raja (king) Bharthari was intensely in love with his newly wed youngest wife, Pingala. He neglected his kingly duties and spent most of his time with her. King Bharthari composed the famous Shringar Shatak (100 verses praising and describing the pleasures of women) after his encounter with queen Pingala.

A Brahmin in his kingdom had attained a fruit of immortality from a Kalpavruksh (wish fulfilling tree). He presented it to Raja Bharthari, who would benefit from the long life, enabling him to help and protect his people.

Raja Bharthari gave the fruit of immortality to his favourite wife Pingala, whom he loved immensely. Pingala gave the fruit to the head of the stables, who she was having an affair with. The horse-keeper in turn gave the fruit to a prostitute he was in love with. The prostitute, like the Brahmin, understood the importance of the fruit and thought it would benefit the King who was a wise and just ruler.

Raja Bharthari realised that it was the same fruit he had gifted to queen Pingala. He suddenly realised that his married life was worthlessness and immediately turned his back on worldly life, became a sadhu (holy man) and accepted Bhagwan as his eternal Pati (husband).

He wrote the Niti Shatak at that point, in which he describes correct behaviour and political science.

He said that the person he was devoted to, was detached from him and desired another who in turn desired yet another. Shame on them all and Madan (God of love). Shame on all the worldly pleasures and on me too, for indulging in them.

In this way Raja Bharthari became Saint Bharthari and devoted his love to Bhagwan instead of worldly pleasures.

He wrote the Vairagya Shatak which says that there are only two ways one can live; indulge (in worldly pleasures) or take to asceticism. Saint Bharthari underscores our efforts in trying to indulge in worldly pleasures and desire eternal peace with Parmatma who is the only true companion of the atman (soul).

In this way Bharthari wrote the Shataktraya (trilogy of 100 verses) which shows a person's transformation from a pleasure loving King to a Saint who was devoted to Bhagwan.

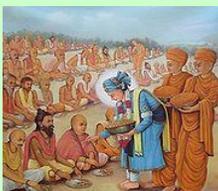


To be continued...

Haribhakta - Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

Question: Who is a true Satsangi?

Answer (by Mahapurush Swami): In Vachnamrut Gadhda madhyam prakran 54, Shreeji Maharaj (Lord Swaminarayan) said that in Shimad Bhagvad 11th skundh, Krishna said to Udhav that satsang is greater than doing other things such as doing yagna, tap (penance) or giving charity. (A Satsangi is the devotee who associates and follows the teachings of God, Saints and wise people). If we think of the Satsangis as our own and thinking of them as souls, not finding any faults and disregarding any of their short comings, then we are true Satsangis. If a saint or a devotee tells us off for something, we should not have any ill feelings towards them and regard them as one of our associates.



If our tongue is accidentally bitten by our teeth, then we don't punish the teeth and break them, but think of them as ours. The thinking towards saints and devotees should be similar. They should be regarded as 'our own'.

Lord Swaminarayan gave an example of a king who had son at the age of sixty. The young prince did lots of mischief and caused lots of trouble but the king still loved him very much. We should have similar feelings and behaviour towards other Satsangis.

Eleven Niyams – Rules or Laws (Continued)

'Kalank na koiku lagat..' by Premanand Swami.



Niyam Eight

'Kalank na koiku lagat...'
Do not falsely accuse anyone.



'Kalank' means to slander or wrongly blame someone. If you don't know someone properly and say that, 'He is a thief', without knowing the facts, then this is kalank. You should never say such things.

In the scriptures, the speech is said to have four 'Dosh' or flaws. God has given us a tongue and we can commit four types of sins with it. Firstly, to speak lies and secondly to swear or use bad language. Thirdly, to gossip, tell tales and spread rumours, which can lead to arguments between people. The fourth is to say sarcastic remarks which could give immense stress to someone and could even lead them to commit suicide.

From these four sins, the sin of falsely blaming someone is the worst one. (This also classed as 'telling lies'). If we tell someone to give false evidence against somebody, then this is a sin and consequently we would not attain a happy life.

If you know that someone has committed a sin, then call them privately and tell them that, 'This is not good for you. I will not tell anyone else but you must not do it again'. You can tell him that much for his own good. In relation to the characteristics of a saint, Niskulanand swami says that a saint 'hides the known faults of others for the good of that soul'.

A true devotee should not falsely accuse or blame anyone. They must control their speech. In any field in our lives, if we wish to be happy, then we must control our speech.

There is a story in Up-Puran. Once there were four young Brahmins who were returning back to their village after becoming scholars in Kashi. At that time Brahmins were well respected. Wherever they went, they received food and lodgings with much respect. They came to the outskirts of a village. The 'Seth' (rich person) of the village saw them and asked, 'Where are you coming from?' The Brahmins replied, 'We are returning home after graduating from Kashi. Seth requested, 'Please come to my house for resting and some food.' The Brahmins insisted to stay outside the village and so the Seth gave them ingredients for cooking their own food. The Brahmins accepted and cooked a meal under a tree. For some reason unknown to them, the food got poisoned. When the Brahmins ate the food, they all died.

Now, there was a dilemma for Yamraj (Devta of Death). Who would be responsible for the untimely death of the young Brahmins. The Seth is innocent because he only gave the ingredients. The Brahmins ate the food without knowing that the food was poisoned. Yamraj went to Lord Shiva and told him about his problem.

'This is the first case like this and I have not heard anything like it before.' Said Lord Shiva.

They both went to Lord Vishnu and asked for his guidance. Lord Vishnu said, 'Lets all go there and sort it out.' The three of them disguised themselves as ordinary people and went to where the brahmins were being cremated by the villagers. They mingled with the crowd and listened to their conversations. One of the young men was saying to the others, 'Did you know this? It is the plotting of the Seth! He is that type of a person. He goes around acting innocent, but he must have had some quarrel with the young Brahmin's parents and so he must have poisoned them. We all live in this village so we can't say anything but he is the culprit.'

'Give the sin of killing the four Brahmins to this young man', Said Lord Vishnu. This was the fruit of falsely accusing someone who was innocent.

If you don't know the facts, then do not be hasty to give judgement. People have great desire to give their opinions, and give them often. If you don't know what has happened then do not be hasty to say anything.

Based on an article by: *Sashtri Swami Harikeshavdas*

Veg Fruit of the month: Tomato



Tomatoes are often thought to be a vegetable, but actually they are a citrus fruit. Tomatoes are very versatile food. They are delicious eaten raw, in salads or sandwiches. They have an astonishing sweetness when cooked. They have high acid content and so is a perfect food for canning.

Types

There are hundreds of varieties of tomatoes of all colours and sizes.

Here are some of the most popular ones:

Standard – the 'normal' tomato, spherical in shape and about an inch to one and a half in diameter.

Plum – the firm fleshed oval shaped tomato which tend to store well as bottled or canned and they freeze well.

Cherry – a small version of the normal tomato. Often from dwarf bush types.

Beefsteak – a large version of the normal tomato which takes longer to mature.

Marmande – very tasty large irregular shaped tomato.

Oxheart – cone shaped tomato, is usually firm with good flavour.



History

Tomatoes first arrived in Europe in the 16th Century. Some believe that they came from South America. The first cultivated tomatoes were yellow cherry-sized variety and hence were named golden apples.

Health Benefits

❖ Reduce the Risk of Heart Disease

Tomatoes contain some important nutrients, such as vitamin B6, folate and niacin, that help with the reduction of heart disease risk. A study has found that women who eat 7 to 10 servings of tomato products each week has a 29 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease than the women who ate less than one and a half serving of tomato products per week. The results were more remarkable when the women ate oil-rich tomato products.

❖ Protect against Cancer

Many studies have shown that the more tomatoes people eat the lower their risks of certain cancers, such as stomach, lung and prostate cancers. Tomatoes contain a substance called lycopene, which gives it red colour, is believed to be the reason for this cancer defending effect. Processed tomatoes have more lycopene than raw ones. The process of cooking breaks down the cell walls which help to release the lycopene. Lycopene is better absorbed by the body when it is eaten together with a little bit of fat, such as olive oil.

❖ Prevent DNA Damage

Tomatoes are high in important antioxidants such as vitamin A and C, which work to prevent DNA damage from free radicals. Subsequently, tomatoes may help to defend against age related diseases such as diabetes and atherosclerosis.

❖ Ward off Inflammation

Another study has found that drinking a glass of tomato juice everyday can reduce blood levels of TNF-alpha by 34 percent. TNF-alpha causes inflammation. High levels have been found in people with chronic and degenerative diseases such as cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's and osteoporosis.

❖ Protect Against Thrombosis (blood clots in the blood vessel)

Drinking 8 ounces of tomato juice every day reduces platelet aggregation considerably. It is more beneficial to drink low-sodium tomato juice if you are trying to protect against thrombosis, as high sodium levels can have opposite effects for this type of disease.

How to spot the best ones

To tell if a tomato is fresh, the smell should be slightly aromatic and the stalk leaves should look fresh and green. Most of the tomato scent comes from the leaves and stem and not the fruit itself. This is why vine tomatoes have a stronger smell.

Because tomatoes are a sub-tropical fruit, they should be stored at room temperature. Storing them in the fridge reduces their flavour. Over-ripe tomatoes go soft more quickly in the refrigerator.

To ripen tomatoes, place them in a paper bag with a ripe tomato and keep at room temperature.

Sonal Patel, Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

Festivals and Holy days – May 2012

Narsimha Jayanti – 4th May



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Ekadashi

Mohini Ekadashi – Wednesday 2nd May 2012

Apara Ekadashi – Wednesday 16th May 2012

Nirjala/Bhim Ekadashi – Friday 1st June 2012

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

The Brahmin's gift

Once there lived a Brahmin in a village. He used to perform religious ceremonies. One day, a rich man gave him a cow for his service. The Brahmin started to bring the cow to his home. On the way, three scoundrels saw the Brahmin bringing the cow. They were lazy and wanted to cheat the Brahmin so that they could take away the cow. They hatched a plan.



The first crooked person approached the Brahmin and asked, 'Are you a washer man that you're pulling a donkey.' The Brahmin was annoyed at being mistaken for a washer man.

He carried on walking. A little later he was met by the second of the scoundrels.

The second person asked him why being a Brahmin he needed to pull a pig. Now the Brahmin was confused but he went on.



Some time later he was met by the third person who asked him why he was pulling along a wild beast. Now the Brahmin was totally confused and also afraid. He thought that it was a bewitched animal which took different forms. Being scared, he ran away, leaving the cow behind. The three tricksters laughed at the Brahmin at having been cheated.

Moral: Believe your own eyes before you believe what you hear from others.

