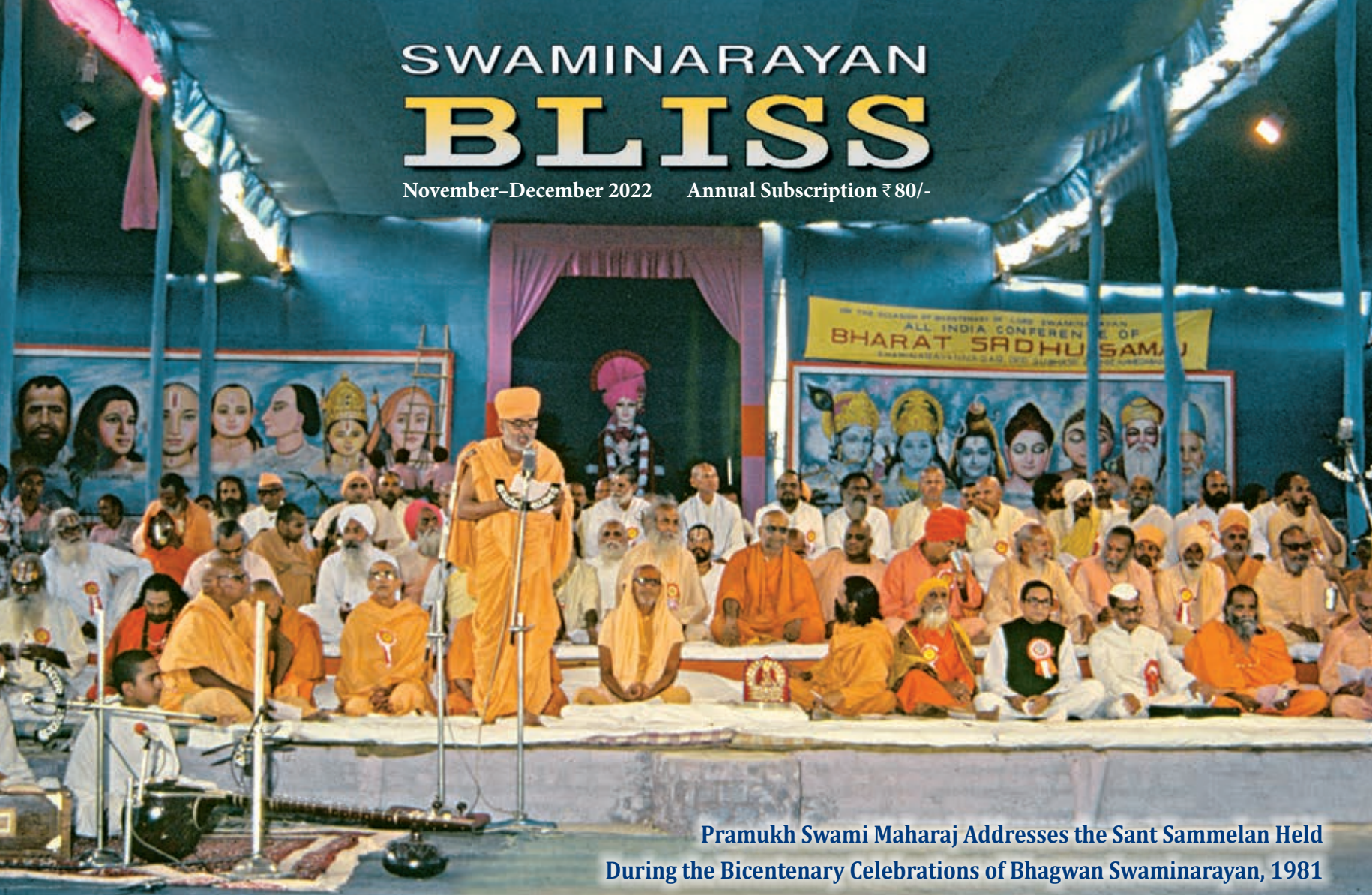


SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

November–December 2022 Annual Subscription ₹ 80/-



Pramukh Swami Maharaj Addresses the Sant Sammelan Held
During the Bicentenary Celebrations of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, 1981

**Sant Sammelans held at BAPS Mandirs in Gujarat and other states of India to
commemorate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations, July–November 2022**



Rajkot



Mehsana



Junagadh



Bhavnagar

SANT SAMMELANS IN HONOUR OF PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ
July–November 2022

Group photos of the Sant Sammelans held at BAPS Mandirs in Gujarat and other states of India to commemorate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations.



Sant Sammelan held during the bicentenary celebrations of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, 1981, Ahmedabad

SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

November–December 2022, Vol. 45, No. 6



Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj



In April 1978, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired and inaugurated the first issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The bi-monthly magazine serves to enlighten BAPS youths, seniors and well-wishers about the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy and the Gunatit guru *parampara*. It also seeks to inspire the universal values and traditions of Hinduism to pursue a happy and peaceful life by serving God and humankind.

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Designer: Sadhu Shrijiwarupdas

Published & Printed by: Swaminarayan Aksharpath, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad - 380004, India

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Outside India (By Air Mail)			India
	Rupees	Pounds	US Dollars	Rupees
1 Year	630	9	14	80
2 Years	1300	18	28	150
3 Years	1900	27	42	220

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Downfall of Gopi Bhatt

*Gopi Bhatt was a pujari of the mandir in Ahmedabad.
He compounded his own downfall because of his
extravagant and fraudulent lifestyle...*

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH GOPI BHATT?

During the satsang assembly the leading devotees of Ahmedabad, Hirachand Choksi, Laldas Gora, Kubersinh Chopdar and others came to pay respects to Shri Hari and listen to his discourse. Shriji Maharaj enquired, "Why are you late today?" They replied, "Because we had gone to see Gopi Bhatt." Shri Hari remarked, "I have not seen Gopi Bhatt since the day I came here. Anand Swami had talked to me about him in Gadhpur." Then, Shri Hari called them closer and asked, "Tell me, what is the state of Gopi Bhatt?"

Hirachand Choksi explained, "Maharaj, Gopi Bhatt is arrogant, greedy and indulgent. He covets things donated for the deities and mandir. He offers *thal* to Thakorji without spreading ghee on the rotla and the dal curry is of low grade. In fact, he sells the donated food grains and flour and pockets the money." Shri Hari sighed and stated, "It is because of Thakorji that the mandir is sustained. It is sinful to use things meant for Thakorji. We cannot keep him as the pujari."

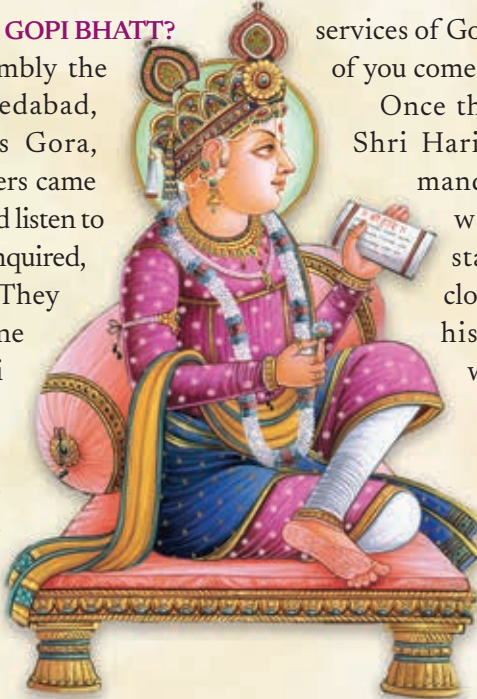
Hirachand further revealed, "Maharaj, there is more about his son's antics. Liladhar, his son, is also brazen. Every afternoon, he invites gamblers and gambles under the mandir dome." Shri Hari was intensely pained to hear this and told the devotees, "After consulting the senior *paramhansas*, we will have to terminate the

services of Gopi Bhatt with finesse. The three of you come to my residence tonight."

Once the satsang assembly was over, Shri Hari went to attend *arti* in the mandir. At that time, Gopi Bhatt was climbing up the mandir stairs. The lavish jewellery and clothes he donned amply mirrored his materialistic tendency. He wore a shining *pitambar*, gold bangles on his wrists and *chakhdis* (wooden footwear) to perform *arti* in the mandir. Shri Hari observed his attire and flamboyant style of doing *arti*. It all smacked of stark ostentation. After the *arti* was over Shri Hari

told Gopi Bhatt, "Meet me tomorrow after the *shangar arti*." Gopi Bhatt took Maharaj's words as a compliment and thought Shri Hari wished to give him more responsibility. He thus parted with elation and satisfaction.

That night, Shri Hari called Muktanand Swami, Gopalanand Swami, Nityanand Swami and Shuk Muni to his residence. Shortly after, Hirachand Choksi, Laldas Gora and Kubersinh Chopdar arrived. Shri Hari told the devotees to narrate Gopi Bhatt's unbecoming behaviour. The *paramhansas* were pained by what they heard. Then, Shri Hari asked them, "Now what should we do?" Muktanand Swami replied, "Maharaj, we should relieve him from his duty. You have built this mandir and installed the *murtis* for the sake of fostering *upasana* in aspirants and for the *moksha*



of countless people. But, if the pujari is greedy and devoid of bhakti, how can the divinities reside in the *murtis*?" Everyone agreed with Muktanand Swami. Then, Shri Hari instructed, "I have called Gopi Bhatt to meet me tomorrow and I want all of you to be present. Also, bring Brahmanand Swami with you."

GOPI BHATT'S EXTRAVAGANT LIFESTYLE

The next morning, after the *shanghar arti*, Gopi Bhatt came to meet Shri Hari. The senior *paramhansas* and devotees were also present. On seeing Gopi Bhatt's extravagance, everyone gauged his materialistic inclinations. When Gopi Bhatt saw the leading swamis and devotees he felt his hunch for recognition by Shri Hari would come true. Shri Hari got a seat arranged for him to sit. Then, Maharaj asked him, "Bhattji, how are the mandir affairs running?"

Gopi Bhatt smiled and replied, "Maharaj, by your grace all is well."

Brahmanand Swami opined, "Maharaj, Gopi Bhatt's extravagant lifestyle surprises and shocks everyone. Furthermore, they conclude about the mandir's opulence." Gopi Bhatt was happy to hear this.

Then, Brahmanand Swami informed Shri Hari, "Maharaj, the document of Gopi Bhatt's appointment as the pujari is informal and not legal. We need to ratify it with a stamped seal from the British office and prevent any issues cropping up in the future.

In response, Gopi Bhatt agreed, "Maharaj, if that is so I'll bring the document right now." Shri Hari added, "Bring it and give it to Brahmanand Swami. He will take our devotees with him to officialize the document."

A short while later, Gopi Bhatt returned with the document, gave it to Brahmanand Swami and asked, "How long will it take to get it officialized?" Brahmanand Swami tactfully replied, "As long as it takes for the British official to stamp it." Gopi Bhatt felt satisfied.

The next day, Maharaj called Hiraji, a sculptor from Jaipur. Hiraji had offered his services during the mandir construction in Vartal. He was pleased at Shri Hari's call. Shri Hari told him, "I wish to instal a *murti* of Hanumanji here, therefore you make it for us." Then, Maharaj called Adharanand Swami and said, "Make a line drawing of a *murti* of Hanumanji according to my instruction." Adharanand Swami brought a piece of paper. Then, Shri Hari stood up on his seat and posed in a standing posture of Hanumanji. Adharanand Swami made a drawing of Hanumanji and showed it to Maharaj. Shri Hari was pleased and gave the drawing to Hiraji to make the *murti*.

RELIEVING GOPI BHATT FROM HIS DUTY

About three days later, Gopi Bhatt came to Shri Hari to ask for his official document. Shri Hari called Brahmanand Swami and asked him about the document. Brahmanand Swami replied, "Maharaj, Nar-Narayan Dev symbolizes austerity, therefore, a pujari with a materialistic lifestyle is inappropriate. So, I have torn the document Gopi Bhatt gave to me and instead of him we now appoint Anandanand Brahmachari as the new pujari. On hearing this, Gopi Bhatt was shocked and stunned. He looked at Shri Hari, but Maharaj remained silent. Then, he asked Shri Hari, "Maharaj, what has Brahmanand Swami done! He has torn the document of my appointment and decieved me by ousting me."

Shri Hari replied, "You ask him."

Brahmanand Swami remarked, "Bhattji, it is you who has been deceiving Thakorji. You siphoned the money and things donated by the devotees to Thakorji for your own use. In addition, you never provided rations and clothes to sadhus as per their needs. How can Thakorji tolerate your fraud? Hence, whatever decision has been made is appropriate. The only silver lining is that we are not demanding the things you have wrongly accumulated. Thus, be satisfied with our decision."

Gopi Bhatt understood and tamely left the mandir precincts.

WE ARE OBEYING THE ORDERS OF OUR MOTHER

In the evening, Shri Hari was seated in a satsang assembly. Soon after, several performers, who danced, sang, and acted as a profession, came to Maharaj and complained, “Your sadhus perform *arti* five times daily and sing bhajans aloud. Consequently, it creates a disturbance in our residential area. We ask you to order them to stop singing.” Shri Hari smiled and answered, “Wherever you go, you sing and dance all night to entertain people. During those late hours thieves ransack their homes and cause great loss to them. Why don’t you stop your activities first!” On hearing this, the leader of the group of performers hesitated for a while and then replied, “We perform at the behest of our deity.” Shri Hari retorted, “These sadhus sing *arti* and bhajans at the behest of their deity.” The performers turned mute and left.

Shortly after, a Muslim aspirant standing at the doorway experienced *samadhi* on Shri Hari’s darshan. The aspirant felt blessed and told his son, Dosamiya, “Son, he is divine, therefore know him. Whenever you get an opportunity to serve him, grasp it.”¹

Several days after celebrating the Fuldol festival, Shri Hari got ready to depart from Ahmedabad on Fagan *vad* 7. The *parshads* and Darbars accompanying Maharaj got ready to leave. Shri Hari told a few sadhus to come with him and instructed the rest, “I wish to celebrate the Hari Jayanti (Hari Nom) celebration in Vartal. Till then, you all go on a satsang tour in the neighbouring villages and return to Vartal on the day of the festival.

The local devotees made preparations to give Shri Hari a grand farewell on his departure from Ahmedabad. Shriji Maharaj mounted Manki,

his mare, and was accompanied by a procession of devotees to escort him to the outskirts of Ahmedabad. Soon, the procession proceeded towards Manek Chowk and then towards the city outskirts. Here, Maharaj told the devotees of Ahmedabad to return.

HARI JAYANTI CELEBRATIONS

Shri Hari rode ahead with the Kathis and *parshads*. There were two canopied bullock carts for his relatives from Ayodhya. Amulaba and Amriba (daughters of Jiva Khachar) were also travelling by bullock cart. In addition, the senior (*sadguru*) *paramhansas* were travelling in other bullock carts.

On hearing of Shri Hari’s arrival in Aslali, Venibhai and other devotees came forward to honour Maharaj with rose garlands. Then, Shri Hari stayed for the night at the devotees’ request.

FRUITS OF SPIRITUAL DISCOURSES

Venibhai made arrangements for an evening meal along with laddus as a sweet item. Shri Hari took his meal and then served laddus to his sadhus. Thereafter, Shri Hari returned to his residence. The accommodation for Maharaj’s entourage was arranged in the open by the village lake. Since it was night-time the area was illuminated with torches dipped in oil. Shri Hari arrived and sat on a raised platform. Thereafter, sadhus commenced the assembly by singing *dhun* and bhajans. In conclusion, Shri Hari discoursed, “Our Satsang has flourished due to the spiritual discourses of sadhus. Their talks have enabled countless to quit addictions and bad habits. All should have a firm inclination to worship and pray to Paramatma. Only then will their satsang become robust. Whatever discourses I give are about Paramatma and I desire that all *jivas* should bond with him.”♦

(Contd. in next issue)

Translated from the Gujarati text of

Bhagwan Swaminarayan authored by Shri H.T. Dave

1. Later, Dosamiya offered his services when Acharya Shri Ayodhyaprasadji was constructing a haveli.

- Translation of *Ahmedabad ma Bhagwan Swaminarayan*, p. 335.



Sant Sammelans

Organized by BAPS on the Occasion of
Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations Year
 31 July–6 November 2022, India

The sacred terrain of India has been blessed with the birth of countless pious rishis, and sages, swamis and *mahatmas*. They have actively protected, preserved and promoted the traditions and beliefs of Sanatan Dharma. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has added to the prestige of the three pillars of Sanatan Dharma by building mandirs, creating shastras and ordaining sadhus.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan's fifth spiritual successor, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, enhanced the prestige of all sadhus and mahatmas through his pristine, saintly life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had tremendous love, respect and reverence for all mahants and mahatmas and spiritual seekers and accomplished swamis.

Hence, as part of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations, with the blessings and guidance of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, a series of inspiring Sant Sammelans were held at BAPS Mandirs throughout India in honour of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Each

of these sacred gatherings of sadhus, mahatmas, mahants, acharyas, pujaris, *kathakars* and trustees of Hindu organizations reflected the deep love and respect everyone has for Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Between 31 July and 6 November 2022, 30 sanctifying Sant Sammelans were held at BAPS Mandirs built by Pramukh Swami Maharaj: Ahmedabad, Amreli, Anand, Atladara (Vadodara), Bangalore, Bharuch, Bhavnagar, Bhuj, Bodeli, Dholka, Dhule, Godhra, Gondal, Himmatnagar, Indore, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Kolkata, Mehsana, Morbi, Nagpur, Nashik, Navsari, Pune, Rajkot, Sankari, Sarangpur, Silvassa, Surat and Tithal.

Before each gathering, the resident BAPS swamis and senior *karyakars* of each mandir personally went to cordially invite all the sadhus, mahants and mahatmas at their own mandir, math or ashram.

On the day of the Sant Sammelan, the invited mahatmas were respectfully greeted by senior swamis who applied sandalwood *chandlos* to their



Ahmedabad



Junagadh

foreheads. Then, they were escorted along the specially laid red carpet, while young traditionally dressed *balaks* welcomed them by showering flower petals on them.

After having darshan of Thakorji in the main mandir and performing *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni, the mahatmas were escorted to the assembly hall, where they were warmly welcomed by other BAPS swamis.

Most of the Sant Sammelans were held as part of the weekly Sunday assembly, so that local devotees could attend the auspicious gathering of mahatmas.

After the singing of *dhun*, *prarthana* and kirtans, the senior sadhus and mahatmas on stage all participated in the lighting of the inaugural *divo*.

Then, the mandir's *kothari* swami gave a welcome speech on behalf of BAPS. After this, the

mandirs' swamis garlanded each of the mahatmas, on and off stage and applied *chandlos* and rice grains to their foreheads.

Thereafter, a senior BAPS swami addressed the gathering, highlighting the theme of the occasion. This was followed by a video on Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Then, the senior sadhus and mahatams representing the various mandirs, *maths*, ashrams and denominations all spoke briefly.

The speeches overflowed with their deep respect and reverence for Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Many recalled their memorable interactions with him, while many spoke of his virtues and works. Their words revealed that the works Pramukh Swami Maharaj did for Sanatan Dharma, for humanity and the nation will continuously inspire countless for generations to come.

They were all touched by his humility,



Sarangpur

detachment, austerity, compassion, devotion and many other sterling qualities. They also expressed their willingness to unite in the common task of encouraging people of all backgrounds to lead God-centric, devout and disciplined lives.

These Sant Sammelans reflected the mutual love and respect between Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the wide-ranging sadhus and mahatmas.

Towards the end of each assembly, a video of Mahant Swami Maharaj's blessings was relayed, "My *sashtang* prostrations to all *santo* and mahatmas. I bid you all Jai Shri Swaminarayan, Jai Shri Krishna, Jai Shri Ram, Jai Mataji with reverence. Our Sanatan Hindu tradition has been blessed with innumerable great avatars, rishis, *acharyas*, devotees and saints. They have continued to spread the fragrance of our great dharma. With their blessings and guidance, the flag of our Sanatan Dharma flies high through our places of pilgrimage, *sampradayas*, *maths* and mandirs. And this grand tradition continues to flourish through you all.

"Bhagwan Swaminarayan manifested over 200 years ago and made enormous contributions to our Sanatan Hindu Dharma. Through his 3,000 sadhus he spread the message of noble living from village to village. Following in the footsteps of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his sadhus, Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj endeavoured day and night for the cause of Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

"He had profound respect for all dharma gurus, saints, *sampradayas*, *gadis* and places of

pilgrimage, and immense love towards all saints and mahatmas. Many have witnessed Pramukh Swami Maharaj's enthusiasm in accepting and serving all *sampradayas*, locations or saints of Sanatan Dharma as his own. That is why, it was our wish to arrange Sant Sammelans to gather all saints and mahatmas, who were all very dear to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, so that our mutual attention and respect grows. At the same time we can all collectively honour Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

"I am delighted that you have all accepted our invitation and attended this special spiritual gathering. I seek your forgiveness for not being present in person. However, I wholeheartedly thank you all for gracing this assembly. Once again, I humbly convey my Jai Shri Swaminarayan to you all. I pray that all your social and spiritual activities continue to progress and flourish and that you are all able to immensely serve for the cause of Sanatan Hindu Dharma."

After this, everyone offered *mantra-pushpanjali* to the *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Then, group photos of all the saints, mahatmas, trustees and administrators were taken. In conclusion, each mandir's *kothari* swami thanked everyone and all were given mementos.

Thereafter, all were served *brahma-bhojan* by the resident BAPS swamis of each mandir.

In this way, hundreds of sadhus and mahatmas graced the 29 special Sant Sammelans.



Ahmedabad

EXTRACTS OF SANT SAMMELAN SPEECHES

31 July 2022, Anand

Pujya Shri Devkinandandasji

Narhari Sevashram, Dakor



There is no difference between the *sant* and infinity. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's virtues and works were infinite. With profound saintliness he strengthened Sanatan Hindu Dharma world-wide. Through his *vicharan* he inspired people everywhere. Through the travels of sadhus, society is elevated. For his entire life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj renounced wealth and remained continuously on the move.

Pujya Shri Dwarkadasji Maharaj

Mahant Bharat Bhuvan, Dakor



For Pramukh Swami Maharaj, all one can say is that he was unique – one of a kind. He was incomparable. Even the darshan of his sadhus is elevating.

Pujya Mahant Shri Rajaramanchandracharyaji

Ranchhodrayji Mandir, Dakor



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such an exemplary saint that he lived the principles revealed in the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.

Pujya Shri Shrinivasdasji

Daouji Mandir, Dakor



Rivers do not drink their own water. Trees do not eat their own fruits – similarly, saints do not do anything for themselves; everything they do is for the benefit of society and nation. This is what

Pramukh Swami Maharaj did. Such a saint is liked a sacred pilgrim site.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj conducted de-addiction drives and led many on to the path of bhakti. Swamishri's character was spotless and he always showered everyone with affection. He was always seen with hands humbly folded.

Pujya Shri Gopalcharyaji Maharaj

Satyanarayan Mandir, Dakor



A guru takes one from darkness to light. Pramukh Swami Maharaj followed his gurus and promoted Sanatan Dharma in India and abroad. Today, the Swaminarayan Sampradaya is truly preserving Sanatan Dharma everywhere.

Pujya Shri Mahamandaleshwar

Vishokanand Bhartiji

Shri Panchyatri Akhada,

Mahanirvan Pithadhiswar



How generous are Pramukh Swami Maharaj and BAPS that they have invited us all here on one platform. As a representative of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did many great works in India and abroad. Amid all that, his saintliness touched all. He cultivated this garden of spirituality and spread our heritage globally.

7 August 2022, Rajkot

Pujya Shri Aniketnandji Maharaj

ISKCON Mandir, Rajkot



Today, it feels as if Pramukh Swami Maharaj is present and bestowing us peace, joy and blessings. When my guruji met Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he experienced the divine rays from Swamishri's eyes, his

compassion and divinity.

God resides wherever such a *sant* is and wherever he goes becomes a place of pilgrimage.

Pujya Shri Prabhusevanand Swami

Ramakrishna Math, Rajkot



Bharat's Sanatan Hindu Dharma is based on eternal truths. It is due to the sadhus that our dharma is great and will remain so.

Saints like Pramukh Swami Maharaj mould our society within the moral codes and keep it united.

Pujya Shri Gokarnadas Maharaj

Chitrakut Dham Mandir, Rajkot



Pramukh Swami Maharaj showed affection on everyone and he was always smiling. To build so many mandirs and manage them well is an outstanding feat. To listen to the learned sadhus of

Pramukh Swami Maharaj is very elevating.

Pujya Shri Raghavdasji Maharaj

Ram-Lakhan Ashram, Rajkot



Whether a rich person or poor person came to him, Swamishri respected and welcomed them all. His character reflected the true nature of Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

He had perfected *atmagnan*. It is due to such *mahapurushes* that our traditions are upheld and we are happy.

Pujya Shri Ketan Brahmachariji

The Art of Living, Rajkot



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was one of the divinities of this world. How much can one personality do for the society? How much divinity can he spread? How many people can he inspire? Pramukh

Swami Maharaj is a perfect example of what can be done.

Pujya Shri Avdhesh Babu

Shri Ganesh Mahadev Mandir, Rajkot



Pramukh Swami Maharaj respected even the most junior people. In 1991, I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I was sitting on the floor, but when he learnt that I was pujari of the Ramji Mandir, he immediately sat me on a seat. This shows his respect for all.

Pujya Shri Jignesh Dada

Respected Speaker on the Shrimad Bhagvat



Pramukh Swami Maharaj is not with us physically, but his divine presence is felt. I was not able to have Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan, but when I embraced Mahant Swami Maharaj, I felt like

I was embracing Pramukh Swami Maharaj since the divinity is now manifest through him.

A true *sant* is one who has no enmity towards anyone. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a *sant*. After Swamishri met the American president Bill Clinton at Akshardham, he immediately met the ordinary devotees. To fulfil one's duty is saintliness.

Pujya Shri Narendra Babu

Apagigani Jagya, Chotila



The roots of Sanatan Hindu Dharma are deep. Pramukh Swami Maharaj and BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha have moulded the lives of lakhs of children and youths. It is difficult to build even a small mandir, so to build so many mandirs is not a small achievement. Pramukh Swami Maharaj and BAPS have strengthened the foundations of Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

Pujya Shri Mantreshanand Swamiji

Ramakrishna Math, Adipur



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a saint of the highest calibre. Such a *sant* is like a *parasmani*, transforming ordinary metal into gold.

7 August 2022, Dhule

Pujya Shri Dhananjay Deshpande

Chairman, Lalita Ambika Devi Sansthan, Tilkhi



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an inspiration who clarified the purpose of our life. He completed great works, but amid all that he never forgot Bhagwan. How do you define infinity. God is infinite.

Similar, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life is infinite.

Pujya Mahant Shri Pranavgiriji

Nagai Mata Devsthan, Nagpur-Kokle



When Pramukh Swami Maharaj left his body, our guruji said, "A lion of Sanatan Dharma has today merged with the five elements."

Pramukh Swami Maharaj raised the flag of Sanatan Hindu

Dharma globally.

Pujya Shri Sudarshan Maharaj

Chairman, Sant Jnaneshwar Varkari Pathshala, Bhokar



The Gita describes 18 qualities of a *jnani* (wise person). What is a mahatma like? Humble. A *jnani* conceals his own virtues. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had such qualities.

I never had the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, but seeing his devotees, *sampradaya*, values and traditions, I feel the greatness of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His life was exemplary and works were outstanding. He worked together with everyone and raised public awareness.

Pujya Shri Nrusinhdasji

ISKCON, Dhule



Everybody has learnt a lot from Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life. A true saint serves and worships Bhagwan in 64 ways. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a saint. The stories of his life reveal that he

was a humble servant of servants.

7 August 2022, Godhra

Pujya Mahant Shri Kalyandasji Maharaj

Ramji Mandir, Orvada



In this garden of the world, Pramukh Swami Maharaj has nurtured people with his affection and devotion. That is why this satsang has blossomed. He set the ideal for devotion and service throughout the world.

Pujya Mahant Shri Indrajitji Maharaj

Gurugadi Ramji Mandir, Godhra



Pramukh Swami Maharaj spread the fragrance of devotion worldwide, which is enjoyed by countless.

He saw God in all and respected all equally. After attaining success, this is difficult for anyone to do. But these qualities overflowed from Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Pujya Shri Bhavinlalji Maharaj

Spiritual Discourser



As described by Shri Krishna Bhagwan in the Gita, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was beyond attachments, prejudice, fear, anger and so was a true *sant*.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the manifest form of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Shrimad Bhagvat, Upanishads, Ramayan, Smrutis, Shrutis and all other shastras. He showed us how to live according to the shastras.

It is difficult to build mandirs in Arab countries. But Pramukh Swami Maharaj did so. That is a reflection of his divinity.

14 August 2022, Amreli

Pujya Shri Bhaktiram Bapu
Manav Mandir, Hathasani



Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated over 1,000 sadhus into saffron robes and that is an exceptional achievement. It is not easy to inspire someone to become a sadhu.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj respected everyone, without any prejudice. He was so great that he built mandirs even in the Gulf countries.

Pujya Shri Ratidada
Gangotri Mandir, Chhalasi



Pramukh Swami Maharaj built so many mandirs and made so many sadhus. But for whom? For Bharat and for our heritage. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was great because he possessed the strength of truth within.

14 August 2022, Pune

Pujya Shri Govindgiriji Maharaj
Treasurer, Ram Janmabhumi Tirthkshetra, Ayodhya



We are celebrating the birth centenary of an exemplary *mahapurush* who enhanced the prestige of our rishi and acharya traditions.

He dedicated his life for dharma and is worthy of reverence and emulation by both sadhus and householders. What was Adi Shankaracharya Maharaj like? What was Vallabhacharya Maharaj like? What was Swami Vivekanand Maharaj like? By the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj we get the inspiration of all of them.

He never spoke in anger. He always remained

behind the curtains and promoted others. He was like the sun, but a cool pacifying sun. And he lit the lives of many. Our prime minister often went to Pramukh Swami Maharaj for blessings and inspiration.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's legacy will continue to guide and inspire for centuries. He has shown the way to nurture Hindu Dharma and the nation, and serve people.

He is a pillar of heritage and through his guidance, affection, mandirs, sadhus and services he has touched countless.

Pujya Shri Revatipati Prabhu
Vice Chairman, ISKCON, Pune



Pramukh Swami Maharaj built over 1,100 mandirs, initiated over 1,000 sadhus, wrote over 700,000 letters and made over 17,000 village and city visits worldwide. He did so much, but never took credit for anything. He always said that he was a servant of God and guru. He always felt that he was a mere channel and was not the doer.

Pujya Shri Maruti Maharaj Kurekar
Varkari Shikshan Sanstha, Alandi, Pune



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's greatness is reflected in his works. His inspiration continues to strengthen us from within.

14 August 2022, Gondal

Pujya 1008 Mahamandaleshwar
Shri Ghanshyamdasji
Mahant, Ramji Mandir, Nava Pipaliya



Pramukh Swami Maharaj reached out to the tribal communities by establishing satsang centres and schools and enlightened them about our heritage.

Through his own life, Pramukh

Swami Maharaj flew the flag of Sanatan Hindu Dharma worldwide. Due to him, a grand mandir is being built in Abu Dhabi.

Pujya Shri Jayramdasji Maharaj
Mahantshri, Ramji Mandir, Gondal



Together with dharma, Pramukh Swami Maharaj nurtured education and character through satsang assemblies. If youngsters are not given values and discipline their lives become disoriented.

For decades Swamishri endeavoured to strengthen society and bring everyone happiness.

14 August 2022, Bhuj

Pujya Shri Maheshbhai Bhatt
Bhagvatacharya, Om Sanskardham, Bhuj



After the earthquake in Bhuj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did so much. And I witnessed it all.

He built mandirs in India and abroad and revived Hinduism. People ask what the need for mandirs, discourses and sadhus is. Mandirs are essential because they help to impart character and values to our youths.

Through mandirs Pramukh Swami Maharaj has enhanced the glory of Hindu Dharma. He was at ease with scholars and young children, such was his universality.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a gem of our Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

Pujya Shri Pradiptanandaji Saraswatiji
Aarsh Adhyayan Kendra, Bhuj



Bhagwan, the Paramtattva, manifested through Pramukh Swami Maharaj. We are all here today because of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His blessings worked wonders.

That you all continue to come even in his absence is a testimony that he was not

an ordinary guru. He is not physically present, but he is also not far away, because he resides in the heart of each devotee. That is the essence of life – our total faith in the Paramtattva that resided in him.

Among the many works Pramukh Swami Maharaj did, he initiated a faithful and hardworking cadre of sadhus. From morning till night, they endeavour to help relieve the miseries of others. That is the saintliness of Sanatan Dharma.

21 August 2022, Bhavnagar

Pujya Shri Mahamandaleshwar
1008 Shri Ramju Bapu



Whatever I am today is due to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He conducted de-addiction drives and led everyone onto the path of satsang.

Pujya Shri Yagneshbhai Oza
Spiritual Discourser, Mahuva



When one progresses spiritually, the eyes reveal that spiritual light. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had simple, friendly and virtuous eyes. His laughter was innocent like a child and naturally appealed to us. He communicated freely with children, youths and elders at their level as required and established a close bond with all.

Pujya Mahamandaleshwar
Mahant Shri Garibdas Bapu
Navi Khodiyar Mandir, Vartej



God manifest through Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He was a *yugpurush*. He consolidated the understanding that 'I am *akshar*, servant of Purushottam'.

Pujya Shri Govind Swami

Swaminarayan Gurukul, Mahuva



A true saint can lead worldly *jivas* towards *moksha*. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a true saint. Without taking the refuge of a true saint, *jivas* cannot attain liberation. By associating with him, true peace and spirituality are attained.

Pujya Shri Vishnu Bapu Danidhariya

Khakharia, Shihor

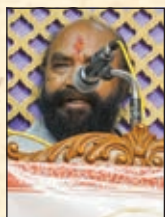


We are fortunate to have lived in the time of a distinguished saint like Pramukh Swami Maharaj. With his blessings I have been able to deliver 369 *kathas*.

21 August 2022, Mehsana

Pujya Mahant Shri Narayandasji

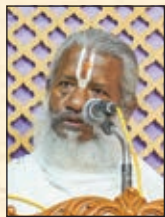
Narayan Ashram, Mehsana



Pramukh Swami Maharaj is not with us today, but his divine energy is felt everywhere. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's work for Sanatan Dharma is unmatched. He built mandirs in many countries and strengthened Sanatan Dharma.

Pujya Sant Shri Parmeshwardasji Maharaj

Hanuman Mandir, Vijapur



Pramukh Swami Maharaj built mandirs in many countries. When foreign dignitaries come to Delhi, they visit Swaminarayan Akshardham. Such are the great works done by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Pujya Sant Shri Nijanand Bapu

Gotarka Ashram, Radhanpur



The Swaminarayan Sampradaya has paved the way for a brighter future for our Hindu dharma. The Swaminarayan Sampradaya has built mandirs in Arab countries and the west and strengthened Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

28 August 2022, Ahmedabad

Pujya Shri Dilipdasji Maharaj Mahant

Jagannath Mandir, Ahmedabad



Pramukh Swami Maharaj humbly performed services throughout the world. He immensely served the society and nation amid many catastrophes. I recall his composure following the attack on Akshardham. I also witnessed his devotion and humility when he graced the Jagannathji Mandir on the occasion of the Rath Yatra of Bhagwan Jagannathji. Only due to the merits of countless births are we blessed with the association of such a *sant*. He is no longer with us physically, but his great spiritual presence persists throughout the world. Whenever we remember him, his blessings are felt. Let us saints and devotees of all *sampradayas* celebrate his centenary such that it is acknowledged globally. Let us live up to his principles and elevate our life.

Pujya Shri Mohandasji Maharaj

Sai Mandir, Ahmedabad



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a *yugpurush*. He nurtured Indian heritage in India and abroad. Great saints like Pramukh Swami Maharaj manifest to promote Sanatan Dharma. Such great saints represent God and they lead misdirected souls onto the path of dharma. They have

sustained our *sanskriti*. Great personalities like Shri Shankaracharyaji Maharaj, Shri Vallabhacharyaji Maharaj, Shri Ramanandacharyaji Maharaj and others have manifested in the sacred land of Bharat. In that way, a great saint like Pramukh Swamiji manifested and performed incredible work. Pramukh Swami Maharaj respected every faith. Bhagwan Swaminarayan taught the message of an addiction-free life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj reinforced this message and cultivated devotion and character in all. By following the path he showed, liberation is attained. I commend the Sanstha's great saints for continuing to nurture and promote Indian culture and our dharma.

Pujya Shri Paramatmanandji Saraswatiji
Sanyojak/Coordinator/Conveyor,
Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha



Our millennia-old wisdom tradition has been enriched by many great *mahapurushes*. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a great saint. This Sanstha was little-known outside the Charotar region. Today, the whole world knows the Swaminarayan Sampradaya through the BAPS Sanstha, due to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He strengthened the Sanstha by making over 1,000 sadhus. He divinely inspired them to serve in many ways. It is no small feat to set up such a system and become established globally.

Whenever there is a decline in dharma, Bhagwan sends his representatives. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is such a *mahapurush*; he is a representative of Bhagwan. A century from now, people will be astonished that such a *mahapurush* built over 1,000 mandirs and inspired hundreds of lakhs of people to lead noble lives. Having had his darshan guarantees one *moksha*.

Pujya Shri Chaitanya Shambhu Maharaj
Vice President, Pavitra Yatraddham Board



I bow to Pramukh Swami Maharaj who spread the divine flame lit by Shastriji Maharaj throughout India and the world. Throughout his life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj strived tirelessly to serve and cultivate character in people of all backgrounds in even the remotest of villages. It is very difficult to serve in society. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life was for the good of others. A person becomes great by the way he lives.

We are celebrating the centenary of someone who dedicated his life to society, the nation, culture, dharma and values.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj not only built BAPS mandirs, but also contributed financially to build Ram mandirs and other mandirs.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a perfect confluence of wise words, noble actions and discretion.

Pujya Shri Nirmad Saheb
Kabir Ashram, Raipur, Ahmedabad



It is our great fortune that we attained a *yugpurush* like Pramukh Swami Maharaj. A few days ago, I had Mahant Swami Maharaj's darshan and I felt the divinity of Pramukh Swami Maharaj touching me.

Pujya Mahamandaleshwar
Shri Rishibhartiji Maharaj
Bharti Ashram, Ahmedabad



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was special. Vaishnavs have offered and continue to offer devotion to the manifest. Pramukh Swami Maharaj promoted such devotion worldwide.

He offered *dasatva* bhakti – devotion as a humble servant.

Also, he promoted harmony everywhere – within Hindu dharma and with other faiths. Jain Acharya Sushilkumarji, Vishweshthirthji Maharaj, Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi, American President Bill Clinton, Prince Charles, all talked about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's greatness.

Pujya Shri Yogataponishthji Maharaj
Prernapith, Pirana, Ahmedabad



Pramukh Swami Maharaj cannot be described in words. Just as you cannot describe the virtues of Paramatma, it is not possible to describe the innumerable virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who was a dedicated devotee of Paramatma.

The darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was like having the darshan of Paramatma. His every action inspired everyone towards devotion. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was beyond the attachments of this world. He never touched money. This is a great austerity. Our great rishis describe money as *maya*, but Pramukh Swami Maharaj was beyond it.

Pujya Shri Gurupriyadasji
Swaminarayan Gadi, Maninagar



Shri Swaminarayan Gadi Sanstha has had a good association with Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. May we continue with such affection and please Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Pujya Shri Hargovinddasji Maharaj
ISKCON Mandir, Ahmedabad



When I was studying in school, my father brought me and my younger brother here to receive Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings. Swamiji blessed me for success in my studies. As a result,

I did study science well, but feel that he also blessed me to take the spiritual path. With his blessings I feel I have also progressed on the spiritual path.

28 August 2022, Jamnagar

Pujya Shri Krishnamaniji Maharaj
Shri Navtampuri Dham, Khijda Mandir,
Jamnagar



Many attempts have been made to destroy Bharat's traditions: looting, demolishing worship places, disrupting education, misrepresentation of history and others.

Amid all this, Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the great task of building mandirs worldwide and revealing the true identity of Bharat's great heritage.

His humility and integrity has left a lasting impression on me. He built mandirs and ordained sadhus, but also inspired character amid society.

Pujya Shri Devprasadji Maharaj
Anada Bawa Ashram, Jamnagar



Universally adored from the simplest hut-dweller to the great scientist and president, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Pramukh Swami Maharaj never sought greatness, but made others great.

Through his simplicity, divine foresight and blessings, he inspired over 1,100 mandirs and 1,000 sadhus. It is straightforward to don the robes of a sadhu, but to cultivate and sustain saintliness is very difficult. Over 1,000 lead a disciplined life of faith and devotion. This Sanstha has done the most work worldwide to free people from addictions.

I also remember the days when Devcharan Swami and I travelled to the drought-stricken

villages with about 20 devotees to distribute truckloads of grains.

When I suffered an accident, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the first to phone me. He blessed, “I have prayed to Maharaj for your full and speedy recovery.”

God and a true *sant* are beyond time. They are always present.

Pujya Shri Chaturbhujdasji Swami

Kothari, Swaminarayan Mandir, Jamnagar



The public will never forget someone who did so much for the nation and society. Pramukh Swami Maharaj did great work to lead people to live devout, addiction-free lives. He selflessly protected our heritage, supported the nation and served our Sanatan Dharma with great pride. Such a *sant* is like a benevolent pilgrim place.

Pujya Shri Jayantiram Bapa

Santpuran Dham, Kundla



Pramukh Swami Maharaj had mastered all the spiritual disciplines. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a benevolent *sant* who helped everyone without exception. In my region when milk was not available, he distributed milk powder and buttermilk.

Pujya 1008 Mahamandaleshwar

Siddhivinayak Krishnanandpurji

Siddhivinayak Siddhapith,

Dhrasanvel, Dwarka



Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught dharma to youths. It is dharma that has sustained our nation.

Pujya Shri Mahamandaleshwar

Shri Patitpavandasji

Shri Mota Ramji Mandir, Nagnesh



Pramukh Swami Maharaj is revered because whatever he did was always for the benefit of others. He built mandirs in India and abroad and established them as pillars of Bharat's Sanatan traditions. He has strengthened our heritage.

Pujya Mahamandaleshwar

Shri 1008 Ashutoshgiri Swami

Shri Bhimnath Mahadev



I was privileged to have Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan. Looking into his eyes reveals that his heart was full of love for everyone. When there is only such love and God in a person's heart, he becomes like God.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a living form of God because he had no ego. Bhagwan Swaminarayan resided in him. If our heart is pure, we will feel his divinity.

Pujya Mahant Shri Atmanand Saraswati

Maharaj

Shri Bhajananand Ashram, Botad



Pramukh Swami Maharaj led people from ignorance to wisdom, from mortality to immortality. Pramukh Swami Maharaj spent his entire life serving others and the world. If we can do even one per cent of that, we will be blessed.

One of his biggest contributions was to promote equality for all. This is the need of the hour. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a *mahapurush* who was alert 24 hours a day to work for the benefit of the world. He was totally selfless.

Pujya Mahant Shri Vikramgiri Babu
Shri Ghela Somnath Mandir



Pramukh Swami Maharaj built over 1,100 mandirs to protect and promote the divinity, traditions, grandeur and devotion of Sanatan Hindu Dharma. This work is continuing through the efforts of BAPS. BAPS works together with other *sampradayas* to strengthen Sanatan Dharma.

Pujya Mahant Shri Dalsukhdas Babu
Nakalank Dham, Halvad



Pramukh Swami Maharaj built over 1,100 mandirs. Each mandir is a university. That means, 1,100 universities. These universities teach morality, humanity, spirituality and culture. They teach love, discipline, discretion and family values. Throughout India, mandirs teach these values. Such mandirs will enlighten future generations about spirituality and traditions. The efforts of such *mahapurushes* will sustain and strengthen Sanatan Dharma.

Pujya Shri Narayandasji Bhagat
Thakar Mandir, Akaru



When I had his darshan, I felt as if I was sitting before Bhagwan, at the feet of God. Even today, when I remember this I am recharged.

Pujya Mahant Shri Prabhucharandas Babu
Prabhucharan Ashram, Halvad



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a special divine personality. His blessings lit our inner spirituality, and brought us joy. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's character was spotless and of the highest level.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj spoke little, but his messages pervaded society. Only one with a direct connection to Paramatma can do that.

Pujya Shri Gunashrayanand Maharaj
Shri Ramakrishna Mission, Limbdi



When I had his darshan, it felt like I was meeting Bhagwan in person. Bhagwan himself was pleased with Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His virtues are endless, and there is no way we can finish describing them.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj furthered the pure *upasana* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. And today, Mahant Swami Maharaj continues to inspire people with the eternal values given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Pujya Mahant Shri Bhagwandas Maharaj
Kalia Thakarni Jagya, Godiya



Swami Bapa was extremely simple. Swamishri treated everyone as his own, giving blessings and guidance. He interacted with even the youngest and most junior people.

Pujya Shri Bharat Babu
Lomev Dham



Pramukh Swami Maharaj explained to people the value of human birth and freed them from addictions. He built over 1,100 mandirs. For humanity, mandirs are like petrol pumps. They fuel people to progress and be helpful to others. Since, to help others is itself dharma.

28 August 2022, Silvassa

Pujya Shri Govindrayji

Vaishnavacharya Haveli, Vapi



In the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna says to Arjun, “When you notice a special natural divinity and spiritual prowess in a *sant*, know him to be my representative.”

Pujya Shri Ramkrishna Swami

Swaminarayan Gurukul, Salvav



Pramukh Swami Maharaj truly epitomized Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s wish to be helpful to all living forms. Pramukh Swami Maharaj always had the best interests of others in mind.

Pujya Shri Shastri Swami Santswarupdasji

Swaminarayan Gurukul, Bhilad



We are fortunate and privileged to be able to serve in his centenary year. Only the *sant* reveals to us the true teachings. He tolerates many difficulties and insults and reveals the true teachings. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life was for the good of others.

28 August 2022, Morbi

Pujya Shri Anilbhai Mehta

Yogacharya, Morbi



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was not only a great spiritual leader, but he was also a great servant of the nation. After Swami Vivekanand, Pramukh Swami Maharaj has done the most to raise awareness about Hindu Dharma worldwide.

In 1990, during the rally to support the Narmada Dam project, Pramukh Swami Maharaj arranged hot meals and food packets for thousands. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the soul

of the Narmada Dam project. He organized the planting of over 250,000 trees and raised millions of rupees for the project. As a result Gujarat today benefits from the water.

Pujya Shri Ranchhod Bhagat

Morbi



Pramukh Swami Maharaj dedicated his entire life to serving the satsang, society and nation. We cannot thank him enough.

28 August 2022, Bharuch

Pujya Shri Devkishore Swami

Shri Swaminarayan Gurukul, Nahiyaer, Bharuch



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj are divine and are present today among us. The echoes of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s centenary will echo to all around the world.

Pujya Shri 1008 Mahamandaleshwar

Gangadas Bapu

Ramkund Ashram, Ankaleshwar



Bhajan, satsang and dedication are at the root of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. The Sanstha releases one call and thousands of volunteers gather to help. They are ready to serve with dedication.

Where did these values come from? From Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Such *mahapurushes* attach us to spirituality. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was globally revered. This is the summit of achievement.

Meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj felt like one is meeting one’s own mother. Such was his affection. He was saintly.

The Swaminarayan Sampradaya is an integral part of Sanatan Hindu Dharma. There is no

doubt about this. We are all Hindus and should stay united.

Pujya Shri Lokeshanandji Maharaj
Trigunatit Ashram, Kukarvada



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's greatness, services, generosity, dedication and devotion are beyond any words. He nurtured Hindu heritage throughout the world. He awakened the devotion within countless devotees.

His life was full of compassion, grace, humility, selflessness and refuge to God. If people can live by these five values then all problems will be solved.

Pujya Shri Muktanand Swami
General Secretary, Bharuch District Sant Samiti



Pramukh Swami Maharaj did great work to unite society. He endeavoured to remove caste distinctions and guide everyone to the feet of God.

In Sanatan Hindu Dharma there are no touchable-untouchable distinctions. Swamishri freely interacted with *harijans* and others and gave them all great joy. Swamishri said, "Everyone has to become a '*hari na jan*' (person of God) and lead a pure, addiction-free life." If we can live by even a few of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's values, our life will become fulfilled.

4 September 2022, Himmatnagar

Pujya Shri 1008 Mahant Vedavyaspuriji Maharaj
Shri Panchdarshanam Juna Akhada, Varanasi



Today's purifying darshan feels like the devas have descended here.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not have an official title, but he promoted dharma not only in

India but also abroad. I believe he was an emblem of dharma. After Shankaracharya, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such an *acharya*.

No matter one's faith or affiliation, Swamishri respected everyone equally. Only one who views everyone in the whole world as *atma* is a true *sant*.

It is no small feat to promote dharma in other countries. It is our duty to follow his teachings. We are fortunate that such a *sant* manifest among us. His inspiration continues even today.

Pujya Shri Jnananand Saraswatiji
Mahakal Mandir, Navarevas



Pramukh Swami Maharaj revived the humanity in humans. He emphasized the need to have faith and take refuge in God. Shri Krishna Bhagwan states in the Gita that we must recognize Aksharbrahma and Parabrahma. They are eternal realities. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had the experience of Aksharbrahma. India is blessed by the birth of such divine *mahapurushes*.

Pujya Shri Ramkrupaluji Maharaj
Mota Ramduvar Vatiroad, Idar



Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived a simple and saintly life. He built many mandirs which are both grand and divine. Yet, his life was simple. He often said, "I am a servant. I am God's servant."

Pramukh Swami Mahaaj was the living light of Paramatma. He awakened many onto the path of liberation, devotion and service.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's devotion and faith towards his gurus was exemplary. God sends such saints to live among us. They are divine personalities. They remain with us through their words, teachings, thoughts, instructions and guidance.

Pujya Mahant Shri Lalji Maharaj

Vaktapur



The work done for Sanatan Hindu Dharma by Swami Vivekanand, Sant Kabir, Adi Shankaracharya and others in past, Pramukh Swami Maharaj has done in the modern era.

When I had Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan about 20 years ago, I felt the presence of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in him.

To change even one person is not possible, but Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired over 1,000 youths to renounce. After Bhagwan Buddha, only Pramukh Swami Maharaj has done this.

Pujya Shri Devraj Dhangiriji Maharaj

Mahant, Ramdevpir Mandir, Modasa



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's works speak for themselves. He met individuals and inspired them to lead pious lives. Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired the teachings stated in the shastras in the lives of people.

Pujya Shri 1008 Karunamurti

Sadguru Narsinhdasji

Kankrol



Pramukh Swami Maharaj dedicated his whole life to awaken our inner spirituality. He built mandirs even in the villages to inspire everyone. He always strived to make things better for others.

Pujya Shri Tulsidasji Maharaj

Vireshwar



When I had the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj 30 years ago at Koba-Rajchandra Ashram, I saw and felt his humility. Without speaking, he radiated so much divinity.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj did

so much throughout the world yet he never talked about his achievements.

Living by the commands of the guru guarantees liberation.

4 September 2022, Junagadh

Pujya Mahamandaleshwar Shri Hariharanandji Bharti Ashram, Junagadh



Pramukh Swami Maharaj had close ties with the Bharti Ashram and my guru Mahamandaleshwar Pujya Bharti Bapu. They met frequently. Our guruji often told us that to learn how to run a Sanstha go to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was non-controversial because he was engrossed in devotion. He passed these values on to his followers.

Pujya Mahant Shri Mahadevgiri Bapu

Mahantshri, Avdhut Ashram,

Bhavnath-Junagadh

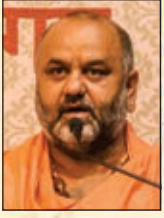


Pramukh Swami Maharaj was naturally simple and straightforward. Whether meeting dignitaries like Dr Abdul Kalam or tribals, he gave all great respect. This is an essential quality in a *sant*. His heart was full of love for all. He considered all to be his own.

Through education and de-addiction he elevated society. Also after earthquakes, floods and other calamities, Bapa always reached out to help because he cared for the wellbeing of everyone.

On this stage, we are all of different traditions, *sampradayas* and attire. Some speak Gujarati, some Hindi, some Sanskrit and some English. But Pramukh Swami Maharaj brought together this mosaic. His message was always 'Let's unite' and strengthen our Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

Pujya Shri Maheshgiriji Maharaj
Guru Dattatreya Sthan, Junagadh



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life may seem ordinary, but he accomplished extraordinary works. His life was exemplary in all respects. Pramukh Swami Maharaj moulded people through mandirs and through these people he built mandirs. These mandirs are not merely for darshan or as exhibits, but they are to nurture humanity.

He created sadhus to give a constructive direction to society. For so many centuries, such work has not been done.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave a true picture of Bharat and Bharat's heritage to the world.

Pujya Shri Badrinathji Maharaj
Ramanujacharya, Porbandar



By Paramatma's grace, we were blessed with the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Due to his efforts society has benefited.

4 September 2022, Vadodara

Pujya Shri Khemdas Saheb
Kabir Sampradaya, Vadodara



Pramukh Swami Maharaj has lit the torch of Sanatan Hindu Dharma and raised the profile of India's heritage throughout the nation and the world.

He truly exemplified the phrase 'Serving people is serving God'.

Divine personalities manifest to strengthen dharma and eradicate immorality. Pramukh Swami Maharaj manifested for this purpose and persevered in doing this throughout his life.

Pujya Shri Ishtamayandji Swami
Ramakrishna Mission, Vadodara



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was honoured and felicitated all over the world by many dignitaries, such as Dr Abdul Kalam and others. Yet, Pramukh Swami Maharaj always remained humble and greeted everyone with folded hands. He dedicated everything to Bhagwan – this is what we have to learn. He inspired devotion to God by visiting homes worldwide.

If someone questions the contributions of sadhus to society, just look at the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the answer. His gift of over 1,000 sadhus is of enormous benefit to society. He wrote hundreds of thousands of letters, sanctified lakhs of homes. He showered his affection on all without prejudice. His life was truly inspirational.

Pujya Shri 1008 Swami Shri Venkateshacharyaji
Balaji Mandir, Vadodara



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was continuously blessed by Bhagwan and this has resulted in today's wonderful community of devotees and cadre of sadhus.

All of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's works are outstanding. He inspired society, especially youths, to tread the path of dharma.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj is not with us today, but Mahant Swami Maharaj continues to bless the BAPS.

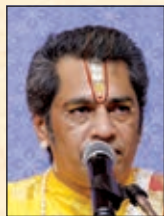
Pujya Shri Deveshanandji Maharaj
Chinmay Mission



To describe the virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj is like holding a *divo* before the sun. The guru moulds the life of his devotees like an expert sculptor. He inspires noble values and actions – as the creator Vishnu. He eradicates the devotees'

drawbacks – as the destroyer Shiv. That is why the guru is revered as manifest Brahma. Pramukh Swami Maharaj exemplified the qualities of humility, simplicity and service.

Pujya Shri Vallabhacharya Pankajkumar Goswamiji Vadodara



When a great personality like Pramukh Swami Maharaj takes birth in Kaliyug, the doors to liberation are opened for all.

The shastras describe the virtues of *jnanyoga*, *karmayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*, and Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a perfect confluence of all three in his actions, words and attitude.

Swamishri spread the light of spirituality everywhere and strengthened Sanatan Hindu Dharma by building mandirs worldwide.

Pujya Shri Ramdasji Maharaj Nayajikaka Mandir, Ukas



Only through the fruits of many great merits do we attain the darshan of a great *mahapurush* like Pramukh Swami Maharaj and get to listen to his wise nectarine words.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj served everyone disregarding their caste, social status or other differences.

Pujya Shri Avatarsinhji Guruduwara, Chhavi, Vadodara



Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived for 95 years. He served society for over 75 years. He helped victims of the Morbi Dam disaster, earthquakes and other natural calamities. Inspired by his ways and teachings,

BAPS recently helped in the Ukraine War.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was truly a great saint.

4 September 2022, Surat

Pujya Shri Lakshmanjyotiji Maharaj Mahantshri, Prannath Trust, Surat



Globally revered, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a flag bearer of Sanatan Dharma. His contributions to nurturing and strengthening Bharat's heritage and Sanatan Dharma are matchless.

It is not an ordinary thing to build 1,100 mandirs, initiate 1,000 sadhus, write lakhs of letters and sanctify lakhs of homes to give inspiration, guidance and comfort.

A person who dedicates his entire life to the service of society, nation, dharma and culture is not ordinary, but is a representative of Paramatma, who pervades him to do his work. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a divine saintly personality.

Just his darshan brought us immense inner peace. His words dispelled our worries and miseries and imparted great comfort.

Remembering him fills us all with joyous emotions.

Swami Shri Ambrishanandji Maharaj Hindu Milan Mandir, Surat



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the sun and moon among us, who removed our ignorance day and night.

Guru Shastriji Maharaj spotted the power in young Shantilal to serve the world as his family.

In Pramukh Swami Maharaj's presence time stood still, hunger and thirst vanished and fatigue disappeared. Two hours of this assembly have passed without anyone noticing.

Just as a sackful of salt becomes absorbed by the ocean, we have been absorbed in the ocean-like virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Pujya Shri Vishveshwaranand Maharaj

Mahant, Narayan Math, Surat



Seeing the *tilaks* on your foreheads and your addiction-free lives, I am convinced that Pramukh Swami Maharaj has established such firm foundations that nobody will be able to shake them. It is our duty to

live up to his principles.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj raised the flag of Sanatan Hindu Dharma in many countries and is truly a *jagat guru* (world guru).

1008 Swami Shri Sitaramji Maharaj

Mahant, Lokvijay Hanuman Mandir, Amreli



Today, I observed the discipline of this Sanstha's volunteers. It reflects the teachings and values given by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has protected our heritage and Sanatan Dharma by building 1,100 mandirs and ordaining over 1,000 sadhus.

By Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings big mandirs are being built in Arab countries.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was not an ordinary saint, but a manifest form of Paramatma. He achieved so many things. He even trekked by foot to spiritually inspire tribals in their remote villages. He respected everyone, regardless of their social status.

Pujya Shri Nirmaldasji Maharaj

Shri Siddha Kutir Mandir, Surat



Disregarding his own comfort and health, Pramukh Swami Maharaj travelled throughout India to strengthen our Sanatan Hindu Dharma and inspire our young generation. He raised the aware-

ness of our Sanatan Dharma everywhere by visiting people from village-to-village and home-to-home.

He encouraged people to shun addictions. The biggest gift we can give him on his Centenary is to forsake our addictions to worldly things and sincerely practise satsang.

4 September 2022, Dholka

Pujya Shri 1008 Jagadguru Jnaneshwardasji Maharaj Pirana Gadi



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a living manifestation of Paramatma. His every atom was pervaded by Sahajanand Swami. Sahajanand Swami spoke through him, and did his work through him.

So, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan is the darshan of God. His friendly eyes and affectionate words reflect his intention to help all. He forgave even those who tried to harm him. He tolerated everything. He carried out arduous *vicharan* for the benefit of the devotees, to uplift society and to liberate the world.

Today, Pramukh Swami Maharaj is very much alive! He is immortal. May his fame continue to spread worldwide.

Pujya Shri 108 Laldas Bapu

Jandhalpir Gadi



Pramukh Swami Maharaj awakened the inner spirituality latent in youths. That is a difficult task, but Pramukh Swami Maharaj accomplished it. Despite his frail health, he still gave darshan to everyone.

4 September 2022, Sankari

Pujya Shri Suryacharyaji Maharaj

Suryapith Gurusthan Murli Ashram, Dwarka



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was like a father to me. He taught me so much. I take his words as my guidance. He is the first divine personality I have met in my 56 years of sadhana.

Pujya Shri Rudragiri Maharaj
Juna Akhada, Dhareshwar Dham,
Kukarmunda, Tapi



After Shankaracharya, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's name will be engraved in gold letters for having strengthened Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

Abroad, the mandirs Pramukh Swami Maharaj built bring families and people together so that they are not lonely. That is a great contribution.

Pujya Shri Haridas Maharaj
Spiritual Discourser, Mogra Mandir, Mogra



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's childhood name was Shantilal. And truly he was an ambassador of peace worldwide.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj respected everyone and was the ideal of devotion. Even amid his hectic schedule, he always kept God at the forefront.

Pujya Shri Ravidas Maharaj
Gau Kathakar,
Shri Gopal Gaudham, Vyara



Despite the variety of people in India, Pramukh Swami Maharaj lit the spiritual flame in all and guided all. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is at the summit of spirituality.

Pujya Shri Ajaydas Babu
Spiritual Discourser on Shiv and Bhagvat,
Panchol



When the modern history of Sanatan Hindu Dharma is written, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's name will be at the very top.

Pujya Shri Pankajbhai Vyas
Spiritual Discourser on the Bhagvat, Sai Mandir, Bardoli



Describing Pramukh Swami Maharaj's virtues is like making a flower from the fragrance in a perfume bottle. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an outstanding spiritual personality.

4 September 2022, Tithal

Pujya Shri Nityanandji Maharaj
Shri Shanti Mandir, Magod



Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the manifest form of compassion. Without distinctions, he showered his affection on everyone, from every level of society.

Pujya Shri Hariprasad Swami
Shri Vallabh Ashram, Kila Pardi



Swami Bapa's delightful laughter is imprinted in my heart. The Vedas teach us to unite. Pramukh Swami Maharaj attached us all to our ancient traditions.

Pujya Shri Shivji Maharaj
Bhidbhanjan Mandir



Child-like affection overflowed from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. We should all revel in that love and follow his wishes.

Pujya Shri Joshi Maharaj, Mumbai



It is our great fortune that we were born in the time of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He inspired the mandir in Abu Dhabi and Akshardham in New Jersey. They will be world renowned.

Pujya Shri Sharadbhai Vyas

Spiritual Discourser, Dharampur



Pramukh Swami Maharaj not only built over 1,100 mandirs, but he also nurtured a vast community of devotees to regularly visit them for darshan and *seva*. He showed everyone the way to reach God.

Pujya Shri Prafulbhai Shukla

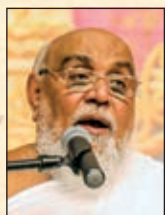
Spiritual Discourser, Khergam



Even thousands of years from now, the world will not forget Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He was an embodiment of affection and compassion. He taught one to be a humble servant and that has brought great joy in my life.

Pujya Shri Jinchandraji Maharaj

Bandhu Triputi Ashram, Tithal



When history remembers the outstanding *hansa*-like *mahapurshes* from the ocean of humanity, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's name will be among the first, since he was extremely compassionate and excelled in saintliness. His compassion and love were limitless.

11 September 2022, Kolkata

Pujya Shri Swami Shastrajanand Maharaj

**Ramakrishna Mission,
Belur Math**



History will be amazed by the fact that a living form of Bhagwan walked on this earth and blessed countless people. Such was Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His birth on earth dispelled the spiritual poverty of this world.

Pujya Shri Bhaktiarjav

Pritivardhan Swami

ISKCON, Mayapur



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's contributions to Sanatan Hindu Dharma are incomparable. Through the mandirs he built, Sanatan Hindu Dharma will be continually nourished.

Pujya Shri Swami

Vishwatmanand Maharaj

President, Bharat Sevashram, Kolkata



Pramukh Swami Maharaj observed detachment, yet served the people and society. Drawn by his *brahmacharya*, over 1,000 youths accepted the path of renunciation. Through his spirituality, countless were attracted.

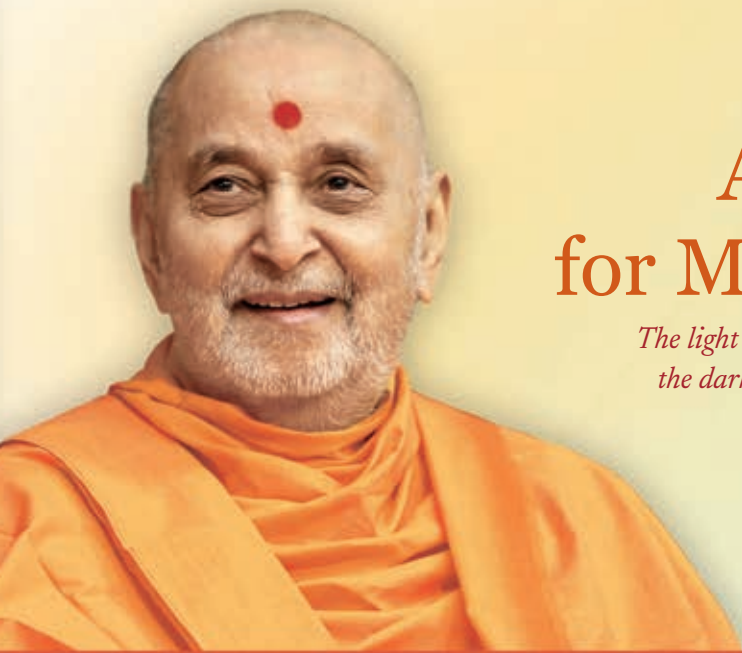
Pujya Shri Kushal Chaudhary

President, Dakshineswar Kali Mandir



All I can ask from a great *mahapursh* like Pramukh Swami Maharaj is the strength to serve our Sanatan Hindu Dharma in the same way he did. ♦

Translation by Sadhu Amrutvijaydas



A Chill Pill for Mental Wellness

*The light of spiritual wisdom and joy can lessen
the darkness of anxiety, frustration, failures
and other problems...*

“Cancel Air India and go to London by British Airways or some other carrier,” devotees requested Pramukh Swami Maharaj while he was in Gondal, Gujarat. “Air India isn’t safe right now.”

Flight 182, an Air India jumbo jet, exploded in mid-air on 23 June 1985 because of a bomb placed by terrorists. The entire crew and passengers perished. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Air India flight to England, UK, was on 10 July 1985. Many Air India flights flew empty because the terrorists threatened more bombings. People were afraid to fly the airline.

“No,” Pramukh Swami Maharaj replied. “Harikrishna Maharaj (the small image of Bhagwan Swaminarayan that accompanied him everywhere) is with us. What have we to fear? We send devotees to Akshar Deri here in Gondal when they have problems, so should we not believe in the Akshar Deri? We will pray at the Akshar Deri and fly by Air India. Nothing will happen. Bhagwan Swaminarayan is with us.”

This was Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s spiritual chill pill. It made him ever fearless and cheerful.

Anxiety never touched him.

“People say they have a headache, but I have never had a headache. I don’t even know what it feels like,” he once shared. Though in later life he had serious ailments, he was always mentally well. It came from his spiritual wisdom. Just as light emerges from the sun and water from the clouds, similarly, mental health blossoms from spiritual health.

“There is no alternate path,” say the Purush Sukta and Shvetashvatar Upanishad, “*Nānyaha panthā vidyate yanāya.*”

In Vachanamrut Gadhada II 60, Bhagwan Swaminarayan echoes this when Muktanand Swami asks him the following question, “Maharaj, in this mundane world, various types of troubles and disturbances arise. Amidst these, what should devotees of God understand so that they experience happiness within?”

Muktanand Swami seems to suggest this question is relevant to devotees of God only. But Bhagwan Swaminarayan hints that troubles come his way, too! Indeed, from a worldly viewpoint, it must have been tough running the

new *sampradaya* that had rapidly grown around him within 25 years of his arrival in Loj, Gujarat: six huge mandirs, two million devotees, and five hundred *paramhansas*.

Following is a compilation of just some of the problem's Bhagwan Swaminarayan faced.

There had been multiple attempts to unseat him, imprison him, and take his life. Jealous elements maimed and murdered many of his sadhus and made life intolerable for others. Devotees were persecuted and excommunicated from their own families and communities. He took them into the satsang family and looked after their social needs. There were famines, droughts and plagues through which he needed to guide and feed his people. Even his own health was fragile. He barely survived several lengthy illnesses and miraculously bounced back as though he was never sick at all.

There were successful efforts to stop Dada Khachar's income and freeze his property so as to strangle his much needed resources in Gadhada. People spread vicious rumours that Bhagwan Swaminarayan was a runaway from a far off land (Uttar Pradesh), from a lower social background (a Shudra), and not of noble pedigree (a Brahmin).

They sabotaged his peaceful and non-violent sacrifices (*yagnas* without killing animals) in Jetalpur and other places. They threw away the vegetarian food he prepared to feed thousands of guests in nearby lakes.

He revealed Gunatitanand Swami as Akshar (*Hari-Lila-Kalpataru*, 7.17, Verses 49–50), but that was even tougher for many of his sadhus and devotees to swallow than his own supreme divinity. Later, he wished to install his own *murti* at Vartal mandir with the name Sahajanand Swami, but that was opposed by Muktanand Swami, the person asking him the question! Just three months after asking it on 14 August 1824, Muktanand Swami tried to prevent him from installing his *murti* on 3 November 1824, at Vartal mandir.

For Bhagwan Swaminarayan it was *deja vu*: almost exactly 22 years earlier, in October–November 1802, Muktanand Swami rebuked him for inspiring spiritual visions (*samadhi*) in Mangrol. Then, on 5 November 1802, Muktanand Swami had a vision of Ramanand Swami who rebuked him! Then Muktanand Swami composed the famous *arti* that ultimately immortalized him: “*Jai Sadguru Swami, Sahajanand dayālu balavant bahunāmi.*”

Yes, Bhagwan Swaminarayan had certainly seen his fair share of problems, from outside and inside the *sampradaya*. How did he cope?

“I will answer that question in the manner I myself behave,” he replied to Muktanand Swami. “That is, [I maintain] unbroken awareness that my own *atma* is distinct from my body, awareness that every physical object is perishable, and awareness of God's grandeur. By these three, no troubles disturb [me].”

In other words, when you realize that you are a spiritual being (*atma*), you will also realize that physical loss is not a great loss. When you realize that physical objects and people are inherently short-lived, you will also realize their destruction or death was not unexpected. When you realize that you have the all-doer of the universe (Bhagwan Swaminarayan) in your life and in your *atma*, you will also realize that you have won the highest lottery in the universe. You will enjoy spiritual self-esteem, gratitude, and amazement. (Vachanamrut Kariyani 8. Please read the last paragraph. It's truly amazing.)

When you feel anxious or depressed about something, swallow the above pill to brighten your day. It should be taken at least once a day, with a glass of bhakti (devotion). It is a 30 second introspective meditation that has no side-effects.

The darkness of anxiety and depression are additionally fought with the light of wisdom and joy.

“It is the nature of the world,” said Pramukh Swami Maharaj. “Life is like riding a camel – up

and down, uncomfortable, and back-breaking – unless you learn how to move with the camel. Then you will be ok.”

Pramukh Swami Maharaj often navigated through unspeakable and intractable difficulties. Throughout his life he laboured to preserve, nurture, and grow the garden of BAPS his beloved guru Shastriji Maharaj had planted.

Despite the relentless outer turmoil, his poise was magnificent. His peacefulness, profound. His joy, boundless.

Such a condition of mental wellness is remarkable. How did he acquire it?

One night, when Shastriji Maharaj was very ill in his final days, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Sarangpur. He was perplexed with the responsibility of completing the all-marble mandir that Shastriji Maharaj had begun building on a hilltop in Gadhada.

“How can I fulfil my responsibility to complete the mandir without Shastriji Maharaj?” Pramukh Swami Maharaj thought as he fell asleep.

That night, Shastriji Maharaj appeared in his dream and said, “Don’t worry about responsibility. That’s my job. You just remember Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Gunatitanand Swami and keep working.”

Pramukh Swami Maharaj awoke with immovable faith. A huge burden lifted off his shoulders. “From that day on,” he said, “many challenges reared their heads but I never felt any burden.”

He worked day and night in extreme conditions to complete the Gadhada mandir and build a thousand more after it, each more beautiful than the previous. He never experienced despair again.

“Even great avatars and devotees of the past have gone through pain,” he explained. “Even Dada Khachar, who gave everything to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and received his blessings numerous times that ‘all will be well’, went through failure after failure, downturn after downturn. But they never lost faith. They carried on.



“If you carry a bucket of water on your head, how much weight will you experience? It will feel heavy. But if you dive into the ocean and thousands of tons of water pass over your head, do you feel its weight? No. Similarly, do not carry such burden on your head. Leave it to God. Immerse yourself in his devotion. He is the all-doer. You will never feel burdened.”

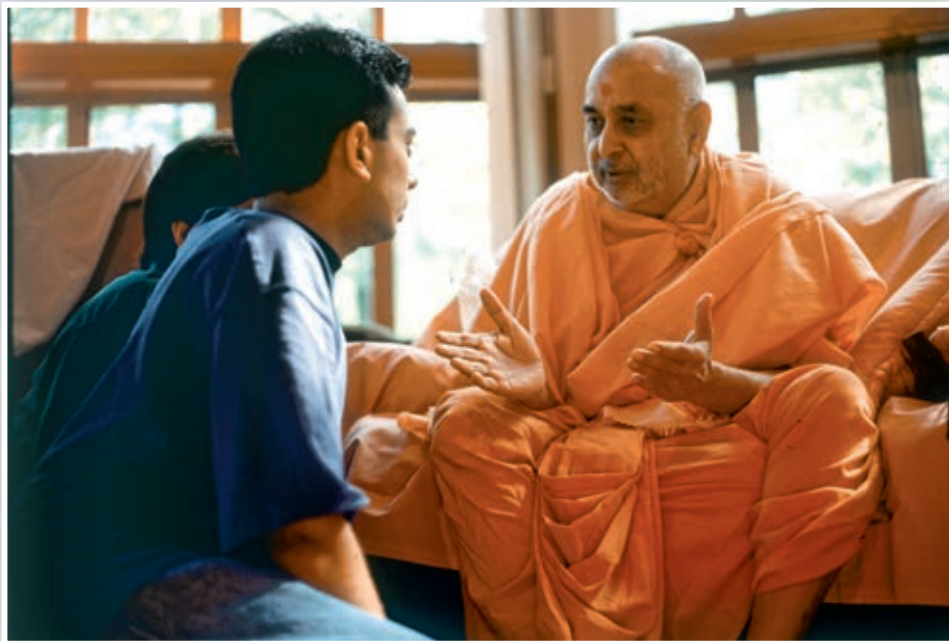
The Bhagavad Gita says, “*Yā nishā sarva bhūtānām.*” Meaning, “All living beings are asleep.” Who? Those who think they are the doers. Those who know Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the all-doer and undoer are awake.

The bigger reality is that we are all – males and females – already his babies lying in his lap. But we are asleep. All we need to do is awake, like Pramukh Swami Maharaj did that night in Sarangpur, and our nightmares will also disappear. Let us all awake in his lap on the occasion of his 100th birthday celebration. Nothing will bring him – and us – greater joy.

DISCLAIMER

ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR MEDICAL DOCTOR before trying alternative methods of controlling anxiety, depression, or despair such as those described in this article. This article does not offer medical advice or any cure for depression, anxiety, or despair. ♦

Forms of Loving Wisdom



Method makes a difference. This is undoubtedly true.

Many play cricket from the street to the cricket ground, but only those who play in a disciplined way seem to acquire real competence.

During an examination many fill up their answer books, but only those who write in a disciplined way have gold medals adorning their necks.

Many run businesses, but only those who conduct them in a disciplined way mint money.

Naturally, the garland of success is attained because of discipline. Defeat results from undisciplined work habits. To carve a stone into an attractive work of sculpture, to carve out an attractive form from a piece of wood, to make a pot from sand or make a rough diamond into a precious one requires appropriate method.

The world seems to be with the young, and many are interested in shaping their lives and

making them admirable. However, the stumbling block is always the method they use. Even when thousands of persons have made innumerable attempts to shape the lives of the young, often the result has been dismal failure. Why?

One can try to polish a rough diamond, but it does not shine. Why?

One can tap on a pile of sand, but that doesn't make it a pot. Why?

The reason is: The number of those who break stones has gone up, but the number of those who can sculpt has gone down. Woodcutters have become a huge majority, but those who can carve wood have become a minority. Diamond-polishers are increasing in number, but diamond-carvers are becoming fewer.

In our ancient India, we had Taxashila Vidyapith. *Shila* means 'stone', *taxan* means 'to shape into form, to carve'. Wherever the young are shaped, wherever they develop, that place is

Taxashila. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a mobile Taxashila, shaping the lives of generations of young men and women. Understanding this method is bound to transform anyone worried about the young today – a sculptor from a mere stonebreaker.

OTHER-WORLDLY METHOD OF LOVE

Childhood in itself is naturally a helpless state of being; it is a stage without experience or thought. One can control it by bribe or threat. We can make a child walk around us just by showing the child a chocolate. But for the young in the liminal stage this trick is not useful.

The young have logic and intelligence. They are strong and competent. They know enough about the calculus of profit and loss. They also have become self-dependent. Under such circumstances bribe, threat, advice are bound to seem dull weapons. In that context, order or threat does not by itself improve anyone; but if there is the warmth of a loving heart, that is bound to succeed.

This is the only art that can lead to success.

Questions are bound to arise here:

“Have the elders withheld their affection from the young so that they do not obey them?”

“Have the teachers not given their love to the students so that they refuse to respect them?”

“Is there a lack of care in the attitude of social workers and leaders so that the young show their utter disrespect for them?”

“Have the sadhus not given much love to the young so that they simply turn their noses up at them?”

Rather than saying ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ in response to such questions, it is best to hold a mirror up to them, because one cannot argue against what the mirror shows. It shows things as they are.

The parents of a young man in New Jersey did a grand expensive ceremony for their son’s marriage in India. But then the son refused to invite his wife to the USA from India. The relatives

endeavoured to persuade him, but to no avail. The parents were hardly in any shape to say anything.

At that time, Pramukh Swami Maharaj happened to plan in New Jersey the Cultural Festival of India. During this festival, the young man met Swamishri. His exposure to Swamishri’s boundless love began to impress the young man.

One evening when Swamishri asked him about his marriage, the young man responded without hesitation: “I am willing to do whatever you tell me. If I have your blessings, I will call her.”

A troubling problem was resolved within moments. We naturally ask this question: How did the love of the parents and elders fail to match with Swamishri’s love?

In 1988, SSC (tenth grade) examinations were taking place in India. On a particular day, students were taking their examination in mathematics. At one exam centre, students were simply copying answers from their books right in the presence of their supervisor. At that time a young man, Himanshu Poonambhai Patel, was trying to remember some details for an answer. The supervisor simply started advising the young man: ‘It is a matter for your future...Everybody is using their books...Why don’t you do that?’ But the young man refused to budge.

The young man simply said: “Pramukh Swami is my guru. His guru, Yogiji Maharaj, used to say that copying in an examination tantamounts to cheating God. I will not copy answers.”

A SHADOW PASSED OVER THE SUPERVISOR’S FACE

Pramukh Swami Maharaj nourished moral values that neither laws nor specific provisions for punishments can provide. How did the love of teachers or social workers fall behind that of Pramukh Swami Maharaj?

No doubt, we have love for the young, but it is important to state again: “Method makes the difference.”

The method of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s love

is something special. In the following discussion we will drink, so to speak, the nectar of his other-worldly love.

CONTACT AT THE RIGHT TIME

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

The essential point is that one can reach someone's heart only on the bridge of caring.

Saying that "Caring is the barometer of love," Erich Fromm says, "To love a person productively implies to care and feel responsible for his or her life not only for his physical existence but for the development of all his human powers." Love means caring for a person in every possible way.

Martin Buber also held the same view. He says: "Love means being fully responsible for the person one loves."

In Pramukh Swami Maharaj such love was natural, spontaneous, and ceaseless.

On 14 July 2007, a camp for the young was organized in Gainesville, Florida. More than 2,000 young men and women participated in it. During a programme at the camp, it was announced, "From the young men sitting here those whose names Swamishri himself had given in their infancy are requested to stand up or those young men whose children's names Swamishri had given are requested to stand up." Many got up.

After that another announcement was made, "Those whom Swamishri had given guidance through letters are requested to stand up." Many got up.

Again, another announcement was made, "Those whom Swamishri had guided by phone are requested to stand up." Many got up.

This was followed by yet another announcement, "Those whom Swamishri had guided in matters of education are requested to stand up." In response to this too, many got up.

As it happened, virtually every young man in the assembly hall had got up in response to one or another announcement.

This was Swamishri's abiding love for the young. He always heard the young. It is because of such loving attentiveness the young today are stalwartly resisting temptations and overcoming obstacles.

LOVING CARE FOR THE SICK

In 2003, Yogi Trivedi, a young devotee in New York, had come to India for Swamishri's darshan and to participate in satsang activities. However, in the second week, he got jaundice, along with a high fever. He told Swamishri: "Since my relatives live in Ahmedabad, I should go live with them, so that our sadhus don't have to worry about me."

At once Swamishri told him, "You don't need to go anywhere. Just stay here with us. Yogicharan Swami will take care of you."

He, then, told the sadhu taking care of him also to take care of this young man.

Two days later, when the young man came for darshan, Swamishri asked him: "How are you now?" Yogi said: "Bapa! It is now unbearable. I feel I am going to die."

On hearing this, Swamishri looked straight into his eyes, saying firmly: "I am here! How can you die?" He then placed his hand on Yogi's head and blessed him.

Within about three to four weeks Yogi recovered. When he came for Swamishri's darshan, he was eating. Seeing Yogi Swamishri asked him to come nearer and gave him *prasad* from his wooden bowl and said, "Eat all of this. You haven't had much food for a month."

Such loving care brought tears to the young man's eyes.

A year later, when Swamishri came to New York, seeing Yogi he immediately asked, "How is your health? Is it good now?" Hearing this the young man was awestruck, thinking that "During this whole year Swamishri must have met countless persons. He must have heard innumerable things from them. And yet he remembers me!" So deeply moved, he had tears

flowing out of his eyes.

“When did I ever desire anything from you?

And still you consecrated me with rain from clouds.

When did I ever ask for anything from you?

And yet the rising sun always inquires about me.

No, O Lord! I want nothing!”

Swamishri’s loving care leaves the young naturally moved. The lines quoted above seem highly appropriate for the events described below.

On 12 February 1995, Swamishri was in Atladara. The *thal* offered to Thakorji at noon had already been placed before him. Suddenly, the news reached him that Dinesh, Bhavnagar’s dedicated young devotee, had an accident and had been taken to a hospital. He had suffered brain injury and was unconscious.

On hearing this, Swamishri right away started reciting the Swaminarayan mantra. Intensely focused and with his eyes closed, he prayed for the young man’s health and then only placed a bit of *prasad* in his mouth.

Swamishri’s care was always so loving that even one’s illness becomes sweetly memorable.

Once, Swamishri had gone to the Sushrusha Hospital in Mumbai to inquire about the health of a devotee, Vajubhai Khatri. There, he heard that Arvind, the son of Mumbai’s then-Mayor Shri Ramesh Prabhu, had suffered an accident. Immediately, Swamishri went to see Arvind. His father gave Swamishri details about the accident. Gently running his hand over the young man’s head, Swamishri said, “Your father has told me everything. God has protected you, and we are praying for you. You will be fine. Have confidence.”

With Swami’s loving care the young easily overcame the blows of illness.

Harshad Chavda had served for years in numerous construction activities. When he suddenly suffered a serious accident, Swamishri wrote four letters to him within a month and

showered so much loving care on him that we are all left deeply moved.

Swamishri wrote to Harshad Chavada: “Your news gives me pain. I pray to Maharaj and Swami for your quick recovery. You are like our hands and feet, so your illness causes pain to me, too. I should serve you in this time of your suffering because you have served us with great understanding. Whatever we can do for you is not enough. When I am not able to serve you in such circumstances, it naturally pains me... Do not worry about expenses necessary for your recovery. We can never forget the *seva* you have done for us all. Even if we must spend hundreds of thousands of rupees or much more than that, that is nothing. Your life is more important than that of even a sadhu. You are a quiet, true, and faithful worker for our institution. Whatever we can do for you is never enough....”

The loving care that Swamishri showered on the young was so evident on innumerable occasions that they were inexorably drawn to him. It is impossible to resist selfless love. It has the capacity to affect us in the innermost sources of our being.

On 3 March 2008, a devotee from Sydney, Australia, had come for Swamishri’s darshan. The car taking him from Ahmedabad to Bhavnagar had an accident. A young woman from Dallas travelling in the car suffered some injury, but because of her intense desire for darshan she disregarded the injury and reached Bhavnagar. When informed about this, Swamishri said, “Since she has come here arrange for her medical treatment.” He even asked a devotee doctor to provide all necessary treatment.

TAKING CARE OF THEIR FOOD

A young man from Toronto wished to receive *diksha* from Swamishri. Hearing about this, Prakash Patel, the brother of this young man, felt the shock that “I have lived like a friend with my brother for 18 years. If now he becomes a sadhu,

what will I do alone by myself?” Prakash decided to inform Swamishri about his anxiety.

Before long an opportunity arose to deal with this issue. He got a chance to go with his father to meet Swamishri. The brother planning to take *diksha* in future was also with them. Swamishri immediately asked Prakash, “If your brother becomes a sadhu, is there any objection from you or your mother?”

Prakash instantly responded: “No, I have no objection.”

Awed by being in the presence of Swamishri, Prakash could not say a word. Perhaps catching what was there in his innermost being, Swamishri said: “Do not worry. I will be your mother, father, and brother.”

What an other-worldly assurance!

This is such a concrete substantiation of Victor Hugo’s prescient remark, “The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved.”

Many young men have experienced Swamishri’s loving care at such an unforgettably right time.

Kanti (now Yogeshdas Swami) and Suresh (now Yagneshdas Swami) had done tremendous amount of running around bringing stones from Rajasthan to Gandhinagar for the construction of Akshardham. Once, they came for Swamishri’s darshan in Ahmedabad. During their seemingly casual conversation Swamishri asked them, “When you go by train, do you take some snacks to eat during your journey?”

The two of them remained silent in response. Swamishri understood right away and told them, “You must ask for them. You still have a lot of work to do. Make a reservation in the sleeping compartment. Money spent for this is not wrong. When we run around so much, health is likely to suffer. If we are careless about health, we end up spending money for treatment and work also doesn’t get done. So you must reduce fasts also.”

Swamishri never failed to consider the smallest

details for the well-being of the young.

Once, Harshad Chavada came to Mehsana for Swamishri’s darshan. During the conversation he told Swamishri about the stone-cutting work going on in Rajasthan. He said, “Right now the workers have gone to their native places to celebrate Holi. Kanti has been taking care of everything. He is also running the machine by himself.”

Hearing this Swamishri immediately told his attendant sadhu, “Kanti is there. Send some packages of *prasad* to him so that he will have more food.”

Swamishri’s love for these young devotees had something deeply maternal about it.

Once, Swamishri had come to Ahmedabad in 1977. It happened to be winter. The young men accompanying Swamishri had their stay on the first floor in the mandir complex. Swamishri stayed on the ground floor. When they reached Ahmedabad, Jagdish, a young man who had joined Swamishri’s *vicharan* (now Narayancharandas Swami), had become ill. Rajendra (Narendraprasad (Acharya) Swami) looked around for a blanket for the ill young man, but he couldn’t find one. It was already midnight. While Rajendra was wrestling with what to do, Swamishri himself showed up with a blanket, saying, “Cover him up with this,” and left.

Next morning, everyone came to know that the blanket Swamishri had given was meant for himself. On that bitterly cold night Swamishri had only his upper cloth (*gatariyu*) to cover himself, but he made sure the ill young man slept in comfort.

The young who experienced such deeply maternal affection from Swamishri naturally became gentle, compassionate and kind. No difficulties or challenges could prevent such young men from developing in ways that Swamishri desired for them. ♦

*Translation of a chapter from
‘Yuva Kranti na Viral Vishwakarma’
by Prof. Suresh Raval (USA)*

Equality

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj treated everyone with equality:
rich or poor, young or old, no matter what caste, creed, colour or country*



In 1984, Swamishri was on a spiritual tour of the Navsari district in South Gujarat, India. In one such village, an assembly was held with Swamishri seated on a raised platform. Just then, his eyes caught the sight of a very thin, poor man standing at the back of the assembly with a flower garland in his hands. He was dressed in rags. The man wanted to offer his garland to Pramukh Swami Maharaj but felt hesitant. Swamishri saw the purity in his heart and called out, “Come here, brother, take this sanctified flower. Don’t be afraid, come nearer.” The man acknowledged Swamishri’s compassionate eyes. With shyness creeping all over him, he slowly reached the front, and immediately placed his head in Swamishri’s lap, who put his hands on

top of the man’s head and softly caressed him. Until now, he had always been treated like a slave, people had called him scornfully, they had looked down on him with despise, and if ever they had touched him, it was only to slap him. But today, it was different. One of the swamis took the garland from his hands and gave it to Swamishri, who in return garlanded the man. He experienced greatness which he had never felt before. He forgot that he was from a lower caste. He stood upright and felt, “I am also a human, after all.”

Someone has put it nicely, “The greatness of great people is known by the way they treat others who are lesser than them.”

In 1986, Swamishri was in New Delhi. A

meeting had been arranged with the President of India, Gyani Zail Singh, at the Presidential Palace (Rashtrapati Bhavan). But before leaving to meet the president, Swamishri had a few minutes, so he decided to stroll in the garden for a few minutes where he saw two gardeners working. He called them over and talked to them about their livelihood and families. He asked them if they had any addictions. The gardeners had rarely been treated so lovingly before by a visitor. They felt Swamishri's love in their hearts. They vowed to give up addictions and spend time and money for their children.

After the meeting, as he was leaving the Presidential Palace, Swamishri asked his driver to stop the car at the gate. He rolled downed his window and called the gatekeeper. He asked him his name and gave him a brochure about the organization and spoke to him for a few minutes. In his eyes, everyone was equal.

On 23 July 2004, in Houston, the Mayor of Stafford, Mr Leonard Scarcella, presented the Key to the City to Swamishri. He was happy, grateful, and pleased that Swamishri had built such a beautiful Hindu mandir in Stafford. Swamishri said, "We were only able to do this due to your support and cooperation."

The mayor responded, "But I didn't do anything myself. My team actively helped. Indeed, you chose us and gave us the opportunity to serve you."

But Swamishri insisted, "You have a wonderful team."

The mayor smiled and said, "But your team is better. We need your peaceful teachings and values here to help us progress in life."

The next day, Swamishri remembered the mayor and said, "When we asked him to offer the Key to the City to God, he became silent for a while, as if he was in deep prayer and talking to God in person. He offered his devotion like a true devotee. Also, when we said that he has given us so much support, he gave the credit to

his team. That shows his humility." Swamishri praised and appreciated the mayor. He truly embraced people of all backgrounds, beliefs, cultures and countries.

When Swamishri was in Houston, Texas, on 1 August 2004, someone introduced a volunteer who was in-charge of housekeeping in the mandir. Swamishri asked, "What's your father's name?"

"Naranbhai," came the reply.

"You mean Jethabhai's son, Narayanbhai?" asked Swamishri again.

Bhupendra's eyes lit up and he said, "Yes, my grandfather was Jethabhai."

Swamishri then said, "Jethalal's father was Ambalal. They were staunch followers and always served with big hearts. They were an ordinary family, but their dedication was extraordinary." Swamishri not only remembered the family but praised their sacrifice and service.

On July 25, 2004, a traditional stone mandir was inaugurated in Houston, Texas, and everyone was happy. Someone commented, "Swamishri, today Houston is rejoicing like never before."

"But why did you mention only Houston? Is there no joy elsewhere?"

"Yes, of course. There is joy everywhere," came the reply.

"Good," said Swamishri. Then he revealed, "If we talk and think about the greatness of others, our own will increase."

He was always thinking globally and giving importance to others. In that, he saw joy, progress and happiness for oneself. ♦

Servant-Leadership

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's servant-leadership was an outstanding attribute of his saintly life. Despite being the spiritual leader of countless devotees he always strived to serve all.

In 1970, American management consultant Robert Greenleaf coined the term “Servant-Leadership” in his essay titled “Servant as Leader”. This ushered a new trend of working in corporate companies. This concept is still widely used in the corporate world with even lectures and seminars on it. Numerous people still willingly adopt this method in their organizations. Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who is an exemplary example of such a servant-leader, said that it is a fact that no one likes an arrogant person. In the corporate world, the arrogant and conceited often seem to be the first to be replaced or eliminated. The corporate structure needs a low-profile and sensible leader. This is because such a leader creates a conducive environment in the office, which in turn results in the employees being productive manifold times.

According to the Hindu shastras, Sage Durvasa had a temperamental nature and it was difficult for others to tolerate or adapt to his anger. Thus, no one invited him to their homes. Once, he arrived as a guest in Dwarika at Bhagwan Krishna's palace. Krishna served him happily. During his stay at the palace, the sage would sometimes singlehandedly eat thousands of portions of food, and at other times he would eat very little. Sometimes, he would



run away from the palace and at other times he would weep uncontrollably. Everyone was exasperated with his erratic and troublesome behaviour. However, Bhagwan Krishna did not tire or get irritated. He continued to serve him with dedication and sincerity. One day, the sage said that he wished to eat *kheer*. Bhagwan Krishna offered him some delicious *kheer*. After eating the *kheer*, the sage asked Krishna to smear *kheer* on his own body, to which Krishna obliged. On seeing the smearings of *kheer*

on Krishna's body, Rukminiji laughed. The sage then told her to smear *kheer* on her body too. After this, Bhagwan Krishna and Rukminiji were harnessed to a chariot in which the sage then sat. Durvasa told them to pull the chariot and often struck them to pull harder. Bhagwan Krishna and Rukminiji did not get angry at the sage's astringent behaviour. Sage Durvasa, who was testing them, became extremely pleased on witnessing their humble devotion and blessed them for their service. He blessed Bhagwan Krishna with a boon that wherever he had applied *kheer*, those parts of his body would never get hurt or damaged. He then turned to Rukminiji and blessed her by saying that she would be the best and most famous among her husband's queens. Since, Bhagwan Krishna had not applied *kheer* on the soles of his feet, he was

later fatally shot by a hunter's arrow.

In brief, a humble servant is dear to everyone. That is why Bhagwan Krishna was also such an able leader in the Mahabharat war.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was always humble like a servant. From the very beginning, he exhibited the traits of a true servant-leader through his behaviour. On the very day when Pramukh Swami was made the president of BAPS by guru Shastriji Maharaj, he washed the dishes of the devotees. Even prior to that, when he was appointed as the chief administrator (*kothari*) of Sarangpur mandir, he sincerely fulfilled all his duties and humbly served everyone. Whether it was cleaning and maintaining the *gaushala*, utensils, kitchen, pantry, etc., he took care of all these tasks with great devotion and humility. Despite his high-ranking position, he never had an iota of ego or arrogance. Seeing him, those around him became inspired to be a part of these services and that too by humbly doing their all.

In 1971, after Yogiji Maharaj left his mortal frame and returned to Akshardham, Pramukh Swami Maharaj became the spiritual master and beacon to thousands of devotees.

Later in the same year, devotees celebrated Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 51st birthday in a village called Dharmaj, in Gujarat.

On the morning of his birthday, Swamishri was cleaning his teeth. He saw some chewed *datan* sticks used by devotees lying near the trash can. He collected all the chewed sticks and put them into the dustbin.

Performing *seva* was natural to him because he was a humble servant.

Once, Swamishri was paying a visit to the rooms of elderly sadhus in Bochasan mandir. Thereafter, while returning to his residence, he noticed that one of the bathrooms on the way needed cleaning. Without telling anyone about his intention, he pretended to visit the bathroom. The sadhus and devotees were left wondering why

Swamishri took so long. After quarter of an hour, they inquired and found Pramukh Swami cleaning the dirty bathroom!

Through such service Pramukh Swami Maharaj demonstrated the true duty of a leader: leading by example.

In 1981, during the bicentenary celebrations of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Ahmedabad, Pujya Bhadant Anand Kaushalyayan, a senior Buddhist saint, was taken aback after seeing BAPS swamis picking and cleaning the dirty dishes of the devotees. During the Delhi Akshardham festival in 2005, Chandubhai Patel had come to serve from Mehsana as a volunteer. At that time, the drainage pipes were blocked because of the massive waste flowing into it. When Chandubhai saw the swamis cleaning the blocked drainage, he joined them. He continued doing this tirelessly for seven days despite the stench and dirt.

Thus, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's servant-leadership inspired countless volunteers and devotees. In addition, thousands were inspired to wash dishes or do menial services even when they had never done them before. In addition to this, they even cleaned toilets, washrooms, etc. Even when the kitchen tasks were very heavy and demanding, no one hesitated to join in and help out. In the United States, Canada, England and other foreign countries, there is a system whereby volunteers wash the dishes and thoroughly clean the kitchen after their weekly assembly and meals. Dr Rajiv Vyas, a well-to-do and respected doctor in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, had a staff of 800 and 38 doctors as his assistants, and was also the director of a renowned hospital in New Jersey. Yet, for years, he regularly cleaned the toilets and bathrooms of the BAPS mandir in Cherry Hill after praying to Thakorji every morning. All these and many more such examples are a testament to the glory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's unique servant-leadership. He set a gold standard for the entire world. ♦

Question Time with Pramukh Swami Maharaj



Mumbai, 4 March 1978. Pramukh Swami Maharaj attended a *yuvak* assembly on the rooftop of the BAPS Mandir in Dadar. Swamishri replied to their questions.

Q: What should we do when we face insurmountable miseries and difficulties in life?

Swamishri: Associating with the Gunatit Sant will give you peace. He will help you to overcome them.

Q: What should youths bear in mind when promoting satsang to others?

Swamishri: You must be living it. If you have conviction you can pass it on. If you live by the *niyams* and imbibe the *jnan* then others will

accept them.

Q: When you call us and give *prasad* we feel good. But do you still have affection for us if we fail in our exams?

Swamishri: The Satpurush's affection is not reduced. He does what is good for everyone. Two people can be highlighted, but not 50. But he has affection for all, no animosity. There is no distinction. In some circumstances, someone may be highlighted, but that does not mean his affection for others is less.

Q: Those who do not have association with the Satpurush excel, but often blessings given to us do not bear fruit. Why?

Swamishri: If God or His Sadhu do not do what we want that does not mean they are not

God or His Sant. They will certainly liberate the *jiva*. There is no doubt in that. Worldly wishes may sometimes be granted, and sometimes not. Maharaj cured the illnesses of others, but Muktanand Swami remained ill. They are focused on doing what is for our *jiva's* benefit. If one practises satsang for one's *jiva's* liberation, then worldly problems will not distract. Their blessings may not bear fruit, but their affection for us does not waver.

Q. The Satpurush is omniscient (*antaryami*). So why is it necessary to confess one's mistakes to him?

Swamishri: The Satpurush is all-knowing, but Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj used to say, "Tell the *antaryami* seven times." We know him as omniscient, but a barrier remains. By confessing, that barrier is removed and one experiences inner peace and joy.

Q. What if one develops animosity while doing *seva* for satsang?

Swamishri: If things do not happen as per our wish then animosity arises. If the aim is to please God and guru then animosity will not develop. Those who want to please them have no problems.

Q. You and the sadhus observe celibacy. So how will women be liberated?

Swamishri: Shriji Maharaj has said, "If the women believe me to be *antaryami* and offer devotion, I will liberate them." The sadhus and householders need not worry about the liberation of women. That can lead to problems, even if one has attained the *brahmic* state. The liberation of women is in the hands of Bhagwan. If you try to mediate, you will encounter problems.

* * *

Sankari, 5 February 1973, Swamishri satisfactorily answered the questions posed by a youth.

Q. How can a *mumukshu* recognize a true guru?

Swamishri: A guru who fully observes the five qualities – *nirman*, *nirlobh*, *nisswad*, *nissneh* and *nishkam* – and is engrossed in devotion to God is a true guru.

Q. To recognize such a guru one has to stay with him and that requires time. By what quality can a guru be recognized from the outset?

Swamishri: If his darshan gives you inner peace, know him to be a true guru. Otherwise, one still has to seek his company and that requires time. Such qualities may not be obvious from the outset, but by associating with him his qualities become fully known. Also, someone may at first seem imposing, but by associating with him, such virtues may not be seen. So, keeping his company is necessary to identify him.

Q. If a guru is no longer alive, but has imparted *jnan* (spiritual wisdom) to people and records of his discourses and beliefs are available, can liberation be attained by reading them and attaching with the guru?

Swamishri: Liberation is attained only through a manifest guru. Because that guru dispels doubts, removes spiritual ignorance and destroys one's drawbacks. Reading the wisdom of the gurus and bonding does benefit, but does not lead to *moksha*. The Gita, Bhagvat and other shastras are written by such distinguished personalities, but merely reading them does not remove the ignorance of spiritual aspirants. So, only through a manifest guru does one attain *kalyan*.

Q. India is home to many devas, dharmas and avatars. There are many conflicts as a result. This causes disputes and divisions. So, what is the need for this new dharma and avatar?

Swamishri: Dharma is *sanatan* (eternal) and all the avatars are of one Bhagwan. The disputes are due to incomplete knowledge. A true guru sees all equally. My guru has visited all mandirs, honoured everyone and for him wherever he

looked, he saw God. So one who is wise should associate with such a guru.

* * *

Ahmedabad, 21 August 1976. A question-answer session was held with Swamishri during the *yuvak* assembly.

Q. How can youths decrease their worldly desires?

Swamishri: If one has true affection for the Satpurush then one will not do what displeases him. In that way, desires will decrease.

Q. For just a one-day celebration, why spend lakhs of rupees for accommodation?

Swamishri: In one day, the *atma* can find peace. In one day, one's life work can be realized. The spiritual benefits are immense. If the arrangements are good, people appreciate it and progress spiritually. It is to encourage people to tread on the spiritual path.

Q. From ill-gotten wealth, if one donates to God, is it purified?

Swamishri: One should not have such an attitude. If one has made a mistake, atone for it. But to do it purposefully is not right.

Q. Purushottam Narayan is supreme, so why does he make us observe fasts and austerities?

Swamishri: We do not like to live in a dirty home, similarly if our *antahkaran* is not pure, then joy is not experienced. So, to purify us and make God the prime focus of our life, Maharaj specifies fasts and austerities. If you want to go abroad, you need a valid passport. Similarly, if one's *antahkaran* is pure, then one attains God's abode.

Q. Gunatitanand Swami sat Bhagatji Maharaj in dhyān for nine days and he became God-realized. Why is this not done by the succeeding gurus?

Swamishri: The Satpurush does not act as we may think. Shastriji Maharaj engaged people in construction and manual work and guided them to the *brahmic* state. When the manifest (*pragat*) Satpurush is kept at

the forefront one has attained the elevated spiritual state.

Q. When someone lapses in observing the five *vartmans*, what can we do to avoid taking *abhav-avgun*? Do *satsangis* have a responsibility in that?

Swamishri: Do not harass one who lapses in observing the five *vartmans*. If one has a rapport with them then one can tell them, otherwise do not keep their company. Do not spread any talks about their misdeeds. Bhagwan will give them the appropriate fruits of their actions. We are not responsible for them. Everybody is liable to make mistakes. We are here [in *satsang*] to become pure. If you focus on this, there will be no problems.

Q. In the *Vachanamrut* it is said that a gangrenous body part should be amputated. What does this mean?

Swamishri: This work should be handed over to the Satpurush. A doctor does his work. He operates, gives medicine and makes others well. Similarly, the Satpurush does what he has to; it is not our role. It is beyond our jurisdiction. It is the duty of devotees to do in a way that reflects positively on the Satpurush.

Q. Before Shriji Maharaj's manifestation was *atyantik kalyan* (ultimate liberation) possible?

Swamishri: Not in this *brahmand*. But it was in the other *brahmands*.

Q. What is your most memorable occasion with Shastriji Maharaj?

Swamishri: All occasions with Bhagwan and his Sant are joyous. (Then Swamishri laughed and revealed.) The most memorable occasion is when he made me a sadhu. ♦



PERSONAL RITUALS

Mansi Puja

In the sixth part, we discussed the personal daily morning worship ritual of nitya puja.

In this seventh article, we discuss the personal ritual of mansi puja. Mansi puja means performing puja mentally, without recourse to any physical offerings such as flowers, leaves, chandan or food.

One performs puja mentally with intense devotion (bhav).

In Vachanamrut Gadhada III 23, Bhagwan Swaminarayan meticulously describes how devotees should offer *mansi puja*. He describes the details applicable to the three seasons in India, namely summer, monsoon and winter. These details will not be discussed here. At the end, he reveals two benefits of *mansi puja*, namely, that a devotee “increases his love for Bhagwan and his *jiva* benefits tremendously”.

If one has not seen Bhagwan, how can one do his *mansi puja* and increase one’s love for him? Here the Svetashvatara Upanishad (6.23) guides us:

*Yasya deve parā bhaktih yathā deve tathā gurau,
Tasyaite kathitā hi arthāḥ, prakāshante
mahātmanaha.*

“If one who offers devotion to Bhagwan similarly offers devotion to the guru, then one attains *moksha*.”

Similarly, Bhagwan Swaminarayan enjoins such equal devotion to the Aksharbrahma Satpurush in Vachanamruts Gadhada I 54, III 26, 35, 38, and Vartal 5 and 11.

From these Vachanamruts one can also glean

the meaning of the phrase, ‘his *jiva* benefits tremendously’, which is eradication of *swabhavs* and *vasana* and attainment of *moksha*.

In BAPS, Shastriji Maharaj and the subsequent gurus have also advocated performing *mansi puja* five times a day. This is equivalent to mini-meditations of about five minutes. In these one visualizes offering delicious foods appropriate to the time of day and also praying to Bhagwan and the guru to accept *yog-nidra* which is a more appropriate phrase for sleep or rest – in the afternoon and at night.

Singing the *nitya cheshta* at night is also a form of *mansi* in which devotees visualize the daily and seasonal activities of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. This includes the minute description of his persona and mannerisms as poetically verified by Premanand Swami. It lasts about 25 minutes and acts as a de-stressor and also serves as a spiritual balm. In Vachanamrut Gadhada II 48, Bhagwan Swaminarayan praises Premanand Swami when he composed and sang the “Vandu” poems, to the extent that he wished to prostrate to Premanand Swami. Moreover, he revealed the immense fruit of such visual contemplation of Bhagwan’s

lila by a devotee, stating, “He has attained the highest state of enlightenment while alive... and has become fulfilled and has nothing more left to do.”

Having briefly discussed the spiritual benefits of *mansi puja*, we now briefly discuss its physical and mental benefits. This inspires us to motivate ourselves to sincerely do *mansi puja* since we are more attached to the body and mind than we are with our *atma*.

Mansi puja is ultimately meditation, but rather than trying to achieve a state of ‘no-thoughts’ which is very difficult for lay people, it is easier, visually feasible and fulfilling. Researchers have noted greater benefits of meditating with meaningful syllables, words, mantras or vivid imagery. Here we cite the combined results of such meditation studies as well as those of Transcendental Meditation (TM).

BENEFITS ON THE BODY

If *mansi puja* or mental imagery is performed diligently, it induces a state of relaxation which affects many systems in the body.

It decreases metabolism – the rate of chemical reactions that are ongoing in the body.¹ This leads to a decreased need for oxygen and increased elimination of carbon dioxide.² It increases the secretion of melatonin at night. This hormone boosts sleep and immunity.³ A deficiency of serotonin, which regulates mood, leads to depression. TM practitioners have high levels of serotonin.⁴

Benefits on the cardiovascular system

Relaxation leads to a decrease in heart rate and blood pressure.^{5,6,7} Indian researchers have discovered that meditation also improves cholesterol levels.⁸

For people with ischaemic heart disease, it improves exercise tolerance.⁹ It decreases the risk of heart attack and stroke.¹⁰

BENEFITS ON THE MIND AND BRAIN

Meditation decreases stress, anxiety and depression and hence lessens the need for medications.¹¹ People who meditate achieve better relaxation and alert states of mind. This is reflected in brain electroencephalograms (EEG) and fMRI. They have higher alpha and theta waves. The latter waves induce the ability to process information faster. Anxiety-prone individuals have lower alpha and theta waves.¹² The secretion of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol decrease.¹³ These hormones are secreted during the ‘fright, fight or flight’ situations in daily life which cause ‘burnout’. Perhaps the greatest and most welcoming benefit, especially during middle age and later, is that long term meditation actually increases blood flow to the brain and increases brain ‘cortical thickening’.^{14, 15} This means one can still increase the brain’s efficiency, especially memory and concentration in certain daily activities.^{16, 17}

Mental imagery is being increasingly used by psychopathologists to treat mental and emotional disorders such as phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and social anxiety.^{18, 19}

The vivid visualization involved in *mansi puja* boosts right brain function. In turn this boosts creativity and facilitates greater neuronal connections to the left brain which increases overall brain function and power. This helps delay or even prevent mental decline in old age. The more vivid the visualization with the ‘mental senses’ of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste, the greater the beneficial effects on the body, mind and *atma*.

Mansi puja then is an extremely important daily ritual with powerful benefits to the body, mind and *atma*. It has a holistic effect on the body by regulating or boosting its major systems, such as metabolism, stress hormones and cardiovascular system. Secondly, it boosts brain function, especially concentration

and memory, and delays the effects of aging. Finally, its most important effect is spiritual in that it aids aspirants to develop profound love for Bhagwan and the guru. This leads to eradication of *swabhavas* and *vasana*, which then help aspirants to become *brahmarup* and attain *moksha*.

In the next, eighth article, we shall discuss the personal rituals of *prayashchitt* – atonement and *upvas* – fasting.

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Mahant Swami Maharaj's 89th Birthday Celebration

19 September 2022, Anand



On 19 September 2022 (Bhadarva vad 9), Mahant Swami Maharaj's 89th birthday celebration was held in Anand in the presence of thousands of devotees. In Swamishri's morning puja, swamis and youths sang bhajans related to the life of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The main evening birthday celebration assembly was themed on a letter written by Mahant Swami Maharaj about how to celebrate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary celebration. The assembly theme unfolded through a series of speeches by *sadguru* swamis and other swamis, describing the virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. Highlights of the assembly:

- ◆ Speech on how Pramukh Swami Maharaj cared and fulfilled the wishes of everyone: Narayanmuni Swami.
- ◆ At 5.50 p.m., Mahant Swami Maharaj arrived in the celebration assembly.
- ◆ Speech on Mahant Swami Maharaj's arduous *vicharan* and how he had also cared and fulfilled the wishes of the devotees: Atmatrupt Swami.
- ◆ Speech on how Pramukh Swami Maharaj obeyed the instructions and fulfilled the wishes of his gurus Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj: Aksharvatsal Swami.
- ◆ Speech on how Mahant Swami Maharaj had committed himself to following the commands of gurus Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj all his life: Anandswarup Swami.
- ◆ Speech on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's and Mahant Swami Maharaj's humility and messages of *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta*: Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami.
- ◆ Speech on how Mahant Swami Maharaj keeps



Swamis and devotees during the birthday celebration assembly, Anand

Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the forefront of his life: Brahmavihari Swami.

- ◆ Speech on the divine virtues of Mahant Swami Maharaj: Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami.
- ◆ An exquisite traditional dance by children and youths to honour Swamishri.
- ◆ Blessings by Mahant Swami Maharaj: “Shriji Maharaj is the all-doer. Everything is done by the divine powers and blessings of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. We have to become more inclined towards spirituality and understand the fact that our true form is *atma*.”
- ◆ *Mantra-Pushpanjali* ritual to honour Mahant Swami Maharaj and thereafter the *sadguru* and senior swamis offered garlands. Then, Swamishri inaugurated an audio bhajan publication by Swaminarayan Aksharpith. Finally, *arti* was performed by all.

The entire celebration assembly was relayed live on live.baps.org, and GTPL and Aastha television channels.



Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami honours Swamishri with a garland



Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami honours Swamishri with a garland

Unity Forums

As part of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations, BAPS centres in Africa invited Hindu and community organizations to participate in a series of Unity Forums to strengthen Vedic Sanatan Dharma in the presence of Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadreshdas Swami.



NAIROBI, KENYA

1 October 2022

Representatives from over 27 local Hindu mandirs and communities, such as Hindu Council of Kenya, ISKCON Temple, Balaji Temple, Pattni Brotherhood, Oshwal Community, Lohana Samaj, Sikh Community, Patel Brotherhood and others, attended the Unity Forum at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Nairobi. Titled 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', the forum featured discussions on protecting and preserving Vedic Sanatan Dharma.

Addressing the assembly, Bhadreshdas Swami talked about the importance of coming together to sustain *bhasha* (language), *bhusha* (attire), *bhojan* (food) and *bhajan* (spirituality) – the four roots of Hindu culture. He reminded everyone about the importance of respecting every place of worship, their traditions and culture. He also explained the importance of mandirs (temple), shastras (scripture) and the *sant* (spiritual leader) as the foundations of Sanatan Dharma, and of encouraging youths to daily read our shastras. He prayed for harmony and peace amongst all, and

the strengthening of Vedic Sanatan values.

His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj sent his blessings for the event, "In the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', meaning the world is one family, let's extend the circle of global harmony."

All who attended appreciated the BAPS Sanstha's efforts to promote harmony and unity by organizing the Unity Forum and were inspired with renewed pride for Vedic Sanatan Dharma.

DAR-ES-SALAAM, TANZANIA

13 October 2022

Around 180 Hindu leaders representing 38 Hindu religious and social organizations based in Dar-es-Salaam attended.

This 'Unity Forum' featured discussions on preserving Hindu culture, and other issues affecting Hindu mandirs and organizations.

The participants also discussed how the community can collectively preserve our ancient culture and beliefs as revealed in our authentic and ancient shastras.

Bhadreshdas Swami shed light on how knowledge can be applied to foster social harmony

and peace. He emphasized the need for continuous dialogue and cooperative efforts to establish a solid foundation of Hindu practices anchored in scriptural teachings and principles.

Some representatives also narrated that their forefathers had migrated to Tanzania more than 150 years ago, and that their descendants were also sincerely practising and preserving our Hindu beliefs and traditions.

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

27 October 2022

Over 60 leaders representing many diverse Hindu organizations attended, fostering fraternity and strengthening unity amongst the various organizations.

The leaders discussed the need for unity and working together to preserve and promote Hindu religion, culture and language. Addressing the gathering, Priyavrat Swami stressed the



importance of unity in securing peace. He described the tireless efforts of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in uniting people to maintain peace.

Bhadrashdas Swami spoke on the principles of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, highlighting the importance of shastras, mandirs and the *sant* in helping to sustain language, traditional attire, a vegetarian diet and spirituality. He also emphasized the need for mandirs in society to nurture these principles in the present and future generations. ♦

Festivals of Inspiration: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations

DAR-ES-SALAAM, TANZANIA

2–11 September 2022; Patel Samaj Ground

More than 24,000 visitors attended the celebrations, in which over 350 volunteers worked tirelessly day and night for over a month.

Among the inspiring thematic attractions was an exciting and interactive exhibition on the life and work of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, titled ‘A Century of Inspiration, the Life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’. A team of over 40 well-trained *kishores* and *kishoris* warmly took guests through the exhibition, explaining the wide-ranging spiritual and social works of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Gujarati, English, Hindi and Swahili. The exhibition housed 3D structures, informative screens, paintings and life-size pictures. Guests learned about the selfless life Pramukh Swami



Maharaj lived for the good of others.

The daily evening *maha-arti* took place at the mandir dedicated to Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the heart of the festival ground.

The event also celebrated India’s vibrant culture and classical heritage. Organizations such as the Sikh Gurudwara, ISKCON, Pathshala,

Indian Cultural Centre and many others presented more than 25 performances.

Another special attraction was ‘Shantilal’s Wonderland’, a special section for kids in which they enjoyed games themed on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s childhood to learn about communication, teamwork and other skills.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s messages of de-addiction, family unity and patience were presented through three inspiring film shows titled ‘Muktanand’, ‘Premanand’ and ‘Nityanand’ respectively, at regular intervals throughout the day.

NAIROBI, KENYA

17–25 September 2022; Jamhuri High School and City Primary School

Around 1,575 volunteers (783 men and 792 women) from Nairobi and various centres across Kenya served in 38 departments performing various duties on the 10-acre festival site, Swaminarayan Nagar.

On Saturday, 17 September, the Swaminarayan Nagar festival site was inaugurated with a *mahapuja* ceremony in the presence of revered swamis, senior devotees, and Shri Rohit Wadhwa, Deputy High Commissioner of India to Kenya.

More than 80,000 people from all over Kenya attended and were inspired by this festival. Of these, 10,371 students from 67 schools in Kenya visited the festival and gained inspiration on how to progress in studies and life.

The magnificent Mayur Dwar welcomed everyone, after which *murtis* of twelve great sages and devotees of India conveyed the message of unity in diversity. The grand *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was enshrined at the centre of the festival grounds.

Three inspiring video exhibitions were also shown at regular intervals during the day. The ‘Transcend’ video show was based on living an addiction-free life. The ‘Family Unity’ video show inspired a harmonious family life and the video

themed ‘Bliss’ imparted life lessons on how to attain ultimate happiness.

A special exhibition showcased the social services undertaken by BAPS Charities in Kenya. Inspired by the exhibition, visitors resolved to plant 1,000 trees and donated 565 pints of blood in the blood donation camp.

Another elegant exhibition depicting the life and work of Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired both young and old visitors.

Other daily attractions included a festive band procession, evening *maha-arti* in front of the grand *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and entertaining and enlightening evening stage programmes presented by social and religious organizations from Kenya.

Special *kutirs* exemplifying India’s devotional rituals and culture were also set up.

‘Shantilal’s Wonderland’ was a special fun area for children to gain practical life skills based on the stories of role models like Shravan, Dhruv and Nachiketa. They learnt about the great heroes of India who brought life to virtues such as courage, patriotism, integrity, duty and others. Values such as respecting elders, sustaining the environment, offering daily prayers, remaining addiction-free and others were also conveyed to the children through participative activities and vivid poster presentations to help them become more responsible and caring citizens.

On 19 September, Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj’s 89th birthday was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm. On 25 September, a procession to honour and welcome Mahamahopadhyaya Pujya Bhadrashdas Swami and the Swaminarayan Bhashya was carried out. Devotees also took the opportunity to perform tulsi *tula* of the commentaries on the Prasthanatrayi. Jnaneshwardas Swami, Kothari of Sarangpur Mandir, was also present and addressed the assembly.

The grand finale programme featured a dance by *kishores* from Nairobi and a fireworks display with a light show.

The festival was widely covered by various media houses across Kenya, such as Nation, The Standard, KBC, KTN, K24, The Asian Weekly and People Daily.

Many dignitaries and well-wishers also visited and derived inspiration from the festival.

VISITOR EXPERIENCES

“Inspirational experience to see a humble president giving time, himself, and love to make children, families, women, villages, and cities happy.” - Pastor Dorcas Rigathi, Second Lady of Kenya

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a contemporary figure and pillar for us as religious leaders and servants of God in our respective faiths.” - Rev. Father Joseph Muite, Chairman of Inter-religious Council of Kenya

“I am inspired and encouraged by how the dedication of one individual has achieved such great impact in the entire world. It is a motivation to many on how selflessness and unity is vital to bringing joy and happiness in the world.” - Mr Nelson Havi, President of the Law Society of Kenya

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

7–16 October 2022; Wits University, Sturrock Park Football Complex, Johannesburg

Over 25,000 members of the local community and guests from Johannesburg and across South Africa attended the historic 10-day Festival of Inspiration.

The festival was inaugurated by Jnaneshwar Swami, Priyavrat Swami, resident BAPS swamis and honoured guests from the public and private sectors. On entering the festival site, visitors were welcomed by the grand *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and festival mandir surrounded by beautiful landscapes. A daily *maha-arti* and *nagar yatra* in the evening added to the festive atmosphere.

The festival featured an interactive exhibition portraying the life and work of Pramukh Swami



Maharaj in which volunteer guides explained the salient messages, such as *ghar sabha*. Also there were regular live presentations on ‘Family Harmony and Values’ and the ‘Paramanand’ video highlighting Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s work in reforming society.

In the children’s section, titled ‘Kingdom of Values’, families participated in a series of games and activities in a quest to acquire five jewels, representing priceless lessons related to respect, honesty, education, family, and environmental awareness. At the centre of this cultural amusement park was a spectacular mandir constructed entirely from recyclable materials gathered by the *balaks* and *balikas* of BAPS South Africa over the previous three months. Over 4,000 plastic bottles and 50,000 plastic bottle caps were used to construct this mandir.

Throughout the 10-day festival over 250 performers presented both Indian and South African culture through music, dance, and other special programmes.

Swamis and learned pandits from across South Africa participated in the Dharma Parishad on the topic ‘Hinduism in South Africa 2025: Challenges and Opportunities’. All resolved to uphold Hindu Dharma in South Africa with unity and friendship.

BAPS Charities hosted free health screenings, dietician consultations, and eye and hearing screenings. Also, visitors donated 200 pints of blood.

The final weekend celebrated Diwali through Chopda Pujan, light-a-lamp to light up a life, build a Diwali hamper to help those in need, and

the auspicious chanting of the Sama Veda by learned pandits.

The Garden of Virtues display featured one hundred edible artworks, sculptures, and images made by local devotees, each depicting a story of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and a shastra reference. Collectively, the display conveyed the message: ‘Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a garden of all the divine virtues described in the shastras. Let us imbibe these virtues in our own lives and spread a divine fragrance in our world.’

The festival concluded with a grand *maha arti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *murti* adorned with 2,000 lotus flowers and a fireworks display attended by 7,500 well-wishers.

Over 450 volunteers contributed their time and efforts to prepare for and run the festival. From May 2022, volunteers gathered every evening to build the magnificent festival displays, mandir structure, and plan for the various programmes and other aspects of the event.

VISITOR EXPERIENCES

“It is amazing to understand and get an insight into the unselfish life, teachings, accomplishments and thoughtfulness of this man. An inspirational exhibition of an organization that is making a real difference in this challenging world that we live in. We, as dwellers of this planet, should take these learnings and be ambassadors of BAPS philosophy and spiritual living.” - Ash Gewap

“I am blessed and found a vision for life. Thanks to each and every *sevak*.” - Guruji Kiritbhai Acharya

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

12–18 October 2022; CPS Ground, Kamwala, Lusaka

More than 8,800 visitors, including 1,500 students, from all over Zambia and Malawi, visited the seven-day celebrations.

Around 100 men and women volunteers helped for one month to set up and manage the festival site.

On the first day, a grand *nagar yatra* from the



Radha Krishna Mandir to the festival site took place. Thereafter, the Pramukh Swami Nagar was ritually inaugurated by Honourable Mr Garry Nkombo, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development; Mr Murugesan Ramaswami, Second Secretary at the High Commission of India in Zambia; and other guests.

A magnificent gate, Mayur Dwar, welcomed everyone to the Pramukh Swami Nagar. Along the main pathway, *murtis* of fourteen great rishis and devotees greeted everyone. A grand *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was enshrined at the centre of the festival grounds.

Three inspiring video exhibitions were also shown at regular intervals during the day throughout the seven days of the festival. The ‘Muktanand’ video show was based on living an addiction-free life. The ‘Nityanand’ video show inspired a harmonious family life and the video themed ‘Paramanand’ imparted life lessons on how to attain ultimate happiness.

Also, a special exhibition showcased the social services undertaken by BAPS Charities in Lusaka, highlighting Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life motto ‘In the joy of others lies our own’. Inspired by the exhibition, visitors donated 101 pints of blood in the blood donation drive.

Every evening, the *maha-arti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *murti* was performed and entertaining and enlightening stage programmes were organized in which kirtan-bhakti, traditional dances, thematic dramas and other cultural programmes were presented by social and

religious organizations from Lusaka and Malawi.

The Nilkanth Abhishek Kutir, Prarthana Kutir, Charity Kutir and Vyasan Mukti Kutir – in which 450 visitors pledged to quit their addictions – exemplified India's devotional rituals and culture.

This festival was widely covered by ZNBC, Zambia Daily Mail and Times of Zambia. Many dignitaries and well-wishers also visited and were inspired by the festival.

VISITOR EXPERIENCES

"I feel blessed to be part of this life-changing experience of celebrating the life of a guru who was selfless, simple, yet so influential to the world." - Hon. Chipoka Mulenga, Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry

A truly inspirational life that has inspired us all. We would all be much better, more religious and more helpful, by drawing inspiration from such a humble, selfless and yet simple life lived. I have personally been inspired to follow the many teachings to improve my life at a personal level."

- Mr Christopher Mundia, Special Assistant (legal affairs) to the President of Republic of Zambia

"I have learnt a new tune to my life through this visit. Today, I have learnt of the values that come from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It is very clear to see that he touched millions of lives. He was truly a saint and we can learn so much from his life." - Hon. Mr Gary Nkombo, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development. ♦

Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations

California, USA



LOS ANGELES, CA

4 September 2022

Over 10,000 devotees and well-wishers gathered at the historic KIA Forum in Inglewood, CA, for the grand centenary celebration of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the 10th anniversary of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan

Mandir in Chino Hills, CA.

Titled 'Paratpar: The Guiding Light', the celebration assembly depicted the life and work of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his transcendental love for all. The celebration began with leaders of over 25 Hindu organizations across Southern California lighting *diyas*. Then,

through various dramatic skits, emotional monologues, energetic dances, and informative speeches by learned swamis, the audience learned how Pramukh Swami Maharaj's love became a guiding light for millions worldwide.

Renowned Indian actor and BAPS devotee, Shri Dilipbhai Joshi presented a powerful monologue about the impact of Pramukh Swami Maharaj on his life. The programme concluded with a devotion-filled dance by over 100 youths offering tribute to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

17 & 24 September 2022, San Jose & Pleasanton

On 17 September 2022, over 2,800 community members and well-wishers gathered at the San Jose Centre for Performing Arts, and on 24 September, over 3000 community members and well-wishers gathered at the Alameda County

Fairgrounds in Pleasanton, CA, for the grand celebrations of the 100th birth anniversary of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

At the start of each celebration, titled 'Param Shanti' (Eternal Bliss), state, county and city officials and leaders of over 35 Hindu organizations across Northern California lit *diyas*. Then, the celebration theme was presented through skits, personal testimonies, energetic dances and informative speeches by learned swamis.

The programmes included a drone show developed by BAPS volunteers displaying the contributions and impact of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The programmes concluded with a devotion-filled dance by over 50 youths offering tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. ♦

Inauguration by HH Mahant Swami Maharaj: 'The 2001 Gujarat Earthquake' Documentary Series

4 November 2022, Ahmedabad



On the occasion of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated 'The 2001 Gujarat Earthquake' documentary series.

This historic four-episode documentary series reveals the extraordinary relief efforts orchestrated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in

the aftermath of this devastating calamity and unravels the untold story of Bhuj's journey from complete desolation to inconceivable restoration. The result of two years of extensive research, examining hundreds of hours of real-time footage, and compiling as well as personally conducting over 130 first-hand testimonials of government officials, volunteers, and victims, this series is a humble tribute to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his memorable service for humankind.

A dedicated webpage providing exclusive updates, content, and details will also be available on baps.org/eq2001 ♦



Highlights of Pramukh Swami Nagar

Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations Site, Ahmedabad

The month-long centenary celebrations of Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who had lived by his motto, “In the joy of others, lies our own”, will be celebrated from 15 December 2022 to 15 January 2023 in Ahmedabad.

People from all walks of life will visit and offer their heartfelt tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and gain inspiration from the fascinating presentations, displays and programmes about his universal life, works and messages. Daily assemblies and programmes, held in the august presence of eminent personalities from India and all over the world, will enlighten and elevate devotees, aspirants and well-wishers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ NAGAR

1. Festival Venue

The month-long ‘Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Festival’ is being hosted on a gigantic 600-acre site called ‘Pramukh Swami Nagar’ along the SP Ring Road, near Ognaj circle, in western Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The site is nearing completion into a cultural wonderland of excitement, joy and inspirations for people of all ages and backgrounds. Entry will be free of cost.

2. Cultural Gates

A total of seven large decorative gateways will



Main ceremonial gate, Sant Dwar



67 feet high replica of Akshardham



An artist's representation of the 30 ft high *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

welcome and guide visitors to the various zones of the festival campus. The main gate, Sant Dwar, visible from SP Ring Road is 280 feet long and 51 feet high. This gate will house *murtis* of great Indian sages. Each of the other six gates is 116 feet long and 38 feet high and will be followed by inspiring depictions from the life and work of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

3. Pramukh Swami Maharaj Maha-Murti

The 30-feet high *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, perched on a 15-feet high pedestal, is encircled by 24 recesses, with each having extraordinary depictions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's great life and work.

4. Replica of Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

Murtis of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and other Hindu deities will be enshrined in the 67-feet high massive replica of Swaminarayan

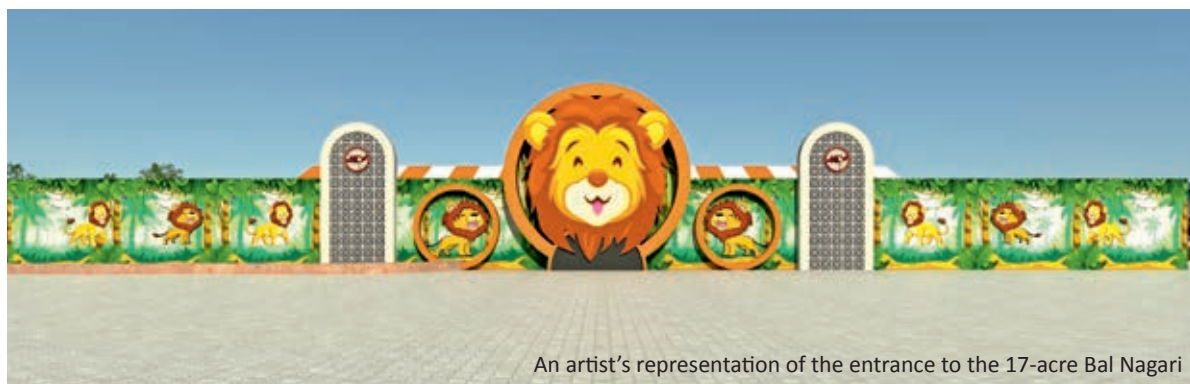
Akshardham, New Delhi, allowing visitors to have darshan and offer prayers.

5. Exhibition Marquees

Five immersive shows – 'Sahajanand', 'Muktanand', 'Nityanand', 'Bharatanand' and 'Paramanand' – comprise of films and live performances themed on topics taught and promoted by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, like anti-addiction, family harmony, pride for India and community service.

6. Children's Cultural Village (Bal Nagari)

The Children's Cultural Village or 'Bal Nagari', spread over 17 acres and consisting of three domes and many other inspiring displays. Children will manage the exhibitions, educational shows and interactive games for children of all ages. The Bal Nagari will inspire children with values like respect, hard work, teamwork, kindness and moral living. In the 'Swarna' dome



An artist's representation of the entrance to the 17-acre Bal Nagari



An artist's representation of the bhajan kutir



An artist's representation of the landscape and decorative archways

exhibit, more than 150 girls will portray the message of achieving success by combining hard work with prayers.

In between their duties, children volunteers will be taught by experienced teachers from various education boards to take care of their school studies.

7. Talent Shows – Open-Air Theatre

Two open performing stages will feature various talent shows like group singing, classical music, musical yoga, *dangi* dance, musical instrument playing, gymnastics and others. Over 150 children and youths have been practising for more than three months for these performances. The performances will inspire children to develop personal talents and skills.

8. Yagnapurush Sabhagruh

Daily, inspirational talks by renowned national and international speakers will be held in the

mammoth 'Yagnapurush Sabhagruh' marquee along with cultural performances of music, dance and drama.

9. National & International Seminars

Professionals and scholars from various fields will convene to participate in professional and academic conferences on a variety of topics.

10. Param Anand Light & Sound Show

Every night, the light and sound stage and arena will come alive with riveting thematic presentations and performances.

11. Sahajanand Jyoti Udyan (Glow Garden)

A vast, enchanting garden of illuminated figures will portray beauty and inspirational teachings from around the world.

12. Landscape

Pramukh Swami Maharaj actively advocated



Volunteers engaged in seva on the festival site

for nurture of nature. During his lifetime, he inspired and conducted numerous worldwide environment-friendly projects. At Pramukh Swami Nagar, thousands of flowers, plants and trees have been nurtured and planted by the landscape department. To conserve water, a drip irrigation system is used to nurture and sustain these plants.

13. Premvati Food Court

A variety of traditional vegetarian cuisine and international favourites, refreshments and drinks will be available at the Premvati food court.

14. Organizer: BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

This festival is organized by BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha – a worldwide socio-spiritual organization endeavouring to inspire millions towards faithful, harmonious and moral living (for details refer to baps.org). Under the divine guidance of HH Mahant Swami Maharaj the centenary celebrations will attract millions from India and abroad and inspire values, peace and joy.

Swamis and Volunteers – The Backbone of Pramukh Swami Nagar

The backbone of Pramukh Swami Nagar is its dedicated volunteer force of BAPS swamis, youths and devotees. These volunteers and swamis, inspired by Mahant Swami Maharaj, comprise of a

diverse group of people – professionals, skilled and unskilled – hailing from different geographical, academic, and social backgrounds. Thousands of volunteers serving at the festival site have been engaged full-time by admirably balancing their personal, family, social, professional and volunteer duties. They have been engaged in physical service, planning, management and implementation at the festival site, some of whom have been serving for the past six months to one year.

Inspirer: His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj

Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations are inspired by HH Mahant Swami Maharaj, the sixth spiritual successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and present guru of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha.

For over six decades, Mahant Swami Maharaj served under the guidance of his gurus Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, tirelessly visiting villages, towns and cities throughout India and the world. His striking humility, serene spirituality and profoundly insightful discourses continue to inspire and strengthen faith and moral living in countless people of all ages around the world.

For future updates on the celebrations:





 @PSM100yrs
www.psm100.org



In the Joy of Others: Love, Serve, Give

13 October 2022, Sydney



Over 2,100 devotees and community members attended the Centenary Celebration of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the iconic Sydney Opera House on Sydney Harbour, Australia, held in the presence of Pujya Doctor Swami.

The programme titled ‘In the Joy of Others: Love, Serve and Give’, was the first cultural event of its kind held inside the world renowned Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House. The in-person audience, joined by an estimated 50,000 via a live stream, experienced a musical, spiritual and inspirational journey into the life and work of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his lasting impact on millions around the world.

Before entering the main Concert Hall, attendees walked through an exhibition showcasing the life, work and incredible impact of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The Concert Hall’s renovated interior and outstanding acoustics were the perfect setting for a programme which featured musical performances and traditional cultural dances. Following a welcome dance, the first section of the programme featured live dramas depicting real-life stories about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s unconditional love and genuine connection with all devotees. The next section focused on Swamishri’s services

to those affected by natural calamities.

At one stage, more than 125 dancers performed while a total of 20 traditional and modern instruments were being played. Performers, aged between 6 and 67, delivered inspiring messages through dramatic storytelling, capturing monologues and enlightening speeches which explored the life, service and love of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

On this historic occasion, Hon. Chris Bowen, Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, said, “We send a message to the world that the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj is celebrated here in Australia and around the world and his teachings are as important here in Australia as they are in any corner of our planet. Pramukh Swami Maharaj does not walk the earth anymore, but his ideas, his thoughts, his teachings, his encouragement, are alive today. This is a special day and let it be remarked around the world, that here in Australia’s most iconic building we marked the 100th anniversary of the life of an iconic man.”

The last part of the programme looked at the gifts that Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave during his life and their eternal presence in our lives in the form of values, mandirs and, most importantly, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj. On this historic evening, Mahant Swami Maharaj had sent special blessings for the celebrations. ♦

Hindu Representation at G20 Religion Forum

2–3 November 2022, Bali, Indonesia



Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadreshdas Swami represented BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha as a traditional scholar of Hinduism at the inaugural G20 Religion Forum – or ‘R20’, reinforcing His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s lifelong advocacy of global religious harmony.

R20 Summit: Background and Significance

R20 is a ground-breaking new global initiative that brings together religious leaders from G20 member states to discuss and respond to wider global challenges of the 21st century.

Founding co-chairs of R20, Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf (General Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia) and His Excellency Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa (Secretary General of the Muslim World League, Saudi Arabia), explained that the objective of R20 is to mobilize global leadership to help ensure that religion functions as an open and dynamic source of solutions.

His Excellency Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia, addressed the opening session of the R20 summit by welcoming the 400 esteemed faith leaders and religious scholars.

In his address to the distinguished forum, Bhadreshdas Swami paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj in his centenary year by invoking his message of religious harmony from the United Nations Millennium World Peace Summit in New York City in 2000.

Bhadreshdas Swami then cited the motto of Indonesia, “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,” and explained, “We are different. Yet, we are one. One human race.

One family of One home. Just as the ancient Rig Veda proclaims: *Yatra vishvam bhavati eka needam.*”

He drew upon the universal timeless wisdom of the Vedas, Upanishads, Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the great schools of Indian thought to encourage a more universal definition of ‘dharma’ and unpacked several universal dharmic values – such as peace, love, friendship, respect and compassion – that can help facilitate peaceful conflict resolution and foster global religious harmony.

He said that through active dialogue “we are able to accept the existence of other faiths – accept them as they are, without needing to discriminate or disparage. Then, there can be mutual respect among faiths – respect of human dignity and spiritual integrity, without inciting hate or hurt. Then, we can learn from one another – learn all that is good and noble.”

In conclusion, Bhadreshdas Swami emphasised the driving message of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj: “In the spirit of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ – ‘The whole world is one family’ – let us reach out to extend the circle of global harmony.”

Among the other speakers were two from India – Swami Govinda Dev Giri Maharaj, Treasurer of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust, and Swami Mitranand Saraswati, Director of the All India Chinmaya Yuva Kendra – who also eloquently promoted religious harmony by drawing upon the principles of Sanatan Hindu Dharma.

Other speakers included an impressive line-up of esteemed faith leaders and representatives as well as eminent scholars of religion from around the world.



INDIA

YUVA PARAYANS 2022

15 August–10 September 2022, Gujarat & Mumbai



As part of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations, BAPS *yuvak mandals* throughout Gujarat and Mumbai held three-day *parayans* based on theme 'I Will Always Be With You'.

Through various enlightening and entertaining presentations and activities, the youths learnt about the selfless affection showered by Pramukh Swami Maharaj on all.

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ SMRUTI MANDIR PRATHAM STAMBH STHAPAN

7 September 2022, Sarangpur



On the sacred day of Jal Jhilani Ekadashi, the Pratham Stambh Sthapan Vidhi of the majestic Pramukh Swami Maharaj Smruti Mandir was held in the presence of Pujya Viveksagar Swami, Kothari Jnaneshwar Swami, other senior swamis,

and devotees from India and abroad. A *mahapuja* was first held in the Yagnapurush Sabha Mandap. Then, at the Pramukh Smruti Mandir Vedic prayers were recited as the first carved *stambh* (pillar) was set in place to complete the ceremony.

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

11 September 2022, Kolkata



More than 2,000 devotees of the Gujarati and Marwari community attended the grand birth centenary celebrations of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the presence of Pujya Viveksagar Swami.

Pujya Viveksagar Swami discoursed on the glorious virtues of Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj based on the theme 'Sant Param Hitkari'.

Also, on this festive occasion, based on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life motto 'In the joy of others lies our own', BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Kolkata, honoured more than 40 city-based organizations which serve for the welfare of the society.

'TOWARDS BETTER LIVING – A FESTIVAL OF INSPIRATION'

18 September 2022, BAPS Mandir, Jalandhar

Over 3,000 people from Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ludhiana, and nearby towns visited The 'Festival of Inspiration – Towards Better Living', which



inspired visitors through video presentations on family harmony, *ghar sabha*, an addiction-free life, and saving energy and water. A visual presentation showcased the life and works of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Cultural programmes by children and youths on the main stage entertained and enlightened the visitors, and a beautiful *annakut* was offered before Thakorji.

In the evening assembly, Munivatsal Swami spoke about the wisdom of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the message of Mahant Swami Maharaj. Padmashri Vijay Kr. Chopra, Editor-in-Chief cum Managing Director of the *Punjab Kesari* newspaper presented awards to the children and youths.

BAPS DONATES 2,000 HOSPITAL BEDS

3 October 2022, Nashik



In Maharashtra, during the challenging COVID-19 pandemic period, BAPS provided hospital beds, meals and rations to the needy. Having provided about 2,000 hospital beds to Nashik Municipal Corporation, two floors of the New Nashik Corporation Hospital have been named as the ‘Pramukh Swami Maharaj Ward’ and the ‘Mahant Swami Maharaj Ward’,

respectively. Shri Radhakrishnaji Game, Divisional Commissioner, Nashik Division and Dr Shri Chandrakantji Pulkundwar, Nashik Municipal Commissioner, along with Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami inaugurated these wards.

SEMINAR ON ‘EARTHQUAKE RELIEF WORK BY PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ’

12 October 2022, Bhuj



Under the auspices of the Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations, Krantiguru Shyamji Krishna Verma Kutch University, Bhuj-Kutch, in association with AARSH Research Institute, Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar, organized a seminar on the topic ‘Earthquake Relief Work by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’ at the Town Hall, Bhuj-Kutch.

Through an online video speech, Brahnaviharidas Swami highlighted that under the guidance of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, BAPS rendered commendable services in the revival of the earthquake-hit areas of Bhuj in 2001. Pramukh Swami Maharaj took personal interest and care to effectively coordinate this relief work.

Then, Vedchintandas Swami, described how BAPS sadhus and volunteers worked day and night in this mammoth rescue and relief operation to provide shelter, food, and medicines for the victims and rescue workers in Bhuj. Food packets prepared at all major BAPS centres were sent to the affected areas and a special shipment containing over 350 tons of essential supplies was also sent to Bhuj – the worst affected area. Medical camps and

blood donation camps were set up in these areas. Moreover, BAPS volunteers also helped the local authorities to restore postal and telephone services.

Atmamanandas Swami then spoke about the extensive rehabilitation work carried out by BAPS in the earthquake-affected areas. Under the guidance of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, BAPS rebuilt over 2,000 homes in 8 villages and a colony in Bhuj to cater for the local people and community. BAPS relief operations in the earthquake-affected areas provided timely emergency and long term physical, emotional and spiritual support to the earthquake-affected people.

Other dignitaries present on this occasion included the Controller of Examinations of the Krantiguru Shyamji Krishna Verma Kutch University, Bhuj-Kutch, Dr Tejas Sheth; the Government Authorized Pleader Public Prosecutor of Kutch District, Dr Kalpesh Goswami; and Director of AARSH, Dr Shrutiprakashdas Swami.

The seminar was broadcast live on the university website.

JIVAN UTKARSH PARVA

13–15 October 2022, Vadodara



Over 50,000 dignitaries, devotees and well-wishers from throughout Vadodara attended the three-day 'Jivan Utkarsh Parva' celebrating the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The three evening assemblies were held on the vast Navlakhi Ground in the centre of Vadodara city. The event was inaugurated by the Mayor of Vadodara City Mr Keyurbhai Rokadia and Director of IREDA Mr Shabdsharanbhai Brahmabhatt.

The first day focused on youths, in which Jnanvatsal Swami spoke on the '3D of Yuva Life: Determination, Dedication, Discipline' based on inspiring incidents from the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and other great personalities. As a result of this, many youths resolved to practise restraint in life, sincerity in studies, honesty, and regular prayers.

The other two days focused on family, 'Seven Gems for Happy Families', in which the seven practical teachings given by Pramukh Swami Maharaj for family unity were elaborately explained through dramas, thematic shows, a unity dance, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings and Jnanvatsal Swami's speeches. Many pledged to enhance their family unity by having daily family meals, instilling values in children, bowing to parents, holding a regular family assembly and other family-centric activities.

LOK SABHA SPEAKER SHRI OM BIRLA MEETS MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ

15 October 2022, New Delhi



India's Lok Sabha Speaker Shri Om Birla met Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj for the first time. Shri Birlaji specially garlanded Mahant Swami Maharaj and Swamishri also traditionally welcomed him with a garland.

Om Birlaji complimented Mahant Swami Maharaj for inspiring the remarkable cultural, spiritual and humanitarian work of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha in India and around the world. Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed Shri Birlaji to continue serving the nation and humanity.

Speaker Birlaji then paid his respects at

Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir. He commended the spirit of voluntary service by which the mandir was built. While devoutly performing *abhishek* of Shri Neelkanth Varni, he prayed for peace, prosperity and harmony in the nation. He then experienced the Sanskruti Vihar boat ride exhibition that displays 10,000 years of India's heritage and discoveries.

Sharing his experience, Shri Om Birla wrote, "Had an amazing darshan of Swaminarayan Mandir. It is a wonderful combination of knowledge, science and culture as well as a wonderful exhibition of art. It is infused with spirituality and service. It was built in a short time. Its darshan has made life blessed. I also got the privilege of meeting Mahant Swamiji Maharaj. Wonderful. Very beautiful."

BAPS SERVES IN THE MORBI RESCUE OPERATION

30 October 2022, Morbi



In the aftermath of the tragic collapse of the suspension bridge over the Macchu River at Morbi, BAPS swamis and volunteers rapidly joined the rescue operations and also provided hot meals to military personnel and other rescuers at the temporary relief kitchen.

A witness to the tragic events, Subhash, a volunteer of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Morbi, jumped in the water and saved six people.

Mahant Swami Maharaj expressed his sympathy to the bereaved families and offered heartfelt prayers at the feet of God.

UK & EUROPE

TASMAI SHRI-GURAVE NAMAH: SHATABDI MUSICAL TRIBUTES

25 April to 26 June 2022 , UK & Europe



BAPS Swaminarayan Hindu mandirs and centres across the UK and Europe organized 34 kirtan *aradhanas* (musical tributes) over the summer of 2022 to commemorate the centenary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Each *aradhana* was titled 'Tasmai Shri-Gurave Namah', in the traditional Hindu spirit of honouring the guru and his indispensable role in the spiritual development of each individual.

BAPS swamis as well as youths and children of various ages from around the UK and Europe presented a set of kirtans extolling the inspiring life and virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

These events formed part of a larger series of 125 musical tributes being delivered across the UK and Europe to celebrate the hundredth birth anniversary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. These began in May 2019 and will conclude with the final kirtan *aradhana* in December 2022.

SANT PARAM HITAKARI: SHATABDI DISCOURSES

25 April to 26 June 2022 , UK & Europe



BAPS Swaminarayan Hindu mandirs and centres across the UK and in Europe held 39 multi-day *parayans* to commemorate the centenary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Each *parayan*, titled ‘Sant Param Hitakari’, was delivered by learned swamis who presented the inspiring life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj to offer practical wisdom for purposeful daily living.

Many of the centres also organized special exhibits to consolidate the theme of the *parayan*, with young boys and girls presenting key incidents or virtues from the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Another key feature of some of the *parayans* was children and youths conducting the inaugural *parayan puja* in fluent Sanskrit and also opening each event with devotional singing.

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ SHATABDI FINALE CELEBRATIONS

27–28 August 2022 , UK & Europe



The grand finale celebrations of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s centenary in the UK and Europe were held in the presence of Anandswarupdas Swami.

The celebrations comprised four performances over two days, allowing more than 9,000 devotees to honour and thank Pramukh Swami Maharaj for his life of selfless service, divine love and profound spirituality.

Upon arrival, devotees performed the *abhishek* of a special *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The special festive assembly included devotional singing, vibrant dances and uplifting narrations, aided by captivating videos, lighting and special effects.

The inspiring three-hour programme, titled ‘Jivya Amare Kaj’, honoured Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s selfless life, covering his tireless efforts (*purusharth*), limitless love (*priti*), and our priceless attainment (*prapti*) of him as the Aksharbrahma Guru.

A series of presentations and videos depicted the sacrifices that he made, and the lifelong memories that his interactions forged.

His borderless and unconditional love was artistically portrayed through excerpts from emotive bhajans presented by swamis and youths, narrations from swamis and a series of personal testimonies by devotees, explaining how it restored faith and provided solace in times of tremendous adversity and challenge.

A musical montage of Sanskrit verses extolling the divine glory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj were supported by personal recollections by senior swamis. They also reinforced the continued presence of Aksharbrahma through Mahant Swami Maharaj.

A poem, specially composed for the finale celebration, guided the programme throughout, in which it gave voice to everyone’s wish to experience Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s presence “one more time”. At the conclusion, the poem moved to pray: “O Pramukh Swami Maharaj! How can we experience you *all* of the time?” To this, Mahant Swami Maharaj wrote in an emotional and fitting video climax: “Pramukh Swami Maharaj is forever present. Just remember him and you will feel his divinity and presence. This is my promise. Let us together celebrate Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *shatabdi*.”

SHILANYAS MAHOTSAV OF BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR

3–4 September 2022 , Paris, France

The historic Shilanyas Mahotsav (foundation stone-laying ceremony) for the new BAPS Hindu Mandir in Bussy-Saint-Georges, an eastern suburb of Paris, France, took place in the presence of Anandswarupdas Swami.

The mandir is being constructed at the



Esplanade des religions et des cultures, the multifaith and multicultural heartland of Paris, alongside a mosque, synagogue, churches, Buddhist temples, and other places of worship. It was chosen by local authorities as an ambassador of Hindu culture and wisdom and for BAPS's commitment to promoting integrity, peace and harmony around the world.

Among the dignitaries present for the festivities were His Excellency Jawed Ashraf, Ambassador of India to France and Monaco, His Excellency Vishal Sharma, Ambassador of India to UNESCO, Yann Dubosc, Mayor of Bussy-Saint-Georges, and Ylias Akbaraly, Chairman and CEO of Sipromad Group. They were joined by hundreds of devotees and guests from various parts of France, other European countries, and India.

After the Vedic rituals, a vibrant cultural programme of dance, videos and presentations was delivered in French and Hindi that described the positive and uplifting contributions the mandir will make to France.

In the assembly, Brahnaviharidas Swami spoke about universal Hindu values from the Vedas and Upanishads, such as the world as one global family, as well as the interfaith harmony and collaboration that the mandir will foster. Anandswarupdas Swami explained how the mandir will empower future generations of the region with practical spirituality.

Ambassador Ashraf said, "This magnificent temple will not only serve as a place of worship but will be a living centre of learning, humanity, culture, and a centre that provides refuge to all. The temple will shape a future of peace, harmony, co-existence

– not just of tolerance, but the embrace of diversity and pluralism that makes this world so beautiful."

Ambassador Sharma added, "Swaminarayan temples are built not only for today with the glory of the past, but built with a futuristic vision – the vision of Pramukh Swami Maharaj – to serve children, mothers and fathers, because this is not just devotion, but devotion with a social message, a great mixture of technology with spirituality."

Mahant Swami Maharaj had sent blessings for the occasion in which he recalled fond memories of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj at Le Bourget Airport in Paris in 1970, which had sown the vision of the mandir. He also blessed that the new mandir will bring the millennia-old legacy of Hindu mandirs to the beautiful city of Paris, inspiring intercultural respect, community service and global harmony.

Following the assembly, devotees and guests participated in the concluding portion of the Shilanyas Ceremony by placing a brick in the foundation pit.

Earlier, on 2 September, BAPS swamis met several leading figures of French society, kindly convened by Ylias Akbaraly, to discuss the mandir project, including The Honourable Jean-Pierre Raffarin, former Prime Minister of France and current advisor to President Macron, Yonathan Arfi, President of CRIF, the umbrella organization of French Jewish associations, Vincent Niore, President of the Paris Bar Association of lawyers, and Renaud Girard, Editor in Chief of Le Figaro, a leading French newspaper. They were intrigued to learn of the work of BAPS France for families and communities, including during the covid pandemic and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

NEASDEN TEMPLE LEADS VIBRANT DIWALI CELEBRATION AT TRAFALGAR SQUARE

9 October 2022 , London

More than 25,000 people gathered at Trafalgar Square, London, for a vibrant and colourful Diwali celebration hosted by the Diwali in



London committee in partnership with the Mayor of London.

This year, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, served as chair of the Diwali in London committee, which comprises various religious and cultural organizations, including the Art of Living, Brahma Kumaris, Chinmay Mission, City Hindus Network, ISKCON, Metropolitan Police Hindu Association, Telugu Hindu Association, and several others.

Diwali on Trafalgar Square is a free annual festival in the heart of London and one of the city's largest Diwali celebrations. Volunteers from the Mandir worked with Hindu, Sikh and Jain communities for this in-person event after a two-year break due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Visitors enjoyed an array of activities at the interactive stalls displaying the rich culture and spirituality of Hinduism.

Attendees also participated in dance workshops, yoga and meditation, a Children's Fun Zone, as well as henna and face painting. Families enjoyed a fusion of delicious vegetarian and vegan South Asian cuisine, while a special light illuminated the Square at dusk to mark Diwali.

This year's celebration also paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj on the occasion of his birth centenary.

Many visitors from all backgrounds and cultures engaged in offering a personal pledge to embody Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life motto, 'In the joy of others lies our own'.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said Diwali was a reminder of "hope for a brighter tomorrow"

during challenging times. "Diwali on the Square is a wonderful and timely opportunity for Londoners to join in that spirit, celebrating our diversity and demonstrating the strength we draw from our many and varied communities."

NEASDEN TEMPLE PARTNERS WITH THE BRITISH MUSEUM TO CELEBRATE DIWALI 29 October 2022, London



BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, London, participated in The British Museum's 'Celebrating Diwali' event.

The family-friendly event at the world-famous museum celebrated Diwali with a day of activities and performances from members of Neasden Temple and Subrang Arts.

The exhibition in the iconic Great Court included dance and music workshops and performances, storytelling, crafts, traditional costume demonstrations, and henna painting.

In addition to the vibrant cultural performances, volunteers from Neasden Temple also contributed with colourful artistic decorations.

NORTH AMERICA

INDIAN CABINET MINISTER PIYUSH GOYAL VISITS BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR 10 September 2022, Los Angeles, CA

Indian Cabinet Minister Shri Piyush Goyal visited the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Los Angeles, along with his wife, Smt. Seema Goyal and the Consulate General of India (San Francisco) Dr TV Nagendra Prasad.

Shri Piyush Goyal and his delegation were



traditionally welcomed and given a tour of the mandir, during which they did darshan, admired the art and architecture of the mandir and offered prayers at the sacred image of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in commemoration of his centenary birth celebrations.

Addressing a group of devotees and well-wishers, Shri Piyush Goyal said, “The temple is fabulous and very befitting of the significant presence of the Indian community and the contribution of Indians to the development and growth of Los Angeles. When one looks back at the contribution of BAPS across the world, in terms of keeping the spirit of Hinduism glowing and flowing in all of us, our children, and our next generation, I believe it is impossible to put a value on that. So I compliment the temple on the completion of 10 years.

“I’ve been privileged to have a special bond with Pramukh Swami Maharaj over the years. As we will celebrate 100 years of Pramukh Swami Maharaj later this year, it will be a very special occasion for the entire world.”

CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA (NY) HONOURS THE LIFE & WORK OF PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

10 September 2022, New York, NY

The Consulate General of India in New York invited the community and organization leaders from across the Tri-State area to honour the life and work of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj during his centennial celebrations.

The 70 distinguished guests in attendance learned of and expressed appreciation for



Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s support for Indian communities across New York and New Jersey. Brahmviharidas Swami gave the event’s keynote address that explored Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s unique ability to impact humanity through each encounter and interaction by “perfecting the spirit of a human being.” The event showcased the many talents of children and youth demonstrating that this message had been accepted by the younger generations in the United States. In addition, BAPS youths recited Sanskrit prayers of peace and sang the national anthem of India.

Amongst those who addressed the assembly were Randhir Jaiswal, Consul General of India, NY; Kenny Desai, President, Federation of Indian Associations (FIA), and Amit Doshi, a community leader and Senior Executive Managing Director at Meridian Capital Group. Each speaker expressed gratitude for BAPS’ and Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s advocacy for Indian culture in America throughout previous decades.

GOVERNOR OF NORTH CAROLINA VISITS MANDIR FOR DIWALI

24 October 2022, Raleigh, NC



The Honourable Roy Cooper, Governor of North Carolina, celebrated Diwali and the Hindu New Year with worshippers and members of the local community at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Raleigh.

This was the Governor's first visit to the mandir, where he was greeted in a traditional Hindu manner. The Governor offered flowers at the central shrine of the mandir's inner sanctum, where he spent several minutes absorbing the peace and admiring the craftsmanship. He then performed the *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni. During the tour of the mandir, the Governor spoke about how peaceful he felt.

In the presence of BAPS devotees and esteemed members of the local Hindu community, Governor Cooper signed a proclamation proclaiming October as Hindu Heritage Month and October 24 as Diwali in the State of North Carolina.

The Governor also stated that when he walked in he was able to feel the reverence and sincere spirituality of the mandir, and also the welcome and lightheartedness of the community before commenting on the "incredible work" of the Mandir, which he appreciated as "done clearly with love".

DIWALI CELEBRATION AT THE NEW JERSEY STATE CAPITOL

3 November 2022, Trenton, NJ



The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha organized a Diwali celebration at the New Jersey State Capitol in Trenton. The event was held in conjunction with Senator Vin Gopal's office and other Indian organizations which included: Hindu Temple and

Cultural Society of USA, Inc., Sri Venkateswara Temple (Balaji Mandir) and Community Center in Bridgewater, NJ; Gayatri Chetna Center of Piscataway, NJ; Federation of Indian Associations; Shree Umiya Parivar of USA, Shree Umiya Dham Hindu Temple in Edison, NJ; and Association of Indian Americans of North America, Inc. (AIANA) in Monmouth Junction, NJ.

Members of the New Jersey Legislature participated in the Diwali and Annakut celebration by performing the traditional lighting of *diyas*.

Many State Senate and Assembly members spoke on diversity and the increasingly beneficial role Indian-Americans play throughout the state. The Speaker of the New Jersey General Assembly, Craig J. Coughlin, shared that the Diwali celebrations at the State House were "a beautiful expression of unity in diversity. We are best when we are united."

UAE

PLACEMENT OF THE FIRST MARBLE PILLAR

8-10 September 2022, Abu Dhabi



Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami led 500 devotees, well-wishers and construction professionals in a special *mahapuja* to bless the first marble pillars on the second floor of the BAPS Hindu Mandir.

Swamis and the Board of Directors placed the base of the first marble pillar of the mandir on the right side of the doorway. Thereafter, Ishwarcharan Swami poured the cement to fix the first stone of the main shrine's spire (*shikhar*). Devotees witnessed these moments live in the assembly hall.

On the evening of 10 September, ministers from the UAE and Abu Dhabi governments

joined Ishwarcharan Swami, BAPS swamis and over 1,000 devotees and well-wishers for a special celebration assembly, centred on the concept of harmony. Munivatsal Swami discoursed on how we may bring greater harmony to our homes.

Present on this occasion were HE Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade; HE Mr Sunjay Sudhir, Indian Ambassador to the UAE; HE Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Community Development (DCD); and HE Tayeb Al Kamali, Ministry of Interior and senior members of the DCD, including Mr Mubarak Al Ameri.

The ministerial delegation first visited the mandir site where they ritually placed bricks on the first floor of the mandir and continued to the second floor where they joined hands with Ishwarcharan Swami and Brahmavihari Swami to place the main body of the marble pillar and complete the ritual begun two days previously.

Thereafter, in the assembly, HE Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi shared the government's support for this project, "As long as the UAE shall exist, it shall be a place where each of its residents will be able to practise their faith in peace."

HE Sunjay Sudhir expressed his joy at seeing children in the assembly and noted, "Even while meeting Dr S. Jaishankar on his transit to Riyadh, we spoke about this mandir. How special it is to see such dedication and devotion... it's the greatest thing to give one's time and energy – *shramseva*.... This project is not just being closely monitored by the governments of India and the UAE but is being watched by the world."

Blessing the assembly, Ishwarcharan Swami shared that this mandir would inspire generations of visitors and, because of its enlightening carvings and the fact that it is located in Abu Dhabi, this mandir will forever be one of a kind.



Tolerance Alliance – a unique initiative, like the UN, that aims to bring together religious leaders, governments and people to promote peaceful coexistence. Under the patronage of HE Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, the Alliance in partnership with the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy organized a conference on 'Religious Diplomacy: International Challenges and Opportunities' at the Sorbonne University. It featured 18 keynote speakers from international religious organizations and diplomats.

The conference aimed to recognize the critical role played by religious organizations and diplomatic cadres in maintaining and building global harmony, fraternity and peace amongst nations.

In his inaugural address, HE Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan highlighted the need of religious diplomacy. Thereafter, Brahmavihari Swami, representing BAPS, emphasized the need of an honest, sincere and trustworthy dialogue. He explained that international diplomacy is a three-legged stool – a balance between political diplomacy, economic diplomacy and religious diplomacy. He highlighted that the Hindu ideal of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – 'The world is one family' – is also reflected in the ways of the UAE leadership. Inspired by His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, the BAPS Hindu Mandir being built in Abu Dhabi is a testament to the vision of global harmony and peace by the leaderships of India and the UAE. He also narrated incidents from the life of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, such as

FIRST RELIGIOUS DIPLOMACY CONFERENCE

26 October 2022, Abu Dhabi

The UAE launched The International

his deep friendship with President Abdul Kalam and his universal prayers at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem to explain how interfaith harmony can be a catalyst for global peace.

Other dignitaries present in the panel included: HE Dr Omar Ghobash, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for Culture and Public Diplomacy, and UAE Ambassador to the Holy See, HE Ali Bin Al Sayed Abdulrahman Al Hashim, Advisor on Judicial and Religious Affairs, UAE Presidential Court and Member of the Islamic Research Complex at Al-Azhar Al-Sharif; HE Rabbi Yehuda Sarna, Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of the Emirates; HE Bishop Paolo Martinelli, The Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia, Head of the Catholic Church in UAE, Oman, and Yemen.

HH SHEIKH ABDULLAH BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN RECEIVES BAPS SWAMIS FOR DIWALI **27 October 2022, Abu Dhabi**



On the occasion of Diwali 2022, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates, warmly received BAPS swamis at his private palace in Abu Dhabi.

Brahmavihari Swami gave an update on the BAPS Hindu Mandir's development and progress. His Highness appreciated the commitment of the volunteers and the work done to date. He expressed the UAE's continued support and commitment to the values of love, tolerance and harmony spread by the historic and iconic upcoming Mandir in Abu Dhabi.

In conclusion, Brahmavihari Swami expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the Indian community in UAE for the warm friendship and continued support of the leadership.

DIWALI AND ANNAKUT CELEBRATION **30 October 2022, Abu Dhabi**



Over 10,000 visitors received a festive and traditional welcome to the Diwali and Annakut celebration at the BAPS Hindu Mandir.

Hundreds of dignitaries joined the celebrations, including His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, Minister of Tolerance and Co-existence of the UAE. After lighting a lamp, His Excellency said, "May the light of Diwali fill your homes with abundance and bless your relationships with joy and laughter as you share this wonderful celebration. I share in your joy as you rejoice in your victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali is a global celebration that unites people irrespective of religion, culture, nationality or caste. Here in the UAE Diwali has become an important event that celebrates the culture and traditions of India. In the spirit of Diwali, Indians everywhere enrich the world. May this Diwali be a special time of new and rekindled relationships, may this day be a joyous occasion that brings you the utmost peace, may you and your families be blessed with good health, may this Diwali be an opportunity for enriching and enhancing peace, love, tolerance and human fraternity."

Earlier, His Excellency was guided by Brahmavihari Swami around the mandir construction site. On seeing the stone structure,

carvings and pillars, His Excellency commented, “This Mandir is going to be iconic and unique. The craftsmanship is intricate and amazing, and the place will help spread global harmony.”

Other dignitaries included, His Excellency Sunjay Sudhir, India Ambassador to the UAE and His Excellency Jose Aguero Avila, Republic of Paraguay Ambassador to the UAE.

Well-wishers enjoyed the intricate and decorative 1,200-dish vegetarian food *annakut* display, along with a thoughtful exhibition celebrating the centenary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

A fun fair area for children was set up in which they participated in interactive activities and insightful games teaching them the significance of the festival and family values, as well as, the importance of community service.

In addition, visitors witnessed cultural programmes, including devotional songs performed by prominent Indian communities.

In keeping with the Diwali and Hindu New Year's sentiments of expressing gratitude, a blood donation camp was organized in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Blood Bank to support the community.

Over 400 volunteers, young and old, gave their time to help create decorations, prepare for the children's Diwali section, and arrange the *annakut* display.

AFRICA

INAUGURATION OF BAPS SWAMINARAYAN RESEARCH INSTITUTES



As part of the birth centenary celebrations of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, BAPS Swaminarayan

Research Institutes were inaugurated in the presence of Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadreshdas Swami in Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Lenasia

The BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institutes are dedicated to advancing quality research, learning, and the expression of Hinduism, its traditions, philosophies, languages and rich body of literature. The Institute will strive to foster social harmony, interfaith dialogue, public engagement, and academic discourse through its value-based education, innovative research, and creative expression.

Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed each inauguration assembly with a video message.

17 September 2022 , Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania



The inauguration took place in the presence of Professor William Pallangyo (Senior lecturer of leadership and management at the Law School of Tanzania), Captain Ibbrahim Bendera (Advocate of the High Court of Tanzania), Mr Idd Mandi (Senior lecturer at University of Dar-es-Salaam), representatives from various Hindu communities, and BAPS devotees.

In his keynote speech, Bhadreshdas Swami said, “India has a vast collection of knowledge and with the opening of BAPS Swaminarayan Institute, this knowledge would be shared in this part of the world as well.”

The chief guest, Professor William Pallangyo, appreciated BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha for this initiative and pledged his full support.

Captain Ibbrahim Bendera said in his speech that the main objective of this research institute is to promote universal harmony and is an amazing

addition to our country.

Snehalbhai Bakrania, Chairman of Shri Hindu Mandal, donated his collection of 3,400 Hindu shastras and texts to the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute.

Mr Idd Mandi, a senior lecturer at University of Dar-es-Salaam, said, “The Central vision of this institute is to bring light and togetherness at a time of great division in the world. We need more of this and we applaud your leadership. I want to recognize the wonderful work of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha in Tanzania.”

2 October 2022, Nairobi, Kenya



The inauguration ceremony was held in the presence of Dr Mulinge Munyae (Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic and Student Affairs at United States International University), Dr Tadayo Makoha (Chairman, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Kenyatta University), Dr Patrick Maluki (Chairman Department of Diplomacy and International Relations at the University of Nairobi), Dr Prakash Heda (Pro Chancellor at Lukenya University), Deputy Indian High Commissioner Mr Rohit Vadhwa and senior leaders of various institutions.

28 October 2022, Lenasia, South Africa

Learned guests from the world of academia, as well as 600 devotees and well-wishers were present for the inauguration.

Young children of the BAPS Children's Forum fluently and confidently recited *shanti* (peace) mantras in the traditional Ghanpath format and verses from the Swaminarayan Siddhant Sudha.

Chief guests included Pujya Swami Vedananda



Saraswati of the Sannyas Council of South Africa, and professors from leading universities, including Prof. Anil Sooklal, Prof. Anil Chuturgoon, Prof. Anand Singh, Shri Pradeep Ramlall and others. Each of them commended BAPS and pledged their support in this noble undertaking.

In his keynote address, Bhadreshdas Swami said that research and enquiry are basic characteristics of Vedic culture and tradition. He cited incidents from the Upanishads which demonstrate the importance of enquiry in order to gain knowledge and experience. He also said that the research institute will provide a forum to gain a deeper understanding of Vedic truths. He urged all to take full advantage of this opportunity to enrich their knowledge and understanding of Hindu Dharma.

ASIA PACIFIC

PARIVARIK SHANTI ABHIYAN

20 March to 13 September 2022, Asia Pacific



Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited over 250,000 homes providing instrumental guidance on various aspects of life to individuals and families. Based on his vast experience with people, he believed that family harmony is the key for an individual to lead

a happy life. As part of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations, volunteers across Australia and New Zealand participated in the 'Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan' – a project to promote family values and unity based on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's seven core messages for family harmony.

Volunteers received guidance on how to conduct the 'Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan' in the *shibirs* held at major BAPS centres in Australia and New Zealand: Sydney (19 March), Melbourne (18 April), Perth (30 April), Brisbane (7 May), Adelaide (14 May), and Auckland (4 June).

During this project, the volunteers went house to house to convey the messages of family harmony as revealed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The volunteers contacted a total of 56,437 homes across Australia and New Zealand and conveyed the seven practical messages of Pramukh Swami Maharaj for family harmony in English, Hindi and Gujarati. The project was conducted by more than 650 volunteers, who dedicated more than 25,782-man hours of service.

The families contacted were of various religious and cultural backgrounds and they all appreciated the work being done by the volunteers for the benefit of others.

Along with this project, volunteers also went to the homes of devotees and well-wishers to gift a framed photo of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. At each home, volunteers perform *pujan* of the *murti* and placed it in the preferred location in the person's house. More than 8,500 *murtis* were distributed to homes in Australia and New Zealand.

INAUGURATION OF BAPS SWAMINARAYAN RESEARCH INSTITUTES

24 July to 28 August 2022

After the inauguration of the first BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute in the Asia Pacific region in Sydney, BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institutes have also been launched in five other Australian centres: Melbourne (31 July), Brisbane (7 August), Canberra (18 August), Adelaide (21



August) and Perth (28 August). A total of more than 480 delegates from 245 organizations and over 7,000 devotees and well-wishers were present to witness the inauguration ceremonies.

The research institutes in Australia will offer both online and in-person courses in traditional languages, Hindu festivals, Vedic philosophy, Vedic rituals, world religions and memorizing scriptures.

IN THE JOY OF OTHERS: A CELEBRATION OF LOVE, PEACE AND HARMONY

4 September 2022 , Singapore



A special assembly at the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan Cultural Centre was held in the presence of Pujya Ishwarchandas Swami to mark the centenary of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The assembly featured speeches by Divyamurti Swami and Munivatsal Swami on the life, works and wisdom of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and inspiring video presentations.

Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami welcomed and honoured leaders and representatives of the various Indian community organizations of Singapore and Malaysia. He then addressed the assembly, speaking about the importance of family peace and harmony

and the means to achieve it based on the principles revealed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

IN THE JOY OF OTHERS: BETTER INDIVIDUALS, BETTER FAMILIES AND BETTER COMMUNITIES

5 September 2022, Canberra, Australia



Based on the theme ‘In the joy of others, lies our own’, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Australia, celebrated the life, work and legacy of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj with an event in the Mural Hall at the Australian Parliament House, Canberra.

Many community leaders, parliamentarians and staff of the Australian Federal Parliament took part in this unique and historic celebration.

The Hon. Dr Jim Chalmers, Treasurer of Australia, addressed the assembly and congratulated the BAPS volunteers for their efforts in promoting a stronger and united society, “We have seen for ourselves the way that you don’t just observe a faith, but you put that faith in action. ‘In the joy of others lies our own’ is the kind of sentiment that you can run a whole country on.”

Minister of Communications, Hon. Michelle Rowland, said, “The legacy of Pramukh Swami Maharaj lives on years after his passing through his followers and devotees. But most importantly, through the values of BAPS.”

Children and youth volunteers recited Sanskrit verses from the Satsang Diksha shastra and recited the Vedic verses of the auspicious Shanti Path to pray for global peace and harmony.

Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Hon. Andrew Giles;

Member for Makin, Tony Zappia; Member for Pearce, Tracey Roberts; Member for La Trobe, Hon. Jason Wood; Member for Blair, Hon. Shayne Neumann; Member for Moreton, Graham Perrett; and Member for Moore, Ian Goodenough also spoke about the contributions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and BAPS to the Australian community.

Ian Goodenough presented a plaque to BAPS representatives to commemorate the birth centenary celebrations of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and as a tribute to his life and achievements, recognizing his leadership and humility in serving society and the community.

BAPS volunteers from across Australia led guests through an exhibition highlighting Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s work that continues to inspire millions worldwide to become better individuals, and thus leading to more harmonious families and communities.

Everyone had the opportunity to pay their respects to Pramukh Swami Maharaj by offering flowers to his sacred image. BAPS volunteers tied a *nadachhadi* on the wrists of all and prayed that the values of service and humility inspired by the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj are attained by all to create a united and stronger society.

HIGH COMMISSIONER OF INDIA TO SINGAPORE WELCOMES BAPS DELEGATION

5 September 2022 , Singapore



His Excellency Shri P. Kumaran, High Commissioner of India, warmly greeted Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and personally ushered the delegation to the meeting hall for an enlightening

discussion on Indian culture, values and harmony.

As 2022 is a celebration of India's Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and also Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Shatabdi Mahotsav, His Excellency was briefed about the year-long events undertaken by BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha in various countries around the world and the grand festival which will be held at the end of the year in Ahmedabad, India. He was also informed about the BAPS humanitarian work conducted during the Ukraine crises.

SATSANG DIKSHA HOMATMAK PATH YAGNA

19 September 2022, Auckland, New Zealand



Hundreds of devotees gathered at BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Auckland, in the presence of Pujya Doctor Swami for a special *yagna* ceremony known as the 'Gruh Shanti Homatmak Yagna'. The rituals commenced with the *pujan* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Mahant Swami Maharaj and the Satsang Diksha shastra. Subsequently, Pujya Doctor Swami lit the ritual *yagna* flame. Thereafter, many *balaks* and *yuvaks* who had completely memorized the 315 Sanskrit shlokas of the Satsang Diksha chanted the verses in unison as sanctified grains of rice were offered in the sacrificial flame, charging the air with divinity.

This *yagna* was the first of its kind in New Zealand, and marked the beginning of a continuous chain of *yagnas* to be performed in the ANZ region. This Satsang Diksha Homatmak Yagna will be performed at the home of a different devotee every day, keeping the flame of the Satsang Diksha forever alight in the minds of all devotees.

INAUGURATION OF NEW BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR

30 September–1 October 2022, Cairns, Australia



The two-day celebration commemorating the historic inauguration of the new BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Cairns, Queensland, Australia, took place in the presence of Pujya Doctor Swami, BAPS swamis, and devotees and well-wishers from the local and regional community.

On 30 September, around 300 devotees participated in the grand procession of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and other *murtis* on beautifully decorated chariots along a 1.5 km route through Cairns Esplanade. Local residents and passers-by welcomed the procession with great joy and interest. Also present on this occasion were Mr Destry Puia, Director of Lifestyle & Community, Cairns Regional Council, and his team.

That evening, children, youths, and adults presented a melodious programme of devotional bhajans conveying the timeless traditions and values that the mandir instils in all.

On the morning of 1 October the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* and mandir inauguration rituals were performed by Pujya Doctor Swami. Devotees and members of the local Hindu community also took part in the preceding Vedic *mahapuja* ceremony. Thereafter, a grand *annakut* of vegetarian delicacies was offered to the *murtis* with great devotion.

Among the guests present were Mr Michael Healy, Assistant Minister for Tourism Industry Development, Queensland; Ms Cathy Zeiger, Councillor, Cairns Regional Council; and Mr James Mcpeake, Director of Mcpeake Town Planning.

IN THE JOY OF OTHERS: CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

10 September to 21 October 2022 , Australia



High in the azure-blue skies and amid the feather-like clouds above Cairns in Northern Queensland, Australia, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary was celebrated in various ways based on the theme "In the Joy of Others – Celebrating the Spirit of Service."

Celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life of selfless service for the joy of others, a giant 5 m wide BAPS and Pramukh Swami Maharaj centenary flag, fluttered through the sky in a sky dive between 15,000 and 8,000 feet.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *murti* was taken 5,000 feet in the air hang-gliding with a view over the horizon of the Gold Coast. *Pujan* and prayers were offered by swamis before sending the *murti* up into the air.

BAPS swamis took the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj 5,000 feet in the air over the iconic hinterland in Queensland in a hot air balloon and performed their *pujan* and *arti*, and offered *mantra-pushpanjali* and *thal*. Prayers were offered for the peace, joy and prosperity of society. From this altitude Pramukh Swami Maharaj showered his blessings on the continent of Australia and its people.

From the culturally rich capital of Adelaide, the *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was taken into the skies of South Australia. Flying over Victoria and into New South Wales, Pramukh Swami Maharaj graced these states from 30,000 feet above sea level. His life and work was remembered and revered by Pujya Doctor Swami. He performed the *pujan* of

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, offered *thal*, performed *arti* and recited the Sahajanand Namavali. He then prayed that the spirit of service spreads across the world. Pujya Doctor Swami delivered a special message about the importance of selfless service.

BAPS CHARITIES

BAPS CHARITIES DONATES \$75,000 TO HELP ERADICATE BREAST CANCER

23 September 2022, Houston, USA



BAPS Charities supported Susan G. Komen's mission to eradicate Breast Cancer through its 'In the Joy of Others: Walk-Run', a series of walkathons hosted by BAPS Charities in 72 centres across North America. BAPS Charities presented a cheque for \$75,000 to Susan G. Komen. The event was attended by over 150 volunteers, contributors, beneficiary representatives, and friends of BAPS Charities.

BAPS CHARITIES' LARGEST BLOOD DRIVES IN USA AND CANADA

5 October 2022, USA & Canada



BAPS Charities organized a record-breaking 100 Blood Donation Drives throughout USA

and Canada in partnership with local blood banks. These drives helped to collect 4,000 pints of blood. The 100 blood donation drives were organized to commemorate the Centenary Celebrations of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, whose compassion towards all inspired the creation of BAPS Charities.

BAPS Charities' nationwide campaign to donate blood was timely relief during the worst blood shortage crisis in over a decade due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ian.

TOYS AND FOOD TO NEW LIFE CHILDREN'S HOME

1 October 2022, Nairobi, Kenya



BAPS Charities Nairobi donated food and toys for the 50 orphaned children aged between a few months and 7 years at New Life Children's Home on Lenana Road, one of four under the New Life Home Trust. These vulnerable children are divided into three categories: newborns from 0–7 months, crawlers from 8–12 months and toddlers aged over 1 year. BAPS Charities has supported the Nairobi home several times previously.

DROUGHT RELIEF ASSISTANCE

2 October 2022, Kajiado, Kenya



Kajiado County has experienced insufficient rainfall over the last two years. Thousands of cattle are at risk of starvation and require urgent feed and water. In response to this looming famine, BAPS Charities Nairobi in partnership with Hari Om group donated 600 bales of hay fodder to livestock keepers in KMQ Town.

Narok County, Nairobi, Kenya

14 October 2022



The Horn of Africa is experiencing the worst drought in 40 years. For many, this is the fourth drought period in a row. In some areas, over 90 per cent of water sources have dried up. As crops fail and families lose their livestock – which, for many, is their only source of income – more than four million people are grappling with acute hunger. Moreover, aid groups and authorities predict the next rains in the Horn of Africa will also likely fail, hurting communities.

BAPS Charities, in conjunction with the office of Her Excellency Pastor Dorcas Rigathi, the 2nd Lady to The Republic of Kenya, provided 12 tons of rice, beans, maize, porridge, and cooking fat. The food aid was distributed to the residents of Narok County, with her Excellency personally being present to distribute the food aid to affected families and individuals.

The food aid will benefit approximately one thousand affected families. Her Excellency appreciated the prompt response and support from BAPS Charities. ♦



Indore



Ahmedabad



Jamnagar



Vadodara

Group photos of Sant Sammelans.



MURTI-PRATISHTHA OF NEW SHIKHARBADDHA MANDIR
28 September 2022, Nashik, Maharashtra

In the ancient city of Nashik, where the divine Purna Kumbh has been held for centuries, Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* of a grand BAPS shikharbaddha mandir built of pink stone.

The festivities included a *maha-yagna*, *nagar yatra* and special assemblies. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri Eknath Shinde, other dignitaries and thousands of devotees attended the celebrations.