

**SHREE SWAMINARAYAN
TEMPLE CARDIFF**(Under Shree Nar Narayan Dev
Temple, Bhuj Kutch)

Satsang e-Letter™

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Jay Swaminarayan

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Ratha Yatra

Rath Yatra or chariot journey is a festival which is observed all over India and in some other parts of the world by Hindus. The festival originated in Jagannath Puri in the state of Orissa, India. The festival is associated with Lord Jagannath (Lord Krishna) and celebrates his journey to his aunt's residence, accompanied by his brother, Balram and sister, Subhadra.

The word Jagannath comes from the two sanskrit words Jagan (world) and Nath (master). Puri is one of the Chaar Dham (four sacred abodes) namely Badrinath, Dwarka, Jagannath Puri, and Rameshwaram. These are the most important Hindu pilgrimage places. It is believed that you attain salvation if you make pilgrimage to these four places. Jagannath Puri is visited by thousands of pilgrims all the year round, but the time of the Ratha Yatra is regarded as most auspicious.

In Jagannath Puri, Orissa, it goes on for ten days. Here it is one of the biggest Chariot festivals, attracting a world famous crowd of up to two million people comprising of pilgrims, devotees and tourists. It is celebrated each year and has been celebrated for thousands of years. From the Puri temple, wooden idols of Lord Krishna, Balram and Subhadra are taken out on procession in huge, beautifully decorated chariots. People get up early on this day and pray to Lord Jagannath (Lord Krishna). The long ropes of the chariots are pulled, in turns, by millions of devotees.

The procession ends at the temple of Gundicha, where the idols are installed for a week. At the end of the week, they are brought back to the Puri temple in another procession, called the phera ratha yatra. On this day, it is a public holiday in Orissa where everyone celebrates by preparing special dishes and sweets. Buildings are decorated with lights and rangolis. It is also a time for thanksgiving, since the festival is in monsoon season.



Nilkanth Varni (The incredible journey of Lord Swaminarayan)

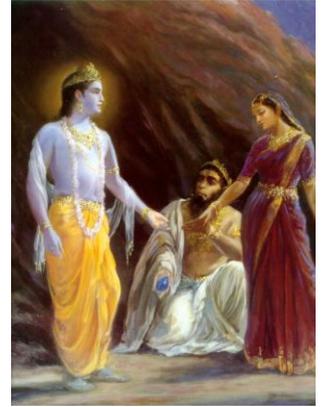


Travelling through dense jungle, Nilkanth comes to the town of Bakurpur where Jeramdas lived. When Jeramdas saw Nilkanth, he said, 'Please come to my house and accept some food.' Seeing his affection, Nilkanth accepted his invitation and went to his house for dinner.

On Nilkanth's request, Jeramdas, together with his friend Krishna Tambodi went to a nearby lake. On the way, they saw a big black bear, which was growling and standing in their way. Jeramdas said, 'Don't go any further, the bear will kill us.' Nilkanth kept walking towards the bear. Jeramdas and his friend quickly climbed a nearby tree and watched Nilkanth and the bear as they stood face to face with each other. Nilkanth said something to the bear and the bear did a strange thing. It seemed to bow down to Nilkanth Varni and returned to the deep jungle.

'We thought the bear would kill you, what did you say to the bear?' Jamnadas enquired as he came running to Nilkanth. 'This was Jambuvan who served Lord Krishna but he has not attained salvation yet. I told him that in his next life, he will be born as a human. He will meet up with me again and achieve salvation after becoming a good devotee'. Jeramdas knew then, that this was no ordinary boy but was the Lord himself. The whole village knew about Nilkanth's miracle and came to see him all the time.

Next day, Nilkanth left Bakurpur without telling anyone. When Jeramdas knew that Nilkanth was gone, he came running after, trying desperately to find him, and caught up with him after twenty days. 'Please come back to our house and stay there. We are all very sad to see you go.' he said. 'I have to go to Jagannath puri, come with me.' Nilkanth said. 'No I can't leave my family' Jeramdas said, and left for home. Nilkanth Varni continued his journey towards Jagannath puri.



Think before you act



Once there lived a potter in a village. Everyday he used his donkey to bring heavy loads of clay to make his pots. The donkey was disappointed with the food given to him by the potter. At night time the donkey secretly ate crops in the farms nearby.

On one night, the donkey was walking in a nearby farm when he met a fox. The donkey and the fox became good friends and started to meet every night to look for food together. Once after eating fresh and great tasting tomatoes the donkey was extremely happy.

He told the fox he was excited and wanted to show his happiness by singing. The fox replied, 'Don't be stupid. If you start singing, someone will hear you and beat us with sticks'. The donkey was still eager to sing and said, 'Singing makes me happy and healthy. I don't care what happens, I will sing a song.' The fox told him that his voice did not sound good but the donkey thought that the fox was jealous.

As the donkey started to sing, the fox said, 'Wait a minute, before you start let me jump over the fence so I am safe.' The fox decided to wait outside the farm.

The farmer woke up after hearing the donkey making noise. He picked up a stick and walked up to the field. The farmer found the donkey and beat him with the stick. The donkey was badly injured and just about managed to limp to the fox waiting outside.

The fox looked at the donkey and said, 'I am sorry to see you like this. I had already warned you but you didn't listen.' The donkey realised his mistake and was sorry for ignoring the good advice of the fox.



Akhand Var (Eternal Husband)



Continued from Issue 20

Kadraj Muni became completely detached from worldly pleasures and got attached to the one and only eternal God. He became totally devoted to God as his only companion and master. Kadraj Muni did not have any desires and wanted nothing in return for his devotion to Akhand var.

A husband fulfils all the needs of his wife; she does not need to ask him for anything. In the same way, Kadraj Muni had firm faith in Bhagwan and hence whatever difficulty he may face, Bhagwan would protect him.

Kadraj Muni attained Bhagwan after lots of penance. In Swaminarayan sampraday, we are very lucky to have attained Bhagwan, not by doing any penance but by becoming a true devotee (Satsangi). In our case, Lord Swaminarayan has taken the first step to make the Jeev (soul) his eternal companion, just as a husband would take the first step when he sends the chundri (proposal for marriage) to the proposed girl.

In this instance Bhagwan has actually come to take the jeev in the way of a Gandharva lagna (Love Marriage). Bhagwan has saved the jeev from his senses and inner enemies who were against the jeev uniting with Bhagwan, just as a bridegroom would take the bride away from her family members.

In the kirtan 'Var Nand Lal varu...' Bhramanand swami says that, 'I will marry the son of Nand (Krishna, God) and ignore the jealousy of ignorant people. I will not be scared of anyone and back off because I have got affection for the Lord. If I do get married, I will marry Purushotam (God) as my husband otherwise I will die a spinster. I will give up my head and die for my Lord.'

Bhramanand swami talks about marrying or uniting with God. He has such strong affection towards God that nothing would stop him. We need to take inspiration from this kirtan and take steps to attain God.

We can make God our eternal husband by having affection towards him and totally surrendering to him. This marriage is spiritual and no thought of lust comes into it. Our love towards God would grow daily and it would keep us on the correct path of Dharma when we think of Bhagwan as our husband. In troubled times, we would get protected by God as he fulfils his duties of a husband towards us, even if we don't ask for his help, and the jeev would attain salvation.



Haribhakta - Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

Question: Do we have to do the mansi puja* five times a day or is just doing kirtan bhakti and listening to katha the same?

Answer (by Mahapurush Swami): It is essential to do mansi puja every day and kirtan and katha are not sufficient on their own. We must do mansi puja where we serve Bhagwan daily and this helps to increase our love towards him.

Mansi puja is essential to our soul as is food for our body. Water alone is not sufficient and similarly, bhakti alone is not enough.



**(Mansi Puja is the mental worship of God, by meditating on his form whilst imagining that we are carrying out and helping the Lord in performing his daily activities. The activities carried out in our meditation depend on the time of the day. For example, if it is morning, then the activities would be waking Bhagwan, bathing him, doing arti, feeding him etc. At night time we would imagine getting him ready for bed etc.)*

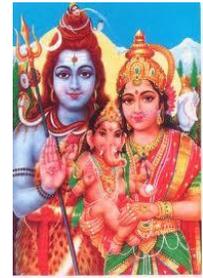
Eleven Niyams – Rules or Laws (Continued)

'Nindat nahi koi Devku..' by Premanand Swami.



Niyam Nine

'Nindat nahi koi Devku...'
Do not falsely criticise any Deity...



The ninth rule – 'Do not criticise any Deity..'

The Swaminarayan sect is known for its non-prejudice towards other religions. We should never criticise any deity. Lord Swaminarayan said that if you come across any temple such as Shiv temple etc. then pay your respect by putting your hands together with respect. Believe in Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh, Parvati and Sun because they are worthy of worship.

Narayan and Shiva are one. Lord Swaminarayan has talked about non-prejudice towards other religions. Which ever deity someone has faith in, we should not criticise them.

Once there were some youngsters gathered in a village. They saw an old man who was very thin and could hardly walk. Most of the young men started to make fun of the old man. 'Look at that old man, he would fly off if there was slight wind', one them saying. One youngster just sat quietly and said nothing. 'Why aren't you saying anything?' one youngster asked him. 'He is my grandfather', he replied.

It is similar with the deities. If you say that 'Shiva is like this and Vishnu is like that', then who ever has faith towards that deity will feel bad.



This is why non-prejudice towards other deities and faiths is one of the important good characteristics we should have. In Shrimad Bhagvad Gita, Lord Krishna says, 'I accept the devotion of anyone who believes in any deity with true faith'. Lord Swaminarayan once said to the saints, 'If you come upon any difficulties, then you could even bow down and pray to a bundle of green grass and I will protect you. I will reside in the grass and protect you'. God is present every where and this is why the devotees should not criticise and say anything bad about any other deities.

Based on an article by: *Sashtri Swami Harikeshavdas*

You have got to laugh....



Start them young



Best seats are at the front



He should stop acting like a banker

Veg of the Month: Courgettes

The courgette, which is often known as 'zucchini', is a member of the *cucurbita* family and is one of the most versatile vegetables. It can be grilled, steamed, grated into salads, stuffed, pureed and used in soups.

Types:

There are many different varieties of courgette available, but the most popular is the green variety.

You can also find delicious golden courgettes during summer, which have a firmer texture and retain their beautiful yellow colour even after they have been cooked.

Another interesting variety is the round courgette, also known as the 'De Nice a Rond Fruit'. The shape of this courgette means that it is ideal for stuffing with fillings such as couscous or rice.



Courgette Flowers:

The flowers of courgettes can also be eaten. They are made up of mostly water, but still have a distinct flavour to them. Courgette flowers are a common delicacy in Italy, where they often use them in salads as a garnish and even as a topping on pizzas. A great way to cook the flowers is to stuff them with seasoned ricotta cheese, dip them in batter and deep-fry them.



Health benefits:

Courgettes are one of the lowest calorie vegetables around and are great to eat when on a diet and aiming to lose weight. They are packed full of fibre, folates and potassium, which helps to reduce blood pressure, and loaded with vitamin C and B-vitamins.

How to pick the best ones:

The best courgettes are the smaller, brighter green ones. Pick courgettes that have smooth, shiny skin and are very firm. If they are slightly rubbery or spongy then this means they have been picked quite a while ago and are starting to get old.

To store them, wrap them in paper and keep refrigerated. This will help to keep them fresh, and will last a lot longer as a result.

Sonal Patel, Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Cardiff

Festivals and Holy days – June 2012

Jal Yatra – 4th June

Ratha Yatra – 22st June



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Ekadashi

Bhim Ekadashi – Friday 1st June 2012

Yogin Ekadashi – Friday 15th June 2012

Dev Shayani Ekadashi – Friday 30th June 2012

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

Shravan's tale

Shravan was a young man who looked after his old parents, who were both blind. He had dedicated all his life to care for his parents and fulfil their wishes.

One day his parents told him that they wanted to go on a pilgrimage. Shravan made a kavad, two baskets joined by a pole which could be carried on his shoulder.



Shravana set off on the long journey, carrying his parents in the baskets of the kavad. He took his parents to all the holy places of pilgrimage on the way. Sometimes Shravan got very tired carrying the weight of the kavad and his parents, but he carried on regardless because he knew that it was his duty to carry out the wishes of his parents.

On one hot sunny day, his parents became very thirsty and needed to drink some water urgently. Shravan took a pot he carried and went off to look for water. Soon, he came to the Sarayu River and started to fill his pot with water. Suddenly there was a whistling sound and an arrow hit him in the chest, causing him to cry out in agony and fall on the ground.



Dashrath, the prince of Ayodhya was out hunting and had shot the arrow, mistaking Shravan for a deer. 'I am sorry, I was hunting and mistook you for a deer', said Dashrath, the prince of Ayodhya. 'Who are you?' Shravan managed to tell the prince who he was and that he needed to get water to his blind parents. 'Please promise me that you will give water to my parents and look after them,' Shravan pleaded as he drew his last breath and died. 'I promise', said the prince.

Prince Dashrath took the pot of water and found Shravana's parents. He handed the pot to Shravan's mother and silently stood by. 'Who are you?' she said, 'You are not our Shravan.' Dashrath found it extremely difficult to speak but after long time, told them who he was and what had happened. He said that he will look after them as promised. Shravan's parents refused his help and said, 'We wish to die after losing our son and you will meet similar fate at end of your life. You too will die when you are separated from your son.'



Many years later, when Dashrath was separated from his son, Lord Ram, he saw on the wall of his palace, the vision of what had happened that day when he had shot Shravana. He too met the same fate as Shravan's parents and died.

No matter who they may be, everyone has to suffer the consequences of their deeds (karma).