

Outreach



A publication by the Samanvay Group, a youth group inspired by the Yogi Divine Society



VOLUME 5 EDITION 1

Editorial

The Greatest Freedom of All

It is a seven-letter word which has motivated millions to fight for and it inspires the seven billion worldwide to live for in our modern day. Human struggle for *freedom* is perhaps as old as time itself. Whether it is the freedom to establish an independent nation, the freedom to express an opinion, the freedom for a teenager from his parents or the freedom to establish one's identity, the struggle for freedom is commonplace in our ever changing society.

Over the past hundred years, man has worked hard to improve the quality of life by attaining all types of such freedoms. Many would even agree that mankind has the most freedom now than at any point in history. Yet, there is one freedom it has not fully conquered.

Every human being is bound by six basic innate natures: egotism, stubbornness, jealousy, anger, lust, and greed. These innate natures are the actual culprits which are holding us captive, binding us and blinding us, whether we realize it or not. These are the culprits that break governments into shambles, start wars between nations, ignite arguments between loved ones, dissolve lifelong friendships in a matter of seconds and ultimately cause sorrow, misery and depression.

It is for this reason that the greatest freedom is the freedom from ourselves; by freeing ourselves from these bondages we can experience true freedom and happiness. We are quite fortunate that just over two hundred years ago, Sahajanand Swami (also known as Bhagwan Swaminarayan) manifested on this earth and showed us a way to achieve this freedom.



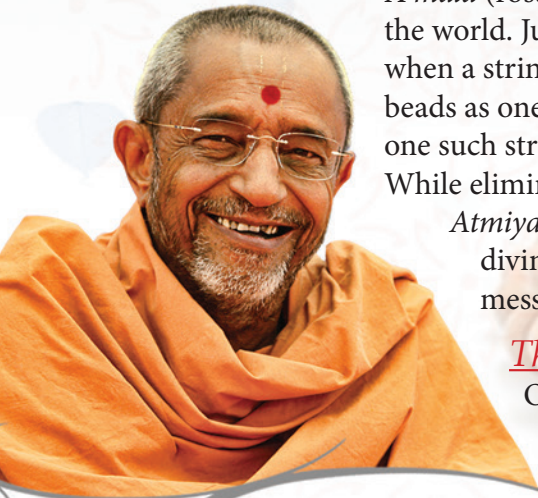
During his short stay of 49 years on this earth, Bhagwan Swaminarayan performed countless wondrous acts to uplift mankind. In fact, the work He performed in less than 30 years, in the small state of Gujarat, has played a critical role in shaping the spiritual, social and cultural heritage of India as we know and admire in our current day and age. Moreover, Bhagwan Swaminarayan's glory is such that in a mere 200 years, His reform has spread to over 100 countries, with millions of aspirants following and living according to His teachings worldwide!

While He performed a range of social reforms, welfare activities, and incredible miracles, perhaps the greatest miracle of all was carving the pathway for liberating humanity from its own base nature. ***In order to free oneself from the innate vices of egotism, stubbornness, jealousy, anger, lust, and greed, the best medicine is Atmiyata.***

Atmiyata is an unconditional acceptance of others, sacrificing personal comforts for the well-being of others, and experiencing bliss in the joy of others. Imbibing this form of harmony in our lives is the life mission of our beloved Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji. Dedicated to Guruhari Swamiji's 79th glorious year of *Atmiyata*, this Outreach will dwell into Guruhari Swamiji's precious mission for cultivating *Atmiyata* in our lives.



Inspiration from the Great Guruhari Swamiji's Atmiya Touch



A *mala* (rosary) is a set of beads commonly used to offer prayer by many cultures across the world. Just a wooden bead alone has little or no value, but the holy *mala* is formed when a string is used to join the individual beads together. The string serves to unite the beads as one, in turn transforming the single beads into something priceless. *Atmiyata* is one such string which serves to unite us with family members, friends and devotees alike. While eliminating any form of discrimination, judgment and reservation, the bond of *Atmiyata* can make our lives more meaningful and blissful. Showering us with His divine grace, Guruhari Swamiji not only strives day and night to spread His message of *Atmiyata*, but His life alone is the prime living example of *Atmiyata*.

The True Inspirer of Atmiyata

One day, a devotee from the small village of *Vasna* came to Haridham Mandir with his son to meet Guruhari Swamiji. The devotee informed Swamiji that his son was feeling extremely weak, his eyes were blood red, and his health was deteriorating day by day. The village doctor was providing medication for quite some time, but all efforts were futile. With tears in his eyes, the father prayed to Swamiji for blessings to overcome this dire situation.

On seeing the devotee's son and his suffering, Swamiji asked the devotee to take his son to Dr. Arun, a specialist in Baroda. With grave concern, Swamiji cancelled everything in His own busy schedule and immediately left to join the family in Baroda. In fact, Swamiji reached Dr. Arun's clinic before the family even arrived.

After running several blood tests, Dr. Arun concluded that the son had blood cancer and it was imperative that he immediately receive a blood transfusion. On hearing this, Swamiji immediately put His own arm on the doctor's table and asked him to withdraw as much blood as was required! Dr. Arun, out of much respect for Swamiji, felt it was inappropriate to take Swamiji's blood. Hence, Dr. Arun informed Swamiji that the blood group of the donor must match the son's blood group.

Swamiji instantly told the doctor not to waste time and that he would get whatever blood type was required, from His very arm. Swamiji, with great humility, told the doctor that it would be His great fortune to serve this devotee and help the son recover. On seeing Swamiji's genuine concern and selfless love, the devotee fell to Swamiji's feet in tears. The devotee refused to accept Swamiji's blood and told Swamiji that only His divine blessings would suffice to obtain the required blood.

For one devotee, Swamiji was ready to sacrifice anything and everything. Every step He takes, every moment He spends with a devotee, and every second of His life is devoted to uplift all those who come in His contact. This is His *Atmiyata* with us. ***Because Swamiji leads by example, He is a guide on how to imbibe this Atmiyata in our lives. His life serves as an inspiration to countless devotees worldwide.***



COOL FACT Why are fish so smart? Because they're always in a school! Most species of fish tend to travel together (termed schools), which greatly increases their survival rate. When threatened by predators, fish actually move closer together and rely on each others' movements to evade attack. The greater their synchronization, the harder it is for predators to pick out one individual fish. In some cases, predators perceive these hundreds of fish to be one giant fish, which is larger than itself! It seems as if someone must have taught the fish of the famous slogan: ***"There is strength in numbers."***

A Living Example of Swamiji's Life Mission

In today's world, where humanitarian acts are only apparent in calamities and family values are almost forgotten, Swamiji has done something miraculous. A living example of Swamiji's visionary mission can be witnessed at Atmiya Vidya Mandir (AVM).

AVM is a residential school, created by Swamiji in 2004, which focuses on the holistic development of a child. While preserving and fostering culture, religion and spirituality, the uniqueness of this school is that it promotes a value-orientated life, an essential quality that is rare to find in today's day and age. Elders often teach children proper values, but Swamiji has created a school in which the child's actions will one day inspire elders.

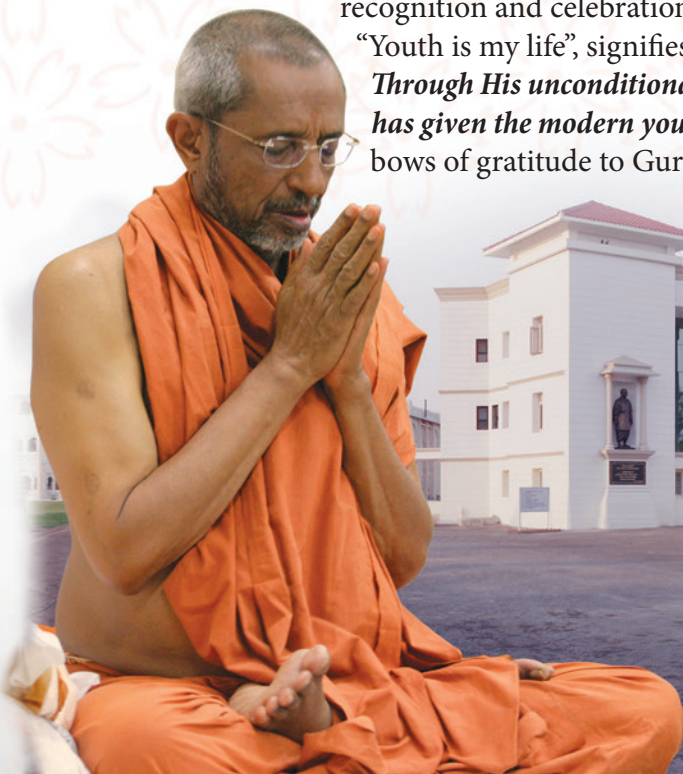
This marvelous school holds numerous living examples of Swamiji's life mission of *Atmiyata*. One such example involves a spirited youth of AVM named Mantavya. Like many of us, Mantavya was greatly touched by Swamiji's humble and inspirational life. It made him wonder, why does Guruhari Swamiji always take a step back to help someone forward? What is the joy that Guruhari Swamiji experiences in *Atmiyata*? Living in such a competitive and self-centered world, taking a step back to experience joy in seeing others excel seems counterintuitive.

His curiosity for such questions got the better of him and he wanted to experience the joy of *Atmiyata*. Excelling at both studies and sports, Mantavya had received a gold medal in sprinting for three straight years. That year, at the Annual Sports Day, he was leading in the sprinting competition as always and was on the verge of winning. However, he slowed down in the final seconds and did not win the race. His friends were shocked to see him lose!

When questioned about his actions, he said it was nothing and that he was fairly beaten in the race. He was genuinely happy, the joy he was experiencing was unlike anything he had experienced, and it was the joy of *Atmiyata*. When asked as to why he seemed happy on losing the race, young Mantavya replied, "I may have lost the race, but I know I have won a gold medal in Swamiji's world, where *Atmiyata* takes precedence over everything else."

This *Atmiyata*, these thoughts and these values are truly astounding and do not naturally arise, especially in young competitive children. However, *Atmiyata* has been ingrained within these children due to Swamiji's constant care and effort.

The spirit of *Atmiyata* and Guruhari Swamiji's immense dedication for youths deems both recognition and celebration. Swamiji's slogan, "*Yuvako maru sarvasva chhe*" - "Youth is my life", signifies the special place He has for youths in His heart. ***Through His unconditional love, compassionate care and divine blessings, He has given the modern youth a new meaning and direction in life.*** A million bows of gratitude to Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji!



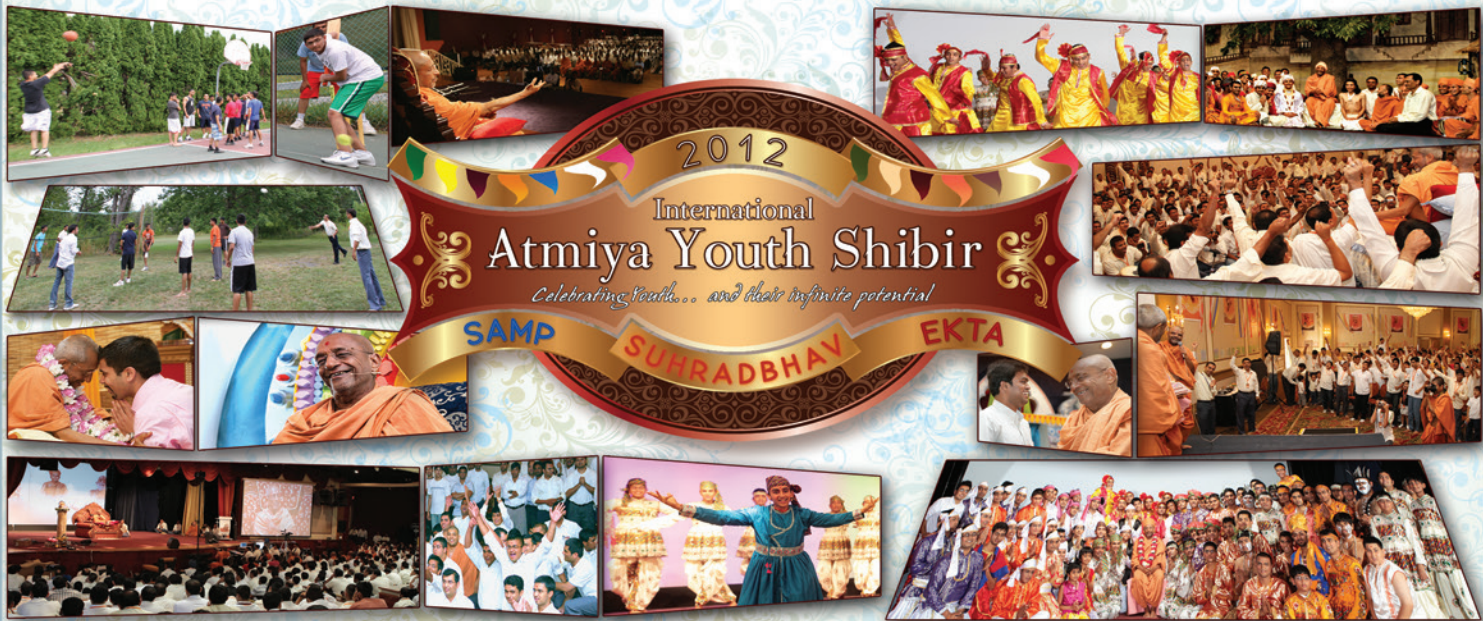
LASTING THOUGHT

“The three characteristics of one who is *Atmiya* are:

he is ever happy, he has no ill-feelings nor does he ever perceive flaws in anyone, and he serves all devotees as he would serve God.” ~ *Guruhar*

~ Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji

Atmiya Youth Shibir July 20th ~ 21st ~ 22nd, 2012
visit ydsus.org for more information



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