

Memorial Assembly of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

3 September 2016, Ahmedabad

A special memorial assembly was held by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) and the citizens of Ahmedabad to pay heartfelt tributes to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the Gujarat University Convention Centre auditorium on 3 September 2016. The assembly was held from 7 p.m. to 9:45 p.m. in the presence of HH Mahant Swami, Puja Ishwarcharan Swami, Mahamandaleshwar Puja Vishwambhar Bhartiji, Shri Dilip Maharaj of Jagannath Mandir, Puja Swami Adhyatmanandji from the Divine Life Society, Puja Yashomatinandanji from ISKCON, Vaishnavacharya Shri Vrajrajkumarji, Puja Bhagvatpriya Swami on behalf of Puja Purushottampriya Swami of Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan, Puja Premvatsaldasji of Kumkum Swaminarayan Mandir, Father Varghese Paul on behalf of the Catholic sect, Shri Ansari on behalf of the Muslim fraternity, Shri Khumriji on behalf of the Vahora community and representatives of Gayatri Parivar, Brahma Samaj, Brahmakumaris, Dada Bhagwan Trust, Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi Jain sects, Zoroastrian and Sikh communities and many other organizations.

The Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Vijay Rupani, Home Minister of Gujarat Shri Pradeepsinh Jadeja, Mayor of Ahmedabad Shri Gautam Shah, President of Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee Shri Siddharth Patel, Group President of The Reliance Industries Shri Parimal Nathwani, Head of Anandji Kalyanji Trust Shri Samveg Lalbhai, Managing Director of Cadila Healthcare Shri Pankajbhai Patel, Founder & Chairman of TGB Shri Narendra Somani, Trustee of Somnath Trust & Sadvichar Parivar Shri P.K. Laheri, renowned architect and Padma Shri B.V. Doshi, acclaimed cardiologist and Padma Shri Tejas Patel, and many other invited dignitaries attended to offer their tributes to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The memorial assembly commenced with prayers and a devotional song. Thereafter, a short video featured HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine life and work.

The Mayor of Ahmedabad Shri Gautam Shah paid his tributes, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life was phenomenal. Under his able guidance the BAPS crossed Himalayan heights of spiritual and social services. His association with the city of Ahmedabad was historic and special. He was initiated into the *parshad diksha* and also appointed as the president of the BAPS in Ahmedabad,

he celebrated mega-festivals and was also instrumental in ushering peace in the wake of communal riots in 1985. I offer my reverences to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

Dr Tejas Patel addressed the assembly, “During the implantation of a pacemaker in Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I came to realize the truth of several shlokas from the Gita that says the soul is untouched by bodily miseries and it is different from the body. He was an embodiment of sheer simplicity. When I had his darshan after his demise he appeared so blissful.”

Pujya Bharti Babu eulogized, “Pramukh Swami’s love was motherlike. A mother comforts her children. Pramukh Swami Maharaj built great mandirs to propagate Hinduism worldwide. Many prostrations to him.”

Shri Sunilbhai Talati offered his tributes, saying, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj gifted us Akshardham in Gandhinagar and provided a landmark as the unique identity of Ahmedabad and Gujarat; we now take our visitors first to see Akshardham. He has instilled such discipline in the BAPS that even the IIMs have to study and imbibe it. Years ago, I was gradually losing my eyesight; his blessings cured my ailment forever!”

Shri Samveg Lalbhai lauded, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj was divinity in human form. He lived to bless society by infusing value based education. His life was like a lighthouse of virtues. He was such a rare sadhu that it was our good fortune that we found him.”

Shri Harsh Brahmabhatt, an IAS officer, expressed, “A true sadhu is one to whom you bow on seeing him. HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a sadhu. His aura was so profound that you start learning important lessons at every moment in his presence. He was such a magnetic personality that you become moved by meeting him. We will keep remembering him for ages to come.”

Thereafter, a short video of selected dignitaries paying tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj was shown.

Pujya Brahmvihari Swami extolled Swamishri’s personality, “Swamishri was universal and cosmic. There was a visible Pramukh Swami; easily perceived from the Akshardhams he built, the sadhus he initiated and the BAPS activities he helmed. You meet him once and you desire to meet him again and again. People ascribe the extraordinary discipline and arrangements for the countless who came for his final darshan to the management of BAPS; in fact everything happened so naturally due to the sheer divinity of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

Shri Parimal Nathwani praised, “Swamiji blessed me many times. Just as we remember Shri Ram and Shri Krishna as the great incarnations, our generations will venerate HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj as God in future. He worked for Hinduism in an unprecedented way.”

Shri B.V. Doshi paid his tributes, saying, “HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a great gardener who transformed the universe. He nurtured people and helped society blossom with a fragrance of values. My many respects to him.”

Shri Siddharth Patel commended, “I offer my heartfelt respects to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who was a Yug Purush in a true sense. He lived ‘In the joy of others lies our own’ till the last breath of his life. He was hailed as one of the 20 most influential people in the world. Pramukh Swami Maharaj worked not only for the Hindu culture, but also for the whole of Gujarat and India.”

Vaishnav Acharya Pujya Vrajraj Kumarji eulogized, “HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived for others; he was compassionate to everybody. He served humanity so effortlessly, whereas we often feel compelled to do *seva*.”

The Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Vijaybhai Rupani offered his tributes, “People who came for Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s darshan after his demise in Sarangpur didn’t come to fulfill any duty, they were all deeply shocked and grieved by his departure. Countless people had strong feelings of having lost a father figure. It is difficult to preside as president of a small residential society for three to five years; however it is no smaller feat to helm an organization incessantly for 65 years without any conflict! Pramukh Swami Maharaj was rightly a ‘Sant Shiromani’. Only one whose soul is pure can remain simple and innocent. We have to behold him as an ‘Ishwar’. After Swami Vivekanand, Pramukh Swami Maharaj spread Hinduism and Indian culture worldwide.

“In the Gujarat Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha), we usually pay tributes to MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly); but we paid tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj as an exception recently. I am honoured to declare the ` 1200 crore Ahmedabad Riverfront from Vadaj to Vasna as ‘Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg’.”

Thereafter, tributes from Prince Charles, British PM Theresa May and also excerpts from *Transcendence*, showcasing Dr. Kalam’s highest reverence to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj, were read.

Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami offered his tributes, saying, “We acknowledge and congratulate you all for taking time out from your busy schedules to pay respects to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had sanctified this city through his tireless visits to thousands of homes.

He had lived by serving others. He never hesitated in doing menial seva of cleaning utensils and washing toilets on the day when he was appointed as the president of BAPS and after a festive celebration. He personally read and replied to over 750,000 letters and visited more than 250,000 homes. This is no easy task! He loved to be a 'sevak'.

“Swamishri himself revealed Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj as his spiritual successor to us. Pujya Mahant Swami was the first educated youth who was initiated as a *parshad* in 1957. Thereafter Brahaswarup Yogiji Maharaj ushered in a renaissance in Hinduism and the spiritual world by initiating 51 young, educated youths into the sadhufold in 1961. Pramukh Swami Maharaj hasn't left us, he is present today amongst us in the form of Mahant Swami Maharaj.”

Finally, HH Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the assembly and lauded Swamishri's virtues, “You all have come here voluntarily in loving memory of Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It was great to hear Swamishri's divine virtues from all the guest speakers.

“Swamishri always gave to others. He gave faith and strength. His life was dedicated to service. He never harboured any expectations from anybody. How simple he was! This was his foremost quality that made seemingly impossible things possible. His egolessness touched everybody. His virtue of forgiveness was unfathomable too. All the speakers today sang Swamishri's glory from their heart. I thank you all for attending this memorial assembly.”

In conclusion, many religious leaders and dignitaries offered their respects to the *murti* of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj with the ritual *mantra pushpanjali*, where flower petals were offered with Vedic chantings. In all, 2,300 invited dignitaries and media persons attended the memorial assembly.