

March 2009

Following the Footsteps...

Volume 2, Issue 3

Upcoming festivals:

- April 3: Ram Navami
- April 9: Hanuman Jayanti
- April 13: Baisakhi

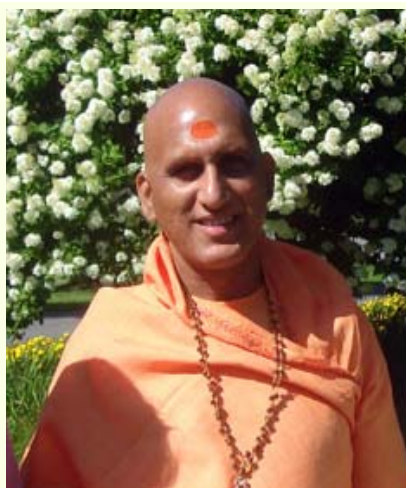
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Prabhu Premi Sangh Newsletter



Reflections from Pujya Swamiji's Diary...



Inspiring pearls of wisdom from the diary of Pujya Acharya Sri....

**Dear Prabhu Premi,
Prabhu bless you.**

God is omnipresent. He is present in each and every particle. Feel God's presence within you at all times. Think that, "I am God, and God is Mine". Give up attachments to sense objects and engage the mind in Him alone.

Nothing in the world is agreeable or disagreeable; everything is an act and work of God. Whatever is taking place every minute, consider it to be the cosmic play (Lila) of God and be fearless. The basis of happiness lies in continuous remembrance of God and constant repetition of His name. Keep remembering God at all times.

With blessings,

Swami Avdhesanand Giri.

Newsletter Summary



Hari Om.

Marking the onset of spring, the nine holy nights of the Vasant Navratri commence on March 27. In this issue, we capture this sacred festival which is dedicated to the prayer and worship of the divine power of Goddess Durga, who is the embodiment of grace and power. Navratri is an extremely holy and pious

time of the year and is the perfect time for self purification through prayer, fasting, anushtaan and sadhana (spiritual practices).

Somebody once said, "Pain is the only best thing in the world." In the article, "The hidden blessing in pain", we analyze how right thinking and an affirmative attitude can help one face the most hostile circumstances with a

smile. Spring, the harvest season, brings abundance and joy. In this issue, you will also celebrate Baisakhi and other festivals around the world that rejoice the nature that is so bountiful.

His Holiness Pujya Swamiji will continue to pursue spiritual practices and spiritual writing in solitude until May 31st. He will be in various places during this period.

Nine Nights of Devi worship (Vasant Navratri)

Just as a mother is very kind to her child, the manifestation of God as Devi (Divine Mother) symbolizes infinite grace, forgiveness, and kindness. She is the epitome of absolute power who protects man from all kinds of problems and miseries. She bestows us with the power to succeed in the material world as well as to achieve great spiritual heights. She is the supreme, cosmic energy of the Universe.

The festival of Navratri is celebrated twice a year,



once during the month of Chaitra (April-May) and then in Aswayuja (September-October). These two periods are very sacred

opportunities for worship of the Divine mother.

During the nine holy nights the three forms of Goddess i.e. Saraswati, Lakshmi and Kali are worshipped. On the first three days, Goddess Durga is worshipped by seekers for strength to overcome one's vices and to remain steadfast in spiritual practices. Worship of Goddess Lakshmi in the next three days helps one to develop a sublime, pleasant personality. When the seeker has eradicated his negative tendencies and cultivated pure and divine qualities, he is then fit to

receive Divine knowledge. Goddess Saraswati who is the endower of this knowledge is worshipped in the last three days.

The Divine Mother manifests herself in various life forms and as different noble qualities in the personality of the seeker. She also manifests as the sacred scriptures. But a more personal and unique form of her manifestation can be witnessed in the form and life of the Sat-Guru. His mantra, His love and His teachings are all manifestations of the Holy Mother.

The Hidden Blessing in Pain

Painful incidents can be a greater teacher in life than pleasurable ones. Every adversity turns our mind towards God and makes us seek refuge in Him. We must remember though that whatever God does is always "spiritually good" for us. That which is spiritually good may not always be pleasant. It may be filled with tears and sorrow and we may perceive it to be suffering. But in reality, it is those difficult situations that bring us closer to God and help us to experience His love.

Pain and pleasure are inter-linked; and both are transitory. Accordingly one must learn to calmly bear the blows of time and welcome both joy as well as sorrow. A strong willed person will find the solution even in the darkness of adversity using the torch of knowledge, the map of the Holy Scriptures and guidance of God.

Often times we think of people or situations that have left us being hurt. At such times, we should prevent ill feelings from building up in our hearts for the person who insulted or hurt us. Learning to accept pain is called "tapasya". Nourishing personal grudges and brooding over past injuries is worse than openly expressing anger. It is a chronic disease.

With the fragrance of forgiveness, turn hatred into love. Forget, forgive and move on! Martin Luther King Jr said, "Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude." That is the only way to be at peace. Do not unnecessarily waste time and energy on trivial things. Be large hearted, and learn to gain happiness from giving happiness.

Engage the mind in creative activities and keep yourself busy with an interesting

hobby or profession which gives you a sense of personal accomplishment. Selfless service (Seva) and Naam Japa are also great tonics. In this Kalyuga, satsang and kirtan is the easiest and most certain route to the path of happiness.

Treat hardships as a blessing in disguise. Meditation and spiritual practices will give the mind strength and help the seeker to develop positive discrimination and correct understanding. Be calm and peaceful in the most hostile situations. Do not associate yourself with your negative qualities or habits. Be humble, but not meek.

When the mind is trained to perceive problems positively and as opportunities for growth, the same circumstances that made us miserable, angry and bitter can prove to be instrumental in shaping our

inner personality and revealing our divine qualities. All that we need is the courage to bravely face the difficulties in life. Always keeps the flame of hope burning in your heart.

Paulo Coelho in his book 'The Alchemist' wrote: "People are afraid to pursue their most important dreams because they feel they don't deserve them or that they'll be unable to achieve them. Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself".

"Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them, but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them, and try to follow where they lead". -Louisa May Alcott.

Baisakhi-“Jatta Aai Baisakhi!”

Baisakhi is one of the major festivals and the most significant holidays in the Sikh calendar. The religious significance is tied to the establishment of Panth-Khalsa (the order of the Pure Ones) in 1699. Guru Gobind Singh Ji baptized the first Sikhs using ‘amrit’ (sweet nectar) to declare them Singhs, a martial community. By doing so, he eliminated the differences of high and low and established that all humans are equal.



After the Baisakhi Day in 1699, the tradition of Gurus was discontinued, and the Granth Sahib was declared

the eternal guide of the Sikhs. To mark the auspicious occasion, devotees take a bath in the holy river, and participate in the day long prayers and activities at the Gurudwara. This is followed by Karah prasad and Guru Ka langar (community lunch).

Farmers in Punjab and Haryana celebrate Baisakhi with utmost joy and enthusiasm as this festival marks the time for the harvest of Rabi (winter) crops. Farmers thank God for the bountiful crop and pray for good times ahead. People buy new clothes, and make merry by feasting on festive food, singing, and dancing to ‘bhangra’ and ‘gidda’. As a harvest festival, Baisakhi is celebrated in different parts of India by different

names: Rongali Bihu in Assam, Naba Barsha in Bengal, Puthandu in Tamil Nadu, Vishu in Kerala, Vaishakha in Bihar, Maha Visuba Sangkranti in Orissa, and Pohela Boishakh in Bengal. Additionally, there is usually a huge parade/celebration in India.

In the United States, there is a parade a few days after Vaisakhi. In Manhattan, New York City there is a very huge parade where many people come out to do seva (religious work) such as giving out free food, and completing any other labor needed to be done. The local Sikh community in Vancouver and Surrey, British Columbia, Canada holds its annual Vaisakhi celebrations in the April long weekend, which often includes a nagar kirtan, or parade, in which an estimated 200,000 people



attend. The day of Baisakhi is of significance for the Hindus as this was the day in 1875 that Swami Dayanand Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj – a reformed sect of Hindus who are devoted to the Vedas for spiritual guidance. Also, Baisakhi day is of relevance for the Buddhists as Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment and nirvana on this day. For this reason, the day of Baisakhi is celebrated as “Buddha Purnima” in several parts of India.

FUN FACT!



Based on the astrological event of the sun beginning its northward journey, other countries/ cultures/ religions that follow the solar calendar mark this special day in special ways. Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, China and Thailand celebrate this as their New Year. The Thai New Year, called “Songkran” (from Mesh “Sankranti”), falls on April 13 and the celebrations last for three days. It is celebrated by throwing of water to relieve the heat in the peak of summer season. People roam the streets with water gun or other containers on their trucks, or post themselves on curbsides with water hose and drench each other and passersby (same idea as our version of Holi). Besides the fun part, people go to the temple and pray. They pour water mixed with fragrance on Buddha images. It is believed that this brings good luck and prosperity. The water symbolizes washing all of the bad so people use this opportunity to clean their house and their souls (with prayers and New Year resolutions). In many places, there are beauty and talent pageants or parades.

Straight from the Heart- Mr. Prem Kumar



I still remember! It was 21st January 2001, 8' O Clock in the morning and I was on my way to appear for my IIT JEE entrance. I was praying to God (My God is Maa Durga) for my entrance. While passing by, I found a poster picturing a sansyasi and written below, "Srimad Bhagwat Katha by Pujyasri". The whole universe stalled for me for a moment when I saw the face on the poster, so calm, so serene, tranquil, yet so vibrant & so full of life, colorful, yet beyond the colors of life (vairagya).

Well! The poster was a little worn out. I could not see the name written below the photo, but could make out the venue & timings of that particular satsang. I know that even if I write it 1000 times with 1000 different words and 1000 different ways I won't be able to explain what was I was experiencing at that moment.

It was like those two miraculous eyes, that wide forehead and that child-like smile with a lot of love fell on me, as if the face on that poster suddenly got alive and the magician therein squeezed the life-element from my body and I passed by that poster life-less or maybe I took true life-element from there and got reincarnated that very moment.

No, no no! I am not that big a theist, not a strict follower of religion or God (Though not even an atheist) a typical, logical, methodical, scientific modern youth who enjoys movies, masti, parties, yet follows (knows & understands) Bharatiya

Samskruti. Nothing so spiritual in me. However that was a moment of transformation in me. And it's so strange that all this happened in not more than a few seconds.

My Papa and I had talked about the "thirst" for diksha before. He said, "There is no point drinking unless your thirst tears your throat apart." The day had come when I felt thirsty for a Guru, a spiritual guide.

I still remember the first time I saw Gurujee in his typical bhagwa attire, a big tilak on the forehead shining much brighter than the daylight sun...so vibrant...so powerful...yet so contained within himself...And the first few words "Namaste sada vatsale matrubhumi, twaya hindubhumi sukham vardhitoham" I just can not express his voice, then he said "Bharat Mata ki Jai".

Then what happened to me for next 4-5 days, I can not explain. I do not have words to express those feelings, emotions, and experiences. My Mom told me "He looks like he is from our family".

I believe in God as a Mother. That is how I know her, she is my Maa- Durga, Ambika, Kaali. I had thought earlier that she is my Guru, and I will learn the lessons of eternity from her. But now there is someone who has suddenly come into my life, my consciousness, who is not fading away from my mind, He has captured every essence, every corner of my mind, I just cannot forget him... day & night...morning, evening he

is living within me while I am eating, sleeping, studying...I actually am enjoying his very presence. I start disliking everything else. No movies, no playing around, no friends, no girlfriends, nothing... my entire life has come to one singularity and he is at the very core of this singularity. I went to our Puja ghar. I asked Durga Maa "What should I do now?" She indicated, "I have sent him to you. He will guide you. I am sending you to your Guru."

I waited a whole full year for him to come again to Jamshedpur and took diksha on 1st of January 2002. We were around 40-50 people attending diksha samskar. He came in the middle, and said, "I am giving you the mantra... your Guru mantra....this will always be with you."

And then he gave a promise to us, the eternal promise, the promise of eternity. He said "Whenever you need me, wherever you are, in whatever circumstances. call me, remember me. I shall always come to rescue you, to fight for you, to stand by you, and to show you the right path.....I will never let you fail, never let you be down, be helpless. I am there, always always for you....."

I do not know how many people could conceive what he said and how many could recognize the potency of that voice. But I know what he promised, its true sense I know, he meant it.

And now after 9 years, I can proclaim that I am the

testimony of that eternal promise. I am the evidence of his truthfulness and his all-pervading strength (samarthya). I am the testimony that my beloved Gurujee has kept his promise. Not just once, but innumerable times. All the changes that have taken place in my life, in these nine years.....what I was before I saw him, and what I am today... It is not a miracle... perhaps the mother of all miracles....yet now when I look back, I realize that it was sure to happen, he had to come to my life....

I am sure, I always was, even before I met him, that I always had him in me, so what if I am weak, so what if I am wicked, so what if I am not more than just an ordinary human being like billions of others, so what if there is nothing so special in me.

He will make me special, he will make me stronger, he will make me eligible. Even before I saw him, even before I was born, I know he was there with me, he is with me today and I know he will be around me, within me - for eternity, even when I die....even after that...in my eternal journey...until I am ripen enough that he assimilates me in him.



Readers are welcome to contribute their personal experiences and anecdotes. Please email your article to: prabhupremisanghnews@gmail.com.



Ecological Balance (Part 2) -Swami Anand Giri Ji

(Continued from previous issue)

Rigveda says:-

Paritrayanai sadhunam vinashaya che dushkritam
Dharma sansthapnarthai sambhavami yuge-yuge.

- Shrimad Bhagwat Gita, Sloka 7, Chapter - 4

Scientific and technological know-how has given mankind freehand in exploiting natural resources without having regard to the ecological considerations leading to uncontrolled deforestation, improper waste disposal, air pollution and acid rain. This has also resulted in greenhouse effect and ozone depletion endangering human life. Chernobyl nuclear leakage and the Bhopal gas disaster are glaring examples of manmade disasters.

Forests are cleared very often to utilize the area for meeting the increased requirements of farms, dwelling units and various activities. It is not only the landscape that is lost with the disappearance of forests, the deer, the tigers, the beetles, the birds, the mosses, the mushrooms and a lot of other forms of beautiful Creations of Nature are also lost. Further, with the felling of large trees the uptake of water by the soil and its release into the atmosphere is also reduced extensively affecting the rainfall.

The spurt in population and the accelerated use of natural resources are leading to depletion of natural resources. Infact, man has unduly overdrawn from nature for satisfaction of his multifarious needs, desires and tall ambitions. Apart from pollution of environment, there is noise pollution and also pollution of food arising from use of drugs, hormones, junk food and aerated water etc.

Air pollution alone is responsible for the death of millions of human beings around the world. It also adversely affects animal life and vegetation. Chronic bronchitis, breathing problems, lung cancer; Tuberculosis are results of exposure to air pollution and pesticides.

Water pollution is not only confined to pollution of river water, even lakes are not spared. A lot of industrial waste is being discharged into the lakes and rivers. Sea waters have also to cope up with pollution. There are several instances of spillage of oil, petroleum and other chemicals into the sea by the shipping carriers causing great damage to marine life.

Generally an ecological crisis occurs with the loss of capacity to accommodate and adopt when the environment or the species or a population evolves in a way not capable of coping with the disturbances that interfere with the eco-system, landscape or species survival. It may be that environmental quality degrades compared to the needs of species after a change in the abiotic factor. For instance, an increase in temperature and less significant rainfall, the atmosphere becomes unfavourable for the survival of species or a population. It may be that that situation becomes unfavorable for the quality of life of the species. Each human being is an independent unit of the eco-system as well as part of the whole. As such it becomes our responsibility to maintain harmony in all our activities individually as well as collectively and maintain ecological balance for the happy living.

Ecological crisis may take a fraction of a second or may take a million of years. The crisis may be of human origin or natural, it may relate to a species or to many species. Lastly the crisis may be local or global e.g. rise in the sea level due to global warming.

The fundamental question before the intelligentsia of the world today is whether we can allow the destruction of the environment to continue or it is still possible to check the flow of depletions by taking preventive measures?

There is need for filling gaps in the Law and lacunae in its implementation. The government is yet to develop an explicit National policy on the environment. For example lack of an integrated approach to pest control has led to re-emergence of Malaria. Excessive use of polythene and its littering by the citizens and lack of will for updating and implementation of a proper waste disposal management system by the civic authorities caused serious blockade of gutters and entire sewage system was rendered defunct during rains in Mumbai resulting in streets and houses remaining submerged in water for months adversely affecting health and hygiene of residents. The indiscriminate killing of snakes for their skins leaves no checks on the field rats adversely affecting the quantity, quality and storage of farm yields. The killing of animals for their skins, hides and food has put back the modern World to the primitive age besides posing serious threat of extinction of these and other species including mankind.

The State and the Citizens are under a fundamental obligation to protect the environment, lakes, rivers, wildlife and compassion for the creatures for maintaining an ecological balance for the ultimate survival of humanity and the Earth remaining a livable and loveable planet.

Prabhu Premi Sangh

Swamiji's Upcoming schedule

- Till 31st May 2009: Various places.



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About the Organization...

'Prabhu Premi Sangh' is founded, directed and led by His Holiness Param Pujya Swami Avdheshanand Giriji Maharaj. Sri Swamiji is the spiritual Head of the age old JunaAkhada group of saints, the biggest of the thirteen saint akhadas in the country. Swamiji has also been nominated as Member of World Council of Religions, a council of great religious leaders devoted to the noble purpose of promoting world peace and communal harmony.

His divine vision for the spiritual and social welfare of mankind and his devoted efforts in this direction, led to the formation of 'Prabhu Premi Sangh'. It has beautiful ashrams established in a divine, peaceful setting in the cities of Ambala and Haridwar, as well as numerous branches throughout India and abroad. Prabhu Premi Sangh is constantly engaged in various spiritual pursuits and programs with the mission to promote amongst society a spirit of selfless service, and impart spiritual knowledge via the study of scriptures, yoga camps, discourses and spiritual gatherings (satsang).



Please visit us online at: www.prabhupremisangh.org.



Feedback

Prabhu Premi Sangh's e-newsletter welcomes your suggestions, comments and queries. We invite you to share with us your viewpoints concerning spirituality, prayer and meditation. You can also send us your personal views, experiences with Swamiji which we will publish under the "Straight from the Heart" section. Please email us at prabhupremisanghnews@gmail.com.

"Never give up truthfulness. It is an insult to God."