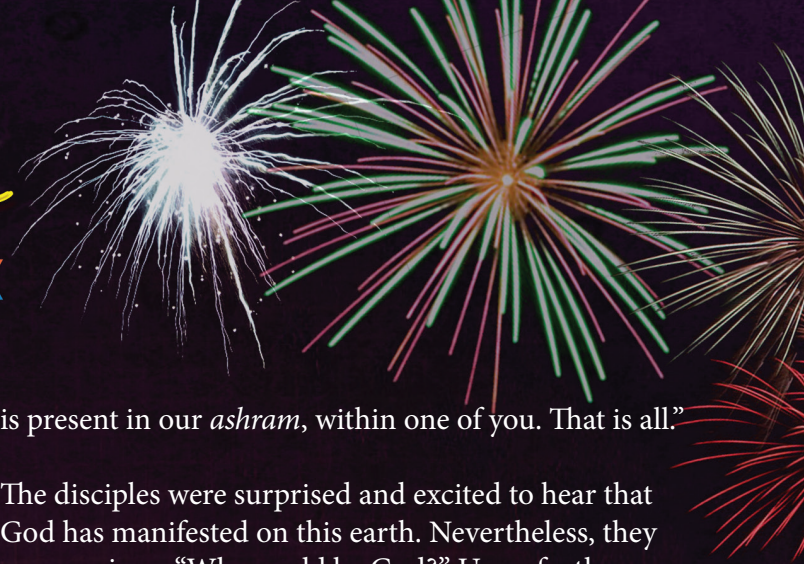


# OutReach

Volume 5 Edition 3



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



## Editorial

*Diwali*, also known as the 'Festival of Lights', is perhaps the most widely celebrated Hindu festival in the world. In preparation for *Diwali*, we decorate our homes with *diyas* (oil lamps), make delicious sweets, light firecrackers and perform numerous sacred rituals to sanctify our homes.

On this auspicious occasion, people's hearts are brimming with joy and happiness. But, the true art is to keep that joy everlasting. What is the key to achieve this? Perhaps this short tale can shed some light...

There was once a pious monk who had established an *ashram* (hermitage) where over two hundred disciples lived. Under the guidance of their guru, the disciples treated each other with great respect, living as one big family.

As the guru was getting older and nearing his final days, he decided to leave the *ashram* to perform his final penances. He gathered his disciples to make this announcement and appointed the senior-most monk as the new leader of the *ashram*.

However, after the guru departed, things just weren't like they used be. With each passing day, the disciples began to mistreat each other. There were more and more arguments, driving the disciples further and further apart. As respect and reverence was replaced with insult and abuse, the peace experienced in the *ashram* for all those years was gradually fading. Troubled by this, the disciples decided to visit their beloved guru, in hopes of a solution.

Relieved to meet him, the devotees folded their hands in prayer and narrated their dilemma. After a long silence, the guru replied, "I only have two things to say. One, God has manifested Himself on this earth. Second, He

is present in our *ashram*, within one of you. That is all."

The disciples were surprised and excited to hear that God has manifested on this earth. Nevertheless, they were curious, "Who could be God?" Upon further introspection, each disciple realized, "I have been harsh to my fellow peers. What if I have unknowingly offended God? I must immediately ask for forgiveness!" The disciples feared of unintentionally offending God, who could be residing in anyone around them.

The wise words of the guru sparked an extraordinary transformation in the entire *ashram*. There was a new found humbleness and humility that was now visible in each and every disciple. Day-by-day, their respect and reverence for each other increased, rekindling the bliss that once existed in the *ashram*.

As we witnessed in the above tale, **true bliss lies in seeing divinity in all those around us.** [This understanding – to see divinity in others – is the underlying definition of Samp, introduced in the previous edition!] For us, evaluating whether we see divinity in others boils down to asking yourselves a simple question: **Do I have utmost respect and reverence for my family members, my friends, my peers and the people around me?**

Taking a pause to introspect on this question on a daily basis is the key. Festivals will come and go, but these virtues will remain with us forever. This is the technique to transform this one day festival into a lifelong celebration, so let us take this opportunity to experience it!



## Celebrations & Appreciations



The day is October 15, 1965, the morning of *Sharad Poonam*. Thousands of devotees start to fill the courtyard of Gondal mandir, anxiously awaiting the moments to come. Smiling and radiating with joy, even Guruhari Yogiji Maharaj's excitement was quite obvious.

The auspicious moment everyone was waiting for has finally arrived. With great enthusiasm, Yogiji Maharaj announces, "Just as Bhagwan Swaminarayan invited thousands of devotees and held a grand *yagna* to initiate Gunatitanand Swami into sainthood, today we initiate Prabhudasbhai (Hariprasad Swamiji)

into sainthood!" As Yogiji Maharaj's words resonate in the Gondal mandir, everyone comes to realize the glory of Guruhari Hariprasad Swami.

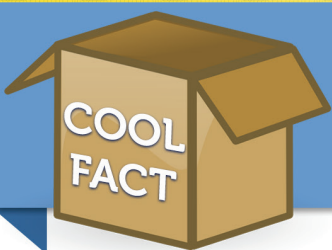
Guruhari Swamiji had an inspirational relationship with Yogiji Maharaj, one built on resolute commitment, dedication and devotion. We are tremendously fortunate to have such a guru in our lives, who has led by example. Today, let us pray and strive to build such an unshakeable bond with Guruhari Swamiji.



## Laugh Out Loud

A young boy enters a barber shop. The barber whispers to his customer, "This is the dumbest kid in the world. Watch, I will show you." The barber shows the boy a dollar bill in one hand and two quarters in another, and then asks, "Which do you want?"

The boy takes the two quarters and leaves. "See, didn't I tell you? He will never learn!" said the barber. Later that day, the customer sees the boy exiting an ice cream store and asks, "Hey, why did you take the quarters and not the dollar?" The boy laughs and says, "Because the day I take the dollar, the game is over!"



British researchers have shown that we are better at detecting words that carry negative meaning than those that are positive. In one study, volunteers were exposed to a word for a fraction of a second – too short a time to consciously read the word – and then asked to guess whether the word was neutral or had emotional content (either positive or negative). The subjects were most accurate at detecting the negative words.

## Learning from the Great *Cultivating a Divine Vision*

Do you always believe what you see? Well, there is always more than what meets the eye! Take a look to the *right*. What do you see? Do you see *good*? Or do you see *evil*? At first glance, it might not be obvious, but both words are present!

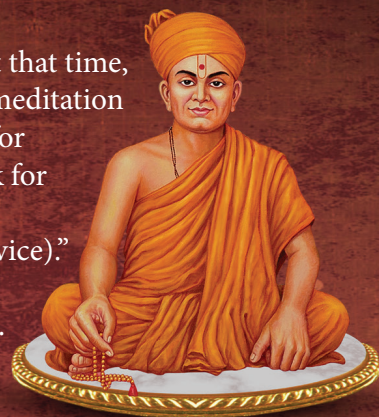
# EVIL

The human mind is very quick to make a judgment. Based on past experiences and interactions, we tend to build firm assumptions and opinions of others. As a result, it is difficult to think and see from a different perspective.

### *But how can we cultivate an ever-positive and divine outlook in every situation?*

For this, we must dwell into the life of Gunatitanand Swami. Regarded as the choicest devotee of Lord Swaminarayan, He lived an exemplary life that serves as a guide for those who aspire to attain *moksha* (liberation).

In one instance, Gunatitanand Swami was sitting in meditation when several devotees arrived. At that time, the devotees bowed down to Swami with great reverence. Hearing them, Swami came out of his meditation and greeted the devotees. Upon seeing this, the devotees were distressed and sought forgiveness for disturbing him while meditating. Swami smiled and graciously replied, "There is no reason to ask for forgiveness. I was meditating on the divine form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. But now, that same Bhagwan Swaminarayan has come to me through you! Now, my only duty is to do your *seva* (service)."



Gunatitanand Swami possessed a divine vision, treating each and every devotee as a form of God. As a result, his eagerness to serve devotees was unparalleled. He would clean beds, wash clothes, cook food and personally attend to all devotees alike, regardless of whether they were sick or healthy, poor or rich, or new to the *satsang* fellowship or established devotees. For this and many other traits, He received Bhagwan Swaminarayan's innermost blessings.

**Gunatitanand Swami showed us what it means to see with divinity. Seeing divinity means: 1) accepting everyone for who they are, and 2) overlooking any apparent flaws of others. By doing just this, we too can receive the blessings of Guruhari Swamiji and be graced with a vision of divinity.**

### *Lasting Thought*



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