

SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

Annual Subscription Rs. 60

August 2010

Pramukh Swami Maharaj
Inaugurates New Garbhagruh
Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi
13 July 2010



NEW GARBHAGRUH, SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM, NEW DELHI



On 13 July 2010, the new *garbhagruha* at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi, was inaugurated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj with a Vedic *mahapuja* ceremony. Then, Swamishri bowed and prayed at the feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Photographs by: Sadhu Yogicharandas, Harshad Vadodaria, Vipul Vaghela, Kalpesh Bhatt, Kiran Patel, Ghanshyam Gohil, Jamnadas Soni, Yogi Bajadia



SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

August 2010, Vol. 33 No. 8



New Garbhagruh, Swaminarayan Akshardham, Delhi

CONTENTS

Swaminarayan Akshardham

- 4 New Garbhagruh Darshan, New Delhi
- 11 Experiences, Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

Swaminarayan History

- 14 Shri Hari Arrives in Ahmedabad Again
British officer greets Shri Hari...

Bhagavad Gita

- 17 Grandeur of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita – An Introduction
External and internal glory of the Gita...

Vicharan & Living with Swamishri

- 22 Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Vicharan

BAPS News

- 25 Inauguration of BAPS Research Institute, New Delhi
- 26 National Yuva Convention 2010, Chicago
- 30 Adult Gujarati Classes, London

Website: www.baps.org

E-mail: magazines@in.baps.org

Founder: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj,
Editor: Sadhu Swayamprakashdas,
Contributors: Sadhu Vivekjiandas, Sadhu Amrutvijaydas,
Designer: Sadhu Shrijiswarupdas
Published & Printed by: Swaminarayan Akshardham, Shahibaug,
 Ahmedabad-380 004, India.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Outside India (By Air Mail)		India	
	Rupees	Pounds	US Dollars	Rupees
1 Year	500	6	10	60
2 Years	1000	12	20	110
3 Years	1500	18	30	160

FIRST WORD

Life is a combination of the subtle and the gross. The mind is subtle and difficult to perceive, whereas the body and the material world are gross and easy to comprehend. Furthermore, the mind is gross in relation to the soul.

Actions and words which form our gross world can be seen and heard. They are controllable, but thoughts and emotions are difficult to perceive and restrain. The gross elements of life are important, but without the connection of proper subtle elements their use and results are severely limited. Even in thoughts and emotions we have negative ones like anger, jealousy, greed and lust, and positive ones like love, patience, honesty, forgiveness and altruism. An alliance of positive thoughts and feelings with our actions and words produces satisfaction, success and liberation.

The recent triumph of Spain in the World Cup in South Africa was attributed by an English daily in India to four elements: approach, high level of technical ability that was drilled into each player, concentration and spatial awareness that enabled the players to create extraordinary patterns of passes. Spain's goalkeeper, Iker Casillas, said, "A team is not just one player. A player can win the game for you but, in the end, everything depends on teamwork."

The right approach to life and Satsang is related to connecting our actions with positive emotions and thoughts. Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj emphasized the need for *samp*, *suhрудaybhav* and *ekta* (feelings of peaceful coexistence, friendship and unity) in life. All their efforts and creations in the growth of Satsang reflect the principle of right approach.





New Garbhagruha Darshan

Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

13 July 2010



Pramukh
Swami Maharaj
consecrates new
garbagruh of
Swaminarayan
Akshardham,
New Delhi

Swaminarayan Akshardham —
Pramukh Swami Maharaj's tribute
to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and
Indian culture





Swamishri invokes the divine presence of Bhagwan Swaminarayan during the *nyasvidhi* ritual



Swamishri performs *puja* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's *abhayast* – hand of blessings



Swamishri performs *puja* of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami

Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi represents Pramukh Swami Maharaj's unparalleled devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and fulfils Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj's long-cherished wish for such a tribute to Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the nation's capital. Since its opening in November 2005, over 20 million pilgrims and visitors from throughout the whole of India and over 130 countries have been inspired by their experience at Swaminarayan Akshardham: the divine *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, exhibitions displaying his motivating messages and the story of Indian culture.

The recently opened new *garbhagruh* is further evidence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's profound devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his gurus. Swamishri had expressed his wish that the *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the main mandir be honoured in a special beautifully decorated canopied *sinhasan*. In accordance with Swamishri's wish, Ishwarcharan Swamile the project. Under his guidance, Bhaktinandan Swami and Shriji swarup Swami prepared a suitable design. Swamishri suggested a number of improvements and passed the design. So, together with the Sanstha's dedicated artists and craftsmen in Gandhinagar, Bhaktinandan Swami began the building of the canopied *sinhasan*. Meanwhile, Harshadbhai Chavda, a life-long BAPS volunteer, initiated the sculpting of the stones to be used for the *garbhagruh* at workshops in Pindvada, Rajasthan. The design featured stone walls in five of the sections under the octagonal main dome, together with intricately carved marble *jharukhas* (balconies), *gavakshas* (windows), 16-foot arches with delicately sculpted bells and an imposing *barsakh* (frame). The task of transporting these



Swamishri performs *pujan* at the feet of
Bhagwan Swaminarayan



Swamishri engrossed in darshan before the divine and serene
murti of Bhagwan Swaminarayan

sculpted stones and other materials from Rajasthan to New Delhi was capably managed by the chief engineer at Swaminarayan Akshardham, Shri Ashwinbhai Patel.

Once assembled, the interior decoration of the *garbhagruh* began. Based on Bhaktinandan Swami's design, Kirtisagar Swami worked day and night to ensure its timely completion. Assisting in this time-consuming process, Shri Surendrabhai Patel of Bangkok served for eight months. Shri Rajababu and his sons, Dineshbhai and Rakeshbhai, also came to help from Hong Kong, and Shri Krunalbhai Bhatt from Bangalore assisted with the light fittings. In just eight months, this uniquely designed *garbhagruh* structure was erected. Then Bhaktinandan Swami, Shrijiswarup Swami and their team worked round-the-clock for six weeks to add the intricate finishing touches and transformed the appearance of the *garbhagruh*. The inner walls and canopy of the *garbhagruh* were embellished with gold leaf

and thousands of coloured, transparent stones, resulting in a breathtaking sight – and a fitting tribute to Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

The soothing light of the *garbhagruh* canopy, *murtis* of *akshar muktas* holding *malas* and adorned in crowns and velvet attire, honour Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

The new *garbhagruh* is also decorated with thousands of peacocks in their feather-beauty and soothing light emanating from the many rows of *gaumukhs*. At the top of the canopy, numerous gold-leafed bells attract one's attention. The astonishing blend of intricate carvings, gold-leafed designs, *gavakshas* and *jharukhas* decorated with bells, peacocks, elephants, *tilaks* and other traditional designs, is breathtaking and beyond words. Even after prolonged and detailed observation, one feels like soaking in more.

Under such a splendid canopy is the serene, divine *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, seated on a pink lotus-leafed seat. The three-tier dais

is covered with reflective green stone, giving the appearance of lotuses floating amid a vast ocean. The 11-ft. gold-leafed *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the centre-point of the *garbhagruh* and draws everyone's focus, blessing all with inner peace and happiness.

All who came for *darshan* experienced the tranquility, spirituality and divinity, as if they were transported to a heavenly realm.

NEW GARBHAGRUH OPENING CEREMONY

With the new *garbhagruh* complete, the Vedic inauguration ceremony was performed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj on the auspicious occasion of Rath Yatra, on Tuesday 13 July 2010.

From early morning, the atmosphere was abuzz with joy and divinity. Today marked the culmination of over one year of meticulous effort in preparing the new *garbhagruh* from start to finish. It was a day which the dedicated volunteers of Akshardham, as well as devotees, young and old, throughout the world had been eagerly awaiting.

At 9.15 a.m. Mahant Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Kothari (Bhaktipriya) Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami, Viveksagar Swami and other sadhus began the Vedic *mahapuja* under the new *garbhagruh*.

Devotees from various countries had also arrived for this memorable occasion. Senior devotees also participated in the *mahapuja* rituals: Shri Purushottambhai D. Patel (Dubai) and his sons, Shri Manubhai and Rohitbhai Patel, Shri Chandrakantbhai Pujara (London), Shri Harishbhai Bhuptani (Kampala) and others.

At 9.30 a.m., Swamishri entered the Akshardham complex. With the *jai naad* echoing along his route, Swamishri arrived at the mandir podium. There, children of Delhi Bal Mandal, dressed in traditional costumes as *devas*, were dancing to welcome him. At the mandir entrance, Ishwarcharan Swami greeted Swamishri and presented him the auspicious *kalash* and *shrifal* (coconut). With these in his hands, Swamishri entered the mandir for the first time since the new *garbhagruh* was completed. *Jai naads* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the guru *parampara*



Swamishri holds the auspicious *kalash* as part of the *mahapuja* ceremony

reverberated around the mandir interior. Swamishri's smiling face reflected his joy at the wonderfully decorated new *garbhagruh*.

Swamishri took his place directly before the grand *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, exactly in line with the centre of the main entrance.

Then, as directed by the learned *purohit* Shri Mukeshbhai Shastri and Shrutiprakash Swami, Swamishri devoutly performed the rituals for each of the steps of the *mahapuja*. After one hour, Swamishri stepped onto the dais to perform the re-consecration rituals of the *murtis*. Swamishri performed the rituals of the *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, while senior sadhus performed the rituals of the guru *parampara* and other *murtis*.

Then, Swamishri performed *pujan* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the guru *parampara*. Thereafter, Swamishri walked to the feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's *murti* and reverently bowed his head. This *darshan* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his ideal Sadhu was indeed a divine sight –



Devotees enthusiastically hail the *jay naad* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the guru *parampara*

one to be treasured in the memory for life.

After Swamishri had taken his seat off the dais, an *annakut* of 21 large, decorated trays of delicacies was arranged before the *murtis* and the *thal* ‘*Māre gher āyjo chogalā dhāri...*’ was sung in unison. This was followed by the *arti*, *mantra pushpanjali* and the concluding rituals of the *mahapuja* ceremony.

Then Swamishri turned to face the devotees. Swamishri was honoured by senior sadhus with garlands on behalf of all devotees of BAPS. Swamishri then placed one big garland around Bhaktinandan Swami, Shrijiswarup Swami and Kirtisagar Swami as blessings for their tireless efforts in completing this outstanding task.

Thereafter, Yogicharan Swami sang and explained the Sanskrit verses specially composed by Bhadresh Swami to commemorate today’s special occasion. Then, Yogicharan Swami sang the bhajan, ‘*Divya sabhā patirāy baithe...*’ The melodious singing added to the divinely charged

atmosphere.

Finally, as everyone proclaimed “*Bhagwan Swaminarayan ni jai*” Swamishri blessed the gathering, “*Jai* for all the sadhus and devotees as well, since this task could not have been completed singlehandedly. It is the work of many hands. We understand the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and of Akshar-Purushottam and we want to go to Akshardham. To attain that Akshardham, we observe the commands of Bhagwan Shriji Maharaj. Since we have devotion for and understand his glory, Maharaj will take us to Akshardham. And in Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj we have such gurus who have tremendous love for us. Whatever intelligence or wealth we have is due to them. We want to please them. The more they are pleased, the happier we will be.

“Countless people will come here and everyone who has served here will gain that merit (*punya*).

“The shastras describe Akshardham: it is divine and luminous, with Shriji Maharaj and all the *muktas* seated there. Today, we have the darshan of Akshardham as it has been described. You might think that at present only a few have darshan but in Akshardham, Maharaj’s darshan is from all sides. Even here, *muktas* are seated on all four sides and so, in this way, we are enjoying darshan of the assembly of Akshardham. What has been made here is luminous, decorated with gems and shining. Whoever comes here will experience peace.

“This has been accomplished by the wish of God and Yogiji Maharaj. Yogiji Maharaj said that Akshardham will be built on the banks of Yamuna. His wish was so powerful that, together with the efforts and service of sadhus and devotees, such good work has been accomplished today. Just looking at it brings peace within. Now we don’t have to wonder whether Maharaj is actually seated in Akshardham or what it looks like. That darshan we have here. It is the description of Akshardham. We are highly fortunate to have that darshan here today, with glittering gems and *muktas* on all sides. Only the highly fortunate are able to understand this work and dedicate themselves to doing it. So,

since you have all understood this glory, this work has been done.

“From Akshardham Shriji Maharaj manifest here for the liberation of all *jivas* and brought his Akshardham and *muktas* with him. Bhagatiji Maharaj and Shastriji Maharaj were great. And Yogiji Maharaj’s visions were grand – may satsang spread throughout the world and may mandirs be built. With his wish we have built this Akshardham and (since then) over 20 million people from India and abroad have visited here – people of different faiths, from the Arab countries, Africa, America and Europe.

“We may think this is impossible, but in God’s work nothing is impossible; everything is possible. If we endeavour, work is accomplished.

“Today we have the darshan of Akshardham here and we have to always believe that we are seated in Akshardham. Whoever comes here, no matter from which country or what background, will have the darshan of Akshardham. People from all over the world come here to see and are blessed. They see the exhibition and boat ride and are pleased.

“Physically, this [Akshardham] appears to us as of this world, but it is just like what is described in the shastras. We are very fortunate to have attained it.

“God has granted us this human body and we have done what we are supposed to with it. What else are we supposed to do with this human body? Work, business, and so on, but Gunatitanand Swami says that we have to realize our atman as *brahmarup* and worship God. To become aksharup, everyone engages in discourses, bhajans and *seva*. We have attained God, offer *upasana* to him and have attained sadhus like Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, so our *kalyan* is assured.

“The main reason satsang has progressed so much is Yogiji Maharaj’s vision. By his wish, the number of sadhus has increased and satsang has spread. This grand Akshardham in Delhi is also due to Yogiji Maharaj’s and Maharaj’s wish. Whatever *seva* people have rendered, Maharaj will return it infinitely and they will attain peace within.

Even after death, Akshardham will be attained and bliss will be experienced. That our wealth, property, family, and so on have been used for God is appropriate. We still have to do our family, social and national duties, but through this [*seva*] our ignorance is dispelled, our base instincts are controlled and God is pleased. This is a supreme achievement. No other attachments remain.

“May God grant you all infinite happiness and peace; may satsang continue to grow in your hearts and may others benefit from satsang through you.

“Here, there is the association of God. In the Akshardham assembly everyone is seated for miles and miles in all directions, but in Akshardham all have the darshan of God as if he is just nearby. We are near to God. He counts us as his own and so grants us darshan, happiness and prosperity.

“We talk about ‘Akshardham, Akshardham’, but here we have a glimpse of it.

“May God grant physical, mental and financial happiness. We must live by Yogiji Maharaj’s motto of ‘*Samp, Suhradhaybhav, ekta*’ – ‘Cooperation, friendship and unity’. Without this, satsang will not grow. Everyone cooperated with others to work, and so God grants happiness to all. May all continue to do so.”

Throughout his blessings, Swamishri referred to the majestic new *garbhagruh* as a ‘glimpse of Akshardham’ and this divinity was felt by all.

After his blessings, Swamishri offered flower petals at the feet of the *murtis* of Shri Lakshmi-Narayan, Shri Shankar-Parvati, Shri Sita-Ram and Shri Radha-Krishna. New gold-leafed *sinhasans* had also been prepared for these *murtis*. Swamishri then performed a *pradakshina* of the new *garbhagruh*. Observing it from the outside, he was pleased on seeing the large paintings of the guru *parampara* and their life-work displayed within the decorative 8 by 6 ft. marble *jharukhas*.

As Swamishri departed at 12.30 p.m. everyone appreciated that they had witnessed a unique, divine occasion. ♦

EXPERIENCES

Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

January to July 2010



Since its inauguration in November 2005 over 20 million people from over 130 countries have visited Swaminarayan Akshardham. From ordinary citizens to distinguished diplomats many have experienced its tranquility and divinity...

The messages of both Bharat (India) and Nepal's culture and traditions have been given through the architecture itself and the documentary. It was extraordinary, and from the bottom of my heart, I praise the manner in which this history has been reintroduced [to the world].

*- Dr. Ram Baran Yadav
President of Nepal*

I was amazed with the silence and blissfulness of the place and with the organization of the events for people. The place and especially its unusual atmosphere gives people what they are searching for.

*- Mr. Jerzy Jankowski
Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of
State for Defence, Poland*

It was a wonderful experience. In this time of

globalization, Akshardham is an island of peace and calmness.

*- Mr. Marcin Idzik
Minister of State for Defence,
Republic of Poland*

Our visit was an extraordinary experience. The sculpture and grandeur of the Mandir is remarkable. The opportunity for learning and enlightenment is most appreciated.

*- William Sterling Blair
Chief of Toronto Police Service & Police Board*

A fascinating glimpse of Indian religion and culture, past and present.

*- Rt. Hon. Mrs. Justice Beverley McLachlan
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Canada*

Swaminarayan Akshardham temple is a wonder. Today's visit to Swaminarayan Akshardham temple has been an incredible experience for me and my family.

*- Borislav Kirilov Kostov
Ambassador of Bulgaria*

This has been a very touching and informative experience, a fascinating introduction into India's incredible culture, traditions and history. The whole construction is good, with its documentary and pure atmosphere.

*- Nevena Borislav Kostov
Daughter of Ambassador of Bulgaria*

If there is a heaven on earth, it is here at 'Akshardham'. 'Akshardham' is an epitome of Indian heritage, culture and spirituality.

*- Sumit Srivastav
Diplomat, Suriname*

This is my third visit. Every time I visit, I relive and rediscover the glory of India.

- Gopal Krishan Arora
Associate Professor, University of Delhi

It is marvellous architecture and art. It is something that will make Hindus and Hinduism proud all over the world. I was struck by the deep interest with which everybody performs his/her task and the cleanliness all over the place. There is complete tranquillity for the visitor to see, do and think for himself.

- Krishnedat Bapath
Ambassador of Suriname

Thank you for an incredible spiritual experience. This opportunity to learn more about the Indian experience, history and culture provided a new understanding for me. The values communicated by the film and the exhibits are beyond one country – they are values for the world.

- Mrs. Gretchen Bataille
*President of University of North Texas
Sage Publications, Board of Directors*

Akshardham gives faith that there is hope of having unity... in all aspects.

- Hamid Baghaee
*Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Head of Iranian Cultural Heritage of Islamic Republic of Iran*

This was a deeply inspiring experience in which not only did my chest swell with pride as being an Indian, but my soul renewed enrichment through the spiritualism, which is all pervading in every corner of the complex. I feel so blessed and fortunate.

- Rajendra Kumar Pachauri
*Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel
on Climate Change (IPCC)
Represented IPCC for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize*

Astonishing vigour. Extraordinary combination and blending of learning, science, culture and dedication.

- Dr. Raman
Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

This was a very holy and sacred experience and an education for me and my delegates. I feel privileged to have this wonderful and sacred experience. It was an unforgettable experience and has given me insights into this great faith and these teachings. I will cherish this for the rest of my life.

- Gedtt Doidge
Minister of Public Works, South Africa

A wonderful spiritual experience. A wonderful piece of architecture. An extremely remarkable experience. May the world live together as brothers and sisters in love, affection and harmony.

- Afzal Brey
Department of Public Works, South Africa

An incredible experience at different levels:

- The architecture is something to behold.
- The movie in the theatre certainly reinforces the much needed values that we miss so dearly across the world as we travel through life and beyond.

- Stanley William Henderson
Department of Public Works, South Africa

A beautiful place to return to again and again.

- Ajay Sookloll
Lawyer, South Africa

We have learnt so many spiritual messages and been inspired by Swaminarayan for non-violence, love and peaceful mind. May all people in the world live in harmony.

- H.E. Krit Kraichittie
Ambassador of Thailand to India

It has been a unique and exhilarating experience to have visited this beautiful shrine. It fills my heart with pride as an Indian.

- Gen. Deepak Kapoor

Former Chief of Army Staff of the Indian Army

This is an unprecedented, historical, incomparable and awe-inspiring vision. We all are proud of this great work. It is very inspirational with reference to culture, history and the legacy of Indian society.

- Nitin Gadkari

National President, BJP

Unparalleled, unusual, unique, inspiring. Swamiji's life is inspirational, giving vision of a perfect and complete human life for the sake of the welfare of the entire universe.

- Vijendra Gupta

Delhi President, BJP

This temple is one of the most beautiful manifestations on this earth. The premise is well kept.

- Smt. Urmila Singh

Governor of Himachal Pradesh, India

Whatever I have seen, I am unable to express in words. Only that can be realized.

- Rajnath Singh

Former President of Bharatiya Janata Party

I also received the blessings and guidance of Pramukh Swamiji. It is due to the boundless benevolence of Shri Swaminarayan that I got such an opportunity and received the message about the purpose and duty of our life. Only from such holy places as here do we get inspiration and an idea of what our country, Bharat, was, is and will be.

- Prem Kumar Dhumal

Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh

Today I was fortunate to meet Pramukh

Swamiji. This was my first occasion to visit the Swaminarayan Mandir and my life was blessed. By observing the dedication, knowledge and discharge of duties, I understood what must have been the lives of our ancient sages and seers. If there is any country which can show the correct direction to the path of eternal peace for the human race, which is consumed by the fire of materialism, it will be Bharat – India. And if you ask how, my reply is, I saw its roadmap in the Delhi Swaminarayan Mandir in Akshardham where I found the new direction to and vision of human life.

- Shivrajsinh Chauhan,

Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh

The way Bharat's glorious past is displayed and introduced to the modern generation is absolutely necessary for the present-day India.

- Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'

Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

It has been a divine experience for me and I am really happy and proud to see the magnificent temple and the complex, which is a result of selfless service and divine inspiration.

- Virbhadr Singh

Union Minister of Steel, Govt. of India

Former Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh

To know our religion, culture and history, one should visit Swaminarayan Akshardham – a serene environment creating a peaceful mind. The young generation, with their family members, will appreciate the importance of Akshardham.

- B.S. Yediyurappa

Chief Minister, Karnataka

It is a wonderful and unforgettable experience to visit here and the memories will be kept alive.

- Daw Kyaing Kyaing

Spouse of President of Myanmar



Shri Hari Arrives in Ahmedabad Again

Shri Hari's spiritual travels continued unceasingly. On arriving in Jetalpur he received an invitation from the British officer in charge of Ahmedabad, Mr Heron, to grace the city again. On assenting, Mr Heron and the devotees of Ahmedabad accorded a grand welcome to Shri Hari...



The next day, Shriji Maharaj left Javaraj with his entourage. They crossed the River Sabarmati and hit the road to Jetalpur. On reaching the outskirts of Jetalpur village Shri Hari was greeted by hundreds of devotees who were waiting to welcome him. News of Maharaj's arrival had drawn a large crowd of village folks eager for his darshan.

Shri Hari's residence was arranged at a devotee Patel's house. First, he sat beneath a neem tree and gave a brief discourse. After lunch Maharaj took his afternoon nap.

In the evening Shri Hari went to the village pond by an open building where the sadhus resided. The Kathi devotees had been put up at various devotees' homes in Jetalpur village. Everyone assembled for Maharaj's darshan by the pond. Shri Hari said, "Serve the old and ailing sadhus with respect and love. One who serves a sadhu is a sadhu."

The next day news of Muktanand Swami's arrival from Ahmedabad reached Maharaj. Shri Hari got up and mounted his Manki and proceeded with a few devotees and sadhus to honour Muktanand Swami. On seeing him, Maharaj dismounted and started walking towards him. Muktanand Swami launched himself in prostrations. With him were Gunatitanand Swami, thirty sadhus, Ravaji parshad and five others. Shri Hari embraced Muktanand Swami and all the sadhus. They all returned to Jetalpur and held an assembly.

Shriji Maharaj asked Muktanand Swami to give hours about satsang in Ahmedabad. He also asked about how he was smeared with poison on his forehead. Muktanand Swami gave a report but he refrained from elaborating about the latter. Maharaj looked at his forehead, moved his hand over it and stated, "Those sannyasis were of baneful nature. We have suffered a lot and will

do so in future. The confrontations between good and evil forces have been ongoing since ages. The more they oppose and persecute others, the faster their destruction.”

Muktanand Swami informed, “Maharaj, Mr Heron remembers you. He has sent a message inviting you to come to Ahmedabad. There is a possibility of him granting us more land for the mandir.”

Shri Hari listened and added, “Because of pious people there is nourishment and flourishment of dharma in society. Since he has invited us, we must go.” Then Ravaji *parshad* offered clothes to Shri Hari that were gifted by several businessmen of Ahmedabad.

On 29 October 1819 (Samvat 1876, Kartik *sud* 11), Maharaj addressed a huge concourse of devotees in Jetalpur, “Today is the birthday of Dharmadev. I am the son of Dharma, therefore moral injunctions are dear to me. Morality sustains our earth; without it there would be destruction. I have taken birth to spread dharma. Dharma coupled with bhakti is Bhagvat Dharma.” In conclusion, the devotees performed *pujan* of Maharaj. Two days later Shri Hari departed from Jetalpur and arrived in Ahmedabad by noon.

On the day prior to Maharaj’s arrival, Nathu Bhatt and Damodar Sheth had informed Mr Heron. Mr Heron had sent his soldiers to honour Shri Hari. The devotees of Ahmedabad (Shrinagar) and Mr Heron’s men escorted Maharaj and his entourage into the city. They played musical instruments and sang bhajans along the way and into the lanes and market places of the city. The citizens of Shrinagar came out of their shops, homes and onto the streets to have darshan and shower flowers upon him.

Shri Hari’s residence was at the Navavas area in the newly-built residential quarters for sadhus. Before retiring to his quarters Shri Hari sat beneath a neem tree. Mr Heron’s men saluted him and took leave. Then Maharaj had lunch and retired to bed for a nap. In the evening, Motiram Chokidar, a sentry of Mr Heron, came with a

message from Mr Heron requesting Maharaj to come to his bungalow. Shri Hari proceeded with a group of sadhus and devotees. On arriving there, Mr Heron honoured Shri Hari by doffing his topee and offering namaskars. Then he held Shri Hari’s hand and led him into his private room and requested him to sit on a decorated seat prepared for him. First, Mr Heron asked about Maharaj’s health. Then Motiram Chokidar told Mr Heron, “There are a few sadhus sitting downstairs and if you say so I’ll bring them upstairs.” Mr Heron nodded with a yes. Shriji Maharaj told Motiram, “Call only Muktanand Swami, Nityanand Swami, Anand Swami, Dada Khachar, Somla Khachar, Allaiya Khachar, Maka Khachar and Hemantsinh Darbar.” Motiram brought the sadhus and devotees to the room.

Mr Heron praised Maharaj’s work, “You have the miraculous powers of transforming immoral and brutish people into pious and moral persons. Through your blessings and the travellings of your sadhus peace has been reinstated in the state. The burden of our duties has been relieved. Now stealing and ransacking have declined drastically.”

Shri Hari replied in Hindi, “Moral order is spread by people who are wedded to morality. One who observes the injunctions of the shastras is moral.”

Mr Heron enquired, “We came to Hindustan only recently, yet we were able to conquer powerful Indian kings and establish our rule. What is the reason for this?”

Shri Hari smiled and explained, “The reason lies in your (British) system of ruling and our royal leaders’ sedition for the sake of trivial self-gains and enmity. The infighting, unethical ways, conspiracies and connivances between the royalties has weakened us. Because of this inner chaos and dissension, unrighteousness and evil became rooted further. So God has found a way to uproot all that.

“Personally you must have pleased a bonafide sadhu in your previous birth and that is why you

have been inspired by God to come to India. You (Britishers) have succeeded by default, because of our failings. Your victory has brought peace in India. God has thus so willed.”

Mr Heron was pleased with Shri Hari's implicit answer. He felt that one who is moral is also fearless and courageous. He does not allow himself to be overshadowed by others. Mr Heron was impressed by Maharaj's persona. He then garlanded Shri Hari and sprinkled perfume on his white clothes. He honoured the devotees too. Mr Heron gifted an expensive shawl to Shriji Maharaj and gave saffron coloured dhotis to all the sadhus. Then he asked Maharaj, “Have you seen the land allocated to you?”

“Yes. A residential quarter for sadhus has already been built on it. Presently, I am staying there,” Maharaj explained.

Mr Heron was pleased to hear this. He generously offered more land, “There is still open land around it. If you so wish, we will surely give it to you.” Then Mr Heron said, “In a few days time I will be transferred to Surat and Mr Dunlop will take my place. He too knows you well. I will request him (to grant you more land) before I leave.” And so saying, Mr Heron rose from his seat and escorted Shri Hari downstairs.

Shri Hari mounted on his mare (Manki) and departed with the same honours that he was given on his arrival. Mr Heron's soldiers, musical players and others escorted Shri Hari back to Navavas. When news of Maharaj's honour spread in the city the disciples of Lolangar turned livid and found it intolerable. But they were helpless and could do nothing to retaliate. They knew that the impression of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on the British officers was profound. So, if they caused any trouble to him the British officers would throw them into jail.

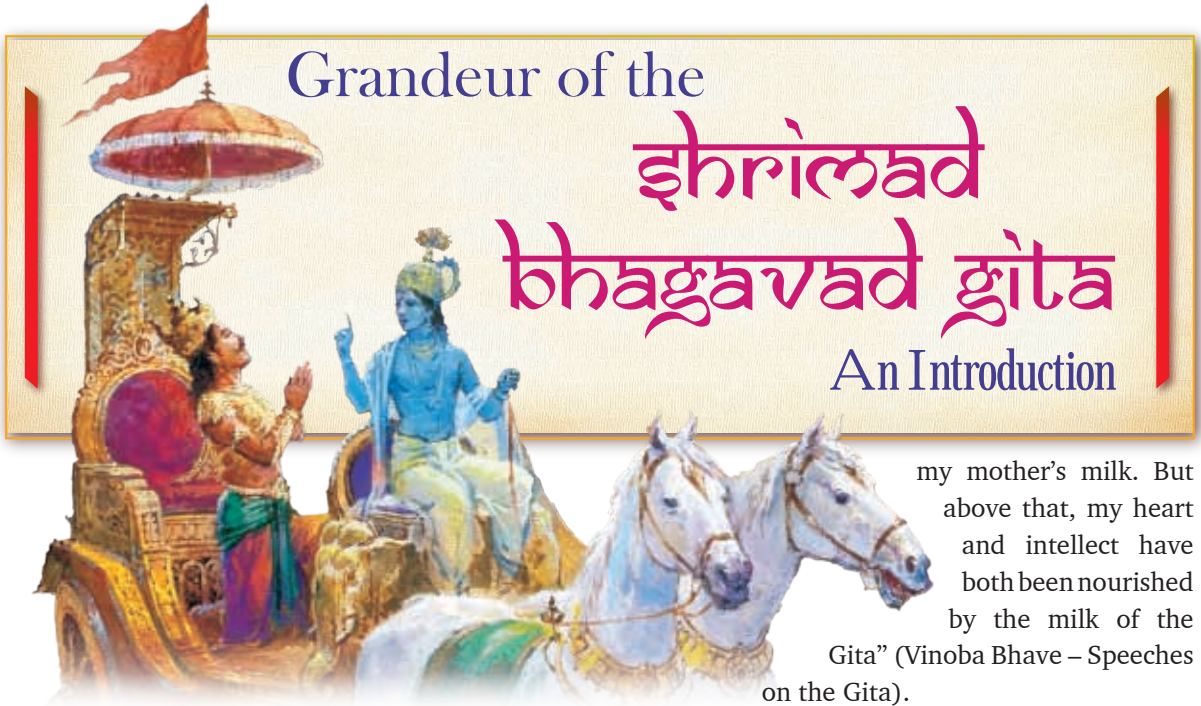
On returning to his residence, Shri Hari left immediately and returned to Jetalpur. He stayed and celebrated the full-moon day and then proceeded to Mehemdavad. Here, Maharaj stayed on the outskirts. The devotees started preparing

meals while Shri Hari held an assembly and spoke to the devotees and sadhus, “In whatever spare time one gets listen to spiritual discourses, so that one's mind does not think otherwise. This Satsang is divine because of the presence of God manifest in human form. So, whosoever has imbibed satsang into their lives will have a pure mind. He will become free of all sins. This is attained by having firm faith in God. When one's faith remains resolute, that is true satsang. But if one nourishes arrogant thoughts of how much one has renounced, tolerated or done bhajan, then one should flush them out. In matters of renunciation and tolerance many great kings, who had all the comforts at their beck and call, had accomplished a lot to attain God; whereas one has done nothing. Whenever one gets puffed up with pride for what little one has renounced think of such great kings. If one fails to do this the subtle feeling of ego will obstruct one in pleasing God.”

The entire assembly was absorbed in Shri Hari's discourse. Still, Maharaj wanted to say more, “To liberate you I have come from Akshardham – which is beyond human imagination. The mind cannot conceive it and speech fails to describe it. Thus you should focus yourself on my purpose on earth and not allow any mundane desires to infiltrate your heart. By nourishing worldly desires, you will get material pleasures from birth to birth, but you will forfeit my association. So, if you cherish mundane desires in your heart, you shall never experience the divine bliss of my form even in your dream state. In fact you shall lose this great gain of my association and be relegated to the ocean of misery.” After this Shri Hari remained silent. What he had spoken was penetrating and worthy of serious self-introspection. After hearing him the hearts of many sadhus and devotees became pure. They realized that his divine words had uprooted their thoughts from the material world and fixed them on to God. ♦

(Contd. next issue)

From Gujarati text of
Bhagwan Swaminarayan



The Bhagavad Gita. A remarkable event. An odyssey which commences with the realities of life and conquers the ultimate pinnacles of ideals. A divine elixir that transforms one from the *jiva* state to the *brahmic* state. Spiritual contemplation that blends theology and life. A stream of thought that flows from individual peace to universal peace. A reservoir of energy that turns sorrow into delight.

This and much more can be said about the Bhagavad Gita, which is also known as the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita or simply as the Gita.

Gandhiji gave his opinion regarding the Gita saying, “The mother that gave me birth has departed, but in times of difficulty I have learnt to go to mother Gita. There is no scope for despair for one who becomes a devotee of the Gita; he is continuously blissful. I wish the Gita be taught not just in government schools, but in every educational institution. It should be a matter of shame for a Hindu boy or girl not knowing about the Gita.”

The words of Vinoba Bhave are also worth remembering, “My body has been nourished by

my mother’s milk. But above that, my heart and intellect have both been nourished by the milk of the Gita” (Vinoba Bhave – Speeches on the Gita).

Those who come into contact with the Gita continue to have such experiences.

Indeed, like a statue made of salt melts on attempting to fathom the depth of the ocean, so too is experience with respect to the Gita. Many foreigners, either intentionally or by chance, have taken a glimpse at the Gita and have consequently irrevocably surrendered themselves to it. Henry David Thoreau says, “The answer to any of the questions in my life can be found in this small book.” Ralph Waldo Emerson says, “The Gita is the greatest wealth of mankind. When I read sentences like ‘सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि’ – ‘*Saravabhootasthamātmānam sarvabhootāni chātmani*’ (Gita: 6/29), my heart rejoices.”. Warren Hastings experienced, “To make morality/ethics reach the pinnacles of success, the Gita is unparalleled.”

Truly, the Bhagavad Gita has entranced its readers. It has guided the lost on the way of life, and has redirected people’s gaze, immersing them in introspection. It has made those weak in religion, courageous, and has inspired faithless scholars towards devotion. It has affirmed restraint in one

who indulges, and has explained the importance of *vairāgya* (detachment from worldly pleasures) to one who has become unrestrained under the shield of bhakti. It has helped people to shake off laziness, pouring in them the enthusiasm to endeavour, and it has invigorated the defeated. What has the Bhagavad Gita not done? How has this all been made possible? The answer can be found in a *shlok* in the Gita Mahatmya – ‘यस्माद् धर्ममयी गीता सर्वज्ञानप्रयोजिका। सर्वशास्त्रमयी गीता तस्माद् गीता विशिष्यते॥’ – ‘*Yasmād dharmamayee Geetā sarvagnānaprayojikā, sarvashāstramayee Geetā tasmād Geetā vishishyate.*’ Meaning, ‘The Gitā abounds with dharma, is the inspirer of all knowledge and encompasses all the shastras. This is why the Gita has attained a unique status’ (Gita Mahatmya Anusandhan).

Let us take a look at some interesting facts about the Gita.

THE MAHABHARAT

Before we contemplate on the Gita, we must first remember the Mahabharat because the Bhagavad Gita is a part of the Mahabharat.

The Mahabharat is history (*itihās*). It is the cultural history of great (*mahān*) India (Bharat). ‘इति’ – ‘*Iti*’ means ‘in this way’; ‘ह’ – ‘*ha*’ means ‘indeed’, ‘truly’; and ‘आस’ – ‘*āsa*’ means ‘occurred’. The etymological meaning of the word ‘*itihās*’ is thus, “In this way (it) has truly occurred.” The ‘Mahabharat’ is a documentary poem of true events.

Maharshi Veda Vyāsji is its composer. Here, in eighteen *parvas* (chapters) and a hundred thousand *shloks*, a vast span of the history of India has been immortalized.

The author is wise enough to ensure that nothing worth saying has been left out, and that nothing unnecessary has been said. In the Mahabharat it is stated regarding itself, ‘धर्मे चार्थे च कामे च मोक्षे च भरतर्षभ। यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र यन्नेहास्ति न तत् क्वचित्॥’ – ‘*Dharme chārthe cha kāmē cha mokshe cha bharatarshabha, yadihāsti tadanyatra yannehā’siti na tat kvachit’* – ‘With regards to the four endeavours – dharma, artha, kāma and moksha, only what has been said in the Mahabharat can be seen in the world,

and whatever has not been said here is not to be seen anywhere’ (Mahabharat 1.56.33). Thus, the Mahabharat is a complete volume, explaining all aspects of life. For this very reason this divine volume, which is an encyclopedia of India’s *sanātan* cultural history, has attained great respect in world literature. It is held in great regard as the longest poem on earth.

The Gita shines with beauty within this glorious Mahabharat: like a small *pārijāt* tree shines in a garden; like a star woven into a garland shines; like the moon, the king of the night, shines amongst the stars; like a noble son shines in a noble family; and like the atman shines in the body.

Truly, the soul of the entire Mahabharat is marvellously encompassed in this small shastra.

Let us take a look at the grandeur of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, a divine part of the Mahabharat.

THE GRANDEUR OF THE SHRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA

A royal palace can be experienced in two ways. First of all, by looking at its exterior grandeur, and secondly by entering and experiencing its inner grandeur. The Bhagavad Gita is a royal palace-like shastra. Its outer and inner grandeur are extremely pleasing.

THE EXTERNAL GRANDEUR

The outer grandeur of the Bhagavad Gita means knowing about its composer, appearance, style, etc.

THE COMPOSER

‘व्यासेन ग्रथिता’ – ‘*Vyasena Grathitā*’ – The Mahabharat has been written by Veda Vyās. The Gita is a part of the Mahabharat, therefore its author is the same. The Bhagavad Gita has been written poetically. Therefore, the question may arise that did Shri Krishna Bhagwan deliver the precepts to Arjun in the exact way they are found poetically in the Gita? Did Arjun also express his curiosity in a poetic manner? The answer is no. In reality, this whole account of whatever happened

during the war, or whatever Arjun asked and whatever precepts Shri Krishna Bhagawan gave was encompassed in a poetic form in the Mahabharat by Maharshi Veda Vyasji. Thus, though it is Krishna who is speaking to Arjun in the Gita, it is Maharshi Veda Vyas who has given a literary form.

PLACE

‘मध्ये महाभारतम्’ – ‘*Madhye Mahabharatam*’ – ‘It is the middle of the Mahabharat.’ The Gita is found in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharat. As far as the description goes in the ongoing story in the Bhishma Parva, Maharshi Veda Vyas goes to the blind Dhritarashtra and warns him of the many inevitable consequences the war will have. Moreover, so that Dhritarashtra can receive a complete account of the battlefield, he appoints the learned Sanjay, giving him divine eyes so that he can give an eye-witness report. Vyas then takes leave. Sanjay, by the ability of his divine eyes, could see afar. He starts to report to Dhritarashtra. The description to this point takes up 24 *adhyays* (sub-chapters) of the Bhishma Parva. At the start of the 25th *adhyay*, Dhritarashtra asks, ‘धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः । मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत संजय ॥’ – ‘*Dharmakshetre kurukshetre samaveta yuyutsavaha, māmakāhā pāṇḍavāshchaiva kimakurvata Sanjaya*’ – ‘O Sanjaya! What did my sons and Pandu’s sons do in Kurukshetra (the name of battlefield), which is a righteous land’ (Mahabharat, Bhishma Parva 25.1). This curiosity of Dhritarashtra marks the start of the Gita. This *shloka* (verse) is the first *shloka* of the Gita. Therefore, the 25th *adhyay* of the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharat is the start of the first *adhyay* of the Gita. Thus, the Gita is contained between the 25th *adhyay* and the 42nd *adhyay*.

FORM: 18 ADHYAYS, 700 SHLOKAS

The Bhagavad Gita is spread across eighteen *adhyays*. These 18 *adhyays* comprise of seven hundred *shloks*. Of these, one *shloka* is spoken by Dhritarashtra, 47 by Sanjaya, 84 by Arjun and 574 by Shri Krishna.

STYLE: DIALOGUE

The Gita is a dialogue. In fact, the entire Mahabharat is a dialogue. In that dialogue, Vaishampāyan Rishi is the main speaker and Janmajay is the main listener. Thus the main dialogue of the Mahabharat is between Vaishampayan and Janmajay.

This dialogue contains another dialogue – the dialogue between Dhritarashtra and Sanjaya, in which, as described above, the blind Dhritarashtra is an enthusiastic listener, eager to hear a report of the battlefield from Sanjaya, the orator. Thus, this dialogue is the second dialogue in the Mahabharat, and this second dialogue encompasses the entire Gita.

Now, this second dialogue contains a third dialogue. The divine dialogue that took place between Arjun and Shri Krishna.

Thus the Mahabharat contains a unique triple dialogue combination. Of these, the third dialogue is the most important.

POETIC

The Bhagavad Gita is a poem. The great poet Vyas has poetically recorded this divine dialogue between God and devotee in a variety of well-known metres, like *anushtup* and *upjāti*.

Mysticism is the soul of poetry. The Gita is extremely mystic. Emotion is the ornament of poetry. The precepts of the Gita is emotional. Casualness is the aroma of poetry. The precepts of the Gita are casual. The Gita is an ideal poem. It is a poem of life, a philosophical poem. A stream of emotions flows in this poem and can be experienced like an incoming tide. The *sthitpragna brāhmīc* state is the embodiment of a mountain steadiness.

For this reason many poetry lovers have relished this shastra from a poetical point of view.

Thus, in terms of style the Gita encompasses a beautiful and balanced combination of dialogue and poetry.

BHAGAVAD GITA: A HISTORY

The Mahabharat is history. The Bhagavad Gita is a part of the Mahabharat, therefore it is also

history. It is a true event. It is not fiction. The Mahabharat is not a collection of fictional stories like those about birds and animals or made-up incidents to teach some moral. Nor is the Gita a creation of Vyas's imagination. Whatever has been described in the Gita has 'ha' – 'truly' 'āsa' – 'happened' 'iti' – 'in this way'. Instead of thinking that such an event could never happen, our intellect should be pure and healthy enough to conclude that 'even this could happen'.

Therefore, Shri Krishna and Arjun are not imaginary characters. Arjun's weakness or religious instability is not imaginary. Nor are the precepts of Shri Krishna made up. Everything is true, because the Gita is history.

We have thus seen the external grandeur of the Gita, now let us see its inner grandeur.

THE INNER GRANDEUR

Imagine if someone picked up a jasmine flower, but spent all their time counting its petals instead of enjoying its fragrance? What if someone disregarded the sweet honey of a honeycomb, and spent all their time counting its holes? We must make sure this does not happen with the Gita. It is not sufficient just to look at its author, time, place, language, style, etc. We must experience its inner grandeur. This experience has the ability to transform one's life.

So what is the inner grandeur of the Bhagavad Gita? By tradition, at the end of each *adhyay*, a small sentence indicating the end of the *adhyay* is spoken. For example, 'इति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जनसंवादे अर्जुनविषादयोगो नाम प्रथमोऽध्यायः ॥' – 'Iti Shrimadbhagavadgitāsu Upanishatsu Brahmanvidyāyām Yogashāstre ShriKrishnārjunasamvāde Arjunavishādayogo nāma prathamodhyāyaha.' By considering these words we find a direction in which to experience the inner grandeur, the main expounded topic, of the Gita.

UPANISHATSU

The word 'Upanishatsu' has given the Bhagavad Gita the status of an Upanishad. Why

is the Bhagavad Gita an Upanishad? Because the Upanishads explain, protect and nurture the ultimate principles and lead one to a true life. There is a well-known saying regarding this: 'सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः । पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥' – 'Sarvopanishado gāvo dogdhā Gopālanandanaha, Partho vatsaha sudheerbhoktā dugdham Geetāmrutam mahat' – 'All the Upanishads are like a cow. Gopālnandan Shri Krishna is the milker of that cow. Parth (Arjun) is the young calf which on seeing milk flows from the udders of the cow. The nectar-like milk of these Upanishads in the form of a cow is the Bhagavad Gita, which the wise drink' (Gita Mahatmya).

To speak in the language of ontologists, the Gita has truly 'elucidated' the Upanishads. This means to say that it has clarified and supported the secrets of the Upanishads, thus affirming them. The Gita carries out this duty fittingly. The Upanishad itself is mystic. That mystery is *brahmavidyā*. The Upanishads are the shastra of *brahmavidyā*. The Bhagavad Gitā clarifies, supports and affirms the secrets of the Upanishads, i.e. *brahmavidyā*.

Thus, the eternal principles of the Upanishads are perfectly reflected in the Gita.

For this very reason, after saying 'Upanishatsu' for the Gita, it is also acclaimed as 'brahmavidyāyām'.

BRAHMAVIDYĀYĀM

The word 'brahmavidyāyām' has so much depth. The Bhagavad Gita is *brahmavidyā*. To understand the importance of this word we must refer to the Upanishads. The meaning of *brahmavidyā* has been given in the Upanishads. The words of the mantra are "येनाक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्त्वं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्यायाम् 'Yenāksharam Purusham veda satyam provācha tām tattvato Brahmanvidyāyām' – 'That by which both the divine entities Akshar, i.e. Aksharbrahman, and Purusham, i.e., Purushottam Parabrahman, are known, is called *brahmavidyā*' (Mundaka Upanishad: 1/2/13). In the Bhagavad Gita, both the divine entities Aksharbrahman and Parabrahman are constantly spoken of. Furthermore, in the eighth *adhyay* Arjun becomes

curious, ‘किं तद् ब्रह्म’ – ‘*Kim tad Brahma*’ – ‘What is that Brahman?’ (Gita: 8/1), and commencing the answer with the words ‘अक्षरं ब्रह्म परम्’ – ‘*Aksharam Brahma Param*’ (Gita: 8/3) Shri Krishna Bhagwan uses a whole *adhyay* to give a detailed explanation of Aksharbrahman. For this reason, the eighth *adhyay* is known to all by the name ‘Aksharbrahmayogaha’.

In the same way, the fifteenth *adhyay* is renowned as ‘Purushottamyogaha’. The reason for this is simply that it contains an explanation of Purushottam Parabrahman as above all *kshar* (perishable) and Akshar (the Imperishable). Moreover, in sentences like ‘एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ’ – ‘*Eshā brāhmee sthitihi Partha*’ (Gita: 2/72), ‘स ब्रह्मयोगमुक्तात्मा सुखमक्षय्यमश्नुते’ – ‘*Sa brahmayogamuktātmā sukhamakshayyamashnute*’ (Gita: 5/21), ‘ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा’ – ‘*Brahmabhootaha prasannātmā*’, and others proclaim that *brahmavidyā* is to make one’s *atma* similar to Brahman and worship Purushottam.

Therefore, the Gita has been appropriately esteemed with the word ‘Brahmavidyāyām’. The only difference is that the same wisdom that has been given in the Upanishads, has, in the Gita, been joined beautifully with the manifest form of Paramātmā. For this very reason, the Bhagavad Gita has been acclaimed with the words ‘Yogashāstre’, showing that it proclaims the necessity of the manifest form of Paramātmā in the principles of *brahmavidyā*.

‘YOGASHĀSTRE’

The Bhagavad Gita is an Upanishad. It is *brahmavidyā*. It is also a shastra of yoga. There are three famous meanings of the word ‘yoga’. Yoga means samadhi, yoga means miraculous powers, yoga means relation.

The yoga shastra describes the state of samadhi in which all the *vruttis* of one’s *chitt* should be focused on the manifest form of Parabrahman. This miraculous creation and the countless astounding events that occur in creation are all just by the powers of the manifest form of Paramātmā whom I have found. Thus this is

a yoga shastra that describes the glory of the manifest form of Parabrahman. This is a yoga shastra that tells us that on attaining the manifest form of Parabrahman we want to serve him by actions, word and mind, and we want to worship him.

Thus, the Bhagavad Gita’s speciality is that it expounds the yoga of the manifest form of Paramātmā. We realize this because it has been honoured with the word ‘Yogashastre’.

All this is the Gita’s inner grandeur. But this is only the inner grandeur with reference to the sentence at the end of each *adhyay*. Besides this, we find that many eternal principles such as the distinction between the body and the *atma*, the greatness of the knowledge of the *atma*, the necessity of experiencing that *atma* to be similar to Brahman, previous births, reincarnation, the concepts of liberation in this life and after death, the art of doing karmas, the secret behind avatars and many others have all become aspects of its inner grandeur. Due to this, India has continually been paid special homage in spiritual matters. Moreover, it is due to this grandeur that the Gita has attained a place in the *prasthantrayi*. Furthermore, many commentaries have been written on this *prasthan*. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has also given the Bhagavad Gita a place in his principle eight shastras. He read time and time again and often gave references to it in his discourses, and sometimes even explained the novel secret meanings of some excerpts.

CONCLUSION

In this way, this introduction has described some of the grandeur of the Bhagavad Gita in different ways. But how can that be sufficient? If one wants to fully experience the true grandeur of a palace, you cannot just spectate, you have to own it! The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is like a magnificent palace. Its spiritual value cannot be estimated. Nevertheless, by reading it, singing it, understanding it, contemplating on it and trying to imbibe its principles in one’s life, a spectator can become the owner. ♦

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's VICHARAN

June 2010, Limbdi, New Delhi



Swamishri on his way to perform morning puja on Bal Din, Delhi



Devotees during a satsang assembly, New Delhi

1-6: Limbdi

7: Limbdi, New Delhi

8-30: New Delhi

1, Tuesday

Prior to his morning puja Swamishri performed the *pratishta* rituals of puja, *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in St. Louis (USA) and Chachana.

6, Sunday

Swamishri blessed the Sunday satsang assembly after his morning puja. Swamishri praised the devotees for internalizing the true colour of satsang in their lives. He then remembered some names of devotees of the past and added, "We have the company of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, who spread the philosophy of Akshar-Purushottam by undergoing tribulations and disregarding their physical needs. Shastriji Maharaj used to say that in a true mandir the bells toll. If there is no *murti* of God in the mandir then there will be no joy. When the *murti* of God is consecrated the mandir becomes alive. The association with God is liberating. The worldly relationships exist till one is alive; then there is nothing."

7, Monday; Limbdi, New Delhi

At 3.45 p.m. Swamishri departed from Limbdi and arrived at Ahmedabad airport at about 5.00 p.m. His flight landed in New Delhi at 7.15 p.m., where he was welcomed with a garland by Atmaswarup Swami. Swamishri reached the Akshardham Complex at 8.30 p.m. On arriving at the mandir for Thakorji's darshan Swamishri was welcomed by youths waving giant flags and performing a traditional dance. Thereafter Swamishri retired to his residence.

8-30, New Delhi

Every morning, while going towards the mandir for Thakorji's darshan, the Akshardham staff members displayed and enacted their duties in their respective departments. Children too performed skits and plays to please Swamishri. Thereafter Swamishri performed his morning puja in the mandir assembly hall. This was followed by his daily sessions of meeting devotees and invited guests.

During the day Swamishri attended to his correspondences and held meetings. He also visited the Akshardham complex a couple of times.

13, Sunday; Celebration of Yogi Jayanti and Pramukh Varni Din

At 6.30 p.m. Swamishri arrived for the Sunday satsang assembly held in the mandir hall. In the beginning Viveksagar Swami gave a discourse in Hindi and thereafter children performed a traditional dance. Then Swamishri was honoured with a shawl by senior sadhus. The 60th Pramukh Varni Din was on 16 June, Wednesday, but a symbolic celebration was held today.

Swamishri blessed the assembly, “As long as one does not have faith in or has not consolidated the knowledge of *atma* and Paramatma in oneself one can never become joyful. To make us aware of that knowledge we have the Gita, Bhagvat, Upanishads, Mahabharat, the Vachanamrut of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the discourses of Gunatitanand Swami. By internalizing this knowledge one experiences bliss.”

20, Sunday

In the evening satsang assembly children of BAPS *bal mandal* presented a ballet on Bhakta Prahlad. Thereafter Viveksagar Swami gave a discourse. Prior to his blessings Swamishri was honoured with garlands.

Swamishri praised the performance of the children in his blessings and added, “In our social life we think and organize about earning more money, but once we will have to give it all up.

When we were born we came empty-handed and when we die we will go with nothing in our hands. God has given us a human form for offering devotion to him and acquiring *moksha*. But man forgets God in his love and attachment for mundane things, addictions and sense pleasures. But we should aim to please God in human life. We are inspired to do so from the life stories of great devotees.”

28, Monday

At 7.00 p.m. Swamishri blessed a special assembly for the staff members of Akshardham. In the assembly sadhus narrated some of the inspiring experiences of visitors to Akshardham. Then some staff members enacted a drama, ‘Shenshahe Alam’, on Alexandar’s encounter with Porus and Dandamis during his entry into India. Thereafter senior sadhus and others honoured Swamishri with garlands. Finally Swamishri blessed all by elaborating on how glorious India’s culture is. Referring to Alexandar’s encounters Swamishri added that he realized that he was nothing before the great culture of India and was left humbled. Swamishri added, “One who realizes the power of God becomes fearless and without pain or misery. Bhagwan Ram, Krishna and Shriji Maharaj himself came to earth. If we understand the glory of his sadhus we will experience inner peace.”



LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

AFTER RETIREMENT

15 June, Tuesday, New Delhi

During the personal audience session with Swamishri an aspirant sought Swamishri’s advice, “I have recently retired from my job. What should I do now?”

Swamishri advised, “Engage yourself in doing bhajan of God. Whenever possible serve others (*seva*) and come to satsang here. This will make you happy and give you inner peace.”

INSPIRING HOPE

16, Wednesday

In the daily audience session after his puja Swamishri takes great care and patience in attending to each and every visitor.

Today, an aspirant was quickly proceeding ahead after his turn. Swamishri looked at him, then held his hand and asked, “What is your name?”

“Kanubhai.”

“Do you want to ask anything?”

“Yes. My 27-year-old son became qualified as a chartered accountant. One day, he suddenly left home.” On saying this much Kanubhai broke down in tears. Swamishri inspired hope in him and blessed him.

Swamishri was sharp in reading the feelings of an unhappy face, despite him proceeding ahead quickly after his turn. Swamishri took time to hear his woe and blessed him for the better.

working for 60 years. For how long should I continue?”

Swamishri enquired, “Have you fulfilled all your (social) responsibilities?”

“Yes.”

“Then it’s enough. Now increase your devotion to God.”

Swamishri inspired an aspirant to retire and yoke himself more and more to God’s devotion.



Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

Translation: Sadhu Vivekjiandas

DEVOTION TO GOD

18, Friday

An aspirant asked Swamishri, “I have been

DIGNITARIES

Each day in New Delhi many dignitaries came to have darshan of and seek the blessings of Swamishri in his morning puja. Thereafter Swamishri met them personally. A list of some of the dignitaries is as follows:

8, Tuesday: Suresh Prabhu, ambassador for UNO’s Grid Water Project; Ashish Nehra, Indian cricketer.

9, Wednesday: Dr Soin, who performed the first liver transplant in India.

10, Thursday: Mr Creeti, Ambassador for Thailand; J. Mallikarjuna, owner of GMR construction company; Pradip Payal, industrialist in plastic packaging; Dr Roy Chaudhary, Chairman of Doctors Ethics Committee and member of the Medical Council of India.

11, Friday: Shushilkumarji Rungta, Chairman of the Steel Authority of India; Dr B.K. Rao, Chairman of Gangaram Hospital; His Holiness Ramdevji Maharaj.

12, Saturday: Dr Goyal, personal doctor to the Prime Minister of India and other dignitaries

13, Sunday: Shridharan, CEO, Metro Train Project, New Delhi; Rajendrabhai Khetan, owner of Salora TV.

15, Tuesday: Sanjeev Jain, proprietor of Parshwanath Construction Company.

16, Wednesday: Dr Shekhawat, husband of India’s President Pratibha Patil; Mr Sharma, Director of Delhi Municipal Council Water Dept.

18, Friday: Premsingh Chaudhary, Speaker of Delhi Legislative Assembly.

19, Saturday: Ravi Tiku, UK industrialist; Vijay Kapoor, former Lieutenant Governor of Delhi; Hon. Tejendra Khanna, Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

20, Sunday: Hon. Adarsh Sud, Mayor of Simla; Hon. Durgasinh, Deputy Mayor of Simla; Shri Kapoor, CEO, Fortis Hospital.

21, Monday: Hon. Sahani, Mayor of Delhi; Vijendra Gupta, President of BJP, Delhi.

23, Wednesday: Shri Bhandari, head of UNI.

26, Saturday: Nitin Gadkari, President of BJP; Adesh Gupta, head of Liberty Shoes.

27, Sunday: Shayam Bhardiya, industrialist and board member of IIM and IIT; Pradip Dhoot, Director of Videocon; Anil Nayak, CEO of Larsen and Toubro.

29, Tuesday: H.H. Vimalanandji Maharaj, President of Divine Life Society; L.D. Mittal, owner of Sonalika Tractors.



INAUGURATION OF BAPS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

4 July 2010, Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi



Scholars on stage with Swamishri during the inaugural seminar session

The new BAPS Research Institute at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi, was inaugurated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj on Sunday, 4 July 2010 in the presence of leading scholars of philosophy from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. A one-day seminar was held to mark the occasion.

During Swamishri's morning puja in the mandir assembly hall he lit the auspicious *divo* to begin the first session of the inauguration seminar.

Then, Viveksagar Swami spoke on Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the guru *parampara* and the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. Chief guests of the first session were Padmabhushan Pandit Satyavrat Shastri and Shri Prakash Dubeyji, President of the All India Philosophy Convention. Both addressed the gathering, praising the recently written *Brahmasutra Swaminarayan Bhashyam* by Bhadresh Swami.

At 10.00 a.m., the scholars joined Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami outside the BAPS Research Institute for the formal inauguration. Sadhus recited mantras from the four Vedas as puja of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was performed and the *nadachhadi* untied. All then entered the Institute's conference hall for the second session of the seminar, from 10.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., in

which the delegates discussed the various types of research work that should be undertaken by research institutes, focusing especially on how to promote moral values.

The third session was held in the Institute's conference hall from 2.30 to 5.00 p.m., in which the discussion centred on 'Brahmasutra Bhashya – Contributions of Traditions'.

Prof. S.P. Dubey briefly described the 14 *bhashyas* (commentaries) on the Brahmasutras from the time of Shankaracharya to the present and hailed Bhadresh Swami's 'Shri Swaminarayan Bhashyam' as the fifteenth.

Scholars of the many *sampradayas* present also expressed their praise for the excellent and lucid *Swaminarayan Bhashya*. They all said that such a masterpiece was the result of the grace and blessings of guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj upon Bhadresh Swami.

The final session was held from 5.30 p.m. in the mandir assembly hall in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj during the Sunday *sabha*.

Following addresses by Ishwarcharan Swami, Prof. Pankaj Jani (Vice-Chancellor, Somnath Sanskrit University), Sannidhan Sudarshan Sharma (Vice-Chancellor, Venkateshwar University, Tirupati), Dr Vijay Bhatkar (renowned supercomputer scientist), Pandit Krishnamurti



Shastri and others, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Shastras, mandirs and sadhus are our pillars. Today, scholars of these shastras have accepted our invitation and graced this occasion.

“Until true knowledge is attained progress is not possible. Our shastras reveal that the body is perishable and temporary, and that *atma*-Paramatma are eternal. Such knowledge is gained from a true Sadhu, who has knowledge of

the form of God. That knowledge is of Atma and Paramatma, Brahman and Parabrahman and it leads to *moksha*. The qualities of a true sadhu are described in the Gita: one who enjoys the *brahmic* state and has no attachments. Yogiji Maharaj was such a sadhu. He always said, ‘May God do good of all. Worship God.’ The shastras instruct us to go to such sadhus. Bhagwan Swaminarayan also said that the four Vedas, *shat*-shastras, 18 Purans, Mahabharat and other shastras reveal that *moksha* is attained only through the company of God or his Sadhu.

“The *bhashya* by Bradresh Swami is based on Shastriji Maharaj’s wish that texts be written on the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. By God’s grace he has accomplished the task well. May all be blessed with *moksha*.”

Thus, the inauguration of the new BAPS Research Institute was concluded. ♦

NATIONAL YUVA CONVENTION 2010

17 to 20 June, Chicago, USA

Over 1,200 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from across North America participated in the National Yuva Convention 2010 in Chicago, Illinois, in the presence of Pujya Doctor Swami. Centered on the theme of ‘Spiritual Quotient – Vidyanam Adhyatma-vidya’, the convention guided the youths on how to blend careers with spirituality from the teachings of Hinduism.

In addition to Doctor Swami’s pragmatic

and motivational lectures, the seminar involved interactive workshops, lectures, lighthearted recreational activities as well as inspirational speeches and presentations by other experienced sadhus.

The youths thoroughly enjoyed the convention and left with the message that developing a spiritual quotient is an individual task, but is furthered by group effort and a nurturing environment. ♦

ADULT GUJARATI CLASSES

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London
January to May 2010

From January to May 2010, at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, 36 participants completed the inaugural Gujarati course specially designed to address a growing demand from parents unable to read or write Gujarati.

Beginning with the basics of recognizing the Gujarati alphabet and correct pronunciation, through to comprehension and conversing, and eventually moving on to basic writing, the

course covered all the fundamental aspects of the language. A variety of interactive teaching methods made the learning process fun and effective.

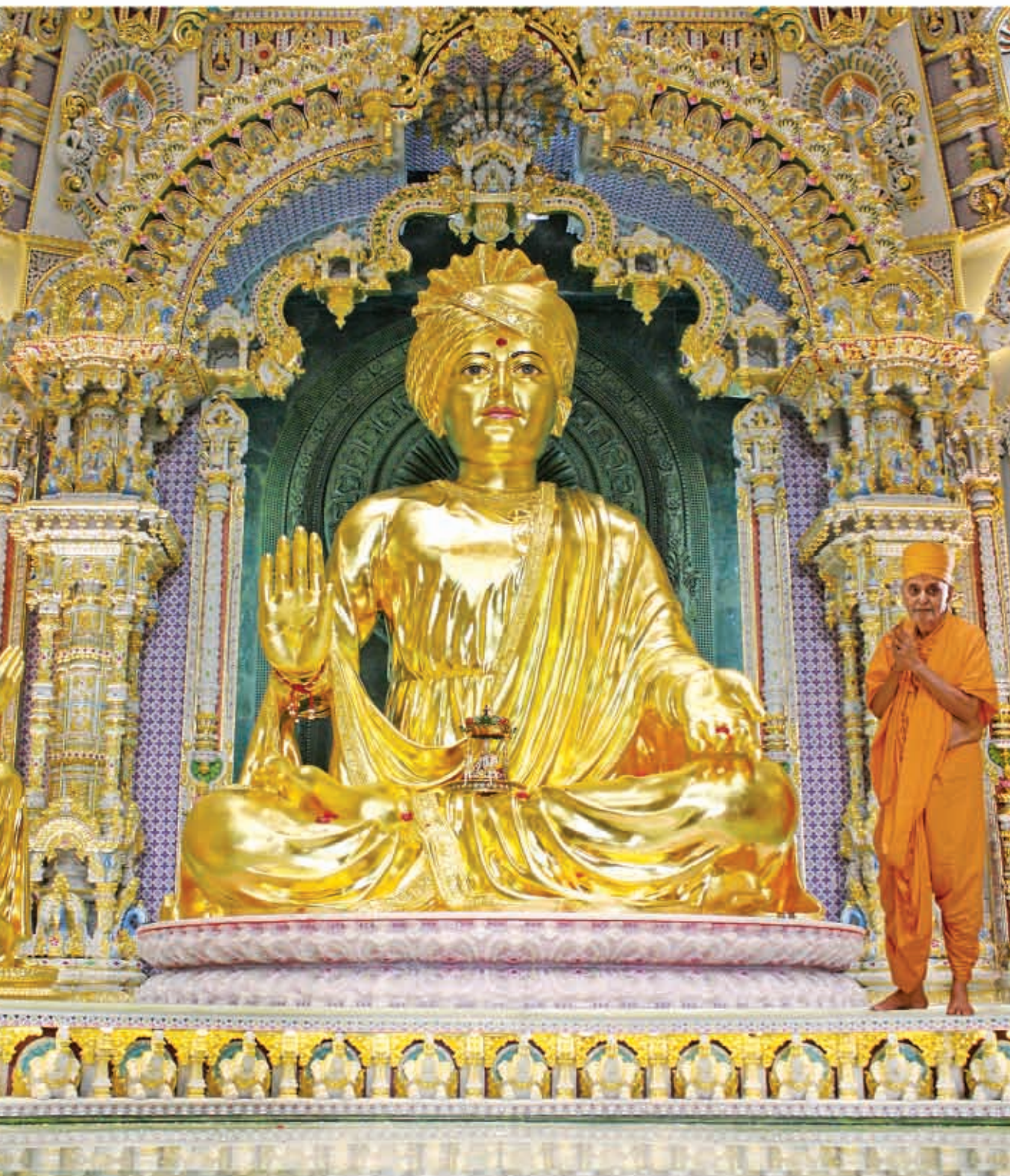
The course ended with a test to assess the progress of the students, which everyone passed successfully. Most can now read, write simple sentences and converse in Gujarati slowly – with some even hoping to go on to study for the GCSE in Gujarati. ♦



SHRI NEELKANTH VARNI MAHA-ARTI AND SHILANYAS CEREMONY

(Top) Swamishri performs the inaugural arti to commence the daily *maha-arti* of the 26-ft. high Shri Neelkanth Varni murti adjacent to Yagnapurush Kund at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi (10 July 2010).

(Bottom) Swamishri performs *pujan* of the stones to be placed during the *shilanyas* ceremony of the new *shikharbaddh* mandir in New Jersey, USA (New Delhi, 11 July 2010).



Swamiishri stands in prayer before the divine *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan following the opening of the new *garbhagruh* at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi (13 July 2010).