

A full-page photograph of a man with a long dark beard and hair, wearing a bright red robe. He is standing on a beach with his arms raised in a gesture of praise or prayer. The background shows a sunset over the ocean with silhouettes of trees on the horizon. The entire image is framed by a decorative border with a repeating geometric pattern.

# PARMARTH NEWSLETTER

**January - February 2009**



# Creating Peace & Interfaith Harmony

**Rishikesh, India**

From the 14th - 15th February, a large Interfaith Peace Conference was held at Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh (Himalayas). Under the banner of Parliament of Religions (Sarva Dharma Sansad), and organized by Pujya Swami Agniveshji and Pujya Swami Chidanandji, top leaders from Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Jainism came together to discuss the pressing issues in India today. The issues raised and discussed included: caste system, communalism, women's rights, selective female feticide and infanticide, environmental protection, terrorism and of course inter-faith harmony. The leaders all agreed to come together, join hands and forces and lead their followers toward peace, non-violence, communal harmony and compassion for all living creatures and Mother Earth. A seven point program was finalized, agreed upon and signed by all members present (enclosed herewith). Further, it was decided that the sansad should continue to meet on a regular basis to continue to work on any issues of controversy or contention.







***The main spiritual leaders who attended include:***

Swami Agnivesh ji, President World Council Arya Samaj

Swami Chidanand Saraswati ji, Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh

Father Dominic Emmanuel, spokesman for the Catholic Diocese

Malaunna Mahmood Madani, MP, head of Jamiat Ullema-e-Islam

Ejaz Ahmed Aslam ji, member Markazi Majlis-e-Shoora, Secretary, Public Relations of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind

Intezaar Naeem, Assistant Secretary (Community and National Affairs), Jamaat-E-Islami Hind

Swami Veda Bharati ji, Swami Rama Sadhaka Gram

Acharya Balkrishan ji, Patanjali Yoga Peeth

Amrendra Muni ji, Jain saint



Goswami Sushil ji

Mahant Trayambak Puri ji, Secretary Niranjani Akhara

Mahant Ravindra Puri ji, Secretary, Nirvani Akhara

Mahant Rajendra Das ji, Secretary Udasin Bara Akhara

Swami Pragyanand Ji

Rajender Singh "Pankaj", General Secretary, VHP



At the conclusion of the two day program, after discussing a wide range of issues affecting India today, the revered leaders from all the traditions agreed upon seven pledges. As the work of the Sansad continues, the spiritual leaders will continue to meet, continue to discuss issues of controversy and contention, and continue to take joint pledges regarding these issues.

These seven pledges listed on the opposite page are just the beginning.

A beautiful part of the conference was the way everyone gathered together, on the holy banks of Mother Ganga, for the divine Ganga Aarti ceremony. All day long they gathered together in the hall, discussing, planning and working. In the evening, they gathered together in prayer and son. Following the aarti, we heard beautiful words of inspiration spoken by many of the leaders.



At the conclusion of the Conference, there was a special tree plantation program. Trees of harmony, peace and love were planted jointly by the leaders of the various religions, symbolizing new life, new hope and new unity.





### ***Pledges taken by all leaders***

I take a pledge in the name of Parmatma/ Allah/ God/ Ek Omkaar that I would devote 30 minutes to one hour of my time every day to meditating on Non-violence, Truth, Compassion, Love and Justice. I shall endeavor, to the best of my ability, to establish a society free from:-

1. **Casteism**: I will neither abide by or support the caste system nor encourage it. I pledge that I will resist any form of alienation, discrimination and oppression in the name of caste.
2. **Injustice against Women**: I will vehemently oppose Female Feticide and the evil of Dowry System, and promote women's empowerment.
3. **Violence and Communalism**: I will honour all of the world's religions equally, regardless of my personal religious inclination. I will respect all religious traditions as well as create an ambience of love, fraternity and respect. I shall oppose communalism, fundamentalism, hatred and violence in the name of religion.
4. **Drugs and Alcohol**: I shall work towards eradicating the curses of alcohol, drug and tobacco abuse and help to de-addict and rehabilitate their victims. In this regard I also oppose the production, sale and promotion of the consumption of these substances.
5. **Blind faith and dogmatism**: I will combat dogmatism, fundamentalism, blind faith, and superstition, as these can pave the path for terrorism. I shall cultivate and propagate a balanced, reasonable temper and rational thinking.
6. **Oppression and exploitation**: I will oppose and try to abolish child labour, bonded labour and other forms of inhuman oppression. I will also work to eradicate the dire poverty and desperation in our country which leads to child labour. I will raise my voice for a better and common education system for all children and also propagate compassion towards animals and care for the environment as well as human rights.
7. **Corruption**: I pledge to eradicate the scourge of corruption prevalent in our society. Along with my mother tongue, I will respect all the other languages.











## Mumbai, India

On the 27th January, straight from USA Pujya Swamiji flew to Bombay for a three-day meeting of saints from a wide variety of smpradayas and paramparas (traditions and lineages), including from all of the different akharas. The meeting was organized by Dharma Raksha Manch, a newly formed organization of the saints for the protection and preservation of dharma. The saints discussed a wide variety of topics and issues affecting not only saints and sadhus but the entire Indian community. They shared how each of them individually, as well as united collectively, can work to protect and preserve the ancient, spiritual culture as well as work for the poor people, for environmental protection and for prevention of communal tensions and violence.

The meetings were very fruitful, and culminated in a huge public function led by hundreds and hundreds of saints, and attended by more than one lakh (100,000) people.







After the Conference finished, on the 30th January, Pujya Swamiji invited some of the revered heads of the different akharas home to the Hinduja house, where He stays. Shri Ashok Hinduja was very glad and blessed to welcome the saints to his home and to receive blessings for the family particularly at the auspicious time of the wedding of his daughter, Ambika.

## Rishikesh, India

Pujya Swamiji was visited by a group of Buddhist monks from Indonesia and Thailand who requested Him to come to their ashram/monastery near Jakarta later this month. Unfortunately He won't be able to travel at this time due to prior commitments, but He promised them He will come soon. The love between them all was beautiful.





# Parmarth Niketan



## *Pujya Swamiji's Travel*

Each month Pujya Swamiji travels to several locations, throughout India and abroad, invited to serve as the Chief Guest, Guest of Honour or other special role at inaugurations, installations, spiritual holiday celebrations and much more. The following is just a glimpse into the travels during this period.

### Hindu-Jain Temple, USA

Pujya Swamiji traveled to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA to the temple of which He is the founder, inspirer and spiritual head, the Hindu-Jain Temple of Pittsburgh.





May 2009 marks the 25th anniversary of the sthapana ceremony for the temple, and so the temple's executive committee and board had requested Pujya Swamiji to please come out to Pittsburgh for a few days to help guide them regarding proper planning for the ceremony. He spent a week in Pittsburgh meeting with all of the old devotees as well as the new committee members.

In the middle of glorious, snowy winter, Pujya Swamiji met with the committee and guided them in chalking out plans for the sthapana celebration. There was also a large, wonderful meeting of the dozens of people who had been part of the community since the beginning.



Everyone spent the evening reminiscing about the days when Pujya Swamiji first came to Pittsburgh in 1980, how they convinced his Guru Pujya Swami Dharmanandji and Pujya Swami Sadanandji to permit him to stay, how he united the community together and provided them with the inspiration, leadership and guidance to build the temple.

The Hindu-Jain temple of Pittsburgh is the first temple in the world where not only Hindus and Jains worship together but also where both sects of Jainism (the shwetambar and digambar) worship together.

A beautiful book is being prepared on the entire history of the temple, along with beautiful photographs dating back to the early 1980s. The book will be available in May.



# Special Events & Guests at Parmarth

## World Cancer Day



February 4 was World Cancer Day, and to celebrate it Parmarth hosted a special fundraiser for a new cancer hospice being built in Rishikesh by divine soul Nani Ma.. The hospice will be a place for those with terminal cancer to come and spend their remaining days in peace and serenity on the holy banks of Mother Ganga.

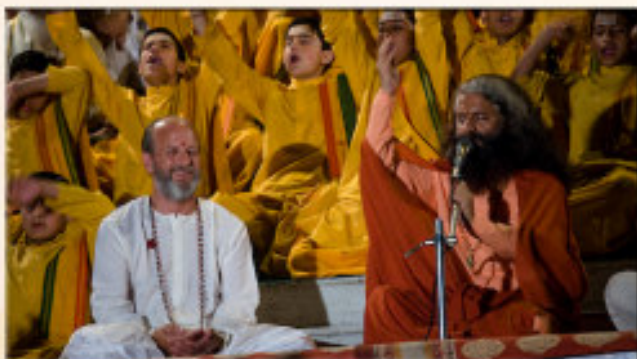


The function was attended also by the honorable Health Minister of the state of Uttarakhand, Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyalji, Pujya Acharya Balkrishnanji.

Beautiful speeches were given about not only the importance of having a cancer hospice center but for having more research into natural methods of cancer prevention and treatment.

## Thom Knoles Group

A 10-day meditation camp was led by Thom Knoles, a world renowned Vedic meditation teacher in the Shankaracharya lineage. The group also had a special satsang and question-answer session with Pujya Swamiji in which He spoke on how to live our lives in meditation, how to bring the teachings into our daily lives, as well as many other topics





## Swaminarayan Group

A large group of western devotees of the Swaminarayan tradition came to Parmarth Niketan led by the sisters of Pujya Hariprasad Swamiji's ashram in Gujarat, came to Parmarth Niketan for a spiritual camp. More than one hundred of these devotees stayed for several days at Parmarth, imbibing the divine nectar and taking part in the sacred yagna and aarti ceremony, as well as special satsang with Pujya Swamiji.



## Brazilian Yoga Group

Dr. Jose Rugue, from Brazil, brought a group of approximately 40 students from Brazil to study yoga and ayurveda for three weeks at Parmarth.

They had a variety of classes from Dr. Rugue and all of the excellent teachers he called in, and they also took part in the evening Ganga Aarti and Yagna. They also had satsang and question-answer with Pujya Swamiji.

Further, when Dr. Rugue was here, the plans were finalized for the partnership between him and IHRF for the new Parmarth Yoga and Ayurveda center in Brazil.





## Gangaji Clean-Up



On the 27th February, Pujya Swamiji organized a large clean up program of the banks of Mother Ganga, all the way from Ram Jhula southward, and into the Swargashram Market area. All of the rishikumars and kanniyakumaris of the Parmarth Gurukul, all of the guests at Parmarth and many others, joined hands to spend the morning cleaning our Mother Ganga.

In February, we had several large groups from abroad staying with us, and all of the foreigners also came together to help in picking up trash from the banks of the river, from within the water itself as well as from the alleyways and marketplace.

Pujya Swamiji is ardently committed to the “Clean, Green and Serene” movement, particularly in this pristine, holy area. Hence, he regularly organizes and runs massive clean up programs.

Special thanks also to Yash and Avanti Birla for providing hoses and pumps so that in addition to picking up trash and sweeping the banks of the river, we are also able to truly wash the banks clean!



## Ayurveda classes in Gurukul

During the Ayurveda and Yoga program run by Dr. Jose Rugue, Dr. Avinash Lele, a world renowned Ayurvedic expert from Pune, came to teach to the students about the intricacies of ayurveda. While here at Parmarth, he gave some special lectures to our young rishikumars and also took them for a nature, ayurveda walk in the forest, showing them which plants are beneficial for which ailments, which have different medicinal properties, etc. The rishikumars all thoroughly enjoyed the program, and Dr. Lele has promised to return soon and regularly!



## Other Groups

During the month of February, we had so many different groups come to the ashram:

1. Thom Knoles meditation group
2. Brazilian Yoga and Ayurveda Group, led by Dr. Jose Rugue
3. Argentinian group led by yogacharya Ganeshnath (Jorge Bindondo)
4. Holland group led by the Saswitha Academy of Yoga and Philosophy
5. Italian Group led by Nandini & Ananda





# Divine Messages



## *Valentines Day What is true love?*

*True love cannot be bought, bribed,  
begged, manipulated or forced.  
It can only blossom from deep  
within the heart.*


This is the time of year when, all over the Western world, people celebrate Valentine's Day. It's not a tradition celebrated in India, but nonetheless it is a wonderful opportunity to discuss love, as the entire holiday is dedicated to this beautiful, divine emotion.

Love is simultaneously the purest and one of the most complex emotions we find. True love, at its purest, is just that – pure, true and love. It is unpolluted, untainted, unencumbered by desires, expectations, needs or wants. Love is content just to love. As Khalil Gibran says, *“Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself.”* Love needs no reciprocity. Love needs no appreciation. Love loves for the very sake of loving. Loving is its own reward.

It is, of course, essential to clarify, that I am NOT talking about lust or passion, which are completely unrelated to love.

Love dissolves the very borders and boundaries of who you are, as you melt into its vast ocean. Love takes you from time to timelessness, from separation to divine union. Love is the sunshine which coaxes open the petals of the flower. Love is the water that causes the seed to sprout. Love causes those who love – whether they are people or flowers — to blossom and grow.






Unfortunately, too few people are able to really reap the benefits – physical, emotional and spiritual – of true love for they are incapable of either giving it or receiving it. Love is not glue which puts together that which is broken inside of you. Love is not a filler for the holes within you. Love is not a band-aid for your inner wounds. Love does not complete you, nor heal you, nor make you whole. In fact, true, pure love can ONLY be experienced between two people who are both already whole and complete. As long as you are looking to another – whether it's a parent, a child, a friend, a spouse, a Guru or anyone – to fill that within you which is empty, to heal that within you which is hurt, to put back together that within you which is broken, you will never be able to experience true love.

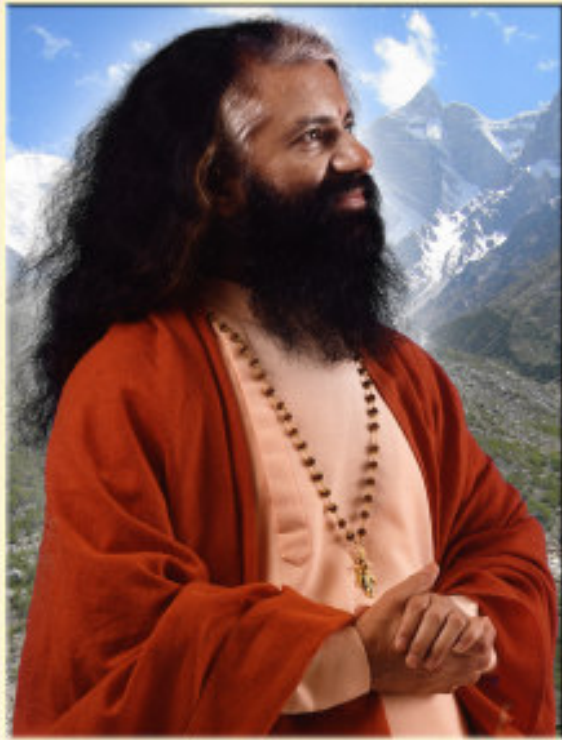
Many people mistake need for love. “I need you” is very different from “I love you” yet too many people mistake the former for the latter. Love gives. Need takes. Love accepts. Need demands. Khalil Gibran says, “*Love possesses not nor would it be possessed; For love is sufficient unto love.*” When you find yourself criticizing your loved ones, finding fault in what they are or are not doing, when you complain and sulk, you are moving away from love. Not only does the love within your own heart become diminished but the beloved's feelings toward you change. No one on Earth likes to be nagged or criticized. No one likes to hear the same complaints over and over. No one likes to see sulking, grumpy or cranky faces day in and day out.

We think, tragically, that we can change people, that we can make them love us more or better or differently (or at all, in the case of someone who doesn't love us). Hence we manipulate, we cry, we complain, we sulk, we do all sorts of things which we think will turn the beloved in the direction we want, toward us. But it actually backfires. You may succeed in changing your beloved's actions. Depending upon the relationship, many people may find it is a lot easier to just amend their behavior to suit their spouse, friend, parent, child or other person who loves them. Yet that is only behavior. The heart cannot be molded or stretched or pulled according to our wishes. In fact, the more you nag and complain to loved ones, the farther they move, internally, away from you. Again, to quote from Khalil Gibran, “*And think not you can direct the course of love; love, if it finds you worthy, directs your course.*” Love is one of the greatest blessings and greatest mysteries on Earth.

On this Valentine's Day, take a moment and examine whether you are truly loving, whether your love is full of acceptance, gratitude and giving, or whether your love is riddled with complaints, criticism, condemnation and comparisons. Take this opportunity not merely to eat chocolates or enjoy a candle-lit dinner but truly to find the source of pure, divine love within you – the love which asks nothing in return, the love which is content just to love







## HOLI

Holi is one of the most festive, joyous holidays of the Hindu year. It is celebrated primarily in the North of India and it falls on the full moon day of Phalguna (February - March). The festival is marked by great revelry during which everyone paints each other with brightly colored powders. Song, dance and bright red, green, yellow and pink powder are the hallmarks of the occasion.

The meanings of Holi are numerous. For some, it is the festival of Springtime, the heralding of warm weather and bidding farewell to the winter. It is also seen as a festival of love, the return of fertility and virility. However, side by side with the celebration of love and fertility is the message to exercise control over the emerging


passion. In some parts of India the story is told on Holi of Kamadeva (God of Love; Cupid), whom Lord Shiva burned to ashes as he tried to seduce Him out of His meditation. The message is: celebrate love, but don't get carried away. Thus, Holi is a celebration of divinity and discipline over passion.

The Puranas describe Holi as a celebration of virtue over vice. It is a time when we rejoice in the victory of pure, divine Prahlada over his aunt Holika. The story - in a simple, condensed way - says that Prahlada was a young, beautiful, pure, divine devotee of God. However, Prahlada's father was a powerful king who believed that everyone should worship him. At Prahlada's refusal to do so, due to his singleminded love of God, his father decided to have him killed. Prahlada's aunt (his father's sister), Holika, had been given a special shawl as a boon from God for various austerities she had performed. When she wore this shawl, she could not be burned by fire. So, Prahlada's father and his sister devised a plan in which she would wear her shawl and hold Prahlada tightly in her arms as they sat in fire. In this way, Prahlada would be killed, but she would emerge unscathed.

However, as divine plan works, a strong gust of wind came and blew the shawl off of her, as well as carried pure Prahlada to safety. Holika was burned in the fire of her own evil. One of the great obstacles in life to our spiritual progress is the difference between what we do or say on the outside and how we really are on the inside. Holika had performed certain austerities by which she was entitled to this boon from God. On the outside, she was "pious." But, on the inside she was not pure. Prahlada, on the other hand, was a simple, pure, loving devotee of God. This is what saved him. This inner purity and inner piety are what truly save us, what truly make our lives divine.

So many of us go to temple, do the rituals, offer money to the priests, and chant a certain number of malas. Then, we go out and act in selfish, unpious, dishonest ways. These may





not necessarily take the form of malicious transgressions. It may simply be the way we speak to our children or to our loved ones. It may simply be the way we try to cheat those with whom we do business. It may be the way we sit and gossip about others.

All the rituals and puja in the world cannot make up for a lack of piety, honesty and compassion. The goal of going to temple is not just to perform rituals; the goal is to become spiritual. God is happier with pure, innocent, devoted Prahlada than with all the austerities and rituals performed by his father and aunt.

Thus, on this divine occasion, we should pray to be filled with the purity and devotion of Prahlada. We should commit ourselves to performing our puja, meditation and japa with focus, dedication and deep love for God.

One meaning of the word Holi is sacrifice. On Holi we light so many bonfires to revel in joy and to burn the effigies of Holika. The meanings of these bonfires are to burn that which is devilish and impure, leaving only the purity and divinity after Holi. However, we must remember not only to partake in the merry-making of a bonfire. We must remember to sacrifice that within us which is devilish and impure. There is some demon-nature in all of us. We must burn that demon-nature on Holi and emerge as pure and pious as divine Prahlada.

The fire of purity and divinity which we light on Holi must burn continuously in our hearts throughout the year. We must have an ever-burning bonfire of impurity, so that we are continuously renewed, continuously purified and continuously rejuvenated.

On Holi we sing loudly in the Hindi language: "Holi I, Holi I, Holi I...." However, let us not just chant this rhyme; rather, let us truly pray to God that on this day "I" may become holy. Let us pray that "I" may become pious, pure and devoted as Prahlada. In that way our lives and our hearts and our souls will be forever protected, forever sheltered at His holy feet.

As we chant "Holi I, Holi I, Holi I...." let us also pray that our "eye" may become holy, that we may be granted the divine vision by which we behold Him in all whom we see. Let us pray that through our holy eye, we never are led toward anger, greed, lust or jealousy.

LET THIS HOLI BE A TIME WHEN WE CHANGE  
NOT ONLY THE COLOR OF OUR FACES, BUT THE COLOR OF OUR HEARTS.

LET US NOT ONLY "PLAY" HOLI, BUT LET US BECOME HOLY.

LET THE ONLY COLOR THAT TRULY PENETRATES OUR BEINGS  
BE THE COLOR OF GOD.

FOR, ON THE MORNING AFTER HOLI THE OTHER COLORS WILL WASH AWAY.

BUT WE MUST LET THE COLOR OF GOD BE INDELIBLE  
IN OUR EYES, IN OUR EARS AND IN OUR HEARTS.







## *Pujya Swamiji's Itinerary March - May 2009*

### **March**

1-30

Rishikesh

### **April**

1-26

Rishikesh

29-30

Venice, Italy

### **May**

1-2

Venice, Italy

3-5

Tenerife, Spain

7-8

London

9-17

Pittsburgh, PA

18

Philadelphia

20-31

Rishikesh

*Please note: Pujya Swamiji's schedule is always subject to change.*

*Please email to [bhagwati@parmarth.com](mailto:bhagwati@parmarth.com) for up-to-date information on His availability in Rishikesh*