

September 2010

Following the Footsteps...

Prabhu Premi Sangh Newsletter



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Upcoming events:

Shrimad
Bhagavad Katha:
Nov 11th to Nov
17th, 2010

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Reflections from Pujya Swamiji's Diary...



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

Prabhu bless you.

To listen is the first step of spiritual practice. The discretion, detachment and determination that is needed to effectively solve problems can be acquired through careful listening.

Just like tiny drops of rain provide relief and comfort to the parched earth, in the same way, by mere listening to the words of a True Master, the turbulence of the mind can be silenced.

Holy company and deep devotion enables the seeker in achieving the Higher Purpose of human life.

*With best wishes,
Swami Avdhesanand Giri*

News in a Nutshell

Hari Om!

Navratri is the nine-day worship festival of the Divine Mother, who is the epitome of kindness, unconditional love and mercy. She is the one who protects, encourages and imbibes courage in her children when they stumble in life.

Different people celebrate *Navratri* in different ways. Fasting, prayer, rituals and

traditional dances such as *garba* and *dandiya* are but a few examples. The *Navratri* festivities conclude on the tenth day, which is celebrated as *Dussehra* or *Vijaydashami*. In our own lives, these ten sacred days usher in purity, divinity and rejuvenation. They are a gentle reminder of the inexorable triumph of the Higher Self over the lower demonic nature of man.

During the month of September, spiritual discourses were conducted in different places.

His Holiness conducted Shrimad Bhagavad Katha in Nathdwara, Rajasthan from September 23rd to 29th, 2010. In the month of October, Shrimad Bhagavad katha was conducted in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh from October 8th to 14th, 2010.

Mother - The First Guru

In the Indian scriptures, the role of the mother has been accorded great importance. In the *Puranas* and other sacred texts, it has been mentioned that offering respect, gratefulness and service towards a mother is far more superior than activities like charity and social service. No one can match the love that a mother gives to her child, and the manner in which she seeks his or her welfare.

In religious texts, it has been written that the pain and suffering that a mother undergoes at the time of childbirth, one cannot make up for it even with a hundred years of service. That is why the mother is considered to be like a pilgrimage.

She is the greatest creation of God, who gives birth to

life and protects it. In the '*Shatpath Brahmin*' text, the mother is accepted as the first guru of man. In the '*Taittiriya Upanishad*', it has been written, '*MatriDevo Bhava*' and one is told to worship the mother like a deity.

Once a great leader was asked, "How can you improve the nation?" He replied - "You give me great mothers, I will give you a great nation." The development of a nation is dependent on mothers. Mothers do not only give birth to children, but they also make them competent and proficient. They are the epitome of sacrifice and tolerance, hence are worthy of utmost respect, prayer and worship.

A mother gives birth to a child, raises him and



shows him with her affection and care. She begins to develop the child even before he or she is born. The mother's value system (*sanskars*) gets associated with the child growing in her womb. That is why it is said that an expectant mother should cultivate thoughts in accordance with the kind of child she desires.

It is said that Ashtavakra learnt *Vedanta* while he was in his mother's womb.

Similarly, Queen *Madalsa* used to sing to her children - "*Shuddhosi, Buddhosi*" which means "My child! You

are immaculately pure, enlightened, and free from the delusion of the world!" It was by imbibing these *sanskars*, due to which her child grew up to be *Brahmarishi* (realized sage).

More important than wealth, luxury and property are good values or *sanskars*. Those *sanskars*, which are passed on by the mother to her child reside in the subconscious mind of the child.

The scriptures have called woman the 'Creator of man' in the form of the mother. A great saint once said, "If you educate a child, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, then you educate a whole family."

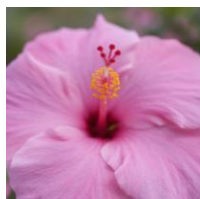
(Excerpt from H.H. Swami Avdheshanand Giri Ji's '*Gyaan Sutra*')

Strength, Compassion and Forgiveness

Navratri is a time which reminds us that true strength lies in kindness, forgiveness and in restraint of the senses. By associating power with kindness and love, it teaches us how to dwell in the world with peace.

The Divine Mother is the personification of compassion and forgiveness. She looks upon her millions of children with motherly grace, and loves each one equally. But for most people, forgiveness isn't that easy.

Often times it is seen that, due to lack of knowledge, people reel under sorrowful incidents of the past for years together. The situation may have occurred just once, but they relive the pain in their minds over and over again. When this happens, it can interfere



with the person's day-to-day activities and prevent him from giving his hundred percent to the actions of the present.

The first step of coming out of this situation is to work on healing oneself. One should spend time in activities like meditation, understanding spiritual texts, and listening to Great Masters. This will help the individual to increase his Self-knowledge and grant him the required strength and wisdom to battle his circumstances. There is no dearth of resources; one only has to make the effort to help oneself.

One of the finest ways of overcoming mental agitation and depression is '*Mantra-Japa*' i.e. mental recitation of the sacred mantra. The mantra is verily the word of God, and when recited with devotion and meaning, it can clear the consciousness of doubts and undesirable thoughts.

In essence, thoughts are what cause us to make negative assumptions about ourselves. The renowned French philosopher Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." But as soon as we detach ourselves from the pattern of pessimistic thinking and tell ourselves, "We are God's children, hence we are divine", we will automatically feel blessed.

Forgiveness is indeed the highest virtue of all. It is only the competent who can forgive. A person who has

mastered the art of forgiving not just others, but even himself, can always experience tranquility.

Forgiveness doesn't just mean letting go, but it essentially means to have so much compassion for others and inner strength, that one remains unaffected and unperturbed by every adverse situation.

If there is life, there is bound to be both good and bad. Even a movie is complete only when there is action, drama, tears and laughter. But we know it's a movie, hence it affects us only as long as we are engrossed in it. After the movie ends, we don't spend hours thinking about it.

Let us try to treat life in a similar manner. We should observe it like a witness and never allow it to disturb us.

Shrimad Bhagavad Katha held in Nathdwara

Shrimad Bhagavad Katha was conducted by His Holiness from September 23rd to September 29th, 2010 in Nathdwara, Rajasthan. Nathdwara, which literally means 'Gateway to the Lord', is one of the main pilgrimage sites and the presiding deity here is Lord Shrinath Ji.

The katha was attended by approximately seven hundred people from different parts of India and abroad. While the katha was primarily philosophy oriented, leaving a strong and positive influence on the audience, there were also several festive moments like the 'Vaman-avatar' and 'Shri Krishna Janam Utsav'.

Describing Lord Shrinath Ji, His Holiness said that Shri means one who possesses 'Shatt-Sampatti' i.e. the six-



fold wealth.

These six attributes are required by every seeker in order to achieve his goal of Self-Realization and are enlisted as follows:

- i. *Shama*: Control of the mind or tranquility.
- ii. *Dama* : Restraint of the senses
- iii. *Uparati*: Withdrawal of the mind i.e. disengaging the mind from external activities which are not conducive for the seeker.
- iv. *Titiksha*: Endurance i.e.

ability to remain unaffected by the pair of opposites such as heat and cold, pain and pleasure, happiness and unhappiness, praise and criticism etc.

- v. *Shraddha*: Faith in the Guru's words and in the holy scriptures. It is also the complete acceptance of the omnipresence and omnipotence of the Lord.

- vi. *Samadhan*: Concentration or single-pointedness. It is the state of equipoise and is the result of *Shama*, *Dama*, *Uparati*, *Titiksha*, and *Shraddha*.

On the occasion of *Shri Krishna Janam Utsav*, the devotees participated in the birth celebrations of Lord Shri Krishna. In relation to the word *Utsav*, His Holiness

said, that a festival is an occasion when joy and bliss is observable everywhere, when happiness is shared by one and all.

He further said that in order to fully experience the happiness around us, we should first seek joy inside of us. This is because a person whose mind is unhappy will not be alive to the beauty of his surroundings.

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

"We should always be grateful to the Almighty. He has given us more than what we deserve."

Health and Wellness

Sugar:

It is unfortunate that people satisfy their sweet cravings with products that contain sugar like candy or soda. These foods typically lack adequate fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Statistics show that average Americans consume an estimate of an alarming 32 teaspoons of added sugar each day, while the recommended cap is 10 teaspoons a day. The rest of the world is not far behind.

High intake of sugar raises our insulin level, which in turn inhibits the release of growth hormones, and that results in depression of our immune system. The outcome of this process is the higher likelihood to catch diseases.

This happens because the

rush of sugar into the bloodstream causes body's blood-sugar imbalance. The body uses insulin to monitor blood-sugar to be at a safe level, and storage of fat. Eating foods high in sugar then contributes to storing fat and thus easily gaining weight, and elevated triglyceride levels. Both of these factors have been shown to result in heart diseases, and cancer.

Refined sugars include sucrose (table sugar), lactose (milk sugar), honey, brown sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, and fruit juice concentrates. These sugars typically lack minerals and vitamins so they utilize the body's micro-nutrients that are stored in order to be metabolized.

When the micro-nutrients are all used up,

metabolization of cholesterol and fatty acid becomes inadequate and inefficient.

It is clear that because sugar does not contain minerals, vitamins, and fiber, it has detrimental effect on our health and body. Simple sugars aggravate asthma, cause mood swings and personality changes, as well as grow gallstones, increase hypertension and cause arthritis.

Instead, we should be selective in our diet and enjoy sweets from fruits and other plants that give us carbohydrates for energy alongwith all other elements that strengthen our immune system to prevent diseases and illnesses. Our human species naturally enjoys sweet food as we have a large area of our tongue is



dedicated to tasting sweet. Eating fruit instead of empty calorie refined sugar is vital to your health and longevity.

One easy place to start is by not keeping ice creams and desserts at home so that they are not easily accessible.

They should be replaced with different kind of fruits so that when you're in the mood to snack, instead of hurting your body, you will be promoting good health.

Worship of Goddess Lakshmi



In the Indian epics, there is a story of *Samudra manthan* i.e. churning of the primordial ocean, during which the *devtas* (gods) and *asuras* (demons) were battling against one another for everything that was coming out of the ocean. Among the various celestial objects and divine beings that emerged from the ocean, was Goddess Lakshmi, the symbol of wealth, beauty, and prosperity.

Both the *devtas* and *asuras* began to endeavor to please the Goddess, but to no avail. While the *devtas* possessed affluence and prosperity, they were not chosen by the Goddess because they were primarily engaged in the act of gratification. The *asuras* though powerful, lived a life against the principles of dharma, and harbored no love towards other creatures. The saints and sages were also rejected because although they were righteous and knowledgeable, they gave greater importance to renunciation rather than balance in life. Lakshmi Ji sought someone who was Himself perfect, sustained others and was filled with the highest ideals. Accordingly, she chose Lord Vishnu because He was the only One who could fulfill these criteria.

There is another narrative which further describes how the Goddess is pleased. Rukmani once visited Lakshmi Ji and asked Her, "Devi, where and with what kind of people do you dwell?"

The Goddess replied, "One who speaks sweetly, who is efficient, disciplined, devoid of anger, devoted, grateful and generous, receives my blessing. I always reside near those who are virtuous, follow the tenets of dharma, respect elders, engage in noble work, are forgiving and intelligent. I also live near those sincere women who dutifully serve their husband, practice forgiveness, truth, discipline, morals and simplicity."

Goddess Lakshmi is in a way a principle or doctrine, which inspires us to live our lives on the basis of virtues. If we carefully observe people who have climbed the zenith of success, we will find that they have had the strength to do so on account of their noble qualities. This is the meaning and significance of worship of Goddess Lakshmi.

Prabhu Premi Sangh

H.H. Swamiji's Upcoming schedule

- November 11th to November 17th : Shrimad Bhagavad Katha (Dehradun)

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About the Organization...

'Prabhu Premi Sangh' is founded, directed and led by His Holiness Param Pujya Acharya Swami Avdheshanand Giriji Maharaj. H.H. Swamiji is the spiritual head of the JunaAkhada, the biggest and the oldest order of the Sanatan Vedic Hindu Dharma, which has millions of saints. Revered Swamiji is the Trustee of Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, the apex body of the Hindu dharma. H.H. Acharya Sri is playing a vital role as a board member of the 'World Council of Religious Leaders', 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.

"Think not of what you have, but of what you can give."