

# Outreach



## EDITORIAL *The Divine String*

Uttarayan, also known as *Makar Sankranti*, marks a very special occasion in the Indian culture, and it is most widely known for one reason: kite flying. On this day, kites are flown in many parts of India, decorating the sky with thousands of colorful kites.

Kite flying is a joyous activity, but it bears a deeper message at heart. In this world, we are all like kites, striving in one way or another to conquer the open skies and achieve our ambitions. More importantly, it is God who controls our flight, and through the continuous pulling and tugging, he keeps his cherished kites soaring high and steady.

But there is noteworthy aspect in the art of kite flying which we must not overlook: *the string*.

Whether a kite will fly high and stable truly depends on the quality of the string attached to it. The strength of the string helps the kite to glide, especially in the most adverse climates. The string is what connects the kite to the owner, and similarly, we are all connected to God through this string. To keep progressing every day amidst conflicts, fears, miseries, doubts and tensions, it is crucial to have the company of a *Gunatit* saint, who is the string that supports us and connects us with God.

With utmost compassion, Lord Swaminarayan manifested on this earth with one mission: to uplift countless souls to a state of eternal joy, peace and everlasting happiness. Showering us with His divine grace, He further vowed to remain manifest for future generations in the form of a *Gunatit* saint. Fulfilling this promise, Lord Swaminarayan bestowed upon mankind His most precious gift:

*Anadi Mul Akshar Gunatitanand Swami.*

Serving as the divine string, Gunatitanand Swami nurtured divinity in the lives of hundreds and thousands. *This Outreach will highlight the Glory of Gunatitanand Swami.*

## SEEK THE BEST TO BECOME THE BEST *An Ideal Devotee*

Gunatitanand Swami was a saint who not only had a clear vision throughout his life, but he cultivated the same clarity of vision in those who came into his contact. He is the first successor of Lord Swaminarayan, the '*Akshar*' in Akshar-Purushottam and the '*Swami*' in Swaminarayan. Revered as the incarnation of Aksharbrahma, Swami was constantly immersed in worship and had an eternal rapport with God. A devotee once asked Swami, 'You take part in thousands of tasks and services, yet continually remember God. How is this possible?'

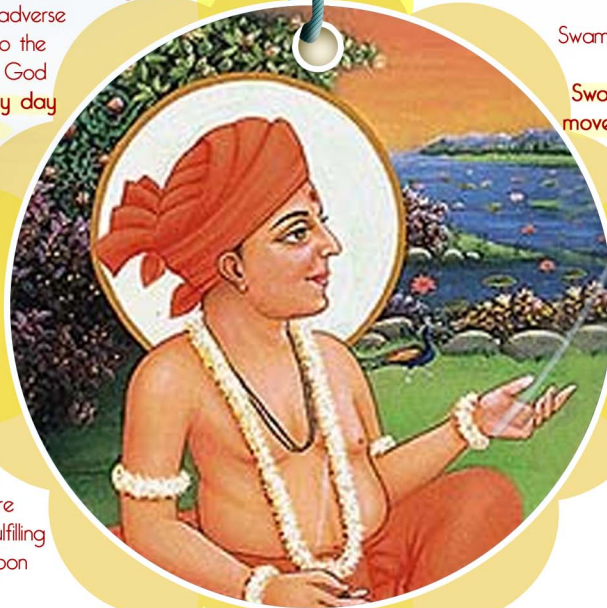
In response, Swami asks, 'Do you ever forget your body?'  
The devotee replies, 'No Swami!'

Swami then says, 'You forgetting about your body is like me forgetting Lord Swaminarayan. For example, just as a fish moves, swims and lives in water, I walk, talk and do all tasks while immersed in Lord Swaminarayan. But I never do anything forgetting Him!'

Regarded as the choicest devotee of Lord Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami lived an ideal life that serves as a prime example and guide for each and every aspirant seeking to attain *moksha* (liberation). As youths treading this path, let's aspire to dwell further into the life of Gunatitanand Swami.

## COOL FACT

Ever catch a cold? Well, happiness may be just as contagious according to recent study in the British Medical Journal. Following more than 4500 participants over a 20-year time span, the people who were surrounded by many happy people were more likely to become happy in the future. Given that the World Health Organization is increasingly emphasizing happiness as a key component of health, it may be in our best interest to seek the company of those radiating with happiness!



# INSPIRATION FROM THE GREAT

# Pearls of Wisdom

Gunatitanand Swami once asked Lord Swaminarayan, "Which is most superior: first, to engage in meditation; second, to behave as the atma (soul); third, to serve the ill; or fourth, to talk about God?" In response, Maharaj answers, "To talk about God is superior."

It was for the sake of future aspirants like us that the compassionate and visionary Lord Swaminarayan advocated to constantly engage in the talks of God. Following Lord Swaminarayan's wishes, Gunatitanand Swami arranged to deliver spiritual discourses throughout the day at Junagadh temple. In fact, Lord Swaminarayan had instructed all saints and devotees to visit Junagadh for one month out of every year to listen to Swami's discourses. Swami's sermons were so powerful and poignant that devotees from all over Gujarat would specially flock to Junagadh to listen to him. His down-to-earth and practical talks inspired listeners to walk a pious path.

On one occasion, Swami was delivering a discourse when several devotees arrived. Upon seeing Swami, the devotees began to prostrate on the rocky and thorn-filled ground. Another devotee advised them to stop since the thorns can pierce the skin and cause harm. Swami stopped the devotees from prostrating and said, "These are not the thorns that you should be worried about. If these thorns pierce your skin, they can be easily removed with a needle or pin, but the thorns at the bazaar (market) are even harder to remove."



## THE TALKS OF THIS SADHU ARE LIKE BULLETS: ONCE THEY HIT YOU, THEY CAN PIERCE YOUR IGNORANCE!

The devotee then asked, "But Swami, the bazaar is always swept and cleaned everyday! How can there be thorns?"

With great sympathy and consideration, Swami replies, "You may not be aware, but thorns in the bazaar are very harmful. In the bazaar, there are thorns of immoral sights that damage our eyes. There are thorns of negative words that damage our ears. There are thorns of various odors that damage our sense of smell. There are thorns of impure contact that damage our sense of touch, and there are thorns of bazaar food that damage our sense of taste. If not alert, these thorns will corrupt our thoughts and actions. To remove these thorns, we must follow Lord Swaminarayan's commands and stay in the right company."

Conveying this simple but poignant analogy, Gunatitanand Swami revealed that if we do not remain vigilant in keeping the five senses positive, our minds and thoughts would surely become polluted. In this way, Swami provided clear, simple and practical solutions to countless problems in all aspects of life. Fortunately for us, his riveting talks were compiled into a scripture called *Swami Ni Vaato*. **If heard or read with utmost reverence, talks of such a saint have the potential to transform lives of individuals, families, societies and entire nations!**

## LAUGH-OUT-LOUD

A man climbs to the top of Mt. Everest to get close enough to talk to God.

Looking up, he asks the Lord, "God, what does a million years mean to you?" The Lord replies, "A minute."

The man asks, "And what does a million dollars mean to you?" The Lord replies, "A penny."

The man asks, "Can I have a penny?" The Lord replies, "Sure, in a minute..."



## LASTING THOUGHT

"By remembering this Sadhu, the sins of the mind are burned away. By listening to the talks of this Sadhu, the sins of the ears are burned away. By having the darshan (seeing) of this Sadhu, the sins of the eyes are burned away. Such is the glory of this Sadhu."

- Gunatitanand Swami, *Swami Ni Vaato*

