

## HIS HOLINESS MAHANT SWAMI

### SADHU KESHAVJIVANDAS

Spiritual Successor of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj

His Holiness Mahant Swami (Swami Keshavjivandas) succeeds the late His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj as the sixth spiritual guru of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha – a worldwide socio-spiritual organization.

HH Mahant Swami was born to Manibhai Narayanbhai Patel and Dahiben on 13 September 1933 in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India. A few days after his birth, Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, the founder of BAPS, arrived in Jabalpur. He blessed the newborn child and named him Keshav. However, his family lovingly called him Vinu.

Manibhai was originally a native of Anand in Gujarat and had settled for a while in Jabalpur for business. Vinubhai spent his formative years in Jabalpur, completing his primary and secondary education in an English medium school. He was exceptionally brilliant and completed his 12<sup>th</sup> grade at the Christian College in Jabalpur. Thereafter, he returned with his parents to his native town of Anand, where he enrolled to study at the College of Agriculture. Despite his deep inner spirituality, his sharp intellect was inclined towards rational and logical reasoning. Only a great spiritual master could penetrate his reasoning and awaken the dormant spiritual spark within him. In 1951-52, he came into the contact of His Holiness Yogiji Maharaj, the spiritual successor of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. He became impressed by Yogiji Maharaj's spiritual charisma and selfless love. He travelled with Yogiji Maharaj during his summer vacations and his love drew him closer towards him.

Vinubhai graduated with a bachelor's degree in agriculture from Anand and through his association with Yogiji Maharaj he was inspired to take the path of renunciation. In 1957, Yogiji Maharaj gave him the *parshad diksha* and renamed him Vinu Bhagat. Then, Yogiji Maharaj told him to accompany him in his *vicharan* to look after his daily correspondence and other services.

In 1961, Yogiji Maharaj initiated 51 educated youths into the *bhagwati* (saffron) *diksha* in Gadhada. At that time, Vinu Bhagat was given *diksha* and named as Swami Keshavjivandas.

Thereafter, Yogiji Maharaj instructed the 51 newly initiated sadhus to study Sanskrit in Mumbai. Swami Keshavjivandas was appointed as their head (mahant) at Dadar Mandir. Over time, he became known as Mahant Swami.

His outstanding virtues of austerity, self-control, devotion, humility and service earned him the blessings and joy of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

In 1971, after the earthly departure of Yogiji Maharaj, he totally dedicated himself to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the new guru, with the same sentiments and allegiance he had for guru Yogiji Maharaj. His exposure to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's pure saintliness and spiritual glory had its beginnings in 1951, when he first met him. He, thus, travelled to inspire satsang in countless devotees in India and abroad under the wishes and instructions of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He also offered his services during the Sanstha's mega-festivals, in children and youth activities, the Akshardham projects and other satsang activities.

HH Mahant Swami's profound discourses have impressed, inspired and regaled countless devotees and well-wishers. His saintliness and devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and gurus Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj have left lasting impressions on innumerable devotees.

On 20 July 2012, in the presence of senior sadhus in Ahmedabad, Pramukh Swami Maharaj declared Mahant Swami as his spiritual successor. He is now the sixth guru in the Gunatit Parampara tradition of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. HH Mahant Swami helms the worldwide BAPS socio-spiritual activities established by HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj and also presides as the guru and spiritual guide of countless devotees.