

[Morari Bapu Speaks Out On the Gujarat Riots](#)

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INTERVIEW

## Morari Bapu Speaks Out On the Gujarat Riots

Appeals for truth, love and nonviolence

Morari Bapu is one of the most popular and respected exponents of the Ramayana through the dramatic form of presentation known as katha, a combination of storytelling, devotional singing and preaching. He's performed katha before a half-million people at once, as well as to 146 pilgrims beside Mount Kailas in the Himalayas (photo right). A native of Gujarat State, he was one of the few prominent religious figures to join peace efforts in Rajkot, Ahmedabad and Mehsana in the midst of the riots. He spoke his mind on the events in this April 14, 2002, interview with the Hindustan Times.

### His View on the Riots

In the Ramayana it says "Param dharam shruti bidit

ahimsa," that is, "Ahimsa, nonviolence, is the prime dharma, or religion." In any place, on any account, violence in the name of religion is not good. Even at the time of a previous riot in Gujarat, I had said, "What divides is not religion, what joins is religion." Dwelling on the past can only cause pain. Dwelling on the future causes anxiety. It is in the present that all should come together to form a bridge of love.

## On Religion and Violence

These things are done by people who have not done satsang, joined in religious gatherings. Those who have done satsang in the true sense—whatever their religion—cannot do this. There are those who take the cover of religion to commit irreligious acts. You cannot call that religion. Dharma is not something to wear. It is your skin and your nature.

## On His Peace Marches

I found everyone wishing for peace. I felt I did what I had to do by going to the people. I took the message of Rama, which is that we should make a bridge. And only then can we proceed to initiate kalyan, welfare.

## On the Name of Lord Rama

In the Bhagavad Gita it says, "The way an individual worships me that is the way he understands me." Rama is like a mirror. You can be influenced by Him. But you can also see your reflection in Him.

## On the Ram Temple in Ayodhya

It is a matter of faith for hundreds of millions of people, which is why I believe that if understanding people come together and talk, a solution can be found.

## On the Location of Rama's Birthplace

Ayodhya is there, the Saryu river is there [as mentioned in the Ramayana]. So the Lord's birthplace, even according to history, is there.

## On Avenging History

I will not go into that, but I wish that the country's stability, peace, progress and rest are maintained. That

is what all good people should get together and aim for.

## On Saints and Politics

The dharma of saints, swamis and sadhus is raj priti (patriotism, literally "love of the government"), not raj niti (politics, literally, "policy of the government"). But neutral and patriotic wise men can definitely give inspiration to politicians, and advise them to act one way or another in the interest of the nation. I mean people who are wedded to raj priti, not raj niti  
~ Gandhi, for instance.

## On Politicians and Religion

Politicians should not use religion, but should be guided by the basics of religion, which are truth, love and nonviolence. Gandhi had truth on his side, which is why he was successful. In today's politics, truth and high principles are ... [shakes his head].

## On Dharma and Religion

Dharma is truth, compassion, love, nonviolence and

seeing to the welfare of others. These are all aspects of dharma. Wherever these are, there is dharma. You do not need labels.

## On Bringing Peace

In my view, whatever events have happened, they should stop, and we should build a bridge of love and trust in each other. People should go to the victims. The Ramayama talks of love of all towards one another. That is the kind of atmosphere we should create and in the true sense build a kingdom like that of Lord Rama's, a kingdom of love.

## On the Rights of the Majority

Dharma is not a matter of competition, but faith. The results of competition are not good.

## On Punishing the Guilty

I feel if there is rubbish on the floor, one should [sweeps his foot] remove it. But one should also forgive it. Whatever evils or evil-producing elements are there in

society should be removed and then forgiven.