

# SHREE JALARAM MANDIR – GREENFORD

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Issue 09



## From the President's Desk

Rashmi Chatwani

Jai Jalaram.

It is coming up to a year since I was elected as the President of the Mandir and it has been a great privilege for me to serve Pujya Jalaram Bapa. I have been extremely lucky to carry out my duties with the help of a very strong team of my fellow Trustees. Their collective effort and persistence in maintaining transparency has won us praises from all quarters and my special thanks to all of them. We are holding our AGM on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

The application for planning permission for a new building of our Mandir incorporating a Community Centre alongside of it will be presented to the local council in the not too distant future. Such projects always pose their own challenges and seem like an obstacle race but with a team of Trustees working very hard on it, I am sure we'll reach our goal. I would like to thank all who have worked very hard in dealing with this project.

Once again we have had great successes at various events which took place at the Mandir over the last twelve months. These events included the celebrations of Diwali and the New Year, Jalaram Jayanti, Maha Shiv Ratri and the colourful Festival of Holi. All this has only been made possible by our devotees who have sponsored various events and activities and supported the Mandir. I take this opportunity to thank all of them. The Sadavrat has continued to go from strength to strength.

Our Mandir has provided platform for various professional bodies mainly to raise awareness amongst devotees on Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, Stroke, Cardiac Problems, Smoking, Organ Donation, and Healthy Eating. We have done very well with the Eye and Dental Camps we have sponsored in Gujarat. Our contribution of Food items for the Food Bank has been well appreciated. So has been the participation in Food for the Homeless project.

Finally, I would like to thank all the volunteers and staff for making this year very successful for the Mandir and all who have supported me as the President.

I personally look forward to taking on the task of building the new Mandir along with the Community Centre once the planning application has been approved.

Jai Jalaram.

## The Board of Trustees 2013 - 14

Rashmi Chatwani - President	Prakash Gandecha - Secretary	Asmita Masrani - Trustee
Cllr. Rajni C. Khiroya - Past President	Sharad Bhimjiyani - Treasurer	Rajnikant Davda - Trustee
Dr. Mansukh Morjaria - Vice President	Praful Radia - Asst. Secretary	Amritlal Rajani - Co-opted Trustee
	Laxmidas Popat - Asst. Treasurer	Dr. Jayu Morjaria - Co-opted Trustee

## Editorial Board

Dr. Jayu Morjaria, Cllr. Rajni C. Khiroya, Dr. Mansukh Morjaria, Prakash Gandecha, Amritlal Rajani



At the Republic Day flag hoisting



Temple visit by the Scouts group

### **New Year's Eve and New Year Day**

The year 2013 saw a variety of spiritual activities being carried out at the Mandir. There was no cooling down period; the year ended off in a high note, with a Bhajan programme on the New Year Eve's Night. The Year 2014 was ushered in by a *Maha Aarti* at Midnight.

Chanting of *Hanuman Chalisa* 108 times in succession began soon after the morning *Aarti* on the 1st January 2014. There was a continuous flow of devotees participating in the chanting until late in the evening. *Maha Prasad* was served throughout the afternoon till 8pm. The Coston School Car Park was not available for the day. As always, the devotees co-operated and used the Greenford Broadway Car Park behind V.B.

### **India Republic Day**

The 65th Republic Day was celebrated at the Mandir with flag hoisting and singing of the National Anthem. The attendees braved the wet weather to show their bond and loyalty to the motherland.

### **Jalaram Bapa's Punya Tithee**

Pujya Bapa left for the Heavenly abode on *Maha Vad Dasam* of *Vikram Samvat* 1937 (23 Feb 1881). His 133<sup>rd</sup> Death Anniversary fell on Tuesday 25th February 2014 (*Vikram Samvat* 2070). It is said that the Saints live in their devotees' hearts forever. This was reaffirmed by the large turn-out of the devotees through the day when *Jalaram Bavni* was being reverentially chanted 108 times.

### **Maha Shiv Ratri**

Every *Vad Teras* is *Shiv Ratri* but the most important *Shiv Ratri* is the one which falls in the month of *Maha* (4th month of the Hindu calendar) and thus known as *Maha Shivratri*. This year it fell on Thursday 27th February. Hundreds of devotees patiently queued up from the time the Mandir opened and waited for their turn for an *Abhishek*. This continued through the day with no respite till evening. Arrangements were in place for 15 pairs of devotees to perform the *Samuha Shiv Pooja*; such cycles were repeated every 45 mins. More than 150 couples/pairs of devotees availed of this fabulous opportunity on the day. The kitchen front, as always, was well prepared and many devotees were served *Prasad*. Everyone had worked very hard. The *Maha Pooja* was conducted in such an awe inspiring manners that even an atheist watching it or listening to the *Mantrachchaar* would bow and pray in front of the *Shivling*. The *Pooja* was a treat to the senses. The *Shastriji* trio of Piyushbhai, Palkeshbhai and Keyurbhai conducted it in a glorious Vedic Tradition. The vibrance was tremendous and touched each and every one of around 100 devotees present around midnight when the final *Aarti* was performed. It was a fitting finale for the day.



Conducting the Maha Pooja



The beautifully decorated Shivling



Holika Dahan Darshan



Chaitri Navratri Raas Garba

### **Holi Puja and Holika Dahan**

Holi is mainly associated as the Festival of Colours; but this day of joyous celebration with colours follows on the next day of the religiously significant *Holi Puja* and *Holika-Dahan Darshan*, the fire-festival. Our *Mandir* has for the past few years been celebrating this festival. This year too, it was a tremendous success with a massive turn-out. All the planned arrangements were in place, but it was the disciplined behaviour of the devotees that won the day and made all of us very proud. *Prasad* was distributed very generously.

### **Chaitri Navratri**

*Aaso Navratri* is socially very popular but *Chaitri Navratri* is religiously as significant. Starting from 31st March this festival is being celebrated at the *Mandir* by devotional performance of *Raas-Garba* every evening, ending with *Mataji's Aarti* at 10 pm. We have covered the 2nd day's celebration here.

The *Durgashtami Havan* (7th April) and *Ram Navmi* (8th April) would have been celebrated soon after this issue would have gone to the press. We know for sure that lots of preparations have been made and would go well.

R A M A - Shree Jalaram Mandir - Greenford						
Financial Summary						
Period Ended	Notes	Income	Expenditure	Surplus	Cumulative	
31st Dec 2008	1	Bal Carried Forward		£5,376	£5,376	
31st Dec 2009	1	£372,815	£217,409	£155,406	£160,782	
31st Dec 2010	1	£571,359	£372,084	£199,275	£360,057	
31st Dec 2011	1	£552,112	£373,162	£178,950	£539,007	
31st Dec 2012	1	£620,438	£353,663	£266,775	£805,782	
31st Dec 2013	2	£656,179	£434,669	£221,510	£1,027,292	
		<b>£2,772,903</b>	<b>£1,750,987</b>	<b>£1,027,292</b>		

Notes: 1. As per Accounts filled with The Charity Commission UK. 2. Unaudited Draft Management Report

## 🌀 GIFT AID YOUR DONATIONS 🌀

**Shree Jalaram Mandir – Greenford has been a torch-bearer amongst all similar institutions in transparency in administration, and all its financial and other affairs. It has also led the path in meeting its social obligations.**

**Shree Jalaram Mandir – Greenford, with the support of the devotees:**

- **Sponsored 83 Eye Camps** that were conducted in past 18 months in 25 towns & villages of Gujarat where: 17,754 patients were examined of which 13,059 were given drops & minor treatment while **2,539 patients were operated for Cataract and given the 'Gift of Sight'**.
- **Sponsored 37 Dental Camps** that were conducted in past 10 months in 37 villages of Gujarat where: 4687 patients were examined, 3007 patients given Tooth Powder and Oral-care understanding, 1606 teeth extracted by '*Jaalandhar Bandh Ayurvedic Method*' and **1122 patients given new set of Dentures**.
- **Gave contribution to Harrow Food Bank:** Up to 27.03.2014, the Mandir has given a generous donation of **1.2 tons of grocery items** for people in crisis.
- **Provided Food for the Homeless:** In past 12 months the Mandir has **supplied over 7500 hot meals** for the needy and homeless people in conjunction with Shri Sathya Sai Narayan Seva Sansthan.

## Be proud to be a Hindu

I quote Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who said, "Hinduism is more than a religion; it is a way of life". It is a set of beliefs and practices. Shree Ravishankar describes it as a way of life comprising of various aspects - the symbols, the rituals, the practices, the scriptures and the traditions each having its own significance. Even the daily practice of puja, chanting, and lighting a lamp along with promoting spiritual values and harmony in the family and society, have a scientific foundation and a deeper meaning. However, it is unfortunate that the understanding to this is relatively inaccessible. Hinduism is probably the oldest religion; it is based on the practice of Dharma, the Code of Life and that is why it is referred to as the eternal faith or Sanatana Dharma.

It is not a religion like Christianity or Islam because it is not founded by any one person or does not have an organized controlling body like the Church or the Order. There is no institution or authority governing it.

To anyone who doesn't know about Hinduism, a religion needs to have one Prophet, one Holy book and one God. The mind is so conditioned and rigidly narrowed down to such a notion that anything else is not acceptable.

Through the history of mankind, religions have shown a tendency akin to present day Multi-Level-Marketing Industry that persistently tries to expand its market share by conversion. It is relevant in this context that no wars have been led under the banner of Hinduism or any forceful conversions to Hinduism done at any time in the history of mankind.

Hinduism professes Non-violence through its preaching: 'Ahinsa Paramo Dharma' meaning non-violence is the highest form of duty. In spite of persistent onslaught from numerous foreign forces, over hundreds of years, Hinduism is still surviving because of the inherent strength of its philosophy. One remains a Hindu never by force, but by choice.

Hinduism is fascinatingly diverse. You can believe in one God and be a Hindu. You may believe in multiple deities or may not believe in God at all and still be a Hindu. It is so democratic, broad-minded and free. Each Hindu practises according to his or her need, belief and spiritual leaning. So the fact is Hinduism is a religion of the individual, for the individual and by the individual with its roots in the Vedas and the Bhagavad-Gita. It is all about an individual approaching God in an individual way according to his temperament and inner evolution. One can customize it to an individual's needs.

Hindus believe in the Supreme abstract authority (Para Brahma) as the creator of this universe. Hindus also believe that God is an all-pervasive reality (sarva-vyapak), who resides in all (antaryamin); this is reflected in the opening *shloka* in the *Ishvasya Upanishad*, '*Ishavasyam idam sarvam...*'. All of us at some stage would have listened to a prayer ending that includes the *Shanti Path* '*Aum Dhyau Shanti Antariksha Shanti Prithvi Shanti..*'; this is an awesome *mantra* of peace, harmony and happiness which when translated means: 'Om. May there be peace in the sky and in the space. May there be peace on the land and in the waters. May the herbs and food bring us peace. May all the personifications of God bring us peace. May God bring us peace. May there be peace throughout the world. May God give me such peace'. Ancestors of today's Hindus believed in eternal truths and cosmic laws and these truths are opened to anyone who seeks them.

The concept or notion of a God, demanding us to worship him or punish us, does not make sense. God is not like an autocratic emperor who wants others to respect him or fear him. Such notions are just fancies of less educated human imagination and fallacies. The entry level Hinduism has some superstitions too but the philosophical side of Hinduism negates all superstitions.

Hinduism has no monopoly on ideas. It is open to all. Hindus believe in one God, expressed in different forms. For them, God is a timeless and a formless entity.

I am a Hindu because it allows independent and objective thinking, without conditioning. I am proud to be a Hindu. Be proud of your religion and who you are.

Jay Shree Krishna. Jay Jalaram.

(Collated and compiled by Dr. Jayu Morjaria)

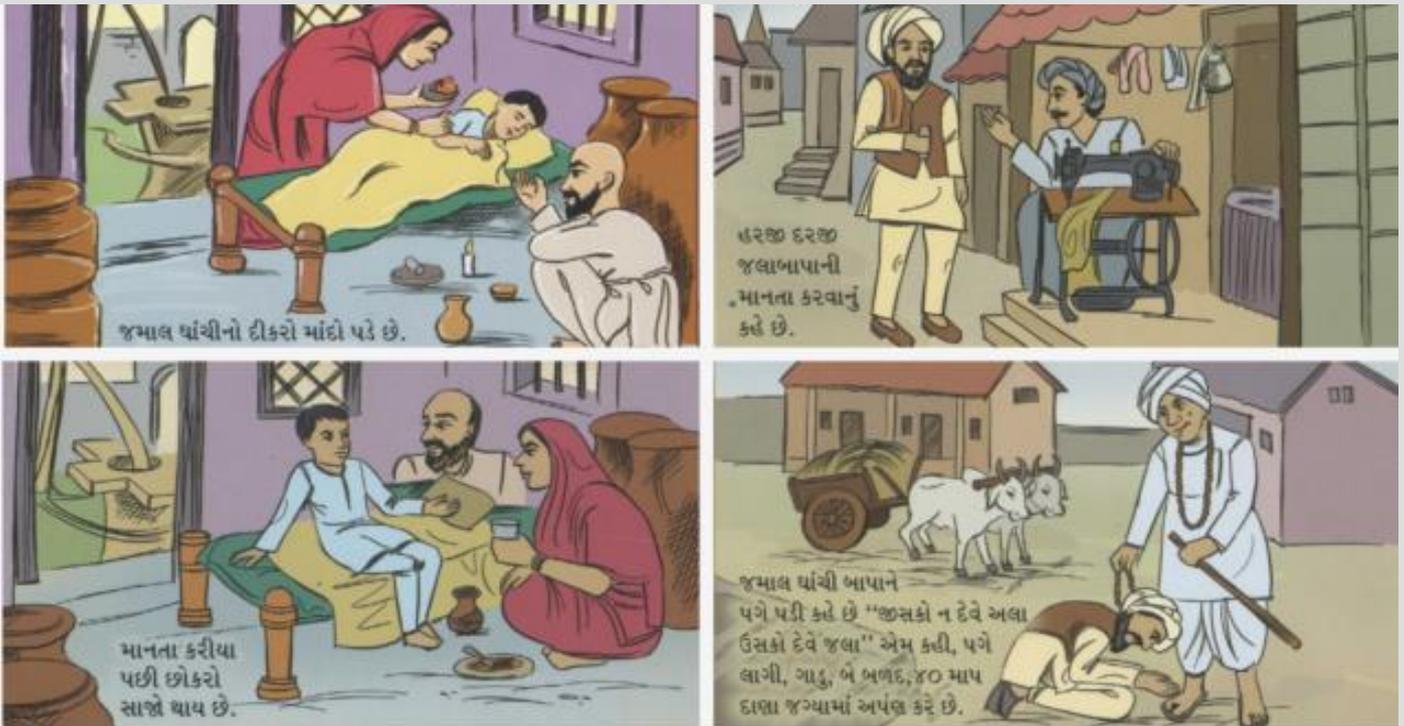


**Wish you all Bapa's Blessings for a Blissful Year ahead**



Dr. Martin Wood from the Department of Study of Religion at Bath Spa University has been conducting research in Pujya Jalaram Bapa's Parchaas. He was at the Mandir last December, interviewing devotees about their experiences. He will be at the Mandir again on 15th, 16th & 17th April. 

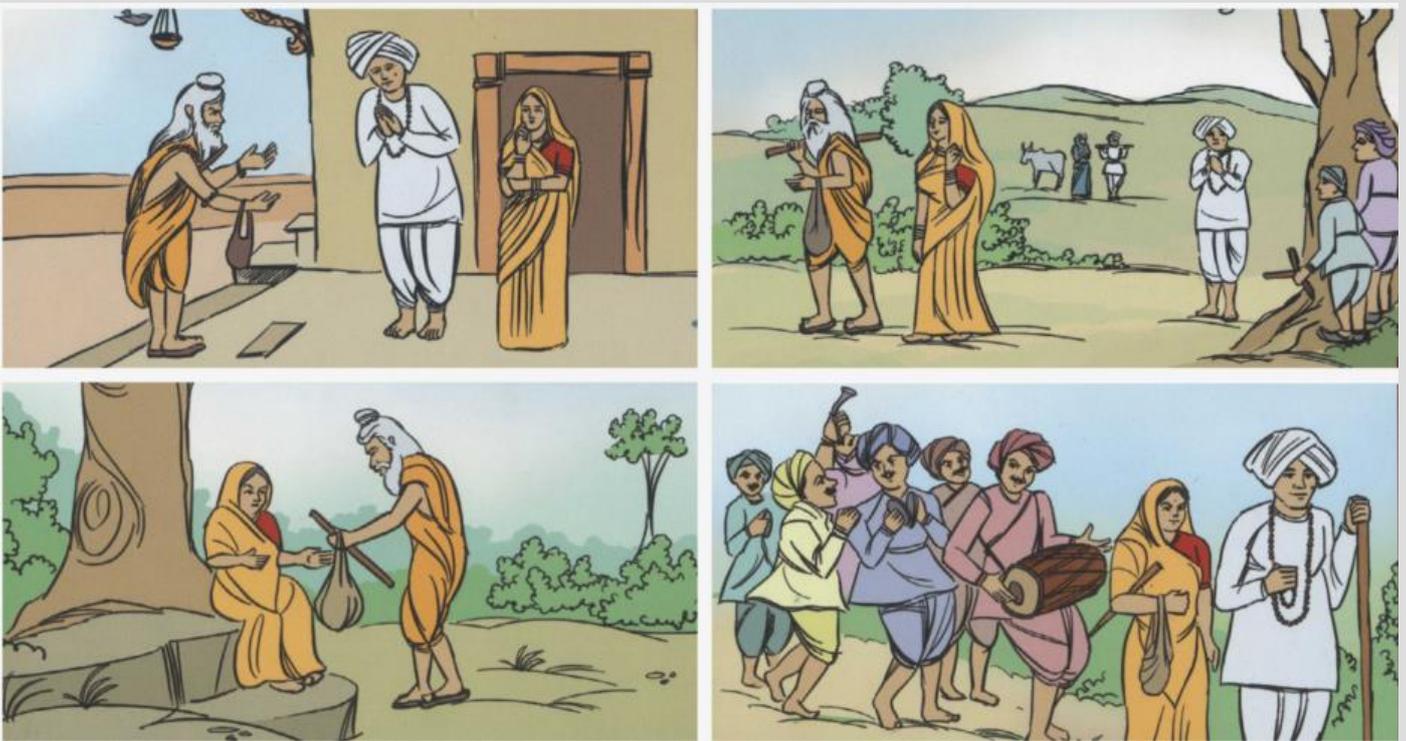
The following are some of the well-known of Bapa's Parchaas:



In Samvat 1878 ( $\cong$ 1822 AD), the ten year old son of Jamal *Ghanchi*, a Muslim oil-miller was seriously ill. Harji *Darji* who had earlier experienced Bapa's miracle suggested to Jamal to keep Bapa's *Manta*. (Harji *Darji* was the one who had first given the title of 'Bapa' to Jalaram two years earlier). With his son on the death bed, Jamal took the *Manta*. The boy started improving soon after and recovered fully. Jamal fulfilled his *Manta* of two bullocks and a cart full of grain for the *Sadavrat* and bowing to Bapa he said, "Jala so Allah" meaning Jala is God. Bapa was just twenty two years of age at the time.



Amarchand Sheth of Jodiya Port (Western Gujarat) was sailing in his dhow, which was laden with goods from Busra (Iraq). The dhow developed a leak five miles from home. He took a *manta* in Bapa's name and pledged to donate fifty bags of superior quality rice if the ship reached safely. When he got to Jodiya against all odds, he sent his men to Virpur with fifty bags of rice, but of inferior quality. Bapa gratefully received the donation but sent a word to Amarchand Sheth that the pledge was for fine quality rice, a fact that was only known to the Sheth! Bapa also requested back his *Kediyu* (traditional shirt). To Sheth's surprise and shock, he found the *Kediyu* plugging the leak along with Bapa's toothpick in its pocket. Repentant of his mistake, the Sheth fulfilled his pledge and sent fifty bags of fine quality rice.



In Samvat 1886 ( $\cong$ 1830 AD), when Shree Jalaram Bapa was just 30, an elderly Sadhu called upon him. Bapa welcomed him in for a meal. However the Sadhu declined the offer and made a strange request. He said, "I am tired of the infirmities of old age. If you really want to do your duty and help me, send your wife with me to serve and attend on me. God would bless you". Bapa informed Virbaima of this request. She asked Bapa to follow his *Dharma* and awaited his order. When Bapa said, "Our *Dharma* is to serve *Sadhu-Santo*", she agreed to serve the Sadhu and care for him like her own father and left with him, leaving Bapa. Two miles north of Virpur, the Sadhu gave his alms sling and staff (*Jholi & Dhoko*) to Virbaima for temporary safekeeping. He did not return but a message was received through an *Akashvani* that Virbaima and Bapa had passed the "test" conducted by God himself. The news spread fast and Virbaima was escorted back to Virpur with fanfare. The *Jholi* and the *Dhoko* are kept for *Darshan* in the Virpur temple even today in Samvat 2070 i.e. 2014 AD.



Three Muslim Arabs were carrying some dead pigeons they had shot whilst travelling. When they arrived at Virpur, Bapa invited them for dinner and to stay for the night. After dinner, Bapa touched their basket with his stick and asked them to release the birds within. To their surprise the birds were alive and flew off when the basket was opened. The next morning these Arabs experienced yet another of Bapa's miracle, related to their job. They remained life-long devotees of Bapa.