



# Parmarth Niketan

Quarterly Newsletter

January 2011



Featuring | Diwali Celebration at Parmarth Niketan, Swaminarayan  
Shibir and Vivek Oberoi wedding







## Special Events & Guests at Parmarth | Swaminarayan Shibir



**Pujya Swamiji lights the inaugural lamp for the camp with Pujya Swami Madhavpriyasdasji and Pujya Balkrishna Swamiji**

From the 8th - 18th November Parmarth Niketan had the great honor and joy of hosting nearly 100 saints and about 800 devotees of the Swaminarayan tradition, headed by Pujya Swami Madhavpriyadasji Maharaj at Rishikesh.

For over a week, the saints and devotees had satsang, yoga, meditation, puja and abhishek. They also participated in the divine Ganga Aarti each evening, giving us all the gift of their darshan.





# Special Events & Guests at Parmarth | Swaminarayan Shibir



Pujya Swamiji and Pujya Swami Madhavpriyasdasji



Ganga Aarti with all the Swaminarayan saints on the stage



Pujya Swamiji and Pujya Swami Madhavpriyasdasji greet each other lovingly







# Special Events & Guests at Parmarth | Diwali



Cleaning up Ganga



Cleaning up Ganga



Pujya Swamiji serving lunch at the bhandara

Diwali, the Indian festival of Light, was celebrated at Parmarth beginning with a clean up of Mother Ganga. All the ashram guests --including the yoga students in Gurmukh's Kundalini Yoga Teacher's Training Program, residents and rishikumars, led by Pujya

Swamiji, spent the morning cleaning the banks of Mother Ganga.

After the Ganga clean up, and baths in Ganga, we had a huge bhandara (feast) on the banks of Ganga.





# Special Events & Guests at Parmarth | Diwali



Evening brought us back to Gangaji's banks for the yagna and aarti ceremony, followed by a sacred Lakshmi puja.



Aarti on Diwali



Pujya Swamiji performs puja



Diwali puja





# Special Events & Guests at Parmarth | Diwali



In the puja we prayed for health, happiness, peace and prosperity for all of the Parmarth family, all across the world, and for all creatures, of all species in every corner of the Earth.







## Special Events & Guests at Parmarth | Indonesian Group



A beautiful group came from Indonesia and they had made a sacred image of Mt. Kailash using soil from their own country and soil from India. They packed the soil with Ganga water and then covered it with gold leaf. They presented this to Pujya Swamiji as a symbol of their devotion to Kailash and their wish to travel to the holy land whenever He goes next.







**Left to right: Malay Mishra, high commissioner of India to Trinidad/Tobago, Pujya Swamiji, Acharya Balkrishanji, Sadhvi Bhagawati**

In October, Parmarth Niketan hosted the Integrating Spirituality and Organizational Leadership Foundation Conference. The theme was Spiritual and Ethical Foundations of Organizational Development. On the concluding day, keynote addresses were given by Pujya Swamiji, Acharya Balkrishan of Patanjali Yog Peeth and Sadhvi Bhagawati, on the importance of

spirituality and ethics in any kind of leadership, organization or development. Shri Malay Mishra, high commissioner of India to Trinidad was one of the special guests.







Lighting the inaugural lamp



Release of Sunita SenGupta's book



Aarti after the conference





On the 27th October, Parmarth hosted the Aviral, Nirmal Ganga conference (Keeping Ganga's flow uninterrupted and clean). Top scientists from across India and even from US came to discuss specific aspects of protecting and preserving Ganga. This is just one more recent step in Pujya Swamiji's commitment to work ceaselessly to keep the waters and banks of Mother Ganga clean. In December He

traveled to Kanpur, Allahabad and Varanasi to meet with scientists and local communities there (details in next newsletter). Here in Uttarakhand the problems are mainly sewage/solid waste management, personal waste disposal and the issue of dams. However, further down in Uttar Pradesh the issues of industrial, commercial and toxic waste arise.







# Pujya Swamiji's Travels and Functions | Ganga Conference



Pujya Swamiji leads the conference of scientists and activists from India and around the world.



The team from the Ganga conference at Aarti





In the wake of the verdict by the High Court, regarding the dispute over the land of Bhagawan Rama's birth in Ayodhya, in which they decided that the land would be divided into 3 parts for the 3 parties, Pujya Swamiji organized meetings between Hindu leaders and Muslim leaders, in an effort to prevent the parties from appealing in the Supreme Court.

Participants in the discussion included Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (via teleconference), Swami Agnivesh, Maulanna Wahiduddin Khan Sahib, Maulanna Madani, Indresh Kumar, Dewan Sahib Ajmer Sharif, Goswami Sushil, A.K. Merchant, Devendra Sharma, Kamal Faruki, Father Dominic Emmanuel and others.







**Pujya Swamiji with the Honorable Chief Minister, Honorable Governor of Uttarakhand and other senior government officials**



**Official inauguration**



**Shri Rakesh Sharmaji, Principal Secretary for Tourism and Culture speaks at the event**

Pujya Swamiji was a special guest at the inauguration of the Himalayan Culture Center in Dehradun, with the Governor and the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand.







The students at Khirket college come to hear Pujya Swamiji's divine lecture

On November 17, Pujya Swamiji traveled to Ranikhet for inauguration and continuation of various projects we've undertaken in a village of Ranikhet (Kumaon, Uttarakhand) called Mawra, which is the home village of Shri CM Bhandariji, the former ambassador of India to Poland. When Pujya Swamiji was in Poland in 2008, Shri Bhandariji had requested Him to grace the village with His presence. Thus, in 2008 Pujya Swamiji made the first trip and agreed that we would join hands and help Shri Bhandariji and his organization in the sponsorship of various village projects including Khirket college. This is also part of the project Pujya Swamiji has undertaken for the beautification of the sacred Jageshwar Mandir which is just a few hours from Ranikhet.



Pujya Swamiji delivers His inspiring and uplifting address to the students





Pujya Swamiji is taken through the village, inaugurating new projects and seeing the progress of projects underway



A beautiful village woman of Marwa



Pujya Swamiji with the beautiful villagers





# Pujya Swamiji's Travels and Functions | Vivek Oberoi's Wedding



**Pujya Swamiji gives His special blessings to Vivek and Priyanka**

On the 29th October, famous Bollywood actor Vivek Oberoi married Priyanka Alva of Bangalore. Vivek has been very close to Parmarth and a devotee of Pujya Swamiji's for many years. (In fact, Vivek's sister, Meghna, married her husband Amit at Parmarth Niketan in 2008) Hence, upon Vivek's request, Pujya Swamiji traveled to Bangalore for the wedding where He showered His love and blessings upon the couple.



**Pujya Swamiji blesses the pagadi before it gets tied on Vivek's head**





# Pujya Swamiji's Travels and Functions | Vivek Oberoi's Wedding



Pujya Swamiji ties the sera on Vivek



Pujya Swamiji blesses them with a special double flower mala - signifying two bodies, but one soul



Pujya Swamiji blesses Priyanka with sacred tilak





After Divine Soul Ratanmaiya Taparia's ashes are immersed in the waters of Mother Ganga at Parmarth, special prayers are said that her soul may attain everlasting peace in the lap of the Divine



Prior to the ash immersion, a sacred puja is performed

Divine Soul Ratanmaiya Taparia, wife of Shri B.L. Taparia, mother of Vijay Taparia, Neelam Periwal and Nisha Rathi, shed her physical body and left for the Divine abode in the beginning of October. Her last wish had been to come and reside at Parmarth, on the banks of Ganga, for her remaining days. Although she couldn't come in her physical, bodily form, her ashes were brought here and the final rites were performed on the sacred banks of Mother Ganga.





**Pujya Swamiji whispers the sacred mantra into Ishan's ear**

The sacred thread ceremony, or janeo sanskar, is one of the most important rites of passage in the life of a young boy ([click here](#) to read details of the meaning of this ceremony). It is a passage into the years in which one will study the Vedas and devote oneself to scriptural (and academic) study. Sailesh and Marina Chand of Brisbane Australia, brought their son Ishan to Rishikesh for his janeo sanskar. A large group of family and friends came as well.



**Pujya Swamiji blesses Ishan**





The family/friends who came from Australia for Ishan's janeo sanskar



Sailsh leads a special Guru charan puja





The function for the bhoomi puja of Patanjali Yog Peeth's horticulture project

On the 13th October, Pujya Swamiji traveled to Gangotri and Dharali in the sacred Garwhal Himalayas. Acharya Balkrishanji and Swami Ramdevji (of Patanjali Yog Peeth) are establishing a horticulture center in Dharali, about 1 hour south of Gangotri, on the banks of Ganga and had requested Pujya Swamiji to come for the bhoomi puja (ground breaking ceremony). Pujya Swamiji agreed, and also took the opportunity to go to Gangotri for follow up on the programs He is working on for cleaning Ganga and beautifying the sacred teerth (pilgrimage area) of Gangotri.

[Click here](#) to listen to the talks at the Dharali function



Yagna ceremony



Shanti chants Vedic mantras she has learned in the Parmarth yoga teachers training programs





Surveying the land



Pujya Swamiji meets with the priests, pandas and local leaders in Gangotri



Gangotri temple



Prayers on the banks of Ganga

Pujya Swamiji has undertaken a huge program, in cooperation with the Government of Uttarakhand, to restore the holy area of Gangotri, the source of the Ganga river, to a state of beauty and cleanliness.







## Hasubhai Award



**Shri Hasubhai Shah with Vice President Joe Biden**



**Hersha Shah with Vice President Joe Biden**



**Ratan Tata, Martin Luther King III, Neil Shah and Jay Shah**

Divine Soul Shri Hasubhai Shah, President of India Heritage Research Foundation (of which Pujya Swamiji is the Founder/Chairman), was given a very special and prestigious award. The United Way Tocqueville Society Award is given to people who have achieved outstanding service as volunteers on a national level.

Hersha and Shri Hasubhai Shah are the first recipients of this prestigious award from central Pennsylvania. Some of the previous recipients of this special award include former President Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, as well as Bob Hope, John Glenn and Henry Ford, II.







## Pujya Swamiji's New Year's Message



Dear Divine Souls,

Happy New Year! As a new year dawns upon us, as the morn of 2011 brings the eve of 2010 to an end, it is a good time to reflect upon our lives, our paths and our progress toward the ultimate destination of divine awakening and realization. So much in our lives, at times, feels overwhelming, frustrating, unmanageable... but at these times it is most important to remember that we are not alone. God is always with us. There is a beautiful story of a young toddler playing in a sandbox. As the young boy shoveled and dug and built in the box, he came upon a large rock in the sand. No matter how much he tried to dig around it, the rock would not dislodge. Thus, he began to try push it with all his

might, trying to move it at least to the edge of the sandbox. Yet still the rock was too heavy for his small body and undeveloped muscles. Finally his eyes became red, and he began to cry out of frustration. A large shadow suddenly appeared across the sandbox and the little boy looked up at his father. "I can't move the rock," the boy exclaimed. "And it's right in the middle of my hole." The boy's father replied, "My child, you have not yet used all your strength." "Oh yes, Papa, I have. I have tried and tried to move it but it is too heavy. I cannot do it."

The father leaned down into the sandbox and easily removed the large rock, laying it carefully on the ground outside the box. "My child, you may have used all the strength in your arms, but I am also your strength. You just had to ask for help and I would have come immediately to remove the rock from your hole."

In our lives also, we forget that we have another source of strength, outside of our own bodies. We feel the weight of all problems upon our own shoulders and imagine that they are up to us to solve. We feel alone, tired, frustrated and helpless, for the rocks are sometimes too heavy for us to lift out of the way.

Yet, we must never forget our other source of strength - God. No rock is too big or heavy for Him. No hurdle or challenge or obstacle is insurmountable by Him. We must simply ask Him, with sincerity, purity and love, to come and help us remove the obstacles on our path. God has





## Pujya Swamiji's New Year's Message



not created us to suffer. Rather He has given us intellect, intuition, purity, piety and faith that we may overcome suffering. He is here, at every moment of every day, to help us along the path, to relieve us of our burdens no matter how heavy they may seem.

We must never give up, we must never lose hope and we must never fear from forging a new, righteous, divine path in life. Those paths will, of course, be difficult at times. However, by maintaining our deep connection to God (by whatever name, whatever form, whatever religion you may be) we become able to tap into the boundless well of courage, fearlessness, steadfastness and creativity. A mobile phone, or any electronic device, loses its power and charge after some time. However, simply by plugging it back into the socket, all of the power is recharged. Similarly, when we reconnect with God it is like plugging ourselves into the Divine Powerhouse....all of the energy and strength of the universe becomes available to us.

In this world, it is easy to lose hope, easy to lose faith, easy to look around at the desperation and to conclude that God does not exist. However, there is a wonderful story of a man who is sitting in the barber's chair one day for a haircut. The barber begins to say, "I do not believe God exists. There is too much evil in the world, too much is negative and bad. If there were a God, then evil would not exist." The man, although a great believer, remained quiet, so as not to cause a fight with the barber who had scissors in his hand. Yet, as he walked out of the barber shop, he turned around to the barber and said, "I do not believe that barbers exist. I see all these men with long, untamed, straggly hair and unruly beards. If there were barbers, all men would be neatly groomed." The barber replied: "Of course barbers exist. I am one. However, I can only groom those who come to me. The straggly, unruly hair and beards you see are on those who have not come to me." The man looked gently at the barber and said, "Yes, it is the same with God. Evil exists because people do not go to Him. If everyone surrendered to Him there would not be evil and wrongdoing. These things stem from ignorance and illusion. When we connect with Him our ignorance and illusion are dispelled."

However, we must realize that God will do whatever is best for us and the world, not necessarily whatever we want. If the young boy in my story at the beginning had been trying unsuccessfully to light his sandbox on fire, or to bury his younger sister in the sand, his father certainly would not have assisted in the task. So, we must realize that all which we strive for is not necessarily in our own or in the planet's best interest, and the lack of Divine assistance does not mean that God is not there or doesn't care or has abandoned us. It simply means He is giving us what we need, rather than what we think we want. It means there is a bigger picture which we are not able to see clearly.





## Pujya Swamiji's New Year's Message



When we feel like we are rowing our boat uphill, against a raging current....when it feels that no matter how hard we row, the boat goes nowhere....when we have prayed and prayed, tried and tried, persevered and persevered all to no avail, it means that it is time to reevaluate the path and direction. Is uphill really the direction we need to go? Are we sure that this path or project or goal is truly God's will? Might there not be another direction in which we could row the boat where the current helps us rather than hinders us? Is there another path we could take which is not so completely overgrown with thorns? Mahatma Gandhiji said it beautifully, "What is the point of trying to increase our speed when we are moving in the wrong direction?"

So, in this new year, let us take a two-fold path to our spiritual development and life fulfillment. Path one is faith - let us realize that God is always there for us, always ready to remove the heavy and stuck rocks on our path. Let us never despair or become overwhelmed by frustration or tension. Let us live with the mantra which we sing every morning in our morning prayers at Parmarth Niketan, "Tu akele nahiy pyare. Rama tere saath mein." It means, "Never despair, my child. God is always with you." And secondly, let us pray not that our will may be fulfilled, but that our will may be in alignment with the divine will, that we may be able to align our lives with the flow of the universe, such that the flow of the current helps rather than hinders us. Despite the prevalence of violence, crime, illusions and ignorance in the world, the actual universal and divine flow is toward goodness, toward light, toward peace, toward equality and toward enlightenment. Hence, let us align our lives and our work with that universal, divine flow so that our lives and our work may be fulfilling, successful, peaceful and joyful.

We will say special prayers here on the banks of Mother Ganga for a year filled with health, happiness, peace, prosperity and spiritual upliftment for you all.

With love and blessings to you all and all your loved ones.

In the service of God and humanity,  
Swami Chidanand Saraswati





# Links

Please visit us on the web for videos, podcasts and music from Parmarth Niketan, plus information on upcoming programs and seva opportunities.







March 1-7, 2011  
**International  
Yoga  
Festival**

venue:

**Parmarth Niketan  
Rishikesh**

Jointly organized by Uttarakhand Tourism Development  
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