The guru of all blood donors

18 Jul 2008, 0413 hrs IST, Ankur Jain,TNN

Swami Adhyatmanand (TOI Photo)

AHMEDABAD: While Gujaratis top the blood donation charts in the world, this celibate monk in aapnu Amdavad is leading by example. He is perhaps the only guru to have donated blood for more than 100 times.

His mantra in life is: 'I get my bread from society and so every drop of my blood is to be given back.' Swami Adhyatmanand of Sivanand Ashram has donated blood 117 times, mostly for armed forces. This has motivated thousands of his disciples to donate blood.

"What better could I do with my blood than donate it to armed forces. Today, be it marriage party, death anniversary or religious discourse, I ask my disciples to organise blood donation camps on all the occasions," says the 64-year-old swami whose disciples in every corner of the world have hosted scores of blood camps whenever he comes visiting.

Even during his 60th birthday celebrations, when his followers wanted to donate silver equal to his weight, he asked them to donate an equivalent amount in blood instead. His disciples have stopped doing 'kathas' during death anniversary ceremonies and instead organize blood donation camps.

In one single year, he anchored 230 blood camps collecting 69,542 units of blood. As a monk, he has nothing else to donate, he argues. Now that his age doesn't permit him to donate blood himself, he motivates others to do so.

The monk has been donating blood since the age of 29 and now organises big blood donation camps on his birthday. "I am called for various functions and the only dakshina I take from my followers is blood."

Even the Red Cross Society feels that a few more monks like him to inspire donors and there will never be shortage of blood. "Gujarat must feel proud to have a saint like him. Many donors have been inspired by him to achieve a century of donations," says Ahmedabad Red Cross Society president Mukesh Patel, who has himself donated blood 121 times.