

April 2009

# Following the Footsteps...

Volume 2, Issue 4

Prabhu Premi Sangh Newsletter



Reflections from Pujya Swamiji's Diary...



## Upcoming festivals:

Buddha  
Purnima: 9th  
May

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Dear Prabhu Premi,

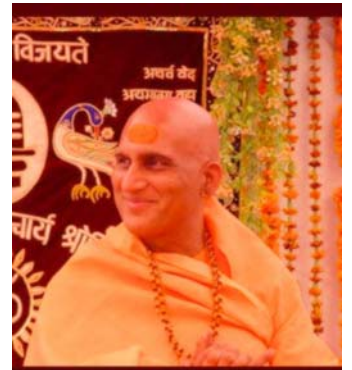
**Prabhu bless you.**

***Laziness is an enemy which hinders spiritual progress. Always remain pro- active and make best utilization of the present moment.***

***A seeker's duty is to make noble resolves and raise his consciousness to the highest level. It is possible to build a secure future only when we are engaged in continuous activity in the present. Being vigilant towards yourself, keep in mind the true purpose of life. Make best utilization of your efforts, time and energy every moment.***

***During the summer months, decide to do something positive, creative and productive.***

**With blessings,  
Swami Avdheshanand Giri**



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

## Newsletter Summary



Hari Om!

The onset of the warm weather brings rays of sunshine representing new aspirations and hope. As seasons change, so do our situations. That is how Buddha perceived life. 'Buddha Purnima', one of the most sacred festivals in the Buddhist calendar marks the three most significant

events of Gautam Buddha's life: His birth, His enlightenment and His attainment of Nirvana.

'Discipline' in various aspects of life is discussed in the current issue. Pujya Swamiji has talked about the discipline and purity of thought. Yoga, which is discipline of body and mind, is discussed in 'Health and Wellness.'

Discipline and respect of time is covered in 'Time management'. And the Srimad Bhagvad Gita explains to us the discipline of speech. Buddha was also an epitome of discipline.

Pujya Swamiji will be pursuing spiritual practices and spiritual writing in solitude until May 31<sup>st</sup> 2009.

## Great thoughts make great people

Thoughts have a profound influence on the mind. Thoughts can enable a person to achieve great heights and thoughts can also lead to his downfall. Positive thoughts elevate us and negative thoughts cause defeat. Thoughts precede our actions. Before any action, first the thought arises. Then the intellect uses its power of discrimination and makes a decision, and thereafter the act is completed.

The nature of thoughts that arise in our minds depends upon our value system and also the company we keep. A person with strong moral values will have pure and sublime thoughts. Association with holy saints and great thinkers also leads to noble and righteous thinking. Right

kind of thoughts lead to virtuous action, and virtuous actions take our life to great heights.

The influence of thoughts on our mind has a direct result on our body. Similarly, the condition of the body also influences the mind. As such, there is a deep correlation between the body and the mind. That is why in order to control the mind and instill good thoughts, it is of great importance to maintain both internal and external purity.

When a person is filled with angry thoughts, he becomes red faced, grits his teeth, clenches his fists and the mind becomes uncontrolled.

When a person is filled with thoughts of fear, his face becomes pale, and body trembles. Similarly,

perpetual thoughts of worry and anxiety lead to illness. This implies that our thoughts have an inevitable influence on us and thoughts also have a great responsibility. Therefore, in order to be happy and also let others be happy, we should entertain good thoughts.

The greatness of all great people lies in their power of positive thinking. They acted righteously in accordance with their good thoughts because of which people considered them as great.

Inculcating positive values will foster positive thoughts. Otherwise, we can build good thoughts by associating with intellectuals.

If the company of such great

people is not easily available, we can simulate their thought process by reading and imbibing biographies and other inspiring spiritual literature. In the event that this is also not possible, then we should spend time in seclusion and quietness and try to explore our own hearts. Analyzing our minds, and conversing with our inner being, we should request God to bless us with good thoughts. This will eventually lead to the cultivation of good thoughts that are capable of leading us to the zenith of success.

*(Excerpt from Pujya Swami Avdhesanand Giri Ji's "Amrit Ganga")*

## Time Management

***"Lost wealth may be replaced by industry, lost knowledge by study, lost health by medicine, but lost time is gone forever."***  
**Samuel Smiles**

Time is indeed our best resource. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "Time is money." Good time management skills are inevitable for success. Time management skills are important to people from all walks of life, like students, businessmen, corporate executives, sportsmen and homemakers. People with good time management skills have learnt to organize and budget their time effectively which has resulted in success. Time management skills help you to gain greater control over

your life and also maintain a positive work- life balance. It makes you happier, organized and stress free even in the most challenging situations.

The key to successful time management is to know what tasks are most important and prioritize so that you do not end up wasting time on the less significant things. It is essential not to focus on being constantly busy, but rather on what needs to be ultimately accomplished. A lot of people make this serious mistake, wherein they concentrate their efforts in the wrong direction. The Pareto Principle, or the '80:20 Rule' says that typically 80% of unfocused effort generates

only 20% of results.

Make a list of all tasks to be accomplished and begin with the most urgent and important ones. A student can make optimal use of his time by dealing with the most difficult subjects first and then gradually proceeding to the ones that he is comfortable with.

Identify what time of the day you are most efficient, i.e. are you a morning person, or do you work best late at night? Cultivate a habit of planning ahead for the day or for the week. Divide your life into smaller segments or phases and take one day at a time. Try to avoid procrastination and any instances of wasting time by restricting time spent on



phone calls, television, and always confirm all appointments well in advance.

Finally, don't forget to chalk out time for recreation! Be organized, but do not become a slave to a particular schedule.

## Buddha: The Enlightened One

On a full moon day during the month of May, in approx 563 B.C., was born a Sakya Prince named Siddhartha Gotama, who was destined to be a great savior of mankind. Brought up amidst royal luxury, he was not permitted to witness suffering of any kind. However, when he became curious about the world outside the palace walls, he was escorted by his attendant on four trips in



his kingdom. On the first three trips he witnessed the harsh truths of life where he saw for the first time an old crippled man, a diseased man, and a corpse. On his fourth visit, he saw a monk who had renounced all pleasures of the flesh and sought an end to suffering. This sight inspired Buddha and at the age of 29, he renounced all worldly pleasures and set out alone, in search of the Truth. After intense austerities, and unrelenting perseverance, he attained enlightenment, after which He was named Buddha, "The Enlightened One." After his enlightenment, in his first sermon, Buddha spoke

about the Four Noble truths which are of great relevance even today. These four truths are:

**Suffering exists in the world (Dukha):** During our lifespan, we witness different kinds of suffering such as physical, mental and psychological suffering. Suffering exists due to the element of change. Just like the clouds passing in the sky, situations are also subject to constant change.

**Origin of Suffering (Samudaya):** The origin of suffering lies in ignorance about the nature of the mind and its attachment to transitory things. Buddha said people experience suffering because they ignore the law of karma and do things that are harmful

to themselves and rob them of their peace of mind.

**Cessation of Suffering (Niroddha):** According to Buddha, It is possible to end this suffering by achieving Nirvana. As long as people remain ignorant about the nature of the world, they will continue to suffer from delusion. When they have attained knowledge and wisdom through scriptural study, and meditation, they understand things as they really are and can achieve freedom from suffering.

**The Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (Marga):** Buddha described the 'Noble Eightfold Path' as the way to end suffering. It is based on developing wisdom, ethical conduct and concentration.

### FUN FACT!



In Thailand, Buddha Purnima is a national holiday and is referred to as *Visakhabucha*, which comes from "*Visakh Pooja*" which implies the worship of Lord Buddha in the middle of the 6th lunar month. Buddhists regard this day as Lord Buddha's recalling Day. Common activities Buddhist do today fall on merit making: offering food to the priest in the morning; behaving themselves according to Buddhism's Five Percepts, etc. Some of them make a visit to the temple to attend sermon or practice meditation while some set birds and fish free. On this occasion, a grand religious ceremony is also held at 'Phuttha Monthon' (Buddha Mandal) in Nakhon Pathom, which is about 25 km from Bangkok where the statue of the 'Walking Buddha' is located. Here a candle lit procession is usually led by a Royal family member. Buddhists from nearby and other provinces can come to take part in the procession.

## Straight from the Heart - Ms. Dharti Pancholi



*Hari Om. I have thought several times to write to this section, but I know I am not able to write even a complete drop for an ocean like Guruji. Besides, for an introvert person like me, it is difficult to express feelings. But remembering Guruji and God, I will drop a few lines straight from my heart.*

*It was summer of 2008 when Guruji came to Sunnyvale for Bhagvat katha pravachan. His calm and strong speech along with his pure and divine personality really influenced many people including me. Although this first time, when I met him, was not too long back, I felt like this connection was established ever since. Truly, somehow we all are connected to him, like how our soul (Aatma) is connected to the divine soul (Paramaatma).*

*It was really God's blessing that brought him, a divine*

*Guru, near my place and my family was fortunate to take diksha from him.*

*On the day of diksha, we actually lost our way so could not reach the place on time. When we told him about our late arrival for diksha, he calmly arranged to give us diksha after meeting other devotees. That was really true blessings and the most wonderful experience of my life. That day, when my 6 years old daughter also took diksha from him, I was telling my mother why she did not take me to him at a young age and I had to pass several years without a divine guru. I understand without God's will and blessings, one can never attain a divine Guru like him.*

*After that, we went to meet him during the meeting time allocated for devotees. It is really amazing how much Swamiji, inspite of being*

*such a busy person, does for his disciples. Not only does he direct thousands of us to the path of realization, but also interacts with us personally. He speaks with all of us - kids, youth, elder - all diverse people. He really cares about our well being so asks how we are doing in our personal lives.*

*It is unusual though for one to even remember any problems or worries about their lives in his presence. When he is around, sitting in the same meeting or katha area, I felt so fulfilled that there is nothing remaining in life. His divine look gives that feeling of completeness. Moments with Guruji are really precious memories of my life.*

*There are so many incidents when I felt Guruji's blessings helped me from being in terrible situations. To share one, my company was going to announce layoffs for several of us.*

*Recognizing that Guruji's and God's blessings are with me, gave me magnificent stamina that I am not worried as much about my job. He really does protect us from any bad happenings. He gives us strength, patience; he gives us confidence that both God and he are with us. What he says is completely true that he is there when we need him. We are really fortunate to have him. With prayers and wishes for Guruji's long, healthy and blissful life. Hari Om.*



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

## Health and Wellness

## Yoga Asanas:

'Yoga asanas' were developed thousands of years ago by the rishis and have evolved over centuries. Although they deal with the physical aspect of yoga, it is not a mere form of physical exercise and the benefits are much more far reaching. Not only do they help to keep the body disease free but also bring mental stability and preserve the vital spiritual energies.

Regular practice of yogic postures has proven to bring down stress levels, help weight loss, build stamina, boost self control and improve concentration. Practicing yoga exercises



is thus one of the best ways of self-care.

The Sanskrit word 'asana' comes from the root 'asi', which means, 'to be'. The literal meaning of the word asana is 'a state of being'. In the Yoga sutras, Patanjali uses this approach and defines 'asana' as "any steady and comfortable posture". But it is not that simple, because only when the body is healthy and free

from toxins, is a comfortable pose easily attainable. Patanjali was aware of the fact that the body needed to be made healthy and be able to develop willpower in order to endure physical and mental distraction during higher stages of meditation. Only when control of the body is mastered, was there no disturbance of dualities.

Many different schools of yoga exist and postures should be practiced under the guidance of a competent teacher. The recommended practice of yoga differs from person to person on account of factors such as age, physical condition, health, and so on.

## THOUGHT OF THE MONTH



"Courtesy and goodwill is the true meaning of education. If education fails to awaken courtesy and goodwill, it is illiteracy."



### Discipline of speech

The power of words is enormous. Through words one can give joy, encouragement, and comfort. On the other hand, words can also be the cause of sorrow, depression and fear. How a person speaks reflects his intellectual caliber, his inner and outer states of being, and his overall self control. According to Apostle James, "The gift of speech is both man's glory and his downfall. We use the tongue to say praises to God and we also use it to curse our fellowmen."

An undisciplined tongue is filled with deadly poison which kills inbuilt peace, love and happiness. Harsh speech creates a negative atmosphere while kind speech creates a positive and loving atmosphere. Unkind words are like a sword that cuts through the heart breaking within minutes strong bonds of long standing friendships and loving relationships. Wounds inflicted by harsh words take a very long time to heal. One should therefore be cautious in the selection of his or her words because, "Words that have left the mouth can never come back."

The purpose of words is to transmit our thoughts and ideas to the other person. Thus speech is a powerful vehicle and we should always attempt to transmit love and compassion through our speech. According to the Bhagvad Gita, there exist three kinds of austerities (Tapasya) which are: Austerity of body, Austerity of speech and Austerity of mind. 'Vak Tapas' or 'discipline at the verbal level' is one of the most important types of austerity. Lord Krishna defines 'Vak tapas' as follows:



*Anudvegakaram vakyam satyam priyahitam ca yat*

*svadhyayabhyasanam caiva vangmayam tapa ucyate ( 17 XV)*

*"Speech that is non-offensive, truthful, pleasant, beneficial, and is used for the regular study of the scriptures is called austerity of speech. "Srimad Bhagvad Gita". (17.15)*

Lord Krishna outlines 4 main criteria for the austerity of speech:

- **Anudvegakaram vakyam** means speech that does not cause distress, that does not overawe and that which doesn't cause anxiety. Before speaking, reflect upon the impact that your words is likely to have on the other person and ensure that it doesn't create "udveg" or disturbance to anybody. If you think that it will intimidate him, cause him anxiety or offend him or in any way, then you should not use those words.
- **Satyam:** Our words should be truthful and the truth should be represented in a subtle, pleasant manner. Our speech is the litmus test of the condition of our hearts. Watchfulness of speech will ultimately improve our thoughts and behavior and help to cultivate positive emotions such as compassion and empathy for others.
- **Priyam:** We should speak politely, softly, and kindly. A person who speaks sweetly wins the heart of all and is liked by all those around him. "Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, and kindness in your smile." (Mother Teresa)
- **Hitam:** "Hitam" means beneficial. Before uttering any words we should think two things - whether it is beneficial to us and whether it is also beneficial to the other person. 'Vak tapas' requires that we must be very alert keeping a constant vigil on what we speak at all times.

A person imbibing these qualities in their day to day communication is practicing "austerity in speech". In our day to day lives, we have a general tendency to speak a lot. We are surrounded by a continuous stream of words at home, at our workplace, watching television, etc. A spiritual aspirant should use measured words and refrain from entering into unnecessary arguments and discussions as it makes the mind restless and disturbs the peaceful state of the mind. Excessive talking, gossiping, and backbiting are also not good habits and should be avoided which will in turn help to conserve spiritual energy.

Then how should one utilize the organ of speech? To repeat God's name. As explained by Lord Shri Krishna, "*Svadhyayabhyasanam caiva*", one should do svadhyay (spiritual study), repeat prayers, and recite the scriptures. *Vangmayam tapa ucyate* - this is called the austerity of speech. Utilizing the organ of speech in this manner as outlined by Shri Krishna will impart peace, making you efficient and more productive.

Practicing austerity of speech will automatically limit your speech and enable you to understand the joys of silence. According to sage Ramana Maharishi, who himself spent several years in silence (Mauna), "Silence is that state which transcends speech and thought. Deep meditation is eternal silence. When the Guru is silent, the seeker's mind gets automatically purified." Silence is the most powerful tool, speech is only less powerful. The greatest Gurus have imparted their teachings in silence. A great saint once said, "God is silence." Thus, the best of all knowledge and the highest power comes from silence.

## Prabhu Premi Sangh

### Swamiji's Upcoming schedule

- Till 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009: Various places.



### CONTACT INFORMATION



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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](http://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](mailto:prabhupremisanghnews@gmail.com).

**"Hurdles in life should be considered as stepping stones, not as obstacles."**