

SPECIAL ISSUE

# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

January–April 2023

Annual Subscription ₹ 80/-



Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations

14 December 2022 to 15 January 2023, Ahmedabad



Thousands of visitors daily came for darshan of Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir at the centre of the centenary festival site

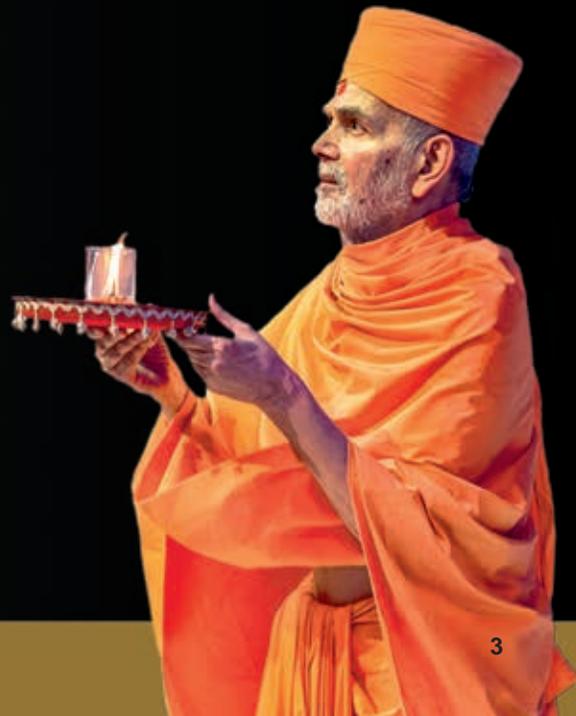


Sant Dwar: Ornate ceremonial main gate of the festival

# Dedication

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a genuine sadhu. He was eternally spiritually fulfilled. He had an unbroken and eternal bond with Bhagwan. His heart was flawless, pious, pure. Future generations will think he was a legend. He was courageous, considerate, cordial and blissful. His devotion to God and guru was unparalleled. Believing himself to be a servant, he humbly attended to and served everyone in their best interests and saw the Divinity in all. We are extremely fortunate to have attained such a guru. Let us celebrate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Shatabdi Mahotsav with grandeur. Let us serve wholeheartedly.*

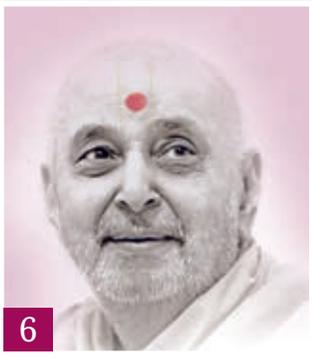
*- Sadhu Keshavjivandas  
(Mahant Swami Maharaj)  
23.6.2022, Ahmedabad*



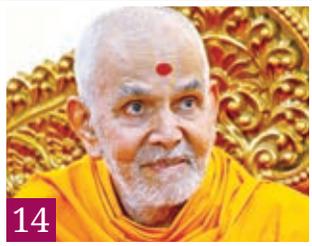


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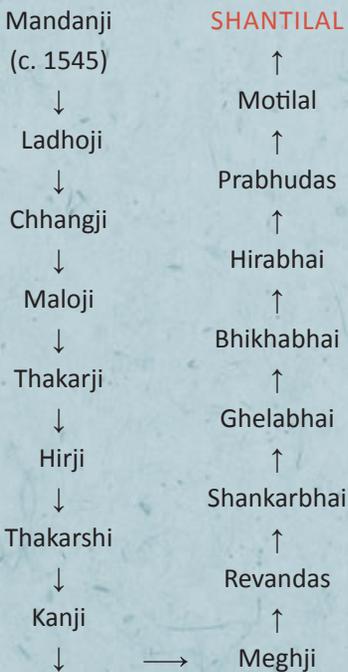
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# PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S BRIEF LIFE AND WORKS

**P**ramukh Swami Maharaj was the fifth successor in the illustrious spiritual tradition of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Out of his compassion for humanity, Swamishri made over 17,000 village, town and city visits and sanctified over 250,000 homes in India and abroad. He read and replied to over 700,000 letters, and personally counselled over 810,000 people. He established over 1,100 mandirs and built grand cultural complexes like Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi and Gandhinagar. His profound experience and realization of God was the essence of his success and divine lustre. The following is a brief outline of his life, beginning below with his family lineage.



Father: Motibhai Patel



Mother: Diwaliben Patel



## 1921

7 December (Magshar *sud* 8, VS 1978). He was born in the village of Chansad, near Vadodara, Gujarat, to Motibhai and Diwaliben Patel. His childhood name was Shantilal.



## 1940

10 January (Posh *sud* 1, VS 1996). Shastriji Maharaj initiated him into the sadhu order at Akshar Deri, Gondal, and renamed him Narayanswarupdas Swami.

## 1939

7 November (Aso *vad* 11, VS 1995). Shantilal left home to become a sadhu.

22 November (Kartik *sud* 11, VS 1996). Shastriji Maharaj Initiated him into the *parshad* order at Ambli Vali Pol, Ahmedabad.



## 1940-50

Studied Sanskrit, did *vicharan* with Shastriji Maharaj and performed services in BAPS mandirs. Served as *kothari* of Sarangpur Mandir.



## 1950

21 May (Jeth *sud* 4, VS 2006). Shastriji Maharaj appointed Shastri Narayanswarupdas as Pramukh (President) of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) at Ambli Vali Pol, Ahmedabad.



## 1951

10 May (Vaishakh *sud* 4, VS 2007). In Sarangpur, Shastriji Maharaj returned to Akshardham. Yogiji Maharaj became spiritual guru of BAPS. Pramukh Swami served the BAPS under the guidance and blessings of Yogiji Maharaj.



## 1959-60

24 October to 3 July 1960. Pramukh Swami went with Yogiji Maharaj on an overseas Satsang Tour to East Africa.



## 1971

4 June. In Sankari, *murti-pratishtha* of the first BAPS *shikharbaddha* mandir built by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



## 1968

27 November. Pramukh Swami's 48th birthday was celebrated in the presence of Yogiji Maharaj in Mumbai. Yogiji Maharaj said that Pramukh Swami was the form of Shastriji Maharaj and instructed all devotees to celebrate his birthday gloriously every year.



## 1971

23 January (Posh *vad* 11, VS 2027). In Mumbai, Yogiji Maharaj returned to Akshardham; cremation rites were held in Gondal. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was declared spiritual guru of BAPS.



## 1973

3 December. Kalash Mahotsav, Ahmedabad; Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated 56 youths into the *parshad* (monastic) order.



## 1974

First overseas satang tour as guru. Received many 'Key to the City' honours. Consecrated first BAPS mandir in USA in New York. Over the next 40 years he consecrated 6 *shikharbaddha* mandirs and over 70 *hari* mandirs in North America.



## 1981

7 March to 13 April. A 37-day festival was organized in Ahmedabad to celebrate Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Birth Bicentenary. Swamishri initiated 207 youths into the sadhu and *parshad* orders. Around 8 million people visited the celebrations.



## 1983

5 February. Pramukh Swami Maharaj, aged 62, suffered a heart attack in Sundalpura. Even afterwards, for over 30 years, he continued to serve tirelessly day and night.



## 1984

7 April 1984. Met Pope John Paul II in Vatican City.



## 1985

16 July to 18 August. Grand 33-day Cultural Festival of India celebrated at Alexandra Park, London. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was honoured in a Suvarna Tula ceremony at QPR football stadium, London. All donations received were gifted to Karamsad Medical College.



## 1985

22 October to 19 December. 59-day Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami Birth Bicentenary Celebrations were held in Ahmedabad. Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated 200 youths into the sadhu and *parshad* orders. Over 8 million people visited the celebrations.



## 1987-88

Inspired cattle camps and famine relief activities in Gujarat.



## 1988

Twelfth overseas Satsang Tour. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was honoured in the British and Canadian parliaments.



## 1989-90

In 1989, 15,000 children participated at the International Children's Convention (Adhiveshan), Vidyanagar. In 1990, 21,000 youths participated at the International Youth Convention (Adhiveshan), Vidyanagar.



## 1991

12 July to 11 August. 31-day Cultural Festival of India was held in Edison, New Jersey, USA; over 1 million visitors.



## 1992

30 October to 2 December. A grand 33-day celebration of Yogiji Maharaj's Centenary was held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. On 30 October, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar.



## 1993

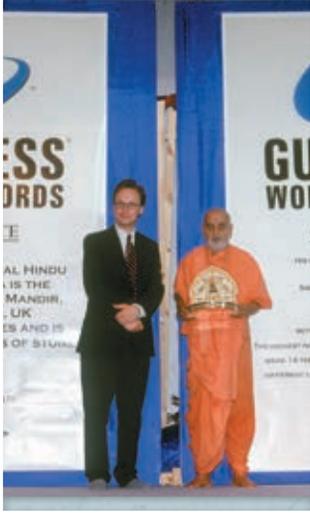
BAPS Relief and rehabilitation activities done in the aftermath of the earthquake in Latur, Maharashtra.



## 1995

20 August. Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed *murti-pratishtha* of the BAPS *shikharbaddha* mandir in Neasden, London.

From 25 Nov. to 31 Dec. Swamishri's 37-day Amrut Mahotsav (75th Birthday) was celebrated in Mumbai, during which he publicly dedicated an eye hospital. In the next two decades, he established 7 hospitals and 11 mobile medical vans to provide quality healthcare to countless people. BAPS was granted affiliation to the United Nations as an 'NGO in Consultative Status to the Economic and Social Council of the UN'.



## 1996

8 July. *Guinness World Records* recognized the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, as the 'Largest Stone Hindu Mandir Outside India'. BAPS volunteers served after cyclone in Andhra Pradesh.



## 1999

Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Nairobi. Visited Israel, where Pramukh Swami Maharaj prayed at holy sites for Christians and Jews. Met Rabbi Lau and Rabbi Bakshi-Doron in Israel.



## 1997

On 10 November, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was received at St. James' Palace by HRH Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales. On 14 April, HH Amir Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa of Bahrain welcomed Swamishri at his royal palace. BAPS volunteers served during the floods in Gujarat.



## 2000

On 29 August, Pramukh Swami Maharaj addressed the Millennium World Peace Summit of Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations, New York. Also, met Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan.



## 1998

On 7 July, Swamishri underwent heart bypass surgery at the Lenox Hill Hospital, New York, USA.



## 2000

4 October. In Miami, Swamishri met US President Bill Clinton. Organized cattle camps and provided relief aid for victims of drought in Saurashtra. Inaugurated BAPS Swaminarayan Vidya Mandir for Girls, Karamsad. In Dabhoi, opened a general hospital for the underprivileged. De-addiction campaign held by BAPS children; over 400,000 were de-addicted.



## 2001

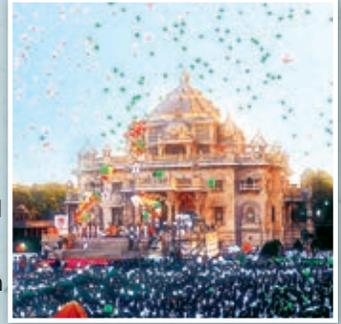
BAPS served after earthquake in Gujarat: Emergency aid to 409 villages, houses and infrastructure constructed in 15 villages and

colonies; 49 schools built.

*Guinness World Records* recognized Pramukh Swami Maharaj as one of the 20 most influential people of the world.

## 2004

On 8 February, the 50th anniversary of BAPS Bal Mandal was celebrated at Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar, in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and HE APJ Abdul Kalam, President of India. 20,000 children attended. Pramukh Swami Maharaj received Lifetime Achievement Award from the USA government.



## 2005

6 November (Kartik *sud* 5, VS 2062). Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi, inaugurated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, HE President Dr APJ Abdul

Kalam, Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singh and other dignitaries. BAPS volunteers served after tsunami affected Andaman, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry: Emergency aid to 51 villages. 'Mystic India', a large format film about the historic travels of Nilkanth Varni, was released.



## 2006

BAPS served during floods in Surat and other parts of Gujarat. Public dedication of two reconstructed tsunami-affected villages: Pattipulamkuppam and Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.

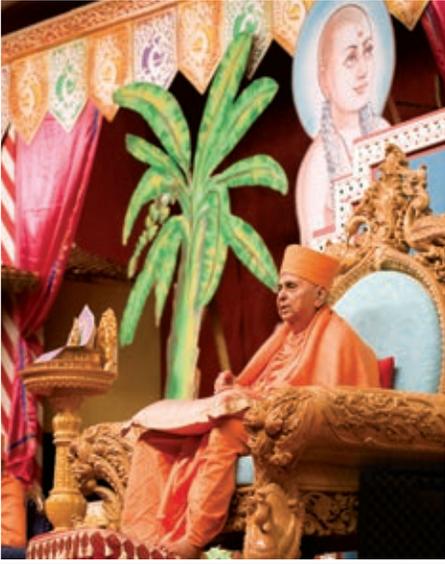
## 2007

De-addiction Campaign by BAPS children: 630,000 people pledged to give up addictions. A Youth Training Centre was inaugurated in Sarangpur. Grand 4-day BAPS Centenary Celebrations (13-17 Dec.) were held in Ahmedabad. On 17 December *Guinness World Records* honoured Pramukh Swami Maharaj for having consecrated the most mandirs and declared BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham temple in New Delhi as the largest Hindu temple in the world.



## 2008

BAPS Mandir in Neasden, London, won UK government's 'Pride of Place' Award. Assistance provided to flood victims in Bihar and Hurricane Ike in USA.



## 2009

Relief aid provided to flood-affected in South Gujarat.

BAPS Mandir in Neasden, London, won UK government's 'The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service'.

On 31 December, celebrated Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami Diksha Bicentenary in Dabhan.



## 2010

Swamishri inaugurated the 'BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute' in New Delhi.



## 2011

Swamishri performed in Mumbai the Shilapujan Ceremony for Akshardham in New Jersey, USA.

*Reader's Digest* selected Swaminarayan

Akshardham in New Delhi as one of 'The Seven Wonders of the 21st Century'.

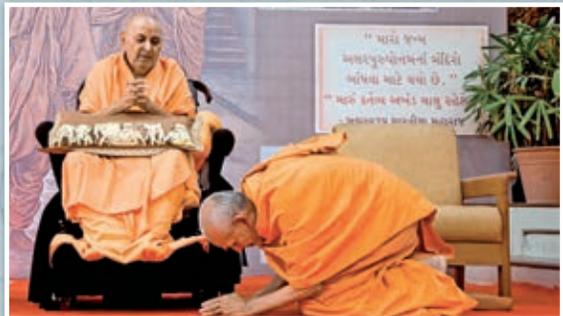
BAPS assisted victims of ammunitions blast in Tanzania and tsunami-earthquake in Japan.



## 2012

Swamishri had pacemaker implant, Ahmedabad.

On behalf of Swamishri, senior sadhus inaugurated BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital in Ahmedabad.



## 2013

On 6 March 2013, Pramukh Swami Maharaj wrote a letter in Ahmedabad declaring that all sadhus and devotees should meet Pujya Mahant Swami for guidance on their personal matters and questions.



## 2013

Over 60,000 youths attended the BAPS Youth Activities Diamond Jubilee celebrated in Ahmedabad. Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated the BAPS Shastriji Maharaj Hospital in Vadodara.

## 2014

10 August (Shravan *sud* 15, VS 2070). Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed *murti-pratishtha* of the new *shikhar-baddha* BAPS Shri



Swaminarayan Mandir, Robbinsville, New Jersey. On 15 August, Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the Bhumital Pujan ceremony of Swaminarayan Akshardham Mahamandir in Robbinsville, NJ. During the year-long celebrations of Shastriji Maharaj's 150th Birth Anniversary, 23,000 trees were planted and over 572,000cc of blood donated by BAPS volunteers.



## 2015

20 June, Sarangpur. Former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul

Kalam, presented his book 'Transcendence: My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swamiji' to Swamishri.

## 2016

In spite of treating Swamishri for a chest infection and age-related illnesses, he unexpectedly passed away at 95 years on 13 August



2016 (Shravan *sud* 10, Samvat 2072) at 6 p.m. in Sarangpur.

On 14 August, HH Mahant Swami was declared as the spiritual successor of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Swamishri's final rites were performed on 17 August.



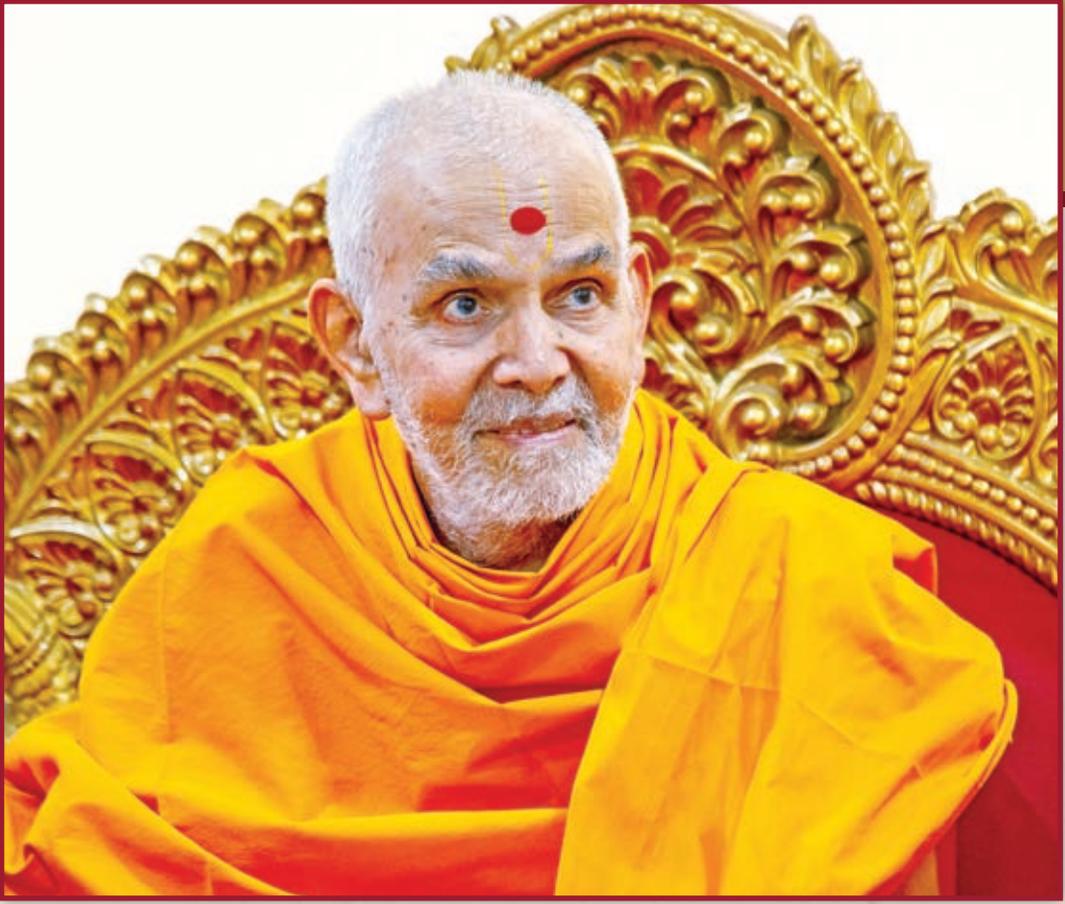
## 2016

3 to 13 May 2016

The Centenary Celebrations of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Sarangpur, were celebrated in Pramukh Swami Maharaj's presence. On 12 May, Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the *maha-abhishek* and 100th *patotsav arti* of the *murtis* in the main mandir.

On 13 May, Pramukh Swami Maharaj blessed the centenary celebrations assembly in Sarangpur.



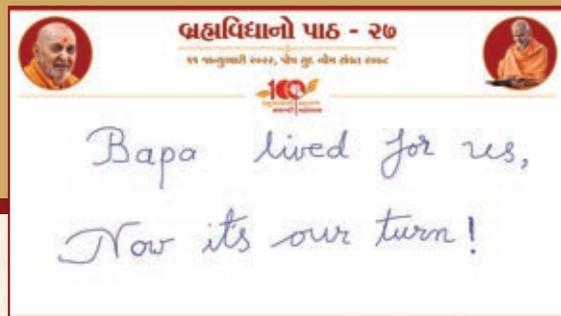
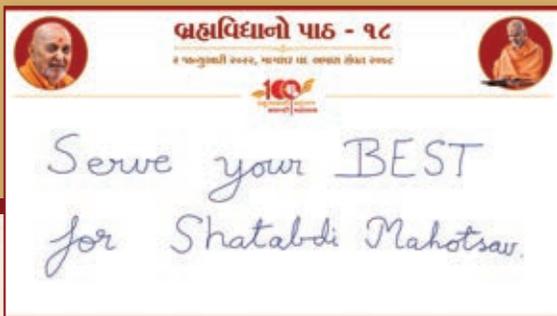


## Mahant Swami Maharaj Inspiration, Contributions and Encouragement

**T**he Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations, held between 15 December 2022 and 15 January 2023, were the result of the dedicated efforts of over 1,000 BAPS swamis and 80,000 volunteers. Underlying their efforts was the inspiration, encouragement and guidance of *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj. From the outset, he was the pivot around all aspects of the celebrations.

Since 2016, he dedicated all his efforts as his tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Mahant Swami Maharaj highlighted the philosophical and scriptural contributions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj to the Swaminarayan Sampradaya by inspiring the new *arti*



and Swaminarayan *mahapuja*. He also personally wrote the Satsang Diksha and dedicated it to Pramukh Swami Maharaj on the occasion of his centenary.

Also, he consecrated the *murti* of Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami next to the *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj to further consolidate the principle of Akshar-Purushottam elucidated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. And to consolidate this knowledge in the present and future generations, Mahant Swami Maharaj oversaw the inauguration of BAPS Research Institutes across the globe.

Between 2017 and 2019, during his overseas satsang visits to Africa, UK and Europe, North America, Asia Pacific countries and the UAE, Mahant Swami Maharaj promoted the glory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the centenary celebrations.

Over the past six years, Mahant Swami Maharaj always made time in his schedule to participate in-person or online in the numerous centenary events, activities and projects organized at BAPS centres in the India, UK, Europe, North America, Africa, Australia, the Gulf Countries and elsewhere. His presence uplifted all these occasions and motivated all participants. During his 15-month stay in Nenpur during the COVID-19 pandemic, Mahant Swami Maharaj regularly interacted and encouraged everyone through frequent online programmes.

In his writings and speeches, Swamishri

regularly emphasized the great privilege and opportunity available in serving for and contributing to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary. His 'Brahmavidya Path' messages during Dhanurmas of 2021-22 focused on encouraging all for the Shatabdi. With messages like 'Bapa lived for us. Now it's our turn!'," "Serve your BEST for Shatabdi Mahotsav" and others, he generated a wave of commitment among the devotees.

He wrote letters addressed directly to all devotees, appealing to them to adjust their personal, family, professional and social commitments to be able to serve in the Shatabdi, since it would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Ultimately, over 80,000 answered his call and served as volunteers to help in the preparations for, during and in the wind-up phase after the Shatabdi.

When details of the festival were discussed with him, Swamishri commended everyone for their meticulous planning and, when necessary, also gave suggestions to enhance the designs and other arrangements.

When challenges arose in the preparations, he would boost everyone with his letters of encouragement as well as in-person and telephonic guidance and blessings.

In a project of this magnitude, obstacles and delays are an ever-present threat. In such situations, Swamishri was the bedrock who provided guidance, assurance, encouragement and blessings. His words unburdened the



Mahant Swami Maharaj views and guides the on-going festival planning and preparations



stressed minds of swamis and volunteers, instilled them with confidence, and gave them direction and impetus to conclude their tasks.

The unusually extended and heavy monsoon season between July and October 2022 resulted in much delay to the planned schedule of work. Hence, to catch up it was necessary to work at an enhanced pace, even during the Diwali period, since less than six weeks remained before the start of the celebrations. Swamishri wrote and spoke to all to join in the *seva* and spend their Diwali in the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. The response was overwhelming as over 14,000 men and women volunteers from all over India flooded in to serve.

On 26 November 2022, Swamishri wrote a letter addressed to “All Dearest Muktas–Volunteers of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav.” He wrote:

“Amazing! Cannot praise BAPS volunteers enough!

“By the grace of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, we have the opportunity to serve in the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav. Believe it to be our great fortune and engage in this service. All his life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj joyfully tolerated hardships for us. Now it’s our turn. You are all the bravehearts of Akshar–Purushottam and are enthusiastically and faithfully serving with dedication. Your focus is on one goal:

Shatabdi, Shatabdi, Shatabdi. To celebrate Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s centenary gloriously and to serve wonderfully.

“So, let us serve in his way and attain Akshardham. His way means:

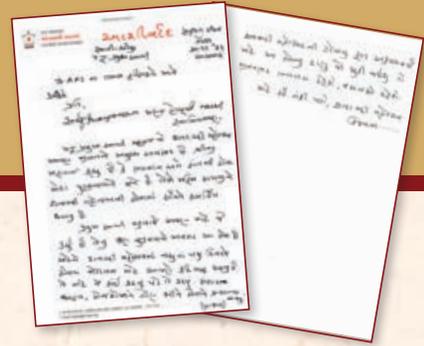
- Serve as per his wish
- Serve as directed and with discipline
- Serve with supreme trust
- Serve with the understanding and faith that Maharaj, Swami, Satpurush, Siddhant and Sanstha are true
- Serve with humility, as a servant of servants and with a cool head
- Serve while understanding each other’s glory and divinity
- Serve with unity
- Serve while sincerely observing *niyams* and dharma
- Speak with discretion.

“By serving in this way, you will earn blessings and your hearts will become like gold. Supreme triumph will prevail everywhere.”

Then, on 14 January 2023, at the conclusion of the celebrations Swamishri wrote a six-page letter of appreciation and blessings to all volunteers in which he profusely praised their efforts. He also directly addressed the *balaks* and *balikas* and wholeheartedly commended them for their untiring efforts in making the Shatabdi a grand success.



Swamishri discusses festival preparations



30 November 2021, Gondal

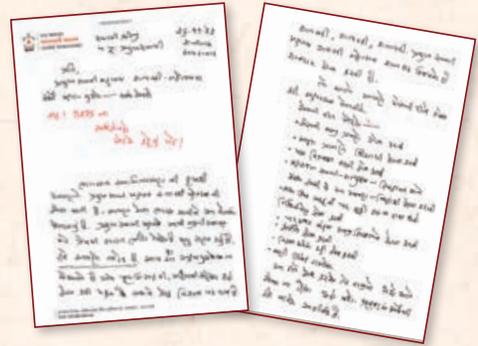
And, on 17 January 2023, Swamishri wrote: “To the dedicated volunteers of Swami Bapa, Jai Swaminarayan from Sadhu Keshavjivandas with great love.

“I saw and learnt about all your dedication during the Shatabdi Mahotsav and I am profusely delighted from within. Even offering *dandvats* is not enough. Due to your dedication and service, the Shatabdi was a triumph.

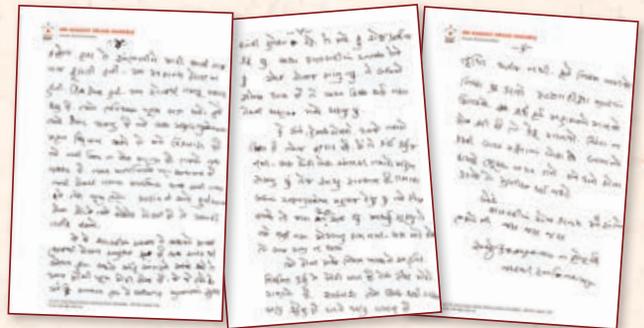
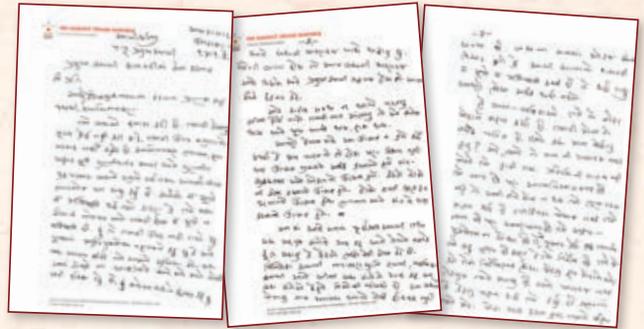
“Even giving you all blessings is not enough. May you all be blessed with peace; may you all enjoy good health, peace of mind and prosperity; and may you always remember Bhagwan. Blessings to you all. Congratulations to you all.”

Finally, on 18 January, during the Volunteers Appreciation Assembly attended by over 30,000 volunteers, Swamishri himself read the six-page letter he had penned on 14 January. In addition, to express his personal gratitude, he instructed all the swamis present in the assembly to offer *dandvats* to all the volunteers.

Thus, from start to finish, at every moment, Swamishri continuously motivated, guided and blessed everyone, ensuring that the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations were a resounding and memorable success. ♦



26 November 2022, Ahmedabad



14 January 2023, Ahmedabad



Inauguration of  
'Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar'  
by Prime Minister Shri Narendrabhai Modi  
and HH Mahant Swami Maharaj  
14 December 2022, Ahmedabad

# શાબ્દી મહોત્સવ



‘Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar’, the celebration site in Ahmedabad, was the culmination of the seven-year centenary celebrations of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It was inaugurated on the evening of Wednesday, 14 December 2022, by the Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The opening ceremony marked the public dedication of the month-long festival spread over 600 acres, and featuring inspiring attractions, insightful exhibitions and enlightening programmes.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar was elegantly decked for the inauguration ceremony. Facing the Sant Dwar, the main ceremonial gate, a special stage was set up with a decorated backdrop of flowers and leaves. On the stage were installed the small *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj (Swamishri’s Thakorji), along with the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj, Doctor Swami, Bhaktipriyadas (Kothari) Swami, Tyagvallabhdas Swami and Ishwarcharandas Swami. The entire inauguration was relayed live on baps.org and Gujarat 1st TV channel and anchored by Shri Dhwanit Thakar and Yogi Trivedi.

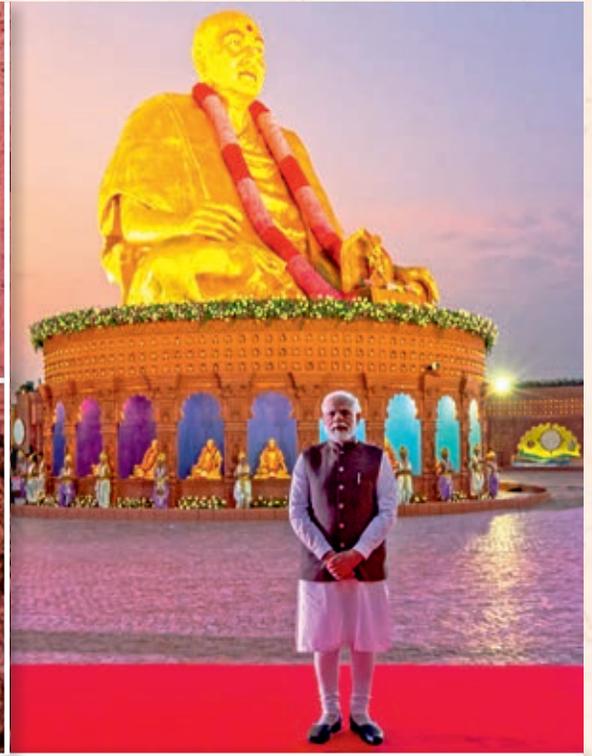
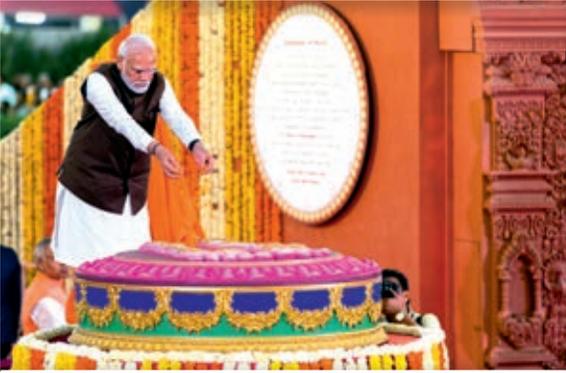
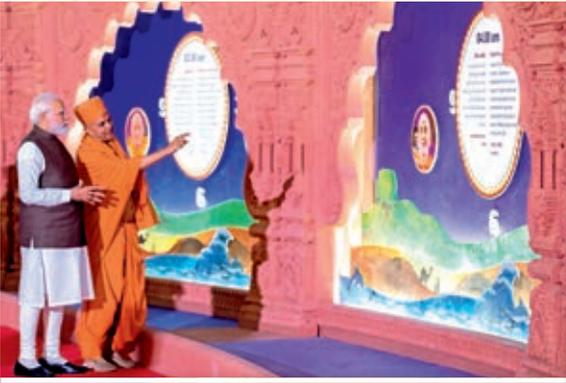


(Top) Glow garden. (Bottom Left) Meeting children at the Bal Nagari.  
In front of display of great Indian leaders

At 5.30 p.m., Prime Minister Shri Narendrabhai Modi, Governor of Gujarat H.E. Shri Acharya Devvratji and Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel arrived at the ceremonial gate. They were welcomed with garlands by Anandswarupdas Swami and Atmaswarupdas Swami and the singing of 'Swagatam' lyrics. On arriving at the special stage, Narendrabhai Modi offered respects to Mahant Swami Maharaj and then Ishwarcharandas Swami garlanded him. Bhaktipriyadas (Kothari) Swami garlanded the governor and chief minister.

The ritual singing of the Vedic *shanti paath* and prayers commenced. During this time, Mahant Swami Maharaj and the Prime Minister held the auspicious *amrut kalash* while children and teenagers in colourful festive costumes danced gracefully in front of them. The prime minister performed *pujan* of the

*murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purshottam Maharaj and offered flowers. Then, to everyone's surprise, the mechanically operated central part of the special stage, with Mahant Swami Maharaj and the guests, moved forward on a red carpet towards the Sant Dwar, 300 feet away, for the inauguration ritual. On arriving at the Sant Dwar, Swamishri and Shri Narendrabhai Modi pulled and untied the *nadachhadi* to declare Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar open for all. The momentous moment was received with thunderous clapping and *jay naads*. The special stage then proceeded forward and stopped before the 30-foot high *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Then, the prime minister alighted from the special stage and offered flowers on the giant footprints of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Shri Narendrabhai was briefly informed about the various incidents displayed about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's



(Top) Listening to an incident of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. (Bottom) Offering flowers to pay tribute. Before the giant *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

services to society in the circle surrounding the *murti*. During this time, Mahant Swami Maharaj and the *sadguru* swamis parted and proceeded towards the inaugural assembly venue. Thereafter, the guests were driven in golf carts to the glow garden and replica of Akshardham Mandir. Again, the prime minister offered flowers before the *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Guru Parampara, Shri Radha-Krishna, Shri Sita-Ram and Shri Shiv-Parvati. Then the guests got a glimpse of the Bal Nagari and the displays of some of the great leaders of India to commemorate the 75th (Amrit) year celebrations of India's independence.

Thereafter, the prime minister joined Mahant Swami Maharaj on the main assembly stage at the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Sabha Gruh. Here, they were enthusiastically greeted by over 100,000 devotees and well-wishers

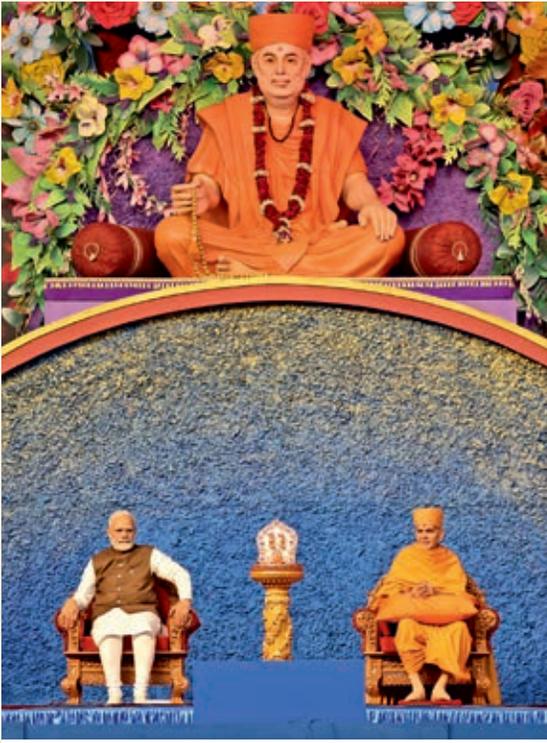
waving the Indian and BAPS flags. Many hundreds of thousands watched the live relay around the world.

On this occasion, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Right Honourable Rishi Sunak MP, shared a personal video message of tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj for his countless contributions to the UK and the world.

Anandswarupdas Swami, mahant of Akshardham in Gandhinagar, spoke, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj was so simple and accessible to everyone because he saw God in all. So, anyone who came in his contact experienced so many virtues in him: selfless love, limitless compassion, contentment, divinity, peace, and the presence of God."

Then, the prime minister, governor and chief minister were honoured with garlands.

Ishwarcharandas Swami, International Convenor of BAPS activities, said, "On this



Main stage of the inauguration assembly

historic inauguration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Centenary Celebrations, Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi has taken out time to come here solely due to the strong bond of affection and reverence he has for Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who always prayed for him to serve the country. Mahant Swami Maharaj also has great love for Narendrabhai and prays that noble works for the country be accomplished through him”

To pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj a video of his social and spiritual works was shown. Thereafter, children and youths performed a traditional dance to the lyrics ‘*Shat shat varash sare...*’ and evoked an ambience of devotion and joy in the assembly. Thereafter, a touching video unfolded glimpses of Narendrabhai Modi’s and Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s forty years of association. Then, Brahmaviharidas Swami recalled some incidents of the prime minister with Pramukh

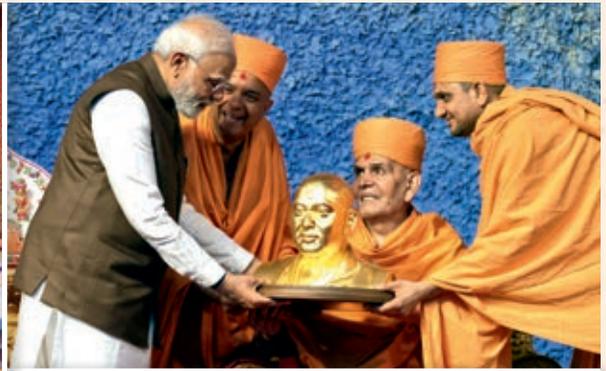
Swami Maharaj.

Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel said, “As we have come together to celebrate the centenary of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s fifth spiritual successor, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, all of us remember the manifold ways his life inspired us. He served all of humanity his entire life with a vision that transcended all physical distinctions. He inspired countless in transforming their lives. He provided comfort to all in need, providing aid to the disaster-stricken. He personally inspired thousands to become addiction-free. One of his greatest contributions is the inspiration of family unity. This is a festival to pay tribute to the invaluable contributions he made to society.”

On this occasion, Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi praised in his address, “I want to congratulate Mahant Swami Maharaj for inspiring this magnificent Pramukh



Youths perform a welcome dance



Receiving a memento before 100,000 devotees and well-wishers

Swami Maharaj Nagar and the swamis for conceptualising and creating it. It is not only impressive; it will be a source of inspiration for generations to come. This festival is great not just because of its scale and beauty, but because of the experience of divinity and grand vision behind it, where everyone can learn about our heritage, history, faith and values.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught me that the greatest goal in life is to serve others, and he inspired me to serve till my last breath.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not give me great lectures, but delivered profound truths through simple words and his example. He cared for me even when I was not in office, just like a mother would for her child. His presence always gave me peace and reassurance.”

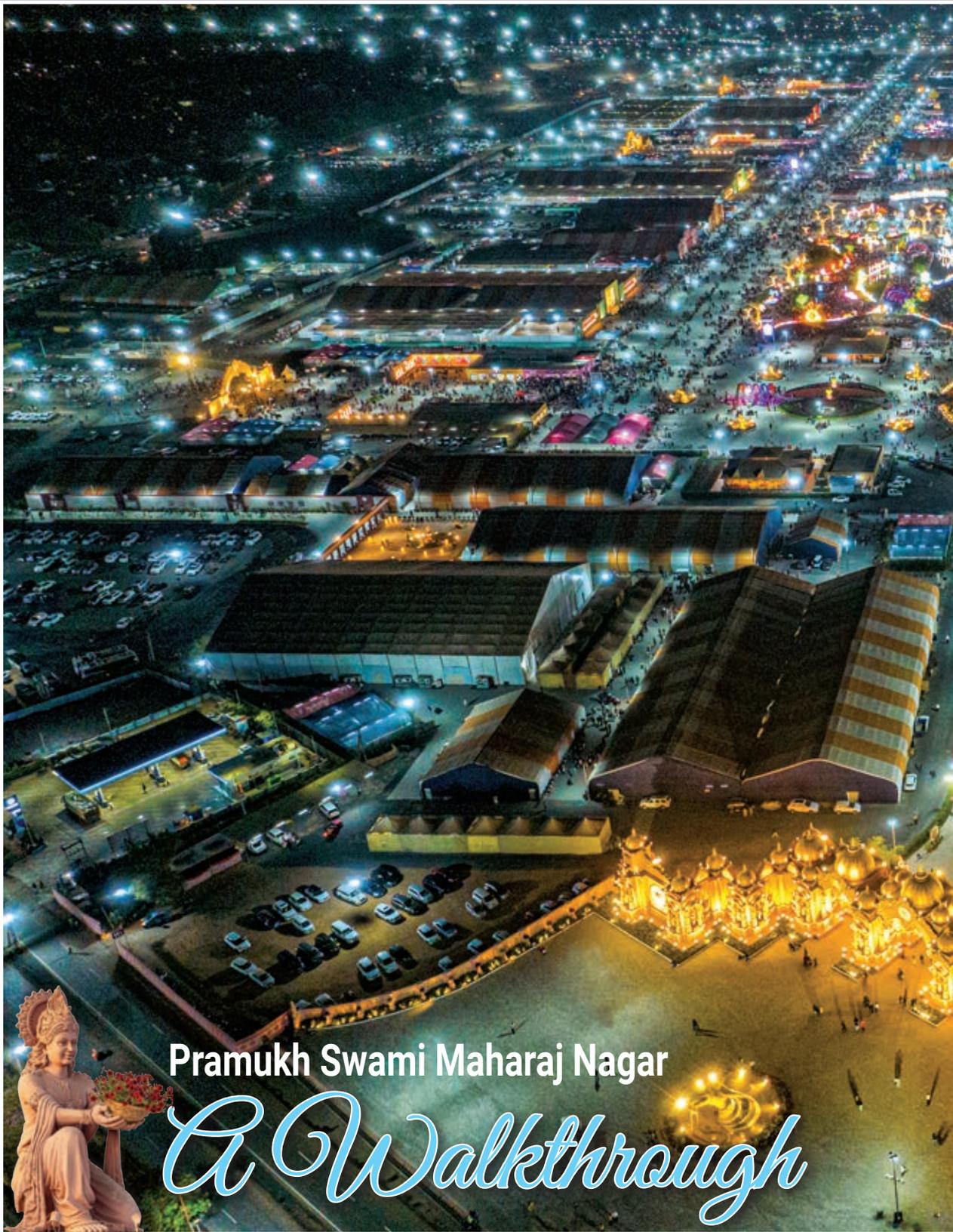
“I dearly miss Pramukh Swami Maharaj. But today, I feel his love and spiritual energy through Mahant Swami Maharaj, who

continues to inspire me to serve everyone in our country.”

In his blessings, Mahant Swami Maharaj stated, “Modi Saheb has come to the *nagar* to offer his tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He has seen [glimpses] of the *nagar*, but he can grasp it all in spite of seeing only a little. He has come solely to offer his homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

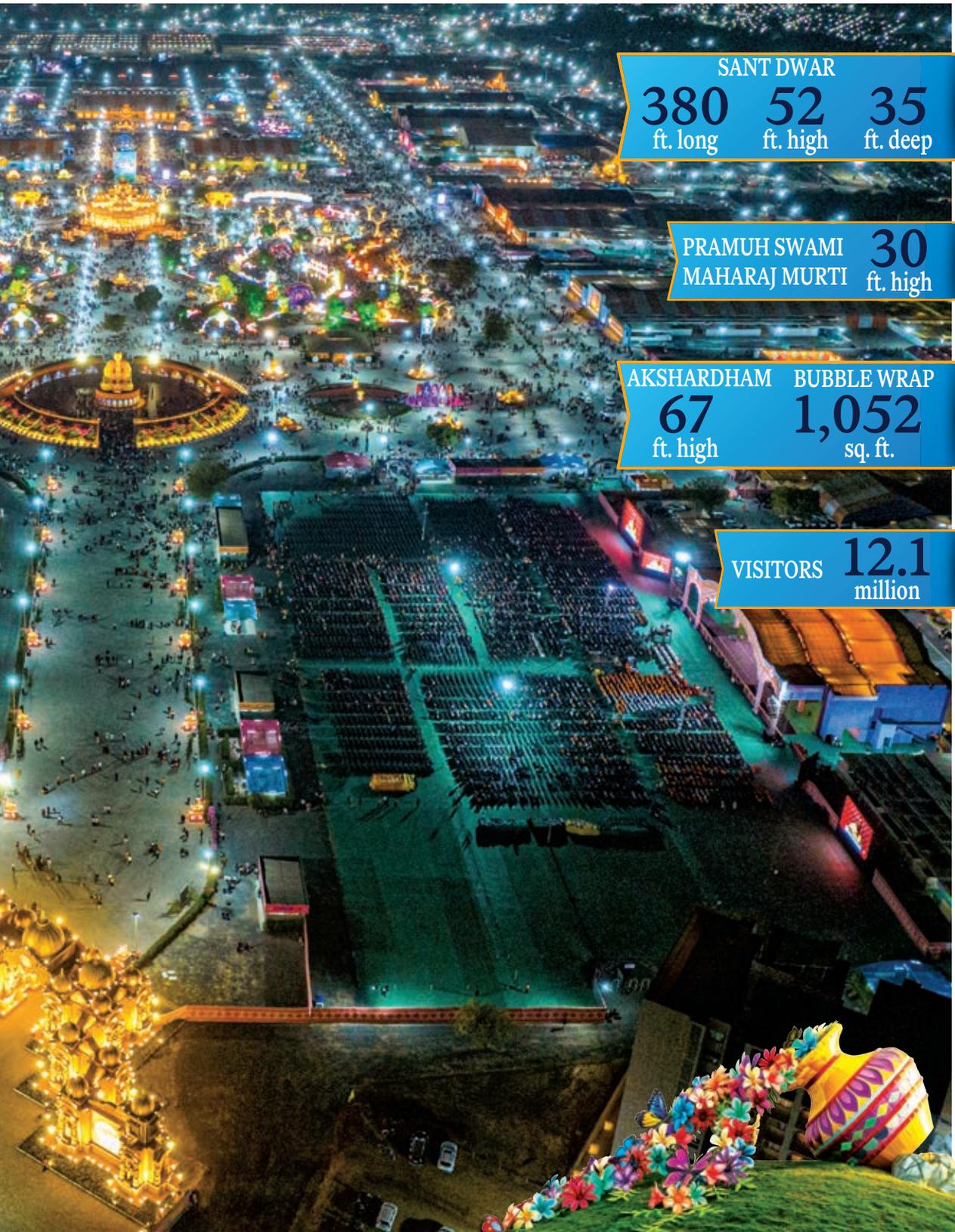
The momentous evening assembly concluded with a *maha-arti*.

In conclusion, Ishwarcharan Swami extended an invitation to everyone to visit ‘Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar’ and see the inspiring presentations, exhibitions and attractions. ♦



Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar

# *A Walkthrough*



SANT DWAR  
**380** 52 35  
ft. long ft. high ft. deep

PRAMUH SWAMI MAHARAJ MURTI **30**  
ft. high

AKSHARDHAM BUBBLE WRAP  
**67** 1,052  
ft. high sq. ft.

VISITORS **12.1**  
million



Sant Dwar, the main ceremonial gate of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar

The mammoth 600-acre Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar was like a sparkling diamond whose glow attracted people from all corners of the globe. Its ambience and atmosphere reflected the heartfelt efforts of the volunteers as this was their devotional centenary tribute to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Entry into the meticulously planned and built *nagar* was free, as were all the attractions, exhibits and displays.

The grand multi-arched Sant Dwar was the ceremonial gateway at the front of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. The entire breadth and depth of the gate was ornate with stunning geometrical designs and decorations. The gate, 380 feet long, 52 feet high and 35 feet deep, was constructed from a special fibreglass mix, cast into hundreds of individual parts that were plugged together like Lego.

The intricately carved Sant Dwar was bedecked by life-sized bronze-coloured statues of eminent personalities: Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Buddha. Chaitanya

Mahaprabhu, Mirabai and Kabir. Vivekanand, Tulsidas and Narasinh Mehta. Rohidas, Mahavir and Guru Nanak.

Their statues seemed ready to speak, as though they had travelled through space-time to emerge at this auspicious portal to welcome the visiting pilgrims.

The entire festival site was thoughtfully prepared and was paved with approximately 10 million paver blocks carefully placed by thousands of volunteers to produce a dust-free surface.

Raising one's gaze from the ground revealed a spectacular boulevard that spanned the width of the gate and was 100 metres in length.

On each side of the boulevard were statues of divinities carrying bowls of flowers. They symbolically showered visitors with petals to light the divine spark within everyone, encouraging them to learn from the practical messages of this divine township given by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The boulevard culminated at the central attraction of the *nagar*: a golden 30-foot-high



*murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj seated on a 15-foot-high cylindrical pedestal, which housed smaller golden *murtis* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in recesses all around its base. Like the huge red *chandlo* on Swamishri’s forehead, the bricks around this pedestal were deep red.

Thousands of people at a time stood in awe, praying, meditating or just gazing up at the perfectly reproduced divine image. Even the side and rear elevations were perfect in proportion. It was both captivating and endearing. Visitors never tired of viewing it, unable to break loose from the reverence it commanded. Each time they passed by they caught a glimpse, bowed their heads or lifted their hands in prayer. This was the monument where everyone took a selfie with their beloved mentor.

Honey Soni from New Ranip, Ahmedabad, said, “Looking at his face, it’s so serene and calm. You can see from his expression how great he was and



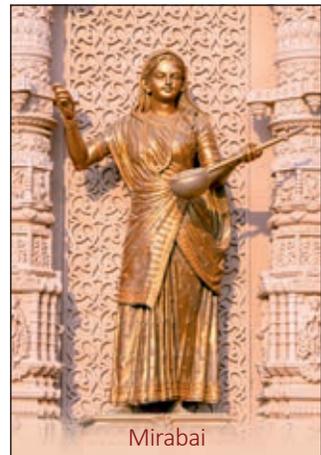
Buddha



Adi Shankaracharya



Chaitanya Mahaprabhu



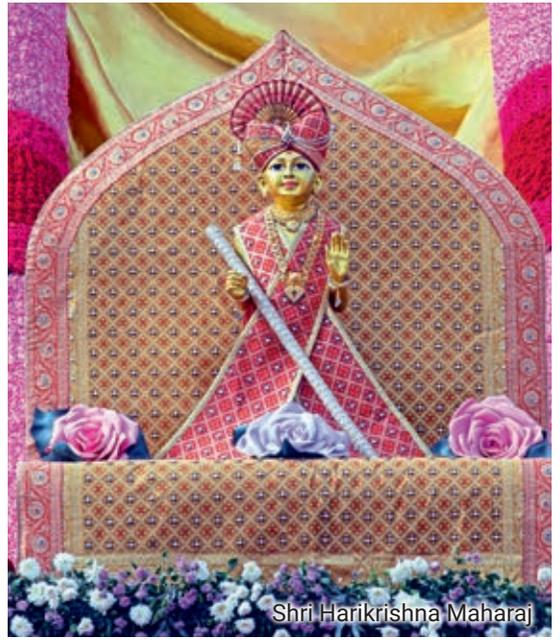
Mirabai



Pramukh Swami Maharaj Mahamurti



Clock of Goodness display



Shri Harikrishna Maharaj



Holy charanavind of Bhagwan Swaminarayan



Murtis of Pramukh Swami Maharaj around the perimeter of mahamurti base



Bust of Pramukh Swami Maharaj made from bamboo and cane

whatever he spoke was good.”

The large *murti* was enclosed by a circular wall interrupted by four entrances, resulting in four segments. The outer sloping sides were embellished with colourful flower designs, while on the inner side, each of the four segments were divided into 6 sections, 24 in total, compressing Swamishri’s magnificent life of 95 years into 24 memorable hours. Each section represented an hour of the day and night, from 1 a.m. to midnight, and commemorated a true incident when he sacrificed a piece of himself to help others at that hour of the day or night. This was the ‘Clock of Goodness’ exhibition.

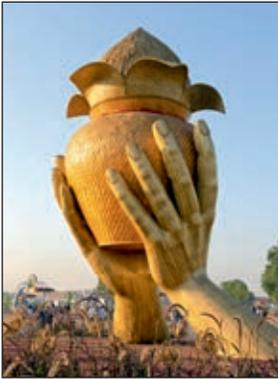
About 100 metres behind this *murti* was a remake of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s ultimate creation: Akshardham Mandir, New Delhi. Rising 67 feet above the ground, the pink structure was a scaled replica of the original.

On the path to the mandir from the golden

*murti*, was an 18-foot-high bamboo bust of Pramukh Swami Maharaj which smilingly greeted the visitors and met them eye to eye. It was as alive and every bit as inspiring and transformative.

Sprinkled all around the township were large exhibits of his hands in various *mudras* (gestures). They depicted him engaged in a variety of spiritual activities: holding someone’s hand to comfort, replying to letters, held up in blessing, chanting a rosary, clapping, folded in prayer, pointing out a principle, holding a *kalash* pot during a ceremony and serving his beloved Thakorji – the 5-inch-high *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan he took with him everywhere he went. He was not only the people’s guru but also the guru immersed in God.

Akshardham was at the centre of the festival site. A volunteer clarified, “One of the



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's holy hand gestures made from bamboo and cane. *Top*: Worshipping Shri Hari Krishna Maharaj. *Bottom* (L to R): Holding a ceremonial *kalash*, praying, blessing and discursing

biggest issues we needed to solve was how to get thousands of daily visitors through the Akshardham mandir. The fibreglass structure would not be able to withstand the wear and tear, nor would we be able to ventilate it sufficiently. Ultimately, we decided to place the *murtis* that are on the inside walls of the original structure on the outside of this structure, thus turning the monument inside-out.”

It was a stroke of genius! This enabled thousands of visitors to walk around the monument, marvel at the architecture, and

have darshan of the *murtis* at the same time. Additionally, the visitors participated in the twice-daily *arti* ceremonies before the images of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and the Gunatit Guru Parampara at the front, Shiv-Parvati-Ganesh to the right, Sita-Ram-Hanuman to the left, and Radha-Krishna at the rear. Additionally, every day scores of children from many places sat on the plinth before the *murtis* to sing bhajans and recite Sanskrit verses to offer their devotion.

To both sides of Akshardham were the



Top: Replica of Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi. Bottom (L to R): Murtis of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami and Mahant Swami Maharaj, Shivji-Parvatiji-Ganapatiji, Bhagwan Ram-Sitaji-Hanumanji, Bhagwan Krishna-Radhaji

glow gardens. At night, these were gorgeously illuminated. The multi-coloured statues of people, animals, plants and many other objects vibrantly depicted values such as self-confidence, courage, leadership, teamwork, humility, compassion, empathy, cleanliness, respect, family, country and faith. These universally important values were shared by Pramukh Swami Maharaj to all he met; especially the young generation. The luminescent statues stood as resplendent role

models to promote a peaceful and values-driven society.

Proceeding from Akshardham one encountered the Bal Nagari, a wonderful children's township. Populated with three enclosed theatres playing professionally produced shows, each fused with live dances and dialogues that enlightened children and parents on the importance of family values, education, health, an addiction-free life, positive thinking and a holistic worldview of



Glow Garden displays. Top: Colourful peacock. Bottom: Regal elephant

*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam* – ‘the whole world is one family’. The shows often reduced visitors to tears – both of pain and joy as they connected with the various characters and their own experiences at home, work or school. Viewers discovered solutions to face their realities and learnt to appreciate their priceless blessings which are often taken for granted.

This was the most applauded part of the entire township. Not because it was more important to visitors than Pramukh Swami Maharaj, but because it epitomized everything he taught and practised. The Bal Nagari was not like a traditional children’s fairground or playground. It resounded with Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s childhood virtues exemplified by

BAPS children through their helpful, respectful and dutiful behaviour without losing their childhood innocence and curiosity.

The major exhibitions were ‘The Village of Buzo’, which encouraged children to respect their parents, ‘The Sea of Suvarana’, which taught that the formula for success is hard work and faith in God, and ‘The Jungle of Sheru’, which emphasized the need for a wise guru in life to help one unlock one’s true potential.

Another highly popular attraction was ‘Chansad: The Village of Shanti’, which displayed six inspiring childhood stories of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, whose childhood name was Shantilal.

Many other spots and displays gave insights



Facade of The Sea of Suvarna exhibition

and inspiration to children and parents based on the teachings of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

At the Niyam Kutir, children were encouraged to undertake any of five pledges to reduce stress and increase productivity: respect one’s parents, begin one’s day with prayer, read spiritual texts for 15 minutes a day, limit one’s time on the internet and social media, and focus more on studies.

Diptiben of Ahmedabad said, “Kids are doing things here that I cannot get them to do at home. That’s amazing. It’s wonderful. Also, I really liked the animals with their little messages. Things that I could not explain to my kids, they understood from the animals on their own.”

Perhaps more outstanding and illuminating



The Village of Buzo

than the glowing statues and shows were the children running the shows. Literally.

The Sant Dwar, Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *murti*, Akshardham and the Bal Nagari were located along the main central pathway of the *nagar*, Pramukh Marg. To the sides were 100-foot-wide walkways – on the left was Shanti Marg and on the right was Narayan Marg. At intervals along both there were more exhibitions, attractions and essential amenities.

Circling the festival site were the six public entry gates, numbered 2 to 7 (Sant Dwar was Gate 1). They led from the various car parks into the festival grounds. Gates 2, 3 and 4 led on to Shanti Marg, while gates 5, 6, and 7 led on to Narayan Marg. At each entry was a display introducing the life, work and teachings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *murti* in the Bal Nagari

Along Shanti Marg were the ‘Sant Param Hitkari’ show, which depicted Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divine virtues, and the ‘Tute Hruday, Tute Ghar’ show, which portrayed the key to family harmony as revealed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Further along was the Nari Utkarsh Mandapam, a special arena where women of all ages showcased their creative and artistic skills through a variety of presentations.

The façade to the ‘Sant Param Hitkari’ show comprised the world record 1,052 sq. ft. bubble wrap painting produced by youths in London.

Also, at the beginning of Shanti Marg was the Yagna Kutir, where families participated in the Vedic *yagna* ceremonies that were held four times daily.

On the other side of the *nagar*, along Narayan Marg, were the ‘Sahajanand Jyoti Mandapam’, a walkthrough exhibition with displays and illuminated 3D dioramas on the life, work and teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan; the ‘Our India, My India’ show which honoured India’s courageous soldiers, celebrated India’s 75 years of independence and taught how everyone should live as a responsible citizen of India; the Bharatiya Loknrutya Stage, an open-air stage where youths performed a variety of regional dances from throughout India; and the ‘Chalo Tod De Ye Bandhan’ show which highlighted the wide-ranging perils of addictions.

To either side of the central pathway were the bhajan *kutirs*, where visitors could



Sant Param Hitkari



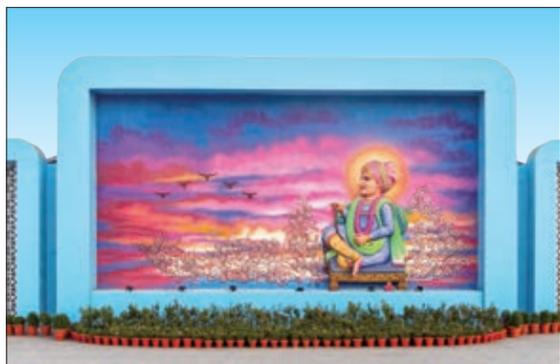
Tute Hruday, Tute Ghar



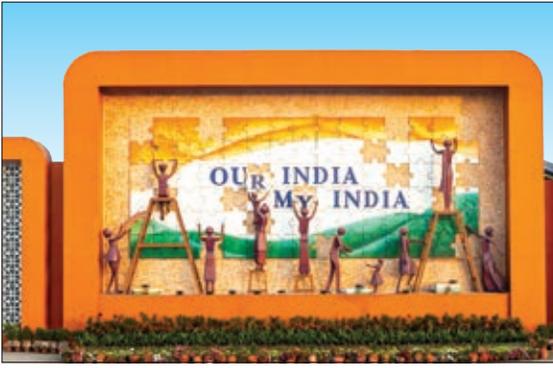
Chalo Tod De Ye Bandhan



A display in ‘Chansad: The Village of Shanti’



Sahajanand Jyoti Mandapam



Our India, My India

spend some time offering their devotion in multiple ways and experience the peace and joy of bhajan.

The *nagar* actively promoted environmental awareness by placing rubbish bins constructed from discarded plastic bottles all over the township. There was also a large booth depicting many other ways to protect the environment and Mother Earth.

Lining each route were mouthwatering food courts, live talent shows and gift stores to satisfy one's interest. There were blood donation areas, renewable energy displays and numerous displays of inspiring people demonstrating that there is always a solution to a problem.

Outside the shows and throughout the township, volunteers stood at designated spaces while others mingled among the crowd to assist those who needed help. Assistance was always just a few metres away.

Beyond the Bal Nagari was one last attraction: the light and sound show, titled 'Mahotsav Purna Purush Ka' – 'Celebrating a Complete Personality'. Utilizing stunning 3D projection mapping technology combined with the remarkable performances of over 300 children and youths, this show was a heart-stopper. It movingly depicted how the 'Purna' or 'Complete' Pramukh Swami Maharaj was always there to make us whole and complete even when life inflicted devastating damage such as earthquakes, disease or bereavement.

It also showcased his simple but masterful introduction of *ghar sabha* into innumerable homes to successfully reduce friction and increase harmony in the family. Lastly, it showcased his emphasis on a life free of drugs, tobacco and alcohol to strengthen self, nurture health and save wealth.

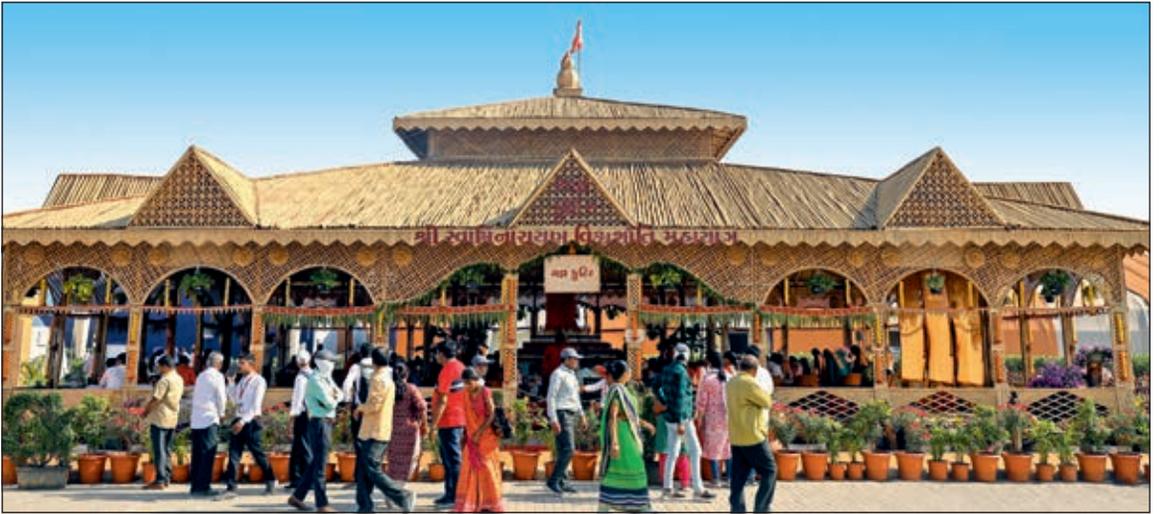
Adjacent to the Sant Dwar was the open-air Narayan Sabha Mandap, the assembly ground where the evening assemblies took place. Equipped to eclipse a concert, its dazzling stage and appealing acoustics transfixed everyone. Thrilling musical performances and dances, kept even the most exhausted spectators awake and attentive.

Luminaries and dignitaries from all walks of life graced this stage to share their wisdom and memories of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the presence of his successor His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj. Swamishri also blessed visitors with his profound wisdom and love every evening, often injecting his characteristic wit and humour to the delight of all.

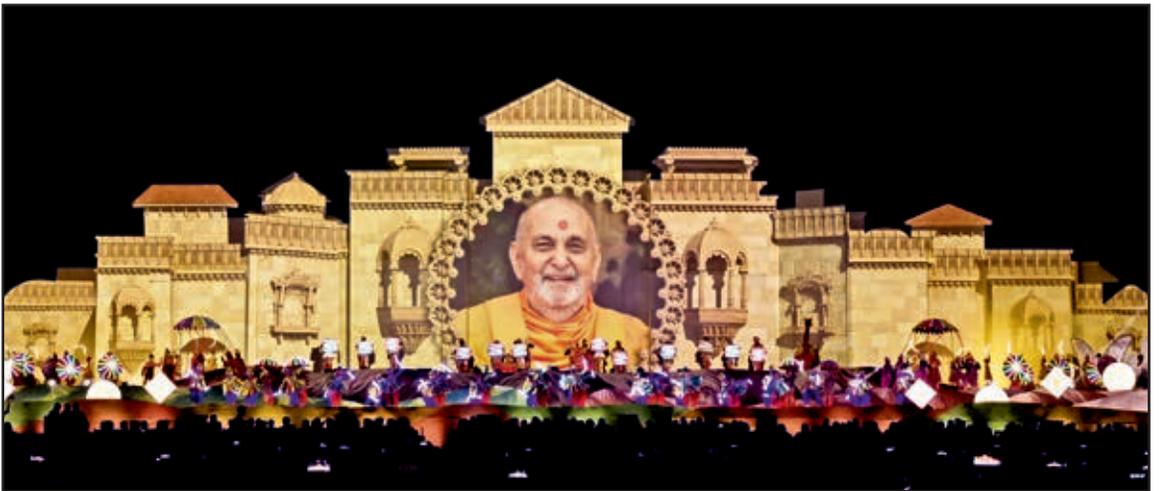
Over the 32 days of the festival, around 12.1 million visitors came to enjoy and learn. Its popularity demonstrably showcased how people are interested in things other than Netflix, Instagram and Facebook. They do have spiritual hunger. They do enjoy visiting events that uplift their minds and hearts, that inspire them to become better versions of themselves, and connect joyously with the larger community beyond the borders of their homes.

Before departing, many visitors turned around again and again to take in the breathtaking sights they were leaving behind. Everyone pledged to return with their friends, relatives and loved ones.

What bigger endorsement for the humanitarian life and divine love of Pramukh Swami Maharaj could there be than that? ◆



Yagna Kutir, where devotees participated in the Vedic *yagna* rituals performed four times daily



Light and Sound show: 'Mahotsav Purna Purush Ka' – 'Celebrating a Complete Personality'



'Bharatiya Loknrtiya Stage', an open-air stage where youths performed regional dances from throughout India

BAPS



# Bal Nagari

17 Acres | 26 Departments

4,500 Children and

2,000 Youth Volunteers

Jungle of Sheru: 581 Shows

Sea of Suvarna: 535 Shows

Village of Buzo: 715 Shows

265,204 Children Took Niyams

Welcome to  
Bal Nagari  
A BAPS' WORLD of  
Vegetarian Strength



Welcome to  
Bal Nagari  
A BAPS' WORLD of  
Vegetarian Strength



## INTRODUCTION

In 1954, Yogiji Maharaj established the BAPS Children's Forum (Bal Mandal). Thereafter, from 1971, Pramukh Swami Maharaj made intense efforts such that 5,000 *bal mandals* were established in India and abroad. He inspired children to concentrate on and excel in studies, respect parents and live with values and faith. In 1992 and 1995, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired mega-festivals in India, providing opportunities to children and senior volunteers to plan and create a Bal Nagari or a children's cultural township.

Spread over 17 acres, the Bal Nagari at the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, inspired

by Mahant Swami Maharaj, was planned and developed by swamis and volunteers of the *bal mandal*. The discussions and planning for the Bal Nagari took two years (2020–2021). The construction of the Bal Nagari commenced in July 2022.

The Bal Nagari consisted of three giant marquees housing two extraordinary musical performances and a large screen presentation, Shanti's Home – Chansad, Niyam Kutir, Bal Mandal Express, Talent Stages, Inspiring Photo Spots and Cultural Dioramas, giant posters of successful role models, landscapes, bookstores and food courts.



In all, there were 26 sub-departments in the Bal Nagari, comprising 4,500 children and 2,000 youth volunteers. Children from BAPS centres were trained to perform in the shows and to serve as guides. Special educational classes were held daily for the whole month for the children volunteers to keep them abreast with their school curriculum.

The Bal Nagari was created to allow children, youths and parents to easily learn from Pramukh Swami Maharaj's universal life and teachings in an entertaining and effective way.

Brief descriptions of the various features of the Bal Nagari are as follows.

### BAL SNEHI GARDEN

Bal Snehi Garden was located at the two main entrances of the Bal Nagari. Pramukh Swami Maharaj always spent time for children and became a 'bal snehi' – a friend of children. Even today, Mahant Swami Maharaj cares for children in the same manner. Bal Snehi Garden was a tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj.

### WELCOME CORNERS

At the four corners of the Bal Nagari were giant colourful sculptures of children riding animals were made of bamboo and plaster of paris. The sculptures welcomed the visitors and conveyed important life messages.

- Rhino: Become strong but remain peaceful.
- Elephant: Gain strength but practise vegetarianism.
- Giraffe: Elevate your thoughts to great heights.
- Lion: Discover your inner strength and become courageous.

### HEROES OF HISTORY

For centuries, the great heroes of India have

exuded values and inspiration to all. From the vast reservoir of Indian heritage, sculptures of eight ancient personalities adorned the Bal Nagari: Dhruv, Prahlad, Bharat, Shruvan, Mirabai, Shabari, Gargi and Sitaji. They inspired visitors to become God-focused, goal-oriented, brave, subservient, devotional, faithful, knowledgeable and strong respectively.

Each sculpture weighed between 1,200 and 1,500 kilogrammes.

### THREE SHOWS

The centre of attraction in the Bal Nagari were the three extraordinary shows by children: The Jungle of Sheru, The Sea of Suvarna and The Village of Buzo. Each show was performed from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. The theme of each was as follows.

#### Jungle of Sheru

The story of Sheru, a lost lion cub, was adapted from a tale often told by Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It was about how a lion-cub living among a flock of sheep started believing it was a sheep. Eventually, after an encounter with a lion it was made aware of its true identity.

The musical performance enlightened the audience about how a true guru enables one to discover true strength and identity as *atma*.

Sheru was enacted by two batches of 150 boys from BAPS schools in Gondal and Atladara. The duration of the show was 22 minutes, and a total of 581 shows were performed during the month which were viewed by 878,210 people. The show became so popular that visitors patiently queued for upto three hours to see it.

#### The Sea of Swarna

The formula for success given by Pramukh Swami Maharaj to students was, Success = Hard Work + Prayer. This success mantra was portrayed through a spectacular musical performance called the 'Sea of Suvarna'. It was performed by girls who were aged 10 to 14 years





Jungle of Sheru

old. The protagonist of the show was Suvarna, a fish, in an ocean. She and her relatives were harassed, and some were killed, by an evil whale called Vaarangna. To overcome the whale's persecutions, Suvarna embarked upon a dangerous and challenging journey deep into the ocean to acquire a divine, magical pearl. Her successful exploration involved intense effort and prayer.

The musical show was 22 minutes long with a cast of two groups of 150 girls from BAPS Vidya Mandir, Randesan, near Ahmedabad. There were 11 main characters and special effects were given with the aid of laser lights, bubble sprays and air dancers. Over the one month, the girls performed 535 shows that were seen by 711,635 people.

**The Village of Buzo**

The ancient message of 'Matru devo bhav, pitru devo bhav', often taught by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, was portrayed in a marquee through an exciting film and live performance by children in 'The Village of Buzo'. The setting was a

Audience fascinated by The Sea of Suvarna show



The Sea of Suvarna

small tribal village in the midst of a jungle. The tribal mother, Baani, and father, Buzaaro, greatly loved their mischievous and unruly child, Buzo. When a ferocious tiger was discovered roaming the surrounding jungle, Buzo's father, who was the village chief, ordered his son and other children not to venture outside their fenced huts. But once, Buzo and his friend disobeyed and left their hut. The frightening consequence and final rescue compounded into an awe-inspiring thriller.

The riveting show was 28 minutes long, comprising a film cast of 200 people and 90 BAPS boys participated in the live performance.

During the 30 days, 715 shows were screened and viewed by a total of 1,425,034 people.

Before each show, the audience in the waiting area were treated to an entertaining pre-show.

**SHANTI'S HOME: CHANSAD**

A walkthrough street exhibition portrayed Shantilal's (Pramukh Swami Maharaj's) childhood

Shanti's Home: Chansad





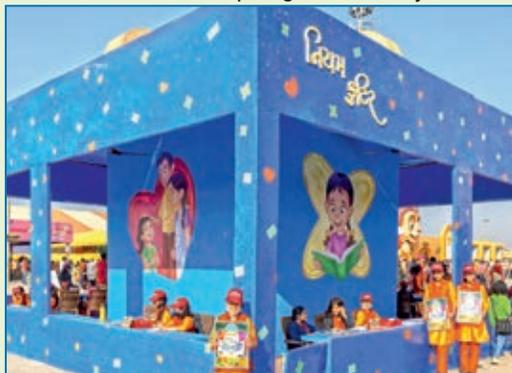
180-foot long Bal Mandal Express

name) six inspiring incidents in Chansad. They reflected his virtues of: 1. Mental strength and tolerance, 2. Compassion, 3. Sharing, 4. Steadfastness in *niyams*, 5. Determination and 6. Devotion. The incidents were exhibited through life-sized tableaux. In front of each tableau, a child-volunteer welcomed the visitors and gave a preamble to the incident and thereafter the incident was narrated on a video screen. In the centre of the walkthrough exhibits was a larger-than-life golden *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Children and parents were inspired and motivated by the incidents of Shanti's Home.

### NIYAM KUTIR

At the *niyam kutir*, child-volunteers informed the visiting children and parents about five *niyams* and inspired them to take pledges. Thereafter, all the children were stamped with the Bal Nagari logo on their arms in memory of their visit. In addition, they were also given a small inspiring

Over 265,000 children took pledges at the Niyam Kutir



illustrated booklet, 'Making the Right Choices.'

In all, 265,204 children took pledges (*niyams*). Out of them, 141,270 children pledged to bow to their parents daily, 89,353 pledged to remember Bhagwan before they started their day, 78,092 pledged to study regularly, 74,114 pledged to use their mobile with discrimination and 54,053 pledged to read good books.

### BAL MANDAL EXPRESS

The 180-foot-long Bal Mandal Express train, made of colourful cut-outs of figures and backdrops, portrayed how children are trained in the weekly children's assemblies (*bal sabhas*) and special programmes at the BAPS mandirs. The weekly assembly helps children to develop skills in storytelling and delivering speeches, to increase faith and excel in studies and sports.

### TALENT STAGES

Two talent stages were created for BAPS girls and boys from India and abroad to present various talents like, music, magic show, dance, yoga asans, rope balance and others. They not only fascinated and entertained the audience but also inspired children to channelize their time and effort in developing their various talents.

A total of 291 boys and girls presented 42 different talents and skills. They presented 1,800 shows that were attended by 3,018,300 children and parents. ◆

# Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations

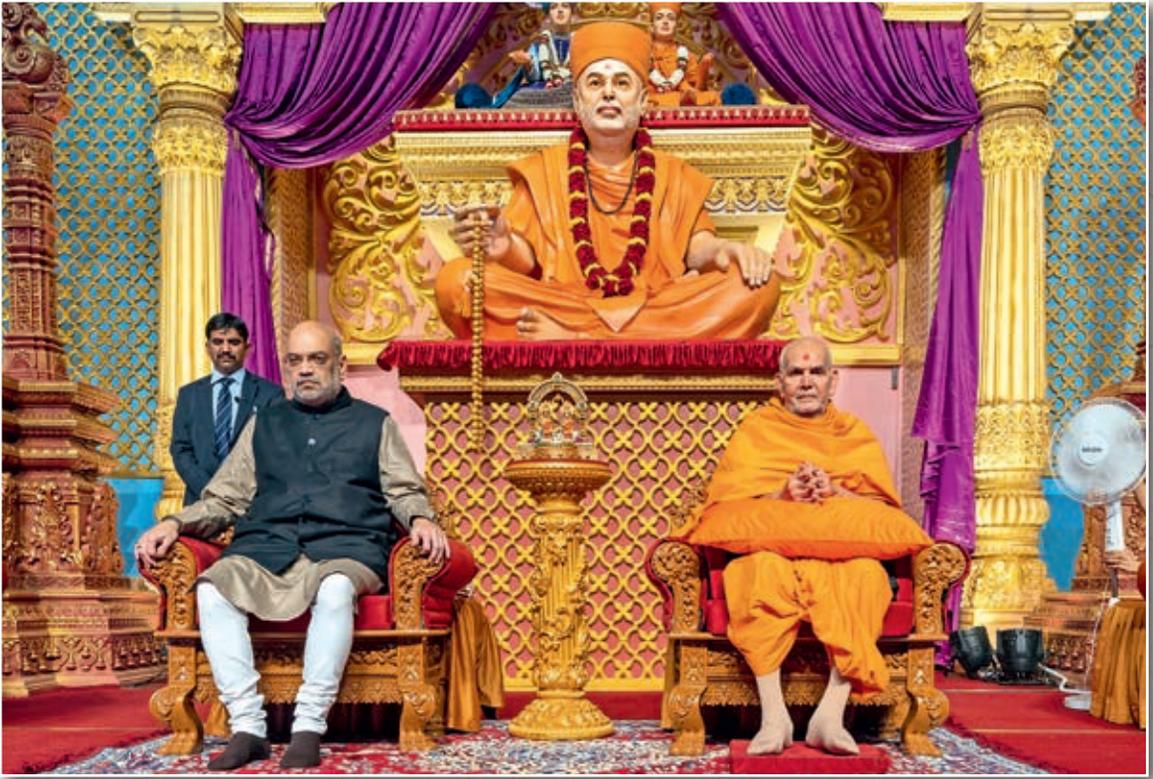
**Daily Evening Assembly Programmes**  
**14 December 2022 to 15 January 2023**



On the occasion of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations, the festival site of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar was vibrant with various programmes for over 30 days. Every evening, in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj, the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar’s grand Narayan Sabha Gruh open-air hall hosted thematic assemblies in which learned swamis, eminent scholars and dignitaries from India and abroad addressed the audience. The themes of the daily assemblies were as follows.

No	Date	Evening Assembly
1.	14 December 22	<b>Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations: Opening Ceremony</b>
2.	15 December 22	<b>International Convention for Better Living: Inauguration</b>
3.	16 December 22	<b>Culture Day: Celebrating Indian Culture</b>
4.	17 December 22	<b>Para-bhakti Day: Celebrating Devotion to God</b>
5.	18 December 22	<b>My Mandir, My Home: Celebrating Mandirs</b>
6.	19 December 22	<b>Guru-bhakti Day: Celebrating the Importance of Guru</b>
7.	20 December 22	<b>International Human Solidarity Day: Celebrating Interfaith Harmony</b>

8.	21 December 22	<b>Equality Day: Celebrating Equality</b>
9.	22 December 22	<b>Glorious Tribal Traditions: Celebrating Humanity</b>
10.	23 December 22	<b>Health and Spirituality Day: Celebrating Inner Well-being</b>
11.	24 December 22	<b>De-addiction Day: Celebrating Transformation</b>
12.	25 December 22	<b>National Sant Sammelan: Celebrating Saintliness</b>
13.	26 December 22	<b>Swaminarayan Literature Day: Celebrating Eternal Wisdom</b>
14.	27 December 22	<b>Vicharan Day: Celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Spiritual Travels</b>
15.	28 December 22	<b>Seva Day: Celebrating Selfless Service</b>
16.	29 December 22	<b>Family Unity Day: Celebrating Family Values</b>
17.	30 December 22	<b>Education Day: Celebrating Value-based Education</b>
18.	31 December 22	<b>Darshan-Shastra Day: Celebrating Timeless Wisdom</b>
19.	1 January 23	<b>Bal-Yuva Kirtan Aradhana</b>
20.	2 January 23	<b>Children's Day: Celebrating the Future</b>
21.	3 January 23	<b>Youth Day: Celebrating the Power of Youth</b>
22.	4 January 23	<b>Gujarat Day: Celebrating Glorious Gujarat</b>
23.	5 January 23	<b>Women's Day 1: Celebrating Women Empowerment</b>
24.	6 January 23	<b>BAPS Gulf Countries Day</b>
25.	7 January 23	<b>BAPS North America Day</b>
26.	8 January 23	<b>BAPS UK &amp; Europe Day</b>
27.	9 January 23	<b>BAPS Africa Day</b>
28.	10 January 23	<b>Women's Day 2: Celebrating Women Empowerment</b>
29.	11 January 23	<b>BAPS Asia-Pacific Day</b>
30.	12 January 23	<b>Akshardham Day: Celebrating Divinity</b>
31.	13 January 23	<b>Sant Kirtan Aradhana</b>
32.	14 January 23	<b>Last Day of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar</b>
33.	15 January 23	<b>Grand Finale of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations</b>



# ‘International Convention for Better Living’

Inaugurated by HH Mahant Swami Maharaj and  
Home Minister Shri Amitbhai Shah

**15 December 2022, Ahmedabad**

**M**ahant Swami Maharaj and the Home Minister of India Shri Amitbhai Shah inaugurated the month-long ‘International Convention for Better Living’ by lighting the inaugural lamp at the Narayan Sabha Gruh in Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Many leading industrialists of India were present on the main stage.

Today’s evening assembly started at 5 p.m. with a unique music symphony by 150 BAPS



Kindling the inaugural lamp

performers from 19 countries, playing 33 Indian instruments.

Thereafter, mahant of Gandhinagar Akshardham, Anandswarup Swami, addressed the assembly, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj wrote that Akshardham has been built for the betterment of people’s lives. All BAPS activities are for this purpose. Pramukh Swami Maharaj improved countless people’s lives by liberating them from the shackles of addictions, superstitions, vices and inner negativity, and inspiring them to control their impulses, focus on developing virtues, and reach the sublime heights of spirituality.”

Today’s evening assembly was attended by many dignitaries, including the Chairman of the Adani Group Shri Gautam Adani, Director of Reliance Industries and Member of Parliament Shri Parimal Nathwani, Chairman of GMR Group Shri G.M. Rao, Chairman and Director of Kalyan Jewellers Shri T.S. Kalyanraman, Shri Karsanbhai Patel of Nirma Industries, Chairman of Zydus Cadila Shri Pankaj Patel, Shri Sudhir Mehta of Torrent Group, Managing Director of Sun Pharmaceuticals Shri Dilip Sanghvi, and Chairman of Hero Electric and Hero Exports Shri Vijay Munjal.

**Shri Sudhirbhai Mehta, Chairman of Torrent Group,** said, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a divine soul, rightly known as a personification of saintliness. As one of the greatest spiritual leaders, his life was dedicated to the service of spirituality and humanity. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was truly a people’s guru. Through his innate humility, universal wisdom and striking simplicity, he transformed the lives of spiritual seekers, community leaders and global personalities.”

**Shri Pankajbhai Patel,** Chairman of Zydus Cadila, opined, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the greatest university for all of us in which we



Shri Sudhirbhai Mehta



Shri Pankajbhai Patel



Shri G.M. Rao

must learn to imbibe the values of selfless sacrifice, love and absolute faith in the guru. As a spiritual leader, he enlightened millions of souls, yet throughout his personal life he remained forever simple and humble. As a spiritual leader, he propagated the message of equality regardless of caste, creed or religion.”

**Shri G.M. Rao, Chairman of GMR Group,** declared, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj always lived for others and remained in constant communion with God. He was an advocate of world peace and revered as one of the most influential spiritual leaders of the world. He possessed nothing, wanted nothing, asked for nothing, and yet he gave everything. His simple, humble and direct words were a reflection of the supreme divinity within him. Through him, God spoke. I have been greatly influenced by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s teachings. He showed us that true leadership is grounded in goodness and bringing joy to others. I try to imbibe the same philosophy in my life and work. His influence will be felt by generations to come, who will celebrate his life and legacy for redefining the meaning of humanity and spirituality.”

**Shri Parimal Nathwani, Director of Reliance Industries and Member of Parliament,** expressed, “I consider this Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar to be a confluence of all the four holiest places of Hinduism. BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha not only builds mandirs, but shapes the lives of countless people.”

**Shri Gautambhai Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group,** praised, “When I see what BAPS

**His influence will be felt by generations to come, who will celebrate his life and legacy for redefining the meaning of humanity and spirituality.**

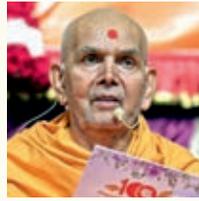
**Shri G.M. Rao**



Shri Parimal  
Nathwani



Shri Gautambhai  
Adani



HH Mahant  
Swami Maharaj

Shri Amitbhai Shah, Home Minister of India, complimented, “This amazing festival site should be a case study for students of management. This festival site not only gives one the experience of peace and divinity, but it provides the esoteric wisdom of the Vedas,

has created, I am astounded. As many of you know the Adani Group has built some of the largest infrastructure projects in the nation, yet it is humbling for me to see the power of volunteerism here spread over 600 acres and completed in less than six months. This is unmatched and there is so much here for even the best global corporations to learn. Having had the privilege of knowing Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I can say that this energizing location is just one of several such manifestations of his greatness where the physical and spiritual, the temporary and permanent, all mould into one seamless entity. We see this manifested around us here as the sheer power of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s legacy. I congratulate Mahant Swami Maharaj and the entire BAPS family for their efforts.”

Upanishads and Hindu culture in a way that even the simplest folk can understand. The millions of people who visit it will experience peace, attain liberation and learn to live a problem-free life.

“In the many vicissitudes of my life, the first phone call of guidance and comfort I invariably received was from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. On countless occasions, I would go to Pramukh Swami Maharaj buffeted by whirlwinds of problems and misery and come back buoyed with peace, energy and enthusiasm. Swami imbued peace, gave right direction and wisdom to people living in society.

His entire life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had done this silently, without any fanfare.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj created inspiring exhibitions together with the Akshardham mandirs to spread the message of

**It is humbling for me to see the power of volunteerism here spread over 600 acres and completed in less than six months. This is unmatched.**



Audience in the Narayan Sabha Gruh assembly

spirituality and universal values to all.

“The biggest thing that Pramukh Swami Maharaj had done was to redefine and rekindle the tradition of Hindu monasticism.

“It is hard to imagine the extent of these massive activities done by a single person.

“Under the leadership of Mahant Swami Maharaj, BAPS is moving forward on the path laid by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I have faith that through the spiritual uplift he has guided we will find the uplift of our society and nation.”

**Mahant Swami Maharaj** blessed the evening assembly, “Every second of his life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj worked for the uplift of humanity. He did not just pay lip service to these values, but practised them and inspired others to practise them.

“Though a person may have 99 flaws, still he

**This festival site provides the esoteric wisdom of the Vedas, Upanishads and Hindu culture in a way that even the simplest folk can understand.**

**Shri Amitbhai Shah**

will have at least one virtue. If we focus on that one virtue, our life will improve. Despite a person’s flaws, Pramukh Swami looked at their virtues and showered love upon everyone, inspiring them to become better. So, we must never look at a person’s flaws,

but only at their virtues. Only if we look beyond a person’s flaws will we be able to become better. It is true that to err is human, but one should not continue to harp on those errors. If we want to progress, we must correct our own flaws, but forgive the flaws of others. If we do this, then the atmosphere in our home and in society will improve. These are the characteristics of a saint. If we want to improve all of humanity we must live in this way. Since Pramukh Swami Maharaj had done this all his life, any individual who met him was inspired to improve his life. If we resolve to behave in this way, then it will ensure society’s collective progress.” ♦

*After the inauguration of the International Convention for Better Living, each evening assembly that followed was themed on the various virtues and works of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Guests speakers who spoke on these special days are as follows.*



## **CULTURE DAY**

**16 December 2022, Ahmedabad**

Several political, social and industrial leaders joined the evening assembly to pay tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj as a global torchbearer of Sanatan Dharma and the goodness of Indian culture.

The evening assembly included an address by Adarshjivandas Swami on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s crucial role in nurturing and preserving Indian culture through its three pillars: shastras, mandirs and *sants*.

Mahamahopadhyay Bhadreshdas Swami highlighted the universal richness of Indian culture and the unparalleled contributions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in sustaining it



Cultural spot depicts family unity

around the world.

The guests present in today's evening assembly included the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Shri Manoj Sinha; Chairman and Director of Elecon Company Shri Prayasvin Patel; Director Secretary of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Shri Bharat Joshi; Thakor Saheb of Limbdi Shri Jaideepsinhji Chhatrasalji Sinhji; Director of Madhwani Group Shri Madhwani; Mayor of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation Shri Kiritkumar Parmar; Chairman of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation Shri Hitesh Barot; Shri Girish Dattatreya and leading British entrepreneur Shri Charles Patel. Some of the guests who addressed the assembly are as follows.

### Shri Bharat Joshi

Director Secretary of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was someone who cared deeply about all individuals. He took the time to listen to all, and his interest in them generated a tremendous influence over millions who tried to follow his example. He inspired people by his actions and quiet reason. My abiding memory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was

in 2002 after the appalling attack on Akshardham in Gandhinagar. Pramukh Swami Maharaj could have reacted in so many different ways, but he proved to everyone that love, understanding and forgiveness were more powerful than guns and hand grenades. His words and actions averted a much greater calamity and much more bloodshed, and reminded us all that we can resist giving in to our own anger. He held to his values even when they were so brutally attacked. He transcended the anger that we all felt and made us all feel that we could do the same thing. Those values run through BAPS and are what makes it such a force for universal good when the world faces so many different dangers.”

### Shri Manoj Sinha

Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj's entire life was dedicated to the betterment of humanity. He experienced the light of God and took millions from darkness to light. Through his efforts in uplifting the poor, empowering women, education, hospitals and medical camps, and de-addiction of over four million people, he re-ignited culture in society. Swamiji was like a

mother who takes care of her children and infuses them with positivity through encouragement and love. He taught all of humanity that we should focus our energies on unity and growth.”

**Mahant Swami Maharaj**  
Spiritual Head, BAPS



“Our culture stands on three pillars. One is mandirs. Pramukh Swami Maharaj created 1,200 mandirs. Mandirs purify people’s lives. They bring peace to individuals and society. Just as factories, hospitals and other institutions are necessary for society, similarly, mandirs are necessary for the functioning of a harmonious society. The purpose of creating mandirs is so we do not forget our culture and values. Hindu shastras are a second pillar on which our culture stands. Abiding by the injunctions of the shastras brings peace, purity and happiness to our lives. Third, just as one needs a teacher to acquire knowledge, similarly, to understand our culture, one needs a *sant*, who is the third pillar. Thus, mandirs, shastras and *sant* are our life. We must consolidate our faith through these three pillars. In this way, we must preserve and protect our culture and religion in order to experience peace and gain God’s blessings. Faith in the guru can transform our entire life. It will give us peace and God’s grace.”

## PARA-BHAKTI DAY

17 December 2022

The evening assembly began with an address by Adarshjivandas Swami on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s devotion to and constant communion with God.

Thereafter, Prabhucharandas Swami spoke about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s bhakti towards God.

Today’s stage guests included: Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Chinna Srimannarayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji, Founder of Jeeyer Intergrated Vedic Academy (JIVA); Shri Parshottam Rupala,

Union Cabinet Minister; Shri Sudhir Nanavati, President of Gujarat Law Society University; Shri Suresh Shelat, Former Advocate-General, Government of Gujarat; Dr J. Rameshwar Rao, Founder Chairman of My Home Group (TV9); Shri Kalpesh Solanki, Group Managing Editor of Asian Media Group (Garvi Gujarat), UK; Dr Girish Ahuja, CA, Taxation Expert and Educationalist.

## Shri Sudhir Nanavati

President, Gujarat Law Society University



“When I first saw and experienced this festival today, my immediate thought was that organizing and managing this vast festival for a month with all that it entails is only possible due to the love that all the dedicated volunteers have for Pramukh Swami Maharaj. My experiences and memories with Pramukh Swami Maharaj have truly been divine. The love in his eyes was comparable to the love I saw in my mother’s eyes, while his laughter was so innocent that I can clearly recall his eyes and laughter after all these years. I recall that when I touched his feet 35 years ago, I experienced a divine current that flowed through me, the likes of which I have never experienced ever again. I would like to say that while he may not be here today, his love, affection and selfless service is something that is the rarest of the rare. I am not religious enough to perform long rituals, but even after 35 years, I still do five *malas* every day for Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

## Shri Sureshbhai Shelat

Former Advocate-General,  
Government of Gujarat



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s heart was full of affection towards God. He was an epitome of ultimate devotion. For Swamiji, serving his devotees was paramount. In 1981, Pramukh Swami sanctified my home and waited for me patiently while I was still on my professional duty in the court. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s patience was



Volunteers spiritedly perform menial and laborious seva

exemplary and he was always available for his devotees.”

### Shri Anant Goenka

Executive Director of The Indian Express Group



“When we bow our heads, we recognize and appreciate that there is someone bigger than us. Humility is an extremely powerful characteristic to have, because being humble tells you that you have a lot to learn. And if you are open to learn, you are open to the pursuit of truth. This is what we saw in Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life.

“Harvard did a case study [on the Taj Hotel staff after the terrorist attack on 26 November 2008]. They found that of the 600 employees of the Taj Hotel, not a single person left their post to save their lives. They helped the guests leave the hotel and came

**Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught that the solutions to all the problems of the world lie inside of us. Events like this are very special since they remind us of this truth.**

**Shri Anant Goenka**

back to help the other guests. Some of them lost their lives trying to do this. In trying to understand why they risked their lives to save the guests, they concluded it was because the employees of the Taj were not hired based on grades, but based on how well they lived Indian values. The world looks to India to teach them how to work without being greedy, to teach them the difference between ambition and greed. The world looks to India to teach them how to work hard, yet be content. The world looks to India to learn how to be happy, no matter what the externalities around us are. In the news industry, we always cast blame on others, but Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught that the solutions to all the problems of the world lie inside of us. Events like this are very special since they remind us of this truth.”

### Dr Girish Ahuja

Chartered Accountant,  
Taxation Expert and Educationalist



“I have never experienced divinity in my life the way I did today when I met Mahant Swami Maharaj. This festival is mind-boggling. My institute is huge, but I have never seen the spirit of service that I have seen in the volunteers here. Their *seva* is pure faith.”

### Shri Parshottam Rupala

Union Cabinet Minister



“The entire Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is an ultimate example of devotion to the guru by Mahant Swami Maharaj.

“Today, the world looks at India differently. When the world wants to see the highest exemplar of Indian culture, we can proudly show them Akshardham. Similarly, when I travelled through the festival grounds today, I did not see a single scrap of paper on the

ground. Seeing is believing, and Mahant Swami Maharaj has made us all believers by showing us such things are possible.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj had such a simple, unassuming, saintly persona, which we see today in Mahant Swami Maharaj. His saintliness improved society where governments have failed. For example, we all know the limitations of the law in eradicating addictions. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had ordained highly qualified swamis like doctors, engineers, etc. and their efforts are helping propel the efforts of India to reach its potential.

“Every aspect of these festival grounds deserves our careful examination as they have been created through immense voluntary efforts. For example, the efforts of the British devotees who sacrificed their time to create such a huge, unique painting of Pramukh Swami Maharaj is just one of the countless things that exemplify the highest devotion of devotees for their guru. Every aspect of the festival grounds envisioned by the swamis teaches an uplifting message, making it an unprecedented milestone within the cultural history of Gujarat.”

**Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Chinna  
Srimannarayana Ramanuja  
Jeeyar Swamiji**



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s saintliness and bhakti impressed countless people. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is not present now, however he is forever present in our minds and his living form is before us in Mahant Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s guru bhakti is reflected in fulfilling Yogiji Maharaj’s divine wish of creating Akshardham in New Delhi. The Pramukh Swami Maharaj centenary celebrations is a festival that augments *sattvagun* and provides peace to people. In reality, this *nagar* has been built on a temporary basis but it will remain eternally in the hearts of all.”

**Every aspect of the festival grounds teaches an uplifting message, making it an unprecedented milestone within the cultural history of Gujarat.**  
**Shri Parshottam Rupala**



150 female youths of BAPS centres in the UK create the world record bubble wrap painting of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

## CELEBRATING MANDIRS

18 December 2022

This evening’s programme celebrating mandirs was titled, ‘My Mandir, My Home.’ It commenced with over 150 children and youths from 19 countries presenting a devotional symphony by playing 33 different Indian instruments.

Adarshjivandas Swami highlighted Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s sentiments in building and supporting mandirs.

Memories of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s work in mandir construction were rekindled through the kirtan, ‘Avo Nirakhiye Mandir.’ Thereafter,

Aksharvatsaldas Swami elaborated on how Pramukh Swami Maharaj created unique mandirs throughout the world.

Beautiful traditional dances celebrating mandirs were performed by BAPS youths from India and East Africa.



Swaminarayan Akshardham in Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar

Dignitaries present in today’s evening programme included, Padmashri Dr Ramakant Panda, Chief Consultant for Cardio-thoracic Surgery and Vice Chairman & Managing Director, Asian Heart Institute; Pujya Swami Govind Dev Giri Maharaj, Treasurer, Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust; Shri Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary and Executive & Academic Head, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi; Shri Shivakumar Sundaram, Chairman, Executive Committee, Bennett Coleman & Company (Times of India Group); Shri Yashwant Shukla, Charity Commissioner, Government of Gujarat; Shri Gagjibhai Sutariya, President, Sardardham; and Shri Ratibhai Patel, President, Vishva Umiya Foundation.

**Shri Ratibhai Patel**

President, Vishva Umiya Foundation



“Pramukh Swami ignited the light of service around the world, directing the power of youth for the betterment of society. He was responsible for fostering greater harmony amongst humanity. BAPS temples have become centres of humanity and culture. The foundations to rekindle spirituality within people across the world were developed through BAPS temples and the intense labours

of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. BAPS’s efforts to uplift society through the building of temples is truly praiseworthy.”

**Dr Sachchidanand Joshi**

Executive and Academic Head, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts



“After witnessing the beauty of this *nagar* and programme, I feel that from now onwards this *nagar* will be the benchmark for the definition of grandeur for the world. Pramukh Swami Maharaj built thousands of temples in the world, which will inspire people for generations. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s mammoth task of creating temples was not just about creating houses of worship, but also about creating centres of education and social service that revived our heritage and spiritual tradition.”

**Dr Ramakant Panda**

Chief Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgery and Vice-Chairman & Managing Director, Asian Heart Institute



“While I run the country’s best heart hospital and have operated on more than 29,000 patients with world-leading outcomes, receiving Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s blessings three times in my life have been the greatest moments of my life in which I felt a

**After witnessing the beauty of this *nagar* and programme, this *nagar* will be the benchmark for the definition of grandeur for the world.**  
**Dr Sachchidanand Joshi**

**This celebration has everything one needs to learn to succeed in life. What Pramukh Swami Maharaj accomplished is humanly impossible, unthinkable.**

**Dr Ramakant Panda**

powerful, transformative divinity.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s direct connection with the lives of millions can be seen in the 80,000 volunteers who created this magnificent festival site, each of them having been directly blessed by him in various ways and in all aspects of their life.

“Truly, I have never seen something like this *nagar*. This celebration has everything one needs to learn to succeed in life. What Pramukh Swami Maharaj accomplished since 1971 until the end of his life is humanly impossible, unthinkable. But if we take his blessings and follow his example, all of us can achieve things of great significance in our life.”

**Pujya Swami Govind Dev Giriji Maharaj**

Treasurer, Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust



“Every moment here is divine and I can tell you that I need to be here at least three days to learn, understand and follow the path indicated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. This is my learning that the only place to develop a divine, vast and inclusive vision one has to come here. Pramukh Swami Maharaj belonged to everybody and everyone believes Pramukh Swami Maharaj is theirs. I am here to bow my head to that person who showered the whole world with love. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a true sadhu, a true renunciate. He himself was the manifestation of a temple. Akshardham was built to last a

**The only place to develop a divine, vast and inclusive vision one has to come here. Pramukh Swami Maharaj belonged to everybody.**

**Swami Govind Dev Giriji**



Selfless service and dedication of the volunteers thousand years but the volunteers developed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj are the immortal temples built by him. His inspirations to lead a better life are those that will last forever. The most difficult task is to mould humans and Pramukh Swami Maharaj took this most difficult of tasks and created great humans and unified society. We haven’t seen Adi Shankaracharya or Samarth Ramdas or anyone else, but we have seen their qualities in Pramukh Swami Maharaj and we are blessed to have experienced his love.”

**Shri Shivakumar Sundaram**

Chairman, Executive Committee, Bennett Coleman & Company (Times of India Group)



“I bow to the selfless services and dedication of the volunteers here who have made the world a better place through their services to society and humanity. Helping people lead a better life is service to God. The common thread in every activity of BAPS and Pramukh Swami Maharaj has been service to humanity. I have seen and felt today how he touched and made a difference in the lives of so many people, personally and through mandirs.

Mandirs are places vibrating with energy that have the power to transform human lives. Through such mandirs, BAPS has touched millions of lives, inspiring thousands of youths to give up addictions



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's giant *murti* was the cynosure of all eyes and pledge to lead addiction-free lives.

“The enormity of the tasks and accomplishments, the size and scale of this very place we are seeing today requires the blessings of the divine. Everything in life happens with the blessings of the divine. The mammoth Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, which I had the good fortune of visiting this afternoon, featuring a variety of exhibitions and attractions, has one common theme – service to humanity is service to God. It teaches us that religion, spirituality and community service are not separate things – they are deeply connected. Our religion is a way of life. We all have the same daily routine from waking up to sleeping, but what differentiates us is our service.”

### Yashwant Shukla

Charity Commissioner,  
Government of Gujarat



“As Charity Commissioner of Gujarat, I can say with confidence that of all the mandirs in Gujarat, BAPS mandirs would rank first in terms of cleanliness and tidiness. They have become examples for others as well.”

**The enormity of the tasks and accomplishments, the size and scale of this very place we are seeing today requires the blessings of the divine.**  
Shri Shivakumar Sundaram



### Mahant Swami Maharaj

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj would always say that a mandir is a place where the mind finds peace. Although great rishis have been overcome by their mind, the mandir grants the mind stability. Many have experienced peace upon entering a mandir. The problems that assail them fade away. This is the work of a mandir. Pramukh Swami Maharaj said the mandir is a place to realize God. So, do not see the mandir as just a pile of stones. While it appears to be made of stone, each stone is infused with a divine life-force. Pramukh Swami Maharaj said that a mandir is a factory for making an ideal human. So, while mandirs may externally appear to be mere edifices, those with the power of discernment realize the profound transformative power of mandirs.”

### GURU BHAKTI DAY

19 December 2022

Reflecting on the role and importance of devotion to the guru in Hinduism, dignitaries from various fields remembered how Pramukh Swami Maharaj exemplified and inspired this ideal in millions worldwide.

Adarshjivandas Swami narrated incidents from Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life, explaining how people experienced him to be an ideal guru.

Then, Atmatrupt Swami spoke about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's ideal discipleship.

The following stage dignitaries shared their memories about Pramukh Swami Maharaj, along with the profound impact his divine life and works had on them.

### Padmashri Savji Dholakia

Founder and Chairman,  
Hari Krishna Exports



“Although one may feel one cannot see God, I can say with certainty that the creation of this festival is not possible without the presence of God. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s love has brought all the volunteers here and infused them with love and devotion to God.”

### Shri Arun Gujarathi

Former Speaker,  
Maharashtra Legislative Assembly



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was godly. His words were divine, his character was godly. He wasn’t a saint for one particular religion; he was for all, irrespective of religion, community, or country. While one world religion cannot be established, it is certainly possible to have the entire world united by religion. And Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the one saint who did that and brought peace to the world. He did this not through magic, but through temples. His mandirs were global centres of peace. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s thoughts and works will live forever, and by following them we attain inner peace. This peace in one’s heart will spread to the family, the country, and finally across the world.”

### Dr Y.S. Rajan

Former Chairman, NIT, Manipur



“I marvel at how fortunate I am that Pramukh Swami Maharaj had taken me into his love, care and protection from 2001. It was the uncompelled compassion of a great soul, like a mother cat taking care of her helpless kittens. Though Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s affectionate love is a

**While I was engrossed in the grandeur of this complex, I realized how much affection these 80,000 volunteers have for Pramukh Swami Maharaj.**  
**Dr Pankaj Chande**

universal love for all, for ordinary persons like us, special gestures from him make our lives free from difficulties.

“How can I describe his glory? He had been sent by God to rejuvenate Hinduism and spirituality all over India and the whole world. Since we ordinary souls require symbols, he has brought into the world many Swaminarayan Akshardhams. His spiritual force is in action now through his swamis and devotees.”

### Shri Alok Kumar

International Working President,  
Vishwa Hindu Parishad



“Upon circumambulating the image of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in this complex, I saw the timeline of his life and realized that day or night, Pramukh Swami Maharaj made constant efforts to serve his devotees and people. BAPS is not an organization that only concentrates on its own spiritual endeavours and ignores society in difficult times. It has been at the forefront whenever there is any natural calamity or difficult times. Pramukh Swami Maharaj served his devotees with compassion. The one lesson that I take is that Pramukh Swami is not just present in this complex, but through his spirit and his works he is eternally present in this world.”

### Dr Pankaj Chande

Founder and Vice Chancellor,  
Kavikulguru Kalidas Sanskrit  
University



“While I was engrossed in the grandeur of this complex, I realized how much affection these 80,000 volunteers have for Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Witnessing them serving here without expecting any reward, I realize his divinity. I believe that the Bal Nagari in this complex



Bal Nagari

should be referred to as ‘Sanskar Nagari’, as moral values are imparted here along with entertainment. The ‘Satsang Diksha’ shastra is an exclusive contribution of Mahant Swami Maharaj because it has become a foundational pillar of BAPS and is proof of the widespread impact of BAPS in the world. I sincerely bow down before Mahant Swami because this entire grand complex is his precious gift to everyone.”

### Shri Arun Tiwari

Platinum Jubilee Mentor, CSIR Indian Institute of Chemical Technology



“When everything you see is unbelievable, then people say it is a dream. After 24 hours of visiting this festival, I still cannot believe whether this is a dream or reality. Looking at a sculpture of Pramukh Swami Maharaj writing a letter, I remember that all his letters had one thing in common, they were always filled with love. Remember, Mahant Swami Maharaj sitting here is a treasure. So do not let go of this treasure in search of worldly objects. Seeing the confident children here, I can state that this is the place that will be the birthplace of the new India.”

**As an urban planner, the fact that 80,000 volunteers of varied backgrounds have come together and created this in six months is astounding to me. It is a symbol of inclusiveness and unity that our entire country must engrave in their hearts.**

Shri Keshav Varma

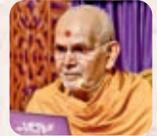
### Shri Keshav Varma

IAS (Retd.), Chairman, High-Level Committee on Urban Planning, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs



“As an urban planner, I know that the transformation of 600 acres of land into such a magnificent cultural centre, with such spirituality and beauty, should take years. The fact that 80,000 volunteers of varied backgrounds have come together and created this in six months is astounding to me. It is a symbol of inclusiveness, equity and unity that our entire country must engrave in their hearts. It is clear that Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divine impulse is present here.”

### Mahant Swami Maharaj



“Today is guru bhakti day. Pramukh Swami used to say that I have been born only to please my guru. We, too, should decide to live only according to our guru’s wishes and not of our own wishes. Whichever direction he points towards should become the direction of our life. His wishes should become our wishes. God speaks through the guru. The guru is divine and our goal should be to always consider all his actions as divine and pure.



International Human Solidarity Day assembly at the Narayan Sabha Gruh

Whatever happens in life, remember that you have to become one with your guru. Understanding this and teaching others to understand the same is the greatest service.”

### INTERNATIONAL HUMAN SOLIDARITY DAY 20 December 2022

Leaders of various faiths assembled for interfaith dialogue to honour Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s spiritually driven vision for human solidarity, world peace and interfaith harmony. The event also commemorated the United Nations’ International Human Solidarity Day on 20 December.

At 5.15 p.m., the evening assembly began with the chanting of God’s holy name, followed by the singing of prayers and devotional hymns. Youths performed a traditional dance to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Elaborating on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s message of interfaith harmony, Brahmaviharidas Swami said, “The idea of harmony is bigger than all of us. We believe ‘the whole world is one family’ and ‘the whole world is one nest’. Pramukh Swami Maharaj not only believed in harmony, he lived it and inspired others to live it.”

**Half a million people have visited, but I have not seen a single incident of disharmony. All the big CEOs of the world should bring their teams to learn about harmonious management.**  
Shri Bawa Jain



A spot depicts Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s hand while writing a letter

#### Shri Bawa Jain

Secretary General, World Council of Religious Leaders, USA



“In the three days I have been at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, half a million people have visited, but I have not seen a single incident of disharmony. All the big CEOs of the world should bring their teams to learn about harmonious management. This *nagar* is a work of architectural genius. In my opinion, Pramukh Swami Maharaj is the modern-day Vishwakarma.”

#### Pujya Sri Satguru Uday Singh Ji Maharaj

Head, Namdhari Sikh



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj served everyone and showered his blessings on everyone, no matter their class, caste, gender, race or religion. His teachings should be taught to all children so that they can grow into good humans, and can tolerate the pain and suffering

of this world. Without compassion, there is no religion. Where there is arrogance, there God is not. So, we should not insult anyone, but respect everyone.”

**Saadiqual-aidiz-zahabi**  
**Bhaisaheb Jamaluddin**

Dawoodi Bohra Community



“My Daudi Bohra brothers and I went around the *nagar* for two hours with awe and admiration, celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who spent his life serving and motivating others to serve. Respected Mahant Swami Maharaj, you continue his legacy and guide thousands similarly. As diverse as we may be in our customs, traditions and faiths, we are united in the belief that to uplift yourself you must uplift others. This is the essence of celebrating international human solidarity day.”

**Acharya Dr Lokesh Muniji**

Jain Muni, Founder President,  
Ahimsa Vishwa Bharati



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a bridge to unite all different faiths together. He used to preach that we should respect others’ opinions and beliefs. That is why in these times when we face an environment of religious intolerance, the BAPS Swaminarayan tradition has been a torchbearer for religious tolerance.

“I feel that toxicity of thoughts are much more dangerous than environmental pollution. That mental toxicity can only be cured by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s values.”

**Venerable Bhikkhu Sanghasena**

Founder President, Mahabodhi  
International Meditation Centre,  
Ladakh



“This unique Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is infused with so much love and compassion. Learning about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life and service was not merely

a heart-touching, but a life-transforming experience for me.

“I have experienced universal brotherhood (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*) here today. The swamis and volunteers have so much love and compassion. After visiting this beautiful place, meeting the swamis and volunteers, and seeing tens of thousands of people from different religious backgrounds visiting this festival site with smiles on their faces and with a spirit of brotherhood, I experienced divine life on earth today. I have experienced humility and simplicity here through the swamis. The whole world has a lot to learn from this organization.”

**Rabbi Ezekiel Isaac Malekar**

Jewish Community Leader, New Delhi



“Though I am a Rabbi of the Jewish faith, I am here today not as a Jew but to represent all of you because I consider myself an Indian first and Jew second. Israel is in my heart, but India is in my blood.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s contributions in education, health, environment, and uplifting Adivasis are unparalleled. At the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, I feel a tremendous spiritual energy and boundless happiness in my heart. I feel as if I am in heaven. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is showering grace from above. This amazing environment cannot be found elsewhere.”

**Archbishop Thomas Ignatius Macwan of the Gandhinagar Archdiocese**



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in constant touch with the divine and was purity incarnate. Purity itself attained completeness in Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj listened to the sufferings of everyone and gave them guidance. He lived to guide people to live better, spiritually and socially, to live for the

upliftment of mankind, and to see good in everyone. Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived the words he uttered. His life itself was his message and if we follow his teachings the world will truly be a better place.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj sustained relationships with everyone, even those who were considered lowly by society, including Dalits and Adivasis. He saw God in everyone.”

### **Pujya Parmatmanandji**

Founder and Acharya,  
Arsha Vidya Mandir



“If humanity is an orchestra with a variety of instruments, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the greatest conductor who brought harmony to human society and taught the values of mutual love and respect. International Solidarity Day should be known as International Pramukh Swami Day, as he was the manifest form of solidarity. The way he united humans signifies he was the embodiment of love.”



### **HE Abdul Rahman Bu Ali**

Thought Leader of Bahrain

“I have experienced Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s impact on millions of lives across the world. He was an extraordinary spiritual leader of our time. A rare soul who lived by dedicating all his life for the service of others. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a true spiritual leader, a mentor, a teacher, an educator, a true example of love, peace, and tolerance, who will continue to live in the minds and lives of his devotees.

“Mahant Swami Maharaj is the best successor to the best predecessor. I thank Mahant Swami Maharaj and the swamis for creating this heavenly wonderland.”

**If humanity is an orchestra with a variety of instruments, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the greatest conductor who brought harmony to human society and taught the values of mutual love and respect.**

**Pujya Parmatmanandji**

### **Param Gurudev Pujya Namramuni Maharaj Sahebji**

Jain Muni, Founder, Parasdham



“By looking at Pramukh Swami Maharaj, our hearts are warmed. How much creative power can a guru possess? Pramukh Swami Maharaj never thought about himself, but he instilled virtues, service, love and respect in all. His was a face that was God’s face. Looking at him, one felt one was looking at God. I applaud all the swamis of BAPS for their unity, which is the driving force behind this magnificent project.”

### **HH Dalai Lama**

HH Dalai Lama wrote a letter offering his tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, “I send my greetings to all of you on the occasion of the centenary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I have some understanding of the work of your organization and its contribution to the Indian society. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an integral part of your development. He truly practised the ancient Indian wisdom of nonviolence and compassion. The leadership of individuals like him have made India a role model of religious harmony in the world today.”



### **Mahamandaleshwar Pujya Swami Avdheshanand Giriji Maharaj**

Acharya Juna Peethadhiswar



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divine life and works spread Indian culture across the world. When I learned about the large number of volunteers in the celebration, who are all different in many ways, I realized the strong unifying bond that Pramukh Swami Maharaj could establish. Pramukh Swami Maharaj



Main ceremonial gate with Pramukh Swami Maharaj's hand doing a mala

personified religion as he constantly worked for humanity and for the good of others. He was so lively and always reflected spirituality. The way his life and work have been depicted in this Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is exemplary. BAPS has not just created temples and volunteers but also nurtured Indian culture in various forms.”

**Pramukh Swami Maharaj never thought about himself, but he instilled virtues, service, love and respect in all. His was a face that was God's face. Looking at him, one felt one was looking at God.**

**Pujya Namramuni Maharaj Sahebji**



### **Mahant Swami Maharaj**

“I bow at the feet of all the religious leaders who have come to the interfaith conference today. Everyone is doing tremendous work in their own respective fields. At the United Nations World Peace Summit, Pramukh Swami Maharaj said, “The greatest necessity of our age is harmony amongst all religions. This must happen not superficially, but there must be a joyous meeting of hearts. Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught that ‘True religion is that which inspires love for all.’ His teachings tell us that humanity is one. Although there may be countless branches, twigs and leaves, the tree is one. Everyone peacefully, beautifully worships

and serves God in their own way and experiences peace.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not see any distinctions in anyone. His personality was such that he saw God in all. We may be of many different faiths, but we are one because we are all the children of God. We pray that the message of unity that the religious leaders gave here is

imbibed in the lives of everyone.”

Finally, Swamishri inaugurated a new publication on Pramukh Swami Maharaj, *In Love, At Ease*, authored by Yogi Trivedi, a scholar of Religion and Journalism at Columbia University, and published by Penguin Books.

### **EQUALITY DAY**

**21 December 2022**

Social, educational and religious leaders paid homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life of service and promotion of universal welfare for all.



**Shri Vijaybhai Patil**

President, DY Patil University

“The entire Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is a truly incredible architectural wonder that



is impossible without divine blessings. BAPS has been a fantastic ambassador for India, propagating our values and philosophy not only in the field of religion, but also in education, healthcare, and the social sphere.”

**Shri Samvegbhai Lalbhai**  
Executive Director, Atul Limited



“Our Indian value system is presented holistically in this 600-acre site. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a Ganga of compassion and equality, who purified all he touched. He imparted an unparalleled message of peace and harmony to humanity.

**Vaishnavacharya Goswami Dwarkeshlalji**  
Founder, International Vaishnav Sangh



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj worked to rid people of addictions, to eradicate discriminatory attitudes and practices, to revive communities affected by all sorts of unrest and calamities. He stood alongside society and made all of humanity his family. In the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, the beliefs and needs of all, from every age and background, are respected and provided.”

**Our society is divided by sects, castes and communities, but here all divisions are erased. Coexistence and equality are the solutions to one of the long-standing challenges to our society.**  
Mahant Shambhuprasad Tundiyaji

**Mahant Shambhuprasad Tundiyaji**  
Sant Shree Savaiyanath Samadhi Sthan



“Our society is divided by sects, castes and communities, but here all divisions are erased. Coexistence and equality are the solutions to one of the long-standing challenges to our society, and our saints are working to make that a reality. Pramukh Swami Maharaj personified the idea that ‘we are all one’.”

**Shri Mohan Bhagwat**  
Sarsanchalak,  
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh



“I am blessed to be a part of this assembly and this festival. This festival can be described as incredible, unforgettable and divine. This festival highlights a very important point other than Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s work and that is: why did he do this? He did not need to do anything other than focus on spirituality. But Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived his whole life serving society.

“All negativity exists because of ego and pride, but Pramukh Swami had no ego and so strived for the advancement and equality of society. Pramukh Swami Maharaj loved everyone equally because he had no attachment to his self. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had the great power to identify the smallest positive quality in a person and encouraged that positive trait to develop to enable a person

to grow. Pramukh Swami Maharaj saw God in each human and considered all people to be the children of God. There is no doubt that he considered everyone equal and treated everyone with the same love. He is a shining example to follow if we want to bring about true equality in human society. By emulating him, by absorbing his positive qualities, normal people like you and me can make incremental progress and slowly but surely reach our goal. By following in his footsteps, our country will be prosperous, will be secure and will be great again.”

### Mahant Swami Maharaj



“God and the guru do not see distinctions amongst people, because they see the same God residing in all. As we are all the children of God, who is unequal?”

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, ‘If our actions are virtuous, then everyone is virtuous.’ Shabari, Rohidas and others offered their devotion to God and followed his commands, so their names are immortalized in the shastras. In this world, they were considered ordinary, because the people of this world look at superficial things. But those who possess virtues are venerable even if they are poor or live in a hut.

“If we have love for God, we will automatically have love and respect for all, perceiving all to be greater than us. But, if one does not love God, one cannot have true love for anyone. Pramukh Swami Maharaj used to say, ‘True religion fosters love for all.’ So, only by fostering love for God will we be able to create a true sentiment of equality.”

Finally, a six-part docuseries on Pramukh Swami Maharaj titled, “*Peed Parayi Jane Re*”

**This festival can be described as incredible, unforgettable and divine. This festival highlights a very important point: Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived his whole life serving society.**  
Shri Mohan Bhagwat

(Feeling the Suffering of Others), produced by Oho Gujarati OTT app, was inaugurated by Mahant Swami Maharaj.

### CELEBRATING TRIBAL TRADITIONS

22 December 2022

This evening, thousands gathered at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar to celebrate ‘Glorious Tribal Traditions: Celebrating Humanity’, marking Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s relentless efforts in uplifting tribal communities.

Adarshjivandas Swami narrated Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Herculean efforts in connecting with people.

BAPS members from the Sabarkantha region performed the traditional Timbli tribal dance.

Jnannayandas Swami spoke about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s tribal works.

A video presentation portrayed Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s efforts to uplift tribal communities.

Some male tribals, who had attained a variety of educational achievements, were honoured on the stage. They included: an orthopaedic surgeon, a PhD scientist, an MD paediatrician, a school principal, winner of the President’s Best Teacher Award, a town planner, marine engineers, dentists, physiotherapists, a national-level sprinter, and a hockey player.

During the programme, many dignitaries spoke of India’s glorious tribal culture and praised Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s efforts for tribal upliftment.

### Tarun Vijay

Former Member, Rajya Sabha



“We should not forget that not only were

tribals a part of the armies of Shri Ram or Shivaji and Ranapratap, but today they are the first protectors of every boundary. They are the heart of India. When introduced to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I realized his tremendous, extraordinary work for tribal communities. Our tribal culture is alive today only because of the efforts of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

### **Richard Hawkes OBE**

Chief Executive, British Asian Trust



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life was one lived in the joy of others. It is truly incredible to see him build a global organization while retaining the ability to be with people from all walks of life – from world leaders to the average person in the streets and villages of India. I have been impressed with BAPS’s social work through schools and hospitals in India. BAPS is also doing amazing work in the UK, supporting COVID-19 vaccine efforts, providing oxygen concentrators in India, serving Ukrainian refugees, and helping address the cost-of-living crisis in the UK.

### **H.E. Mangubhai Patel**

Governor, Madhya Pradesh



“As a guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not just give blessings and preach; he believed himself to be a servant of God and therefore a servant of all humanity. As an ideal servant, he worked relentlessly in tribal areas, going from hut to hut, promoting de-addiction and uplifting them socially and economically. By freeing 4 million people from addictions, Pramukh Swami Maharaj actually freed 20 million people from misery when one counts all their family members as well. He created 110 mandirs and six *shikharbaddha* mandirs in tribal areas. His life has become a glorious chapter in human history.”



### **Mahant Swami Maharaj**

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj provided a distinctive definition of Adivasis. He said, ‘The oldest, ‘adi’, is God, and those in whose hearts God resides ‘vasi’ are Adivasis.’ This was not just wordplay, but Pramukh Swami Maharaj truly believed and lived this. Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, ‘Although others may consider tribals backward, I see God in them.’ This sentiment propelled him to travel from hut to hut in tribal areas, considering them as his family. He stayed at their homes without distinction. Through his selfless love, he transformed the lives of thousands of tribals, freeing them from addictions and bad habits and inspiring them to lead virtuous lives. Today, these same tribals have progressed academically, professionally and spiritually, teaching their children to also tread the same path. In fact, many males and females from the tribal communities are joyously serving as volunteers in this festival. Whatever he did, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did with his heart, and his heart was so pure, it touched everyone.”

### **HEALTH & SPIRITUALITY DAY: CELEBRATING INNER WELL-BEING 23 December 2022**

On the occasion of ‘Health & Spirituality Day: Celebrating Inner Well-Being’, illustrious dignitaries from the medical and spiritual fields joined Mahant Swami Maharaj at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.

An engaging video provided an overview of BAPS’s health services. Senior BAPS swamis, Anandswarupdas Swami and Swayamprakashdas Swami (Doctor Swami), remembered incidents from Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life that demonstrated his tireless efforts for the physical and spiritual well-being of millions.



Volunteers serve unitedly by laying paver blocks

### Dr M. Srinivas

Director, All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS)



“Being in the company of great souls like Pramukh Swami Maharaj reminds us how to live healthily in every aspect – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Purity of the heart, mind and soul is very important for everyone, including doctors. The world needs peace and health, for which the guidance of Mahant Swami Maharaj is very important for us all.”

### Padma Shri Dr Ashwin Mehta

Director, Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre



“Hinduism teaches us that a pure vegetarian diet is the way to good health. Pramukh Swami lived his entire life for others. One whose mind is pure, their body is pure. We know that anger causes high blood pressure and heart attacks. Thus, Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s teachings to do *ghar sabha* (daily home assembly), had a profound impact not only on a family’s spiritual and emotional health, but also on their physical health.”

**We can see the 80,000 volunteers in this *nagar*, some of whom are students, villagers, small-time shopkeepers, businessmen, American doctors and engineers, and yet everyone works seamlessly with tremendous unity.**  
Padma Shri Dr Tejas Patel



### Padma Shri Dr Tejas Patel

Chairman, Apex Heart Institute

“From the first time I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1978, I felt that despite him being such a great saint there was an instant deep connection with me, which lasted until the end of his life. I was tremendously touched by his simplicity and his deep personal connection with people. He would communicate with such ease with a toddler, a schoolchild, a college student, a physician, an industrialist, as well as with presidents and prime ministers of great nations, leaving a deep imprint on each of them. This skill of connectivity with everyone despite differences in background and language barriers was something that astounded me.

“I was also deeply impressed by his extraordinary leadership. We can see the 80,000 volunteers in this *nagar*, some of whom are students, villagers, small-time shopkeepers, businessmen, doctors and engineers, and yet everyone works seamlessly with tremendous unity. To see this profound positive influence of a single person on so many souls leaves me at a loss for words.”



### H.E. Banwarilal Purohit

Governor, Punjab

“I am astounded by what I have seen here. Pramukh Swami Maharaj must surely be looking down at this festival from above and blessing everyone who comes. I have never seen such a spiritual festival in my life. I don’t think anyone will be able to do this in the next 25 years. I will remember this day for the rest of my life.

“We give speeches about ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’, but

Pramukh Swami Maharaj truly created a spirit of the whole world as one family. He built so many temples across the world. This is not possible by an ordinary person. A divine energy was working through him.”



### Mahant Swami Maharaj

“Medical science today has proven that the body’s immune system is strengthened by prayer, service and forgiveness, so we should follow this advice. Science has also shown that fasting improves health by providing many forms of energy and eliminating many types of diseases.

“Speaking on health and spirituality, Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, ‘Eat less and forgive more.’ Along with healthy eating, every second of his life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj continually forgave. If we practise this principle, we will also benefit as will the world, as so many conflicts the world over are rooted in injudicious speech.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, ‘Spiritual talks, which nourish the mind, and service to others, which nurtures the body, leads to overall well-being.’ One with mental well-being can endure any physical problem. To control the mind is our key spiritual endeavour, and spirituality is the cure to the miseries of the mind.”

### DE-ADDICTION DAY

24 December 2022

In today’s evening assembly, Anirdeshdas Swami spoke about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s efforts in de-addicting countless people. Thereafter, an engaging video showed how Pramukh Swami Maharaj transformed countless people to live a pure and healthy life by giving up addictions.

**I have never seen such a spiritual festival in my life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj built so many temples across the world. This is not possible by an ordinary person.**  
H.E. Banwarilal Purohit



Visitor takes a pledge at the Niyam Kutir

### Padma Shri Dr Pankaj Shah

Director, Gujarat Cancer Research Institute



“I have witnessed Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s initiatives to stop addictions. During summer vacations, BAPS children visited homes and other places to convince people to quit addictions. This was the most effective way that I have seen in my entire life. The power of an innocent child to convince adults to quit addictions is truly divine. These de-addiction programmes by Pramukh Swami Maharaj are being carried forward by Mahant Swami Maharaj and will have far-reaching effects towards creating a more addiction-free and cancer-free society.”

### Mahant Swami Maharaj



“So many people were transformed through de-addiction programmes by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He was so pure that he purified all who came into his contact. Whoever connected with him was transformed and started living a clean and pure life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught us to live a beautiful life. A beautiful life has a strong positive impact on the family

and society. A life that inspires and benefits others and brings peace to oneself and thousands is needed.

“The world has a deficit of peace. Everything else can be found, but no one has peace. But a spiritual life can bring peace to the lives of thousands. Identifying your own faults and working towards self-improvement is vital. Do not sully the purity of your soul in your race to acquire money and power. Being pure, even if one is poor, is an infinitely better way of living. Only see good, do good and wish good for all.”

## NATIONAL SANT SAMMELAN

25 December 2022

A special morning convention was held in the presence of over 250 esteemed sadhus, mahants and *acharyas* from all over India.

The 250 delegates arrived at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar in the morning, where they were ceremoniously welcomed at the main Sant Dwar by hundreds of BAPS swamis before being honoured by a colourful procession through the *nagar*.

The convention commenced in the conference hall with Vedic chantings.

### Pujya Viveksagardas Swami

Sadguru Swami, BAPS



“This spiritual confluence of so many revered sadhus from different *sampradayas* feels like the Kumbh Mela. For decades, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had always held sadhus from all *sampradayas* in the highest esteem.”

### Pujyapad Parmatmanandji Maharaj

President, Bharatiya Acharya Sabha



“The land of Gujarat is incredibly sanctified as many sadhus have blessed it with their holy feet. The very breath of any religious organization is its sadhus and the saintliness they uphold.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj nurtured an order of sadhus who uphold the utmost saintliness.”

### Pujya Ravindra Puri Maharaj

President,  
Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad



“I bow to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who was a divine person. Throughout his life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj propagated Hindu culture to every corner of the world. We are all indebted to Pramukh Swami Maharaj for increasing the pride of sadhus in our community.”

### Pujya Jnandevsinhji Maharaj

Chairman, Nirmal Akhada



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj made all in his company spiritually immortal. He embodied, as a sadhu, the highest form of compassion and lived as a true servant of humanity.”

### Acharya Shri Avichaldasji Maharaj

Sarsa



“Anyone who wants to understand the role of a sadhu should look towards Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He was the best example. The Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar we see today is a result of the tireless work and meticulous planning of the sadhus. Pramukh Swami Maharaj nurtured an order of more than 1,000 sadhus. It is easy to preach on religious teachings, but only the sadhu who has renounced his home and family in the true sense can uplift society. The spirit of service and dedication are particularly apparent at this Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.”

### Atal Peethadheeshwar Pujya Swami Vishwatmanand Saraswati



“India is a land of saints, ascetics and sages, and it is a matter of great fortune for us all

that a great personality like Pramukh Swami Maharaj manifested here. Anyone who comes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar will become more familiar with Hindu culture.”

### **Jagadguru Shri Dharacharyaji Maharaj**



“Today one can see the forms of dharma (righteousness), *jnana* (knowledge), *vairagya* (worldly detachment) and *bhakti* (devotion) at this most sacred Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Bhagwan Swaminarayan infused divinity into the blessed land of Gujarat and liberated those in his association. Pramukh Swami Maharaj upheld the principal duty of a true sadhu to connect all swamis and devotees to God.”

### **Mahamandaleshwar Bhagwat Swarupdasji Maharaj**



“It was our great fortune that Pramukh Swami Maharaj had visited our ashram in Haridwar with 250 of his sadhus. Even though we all belong to different *sampradayas*, our religion and ultimate goal is the same. If we all attach our mind to a sadhu like Pramukh Swami Maharaj, we will undoubtedly attain ultimate liberation.”

### **Pujya Jitendranathji Maharaj** Head, Devnath Peeth



“Devotion towards God has spread worldwide from Gujarat, and praises of Akshar-Purushottam are reverberating in all directions. The swamis of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya are at the forefront of relaying the message of Hindu culture to all corners of the world. I firmly believe that if God wanted to descend on this earth in the form of a guru, then that would be through Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

### **Maha Mandaleshwar Dilipdasji Maharaj**

Mahant, Jagannath Mandir, Ahmedabad



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s works for religion and society were so phenomenal that today, on the occasion of his centenary celebrations, Hindu religious leaders from all over India have gathered here.”

### **Pujyapad Acharya Jeeyar Swami Laxmiprannaji**



“A true *sant* inspires life-transformation not by impressing people but by the purity of their life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a *sant*. I pray that swamis like Pramukh Swami Maharaj are born on this earth again and again.”

### **Mahant Swami Maharaj**



“I feel really blessed to have the darshan of swamis and mahants from across India. I offer my prostrations to you all, because all of you are nobly serving society. Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, ‘True religion is that which fosters mutual love.’ Today, as swamis and mahants from so many different *sampradayas* have gathered together, we see his words becoming a reality. I pray that we may all work together to serve society and that I may forever be the beneficiary of your blessings.”

### **Jagadguru Shankaracharya Shri Sadanand Saraswati Maharaj**



“I am delighted to be here at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, and I would like to thank Mahant Swami Maharaj for organizing these centenary celebrations. If all of us sadhus and mahants are unified, we will be able to serve society in the best possible manner.”



Revered sadhus, mahants and *acharyas* before the *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

## Evening Assembly

### Mahamandaleshwar Yatindranand Giriji

Juna Akhara



“In the Ramacharitmanas, Ram Bhagwan teaches us that one will find devotion to God only in the life of the true *sant*. Such a true *sant* was Pramukh Swami Maharaj. At his feet, all the problems of one’s life are resolved. Contact with Pramukh Swami Maharaj liberated millions from the slavery to addictions and connected them with God.

### Dattatreya Hosabale

General Secretary,  
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh



“The activities of BAPS and Pramukh Swami Maharaj have never been for their own benefit,

but for the benefit of society, the nation and the world. The extraordinary programmes organized at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar are kindling the sentiments of spirituality in the hearts of millions. There can be no greater service to humanity than creating a sense of spiritual contentment and joy in the hearts of people. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life was an embodiment of the four virtues of dharma – truth, purity, compassion and austerity. It is our good fortune that we have been born in India in this era.”

### Pujya Chidanand Saraswatiji

Head, Parmarth Niketan Ashram



“I have been deeply touched by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s simplicity and humility, gently guiding society by seeing God within everyone. Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is an extraordinary place infused with the divine



messages Pramukh Swami Maharaj conveyed through his life. This festival is teaching millions who attend that our global challenges such as conflicts, climate change and environmental degradation can only be addressed by implementing spiritual ideals in individuals, in families and in neighbourhoods, as that will ultimately transform the country and the world.”

### Singh Sahib Giani Ranjit Singhji

Head Granthi, Gurudwara  
Bangla Sahib, New Delhi



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj embodied the virtues of spirituality, humility and renunciation, which are the virtues of a true *sant*. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life was for others. From schools, hospitals and de-addiction campaigns to water pumps and many such

humanitarian activities, Pramukh Swami Maharaj worked to reduce others’ pain and benefit their lives. Thus we must pledge to follow his example by respecting all and loving and serving one another.”

### Mahamandaleshwar Dr Swami Rameshwardasji Maharaj

Manokamna Siddh Shri Hanuman Mandir



“88,000 rishis performed austerities at one time in Naimisharanya Kshetra, one of the most sacred sites in India. The 80,000 volunteers serving here are a representation of those rishis. Pramukh

**The activities of BAPS and Pramukh Swami Maharaj have never been for their own benefit, but for the benefit of society, the nation and the world.**  
Shri Dattatreya Hosabale

Swami Maharaj’s spiritual and social outlook and vision was broad and for the good of all. He revolutionized the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, creating mandirs and transforming society. The efforts and austerities of Pramukh

Swami Maharaj are the reason why the world considers him the spiritual leader of all.”

**SWAMINARAYAN LITERATURE DAY:  
CELEBRATING ETERNAL WISDOM**

**26 December 2022**

The evening assembly began at the Narayan Sabha Gruh at 4.45 p.m. with prayers and devotional bhajans.

Viveksagardas Swami, delivered a thought-provoking discourse on Swaminarayan literature. He said, “At Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s behest, his sadhus prolifically produced a rich diversity of literature in a variety of languages, including Sanskrit, Gujarati, Hindi and Braj, of various styles, sentiments and ideas. Nearly 35,000 kirtans were composed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s swami-disciples. Their prolificness was not at the expense of quality.

“Eminent scholars of Gujarati literature have praised the literary qualities of Swaminarayan literature. Mahatma Gandhi included many hymns of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s swami-disciples in his *Ashram Bhajanavali*, which he sang daily to gain spiritual inspiration. Swaminarayan literature was distinctive for being suffused with devotion.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj fostered that tradition started by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Many periodicals and newsletters were begun by Pramukh Swami Maharaj and are widely read by countless devotees. BAPS has published more than 700 books. Additionally, Pramukh Swami Maharaj encouraged the production of scholarly literature such as the *Swaminarayan Bhashyam*, which has been recognized and honoured by the Kashi Vidvat Parishad as well as dozens of universities around the world.”

Dignitaries and scholars present in the assembly also paid tributes by praising Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s contributions to literature.

**Every person’s  
personality reflects  
aspects of their parents; in  
Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
we saw aspects of God.  
Shri Madhav Ramanuj**

**Shri Madhav Ramanuj**

Eminent poet and writer



“Every person’s personality reflects aspects of their parents; in Pramukh Swami Maharaj we saw aspects of God. Meeting him felt like meeting a beloved family elder. He created more than a thousand mandirs, but innumerable inner mandirs in the hearts of those who loved him. His divine austerity soothed the fires burning society and spread compassion and peace. The swamis that learnt this from him and the devotees that learnt this from his swamis – created this wonderful *nagar*. There are no words to describe it. It is as if God has incarnated himself in this *nagar* and is gracing us with his presence. Our existence in his lifetime is our great fortune.”

**Shri Chandrakant Raghunath Patil**

BJP State President, Gujarat



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s work benefited the whole world. The 80,000 volunteers selflessly serving here together as one will benefit the world with their inspiring example. Despite the hundreds of thousands visiting this campus daily, I have not seen any disorder. This event offers lessons on service, duty and compassion that should be learned by all.”

**Dr Balwant Shantilal Jani**

Hon. Chancellor,  
Dr Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya



“Only Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s pure love could inspire thousands of 10- to 14-year-old children to organize and joyously serve in the Bal Nagari while continuing their education. This one facet of this event is an unparalleled contribution of BAPS to the world. In Pramukh

**Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
and his institution can  
astound the greatest man-  
agement experts through  
their creative capacity.  
I have never seen such a  
passion for service in any  
other organization.**

**Padma Shri Kumarpal Desai**



Child-volunteer explains to visitors  
about the Bal Nagari

Swami Maharaj Nagar, the visiting public offer homage to the entire Hindu tradition, which is represented through a variety of avatars and spiritual luminaries honoured on this campus. The essence of this festival is transforming people's lives to benefit the world. It is a platform to educate people about the richness of our vibrant culture."

### **Shri Raghuvir Chaudhary**

Former President,  
Gujarat Sahitya Parishad



"My favourite exhibition here is Sant Param Hitkari, which shows how Pramukh Swami Maharaj did so much for so many, regardless of caste or creed. When youths are trained, they are blessed with so much strength. This can be seen from how the young swamis are currently engaged in great works for society. I feel BAPS's greatest service to the world is its work in holistic child development. The enlightened guru has always been present in BAPS and will always remain."

### **Padma Shri Kumarpal Desai**

Trustee, Gujarat Vishwakosh Trust



"This event is neither ancient nor modern, but eternal because it is the celebration of a universal figure like Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught us to love unconditionally, to give unstintingly, to care unselfishly. He inspired a revolution, not

politically or militarily, but through his pure love. He was the very soul of this world; the light of India's culture and tradition. The first lesson he imparted was that of spirituality. The second was of service. He taught that selfless service to others benefits us spiritually. He inspired not just individuals, but entire families to serve. Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his institution can astound the greatest management experts through their creative capacity. Work that would take 50 years has been done in two years here by BAPS. I have never seen such a passion for service in any other organization.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj was not a sadhu of Gujarat, or any single *sampradaya* or religion, but a sadhu of the world. He was not merely the leader of Hinduism, he was the torchbearer of culture and the architect of global humanity. Pramukh Swami Maharaj provided a mother's love, a father's comfort, and a guru's wisdom. He revolutionized humanity by granting people completeness, enlightening them with spirituality. Pramukh Swami Maharaj helped countless people experience God. He did not just create mandirs, but he transformed everyone's homes into mandirs. Egoism, domination and expectations are the enemies of love; Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life was wholly devoid of these elements.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj's response to the



A volunteer answers a visitor's enquiry

terrorist attack on Akshardham was the highest ideal of forgiveness that helped the world realize what equanimity and true Indian culture is. Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave us universality. There is not the slightest distinction of caste, creed or background in BAPS. It embodies the highest ideal that the whole world is one family. In short, what did Pramukh Swami Maharaj give to us? For our lips – honesty, for our voice – prayer, for our hands – service, for our heart – spirituality, for our face – laughter and spiritual light.”

### **Bhagyesh Jha, IAS**

Chairperson, Gujarat Sahitya Academy



“Upon seeing Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, I feel immense happiness. In each particle of the *nagar*, I see Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His joyful face is evoked in my mind. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a protector of the consciousness belonging to this world and spirituality. This is not only a celebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary, but it is equally a celebration of the reawakening of the most ancient culture, a celebration of Hinduism, and a celebration of India's continued progress. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an ambassador of God's affection.”

### **Shri Ashok Singhal**

Union State Minister, Assam



“After coming here, I have realized not only the grandeur of this great *nagar*, but the faith and love for Pramukh Swami Maharaj that inspired this unimaginable service of 80,000 volunteers. Through them, we still feel Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine touch. Pramukh Swami Maharaj created a virtuous society. Thousands serve here day and night without expectation. This impossible feat is possible here only because of devotion and the purity of the guru. The Swaminarayan Sampradaya has inspired people to give, not take. Grand mandirs have been built by BAPS and countless children have been taught to be ideal moral citizens. This has been my personal experience.”

### **H.E. Rajendrakumar Arlekar**

Governor, Himachal Pradesh



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired the nation not just through his words, but through his work and work ethic. His life is itself an inspiration to us. As I entered this *nagar*, I felt there was a sense of faith and devotion that will inspire all who come here. I myself am inspired. Who would not be inspired by seeing this *nagar*. The entire event, on such a large scale, is organized without chaos or mismanagement. It is an example for the whole world. It inspires us to leave with an uplifting message. I have not come here to guide, but to learn from you and this festival. The objective behind celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary is to awaken society to serve the nation and the world. An inner self-awakening inspired by the blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj will propel our country to great heights.”

## Mahant Swami Maharaj



“Through the speeches of eminent scholars, we have learned a great deal about the spiritual literature written by the swamis of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, ‘We should develop a habit of reading religious and spiritual literature that will benefit our lives.’ We should not read things that will pollute our minds or discourage us from moral living. The Vachanamrut, Swamini Vato and biographies of our gurus should be read daily as they contain immense spiritual wisdom. Unfortunately, people are less attracted to this spiritual literature, but are enticed by worldly content. We should not read impure content, as it will be difficult for us to escape from their impressions. Read only one or two lines, but read something that will benefit your life.

Our reading should be coupled with prayer, as that will help instil what we read in our lives. One should not just continuously read, but pause, introspect, and contemplate upon what one has read. Such reading will be immensely beneficial to you.”

## VICHARAN DAY 27 December 2022

Adarshjivandas Swami narrated episodes from the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj on the faith he fostered in society through his travels.

Pujya Viveksagaradas Swami delivered a discourse on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s epic *vicharan* and its liberating impact.

A video depicted Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s unceasing travels.

Many dignitaries joined



Countless pay respects at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar

Mahant Swami Maharaj to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divine and selfless life.

## Shri R.S. Sodhi Managing Director, Amul



“Dr Verghese Kurien had great reverence for Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and had often said, ‘What Pramukh Swami Maharaj did for society is so immense that my work appears negligible.’ Of the many facets of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s leadership, I have been most impressed by his ability to connect with everyone, especially today’s youth. He made the impossible possible – whether it be in the form of building temples or doing relief work. He transformed lives. I have learned that he enabled swamis of BAPS to become experts in the fields of architecture, Sanskrit and

**As I entered this *nagar*,  
I felt there was a sense  
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agement. It is an example  
for the whole world.**

**H.E. Rajendrakumar Arlekar**

many more without any formal education or training. He helped people live addiction-free lives. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was calm and stable no matter the situation. Where any leader would have been destabilized by the horrific Akshardham terrorist attack, he kept society calm through his own equanimity.”



Giant murti of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

### Swami Ramdevji Maharaj

Yogacharya, Patanjali Yoga Peeth



“We are witness to a revolution in the form of this unforgettable Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations. I have seen three Kumbh Melas, but this festival is a Mahakumbh! This 600-acre site is the pride and embodiment of Hinduism. This festival is the perfect example of how an effective and inspiring event can be organized. There is no professional mind at work here; it is the divine power of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

“I had taken Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s blessings thirty years ago in Surat, when I was a nobody. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is not just the pride of BAPS or the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, but of the entire Hindu faith.

“I experienced a profound peace in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divinity, and whenever I meet Mahant Swami Maharaj, I feel like I am meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

### Shri Vajubhai Vala

Former Governor, Karnataka



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj embodied the

qualities of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and Mahesh the destroyer of sins and vices. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had an innocent laugh and loving compassionate eyes, which I cannot forget. Pramukh Swami Maharaj lit 1,100 lamps in the form of swamis that inspire thousands of others. We must become inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj and continue his legacy.”

### Shri Balkrishna Shukla

MLA and Chief Whip of BJP Gujarat



“I am confident that the main inspiration for India’s celebrations of 75 years of independence will come from here. BAPS is the best school to learn management. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi often says that if you want to learn management, go to BAPS for six months. This festival is a testament to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s and Mahant Swami Maharaj’s inspiration, and we pray that this attitude also spreads across Gujarat.”

Other guests who addressed the assembly were Justice N.V. Ramana, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, and Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Business and Commerce.

### SEVA DAY: CELEBRATING SELFLESS SERVICE 28 December 2022

In the evening assembly, several leaders and dignitaries joined Mahant Swami Maharaj to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s tireless and selfless services to society around the world.

### Shri Arvind Babbal

Renowned Director and Producer



“I prostate to everyone who has offered their time, effort and service in creating this *nagar*. It has been done through Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s blessings. The way everyone

is working is a reflection of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's impact on them."

### **Dr Afroz Ahmad**

Member, National Green Tribunal of India



"I was with the Narmada Control Authority for thirty years, and this was a big challenge for me as there was vehement opposition to allow the water of Narmada to enter Gujarat. I was stressed as to the outcome because politically and legally there was massive opposition – not just nationally, but internationally. When I came to Gujarat, I was told to meet Pramukh Swami Maharaj. On meeting him, he asked me the status of the project. On informing him that it was pending in the Supreme Court in New Delhi, he blessed me and said that Bhagwan Swaminarayan will take care of everything. I went to Delhi where we won in the Supreme Court. This was just the beginning. Every hurdle we faced was solved through Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's words have led to the uplift of society, helped eradicate poverty and further democracy. He blessed me that I would be a judge one day and today I am pleased to state that I have been appointed a judge at the National Green Tribunal."

### **Shri P.K. Laheri (IAS)**

Former Chief Secretary,  
Government of Gujarat



"For over forty years, I have had many opportunities to meet, travel with and learn from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Words fall short in describing his true greatness. The key thing that touched me from his life was that in all situations, he calmly accepted God's will and saw himself only as God's instrument. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had absolutely no attraction towards worldly things, and yet he helped every person who came to him with their



Selfless service of the volunteers

worldly concerns or problems because, like the famous verse of Narsinh Mehta '*Vaishnav Jan...*', Pramukh Swami Maharaj empathized with the suffering of others. But his heights of spirituality were such that despite fully engaging in solving the problems of the hundreds of thousands of people who came to him, he was ever calm and blissful because he was absorbed in God.

"He devoted himself to accomplishing the Narmada Dam project. He would proactively help in the coordination work and on other fronts. The de-addiction campaigns he inspired were another exemplary social contribution of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He always looked to uplift others during the course of his entire life."

### **Dr Sudhanshu Trivedi**

Member of Parliament and Senior  
National Spokesperson for BJP



"What do we gain from serving others? There is a constant give and take in the world. Focusing on how to take more from others engenders negative vibrations. But when we serve others without expectation, we emanate pure, positive vibrations that not only help others, but also purify one's inner self. Tulsidas said that the hardest thing to do is serve with the purest intentions, but serving like this was natural for Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I feel that his ideals of service, his pure thoughts and sentiments are still alive. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had immense

compassion for all of society, and so he worked his entire life to nurture family unity. His inspiration to countless people led them to live with love with their family, which was not just beneficial for the family but for the prosperity of the nation. Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired the entire world to imbibe Hindu values and perform selfless service. I'm confident that due to his inspiration, India will rise in the 21st century, not to dominate the world, but to motivate the world."

**Vinay Sahasrabudhe**  
Member of Parliament and  
President, Indian Council for  
Cultural Relations



"Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar seems to be a dream constructed by the gods. Thousands of people like me take inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but today at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, I have come to the source of inspiration for great leaders like him.

"Some time ago, upon visiting the seminary for the training of swamis in Sarangpur, I realized that BAPS was fostering a revolution of service, virtues and spirituality. Today, I have seen so many successful professionals who are serving here as volunteers. I saw doctors, CEOs, engineers offering service, which is an indication of the messages taught by BAPS in India and across the world. I was impressed by their enthusiasm as well as their discipline and commitment. The art of developing civil societies on the foundation of strong values should be learnt from BAPS."

### Mahant Swami Maharaj

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj's entire life was dedicated to the service of others. He did not spend a second of his life devoid of service. He even served others mentally. He might have appeared to be sitting calmly,



**The art of developing civil societies on the foundation of strong values should be learnt from BAPS.**  
Vinay Sahasrabudhe

but his thoughts were always focused on how to serve others and help them to progress.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj served with the purest of intentions. He said, 'We must not serve with the expectation of public acclaim, but to do concrete work that positively impacts society. We should not limit our service to our own circle, but we must expand it to encompass everyone, such that our entire life is immersed in service.' In this way, Pramukh Swami Maharaj served society sincerely and without distinction.

"He also taught that we should never denigrate other organizations that are serving society. For example, when many organizations had organized cattle camps during the drought of 1987, Pramukh Swami Maharaj insisted that we should never say that we are the best and others are lesser, but we should understand that everyone is serving according to their own capacity. He taught that instead of engaging in comparison with others, we should continually improve our own service and strive to serve the best we possibly can. However, we should never nurture even the thought that others are lesser than us and we are better.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj said that we should be happy to bear hardships in service, but we should never try to show something that we are not. Pramukh Swami Maharaj disliked pretence, and in his own life, he served with the sole thought that God may be pleased.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj saw service as devotion to God and his gurus. This is an element of service that is forgotten. We should serve with the intention to please God, not to gain accolades. Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, 'God recognizes our service, so whether others recognize it or not does not matter.' We must serve with the firm conviction that God sees our service. We

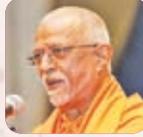
should not just superficially serve to show others. Pramukh Swami Maharaj embodied these ideals of pure and true service, without any thought of public acclaim.”

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## **FAMILY UNITY DAY: CELEBRATING FAMILY VALUES**

**29 December 2022**

**Pujya Swayamprakashdas Swami (Doctor Swami)**  
Sadguru Swami, BAPS



“Just as we need air to survive, we need unity to thrive. Pramukh Swami Maharaj used to stress, ‘The family that eats, prays and plays together, stays together.’ He provided a four-point formula for fostering unity in families: only if everyone in a family can tolerate others, sacrifice for others, let go for others and adjust for others can we secure harmony within a family. Indeed, family unity is the essence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Centenary Celebrations. If we can progress in our family unity, we will experience the joy of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar at home; every day will feel like a festival.”

Many other dignitaries joined Mahant Swami Maharaj to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life and work: Shri Harsh Sanghvi, Home Minister of Gujarat; Shri Shaktisinh Gohil, National Spokesperson, Indian National Congress and Member of Parliament; Shri Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji, President, Jan Shikshan Sansthan Mahavidyapeetha; Pujya Swami Nikhileshwaranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Ashram, Rajkot; Shri Amit Chavda, Member of Legislative Assembly Gujarat and Former State President, Indian National Congress; Shri Dilip Joshi, Popular Indian Film and Television Actor and Shri Jairaj C. Thacker, Managing Trustee, Narsee Monjee Education Trust.

## **EDUCATION DAY: CELEBRATING VALUE-BASED EDUCATION**

**30 December 2022**

Jnanvatsaldas Swami explained, “When only our hands work, it is called labour. When our head – intelligence – is added to our hands, that labour becomes skill. And when our heart – set of values – is integrated with our head and hands, that same skill becomes an art. That is why Pramukh Swami Maharaj used to explain, ‘The heart of education is the education of the heart.’ This is essential, because we do not need just engineers, doctors, architects, scientists, others; we need good engineers, doctors, architects and scientists – those who are not just experts in their respective fields, but who are guided by and grounded in universal values such as integrity and compassion.”

Many dignitaries also joined Mahant Swami Maharaj to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s inspiring life and work.

### **Dr Rajesh Khajuria**

Commissioner, Accreditation Council for Business Schools & Programmes (ACBSP), USA



“Gautam Buddha used to say, ‘Religions are the signposts of gods,’ but seeing the saintliness of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I can say that Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the only signpost of God. By creating 1,200 magnificent mandirs around the world, including over 100 in North America and cultural complexes like Akshardham in Gandhinagar and Delhi, Pramukh Swami Maharaj achieved what no emperor or king could do in the last five centuries. Upon visiting BAPS mandirs in India and the USA and by interacting with the devotees, I feel that the common thread among all of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s work is faith. Through his mandirs, swamis and thousands of volunteers who work selflessly for the betterment of the world, Pramukh Swami Maharaj showed our world the power of such faith.”



**Padma Shri T.V. Mohandas Pai**  
Chairman, Manipal Global Education  
(Manipal University)



“Today, humanity is seeing unprecedented challenges amid a digital revolution. These challenges include an aging population, destructive climate change due to rapacious consumption, and unbridled technological advances with artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotics replacing human beings. We are also seeing societal destabilization due to increasing religious conflict and a widening gap between rich and poor in many countries. Amid these challenges, India is rising up to be a great power once again because of the energy of our people and the wisdom of our holy saints and ancient civilization. To resolve the challenges of humanity, we must learn from Pramukh Swami Maharaj who taught us to live together as human beings, to be compassionate, to care for our children, and to care for nature. He established mandirs worldwide to inspire countless people to live in peace, to care for everyone and harm no one in society. I am confident that inspired by the teachings of

**To resolve the challenges of humanity, we must learn from Pramukh Swami Maharaj who taught us to live together as human beings, to be compassionate, to care for our children, and to care for nature.**

**Padma Shri T.V. Mohandas Pai**

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, BAPS will carry on their extraordinary work of educating humanity on how to live in this new world, find peace within, have compassion for others, take care of our planet, and make sure that all of us leave a better world for our children.”

**Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Debji**

Chairman, Shri Jagannatha Temple  
Managing Committee, Jagannath Puri



“Hindu shastras explain, ‘True education is that which liberates.’ This is one of India’s great contributions to the world, to teach us that alongside our outer, physical advancements in society, we must also elevate ourselves spiritually within. A country ultimately comprises of people, not just buildings or roads. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s vision and work for improving the inner character of people was his great contribution to the world. He educated people to make them ideal human beings. His example needs to be emulated around the world. I was deeply touched by his compassion and eagerness to alleviate the suffering of all those affected in the Odisha



Mahant Swami Maharaj and guest speakers on Education Day assembly

supercyclone in 1999. His inner divinity manifested in every project that he undertook, including the rehabilitation work in Odisha.”

**Pujya Swayamprakashdas Swami (Dr Swami)**

Sadguru Swami, BAPS



“It is said that ‘Character is the highest wisdom.’ Although no degrees are conferred for character, in our history, people with no educational qualifications have attained exceptional achievements. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s formal education was only upto sixth grade in Gujarati medium. Yet, his spiritually elevated life uplifted all. Thus, we see that character is the highest wisdom. More important than schools or colleges are character and faith in God. What you see at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is not the result of educational qualifications, but the result of spirituality and faith in God.”

**Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Dr Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji**

Pontiff, Sri Adichunchanagiri Mahasamsthana Math, Bengaluru



“Einstein said that science can denature plutonium, but it cannot change the wickedness of the human heart. If modern knowledge cannot change the evil qualities of human beings and bestow us with values, what is the solution? We must

adopt an education that helps one realize the divinity within. Only such a person can understand and serve society. With this vision, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired 1,000 swamis, 1,200 mandirs and more than 5,000 satsang centres to propagate spiritual education and true knowledge. I have visited BAPS mandirs in America and seen the morality and values they have fostered in children and youth. I am very grateful that BAPS has been providing value-based education, imparting moral values and spirituality to countless people. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a great, inspiring personality and an embodiment of love and divinity to whose divine soul I have been prostrating with ecstasy. His successor Mahant Swami Maharaj is well-versed with modern science and the metaphysical world, making his teaching easily acceptable to all facets of society.”

**If modern knowledge cannot change the evil qualities of human beings and bestow us with values, what is the solution? We must adopt an education that helps one realize the divinity within.**

**Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Dr Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji**



Scholars present a plaque, 'Sanatan Dharma Jyoti', to honour Pramukh Swami Maharaj

### Mahant Swami Maharaj



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj used to say, ‘Education without values destroys, while education with values protects us.’ Scholars may have immense knowledge, but the inability to apply that knowledge in their lives makes their knowledge futile. Education is needed for national progress, but without spiritual knowledge, education is incomplete. Education coupled with values benefits all.

“Yogiji Maharaj used to say that students should study eight hours a day, but nurture their moral and spiritual character 24 hours a day. An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of theory. Character deficiencies cause tremendous problems, so only value-based education that fosters character will ultimately bring success and happiness to a person’s life. Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj established students’ hostels and educational institutes to provide society such value-based education.”

**My experience at Pramukh Swami Maharaj nagar has taught me that if one is determined, harbours pure thoughts and has the blessings of true sadhus, then one can achieve anything.**

**Padma Bhushan  
Shri Vijay Bhatkar**

### DARSHAN SHASTRA DAY: CELEBRATING TIMELESS WISDOM

31 December 2022

More than 30 eminent Sanskrit scholars from all over India conferred the honour of ‘Sanatan Dharma Jyoti’ to Pramukh Swami Maharaj for his countless contributions to foster, nourish and protect the timeless wisdom of Hinduism, Indian philosophy and his continuous encouragement to preserve and promote the Vedic scriptural tradition. The citation was presented to Mahant Swami Maharaj in an evening assembly themed: ‘Darshan Shastra Day: Celebrating Timeless Wisdom’, at the Narayan Sabha Gruh.

### Mahamahopadhyay Bhadreshdas Swami



“I bow to all the honourable guests on the stage today, who have gathered from all over India – Kashi, Tirupati, Nagpur, Assam, Somnath and other places. We are indeed blessed to see so many eminent scholars together; seeing them is like seeing a physical manifestation of the rich treasures of India’s glorious knowledge.



“Bhagwan Swaminarayan revealed Akshar-Purushottam Darshan through his life, work and teachings, including the Vachanamrut. He revealed that Purushottam is distinct from, superior to and the inspirer of Akshar, who also serves as the abode of Purushottam. One must realize one’s true spiritual identity from the Aksharbrahma guru on earth and perfectly devote oneself to Purushottam.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired and guided swamis as well as devotees to study this rich heritage of Hindu shastras and research the various Darshan schools to bring forth their wealth of knowledge to benefit the whole world. We are truly indebted to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and also Mahant Swami Maharaj who is currently inspiring this great work of global spiritual welfare.”

**Padma Bhushan Shri Vijay Bhatkar**  
Architect of India’s supercomputer  
and Chancellor, Nalanda University



“My experience at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar has taught me that if one is determined, harbours pure thoughts and has the blessings of true sadhus, then one

**I will remain forever astounded by the excellence of the management here, as I lost my glasses somewhere last night and before I left the campus two hours later, my glasses were handed back to me by a volunteer.**

**Professor Vijaykumar CG**

can achieve anything. My parents and I have achieved great academic heights from a humble background. I always wondered whether I would ever be able to view India’s greatness as it was in ancient times. I am convinced after seeing Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar that due to the divine impact of Pramukh Swami Maharaj our country will achieve that same greatness and become a world power in this century.”

**Dr Vijaykumar CG**

Vice-Chancellor, Maharshi Panini Sanskrit and Vedic University, Ujjain



“Amazed by the unexpected magnificence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. I realize now that this festival is meant to inspire a spiritual consciousness throughout society. The exhibitions’ depiction of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s compassion left me in tears. I was elated to hear the young children volunteers on this campus speaking so confidently in Sanskrit. Throughout the campus, there was an impressive confluence of spirituality and technology in the service of fostering a positive spiritual consciousness. The tremendous spirit of

selfless volunteerism in the hearts of the 80,000 volunteers who have made this campus possible leaves me at a loss for words. I will remain forever astounded by the excellence of the management here, as I lost my glasses somewhere last night amongst the crowd of over 200,000, and before I left the campus two hours later, my glasses were handed back to me by a volunteer.”

### **Dr Lalitkumar Patel**

Vice-Chancellor, Shri Somnath Sanskrit University, Veraval



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj had won the hearts of people of all faiths around the world. His life was divine, and he served selflessly, constantly travelling for the uplift of all humanity. Of the many significant shastras in our tradition, the Upanishads show the truth of the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan, which is reflected throughout this divine, incredible, unimaginable Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. I am proud that Shri Somnath Sanskrit University was the first university to introduce Akshar-Purushottam Darshan into its academic curriculum.”

### **Professor Ramnarayan Dwivedi**

Mahamantri, Kashi Vidvat Parishad; Professor and Head of Department, Banaras Hindu University



“After holding a comprehensive discussion on the texts, every scholar present accepted and declared Akshar-Purushottam Darshan as an independent Vedic Darshan. Esteemed scholars of Kashi held an assembly to honour the commentaries. The *Swaminarayan Bhashyam* is unparalleled. Its creation is only possible through the blessings of the Divine and guru. I urge all universities to include this shastra in their curriculum.”

### **Professor Haridas Bhatt**

Renowned Madhva Scholar



“The principals of all Sanskrit universities

are gathered here today to honour Pramukh Swami Maharaj with the ‘Sanatan Dharma Jyoti’ proclamation. He is a most fitting recipient of this honour because, just as the commentaries by Bhadreshdas Swami that he guided him to compose, he did not criticize any other faith or belief system. His inclusive vision is remarkable that all those who serve God are of equal importance and can receive the same love from God as scholars. The Swaminarayan Sampradaya has been renowned as a devotional sect. But today, it has proven to be based on knowledge, in philosophical and theological principles grounded in the Upanishads.”

### **Mahamahopadhyay Harikrishna Satapathy**



“This *nagar* is an incredible, magnificent and unbelievable experience. When I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj during his relief work in Odisha after the super cyclone of 1999, I was overwhelmed by the love in his eyes. He did not just speak nice words, but lived scriptural values and inspired others to do the same. In this *nagar*, I can see ‘*Ishāvāsyam idam sarvam...*’ from the Isha Upanishad being practised by the volunteers; they are sincerely serving everyone equally without distinction and without craving anything.”

### **Mahant Swami Maharaj**



“Bhagwan Swaminarayan revealed the essence of all the shastras by declaring that one should identify one’s *atma* with Akshar and worship Purushottam. The body is an obstacle in identifying with Akshar, and the shastras help us understand the distinction between body and *atma*. Only by spiritually connecting with the Aksharbrahma guru can one identify

with Akshar. This must be the primary spiritual endeavour of our life, as only after the *atma* is purified can it truly worship Purushottam. That is why Shastriji Maharaj installed the *murtis* of Akshar and Purushottam in the central shrine of the mandirs. Shastriji Maharaj explained that Brahma and Parabrahma are the quintessence of all the shastras, and Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj instilled this in the lives of hundreds of thousands of devotees.”

### Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami

Eminent Scholar, Head of Radha Raman Temple in Vrindavan and Gaudiya Vaishnav Leader



“Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj revealed himself on this earth as a *sadhak* (seeker), but actually he was *sadhya*, meaning God himself came as a guru and guided the seekers towards the path of divinity.

“Today, Pramukh Swami Maharaj is alive and established in the hearts of millions of devotees. Millions of bubbles were filled with colours in making the picture of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, but even when the bubbles burst the colour of bhakti and divinity will never diminish from the hearts of devotees.”

## KIRTAN-BHAKTI BY BAPS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

1 January 2023

In the evening assembly, over 170 BAPS children and youths from 10 countries sang bhajans celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divine life. The beautiful performance began at 5.00 p.m. at the Narayan Sabha Gruh. Some of the stage guest who addressed the assembly are as follows.

### Padma Vibhushan Jagadguru

Ramanandacharya Swami

Rambhadracharyaji

Founder and Chancellor, Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Divyanga University



“The bliss obtained through a single moment with an enlightened *sant* is greater than the

pleasures of countless heavens. I had this very experience when I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I experienced four exceptional virtues in Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His face exuded constant bliss, his heart was permeated with infinite compassion, his speech was exceptionally sweet, and his hands worked solely for the good of others.”

### Padma Shri Dr Sanjay D. Patil

President, D.Y. Patil Group



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj brought inspiration, happiness and love to the lives of millions. So it is no surprise that hundreds of thousands from around the world daily flock to this festival. I congratulate the planning and coordination of the thousands of volunteers whose selfless service has gifted the world this divine atmosphere of devotion and faith. As I have always believed that the blessings of God and parents are needed for success in life, the New Year blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj will ensure I will be able to do good in the upcoming year.”

### Mahant Swami Maharaj



“Yogiji Maharaj used to say, ‘Singing and listening to bhajans are my spiritual inclination.’ So he will have indeed been greatly pleased with the performance of the children and youths today. He always blessed children and youths who offered such devotion.

“Children and youths have so much strength, energy and talent. Pramukh Swami Maharaj nourished and channelled that for the betterment of society. Today’s wonderful musical programme is a vivid demonstration of that. We should also appreciate the many swamis and volunteers who patiently worked hard to develop and mentor these children and youths.



Mahant Swami Maharaj and the stage guests during the Children's Day evening programme

“We also thank Jagadguru Rambhadracharyaji, Dr Patil and all our stage guests today for encouraging these performers in their devotional tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

## CHILDREN'S DAY: CELEBRATING THE FUTURE

2 January 2023

Hundreds of children from BAPS children's centres around the world presented an exhilarating evening programme titled, 'Thank you Pramukh Swami!'

The evening programme began at 4.30 p.m. with 65 children engrossing the audience in devotional bhajans. Thereafter, the various activities of the BAPS Children's Forum were presented through engaging skits and dances.

A video portraying glimpses of BAPS children's activities was shown.

A number of successful men and women who had gained inspiration and life skills through their participation in BAPS children's activities were honoured in the assembly. They included Gujarat Assistant Commissioner of Labour Nehaba Parmar, founder of Paper N Parcels and

India's youngest entrepreneur Tilak Mehta, Deputy Director of Gujarat Information Ministry Nitya Trivedi, FlyDubai airline Pilot Vinay Gajra, US Army Blackhawk Helicopter Crew Chief Sapna Patel, Harley Street (UK) Periodontist Dr Reena Wadia, Senior Vice President of Engineering at LinkedIn Mohak Shroff, and American COVID vaccine campaigner Dr Mayank Amin.

The evening's 'Children's Day: Celebrating the Future' programme concluded with children expressing their heartfelt gratitude through a special presentation, 'Thank you Pramukh Swami.'

### Shri William Selvamurthy

President, Amity Science, Technology & Innovation Foundation



“I am blessed to begin this New Year in this heavenly, blissful and divine place. I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj over 20 years ago, and I used to often go with Dr Abdul Kalam to visit him at Akshardham in New Delhi.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj constructed a thousand temples over four decades. This is not humanly possible. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an avatar

**The young children who performed are gaining invaluable lessons in character to enable them to eventually create this new global order of peace.**  
Shri William Selvamurthy



who had come to this world to uplift and transform humanity. He was an embodiment of unconditional love and compassion for everyone. He expressed compassion not only in words but in deeds. This philosophy motivated his disaster relief, educational and healthcare activities.

“I am convinced that by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s inspiration his disciples around the world will create a new world order of global peace, harmony, good health and happiness for everyone. The young children who performed are gaining invaluable lessons in character to enable them to eventually create this new global order of peace.”

#### **Dr Vishwanath Karad**

Founder, MIT World Peace University, Pune



“I feel that Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is not man-made but a creation of the Divine. I can witness a new face of Indian culture in this place. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a pure soul who created more than 1,200 mandirs and built several educational institutions, which is not humanly possible. Pramukh

Swami Maharaj was a God-realized soul. His eyes radiated divine light.”

#### **Padma Vibhushan Shri Prathap C. Reddy**

Founder & Chairman,  
Apollo Hospitals Group



“I applaud Mahant Swami Maharaj and all the volunteers for this absolutely marvellous, wonderful creation for the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations. It is marvellous because Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a marvellous person, and a divine blessing for the nation and the world. I am very grateful to all the swamis and thrilled with the volunteers for what you have created in just a few months. I feel it is a very fitting tribute for a great soul like Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj not only created over a thousand mandirs, but he personally uplifted and transformed the lives of people of all ages. We are all here because of the great services and blessings of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, which has done phenomenal work not just in propagating spirituality, but also teaching how to live as a good human being.

“One day, Pramukh Swami Maharaj called to bless me, my family, the entire Apollo family, and all the patients. He told me, ‘You are here to serve people. You must serve them as your children.’ The experience I felt at hearing his words is indescribable and miraculous. Though words cannot express how I felt, I think all of you know whenever you walk into a Swaminarayan mandir, you have that feeling

that you are here for a purpose that you must fulfil. Whatever services I have been able to offer to society, I attribute to the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj who touched my heart and significantly impacted my life.”

**I applaud Mahant Swami Maharaj and all the volunteers for this absolutely marvellous, wonderful creation. Pramukh Swami Maharaj significantly impacted my life.**

**Padma Vibhushan  
Shri Prathap C. Reddy**



Security volunteers at night

### Shri Madhavsinh Diwan

Diwan of Bilada



“As my mother was a staunch BAPS follower, she insisted that my father, the Diwan of Bilada State, invite Shastriji Maharaj to our home in Rajasthan. My father was not a believer, so when Shastriji Maharaj came, he refused to meet him. On the last night of Shastriji Maharaj’s stay, my father experienced *samadhi*, in which he saw the image of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Gunatitanand Swami, which transformed into Shastriji Maharaj. He woke my mother and told her what had happened. In the morning, he went to see Shastriji Maharaj and performed the *arti*. My father passed away soon after, but Shastriji Maharaj would look after me. Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj showered their compassion upon me. My relationship with him was both a father-son and a guru-disciple relationship, and I pray the same relationship continues with Mahant Swami Maharaj.”

### Mahant Balaknath Yogi

Chancellor, Baba Mast Nath University and 8th Spiritual Head of the Nath Sampradaya



“What Pramukh Swami Maharaj achieved in independent India and abroad, no one in India’s history has been able to do. He was the pillar

of Indian and Hindu society. It is no easy task to build a mandir. There is no discrimination in mandirs. They preach love and service to society. Today, the whole world needs the messages of Hindu culture. It was Pramukh Swami Maharaj who tirelessly spread these messages. This is why I believe the world looks at India as a leader.”

### Bandhu Triputi Pujya Shri Jinchandraji Maharaj

Founder, Shantidham Aradhana Kendra



“It is rare to find such a divine person like Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I have always been attracted to his divinity. I have seen him up close. Whenever I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I was reminded of Bhagwan Mahavir’s words, ‘Only one who is soft-hearted, accommodating, humble and generous is pure enough to uphold dharma.’ Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a pure *sant*.”

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj never discriminated. He believed everyone to be his. He ignited the light of morality and spirituality in everyone. Whenever we see Mahant Swami Maharaj, we also find true saintliness.

“Thousands of volunteers and swamis have worked tirelessly day and night to create this magnificent *nagar*. It is difficult to build even one home, and so to build an entire *nagar* is extraordinary. I have been going around the *nagar* since 3 p.m. and can truly say that there is nothing lacking. I must tell others that to understand cleanliness, guru-bhakti and service, you must go to Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.

“I fondly recall the image consecration ceremony of the mandir in Tithal, the town where I live. Can you imagine that Pramukh Swami Maharaj called me, a Jain muni, to enter into the inner sanctum during the *pratishtha* rituals. I was touched! He even visited one of our Bandhu Triputi gurus when he was ill. Even we did not know how he found out that the Jain

muni was ill. This shows his unparalleled love and compassion was without distinction of faith or religion. He was a true *sant* who wished for the good of everyone.”

**Pujya Vishwa Prasanna  
Tirth Swamiji**  
President, Pejawar Math



“People have come from around the world to this *nagar* because Pramukh Swami Maharaj worked to instil values in people everywhere. A society’s future is reflected in the future of its children. Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave children the values that will make tomorrow’s society prosperous and peaceful. This work is continuing today, showing us that Pramukh Swami Maharaj is still within the form of Mahant Swami Maharaj.”

**Shri Ashwini Vaishnav**  
Union Minister of Railways,  
Communications & Electronics &  
Information Technology



“It is my honour to have received the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. Mahant Swami Maharaj told me, ‘In whatever work you do, you should keep the spirit of service at the forefront.’ I can see the thousands of volunteers at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar have created such a breathtaking campus by imbibing this teaching.

“Inspired by the selfless service of all the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha’s followers around the world, I offer a small token of service to the community by renaming the ‘Gujarat Sampark Kranti Express’ train as ‘Akshardham Express’ in honour of Pramukh Swami Maharaj as it will connect his two divine creations – Akshardham Gandhinagar and Akshardham New Delhi.”

**I have been going around the *nagar* since 3 p.m. and can truly say that there is nothing lacking. To understand cleanliness, guru-bhakti and service, you must go to Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.**

**Pujya Shri Jinchandrajii  
Maharaj**



**Mahant Swami Maharaj**

“I offer my congratulations to the children for their exceptional performance today on the occasion of Children’s Day. Small children are often ignored, but they are doing good work now and will do great things in the future. Pramukh Swami Maharaj always showered his spiritual love on children. Children felt that Pramukh Swami Maharaj was theirs and elders also felt that Pramukh Swami Maharaj was theirs. In this way, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had won everyone’s hearts.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj often told children, ‘You should regularly attend the mandir, bow down to your parents, study hard, and pray daily. This is your service to us.’ Pramukh Swami Maharaj also used to tell parents, ‘If you do not instil values in your children, you will lose both your children and your wealth.’ In this way, Pramukh Swami Maharaj cared for the cultivation of character in the young generation.”

## **YOUTH DAY: CELEBRATING THE POWER OF YOUTH**

**3 January 2023**

The BAPS Youth Wing presented a programme of inspirational dramas, bhajans, videos and speeches that paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s selfless love and tireless efforts

for the moral, spiritual, social and academic development of hundreds of thousands of youths around the world.

Speaking about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s inspiration to youths, motivational speaker Jignesh Dada said, “Many would flock to celebrate a person’s life in their presence, but when I



witness hundreds of thousands of people flocking here daily without a hitch to celebrate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's pious life, it is conclusive proof that his divine consciousness is present here.

### Yagnapriyadas Swami

Head, BAPS Satsang Activities  
Central Office



“Children and youths yearn for love, and Pramukh Swami Maharaj had showered his pure, divine love upon them. He fulfilled all their wishes and pleased them. Pramukh Swami Maharaj not only recognized and validated their affection and feelings, but he also forgave youths for their mistakes and guided them onto the right path. As a result of his affection, youths confidently navigated through difficulties, adopted religious observances, and cultivated values like integrity. Today, his love has inspired countless highly educated and professionally qualified youths to serve in this *nagar*.”

Thereafter, a video of Pramukh Swami Maharaj addressing youths was shown in which he said, “Typically, youths crave for parties and are averse to spiritual assemblies, but you have all come here inspired by Yogiji Maharaj, who had declared, ‘Youths are my heart.’ Giving youths such an important place as his heart, we can see the immense love and compassion

Yogiji Maharaj had showered upon youths. As Yogiji Maharaj's heart, youths must do good and refrain from bad habits and activities so that his heart is well protected. If we do what Yogiji Maharaj liked, he would be pleased with us.”

### Shri Jinalbhai Mehta

Managing Director, Torrent Power



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a divine person who inspired countless cultural, social and spiritual initiatives, providing comfort and care to millions. My family and I had often received his blessings, including in times of personal calamity. Today, I am overwhelmed by visiting this festival, inspired by the vision of Mahant Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is truly a spectacle beyond comparison. Pramukh Swami Maharaj touched the lives of countless souls with the light of faith and devotion.”

### Shri Tejasvi Surya

Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha,  
and President, Bhartiya Janta Yuva  
Morcha



“We are celebrating the centenary of a great soul like Pramukh Swami Maharaj because he had achieved more in one lifetime than what we can dream of achieving in a hundred lifetimes. Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his dedicated



volunteers have created a campus that is so clean, green and serene. It appears miraculous. Nowhere can you find a single piece of litter. The amazing managerial, leadership and service skills learned here will lead us to a better nation for tomorrow. BAPS represents the universal spirit of Sanatan Dharma, so it will be an eternal and guiding force for all time to come.

“At Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar we see service and science, renunciation and technology, purity and modernity that is a microcosm of a new India that is ambitious. When I visited Akshardham in New Delhi, I realized that BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha is rekindling this innate Indian spirit of thinking grand, thinking audacious, thinking in an aspirational fashion, and organizing and executing it to perfection. This is what one sees in the BAPS mandirs in India, the US and all over the world.

“This is a place where the youths should come to learn devotion to the nation and devotion to God, to learn self-realization and the upliftment of our nation, how to lead a life with strength of character, courage of conviction and leadership that can transform ourselves and the nation.

“The theme of today’s programme is youth. Youth is not

an age; it is an attitude. I believe that Pramukh Swami Maharaj is this modern age’s greatest youth icon because the values he established are timeless and universal. Many times, young people feel that religious organizations are only for the elderly. However, from organizations like BAPS, we learn lessons of how to lead a meaningful and purpose-driven life. Today, around the nation and around the world, BAPS is doing this very necessary activity of human-making and nation-building through the language of love. BAPS works through the language of love and selfless sacrifice, encapsulating the millennia-old values of Sanatan Dharma.”

**Dr Sambit Patra**

National Spokesperson,  
Bharatiya Janta Party



**This is a place where the youths should come to learn devotion to the nation and devotion to God. How to lead a life with strength of character, courage of conviction and leadership that can transform ourselves and the nation.**

**Shri Tejasvi Surya**

“I would like to begin by firstly bowing to the soil of Gujarat, because there must surely be something special about it for having produced two of the greatest personalities of the century – Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

“I first bow to the holy feet of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I



A balika guide at the Bal Nagari

am not very familiar with the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, but when I saw photos and videos of Pramukh Swami Maharaj on TV, I was intrigued by his eyes, his aura, his divine voice. His face has been wonderfully depicted in the bubble wrap portrait here made from 850,000 bubbles by 150 women. What an awe-inspiring devotional offering! Even upon seeing the divine eyes and *tilak* in the *maha-murti* (giant image) of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, you will rejoice in divinity.

“I want to bow to the volunteers. The volunteer showing me around was a graduate from IIT. Other volunteers I was introduced to were people with their own successful businesses, and yet they were serving water to the visitors. I cannot help but ask why everything here is so clean and efficient? I realized it is because the volunteers serving here expect no worldly rewards or remuneration, but only the spiritual blessings of their guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

“I bow to the love for the guru here. I saw it within Pramukh Swami Maharaj for his guru Yogiji Maharaj as he worked only to fulfil his guru’s vision. I also see it now in Mahant Swami Maharaj for his guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the magnificent creation of this grand *nagar*. Where there is such divine, selfless love, even the impossible can become possible.

**I bow to the love for the guru here. Where there is such divine, selfless love, even the impossible can become possible.**

**Dr Sambit Patra**

is unparalleled.”

**Shri V. Muraleedharan**

Union Minister of State, External Affairs & Parliamentary Affairs



“I had the opportunity to participate in Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Amrut Mahotsav in Mumbai in 1995, and 25 years later, I am attending his centenary celebrations. I was deeply touched today by the Bal Nagari and particularly by the 11-year-old boy from the UK who explained to me how Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s teachings and love inspired the values of culture and spirituality in him and his friends. I have personally experienced over the years how BAPS’s children’s activities provide for the development of religion, spirituality, health and well-being amongst children globally.”

**Shri Anurag Thakur**

Minister of Information and Broadcasting



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj is being revered the world over because his exemplary work



Sea of Survarna exquisitely portrays the mantra of success

reached everyone around the world. He did not just preach, but practised everything to the letter. He lived his life solely for others as devotion to God. Only then could such a festival on 600 acres be possible.

“I urge everyone to visit Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, especially the Bal Nagari, where children and families can learn so many important values and skills. For example, the ‘Sea of Survarna’ story is beautifully presented by the girls who teach us how hard work and prayer can lead to success. In fact, all seven exhibitions are worth watching as they teach so many valuable life lessons.”



**Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**  
Minister of Jal Shakti, Govt. of India

“I have personally witnessed Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar coming up when I visited

Ahmedabad a few months ago. At the time, I was curious as to what would lie inside. After seeing it completed today, I was awestruck upon entering the ornately carved Sant Dwar welcome gate. I am left speechless by the beauty and grandeur of everything within Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Even though these celebrations will last only for a month, the beauty, divinity and inspiration of this creation will last a lifetime. I bow to the humility, divinity and saintliness of Mahant Swami Maharaj that has made it possible.”



**Mahant Swami Maharaj**

“Yogiji Maharaj used to say, ‘The youth are my heart.’ The heart is such a vital organ, and Yogiji Maharaj gave that place to the youth. He felt that youths should be ideals of service. They



Sant Dwar, where all main guests were welcomed and honoured



Mahant Swami Maharaj with stage guests on Gujarat Day celebration assembly

should not just be healthy in body, but cultivate the spirit of service. They should serve everyone without distinction. This is the duty of a youth.

“Youths should strive to be ideal in all aspects of life. In every activity, they should keep religion and ethics at the forefront. A lot can be achieved if one has good character. Our actions should be such that they reflect positively upon God and our guru. People should be inspired not just by our intelligence or talents, but by our character.

“No matter what obstacles we face, we must resolve to study diligently. We must also firmly resolve to worship God. With such firm resolutions, we will certainly be able to accomplish these two things.

“The youths who presented today made a commendable effort. These youths are not just good performers, but they are steadfast in their observance of ethical living. We congratulate all the youths as well as the swamis and volunteers who have guided them, without which their energies would have been be wasted.”

## GUJARAT DAY: CELEBRATING GLORIOUS GUJARAT

4 January 2023

The evening assembly began at 4.45 p.m., in which Gujarat’s renowned folk singers Hemant Chauhan and Kirtidan Gadhvi sang a medley of

bhajans. Rajbha Gadhvi enthralled the audience with his unique musical performance, while Osman Mir sang his favourite devotional kirtans on Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Distinguished guests then paid homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s works for Gujarat.

Renowned Gujarati folk singer Padma Shri Bhikhudan Gadhvi and acclaimed Gujarati humourist Padma Shri Shahabuddin Rathod, Former Cabinet Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, Former Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Nitinbhai Patel and Former Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Vijaybhai Rupani also addressed the audience.

### Shri Deepakbhai Desai

Head, Dada Bhagwan Foundation



“All Pramukh Swami Maharaj thought about was providing peace to every person he met. Saints like him dissolve our anxieties and sorrows. Pramukh Swami Maharaj embodied detachment and transcended ignorance.”

### Mahant Swami Maharaj



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a hub of all virtues, so whatever glory we can extol remains



insufficient. He sacrificed his entire life for society, keeping not even a single second for himself. Everything he did was for others.

“He built many hospitals, schools, hostels and mandirs in Gujarat to foster the educational, health and spiritual welfare of the people of Gujarat. The state of Gujarat will forever remain indebted to him for his immense services.”

## WOMEN'S DAY 1: CELEBRATING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT DAY

5 January 2023

The Women's Day evening assembly began at 5.15 p.m. at the Narayan Sabha Gruh with BAPS women from Ahmedabad, Mumbai and the UK singing devotional prayers to the accompaniment of Indian and western instruments. Thereafter, 31 girls performed a classical dance to Vedic hymns expressing the glory of the enlightened guru. This was

followed by women performing a medley of dances from different regions of India and a drama, 'The 7th of December', recounting true stories of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's holistic and profound impact on the lives of women. He saved marriages, transformed hatred to love, inspired divine experiences and provided counsel through letters.

Several distinguished guests also paid homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's work of women's empowerment.

### H.E. Anandiben Patel

Governor of Uttar Pradesh and  
Former Chief Minister of Gujarat



“This is an excellent event for all women. 33,000 women and girls have volunteered in the making of this festival! Pramukh Swami Maharaj recognized the true potential and power of women, and he took steps to inspire them to



Girl volunteers perform a traditional dance during the Women's Day celebration



Women volunteers offer seva in the landscape department cultivate values and virtues, service and devotion.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was humility personified. I have been personally touched by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divine love. I was astounded to observe the children magnificently managing the Bal Nagari. The children here possess the strength to do wonders.”

### Darshana Jardosh

Union Minister, Textiles and Railways



Darshana Jardosh appreciated, “I am overawed by the grandeur of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. As the daughter of a photographer, the beauty of every nook and cranny of this place is imprinted in my mind. The feeling of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ (the whole world is one family) that one experiences here shall be a partner in our collective creation of a vibrant India. The exhibitions here inspire one to imbibe the highest values from Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life.

“When I see the active contribution of the female volunteers in so much of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, I am further convinced that Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a pioneer of women’s empowerment. Similarly, in Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, women volunteers are taking care of everyone and everything: from the gardens and cleanliness

**This is an extraordinary, overwhelmingly beautiful place. The women’s and children’s contributions to the *nagar* are inspired by the love of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.**

**Dr Hanna Hea-Sun Kim**



Lady volunteers serve at the Premvati foodstall

to the food stalls and lighting.”

### Meenakshi Lekhi

Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture of India



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar provides us with a reflection of what society should be like.

“As I went around the *nagar*, I was drawn to the messages of the films and exhibitions. Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught that devotion with hard work is the path to success, and he did this so well that, today, Indians all over the world are so successful. This message of prayer and hard work was beautifully presented in the ‘Sea of Suvarna’ show performed by hundreds of young girls.”

### Dr Hanna Hea-Sun Kim

Professor and Chair, Anthropology Department, Adelphi University, USA



“Thirty years ago, I attended the Yogi Shatabdi Mahotsav in Gandhinagar while I was a student. Today, as a professor of anthropology, I am still a student of BAPS.

“This is an extraordinary, overwhelmingly beautiful place. The women’s and children’s contributions to the *nagar* are inspired by the love of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. With love, he taught all of us the message

throughout the Bal Nagari that prayer and hard work leads to success. While success is never easy, we can always ask for help. It could be from your guru or a trusted friend. But don't be afraid to ask for help. Success is not about being rich, but about knowing who you are and what is your goal."

**Her Excellency Pastor  
Dr Dorcas Rigathi**  
Second Lady of Kenya



"Empowerment only comes from knowing God and one's purpose. You have discovered yourselves, and that is why you have gathered together here so that you can celebrate the life of a man of God who championed the life of women. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is a champion of women's development.

"Today, as I went around this beautiful, inspiring place, I realized that you are celebrating the life of a great man of God who emanated God's light, who was not only humble but who cared for everyone – children, women, the addicted. He lived a life of sacrifice and service."

**Justice Abhilasha Kumari**  
Judicial Member, Lokpal Committee  
of India and Former  
Chief Justice, Manipur High Court



"Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the epitome of saintliness, love, compassion, holiness, magnanimity, and empathy for all human beings – indeed for all living beings. Such a person does not come upon this earth very often, but when he does, he leaves an indelible mark in the hearts and minds of people through the transformations he brings about in people's lives. His

**Today, as I went around this beautiful, inspiring place, I realized that you are celebrating the life of a great man of God who emanated God's light, who was not only humble but who cared for everyone.**  
**Dr Dorcas Rigathi**

**I am amazed, astounded, and awestruck at what must have gone into making the *nagar* – a marvel of art and technology with shows that are meaningful and impart knowledge to all.**  
**Justice Abhilasha Kumari**

legacy will last for generations to come, indeed forever.

"I had the good fortune of having the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj several times. I can say from my own experience that any person who has his darshan even once will be drawn into his holy spirit and engulfed into his aura. This month-long

celebration is a beautiful and befitting tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his teachings to better each individual and elevate every soul to fulfil life's purpose and reach the culmination of one's spiritual journey. The foundations are laid in childhood, and thus there was a great emphasis by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in instilling values in children.

"From my two days at the *nagar*, I am amazed, astounded, and awestruck at what must have gone into making the *nagar* what it is today – a marvel of art and technology with shows that are meaningful and impart knowledge to all. This celebration reflects the ideals cherished by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and it has a takeaway for each person who visits.

"We must not forget the inspiration which has made it possible. Mahant Swami Maharaj has overseen each aspect of the preparations that have gone into this festival planned by the sadhus who are invisible and silent catalysts that have guided this entire show. The volunteers have executed the plans that have been meticulously laid down. The discipline, hygiene, politeness, courtesy, and feeling of welcome that we get here are exemplary. I bow down at the feet of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and hope that his compassion will always flow upon this earth and touch the hearts of everyone, that we might become better human beings."



Assembly celebrating BAPS Gulf Countries Day

### Dr Jayanti S. Ravi (IAS)

Secretary, Auroville Foundation



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the living embodiment of pure divinity.

“Today, I saw little girls and women in this *nagar* as volunteers. When I saw the girls from London who prepared a portrait of Pramukh Swami Maharaj by injecting colours in bubbles, I was touched by their patience, hard work, teamwork and attention to detail as an offering to their guru. If this sort of devotion can be spread everywhere, it can transform the world.

“When I completed my PhD thesis on eGovernance, I had it offered to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I felt so blessed that he sanctified it with flower petals and marked it with red vermillion. I have still kept those dried flowers because these blessings and memories have made a big difference in my life. Even for my latest book, ‘Sanity in Sanitation’, which has a foreword by Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi, I sought the blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj. He wrote: ‘Bhagwan

**When I saw the girls from London who prepared a portrait, I was touched by their patience, hard work, teamwork and attention to detail. If this sort of devotion can be spread everywhere, it can transform the world.**

Dr Jayanti S. Ravi (IAS)

Swaminarayan taught that along with physical hygiene, moral purity is equally important.’ This was another wonderful opportunity for me.

“I mentioned this morning in the conference that for so many volunteers to serve together without clashes means that the power of God is working through them. Anyone who employs these volunteers will definitely benefit. The impact of this *nagar* is being felt across the world. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s every hour, minute and second was spent in the service of society and prayer. I hope that everyone is inspired by his life of humility, service and faith.”

Other guests and dignitaries on the stage were Sunaina Tomar (IAS), Additional Chief Secretary, Social Justice & Empowerment Department; Kanchanben Radadiya, MLA, Gujarat; Darshana Vaghela, MLA Gujarat; Irene Achieng Oloo, Deputy Ambassador of Kenya to India; Gitaben J. Patel, Deputy Mayor, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and Dr Payalben Kukrani, MLA, Gujarat.



Newly initiated *parshads*

## PARSHAD DIKSHA CEREMONY

**Mahant Swami Maharaj Initiated 46 BAPS Youths into the Monastic Order**

**6 January 2023**

In the morning, Mahant Swami Maharaj initiated 46 BAPS youths into the *parshad diksha* in a grand ceremony at the Narayan Sabha Gruh.

Of the 46 youths, five were postgraduates, 23 graduates, 16 engineers, a teacher, a pharmacist, an MBA and an MPH. Having studied from prestigious Indian and foreign universities like IIM, Harvard (USA), Rutgers (USA) and Melbourne (Australia), these youths left the comforts of home and their promising careers to eagerly walk on the path of renunciation and service to society. The youths included nine from America, one from Africa, and others from Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Gujarat.

The newly initiated *parshads* will continue their monastic training at the BAPS ashram in Sarangpur, Gujarat, where they lead a life of simplicity and austerity steeped in devotion, service and learning. The seven-year training course helps them become proficient in their personal spiritual endeavours related to worship, service, austerities and learning. The learning curriculum covers a deep study of Swaminarayan Hindu theology, history

and literature, world religions, as well as the Ramayan, Mahabharat, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and other Hindu shastras. It also includes a study of languages such as Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujarati and English.

## CELEBRATING GULF COUNTRIES DAY

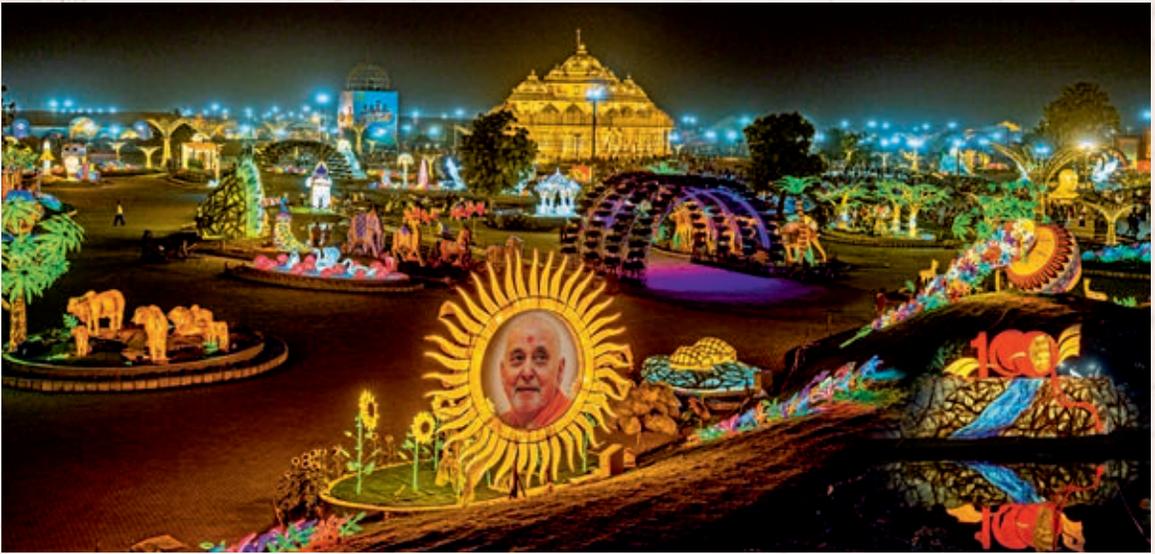
Today's evening assembly, dedicated as 'BAPS Gulf Countries Day', began at 5 p.m. It centred on four stories – of prayer, friendship, harmony and transformation – that encapsulated Pramukh Swami Maharaj's travels and interactions with devotees in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and the Gulf region. Each theme was introduced by a short video and followed by an exposition on the theme.

### Mr Nazem Al-Kudsi

Former CEO,  
Abu Dhabi Investment Council



“As an Arabic man, my life changed forever when Pramukh Swami looked into my eyes. He inspired me to start getting in touch with my true nature. The breath of Pramukh Swami had an impact on me, but I did not appreciate that this breath would have such a deep impact on my part of the world. The breath of Pramukh Swami promised a mandir in Abu Dhabi and



Glow Garden portrays values and faith

brought us great leaders like Narendra Modi under whose leadership your land will thrive.”

**H.E. Dr Bassam Alkhatib**

Ambassador,  
Syrian Arab Republic to India



“Human values lie in our heart, so we can know our future. Pramukh Swami Maharaj spread these human values around the world. I believe that celebrating the diversity of our cultures and religions is the best way to shape our future.”

**Dr Aman Puri**

Consul General of India in Dubai



“The values of tolerance, peace, non-violence, harmony and selfless service are what Pramukh Swami Maharaj stood for, and BAPS is spreading these values across the globe. I have visited several BAPS centres and mandirs in various countries where they attract people from all faiths, which is truly remarkable.

“In Dubai, we are witnessing

a historic milestone for UAE and India’s relationship and for UAE’s Indian community.”

**Dr S. Jaishankar**

Indian Minister of External Affairs



“The world called Pramukh Swami Maharaj ‘the people’s guru’ and ‘the global guru’ because he had travelled to over 50 countries, visited more than 17,000 cities and villages, established more than 1,200 mandirs, and wrote more than 750,000 letters. He met global leaders and kings, but also ordinary and poor people whom he embraced. As a result of his efforts, BAPS is taking India and the world forward.

“My first experience of BAPS was witnessing the construction of Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi. All of Delhi’s residents were surprised to see such a beautiful mandir – so immense, so clean, and running so smoothly. When I became the ambassador of India to America, I visited the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Los

**BAPS operates on a grand scale but at the end of the day, every aspect of the community and guru is personal. One needs a different mindset to never forget each individual. This is what is unique about BAPS.**  
Dr S. Jaishankar

Angeles. The atmosphere and people were such that while I had planned to spend 30 minutes, I spent three hours.”

“Last year, when the war erupted in Ukraine, around 20,000 Indian students were stranded. They needed to be brought home in the cold. When the Indian government was trying to decide what to do, BAPS brought volunteers from 11 countries to the Polish border and served hot meals every day. I was meeting other ministers of bordering countries who still remember the selfless spirit of BAPS volunteers who helped not only Indians but people of other countries and races.

“When I think of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I see four big concepts: 1. Compassion, 2. Service, 3. Community and 4. Humanity. Firstly, BAPS is both local and global because it is connected to the land wherever it serves the people. They create their own identity without discriminating against anyone. Secondly, BAPS also employs technology and modern methods while remaining faithful to its traditions, culture, heritage and values. The balance and symbiosis of technology with tradition can be seen in the mandirs BAPS builds around the world. Thirdly, BAPS also acts and leads by example. And fourthly, BAPS operates on a grand scale but at the end of the day, every aspect of the community and guru is personal. The personal touch is everywhere. One needs a different mindset to never forget each individual. This is what is unique about BAPS.”

Mr Jaishankar also highlighted the three main challenges of the world today – conflict, covid and climate – and elaborated upon their solutions through peace, progress and prosperity.

“People say that India has become ‘the pharmacy of the world’, but we are also ‘the pharmacy for the world’. We should do things



Ornate work in bamboo portrays Pramukh Swami Maharaj's hand worshipping Shri Harikrishna Maharaj

for ourselves, but we should also think of other countries. This is what we learn from Pramukh Swami Maharaj and this *nagar*.”

**Dr D. Veerendra Heggade**  
Dharmadhikari, Shree Kshetra  
Dharmsthala, Karnataka



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj brought society and religion together. I have never seen such a simple swami anywhere. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's message was to be humble, friendly, courteous and helpful to others, and his devotees follow this very well. If this spirit can be spread to others and other religions, then great work can be done.”

**Thomas Perez**  
Former US Secretary of Labour



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was one of the world's greatest spiritual leaders, global citizens, interfaith leaders, and far-reaching humanitarians. His life was his message – a message of peace, hope, tolerance, and most importantly, selfless service – service to others, service to all, and service to the



Assembly celebrating BAPS North America Day

most vulnerable among us, regardless of colour, creed and caste. That was his life. It was a powerful reminder of how a single person born in the humblest circumstances imaginable could truly transform the world through an unwavering commitment to the values of social justice, human rights and interfaith harmony.

“From his engagement in mandirs, churches, mosques, synagogues, cathedrals, and gurdwaras, Pramukh Swami Maharaj transcended any single religion. Rather, he was always that divine spark that resides within each one of us and binds us together. Presidents, prime ministers and popes sought him out, seeking his profound witness and steady guidance in a world that is oftentimes utterly bereft of guidance.

“He ran the BAPS global organization for decades with his reflexive humility and vision, growing it into a global force for good in dozens of countries globally. BAPS has become an indispensable pillar in those communities where you operate. Whether it is answering the common cause of humanity in Ukraine or elsewhere, your

service recognizes no boundaries or borders.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj will forever live on not just through BAPS but through the millions he inspired through his example of fierce dedication to the uplift of others. His legacy is in every hospital that he built, in every village he served, in every heart he touched, and in every life he transformed. It is difficult to encapsulate all that he was and all that he meant to the millions who loved him and learned from him from across the world.

“Let us live all our lives the way Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived every single day – that ‘In the joy of others lies our own’ and ‘unity exists in diversity.’ Deceptively simple though these messages may be, they are potent in their impact. Diversity is something to embrace, not fear. Diversity is what has made our global community so strong.

“I offer my congratulations for the grand success of this festival. I am in awe of your volunteerism. You are the future of not only India but of the world.”

Mr Ylias Ahbaraly, Chairman & CEO Groupe Sipromad, also spoke on the occasion.

**I offer my congratulations for the grand success of this festival. I am in awe of your volunteerism. You are the future of not only India but of the world.**

**Thomas Perez**



### Mahant Swami Maharaj

“I have been a firsthand witness of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s selfless and harmonising travels to the Gulf Countries, which has resulted in the under-construction of BAPS mandir in Abu Dhabi. The mandir will be a unique contribution to the local community and will become a home of peace. A BAPS Mandir will also be built in Bahrain, thanks to the gracious support of local leaders, organizations and the community.

“We are grateful to have Jaishankarji in our assembly here today. He has spread the goodwill of India across the world. I pray that all the dignitaries gathered here can serve their communities and countries further. May God bless everyone.”

### BAPS NORTH AMERICA DAY

7 January 2023

Over 500 children and youths from more than 75 centres across North America performed an impressive cultural programme titled, ‘Beyond Boundaries: North America Day,’ paying tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s tireless spiritual travels in North America.

The impact of his travels led to unimaginable transformations in thousands and inspired them to preserve their timeless cultural and spiritual heritage. Following the programme, Mahant Swami Maharaj and dignitaries from around the world paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s works of personal spirituality, Hindu mandirs, humanitarian services and interfaith harmony in North America.



### Mahant Swami Maharaj

“Today the swamis and devotees from America and Canada have come together and presented a beautiful performance. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had gone to every corner of the North American continent and pleased everyone. His efforts led to more than 100 mandirs and thousands of devotees in North America. We will see the culmination of his inspiration with the construction of Swaminarayan Akshardham in Robbinsville, New Jersey. Swaminarayan Akshardham will draw people from everywhere and inspire them with the universal values of Hinduism. Pramukh Swami Maharaj said that we are not creating this Akshardham for public acclaim, but to please God and attain liberation. The immense efforts of all the male and female volunteers, young and old, who have contributed to this Akshardham are commendable. Due to their unity and enthusiasm, the work will soon be completed. All those who have volunteered in this effort will receive Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s wholehearted grace, and everyone’s hearts will become golden.”

Several esteemed dignitaries were also present to pay tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life of selfless services.

### Mr Cameron Mackay

High Commissioner of Canada in India



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s message, ‘In the joy of others lies our own,’ is widely respected in Canada and around the world. His humanitarian services express important Canadian values. The 1,200 temples that he established around the world act as refuges in difficult times and provide a space to meditate and experience peace. The BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Toronto is well respected and appreciated by many Canadians and it symbolizes the rich heritage and cultural diversity of India and Canada.”

### Hon. Justin Trudeau

Prime Minister of Canada



“Today, we are celebrating the rich life of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and everything he did to build and grow BAPS. Throughout his life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj left a mark in Canada. Around the world, he spread his lifelong message, ‘In the joy of others lies our own.’ Many of you have given life to the values he promoted, whether it is participating in BAPS Charities, volunteering in your mandir, or strengthening the communities you live in, Canadians have appreciated the ways that you are stepping up. Our country is stronger because of it, and I am inspired by everything you have built. Thank you.”

### Hon. Michael D. Ford

Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, Ontario, Canada



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a rare soul who was completely devoted to God. He also had a selfless desire to help others and promote peace and harmony across the globe. His words were thoughtful, meaningful and consoling, coming from the depth of profound experience and deep compassion. He gave enlightenment,



guidance, and wisdom to the many entrusted to his care. As a good friend of the BAPS mandir in Toronto, I have seen firsthand how his teachings and his legacy continue to live on through the spirit and work of his followers.”

As part of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations, Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated a new Cardiac Cath Lab for angiographies, angioplasties and pacemaker implantations at the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Hospital in Surat.

Other Government of India ministers who spoke were: Shri Prahladsinhji Patel, Minister of State for Food Processing Industries and Jal Shakti; Shri Rajeev Chandrasekharji, Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Electronics and IT; and Harshvardhan Singlaji, Chief Coordinator for India’s G20 Presidency.

## UK AND EUROPE DAY

8 January 2023

BAPS devotees from the UK and Europe presented a creative evening programme titled, ‘In His Own Words: BAPS UK and Europe Day’, in the Narayan Sabha Gruh celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s contributions to fostering the cultural and spiritual heritage of thousands in UK and Europe.



Assembly celebrating BAPS UK and Europe Day

### Evening Assembly

At 5 p.m., the programme commenced with over 100 participants of all ages singing devotional bhajans. Following this, a drama interspersed with various skits, videos and speeches depicted Pramukh Swami Maharaj's tireless efforts in UK and Europe. Through Mahant Swami Maharaj's analogies of a flute, pot and rain drops in his publication *Divine Memories*, Part 4, the audience discovered how Pramukh Swami Maharaj wore out his body for the devotees of UK and Europe, how his universal love touched the hearts of all and how he granted God's bliss.

Some stage guests paid tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life and work.

### Mr Nigel Lane

UK-based Architect, Managing Director of A. Lane Architects



Mr Nigel Lane, who helped design the Haveli of the London BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, shared his impressions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in a video message, "I worked closely with Pramukh Swami Maharaj between 1990 and 1995 on a project that was the first

**He was a man with deep love and affection, full of goodness and doing great things for humanity. Quiet and dignified, so lovely to work with, and without the usual noise of language. He left a lasting influence on me, which has been etched into my heart.**

Mr Nigel Lane

of its kind in the West. Today, I want to share what he was like as a person, as a human, because that is very special. We had no common language, but his presence came through. He was a man with deep love and affection, full of goodness and doing great things for humanity. Quiet and dignified, so lovely to work with, and without the usual noise of

language. He worked hard, giving all of his time and energy to others. That is a unique love.

"Swamiji truly cared for me quietly and deeply. He left a lasting influence on me, and I cherish those memories, which have been etched into my heart. When beside the sea, you don't see the tide coming in. It comes in imperceptibly. That is how I felt about his inspiration. It was quiet, subtle and rises up inside. Pramukh Swami Maharaj wasn't just a Swaminarayan, he wasn't just a guru, he was a universal man. It would be wrong for me to say I miss him because I truly feel that he is eternal. He has remained with me ever since."



### Mahant Swami Maharaj

"Contemplating on Pramukh Swami

Maharaj increases our understanding and love for him. He has continued to shower immense love and affection on us all. What I distinctly remember from my first meeting with Pramukh Swami Maharaj was his simple, unpretentious demeanour. He was absolutely natural and guileless. He made no effort whatsoever to impress, and yet he left a deep, indelible impression: ‘Yes!’ I remember saying to myself, ‘This is what I call a sadhu!’

“That is the Pramukh Swami Maharaj I have experienced. I’ve said this much, but it still seems like I have not said enough. He was a mountain of virtues, difficult to fully grasp, but this will help us understand him better. Ultimately, we pray, Swami, please help us recognize you and offer us a seat in Akshardham with God.”

Thereafter, several esteemed dignitaries paid tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life of selfless service.



**Shri Gopichand Hinduja**  
Co-Chairperson, Hinduja Group

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was not a highly educated management professional, but a simple man who found it to be his divine mission to fulfil God’s vision. He produced practical results because he firmly believed that he worked for God, not for himself. I witnessed Pramukh Swami Maharaj meticulously planning the Neasden Mandir to its last detail. Pramukh Swami Maharaj overcame many challenges, whether it was permissions or financial struggles, but he was committed to serving the world. Life is like a journey through a dense forest, dark and foreboding. But if you have noble and good souls like Pramukh Swami Maharaj with you, it enlightens you and shows the way how to move forward.”

**Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a simple man who found it to be his divine mission to fulfil God’s vision. He produced practical results because he firmly believed that he worked for God, not for himself.**  
Shri Gopichand Hinduja

**Shri Hardeep Singh Puri**  
Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj personified saintliness and exuded divinity. As a guide and guru, he touched countless lives not only in India but across the world. He was respected and admired as one of the greatest spiritual leaders of our time. He was truly a ‘people’s guru’.

**Gen. Dr V.K. Singh**  
Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways and Civil Aviation



“The work done by BAPS is incomparable. I have seen this for many years when I was in the military, that in every difficulty BAPS has worked for the nation and humanity like no other. During the Ukraine crisis, we had only a small embassy in Poland. At Prime Minister Modi’s request to Mahant Swami Maharaj, in no time, volunteers from BAPS UK and Europe reached out to rescue our people.

“The spirituality that inspires us to serve humanity is the highest spirituality. There are not many like Pramukh Swami Maharaj who touched everyone’s heart and showed compassion for others by serving in this way.”

**Mr Alex Ellis**  
British High Commissioner to India



“We saw how BAPS has given exceptional service in India, the UK and across the world, during the Ukraine crisis, the COVID pandemic and on many other occasions.

“I would like to share a message from His Majesty King Charles III to those assembled here today, ‘As you commemorate the 100th

anniversary of the birth of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I wish to send you all my warmest good wishes. It was the greatest pleasure to meet His Holiness at St. James's Palace in 1997, and to have been able to visit on several occasions over the years the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden, which His Holiness helped to create. His Holiness's timeless message that 'In the joy of others lies our own, in the progress of others rests our own, in the good of others lies our own, know this to be the key to peace and happiness,' resonates as much now as it always has."

### **Hon. Rishi Sunak**

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom



In his video message said, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived by the maxim that 'In the joy of others lies our own.' In the UK, he was the inspiration of our magnificent Neasden Temple, a familiar sight on our London skyline known as much for its service to the local community as it is for its beauty. That dedication to service is found in all 14 of the mandirs Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired across the UK. And throughout the pandemic, they stepped up not only to help the Hindu community, but thousands who needed support during that difficult time. Over the past many years, these efforts have not gone unrecognized. Roads have been named after Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and our iconic Wembley Stadium arch has been lit up to pay tribute to his service and support for our country. So, as you gather to mark Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 100th birth anniversary, let me pay my respects to his enduring memory and the incredible legacy he has passed on. I wish you every success with these anniversary celebrations."

**The greatest thing about every BAPS volunteer is that you can be the chief executive of the most important company in the country or a humble worker.**

**Padma Shri Bob Blackman**

### **Padma Shri Bob Blackman**

Member of Parliament,  
Harrow East, UK



"In the joy of others lies our own,' sums up the man who gave such devotion and dedication to the whole world. The greatest thing about every BAPS volunteer is that you can be the chief executive of the most important company in the country or a humble worker, but in the mandir, everyone is equal, and everyone takes on the tasks necessary to do the job."

### **Sir Keir Rodney Starmer**

Leader of the Opposition and  
Leader of the Labour Party, UK



In his video message said, "I have been privileged to visit the Neasden Temple in London created by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It truly is a landmark for Hindus and the whole of the United Kingdom. It is incredible to see firsthand how thousands of volunteers have been inspired to serve society."

### **Padma Shri Barry Gardiner**

Member of Parliament,  
Brent North, UK



"Pramukh Swami Maharaj never valued a person for what they owned. For him, every person had worth and was valuable because they were a human being – a life precious to God. All who have ever met Pramukh Swami Maharaj will know what I mean when I say, with his eyes he seemed to look right into your heart, into your soul. It did not feel uncomfortable because you never felt he was doing it to judge you. I am sure he could have seen all the wrongs, all the selfish things that we try to hide away, but he was not looking for those. He was looking for the good in us, for the humanity, for the worthy, because he knew and believed it was there

– however small, however much we might have hidden it even from ourselves.”

**Pujya Rakeshbhai Jhaveri**  
Founder and Spiritual Head,  
Shrimad Rajchandra Mission



“When you think of the many positive qualities, only one name that comes to mind is ‘Pramukh Swami’. He was a river of service and compassion. He was free of ego and totally pure. Formation and transformation were the hallmarks of Pramukh Swami. However, what touched me the most was his absolute purity free of all ego, with his mind fixed only on God. People say the sky’s the limit but I say that Pramukh Swami is the limit. In the same way that the sun does not belong to any one country or person, Pramukh Swami did not belong to BAPS but to all of us.”

Other dignitaries who graced the stage included: Dr Vijaykumar Krushnrao Gavit, State Cabinet Minister of Horticulture, Medical Education, and Tourism, Government of Maharashtra; Shri P.K. Mehra, Air Marshal (Retd.); Shri Manoj Ladva, Chairman and Chief Executive, India Inc. Group; Shri Vijay Darda, Chairman, Lokmat Media Group; Shri Rakesh Singh, Member of Parliament (Jabalpur); Shri Jayesh Shah, Chairman, Shri Naman Group; Shri Ashok Jain, Managing Director, Jain Group; Shri Anil Kumar Mittal, Chairman & Managing Director, KRBL Limited; and Shri Rakesh Chaurasia, Renowned Indian Flautist.

## BAPS AFRICA DAY

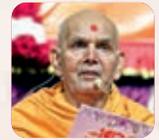
9 January 2023

On 9 January 2023, BAPS devotees from various countries in Africa presented a creative programme titled, ‘Africa’s Timeless Tribute: BAPS Africa Day’ at the Narayan Sabha Gruh in Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.

The thought-provoking programme commenced with devotees from Africa singing *dhun* and bhajans. Following this, various dramas, videos, dances, and speeches depicted Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s tireless efforts in travelling, constructing mandirs, and serving and transforming the lives of thousands of devotees and volunteers in Africa.

Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated a new English publication, ‘My Personal Mala: My Daily Companion’ written by Amrutvijaydas.

Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated another new English publication by Swaminarayan Aksharpith authored by Amrutvijay Swami, ‘For the Joy of Others.’ It provides a historical account of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s efforts for the success of the Narmada Dam Project and timely assistance to the victims of the Morbi Dam disaster.



## Mahant Swami Maharaj

“The many satsang centres from Africa have come together and presented a beautiful programme on the occasion of BAPS Africa Day. Shastriji Maharaj laid the foundations of satsang in Africa. Nirgundas Swami strengthened this foundation through his letters to Africa’s devotees. Upon this foundation, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj built a great edifice of satsang centres and mandirs. I travelled to Africa twice with Yogiji Maharaj and three times with Pramukh Swami

Maharaj, and those memories are still fresh with me. I saw how Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj endured immense hardships to please the devotees of Africa. Only such souls who have tremendous mental stability can endure such hardships.

**Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
seemed to look right into  
your heart, into your soul.  
It did not feel uncomfortable  
because you never  
felt he was doing it to  
judge you. He was looking  
for the good in us.**

**Padma Shri Barry Gardiner**

“I pray that everyone’s devotion is further augmented, that their social and financial circumstances improve and that everyone attains happiness in this world and in God’s abode.”

Several esteemed dignitaries were also present to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life of selfless service.

**Hon. Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde**  
Former Chief Justice,  
Supreme Court of India



“It is indeed very heartening to note that Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired service to some of the greatest social causes in the country. The members of BAPS are seen to help wherever there is a calamity.

“When you see the activities of BAPS, one feels a great sense of belonging to the great traditions of Sanatan Dharma.”

**HH Sri Swami**  
**Yogaswarupanandaji Maharaj**  
President, Divine Life Society



“I am thankful to be present at the celebration of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s birth centenary. I also had the privilege of meeting Yogiji Maharaj in 1964 in Gondal and was thankful for knowing him.”

**Pujya Madhu Pandit Dasji**  
Head of ISKCON, Bengaluru



“That so many volunteers have been able to organize this celebration for an entire month is an expression of their love and faith. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an embodiment of purity, love and compassion, so this is a fitting celebration of those values.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj had so much faith in chanting the name of God. That was

**When you think of the many positive qualities, only one name that comes to mind is ‘Pramukh Swami’. What touched me the most was his absolute purity free of all ego, with his mind fixed only on God.**  
**Pujya Rakeshbhai Jhaveri**

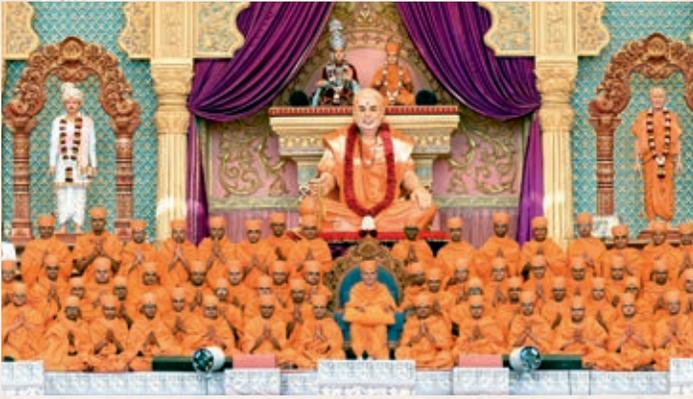
his strength and surely is the strength of all his devotees. Through the construction of architecturally iconic temples all over the world, Pramukh Swami Maharaj contributed in an unimaginable way to the spread of Hinduism and the propagation of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s

message worldwide. Everyone knows of his contributions to serving humanity.

“In my first meeting with Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I was struck by his deep, penetrating gaze. The way he would look into your eyes was beyond the body, beyond any designation – it was a look directly into the soul. His glance was a glance of divine grace that could raise the divinity in everyone’s hearts. His work for 45 years on this planet is a demonstration of him being a very pure instrument in the hands of this great tradition, the teachings of which are bringing and will bring peace, harmony, happiness and spirituality to the masses of the modern world.”

The other stage guests were Dr Bhupinder (Sonu) Sharma, Author, Educator, Business Counsellor and Business Entrepreneur; Shri Tejendra Khanna, Former Lieutenant Governor of Delhi; Hon. Justice Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny-Dollo, Chief Justice of Uganda; and Pujya Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Guru Mahasannidhanam of Kauai Aadheenam (Hawaii, USA).

**In my first meeting with Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I was struck by his deep, penetrating gaze. His glance was a glance of divine grace that could raise the divinity in everyone’s hearts.**  
**Pujya Madhu Pandit Dasji**



Newly initiated sadhus

## SADHU DIKSHA BY MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ

10 January 2023

In the morning, Mahant Swami Maharaj initiated 58 BAPS *parshads* into the sadhu order in a grand ceremony at the Narayan Sabha Gruh.

Of the 58 *parshads* who took initiation, 6 were postgraduates, 30 engineers, 19 graduates in other fields, two MBAs and an architect. Thereafter, senior sadhus addressed the assembly.

Finally, Mahant Swami Maharaj said, “All these newly ordained youths are great. It is very difficult to dissociate from the world and renounce everything. Many talk of it but cannot put it into action. However, these youths have. I express my heartfelt thanks to their parents as well, because their child is like their own heart, which they have offered joyously to God.

“The newly initiated swamis have now joined the many already here. While your life will be spent in service and offering devotion, all should be extremely firm in their religious observances. Through this you will be protected. You can do this because you are brave beyond measure. Remain steadfast in all your vows and understanding.”

## WOMEN'S DAY 2: CELEBRATING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

10 January 2023

Evening Assembly

Today's evening assembly, titled “Women's

I feel fortunate to have seen the exceptional 'Sea of Suvarna' programme in the Bal Nagari. When I asked a young girl why she was smiling despite being away from her parents for so long, she replied, 'Smritiben, we are serving.'

Hon. Smriti Irani

Day”, began at 5 p.m. with a special medley of bhajans sung by an all-female ensemble from across the world and accompanied by traditional Indian as well as Western instruments. Dignitaries and invited guests then paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

### Mrs Amruta Fadnavis

Vice-President Axis Bank, Actor, Singer and Social Activist



“I have seen a truly beautiful festival today. Pramukh Swami Maharaj spread the message of love across the world and it is wonderful to see everybody, including children, following his messages today. He considered everyone a member of his family, which is evident from the 750,000 letters he wrote to devotees. His guidance to all towards liberation differentiates him as a true guru. Today I bow to Mahant Swami Maharaj, who is taking his legacy forward.”

### Hon. Evelyn Anite

State Minister of Finance for Investment and Privatization of Uganda



“When I come to India I can feel the maxim of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, ‘In the joy of others lies our own.’

### Hon. Smriti Irani

Minister of Women and Child Development and Minority Affairs of India



“The depth of my feelings about my

experiences at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar are inexpressible. Years ago, when my husband and son met Pramukh Swami Maharaj at Dadar Mandir in Mumbai, I stood at a distance and did his darshan. Today, when I stand here and see all women devotees here, I think, in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, at the refuge of the guru – there is strength.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught the balance between rights and responsibilities. This is something women have to balance and battle with every day. If we want to give one message on behalf of India, it should be Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s message – whether men or women, make humility your weapon, walk on the path of values and morality for the benefit of the nation and humanity. I feel fortunate to have seen the exceptional ‘Sea of Suvarna’ programme in the Bal Nagari. For six months young girls learned their choreography to teach young children and their parents values in a creative way. None of the girls looked tired. When I asked a young girl why she was smiling despite being away from her parents for so long, she replied, ‘Smritiben, we are serving.’

“I was touched by the story of Shambhu, a young boy from Selvas, who wrote a letter inviting Pramukh Swami to his home. His story is shown in the ‘Sant Param Hitkari’ exhibition. Despite the remoteness of his village, Pramukh Swami Maharaj changed his schedule to visit him. I pray in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, that when your devotee comes calling, then come in any form and grace us.”

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## BAPS ASIA PACIFIC DAY

11 January 2023

### Evening Assembly

Devotees from the Asia Pacific region sang bhajans and presented various dramas, videos, dances and speeches that depicted Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s tireless *vicharan*, construction of mandirs, service and transformation of lives

of hundreds of devotees and volunteers in the Asia Pacific region.



### Mahant Swami Maharaj

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“We congratulate all the centres that have come together to present a beautiful programme on the occasion of Asia Pacific Day. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had travelled to this region three times and blessed the devotees. I also have many warm memories of my visits to the region.

“When we speak of painting the region with spirituality, it means to make efforts, endure hardships, and persevere through difficulties, which is what the devotees and swamis have done. This will be accomplished most rapidly if we maintain unity, fraternity and affection. While this may appear to be child’s play, when you go to its roots, there is immense depth there. Moreover, our faith, staunchness in religious observances and humility will nurture spirituality. Our faith will inspire faith, our religious observances will be respected by all and our humility will strengthen the bonds of friendship with all. In this way, the countries of the Asia Pacific region will be painted with spirituality. May all the devotees of this region progress in all aspects of their life.”

Several esteemed dignitaries were also present to pay tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life of selfless service.



### Hon. Anthony Albanese

Prime Minister of Australia

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“On behalf of all Australians, I send my warmest wishes to His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj and the BAPS organization for the 100th anniversary of the birth of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I pay tribute to his legacy. His message of serving those around us is something we can all strive for.”

### H.E. Asoka Milinda Moragoda

High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India



H.E. Asoka Milinda Moragoda read out a special message from the President of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe, “I extend my warmest congratulations and sincere best wishes to everyone at BAPS on this auspicious occasion of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Centenary Celebrations. His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj was one of the greatest spiritual leaders of our time who touched countless lives across India and the world.”

### H.E. Naor Gilon

Ambassador of Israel to India



He shared a message from the Hon. President of Israel Isaac Herzog, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired millions from around the world from all walks of life, including in Israel. We fondly remember his visit to our country in 1999, where he met with many religious dignitaries and political leaders including the Chief Rabbi of Israel and Prime Minister Shimon Peres. During his visit, Pramukh Swami Maharaj demonstrated his profound respect for other faiths and belief systems, offering prayers both at the Church of Nativity and at the Western Wall.”

### H.E. David Pine

High Commissioner of New Zealand to India



“As I went around the *nagar*, I appreciated the universal lessons about the importance of hard work and prayer, which are believed by people of all faiths in all parts of the world. Today’s event is itself a testament to the energy and commitment of the BAPS community, involving the efforts of 80,000 volunteers.”

**The entire 600 acres of the campus is like an Open University, a research centre. There is enough to learn from this *nagar* that a PhD thesis could be written on each aspect of it.**  
**Shri Dharmendra Pradhan**

### H.E. Chang Jae-Bok

Ambassador of Korea to India



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a great spiritual leader who dedicated his entire life to serving the cause of spirituality and humanity. His life, works and teachings have universal appeal, transcending geographical boundaries.”

### H.E. Dr Shankar Prasad Sharma

Ambassador of Nepal to India



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was truly a great leader. I would conclude by commending the entire programme here, which provides life skills, education and teachings. The vision, planning and management are simply superb. This is an experience of a lifetime.”

### Hon. Jason Wood MP

Shadow Minister of Multicultural Affairs, Community Safety & Migrant Services of Australia



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj is loved by his devotees and by everyone for his striking humility, noble service, saintliness and selfless desire to help everyone. True to his teachings, BAPS Australia has always been at the forefront of serving the community during difficult times.”

### H.E. Ardak Kakimzhanov

Ambassador of Kazakhstan to India



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the creator of the beautiful Akshardham Mandir in New Delhi, was deeply committed to interfaith harmony and this is reflected in the work that continues through BAPS’s activities. Kazakhstan is committed to this as well and BAPS volunteers help take this forward. These wonderful celebrations allow people

around the world to experience Pramukh Swami Maharaj's messages of peace and unity."

Other dignitaries present were H.E. Ganbold Dambajav, Ambassador of Mongolia to India; Craig Ondarchie, Former Shadow Minister of the Victoria State Government in Australia and Barry O'Farrell, High Commissioner of Australia to India.

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## AKSHARDHAM DAY: CELEBRATING DIVINITY

**12 January 2023**

The evening programme commenced at 5 p.m. with a musical symphony. More than 150 youths from 19 countries sang bhajans accompanied by traditional and Western instruments.

Thereafter, videos, dramas, speeches and cultural dances presented the creation and consequent influence of one of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's master creations, Swaminarayan Akshardham.

Adarshjivandas Swami narrated several inspiring incidents from the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Anandswarupdas Swami explained, "All mandirs and the Swaminarayan Akshardham complexes are based on the philosophical teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan."

### David Fried

Mayor of Robbinsville,  
New Jersey, USA



In his video message said, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived his entire life in the service of the community and the world. He made his final trip to America in 2014 at the age of 93 to inaugurate the mandir here. His life and work have inspired millions across the world to dedicate themselves to humanitarian causes. Today, we still experience that spirit of service through the thousands of volunteers serving here every day."

### Shri Dharmendra Pradhan

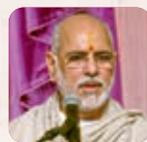
Union Minister of Education and  
Minister of Skill Development and  
Entrepreneurship



"The entire 600 acres of the campus is like an Open University, a research centre. There is enough to learn from this *nagar* that a PhD thesis could be written on each aspect of it, which shows 21st century science, technology, processing, marketing, branding, and so much more. I had the darshan of God here, and I also learned how this *nagar* can bring transformation in people's lives."

### Acharya Bhaishri Rameshbhai Oza

Eminent Hindu Speaker and Leader  
of Sandipani Ashram



"Whoever met Pramukh Swami 'Bapa' even once, came to love him. People of all religions and nations from around the world experienced his love deeply. He had the capacity to love everyone, from simple villagers to President Kalam. It was this love that inspired improvement in people's lives. In his presence, people gave up their addictions and bad habits, and transformed their lives to serve others. I myself experience an avalanche of love whenever I remember him as 'Bapa'. When we are celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life, his grace, humility and simplicity continue to inspire everyone. This Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is like the Kumbh Mela, a 'Kumbh of Inspiration'."

"I am proud that in the mandirs and Swaminarayan Akshardhams that Pramukh Swami Maharaj has built, you can see Sanatan Dharma flourishing around the world."

### D.R. Kaarhikeyan

Former Director, Central  
Bureau of Investigation (CBI)



"Pramukh Swami Maharaj's perfect life has inspired 80,000 volunteers to serve with so

much dedication and affection out of gratitude for their guru.

“The features and exhibitions in this *nagar* are each perfected with themes that were dear to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, whether it is family harmony, education, care for the environment, or humanitarian relief work.”

**Pujya Swami Shantatmanandaji**  
Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission

“Today is Swami Vivekanand’s birthday. After travelling around India, Swami Vivekanand observed, ‘The ideals of India are renunciation and service.’ Today, after attending the centenary celebrations of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I feel that Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an embodiment of renunciation and service. Pramukh Swami Maharaj saw the presence of God in others.

“Only those who have come and seen this festival will realize its vastness. It is unbelievable! Only those who have visited will get some idea of the perfection with which Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar has been created by the extraordinary efforts of the volunteers and swamis.”

Other dignitaries who spoke on the occasion were: Dr L. Murugan, Minister of State of Fisheries and Animal Husbandry; H.E. Yugo Xavier Gobbi, Ambassador of Argentina to India; and Pujya Chinmaybhai P. Pandya, Head of Gayatri Parivar.

**Mahant Swami Maharaj**

“The Akshardham mandirs are Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s epoch-making creations. As long as this world exists, the Akshardham

**I am awestruck by the extraordinary beauty, magnificence and serenity of this 600-acre Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. When I see the discipline in this complex, I feel the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.**  
**Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan**



mandirs will propagate our spiritual heritage and faith. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s sentiment in the creation of Akshardham was absolutely pure. He had said, ‘This Akshardham has been created not out of competition or to increase our glory, but because it was Yogiji Maharaj’s wish.’

“I have often been together with Pramukh Swami Maharaj during the various meetings for Akshardham. Not once did he ever express the sentiment that, ‘I have done this.’ In this way, Pramukh Swami Maharaj created the Akshardham mandirs solely out of devotion to God, but not with an iota of intent to increase his own glory.

“He was himself a living and breathing embodiment of Akshardham. From head to toe, he was suffused with devotion to God, devotion to the guru, and replete with the highest spiritual virtues. Therefore, his life continues to grant millions of people inspiration and spiritual strength.”

## KIRTAN BHAKTI PROGRAMME

13 January 2023

BAPS swamis from around the world sang devotional bhajans celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divine life and work. Manhar Uddhas, a popular singer, also sang a bhajan.

Mahant Swami Maharaj was also joined in the evening assembly by various dignitaries who paid homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

**Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan**  
Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh



“I bow at the holy feet of Mahant Swami Maharaj, who guides devotees to their spiritual liberation. I am awestruck by the extraordinary beauty, magnificence and serenity of this

600-acre Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. A large number of police officers would have to be deployed to maintain law and order if a political function was organized on this scale. However, when I see the discipline in this complex, I feel the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

“I feel that Pramukh Swami Maharaj incarnated on earth to establish dharma, as it has been espoused in the Bhagavad Gita. I was fortunate to have been blessed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj once. He had a spiritual aura. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a perfect amalgamation of the paths of knowledge, devotion and action. Twenty-four hours a day, he served people. I bow to his feet and seek inspiration from him.”

**Vivek Bhatt**

Bureau Chief, Gujarat First TV Channel



“When I was first blessed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj 12 years ago, I felt that God was present in him. He awakened and strengthened my faith in God and our spiritual and cultural heritage, and inspired me to spread positive knowledge through our media house.

“Even our staff deputed to the festival ground have changed for the better. Our reporters have given up their addictions, and they are now inspired to think about how to use the media to promote positive values.

“Because of its scope, this festival is a huge challenge for us to give coverage. However, for the first time in my career, I did not experience the slightest stress. I believe that this is only because we were blessed by Mahant Swami Maharaj. Only BAPS can organize and run an event of this scale and we are grateful for the opportunity to cover this.”

**Our reporters have given up their addictions, and they are now inspired to think about how to use the media to promote positive values.**  
Vivek Bhatt



Visitor takes a pledge to quit addiction

**Shri Kamlesh Gandhi**

Chairman and Managing Director, MAS Financial Services



“The magnitude of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations cannot be expressed in words. The volunteerism, sense of fraternity and discipline of the volunteers is extraordinary. So many people have been inspired to make their lives better after seeing the exhibitions here depicting the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Apart from management lessons, one can feel that this festival is being carried out with divine intervention.”

**Shri Amish Devgan**

Managing Editor, News18



“Over the past 30 days, I have developed immense respect for the BAPS volunteers who have managed the flow of millions of visitors so efficiently and without any chaos. My generation believes in the importance of staying connected to our culture. Years ago, Swami Vivekanand represented Hinduism, and today, this is being done by BAPS.

“Of the millions of people who have visited this *nagar*, tens of thousands have given



Many praised the celebrations as a cultural Maha Kumbh

up addictions, which is very important in today's world. Ten years from now, all of us will see the impact of this.

“BAPS mandirs are found all over the world, which is an aspect of our culture that spreads its positive vibrations to inspire people around the world.”

**Devendra Bhatnagar**

State Editor, Divya Bhaskar, Gujarat

**Over the past 30 days, I have developed immense respect for the BAPS volunteers who have managed the flow of millions of visitors so efficiently and without any chaos.**

**Shri Amish Devgan**



‘impossible’. It seems impossible to have so much discipline while so many thousands of people are walking around the festival grounds. The life-transformations that have occurred here need to be publicized. It is no small feat that people are able to give up their addictions by coming here, but it is because faith and spirituality are manifest here. This is a matter of experience.”

“Today, with this festival, we have been graced with a ‘cultural Maha Kumbh’ in Ahmedabad. To sum it up in one word, it is

**Mahant Swami Maharaj**



“Pramukh Swami Maharaj made everyone



happy. No one can say that Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not please them. He mixed with us so much that we were unable to understand his true greatness. In the time of Yogiji Maharaj and afterwards, we have seen that his life was absolutely pure, accommodating, natural and simple, without an iota of conceit or pretence. To uphold all of these virtues and do such work so naturally is very difficult. May Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Gunatitanand Swami grant happiness and liberation to all who have visited this festival.”

**14 January 2023**

Today, marked the final day of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. The exhibition halls and other attractions were open from morning till

late night. No evening assembly was held in the Narayan Sabha Gruh. ◆

**It seems impossible to have so much discipline while so many thousands of people are walking around the festival grounds. Faith and spirituality are manifest here.**  
Devendra Bhatnagar





# Grand Finale of Month-Long Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations

15 January 2023

**P**ramukh Swami Maharaj was given a grand devotional tribute in the closing ceremony of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations in the divine presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

During the month-long festival, over 12.1 million people visited the exhibitions and attractions at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar and were inspired to live better lives. The *nagar* hosted a variety of exhibitions, attractions, seminars, films and shows, each imparting a unique lesson from the inspiring life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Millions watched the daily

evening assemblies live over the past month, whether at the *nagar* or by webcast, and were enlightened about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life and work from speeches given by senior swamis and dignitaries from around the world. Thousands gained inspiration from Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life through the professional and academic conferences held at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.

A blood donation drive was also organized over the month-long festival, during which over 5.6 million cc of blood was donated. Hundreds of thousands of people were impressed and



Mahant Swami Maharaj blesses all on the grand finale celebration day

humbled by the ornate main gate, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 30-foot-high *murti*, replica of Delhi Akshardham Mandir, enchanting glow gardens, light and sound show, women's empowerment pavilion and other exhibitions. After visiting the exhibitions, thousands were inspired to give up addictions and pledged for family harmony. After watching the shows at the Bal Nagari, 250,000 children resolved to bow daily to their parents, study sincerely, and become ideal citizens of the world. All who visited were in awe of the over 48 departments and 80,000 volunteers inspired by Mahant Swami Maharaj who made Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar possible.

#### Grand Finale Programme

The Grand Finale Ceremony of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations, titled, 'We Will Not Forget You' commenced at

5 p.m. As thousands of devotees from around the world assembled, BAPS music bands played to welcome them. The assembly began with the singing of devotional *dhun* and bhajan followed by the grand entry of Mahant Swami Maharaj on a decorated chariot. Youths danced on the main stage to welcome Mahant Swami Maharaj as his chariot advanced on the pathways through the audience. The devotees were elated and felt blessed to have Swamishri's darshan from a close distance.

The **first part** of the assembly was themed on why people would not be able to forget Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Selected devotees shared their personal experiences about Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Each reiterated the point that Pramukh Swami Maharaj is always with them.

**Pujya Viveksagardas Swami** then spoke about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *vicharan* routine and



the physical and mental sacrifices he made to please and fulfil the wishes of everyone in society.

Thereafter, video testimonials of visitors about their impressions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar were shown.

The **second part** of the assembly focused on how society would never forget Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his work. **Brahmaviharidas Swami** spoke about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's construction of mandirs and their global impact. After a video about the significance of BAPS mandirs, **Anandswarupdas Swami** explained how Pramukh Swami Maharaj changed society's landscape through festivals.

A video introduced the festivals Pramukh Swami Maharaj had inspired and the impact of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar on society.

The **final part** of the grand finale programme unfolded on the theme of how our future generations would not be able to forget Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Each senior swami of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha spoke about a quality of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. **Ghanshyamcharandas Swami** began with a prayer after which **Tyagvallabhdas Swami** spoke

about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his gurus. Kothari **Bhaktipriyadas Swami** described Pramukh Swami Maharaj's saintliness, while **Swayamprakashdas Swami (Doctor Swami)** spoke about how Pramukh Swami Maharaj saw everyone equally. **Ishwarcharandas Swami** elaborated about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's endearing humility.

Children then gathered on stage to discuss how they, despite of having never met Pramukh Swami Maharaj, found Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Mahant Swami Maharaj. After a fascinating video introducing Mahant Swami Maharaj through testimonials, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the mammoth assembly, "We saw in today's assembly that Pramukh Swami Maharaj had cared for everyone. Thus, everyone felt that he was theirs. That is why none can ever forget him, not today and not thousands of years hence.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj had no sense of ego. Just as Pramukh Swami Maharaj never forgot his gurus, similarly, we should always remember Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Once, I was in Bamangam. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was traversing the rugged terrain and I wondered why



Pujya  
Doctor Swami



Pujya  
Kothari Swami



Pujya  
Tyagvallabh Swami



Pujya  
Ishwarcharan  
Swami



Pujya  
Viveksagar Swami



Pujya  
Ghanshyamcharan  
Swami

was he taking so much strain on his body. People would understand if he didn't. Immediately, Pramukh Swami Maharaj turned to me and said, 'Our gurus have done this, so we should, too.'

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj had God in every pore. He was Aksharbrahma. He has not and will not ever leave from this earth. He is with us today and will forever remain with us.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary was celebrated in a grand and divine way. By Bhagwan Swaminarayan's grace, the celebration has been completed without a hitch. By celebrating this festival, we have offered our devotion to our guru. We should never forget this. This festival was not celebrated to show off to anyone or to increase our glory. The true benefit of this festival is for our lives to become more like that of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He had virtues of service, resoluteness in spiritual observances, unity and affection. May we imbibe the same.

"May God bless all who visited this festival, supported it or even appreciated it from afar. And the services and sacrifice of the volunteers and swamis cannot be forgotten. They have endured so many hardships. Without the

volunteers, this would not have been possible. In such difficult circumstances, they kept courage, and without looking at day or night, served humbly. Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and I are very, very pleased with their services."

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations were officially concluded with a mass *maha-arti*, a colourful dance by youths and fireworks. ◆





# Professional Conferences

*During the month-long Pramukh Swami Maharaj centenary celebrations 14 one-day professional conferences were hosted by BAPS at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, Ahmedabad. Each conference was addressed by Brahmaviharidas Swami and Jnanvatsaldas Swami and also included speeches by professional speakers and expert panel discussions. The conferences were held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and thereafter the delegates were taken on a guided tour of the festival grounds. A brief report of some selected conferences is as follows.*

## INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF INDIA (ICAI)

17 December 2022

Leading experts at the conference shared their opinions and gratitude.

Shri Debashish Mitra, President, ICAI, said, “After spending time here, I feel as if I have

reached God’s abode. I will continue to draw inspiration from the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj by reflecting on how it illuminates the principles of ICAI.”

Shri Bishan Shah, CA, Chairman, ICAI, Ahmedabad, said, “I felt as if Pramukh Swami Maharaj is with me. Behind creativity,



Debashish Mitra



Bishan Shah



Purushottam Khandelwal



Sunil Talati

leadership and happiness is spirituality. It is spiritual wisdom that makes humans great. I am indebted to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Mahant Swami Maharaj and the swamis.”

**Shri Purushottam Khandelwal, Central Council Member, ICAI**, opined, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived for God and others. He gifted an institute [mandir] every 15 days. We, too, should spend our time for others.”

**Shri Sunil Talati, Former President, ICAI**, said, “The way in which the festival construction has been completed on the 600 acre site is astounding. Over 350 farmers and builders offered their land and the grand *nagar* was created in one year by 80,000 volunteers. This would not have been possible without the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. If we want to be graced with even more blessings, we must observe the work done by these volunteers.”

**Shri Aniket Talati, Vice-President, ICAI**, addressed the conference, “This place is a wonder of the world. We are very grateful to BAPS for providing a beautiful conference hall and facilities at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.”

## MEDICO-SPIRITUAL CONFERENCE

18 December 2022

A medico-spiritual conference was hosted by BAPS and organized in partnership with the Indian Medical Association, Gujarat.

**Dr Mahadev T. Desai** spoke on vegetarianism as a healthy and holistic way of living. He said, “I am vegetarian only due

to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Forty years ago when I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he asked me to write an article on vegetarianism. I used to eat eggs, but not meat. I thought I should turn vegetarian, only then I would be able to write about this.”

An interesting panel discussion on ‘Doctor-Patient Relationship: A New Perspective’ was conducted by Dr Abhijat Sheth and other doctors. Dr Sheth had observed that many BAPS patients, who had naturally imbibed spiritual values were easier to treat. He encouraged that the IMA should also strive to inculcate spiritual values along with medical knowledge to medical students at the undergraduate and postgraduate level.

**Dr Mona Desai, Chair of the National Medical Institute**, shared her impressions in an interview, “The whole *nagar* is out of this world. To visit such a unique place is a unique and lifetime experience. It was a pleasure to know how women are actively involved here. Everything is beautiful and precisely made. Beautiful and amazing work.”

## CONFEDERATION OF REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA (CREDAI)

22 December 2022

**Hemant Patel, Chairman of CREDAI, Gujarat**, said, “A hundred conferences would be required to talk on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s greatness! Pramukh Swami Maharaj, through his divinity and spirituality, created more than 1,200 exquisite mandirs



Aniket Talati



Dr Mahadev T. Desai



Dr Abhijat Sheth



Dr Mona Desai

in India and around the world, including the Akshardham complexes in Gandhinagar and New Delhi. It makes him an inspiration for us builders.”

## ENTREPRENEURS AND LEADERS

23 December 2022

**Shri Chiranjiv Patel, Global Committee Member of Entrepreneurs Organization for Gujarat**, remarked, “80,000 volunteers have worked wholeheartedly to create Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, while persisting through harsh weather conditions and hence, made the impossible possible. One can learn value-based management from Pramukh Swami Maharaj.” While recollecting an incident of his childhood when he accompanied his father and a family friend to meet Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he added, “My father’s friend, who was one of the biggest entrepreneurs of a restaurant chain in Ahmedabad, apprised Pramukh Swami Maharaj regarding the progress of his organization. However, Pramukh Swami Maharaj only replied, ‘Don’t forget to treat your employees with compassion and kindness.’ We can learn the greatest virtues of humanity and kindness from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj created the highest number of dedicated leaders in the form of these volunteers. The world has probably never seen such a force united through values.”

**Shri Ganpat Patel, Patron in Chief and President of Ganpat University**, said, “Upon seeing the vast dedicated volunteer force, I

realized Pramukh Swami Maharaj created value-based management through love. The management of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is so efficient because of the volunteers focus on what is right, rather than who is right.”

**Leander Paes, world-renowned professional tennis player**, shared his thoughts, “In times when tech-savvy people are losing a sense of communication, the BAPS volunteers who have dedicated themselves to create the grandeur of this place exemplify the passion and unity within the community. It is our duty to inculcate value-based communication in the industry and make them realize the importance of community.”

## LAWYERS AND JUDGES

24 December 2022

In his inaugural welcome address, **Shri Anirudhsinh Zala, Chairman of the Bar Council of Gujarat**, said, “The Swaminarayan Sampradaya takes care of people and provides them with a platform for progress. Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is magnificently organized and is an exemplar of cleanliness.”

**Supreme Court Judge Honourable Justice Shri M.R. Shah** shared, “On meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 2004, I realized one should lead a disciplined life. We should follow the footsteps of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and imbibe the virtues of discipline, selfless service and generosity in our profession. Pramukh Swami Maharaj explained the *niyams* of the Shikshapatri. After reading it, I realized that the Shikshapatri is the constitution we need for our lives.”



Chiranjiv Patel



Ganpat Patel



Leander Paes



Anirudhsinh Zala

## EDUCATIONISTS

2 January 2023

A special one-day national conference, ‘Spirituality in Education’, was organized today for vice-chancellors, principals and educationists in partnership with the Gujarat Rajya Mahavidyalaya Shaikshik Sangh and Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh.

**Shri Rohit Desai, President of Gujarat Rajya Mahavidyalaya Shaikshik Sangh**, said, “I pray before God that may we take positive energy from this holy Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Pramukh Swami Maharaj imparted value-based education by working for the welfare of society through initiatives such as de-addiction campaigns, disaster-relief work and women empowerment programmes. We should strive to unite and impart education that will benefit society and our nation.”

**Shri Praful Pansheriya, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs (Primary, Secondary and Adult Education, Higher Education)**, shared, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not pursue a formal higher education, but through his spirituality, humility and pure conduct, he led an organization like BAPS and inculcated these values in the swamis and devotees. We need to learn from Pramukh Swami Maharaj to renounce arrogance and focus on the betterment of students. Teachers should enable such an education wherein students achieve stability and not succumb to negative influences.”

**Shri J.J. Vora, Vice Chancellor of Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University**,

said, “I appreciate the devotion and dedication of the 80,000 volunteers of different professions who have come together to create this monumental Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Such a synchronization of unity, creativity and hard work is only possible due to divine intervention.”

**Shri Bhikhubhai Patel, Chairman of Charutar Vidyamandal, Vidyanagar**, said, “In 1964, Yogiji Maharaj established Akshar Purushottam Chhatralaya (APC), a hostel facility for students, that has resulted in providing the country with character-based and value-driven youths.”

## HUMAN RESOURCES

4 January 2023

More than 1,250 CEOs, directors, managing directors, general managers and HR managers of around 600 companies from all over India gathered for this conference, titled ‘Leader 2030: Role of HR’.

**Dr T.V. Rao, Chairman of TVRLS and former professor at IIM(A)**, said, “Having started to read *Transcendence: My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swami* by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, I have been left awe-inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life. I have learnt that one needs to sanctify oneself in order to sanctify society. Pramukh Swami Maharaj advised Dr Kalam to add ‘faith in God’ as the sixth pillar of his vision of 2020. I advocate adding spirituality in the role of HR. Everyone present in this conference should definitely read *Transcendence* and be inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life and teachings. It will help us to be kind to people and focus on solving their problems.”



Justice M.R. Shah



Rohit Desai



Praful Pansheriya



J.J. Vora



**Mr Krish Shankar, EVP & Group HR Head, Infosys,** said, “The biggest problem in the present world is psychological health. To tackle this we need to be an architect of creating an inclusive organization. We need to learn the spirit of inclusiveness from BAPS. HR should be re-invented through six key shifts: constant learning, opportunities to reinvent careers, inclusivity, harnessing culture, entrepreneurial contracts, and using technology to assist people.”

An interesting panel discussion on ‘Sustainable Development’ followed.

### **INDIAN DRUG MANUFACTURERS’ ASSOCIATION (IDMA)**

**8 January 2023**

**Dr Hemant Koshia, Commissioner, Food & Drugs Control Administration (FDCOA),** shared a memorable incident of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, “Many years ago when I was

a Joint Commissioner of FDCOA, Gujarat, I had applied for the post of Drug Controller, Delhi. I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj to seek his blessings for the interview. Pramukh Swami Maharaj advised me not to take the interview and instead serve Gujarat. Following the advice of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I did not appear for the interview. Today, I am standing before this audience as a Commissioner of the FDCOA, Gujarat.”

Other conferences included: Industrialists (GCCCI), National Association of Realtors (NAR), Rashtriya Sant Sammelan, NDDDB, Civil Engineers and Architects (GICEA), Tourism, and Leadership Symposium for Amusement Park Owners. ◆



Shri Bhikhubhai Patel



Dr T.V. Rao



Mr Krish Shankar



Dr Hemant Koshia



Dr Sachchidanand Joshi



Dr Milind Kamble



Dr Alok K. Chakrawal

# Academic Conferences

*In affiliation with BAPS, seven academic conferences were held at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar in which renowned national and international scholars presented papers on various subjects. The conferences were as follow.*

## **ANCIENT INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE**

**19 & 20 December 2022**

Among the scholars who spoke were Dr Sachchidanand Joshi (chairperson of IGNCA), and Shri G.B. Delgurkar (eminent archaeologist and President of Deccan College).

## **INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES**

**21 December 2022**

Scholars who spoke included Padmashri Dr Milind Kamble (Founder and Chairman of Dalit

Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Keynote speaker Dr Alok K. Chakrawal (Vice-chancellor of Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya), Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadreshdas Swami, Shri Bijoy Sonkar Shastri (Chairman of National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes), Dr Shrutiprakashdas Swami (Director of AARSH, Gandhinagar), Mangalnidhidas Swami (USA), Dr Kalpesh Bhatt (Assistant Professor at University of Mary Washington, Virginia).

## **SCHEDULED TRIBE UPLIFTMENT**

**22 December 2022**



Dr Hanna Kim



Dr Jayanti Ravi



Dr Ranjana Harish

Thackersey (SNDT), Mumbai.

In her keynote address, **Dr Hanna Kim, Chair of the Anthropology Department at Adelphi University in New York**, emphasized the role of the BAPS Yuvati Talim Kendra (Young Women’s Training Centre) in providing training

## SWAMINARAYAN SANT SAHITYA

26 December 2022

Scholars who spoke included Prof. Himanshu Pandya (Vice-chancellor of Gujarat University), Shri Raghuvirbhai Chaudhari, Shri Anilbhai Joshi, Shri Bhagyesh Jha, Shri Kumarpal Desai, Shri Madhav Ramanuj, Mahamahopadhyha Bhadreshdas Swami.

## INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCE ON HISTORY

3 & 4 January 2023

Scholars who spoke included Prof. Arvind Jamkhedkar, Dr Paramtattva Swami, Prof. Ram Kishore Tripathi, Prof. Makrand Mehta, Dr Aksharananddas Swami, Dr Hamsa Stainton (USA), Dr Dalpat Purohit (USA).

## WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AND HINDU SOCIO-SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

5 January 2023

Scholars and students from around the world – including universities in India, Australia, America, Canada and the United Kingdom – presented their research papers on women’s rights, representation and empowerment.

The conference was organized by BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute, New Delhi, in collaboration with Shreemati Nathibai Damodar

to women in attaining “greater contentment and autonomy in life by cultivating techniques found in the Swaminarayan toolkit for navigating everyday lives.” She opined, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj was ahead of his times in valuing human capacity, regardless of caste, class and gender.”

**Dr Jayanti Ravi, Secretary of the Auroville Foundation in Tamil Nadu and former IAS officer in Gujarat**, cited the examples of Andal and Mirabai as exemplary women figures of bhakti. She applauded BAPS for the selfless devotion, dedication and commitment of female and male volunteers at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.

**Neetaben Shah, Director of BAPS Swaminarayan Girls School in Randesan**, outlined the progression of women’s activities since the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the role of women volunteers at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, who were utilizing their special skillsets to serve selflessly.

**Dr Ranjana Harish, Former Professor and Head of the Department of English at Gujarat University in Ahmedabad**, showed how Bhagwan Swaminarayan had promoted women’s rights to perform bhakti, attain liberation, and “for women’s recognition as persons worthy of human dignity.” She further narrated how Pramukh Swami Maharaj had touched her during a stressful time in her life through an inspirational letter. ◆





## Nari Utkarsh Mandapam

*The BAPS Women's Wing's performances and presentations at the Women's Pavilion (Nari Utkarsh Mandapam) in Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar included seminars, cultural programmes, dramas and panel discussions on important issues relevant to women. In addition, some evening programmes were held on the main stage of Narayan Sabha Gruh. Many renowned women personalities addressed the audience daily. A brief report is as follows.*

### **PARENTING SEMINAR**

**24 December 2022**

Dr Prarthana Patel, Paediatrics Professor at GCS Medical College, spoke about the importance of a child's holistic health. It incorporates six key aspects: physical, emotional, spiritual, social, intellectual and moral development. She also paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's exemplary efforts towards the holistic development of children and youths in today's society.

Dr Patel also enlightened the audience on proper parenting techniques for raising a child according to his or her age: from a newborn (0 to 1 month), an infant (1 month to 1 year), a toddler

(1 to 3 years), a pre-school child (3 to 6 years), child (6 to 10 years) to adolescence (10 to 18 years).

### **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT INSPIRED BY PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ**

**27 & 28 December 2022**

On 27 December 2022, Gujarat High Court judge, Honourable Ms Justice Vaibhavi D. Nanavati, enlightened the audience on ideal gender relations for a harmonious society.

Justice Nanavati paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and called the ongoing centenary celebration a "festival of inspiration that motivates millions to lead a pure, virtuous and addiction-free life." She applauded the

dedicated and sincere efforts of swamis and volunteers of all ages who were serving tirelessly to pay homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Deeply touched by the life and work of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Justice Nanavati praised, “He was an ideal saint who practised celibacy and was detached from worldly pleasures but at the same time lived for others. He never differentiated based on background or gender. Bhagwan Swaminarayan initiated the work of women’s uplift and Pramukh Swami Maharaj had, over the years, continued to uplift and empower women through various activities such as setting up dedicated wings for children, youths and women around the world and inspiring the Yuvati Talim Kendra (Young Women’s Training Centre). He uplifted women from all walks of life, irrespective of whether they came from a small village or a cosmopolitan city. Women always felt his presence, and whenever they prayed to him, he heard them and fulfilled their prayers. I, too, have experienced this feeling.”

On 28 December 2022, as part of the daily Women’s Empowerment Programme at the Nari Utkarsh Mandapam, **Dr Ratankanvar H. Gadhavicharan (IAS, MBBS), State Project Director of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**, spoke about her experiences of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his contributions to society. She said, “I am impressed with the extensive involvement of women in all aspects of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations as this is a clear testament to

the strength and skills that women possess. Whether one is a male or female, if a person possesses virtues such as love, compassion, mercy and selflessness, then they have immense inner strength.”

**Kusum Kaul Vyas, Director at Ayurnet Healthcare and Trans-sphere Technologies and Chairperson of Women’s Wing of Gujarat Chamber of Commerce & Industry**, said, “I have been fortunate to be a part of several events in Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s presence where I could feel his positive vibrations. The first time I looked at him, his almond-shaped eyes attracted me to his face. They were deep as a lake, penetrating and profoundly sweet. So it is no surprise that he spread sweetness, love and joy across the world. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has touched every person’s heart and soul in one way or another. His biggest contribution has been to nourish Hinduism around the world.”

**Ami Patel, Deputy Superintendent of Gandhinagar**, appreciated the selfless services of the women volunteers at the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. She recounted that she was deeply influenced by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s guidance in a letter in which he had explained, “Women are mentally connected to God, and God is constantly guiding them onto the path of righteousness and spirituality through this mental connection and sincere prayers.” Just as Pramukh Swami Maharaj had said, she experienced a direct connection with Mahant Swami Maharaj from the first time she saw him. She shared her conviction, “It is important to

Ms Vaibhavi Nanavati

Dr Ratankanvar H. Gadhavicharan

Kusum Kaul Vyas



remember that God always acts in our best interest. In my daily life, I draw strength from the following maxims taught by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, ‘In the joy of others lies our own’ and ‘Not even a leaf is capable of moving in this world without the will of God.’”

**Ultimately these girls and young women are going to shape the society we live in and the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebration is providing them a wonderful platform to showcase and upgrade their skills.**

**Mrs Savitri Patel**

on managing homes seamlessly and inculcating key values and various skillsets.”

Observing how Pramukh Swami Maharaj helped empower countless women, she said, “A group of young women recounting their immigration stories to America told me how they felt overwhelmed by their relocation until they met young female BAPS

volunteers who invited them to the local BAPS mandirs where they could meet like-minded people and enjoy home-cooked meals. While they initially went for the camaraderie and food, over time the inspiration they gained from Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life and works provided them an anchor that has now empowered them to offer their services at the BAPS mandirs and help other women in society.”

She concluded by saying, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj has over the years made exemplary efforts to impart skills and inculcate good values in the lives of girls from a very young age. The strength that these values and skills have brought into their lives can be clearly witnessed from the work that female volunteers have done in this Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Ultimately these girls and young women are going to shape the society we live in and the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations is providing them a wonderful platform to showcase and upgrade their skills.”

**Mrs Nayna M. Patel, Director of Mamata**

**WOMEN’S  
EMPOWERMENT INSPIRED BY  
PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ**

**29 December 2022, Ahmedabad**

On 29 December 2022, as part of the daily women’s empowerment programme at the Nari Utkarsh Mandapam **Mrs Savitri Patel, Managing Trustee of Manav Kalyan Trust**, Former Chairperson of the Businesswomen Wing of the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, applauded Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s vision on women empowerment. She said, “Three things are paramount for an empowered society – wealth, protection and education, which are represented by goddess Lakshmi, goddess Durga and goddess Saraswati. Thus, we can understand that God has given goddesses the responsibility to help shape the world. Similarly, Pramukh Swami Maharaj laid the foundation stone for women’s empowerment in today’s society by starting educational institutes for girls, initiating various activities for girls, youths and women such as *garbh sanskar* (instilling values in an unborn child during pregnancy), guidance

Ami Patel



Mrs Savitri Patel



Mrs Nayna M. Patel



Airwings, Ahmedabad, and Former Chairperson of the Businesswomen Wing of the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, “One strong woman is capable of inspiring society around her. Pramukh Swami Maharaj worked tirelessly to empower women not only in India but around the world.”

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30 December 2022

Ms Mana Patel, an Olympic swimmer who has won 111 national and 32 international awards, addressed the daily women’s empowerment assembly. She wholeheartedly thanked the women volunteers, “I feel honoured to be a part of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations. The theatrical performance ‘Perna Pramukhraj’ at the Women’s Empowerment Pavilion was mesmerizing and truly inspirational. It beautifully portrays and offers compelling solutions to relevant social topics of today’s world. It has been my absolute pleasure to be a part of this wonderful event. Women have innate strength to excel in their lives. It is important to tap their unused potential and provide them platforms to nurture their skills and talents.”

Dr Dipika Saradava, President of BJP Mahila Morcha, Gujarat, paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj has over the years made exemplary efforts to

**Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is incredible! I am amazed, particularly by the arrangements at the Women’s Empowerment Pavilion. I feel that what I see here is almost legendary.**

**Dr Naynaben Patel**

impart skills and inculcate good values into the lives of girls from a very young age. The strength that these values and skills have brought into their lives can be clearly witnessed from the work that female volunteers have done in Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Ultimately, these girls

and young women are going to shape our society and the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations are providing them a wonderful platform to showcase and upgrade their skills.”

1 January 2023

Prominent Women Applauded Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Work for Women’s Empowerment

Advocate Gauri Chandnani, former President of the Income Tax Bar Association, reflected upon the works of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the field of women empowerment. She said, “Bhagwan Swaminarayan and all his spiritual successors have done immense work for empowering women. For example, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired the creation of a three-month training programme for the holistic development of young women in BAPS, called the Yuvati Talim Kendra. This exceptional programme has helped thousands of young women, who have proactively participated over the years, to grow in all aspects of their life.

“I owe all my success and achievements to the blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. My father, an IAS officer, had the good fortune to meet

Advocate Gauri Chandnani

Dr Naynaben Patel

Ms Mana Patel



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and so, I have witnessed that Pramukh Swamiji never differentiated anyone's social class, education, etc. When a saint like him has compassion for us, we are blessed. When my mother passed away, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had asked four swamis including Pujya Doctor Swami to visit our place and do bhajan. This way, Pramukh Swami Maharaj ensured that he was with us during our sad times.”

**Dr Naynaben Patel, Dean of the Dental College of Jamnagar,** shared her experience of visiting the *nagar*, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar is incredible! I am amazed, particularly by the arrangements at the Women Empowerment Pavilion. I feel that what I see here is almost legendary. My visit to Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar on the first day of 2023 will be my first step towards spirituality for this whole year.”

## GARBH SANSKAR

2 January 2023

The BAPS Women's Wing organized a seminar on 'Garbh Sanskars'.

**Dr Monika Vasani, Ayurvedacharya, Founder of Dream Baby Garbh Sanskar and a Medical Officer,** delivered a seminar on the importance of *garbh sanskars*, describing the values to be instilled in the foetus.

**Dr Vasani** said, “The *Charak Samhita* says that there are, in all, six mediums through which

**The theatrical performance 'Prerna Pramukhraj' at the was mesmerising and truly inspirational. It beautifully portrays and offers compelling solutions to relevant social topics of today's world.**

**Ms Mana Patel**

a foetus imbibes values. These include both parents' character, biological cycles, thought processes, behaviour, outlook, and others. It thus becomes imperative for the parents to ensure and consciously adopt a value-based and disciplined lifestyle for the sake of their children. For these reasons,

Mahant Swami Maharaj has advised that pregnant women should read spiritual books to ensure the inculcation of spiritual values.”

**Jayshree Mehta, former collaborator with UNESCO and the UN in scientific policy planning, new project implications and gender equality, and Owner and Director of Infinium Toyota,** expressed her immense gratitude towards Pramukh Swami Maharaj and applauded the efforts of all the volunteers in Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. She said, “I feel fortunate and I am overcome with pride and delight to see how thousands of volunteers have banded together to serve at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's personality was so magnanimous that words fall short in describing it. He was a 'Yug Purush' and a great soul like him comes only once in a century. His thought process, demeanour, dedication to serve society and people-oriented persona made him unique. He spent his whole life helping others.”

**Dr Neeta Goswami, BASM, former Chairperson GCCI, Ahmedabad,** said, “The

Dr Dipika Saradava



Dr Monika Vasani



Jayshree Mehta



Dr Neeta Goswami



light of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life and work has illuminated my heart. Just the way God has created the sun and the moon, he has also created saints like Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the uplift of society. His magnificent creations are the glory of India. He was a saint who had no expectations from society, but instead dedicated his entire life for the bliss of people. No person can be more capable than him.”

**IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUALITY AND GURU**

4 January 2023

**Honourable Justice Abhilasha Kumari, Judicial Member of the Lokpal Committee of India, first woman Chief Justice of Manipal High Court and former Justice of Gujarat High Court,** shared her insights on the necessity of spirituality and the guru for one’s holistic development. She said, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an ideal guru, so every word he said was satsang.

“While the guru may appear engrossed in manifold activities, he remains forever concentrated on kindness and helping humanity. We must put our trust in a guru who is *gunatit* – not affected by worldly matters. A true guru is necessary to differentiate between truth and falsity. We are fortunate that we have found a true guru in Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. Now we should follow their guidance to reach our final aim.”

**Mrs Janki Vasant, Founder and Managing Trustee of Samvedana and winner of the Women’s Power Award from the President of**

Mrs Janki Vasant

Ms Meera Patel

Ms Drasti Patel

Bhumika Joshi



**India,** shared her experience of the celebrations, “This beautiful experience at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar has rendered me speechless. BAPS’s works are longstanding and worldwide.

“BAPS serves people by transforming broken families into harmonious ones, helping people give up addictions, and working for women’s literacy. It is because of organizations like BAPS that people can find the spiritual anchor and strength within themselves. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s work is even more necessary in today’s times.”

**BAPS NORTH AMERICA WOMEN’S WING**

7 January 2023

A special programme was organized by BAPS North America Women’s Wing themed on a dazzling cultural programme, ‘You Made My Life Blissful.’

The programme included traditional prayers, dances, musical and theatrical performances, and video testimonials of the devotees. A fascinating documentary highlighted the role of women in offering services at Akshardham in Robbinsville, and how it enhanced their personality.

**Ms Meera Patel, Former US Marine from Los Angeles,** said, “I had served as a US Marine in Afghanistan. Today, I am serving as an Ayurvedic physician. My faith in Pramukh Swami Maharaj gives me confidence in myself. While volunteering in Robbinsville Akshardham I have learned the importance of serving society. Taking inspiration from my guru, I, too, am driven by the spirit of service. My life goal is to serve people and I am constantly trying to find new ways to empower them, physically,

mentally and spiritually.”

**Ms Drasti Patel of New Jersey**, recounted how Pramukh Swami Maharaj guided her , “I am volunteering as a core lead of the Robbinsville Akshardham site. I was an introvert by nature and I’ve never held a leadership position before. I have always believed that Pramukh Swami Maharaj is with me, continuously giving me the strength I need to accomplish any task. This conviction provided me with the confidence, clarity and commitment I required for my leadership position. I am amazed at the person I have become today. People around me have also observed how much I have evolved and matured into a more self-assured person.”

**Bhumika Joshi, Defence Attorney in New York**, said, “I am so grateful for the opportunity to volunteer at Akshardham during its construction because it has given me confidence to overcome all the challenges that I have to face in my life.”

**Usha Sutariya of Long Island, New York**, shared her story of personal crisis, “When my education, my job, my money were of no use, I turned to God. I was fortunate enough to find a guru like Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

She wrote a letter to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and narrated how the letter from him changed her life “He uplifted my life, gave me strength and hope when I was contemplating on committing suicide. I was completely shattered but Pramukh Swami Maharaj understood me

**We must take an example from Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, where women are involved in so many aspects of its management. These volunteering opportunities have increased their self-confidence and determination to contribute.**

**Beenaben Handa**

and informed me to not act against the codes of conduct given in Shikshapatri and steered me away from the path of committing suicide. He transformed my life. When I needed him the most, he was there for me. He saved me and my child.”

**Beenaben Handa, Founder and Director of Poiesis**

**Achievement Foundation**, remarked on women’s roles in creating and managing Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, “We must take an example from Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, where women are involved in so many aspects of its management. These volunteering opportunities have increased their self-confidence and determination to contribute. Moreover, everyone who sees this is similarly inspired. Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught love that transcends all materialistic attributes.”

**Ms Anar Patel, Social worker & Entrepreneur**, paid tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, saying, “I have observed that all BAPS volunteers serve everyone with sheer love. These are our true values and this is our religion. If people take even one value with them from this celebration, their life will become blissful. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s simplicity and ease were heart-touching and I find the same in the swamis of BAPS. Just as nature blossoms in the spring, values blossom in the presence of a true *sant*.”

Usha Sutariya



Beenaben Handa



Ms Anar Patel



Dr Binny Sareen



## BAPS UK AND EUROPE WOMEN'S WING

8 January 2023

A special programme was organized by the BAPS UK and Europe Women's Wing. The deeply thought-provoking and emotive programme titled 'Vahetu Jivan Tamaru' celebrated Pramukh Swami Maharaj's presence on earth through the unique medium of water as being purifying, spiritually energizing, and constantly flowing in selfless service to unite all with God.

**Rajyogini Dr Binny Sareen, Founder & President, Global Initiative for Peace & Wellbeing, Brahma Kumari HQ, Mount Abu,** described her experience at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, "It is a marvellous miracle of spirituality. Words fall short in describing this Nagar. From this place, the purity, the spiritual messages of love, brotherhood, kindness, blessings, and divine virtues are spreading all over the world. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is a complete 'Yug Purush' who guided us onto a beautiful path of service, happiness, love and peace. I especially want to felicitate those volunteering here. The time that you devote here is a great service. From the moment I entered this place, I have been greeted and served with vibrant smiles.

**Ms Bhargavi Dave, Director of the District Rural Development Agency, Gandhinagar,** said, "I have seen magnificence in many places and I have felt divinity in many places as well, but here I can feel purity and holiness all around me. This holy land is a culmination of magnificence,

**It is a marvellous miracle of spirituality. Words fall short in describing this nagar. I especially want to felicitate those volunteering here.**

**Dr Binny Sareen**

divinity and purity. There aren't enough words to describe a holy saint like Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

"His divine presence clearly exists here. This *nagar* vividly demonstrates concepts like

celebrations, microplanning and management. Upon entering the *nagar*, I noticed that every volunteer has a loving smile on their face.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the epitome of love, compassion and kindness. Even if we take something small away from this *nagar*, our lives will become more meaningful. It is miraculous that volunteers from all walks of life are serving harmoniously together. This *nagar* is a blend of the five fundamental values of devotion, positive emotions, dedication, faith and service."

## BAPS AFRICA WOMEN'S WING

9 January 2023

A special programme titled 'Katha Kahu Ek Yug Purush Ni' was organized by the BAPS Africa Women's wing. The vibrant programme enthralled the audience with traditional musical dances of Africa and India, highlights from Pramukh Swami Maharaj's spiritual travels in Africa as well as an inspirational skit depicting a personal incident of a devotee who had faced many challenges with unshakeable faith in God and unwavering strength.

Some volunteers shared their experiences of how Pramukh Swami Maharaj transformed their lives by building temples and starting the weekly assemblies in Africa.

Ms Bhargavi Dave



Dr Jyoti Pandya Sheth



Ms Meena Kaviya



Dr Jyoti Pandya Sheth, National Vice President Mahila Morcha, BJP Gujarat, expressed, “Magnificent is the only word that comes to mind when I think of this *nagar*. The positive vibrations emanating from here will spread across humanity and will in future help us survive peacefully. The entire team of 80,000 volunteers will leave a legacy for the world to follow.”



## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION SEMINAR

11 January 2023

The BAPS Women’s Wing organized a seminar on ‘Save Electricity and Water and Maintain Cleanliness’.

**Guest Speaker Ms Meena Kaviya, President of the Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs (Gujarat chapter),** said, “The positivity, welcoming smiles and happiness radiating on all the volunteers’ faces clearly demonstrates that Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Centenary Celebrations are a celebration of humanity.”

## WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

12 January 2023

Some of the many invited speakers spoke on women’s empowerment.

**Ms Truptiben Jain, Director, Naireeta Services, Ahmedabad,** said, “The 80,000 volunteers belonging to different professions and socio-economic classes coming together to selflessly serve here overwhelms me. I would like to become a part of BAPS organization to be able to serve on a larger scale.”

**Dr Sandhya Purecha, Bharatanatyam Guru, Sanskrit Scholar and Chairperson of Sangeet Natak Akademi of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India,** shared her experience of her visit, “The Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations delight me, especially because women are the cultivators of not only the home and society, but also the nation and the entire world, and I see the prominence women have in BAPS. I am overwhelmed by looking at what Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj have done for the empowerment of women.”

**Dr Jagdish Kaur, Regional Adviser for Tobacco Free Initiative at the WHO’s Regional Office for South East Asia, New Delhi,** said, “This has been an amazing experience. It is unfathomable how this celebration has been organized and managed by thousands of volunteers over a period of one month. I can see the deep commitment, compassion and hard work that has gone into the same and all this is possible only with the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.” ◆

Ms Truptiben Jain



Dr Sandhya Purecha



Dr Jagdish Kaur







**Vahagn Khachatryan**  
President of the Republic of Armenia



**Ranil Wickremesinghe**  
President of Sri Lanka



**Prithvirajsing Roopun**  
President of the Republic of Mauritius

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Turkey, December 20, 2022

Your Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj,  
Nasirvan.

I am pleased to send my warm congratulations on the centennial birth anniversary of His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj.

Pramath Swami Maharaj was a visionary and gifted the world with values and wisdom, which can be experienced through his disciples as well as his spiritual teachings.

Relations between our two countries have had a colorful long history. There are number of months about historical ties between our two nations from ancient times. In medieval centuries, when the Armenian community settled in Agn, Calcutta, Malabar, Hyderabad and other major Indian cities, the interactions have been developed significantly. Armenians in India were blessed with respect and were granted certain privileges in areas for their contribution to the country's prosperity.

Close interactions between our two peoples play a significant role in the development of bilateral relations between Armenia and India. And it is important that the activities of our countries have mutual access to historical cultural values.

I wish you the very best for the centennial celebration.

*Vahagn Khachatryan*  
VAHAGN KHACHATRYAN

HIS HOLINESS MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ  
GURU OF THE BAPS SWAMINARAYAN SANSTHA  
NEW DELHI

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President of Sri Lanka

Message

I extend my warmest congratulations and sincere best wishes to everyone of the Swaminarayan Shri Anand Parashakti Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) on the auspicious occasion of Pramath Swami Maharaaj Shri Mahant Maharaj, the centennial birth anniversary of His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj.

His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj was one of the greatest spiritual leaders of our time who touched countless lives across India and the world. The work of His Holiness, "In the joy of others, lies our own..." epitomises the life he lived and the legacy that he has left behind.

His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj was able to mobilise thousands of volunteers to support the affected during the times of crisis - from earthquakes to floods. We in Sri Lanka also benefitted from his support during the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, for which our country will forever be grateful.

I avail myself of this opportunity to wish every success in the centennial birth anniversary celebrations in India. I am certain that the life and legacy of His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj will continue to inspire generations to come.

*Ranil Wickremesinghe*  
Ranil Wickremesinghe  
President  
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka  
09.01.2023

Republique de Maurice  
Message of H.E. Mr Prithvirajsing ROOPUN, G.C.S.K.

On behalf of the people of the Republic of Mauritius and in my own name, I would like to extend our best wishes on the celebrations of Pramath Swami Maharaj's 100th birth anniversary.

His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj shall forever be recognized and respected as one of India's greatest spiritual teachers who fully lived and propagated the principle - *Yashodhara Karamdhara* - the world is our family.

His Holiness provided the values of Bhakti with such devotion and love that his life and work will be remembered for time immemorial.

The Republic of Mauritius was fortunate and indeed blessed that His Holiness visited our country in 1974.

His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj's philosophy - "In the joy of others lies our own" has always and shall continue to guide and inspire countless people across the world.

*Prithvirajsing Roopun*  
Prithvirajsing Roopun, G.C.S.K.  
President of the Republic of Mauritius



**Dr. Faisal Al Mekdad**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic



**Chang Jae-bok**  
Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Korea



**Bulat Sarsenbayev**  
Chairman, Center for Development of Interfaith and Inter-Civilization Dialogue

Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն  
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Damasus, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023

His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj,  
Gujarat, Republic of India

It is a great pleasure for me to extend to you and to the friendly people of India the warmest congratulations on the centenary celebrations of the birth of his holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj, with all the spiritual values, universal peace message, and human fraternity thereby, involved.

In Syria, being the cradle of many civilisations, we believe in the culture of peace, and we do work together with all our friends around the world to enhance dialogue, understanding, and the values of tolerance and peace among cultures and civilisations. In this regard I quote "Each civilized person in the world should admit that he has two former countries: the one he was born in, and Syria". Andrius Parnis - Former director of Louvre Museum.

It was a pleasure to visit the Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple in New Delhi recently. I was deeply touched by the heart-warming welcome, and the beauty and spirituality that fill the Unique place.

Wishing you joyous centennial celebrations.

Yours sincerely,  
*Dr. Faisal Al Mekdad*  
Dr. Faisal Al Mekdad  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic

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President of Sri Lanka

11 January 2023

Your Holiness,

I express my heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of birth anniversary celebrations of His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj. My compliments to BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha for organizing this meaningful celebration as also for its selfless service to humanity.

His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj was a great spiritual leader who dedicated his entire life to serving the cause of spirituality and humanity. His life, works and teachings have universal appeal, transcending geographical boundaries.

May the ideals of His Holiness Pramath Swami Maharaj permeate our lives, guiding us on the path of peace, progress and prosperity.

I wish the celebrations of success.

*Chang Jae-bok*  
Chang Jae-bok

His Holiness  
Mahant Swami Maharaj  
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha  
Maheshwar, Gujarat - 386000

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA  
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Wishing you joyous centennial celebrations.

Yours sincerely,  
*Bulat Sarsenbayev*  
Bulat Sarsenbayev  
Chairman, Center for Development of Interfaith and Inter-Civilization Dialogue



# Making of

## PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ NAGAR

*It took nearly one year, starting from December 2021, to construct the mammoth Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Over 48 volunteer departments were involved in making and running the month-long celebrations. The story of the making of Pramukh Swami Nagar is one of stupendous effort and divine blessings.*

*Some salient aspects of this story are as follows.*

■ Due to Mahant Swami Maharaj's inspiration and blessings and Ishwarcharandas Swami's guidance a core committee of swamis was assigned the onerous task of planning, constructing and managing the celebration. The core members were Anandswarupdas Swami, Jnaneshwardas Swami, Narayanmunidas Swami, Yagnapriyadas Swami, Nikhileshdas Swami, Brahmaviharidas Swami and Rushirajdas Swami.

■ In 2019, about 30 swamis held brainstorming sessions during a week-long stay in Nenpur, Gujarat, to discuss and share ideas about how to celebrate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary celebrations. Pujya Ishwarcharandas Swami also attended and gave suggestions and guidelines.

■ Nikhileshdas Swami, Jnaneshwardas Swami, Rushirajdas Swami and other swamis

were given the responsibility of looking for the celebration site. In 2019, land for the celebration site was first suggested by Kalpeshbhai Patel, a *satsangi* and builder of Ahmedabad. It was a tract of uncultivated land on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, near Ognaj Circle on the Sardar Patel Ring Road. The land, replete with thorny trees and bushes, belonged to over 350 farmers and builders. It was located off the S.P. Ring Road, in Ahmedabad, on the outskirts of four villages: Ognaj, Lapkaman, Rakanpur and Santej. When it was shown to Ishwarcharandas Swami he instantly declared that the land was most apt because of its easy accessibility to visitors from all the districts of Gujarat: Vadodara, Surat, Saurashtra, Gandhinagar, Mehsana and Himmatnagar.

■ Soon after, when Mahant Swami Maharaj, who was in Rajkot, was shown a



Daily meeting with heads of departments



A meeting with volunteers

Google map of the site, he instantly approved and uttered, “The festival will be celebrated supremely.” Thereafter, Kalpeshbhai Patel and Trikambhai Patel took the lead in contacting the landowners and builders to permit the use of their land. Large portions of the site belonged to industrialists Shri Karsanbhai Patel of Nirma and Shri Dipakbhai Vasvani. They wholeheartedly agreed to allow the use of their land for the celebration.

- Initially it was decided that 200 acres would suffice for the entire celebration. However, after detailed planning it became evident that more land would be required to include the parking lots, kitchen facilities and accommodation for the volunteers. After considering these factors and also the need for a separate site to celebrate the grand finale birthday event of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, it was decided that a total of 600 acres of land would be required.

- Subsequently, meetings with other land owners followed. Swamis explained to them about the celebration and they all agreed to donate their land for one year. However, a setback occurred when a few farmers doubted whether they would get their exact land back once the festival was over. Eventually, after assuring them and with the divine blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj, they all agreed. The farmers donated their lands without any remuneration or other

expectations.

- In February 2020, land for the celebration site was acquired. Work commenced with the clearing of land. However, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic affected India and the celebrations scheduled for December 2021 were postponed. For nearly two years, 2020 and 2021, preparations for the celebrations were stalled.

- In 2021, Shrijiswarupdas Swami planned the 200-acre main celebration site. The site was designed with a wide central longitudinal axis, embellished with the principal features of the celebrations. Shanti Marg and Narayan Marg, the two main paths, ran parallel to the central path and axis of the *nagar* for the visitors to walk on. Flanked on either side of these two paths were the six entrance gates along with inquiry booths, displays of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s timeline, washroom facilities, drinking water, Premvati foodstalls and BAPS bookstores. The main features of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar included exhibition halls, Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s giant *murti*, glow gardens, replica of Akshardham Mandir, Bal Nagari, Light and Sound show, Women’s Pavilion and an open-air theatre for folk dances. In addition, an impressive ceremonial main gate – Sant Dwar – was situated at the front of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.

- The task of clearing the vast tract of thousands of thorny trees and bushes



Construction of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar



was humongous. The land was also uneven and dotted with small craters and mounds. Nikhileshdas Swami and Jnaneshwardas Swami gave guidance as to how the site should be prepared. A team of swamis, including, Shrijicharandas Swami, Vinaycharitdas Swami, Nirmalmunidas Swami and Dharmavallabhdas Swami, assisted in preparing the celebration site. The swamis were assisted by four volunteers of Ahmedabad: Haribhai Kothari, Yogeshbhai Patel, Narayanbhai Patel and Rameshbhai Talaviya.

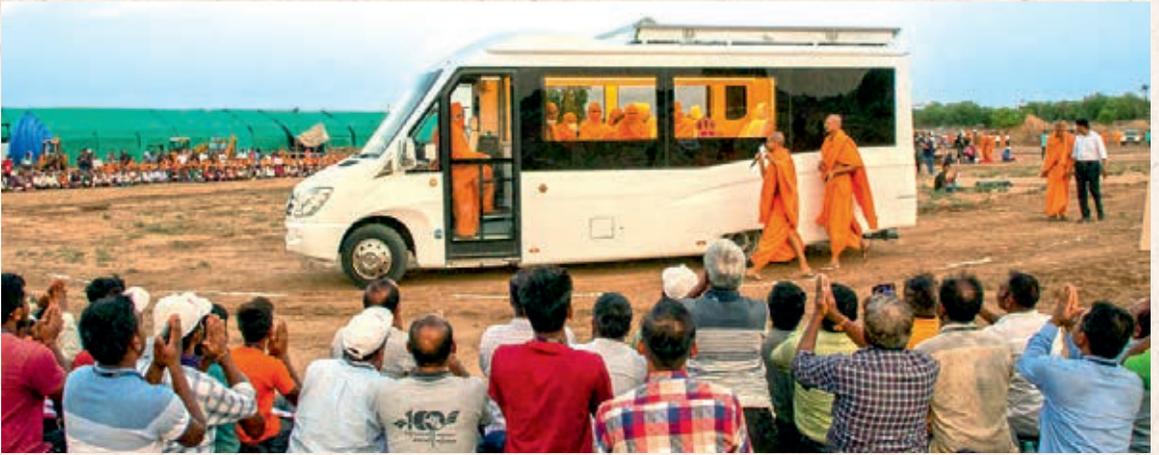
■ Then, collaboration of officials of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar municipalities and the four village heads (*sarpanchs*) was sought. Trikambhai Patel, Kalpeshbhai Patel and Sureshbhai Patel liased with the local municipality officials to acquire permissions, construct roads, lay drainage pipes and build other infrastructure. The local municipal town

planning department cooperated immensely by expediting the laying of large drainage pipes and construction of roads according to their town planning schemes. Subsequently, the *nagar's* water and waste drainage arrangements for the kitchen, Premvati and toilets were given a direct connection to the municipality's drainage system. Furthermore, the new roads built by the local municipal corporation provided easy access to the visitors during the celebration.

■ On 7 March 2022, the *bhumi puja*n (sanctification of the land) of the celebration site was performed at the hands of Ishwarcharandas Swami. A large pit for the ritual was made on the spot where a replica of the Akshardham Mandir, Delhi, would be built. About 500 leading devotees of Ahmedabad, volunteers and swamis were invited for the *bhumi puja*n rituals.

■ Ishwarcharandas Swami gave expert guidance and instructions about the main features of the celebration site. He stated that Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *murti* should be visible to the visitors from all sides of the venue. Thus, the 30-foot-high *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was installed at a prime spot.

He advised that instead of building two or three mandirs, only one should be made – a replica of Akshardham, New Delhi. This would enable devotees and visitors to have darshan of



Mahant Swami Maharaj visits the site and blesses the volunteers

Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and all the principal divine avatars.

Furthermore, Ishwarcharandas Swami instructed that a bust of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, made of bamboo strips, should be installed at the forefront of the Akshardham Mandir.

- In December 2021, with only a handful of volunteers and swamis, the task of clearing the celebration site started all over again with two JCBs (excavators) and two tractors. At that time, the area around the 50-foot-high water tank became the centre point of administration. A temporary marquee was rigged for the daily *arti*, *sabha* and dining facility, and a couple of transport containers were converted into administrative offices.

- Gradually, as work progressed in cleaning the land, a large tent was erected for the volunteers to stay and water tanks were arranged for their daily bath.

- From March to September 2022, more than 25 excavators and 125 tractors, fitted with ploughs, were deployed to cope with the increasing pace of work. The volunteers relentlessly served in the hot months of April and May with temperatures rising to 45°C. Civil work for the foundations of the main gate and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *murti* commenced. With thousands of bricks donated



by well-wishers, the masonry and concrete work began. Before the advent of the monsoon in late June, most of the civil work was completed.

- Yagnapriyadas Swami, Vivekmunidas Swami and swamis of the satsang Pravrutti Central Office deftly handled the task of recruiting 80,000 volunteers and assigning them their *seva* on the celebration site.

- Then, in July, students from Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Vadodara, Surat and other cities, who had appeared for their 12th grade exams, and other volunteers arrived to do *seva*. They found the summer heat oppressive and so they were told to do *seva* from 8 to 11 a.m. and take rest after lunch. Thereafter, they resumed *seva* at 5 p.m. and continued till late night. The volunteers truly persevered in the challenging conditions to please Mahant Swami Maharaj.

- To make Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar dust-free for all the visitors, a suggestion



Volunteers lay paver blocks in the hot sun

■ The paver block project was led by Vinaycharitdas Swami, Udarcharitdas Swami and a few devotees. After their concerted efforts, a manufacturing plant for paver blocks was set up in the *nagar* premises to save transportation cost and time. The laying of the blocks was accomplished by the efforts of thousands of men and women volunteers

■ The monsoon season in Gujarat usually arrives mainly in late June and lasts till August. It was decided to start laying the paver blocks well in advance, from July on dry days. The sand-mud composition, required as a base for laying the blocks, was acquired from surrounding under-construction residential sites.

■ From July 2022 onwards, the rains inundated the site and thus hindered the pace of construction of the glow gardens, marquees for the guest relations and conference halls and in other parts of the *nagar*. When the volunteers pumped out the water, another round of heavy rains further stalled any progress. Eventually, due to the patient and persistent efforts of the volunteers and Mahant Swami Maharaj's blessings these tasks were accomplished.

■ In the early days, accommodation for the volunteers was arranged in two nearby blocks of flats. Daily breakfast and meals for 6,000 volunteers and swamis were arranged by

Dharmaratna Swami and Adhyatmapriyadas Swami from the BAPS Mandir in Ahmedabad.

■ The initial requirements of water and electricity for the construction of the *nagar* were arranged by Bhaktiyogi Swami and his team. The local farmers generously agreed to provide electricity and water from their connections and supplies.

■ In the initial phase, a 6 km long hard grit road was made to facilitate the movement of vehicles for the construction work and tasks related to the electricity, landscape and water departments.

■ Another new endeavour that was planned was the construction of premium quality public toilets, urinals and bathrooms. In all earlier BAPS mega-festivals, the washrooms were constructed on a makeshift basis. However this time, Mahant Swami Maharaj and the *sadguru* swamis expressed that the washrooms should be of good quality, clean and hygienic. Subsequently, the washrooms were designed and constructed accordingly. When members of the Tiles Manufacturing Association in Morbi were invited to see the festival site, they were so impressed by the plans that they pledged to supply the floor tiles, basins, toilet commodes and urinals free of cost. In all, more than 250 toilet blocks were constructed in the *nagar*.

■ In spite of a slew of problems, such as, land acquisition issues, summer heat, severity of monsoon rains, cold winter nights and other challenges, the volunteers, swamis and devotees never complained or felt disheartened or unhappy. This was all due to Mahant Swami Maharaj's grace and blessings. Whenever he was informed about any issue, Swamishri blessed that all would turn out well. And it did.

■ Because of the large scale of the celebration site, a tremendous amount of planning, intense effort and thousands of volunteers were required. To cope with the mammoth task technology

was utilized. During past mega-celebrations cables were laid by digging the ground, however this time machines were used to lay them. Excavators (JCB) were deployed during the land development phase and Hydra cranes were used to facilitate the construction of structures for the main gate, assembly stage, 50-foot-high backdrop of the light and sound show and other things.

■ Around July and August, the landscape department was nurturing petunia plants in baskets arranged at different levels under temporary net houses. The nursery was set up near the *nagar* premises. Once, due to a heavy downpour at night, the canopies collapsed and the petunia baskets crashed to the ground. Instantly, swamis and volunteers of the electric, construction and other departments rushed to help. Since it was dark the volunteers of the electric department arranged for light bulbs to illumine the area. Then, for the next two hours all the volunteers worked unitedly to save the petunia plants.

■ To lay over 10 million paver blocks was no small or easy task. Male volunteers enthusiastically helped to load, unload and lay the blocks in various parts of the *nagar*. Women volunteers are not used to such heavy work, yet they helped despite the hot sun. At Mahant Swami Maharaj's word, 14,000 men and women volunteers spent 10 days during Diwali and New Year (October 2022) to lay the paver blocks in the *nagar*. After the festival was over, the paver blocks were removed, piled by volunteers ready for builders and construction companies to purchase and pick up, thus making the whole project cost-free.

■ The making of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar was a glowing example of what voluntary *seva*, divine grace and intervention can accomplish. Out of many examples, the glow gardens (Pramukh jyoti Udyan) is one. It was designed by Narayanmunidas Swami, Bhaktikushaldas Swami and other swamis and volunteers who had never before endeavoured



Volunteers engaged in *seva*

on such a project. The glow gardens turned out to be unique because of Swamishri's blessings. The bulk of the decorations and fabrication of gates were done by Brahmacharandas Swami and his team.

■ The length of plastic pipes used in the *nagar* for drainage and water supply added upto many kilometres. They were all donated and then returned after the celebration. Similarly, the cables used by the close circuit TV and telecommunication's department were donated and returned after the festival.

■ In the first phase of preparations, the celebration site required uprooting the shrubs and bushes and cleaning. Then, in the second phase, the land was levelled and boundaries were marked for the creation of specific features and spots. Subsequently, the construction department made the foundations and did the masonry work for the Akshardham Mandir and the pedestal for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *murti*.

Then, marquees or *mandaps* were constructed for the shows and conferences. Tin sheds were set up for volunteers' accommodation and tin sheets were used to create a boundary wall surrounding the *nagar* for security. These tasks were assigned to separate teams or departments of volunteers. Every evening, the heads of each team assembled for a meeting to assess and coordinate the progress of work. ◆



# Festival DEPARTMENTS

*Over 1,000 swamis and 80,000 men and women volunteers served in the various departments formed to manage Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations. The following pages give a brief description of the scope and scale of some of these departments.*



## VOLUNTEERS DEPARTMENT

The entire responsibility for registering and allocating volunteers to the festival departments was fulfilled by the Satsang Pravrutti Central Office (SPCO or Madhyastha Karyalaya), which oversees the Sanstha's regular satsang activities through its network of registered *karyakars*. This network was used to make the process more efficient and effective.

Under the guidance of Yagnapriya Swami, Vivekmuni Swami and Vivekshil Swami, 22 swamis and 1,775 volunteers served in this department. In December 2021 and January 2022, at the 22 Annual Karyakar Shibirs held at various BAPS mandirs in India, 18,000 registered men and women *karyakars* were informed about the scope of the centenary *seva*. Mahant Swami Maharaj, too, highlighted the importance of the *seva* by writing 14 inspiring messages during Dhanurmas as part of his Brahmavidyana Path series.

The *karyakars* were entrusted the task of reaching out to members of their *mandals* and recruiting volunteers to commit to between 35 and 180 days of *seva*.

In February 2022, preparations began with cleaning and levelling of the 600-acre festival site. At this time, 125 volunteers committed to serve for one year and immediately joined.

The recruitment of volunteers was given impetus through 48 assemblies held at BAPS centres throughout Gujarat and Mumbai between 20 March and 30 April. As a result, over 80,000 men and women volunteers registered to serve between 35 and 180 days. In addition, 1,400 registered from overseas.

To help in managing the data, the Swayamsevak Dal (Volunteers Department) mobile application was inaugurated by Mahant Swami Maharaj on 18 March 2022. Each volunteer installed the app on their phone, enabling smooth registration, *seva* allocation and other admin processes.

The site preparations gathered momentum and the plan was to complete as much of the structural work as possible before the monsoon rains came.

So, around 1,300 students and teachers came to help in 15-day rotas during their summer vacation. The summer heat reached up to 47°C, yet everyone joyfully continued, and completed the foundations for the Akshardham Mandir and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *murti*.

From June, as more departments became active on site, the need for volunteers increased. Around 25,000 volunteers had indicated that they would be able to come to help in the site preparation. So, 15-day rotas were organized, and from 1 June to 15 December, 13 batches of volunteers served in this way.

Also, one-day *seva* batches were arranged for volunteers living in Ahmedabad, and the nearby cities and towns of North Gujarat and Charotar. Daily, between 250 and 300 volunteers came and on Sundays, between 1,500 and 2,200 came.

From September, nightly *seva* was also introduced in which around 250 to 350 volunteers from Ahmedabad and within 30km joined every night.

From July, volunteers who had committed to 180 days joined. Then, at intervals those who had committed to *seva* for 150, 120, 100, 90 and 60 days joined.

To complete the extensive construction requirements for the bathroom and toilet blocks, glow garden fabrication work and decoration of the numerous entrance gates, welders, carpenters, masons and other skilled personnel were required. So, swamis and volunteers at all BAPS centres contacted devotees with such skills and convinced them to serve in 15-day batches.

To coordinate and fulfil the volunteer requirements, the SPCO held regular online meetings with the responsible swamis and senior volunteers at BAPS centres.

From 11 September to 8 October, a series of



Volunteers receive instructions on site

one-day training sessions were held at 42 centres to prepare the volunteers on how to perform their allocated duties.

The extended monsoon season added to the challenge and caused much delay to the site preparation schedule.

Hence, in October, barely two months before the start of the festival, a lot of work was behind schedule. But, if volunteers came in force during the Diwali period, it would be possible to catch up. So, Mahant Swami Maharaj himself appealed to everyone, “Spend your Diwali and New Year in the *nagar*.” As a result 14,000 men and women volunteers served during the Diwali period and much of the work was completed.

Most volunteers had committed to 35 days *seva*, and to transport them to the *nagar* the Gujarat State Transport officials assisted by arranging buses as required from the various centres.

On 12 December 2022, a grand Volunteers Assembly was held in the *nagar*, in which Mahant Swami Maharaj motivated and blessed all for their upcoming *seva*.

To house 7,000 volunteers onsite, Pramukh Hraday, Bhakti Hraday and Yogi Hraday tent accomodations were prepared on the festival grounds. In addition, volunteers were also housed in off-site flats at varying distances

from the *nagar*. To meet the basic needs of volunteers, a consumer store, hair-cutting salon, tailoring, shoe repair, laundry, volunteers bank and medical facilities were made available. For their daily meals, three dining areas were set up at convenient locations in the *nagar* to enable all volunteers to easily access them.

For uniformity, the dress codes for men and women volunteers were fixed and to keep them warm, a special sweater was made available.

Throughout the month-long *seva* period, daily assemblies were held in the morning in which swamis gave inspiring discourses and each department also held discourses at their convenience.

Daily meetings of senior volunteers enabled any difficulties and requirements to be managed in an appropriate, timely and efficient manner.

From 15 to 18 January, after the closing of the *nagar*, the volunteers helped in the windup of the festival site, enabling up to 60% of the work to be completed.

On 18 January, a special Volunteers Appreciation Assembly was held in which Mahant Swami Maharaj read a six-page letter he had personally written to all volunteers to express his gratitude for their *seva*. He reinforced this heartfelt sentiment by instructing all swamis to prostrate to all the volunteers. Instantly, even the *sadguru* and other senior swamis joined the other swamis in performing *dandvats* to the volunteers.

Thereafter, a force of around 3,000 volunteers remained on site to help complete the wind up.

The Volunteers Department also coordinated the Darshan Yatra project.

### Darshan Yatra

For the devotees who regularly attend the weekly satsang assemblies at BAPS centres throughout India, special arrangements were made to enable them to visit the *nagar* and



Women volunteers prepare special food items



Volunteers prepare meals

view all the attractions. Through the Darshan Yatra app, *karyakars* at each centre registered devotees and their family members for the visit. To facilitate their visit, all devotees would be provided free accommodation for one night, dining in the *nagar* and early entry into the *nagar*. Over 800,000 devotees registered and visited the *nagar* through this arrangement.

### KITCHEN DEPARTMENT

The Kitchen Department was a model of efficiency that encapsulated the spirit of service and meticulous planning. Under the experienced guidance of Ghanshyamprasad Swami and Brahmatirth Swami, 60 swamis, 600 Brahmin cooks, and 4,000 male and 4,000 female volunteers served day and night.

The planning began in January 2022, with an appeal to all swamis throughout India to source donations of the many raw materials – grains, spices, condiments, pulses, vegetables, cooking oils, milk, dry fruits, fresh fruits and others – that would be required.

The swamis responded and approached producers, distributors, retailers and others to donate whatever they could. The response was overwhelming. Everywhere, people were delighted by the opportunity to contribute to this festival celebrating Pramukh Swami Maharaj and wholeheartedly pledged to provide

foodstuffs in large quantities.

Pulses from Mumbai, rice from Delhi and the Daskroi (Ahmedabad) district, wheat from the villages of Gujarat, *chana* from Bhadra, Limbdi and Surendranagar, sugar from Pune, Sankari, Bharuch and Navsari, snack items from Rajkot, potatoes from Disa, Himmatnagar and Modasa, oil and ghee from Anand, and many other items were donated from all over India. Also, daily arrangements were made for fresh vegetables donated by farm owners in the Vadodara, Himmatnagar and other areas.

The large quantity of donated materials had to be stored at locations near the festival site to facilitate their transport when required. This was made possible by the generous support of owners who provided space in their cold storage and warehouse facilities to stock the donated foodstuffs as they arrived from throughout Gujarat, Maharashtra and other places.

From February 2022, as work on the festival site gathered pace, meals for the volunteers were sent thrice daily from the BAPS Mandir in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad. This continued for 277 days until October 2022. During this period, over 1.15 million meals were served to the volunteers on site.

Also, during this time, sweet delicacies for the volunteers were regularly sent from BAPS mandirs in Mumbai, Surat, Mahelav, Nadiad,

Mehsana, Dholka, Limbdi, Bhavnagar, Mahuva and other places.

During the festival, the Kitchen Department comprised 13 acres of food preparation areas and 23 acres of dining areas. On weekdays, over 300,000 meals were prepared daily and on weekends over 450,000 meals were prepared. The dining areas were designed to cater for 60,000 people every hour.

The department comprised five main divisions: administration, storage, preparation and packaging, production, and supply.

The administration division comprised the main office; IT; accounts; volunteers office to manage volunteer deployment; transport of machinery, utensils, raw materials and pre- and post-production food items; general store and CCTV room to monitor flow of people in the dining areas.

The IT section maintained accurate records of the raw materials received and used to enable optimum use of all the items.

The storage division was where the raw materials were kept, such as dry fruits, cooking sauces, pulses, spices and condiments, oil, ghee, flour and other foodstuffs. The cooked items ready for use were also stored in this area before distribution to the dining areas. This division housed the cold storage containers for dairy and frozen items.

In the preparation and packaging division about 70 tonnes of vegetables arrived every weekday and upto 120 tonnes on weekends. After manual offloading onto pallets they were moved to the processing locations by forklift.

Vegetables were cleaned and stored on pallets after cutting them to a size to pass them through the machines to cut them into shapes and sizes as per the recipe.

Stainless steel utensils were used for food preparation and various types and sizes of plastic containers were used to transfer, store and supply items.

On the occasion of special large assemblies, the packaged meals given to attendees were packed in this area.

Also, filling samosa, spring rolls, sandwiches and other such tasks were done by women volunteers in the packaging area.

The food production areas were divided into three sections: Kitchens 1, 2 and 3, which were further partitioned into functional units to coordinate and cater for requirements in preparing, cooking, storing and distributing the food.

Seven thermic boilers of various capacities were set up to provide the energy for cooking. Cooking oils were supplied where required through a motor-driven network of pipes. Large grinding machines were fitted to meet daily needs: two to mill 7 tonnes of grains, one to grind sugar and two to grind spices.

Kitchen 1A: where common sweet items (e.g. laddus, *mohanthal*) were prepared.

Kitchen 1B: where the *shaks* (vegetable curries) were prepared. It housed a potato peeler that peeled 100 kg of potatoes in under three minutes. For cooking, nine 800-litre stainless steel pots were used, each preparing *shak* for 7,000 people in less than ninety minutes. All the *bhaji* for the *pau-bhaji* dish served in the Premvati stalls was also prepared here.

Kitchen 1C: from 3 a.m., 12,000 litres of tea and *ukalo* for breakfast, then dal for lunch and *kadhi* for dinner were made.

Kitchen 1D: for cooking rice and pulses. Utensils included 800 and 1200 litre vessels, and a 2,000 litre tank for boiling rice and pulses. Here, 350 kg of rice could be prepared in 30 minutes. The *khichdi* served in the Premvati stalls was also prepared here.

Kitchen 2A: housed steam cabinets for making *khaman*, *idli*, *dhokla* and other steamed items, and fryers.

Kitchen 2B: where the specialist sweet items, like *jalebis*, *gulab jambus*, *ras gullas*, *puranpuris*,



Main Premvati dining hall



Women volunteers serve in the Premvati marquee

were made by hand by the women volunteers.

Kitchen 2C: where dairy items and sherbets were made. For lunch and dinner, around 30,000 litres of *chhaas* (buttermilk) were prepared daily.

Kitchen 2D: housed 20 machines which could make 40,000 *rotlis* per hour. In this section, 125,000 *bhakis* as well as *theplas* and other such items were made daily.

Kitchen 3A and Kitchen 3B: 550 small gas stoves were set up for women devotees to cook *rotla*, *puranpuris*, *thepla*, *dhebra* and other items.

Kitchen 3C was the steam-powered backup kitchen area.

Daily, the schedule started at 1 a.m. when the breakfast preparations began for about 70,000 people. At around 4.30 a.m., the preparations for the afternoon lunch began and at around 1 p.m. the dinner preparations began. Once the items were made they would be transferred into suitable containers which were then transported to the various dining areas in the required quantities.

After every session, the utensils and cooking area were thoroughly cleaned. Pressure pumps were used to spray water to the clean utensils and vessels. Hot water prepared from the boilers was transported via tankers to use for utensil cleansing. The day's tasks would end at around 9 p.m. After a few hours of calm, the buzz of volunteers attending to their duties would start again.

The thermic boiler system powered the forty 800- and 1,200-litre cooking utensils and fryers.

This approach saved fuel costs and since there were no direct flames, it reduced smoke and the ambient heat under which the cooks and volunteers worked. Over 12.5 million meals were prepared during the month and not a single person was burnt or hurt.

The specially made cooking vessels were fitted with butterfly valves and hinged outlet flaps to enable speedy emptying into appropriate containers for transport to the dining areas.

The menu was prepared in advance and, apart from some common food items, no items were repeated for 15 days. So, every visitor and volunteer enjoyed the varied, tasty and nutritious food.

### PREMVATI DEPARTMENT

For all visitors, affordable and tasty foods, snacks and drinks were made available through the 35 Premvati stalls throughout the *nagar*. Around 70 items were served, including *khichdi*, *pau-bhaji*, samosas, sandwiches, *dabelis*, pizzas, and packaged snacks and drinks.

Due to the more-than-expected visitors, the arrangements had to be quickly modified and scaled up to meet the phenomenal demand. Initial planning was for up to 20,000 servings of each item daily. But the demand for the



Electric Department volunteers set up power connections



freshly cooked items increased in magnitude. The demand for *khichdi* rose to 151,000 dishes per day. Hence, production was shifted from the smaller Premvati kitchen unit to the large festival kitchen. And to enable this production, the raw materials had to be sourced urgently from multiple vendors. This continued throughout the entire month, placing an unexpected strain on the manpower. However, everyone happily met the challenge and put in extra duty hours to cope with the demand.

With over 200,000 visitors daily, the demand for samosas rose to 100,000. Even with the specialist cooks preparing them, they could not meet the demand. So, about 400 women volunteers were trained and they quickly joined the production team.

The demand for *dabelis* rose to 40,000. Women volunteers would prepare them from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. to enable timely distribution.

To meet the demand for pizzas, two more industrial ovens had to be fitted.

The ingredients for the various items were prepacked in appropriate proportions. When required, these packs were used to make the items to ensure that quality and taste were maintained. A special software was made to monitor the processes.

To serve all the items, biodegradable dishes, spoons and bowls were used. All the suppliers

in Gujarat were astonished and struggled to meet the requirements. But with the help of Bharatbhai Jiyani (from Odhav, Ahmedabad), the required quantities were brought in from other states.

After the items had been cooked in the kitchens, rickshaws and other small vehicles were used to supply them in the quantities required at each of the stalls around the vast *nagar*. At peak times, the walking visitors along the supply routes added to the challenge of ensuring timely supply.

The majority of Premvati volunteers were women. From preparing the vegetables to cooking and serving at the Premvati stalls, they patiently and diligently served from morning till late night. And only after daily balancing the books did they leave. They all cheerfully accepted the immense extra workload and ensured that every visitor was served courteously.

## ELECTRIC

The 600-acre festival site with 200 acres of attractions and 400 acres of parking, accommodations and other facilities required a stable, reliable and well-integrated supply of electricity to power the lights, equipment and other accessories used for all the exhibitions, utilities, departments and amenities.

A total of 8 MW was required in the *nagar*. The power was supplied by the Uttar Gujarat Vij Company Ltd (UGVCL). For power stability, five back-up resources were set up and 103 generators were used.

Off site, the arrangements in the many flats used as accommodation for volunteers and devotees required a total power load of 15MW.

On the festival site and parking areas, around 130 km of cables were laid. Also, 500 km of wiring was used throughout the site in a ring circuit.

Laying of the underground cables began in September 2022 and was completed in six weeks. To safely distribute the power to wherever it was required, 170 specially designed panel boards were used.

In the parking areas, 2,000 LED lights were fitted on 135 towers. On the festival site, 710 street lights poles were erected, and 7,200 LED floodlights, 98,000 bulbs and 10,000 tubelights were used.

To ensure each area of the festival site was continuously operational, volunteers carried out regular maintenance and repairs.

Led by Shilbhushan Swami, Vivekdarshan Swami and Shvetprakash Swami a total of 40 swamis, *parshads* and *sadhaks*, and 400 volunteers served in the department.

## WATER

The Water Department provided water for drinking, cooking, sanitation, bathing, watering the landscape and grounds (to settle the dust) and other purposes. For this, five reservoirs were created with a total capacity of 4.5 million litres, to store water received from the Narmada River line and eight borewells.

To supply water from the reservoirs, 66 km of pipes of various sizes of unplasticized polyvinyl chloride (uPVC), chlorinated polyvinyl chloride (CPVC) and high density polyethylene (HDPE)



Water station for the public

pipes were laid underground to supply water to every part of the *nagar*: the kitchens, on-site volunteer accommodations at Pramukh Hraday, Bhakti Hraday and Yogi Hraday, 250 toilet blocks and other areas. The work began on 1 September, and despite the heavy rains, all the swamis and volunteers admirably completed the work on time.

Purified filtered drinking water was provided via pipelines to the 66 free public drinking water stations, kitchen and dining areas, volunteer accommodations and various departmental offices spread throughout the *nagar*. The 66 drinking water stations spread throughout the *nagar* were operated full time by women volunteers, providing clean, cool water to all visitors. Daily, around 200,000 litres of drinking water was consumed. Also, over 5,000 water jugs and an equal number of refill bottles were used daily in the department offices, parking areas and other locations.

During the festival, over 10,000 taps, 5,500 valves and 150 submersible pumps were used to provide reliable and ready access to water wherever required. Also, every day, water tankers sprayed water throughout the unpaved areas of the festival grounds to reduce the floating dust.

The department, led by Vedagna Swami, Bhaktijivan Swami, Anandnilay Swami and



General Stores indoor storage area

Anandnidhi Swami, comprised 27 swamis and over 2,050 men and women volunteers.

## GENERAL STORES

The General Stores Department was responsible for supplying many of the materials and items required by other departments.

Many months prior to the festival, the department obtained lists from each department of their requirements.

With this initial information, Sarvadarshan Swami, Aksharprem Swami, Vimalsmaran Swami and other swamis and volunteers visited manufacturers, distributors, traders, suppliers and others to acquire the items, either in donation or at reduced cost.

The department maintained an inventory of around 1,500 items of five main types: plastic goods, stationery, hardware, safety and hygiene.

When items arrived, they were documented and then placed in the appropriate section of the storage area in the *nagar*.

To process requests, manual request forms and an app were used. The request would be entered into the system and the volunteers in the storage area would see the order on TV screens. They then gathered the requested items and delivered them to the counters for collection by the department representative. Once the order was fulfilled, a message of the items and

quantities was sent to the department's main contact volunteer to inform him that the order had been dispatched.

The department was responsible for sourcing the chairs, sofas, tables, cupboards and other furniture required. They also provided the thousands of colour-coded and dry-rot treated 3-foot wooden poles and the many kilometres of plastic rope used by the kitchen, transport and *sabha* departments to help them control traffic and pedestrian flow, and seating arrangements.

The department also provided plastic buckets, tumblers, tubs and other items used by the Accommodations Department.

Many of the hardware items and tools – nails, screws, hammers, spanners, and others – used by the Construction Department were provided.

Through their diligent efforts, the swamis and volunteers of the department were able to obtain much of their inventory in donation from sources throughout Gujarat, Assam, Meghalaya, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi and other states.

## DECORATION

The Decoration Department had wide ranging tasks to design, build, install and then dismantle all the *murtis*, various artistic exhibits and stages throughout the *nagar*.

Led by Narayanmuni Swami, Vishwavihari Swami, Brahmacharan Swami, Kirtisagar Swami and Adarshchintan Swami, the team of 55 swamis, *parshads* and *sadhaks* were ably assisted by over 7,500 men and women volunteers. The volunteers included skilled carpenters, tailors, welders and other craftsmen. But the majority were untrained volunteers who were taught to perform the tasks as required.

The department was responsible for designing, building and setting up the following: Akshardham Mandir, Pramukh Swami Maharaj Mahamurti and the surrounding displays, main

ceremonial gate and six public entrance gates, Pramukh Swami Maharaj timelines at each entrance gate, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's hand *mudras* (gestures), the glow gardens, daily assembly stage, main celebration stage, light and sound show stage, exhibition dome facades (four main exhibitions and three in the Bal Nagari), Sahajanand Jyoti Mandapam – facade and inner displays, Bal Nagari: welcome tower, animal corners, Chansad – The Village of Shanti, garden of memories, Bal Mandal Express, and wherever else decorative elements were required.

Depending on the material from which the decorative displays were to be made, the various teams were assigned tasks. Even while making the items, design changes were necessary to ensure that the final product was aesthetic. The work started in January 2022 and much of the fabrication work for the glow gardens was done off-site by swamis and volunteers working long hours.

The department's volunteers erected the structural framework for the attractions and displays and then fixed the modular design elements into position on site.

To set up all the decorative elements of the *nagar*, over 690,000 sq. ft of plywood, 850,000 ft of wooden strips, 450 tonnes of metal, 7,500 kg of nails, 30,000 litres of paint, 22,000 m of cloth, and other materials were used.

To create the over 1,700 structures, sculptures and statues from bamboo and cane, more than 18,000 bamboos were donated and used, as well as plaster of paris, cloth and paper. These were made by 130 Bengali artisans and over 50 volunteers.

The dimensions and details of the larger constructions were as below.

Akshardham Mandir: 71 ft high, 210 ft wide, 210 ft long; 88 pillars, 555 *murtis*, 9 domes, 20 *samrans*.

Main Gate: 52 ft high, 35 ft wide, 380 ft



Preparing a display for the glow gardens

long; 72 pillars, 30 domes, 28 *sant* statues.

Main celebration stage: 57 ft high, 125 ft deep, 185 ft long.

Daily assembly stage (Narayan Sabha Gruh): 45 ft high, 100 ft deep, 175 ft long.

Light and sound show stage: 55 ft high, 90ft deep, 185 ft long.

Exhibition facades: 30 ft high, 5 ft deep, 250 ft long.

### Glow Gardens

Pramukh Swami Maharaj instilled faith in the hearts of millions of people. Faith in various forms was depicted in the glow gardens, designed by Narayanmuni Swami and Shrijiswarup Swami, in six sections: Faith in Values, Faith in God, Faith in Scriptures, Faith in Guru, Faith in the Nation and Faith in the World.

The messages of faith in its varied forms were conveyed through illuminated structures of animals, birds, flowers, nature, people and other objects. Around 80 spots were designed using 3D modelling software. Actual-size prints of each element were made on flex material, which were used to make the structures by bending various sized metal rods and wires into the required form. Each element was assessed for anatomical correctness of the face, eyes, legs, tails and other features and necessary adjustments were made. Around 60 tonnes



Women volunteers prepare the bubble wrap portrait



World record bubble wrap portrait of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

of metal rods and 230 km of wire were used to make over 8,500 such elements, including around 5,000 flowers.

The metallic structures were then fitted with LED lights and electric connections. About 25 km of LED light strips and 18,000 LED bulbs were used requiring 450,000 electric connections.

Then the structures were covered with cloth of different colours. After many trials a suitable glue that would stick the cloth to the metal for a long time was found. Women volunteers quickly mastered the skill of attaching the cloth and meticulously completed the task.

After the cloth was attached, the structures were painted so that day or night they would provide a pleasing experience.

One of the challenges was that the volunteers changed every 15 days, but the new volunteers quickly learnt the required skills to meet the deadlines. In total, 3,650 volunteers served in preparing, fitting and maintaining the glow gardens.

Every night during the festival, from 6 to 11 pm, the lights would be turned on to reveal the full glory of the glow gardens and enable visitors to appreciate the messages of faith. Then, overnight, necessary maintenance was carried out by the volunteers.

### World Record Bubble Wrap Portrait of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, through his tireless travels, letters and personal counselling, injected joyous colour and meaning into millions of lives around the world – these sentiments were portrayed in this gigantic colourful tribute prepared using bubble wrap.

The 1,052 sq. ft portrait of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, adjudicated by *Guinness World Records* as the world's largest bubble wrap painting, was prepared by 150 female volunteers, aged between 11 and 75 years, from across the UK. They worked tirelessly for six months, injecting 320 colours into more than 850,000 bubbles using 335 litres of paint.

The spectacular artwork used 886 metres of bubble wrap. Each 5mm bubble was individually injected with colour using a syringe, ensuring the exact amount of paint per bubble.

To ensure that the correct colour was injected into the correct bubble a special software was used to number the bubbles, which were then painstakingly written by hand on each of the 850,000 bubbles for 100% accuracy.

When completed, the dry bubble wrap was glued to wood panels for support, raising the gross weight to 4.5 tonnes. The painting was prepared as 104 individual pieces so that it could be transported from London



Net house built by the Landscape Department



Peacock decorated with petunia flowers

and assembled on the festival grounds in Ahmedabad. This record-breaking work of art was used as the facade to the Sant Param Hitkari exhibiton hall.

Devika Patel, a biomedical scientist from London, explained, “We decided on bubble wrap to form the basis of the portrait because it is such a low-key material and yet we can turn into a work of art – which is exactly what Pramukh Swami Maharaj did – he turned ordinary people into spiritual masterpieces. We were especially energized to complete this mammoth task because Mahant Swami Maharaj himself began the painting by injecting the first bubbles with colour in Surat and gave his blessings and encouragement.”

## LANDSCAPE

At the same time as the construction work was in progress, the Landscape Department was also actively designing, cultivating, planting and maintaining the floral decorations that adorned Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.

In previous festivals, Mahant Swami Maharaj himself had led this department. With his blessings, Jnanvardhan Swami, Brahmachintan Swami and Divyanidhi Swami began planning in 2021. They visited the annual flower show in Ahmedabad, Miracle Gardens in Dubai and other such venues as

well as many nurseries in Gujarat, Maharashtra and South India to study the flora that would be appropriate for the festival location and weather.

They delved deep into the types of seeds to use, how to cultivate them, the types of soils and nutrition required and other details.

They prepared designs of the flora arrangements for the Akshardham Mandir, Pramukh Swami Maharaj Mahamurti, the glow gardens, the main walkways, the main and public entrance gates, the *paramhansa* displays and other locations in the *nagar*.

Based on the designs, the soil was spread and moulded in each location. Some mounds were 14 feet high. Brahmacharan Swami then drew the large 180–200 feet designs by hand. Even when heavy rains washed away their efforts, the swamis and volunteers patiently rebuilt everything and Brahmacharan Swami redrew the designs. He checked the designs using photos taken by drones and then the landscape volunteers would sow the various plants as per the designs. Over 1,200 trucks of soil were used to fill in the various locations to shape the landscape. The special soil and compost mixture required was prepared using a concrete mixer machine.

In total, the department, run by six swamis, and 600 men and women volunteers, developed



Plants being cultivated in the nursery



A floral design

over 8.9 acres of gardens and greenery using over 1,035,000 plants of 125 varieties in 250 colours. The varieties of plants included petunias (trailing and ground), chrysanthemums, bougainvillea, champa (plumeria), Victoria water lilies, roses, pansies, hibiscus and others.

To sustain the flora, over 135 km of drip irrigation pipes and tubing was laid, providing water and essential nutrients to the plants. The department also provided 10,000 potted plants for indoor and outdoor decorations of offices and other locations.

Initially, to rear the various flora, a nursery was started in 7 plots of land, each 55 by 95 feet in size. However, as the *nagar* designed evolved, the need for plants increased. Eventually, the nursery spread over 100 such plots.

Two net houses, spread over 82,000 sq. ft, were erected by using wooden poles and over 12,000 cement blocks to facilitate proper care and cultivation of plants.

One of the net house, set up to accommodate 12,000 petunias was of two levels. The 6,000 baskets of trailing petunias were kept on the upper layer, built of wooden sticks and nilgiri branches, at a height of six feet to allow them to spread out 3 to 4 feet. And on the lower level, 6,000 baskets of ground petunias were placed on three-foot-high cement blocks.

The petunias were cultivated in baskets of

eight different sizes, ranging from from 13 to 24 inches in diameter.

The petunia plants were initially raised in a nursery in Pune. From there they were brought in trays. When the plants had grown to the appropriate size, they were transplanted from the trays to the baskets and arranged in the net house according to colour and size. They were irrigated using a pressure compensating (PC) drip irrigation system to provide sufficient water and appropriate nutrition. The leaves were pinched regularly to facilitate better growth and flowers were plucked to ensure that the plants were in full bloom during the festival period. They were fully grown in about three months. The petunia baskets were placed as required throughout the *nagar*.

Ground petunias were planted according to the landscape design in the *nagar* where the ground was prepared by appropriate soil treatment. Leaves were pinched daily to ensure good bud growth.

A 5 ft plant bed around the main entrance gate provided protection and decoration.

Various antique objects like carts, chests, clay pots, bells, urns, tree trunks were creatively decorated with flora and were placed in the walkways of all the public entrance gates.

Artistic designs using coloured petunias and pansies covered the *kalashes* (water pots).



A *balak* presents while standing on a Victoria water lily leaf



Sunflowers in the glow gardens

Petunias and pansies were also used in the slopes around the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Mahamurti. A total of 24 flower modules were used to represent each hour of the day. Chrysanthemums decorated the topmost ring of the slope, like a garland around the neck of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Around the Akshardham Mandir, trailing petunias were hung using artistic metal structures of peacocks, flowers, vases, traditional arches, artistic trees and other designs. Victoria water lilies were planted on both sides of Akshardham.

Victoria water lily plants have very large leaves, up to 3 m (10 ft) in diameter, which float above the surface of the water on submerged stems. These leaves are really strong and can support about 30 kg in weight.

Victoria lily seeds were grown initially in muddy water in Pune and then brought to the *nagar*, where they were transplanted into a pond of muddy water maintained at a level of one foot.

In the Bal Nagari, *balaks* stood on the lillies in the pond to speak about Pramukh Swami Maharaj to the visitors. The visitors were fascinated by this novel presentation style.

The glow gardens featured freehand landscape design mounds varying from 3 to 8 feet high surrounding the artificial glow flowers and other displays. The plant types were placed according to the spots. For example,

touch-me-not (*lajamani*) plants were placed around the Jagadish Chandra Bose spot to demonstrate that plants are alive and at the camel spot, desert plants were used.

In the Yagna and Bhajan Kutirs, plants of religious significance were used, like *ked*, *asopalav*, *tulsi*, *damro*, *rudraksha*, *kailashpati* and roses.

The work of the Landscape Department was generously supported by many nurseries from Gujarat and other states which provided seeds, potted plants and other essentials.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

The Accommodations Department provided lodgings for the volunteers serving in the festival and devotees visiting from throughout India who had registered for the Darshan Yatra.

From January 2022, swamis and volunteers contacted builders within a 30 km radius of the festival site who were constructing flats and other residential buildings to seek permission for temporary use of their buildings to house the volunteers and devotees.

Through Mahant Swami Maharaj's blessings and the patient and persistent efforts of the swamis and volunteers, many builders generously granted permission to use their flats for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations. The building projects

were at various stages of completion, yet they willingly fast-tracked whatever was required to prepare the buildings, despite the challenges in obtaining materials, labour and regulatory permissions, delays caused by weather and other economic constraints.

In a special assembly for the builders, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed, “Thousands of devotees from India and abroad will be coming and your buildings will be used to house them. Due to your sincere sentiments, your buildings will become sanctified.” This added impetus to everyone’s efforts. To assist the builders, teams of experienced *satsangi* builders and civil engineers were formed. In this way, the majority of flats were ready for use by the end of November.

The Accommodations Department arranged for quilts, pillows and other basic requirements since all the properties were new and unfurnished. With the help of the Electric Department, around 5,000 water heaters (geysers) were fitted to provide hot water for bathing since the festival was during winter.

The flats earmarked for the volunteers were then handed over to the Volunteers Department to manage.

The remaining accommodations were provided to registered devotees visiting as part of the Darshan Yatra arrangements for devotees. The Darshan Yatra arrangements had been initiated in August 2022, with devotees at all BAPS centres in India registering for a 1½ days (one-night) visit to see the festival. They would arrive on the afternoon of Day 1, view the *nagar* that evening, then rest in their allotted accommodations, visit the *nagar* again on Day 2 and then depart for home in the evening. For devotees from places outside Gujarat, two-night stays were arranged.

Based on the registrations and where the devotees were travelling from, the Accommodations Department allotted flats to

about 25,000 devotees arriving daily. Through the Darshan Yatra app, each devotee knew where they had been housed and were given directions on how to reach there. The majority of these registered devotees came by bus from their centres and so they were housed in groups accordingly.

At each location, the Accommodations Department volunteers would greet the arriving devotees, assist them to their rooms, provide any guidance or special help, and also check out the departing devotees every morning. These volunteers ensured that the accommodations were cleaned on time, bedding was sufficient, necessary repairs were done and executed other duties to ensure minimum discomfort and inconvenience to the visiting devotees.

Due to the daily turnover of visiting devotees, the volunteers were always busy, but they admirably fulfilled all their duties.

The Accommodations Department arranged lodgings in 86 flat schemes – totaling 5,000 flats, 1,150 homes (with residents permitting the use of 1 or 2 rooms), 25 hotels and guest houses and 2 schools.

Throughout the month, accommodation was provided for over 530,000 devotees and volunteers.

Under the guidance of Atmatrupt Swami, Vimalprakash Swami, Arshyogi Swami, Shri Trikambhai Patel, Shri Kalpeshbhai Patel, Shri Hiteshbhai Patel and Vinaybhai Patel, over 2,070 men and women volunteers carried out the various tasks at the accommodation locations.

## TRANSPORT AND PARKING

Under the guidance of Rushiraj Swami, Munivandan Swami and Tyagraj Swami, the Transport Department had four main roles: 1. To provide vehicles and drivers to all the other departments to enable them to transport materials and perform other functions. 2. Manage the parking arrangements. 3. Direct



Thousands of cars were parked daily in the free parking areas

traffic flow. 4. Provide transport for volunteers to and from their off site lodgings in flats.

The transport arrangements for the volunteers was possible with the wholehearted support of the Ahmedabad Municipal Transport Service (AMTS) and the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC). Buses were arranged every morning and evening to shuttle the volunteers to and from their lodgings.

In early 2022, the Transport Department conducted a survey, with the help of the swamis and volunteers at BAPS centres throughout Gujarat, to list the type and number of vehicles that people would give to use for the festival. As a result, over 3,480 vehicles were generously given for use by devotees and well-wishers. The types of vehicles included: two-wheelers, cars (hatchbacks, sedans, multi-utility vehicles), tractors, trucks (many sizes), pick-up vans, dumpers, buses, graders, JCBs, rollers, fork lifts, hydra cranes, electric rickshaws, tankers, minivans, excavators and others.

These vehicles were used for construction, departmental operations, wind up and other requirements.

The insurance and documentary necessities were strictly followed to ensure that the legal requirements were properly fulfilled.

On site fuel – petrol and diesel – as well maintenance and repair facilities were set up to

ensure that the vehicles were operational when required. For electric vehicles, charging stations were also available.

The first impression and parting impression on visitors to the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar was based on the traffic control and parking arrangements.

A total of 80,000 parking spaces for two-wheelers, cars and buses were prepared spanning over 325 acres. There were 62 parking blocks easily accessible from whichever route visitors approached the *nagar*. To demarcate the individual parking spots in each parking block, over 700,000 feet of rope, 13,000 painted sticks and 23 tons of limestone powder were used. Each parking block was clearly labelled, using reflective materials, providing visitors the necessary information to return to their vehicle without difficulty, even at night. The parking areas were lit by LED lights and each block was assigned a QR code for visitors to scan and pin the location. In addition, printed slips indicating the block and row in which their vehicle had been parked were provided.

Over the festival period, over 1,077,500 vehicles used the free parking facilities. Also, arrangements were made to jump-start vehicles, repair punctures and make other basic repairs in case visitors had problems with their vehicles.



Dances and dramas on the open-air theatre stage

The 4,400 volunteers served in two shifts, from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to midnight. They tolerated the heat, cold and wind without complaints and patiently guided visitors to follow the guidelines so that the traffic flowed smoothly.

The parking lots encircled the festival site in a way that minimized the distance visitors would have to walk to one of the six entrance gates.

### CULTURAL PROGRAMMES

Throughout the month, a variety of creative cultural performances based on the life and teachings of Pramukh swami Maharaj were presented. Under the guidance of Rushiraj Swami, Jnannayan Swami, Jaytirth Swami, Anantmangal Swami and Santnilay Swami, 23 swamis, 1,100 performers and 400 support volunteers contributed to the presentations. Also, Yogiseva Swami, Aksharpurush Swami and other swamis and volunteers put in tremendous efforts to prepare all the props required for the various dances, and the light and sound show.

The following cultural programmes were presented:

1. Dances and dramas on the open-air theatre
2. Exhibitions: Sant Param Hitkar; Tute Hriday, Tute Ghar; Chalo Tod De Ye Bandhan; and Our India, My India

3. Light & Sound Show
4. Marching Bands
5. Performances on the talent stages.

Also, performances during the opening and closing ceremonies.

All the performers were children, teenagers, youths and adults selected from BAPS centres in India and abroad.

### Dances and Dramas

The Bharatiya Loknratya Stage, open-air theatre, hosted a wide range of dances from various regions of India. These included Kachhi Ghodi (Rajasthan), Rampa (Madhya Pradesh), Raas (Gujarat), Gadhvali (Himachal Pradesh), Bhangra (Punjab) and others. Also, two dance-dramas – Krishna Lila and Bhakta Prahlad – were performed.

The selection for the performers began at BAPS centres in Gujarat and Mumbai in early 2022. The youths from the initial selections by the centres were then auditioned by a team led by Shri Jayendrabhai Kalyani. Thereafter, each of the centres – Ahmedabad, Anand, Atladara, Mumbai, Surat and Tithal – was assigned two or more dances to prepare for the centenary.

The youths comprising the dance teams gathered regularly at their centres and received training from experienced local BAPS youths, especially during the summer vacations. Thereafter, regular practices were held to polish the performances. The youths would adjust their study, job, family and other commitments to regularly attend the practice sessions.

During the festival, the sequence of 14 dances and two dance-dramas were performed at least twice daily for the entire month. The performances would begin at around 9 a.m. and continue until 6 p.m. In total, the 225 youths presented over 1,000 dance performances throughout the festival, which were viewed by around 1.35 million people.



Sant Param Hitkari Exhibition



Tute Hraday, Tute Ghar Exhibition

### Exhibition 1: Sant Param Hitkari

Through a combination of live acting and videos, the Sant Param Hitkari Show masterfully portrayed some of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's qualities: how readily accessible he was to all, how he went the extra mile to help people, how he understood the sensitivities of children and how he went out of his way to fulfil requests from devotees.

Four shorts skits and videos depicted the following true stories.

1. Swamishri readily accepted young Shambhu's invitation to bless his home in the remote village of Malav. Despite it requiring a lengthy detour from his planned route Swamishri agreed. Amid the excitement of Swamishri's visit, everyone forgot Shambhu, but Swamishri did not. He performed the *arti* a second time to fulfil the young boy's wish.
2. Swamishri was abroad when he received a letter from Reshma Parghi, a tribal devotee, that was vague and largely illegible. He asked other swamis to try to decipher its contents, but they too failed. Swamishri spotted that the letter was postmarked from Sabarkantha, where Shrirang Swami was stationed. It was an era of landlines only. So, after a few attempts, Swamishri spoke to Shrirang Swami and told him to find out

where Parghi lived and what he had written in the letter. So, Shrirang Swami set off to the villages he regularly visited and found Reshma Pardhi in village of Hingatiya near Himmatnagar. Since his village water pump had been out of action for a long time and the authorities had not repaired it, he had written to Swamishri to help fix it. On learning of the problem, Swamishri arranged for it to be resolved.

3. Dashrath was a disabled tribal villager who lived Khadoli, 18 km from Selvas mandir. He had many family problems and walked much of the way to meet Swamishri, who was in the mandir at that time. He reached late at night, as Swamishri was preparing to retire to bed. The swamis told Dashrath to come in the morning. But Swamishri heard the conversation and told the sadhus to allow Dashrath to come. Swamishri guided and blessed him and then arranged for his meal. Swamishri was accessible to and cared for all people, no matter their social status.
4. Yogesh Vanra was a shy boy from the village of Khambha near Amreli who lacked confidence. But Swamishri saw the potential he had to study and arranged for his lodgings at the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar. Still Yogesh's inferiority complex hindered his studies



Visitors pledge to give up addictions

and made him homesick. However, Swamishri motivated him to persist and pacified his mind. Such love and care enabled Yogesh to graduate with an engineering degree and become the pride of his village and family.

Thus, despite his worldly fame and elevated spiritual state, Swamishri was readily accessible to and ever willing to help everyone.

This 31-minute show was presented 1,160 times and viewed by over 1,146,000 people.

### **Exhibition 2: Tute Hriday, Tute Ghar – Broken Hearts, Broken Homes**

The main theme of this show was family unity. It highlighted three main situations: First, that every member of the family – children, parents and grandparents – are busy in their own way and they are unable to spend time with each other to understand each other's feelings. Second, the youths of today feel that their parents do not understand their ambitions and hinder them in their career choices. Third, the elders in the home interfere in the daily interactions between other family members and cause disruption and disunity.

Thus, family unity and mutual understanding are lacking. Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught that the solution to restoring family unity, understanding and trust is *ghar sabha*.

This show is creatively presented using live performers interacting with recorded characters projected on LED screens. It depicts, in a humorous and entertaining way, the gulfs in understanding and communication that exist between husband and wife, father and son, mother and son, and wife and mother-in-law due to the troublesome consequences of modern habits in a particular family. Having observed this turmoil, a family friend undertakes to resolve their issues by involving them in an engaging and introspective activity and leading them to commit to hold a daily *ghar sabha*.

This 25-minute show was presented 1,423 times and was viewed by 1,478,000 people.

### **Exhibition 3: Chalo Tod De Ye Bandhan – Let's Break This Bondage**

This specially scripted short film accurately depicts the perils of addictions and how they plague not just the addicted individual, but also everyone connected to them. This was a message relentlessly advocated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj as he tirelessly endeavoured for decades to free people from the shackles of addictions in all forms.

The film tells the story of an alcoholic father who ruins his son's 9th birthday party by turning up drunk and insulting the friends his son had invited. As a result, the son is bullied, ridiculed and isolated at school. So, as he grows older, the son resorts to smoking, drugs, alcohol and other intoxicants. The father's addictions lead to financial struggles for the family. Then, in his late teens, the son dies in an accident while he was under the influence of drugs.

This jolts the father and he repents for his addictions. Visions of his son haunt him, but they also inspire him to shed his addictions and motivate him to urge others to avoid his fate by quitting their addictions.

It is a powerful message that was well received. On exiting from this show, over



Our India, My India Exhibition

10,000 people approached the adjacent Niyam Kutir and pledged to give up their addictions.

This 28-minute show was presented 1,417 times and viewed by 1,410,000 people.

#### **Exhibition 4: Our India, My India**

This show commemorated India's 75th independence anniversary by paying tribute to the brave soldiers who secure the nation's borders and challenged all citizens to also become soldiers by contributing to the well-being of Mother India. Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said that all citizens have a responsibility to ensure the welfare of their family, society and nation. Of the many duties Swamishri often highlighted that individuals should fulfil, this show depicts three practical measures all citizens can adopt to contribute to the progress and prosperity of India.

Through three engaging presentations, featuring live performances and videos, this show encouraged everyone to follow the laws of the land to ensure a safe and clean country, and not to waste resources like water and electricity.

The first presentation showed the harm caused by not following traffic rules, especially not wearing a helmet when riding a motorbike.

The second promoted the responsibility of each person to not litter the roads and dispose of



Mansarovar display in the Sahajanand Jyoti Mandapam

waste appropriately and maintain a clean India.

The third encouraged all to save water, electricity and other natural resources and not to waste them carelessly. At the end of the show everyone rose to proudly sing the Indian national anthem and commit to become more responsible citizens.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj frequently directed devotees to follow the above and arranged projects and activities that reminded devotees to do so.

So, in effect, every citizen is a soldier whose duty is to protect India from the onslaught of wilful disregard for the laws of the land.

This 24-minute show was presented 1,382 times and viewed by 1,400,000 people.

#### **Exhibition 5: Sahajanand Jyoti Mandapam – Sahajanand Glow Hall**

This was an indoor walkthrough exhibition depicting the life, work and messages of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Gunatit Gurus and the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. The exhibits included paintings, posters, videos and dioramas with glow models taking visitors through the jungles of East India, the serenity of Mansarovar in the north, the grand mandirs of South India and the pious pilgrim places of West India.



Light and Sound Show

### Light and Sound Show

‘Mahotsav Purna Purush Ka’ – ‘Celebrating a Complete Personality’ was the exhilarating and entertaining nightly light and sound show that enchanted the hearts of all visitors. This engaging, energetic and enlightening presentation, featuring delightful dances, colourful costumes, meaningful messages and vibrant visuals, was the heart and soul of the centenary celebrations. It summarized the most salient values depicted throughout the festival site and captured the essence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s selfless life lived ‘in the joy of others’. Throughout his life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired millions worldwide to adopt noble values to live a better life. Thus, he was known as a ‘Purna Purush’ – one who was not only complete himself, but also brought completeness to the lives of those he touched.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had a unique capacity to assess the needs of individuals, families and society, and provide appropriate support and solutions for their problems. This show celebrated three aspects of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s work to uplift humanity: his timely assistance to the victims of the Bhuj earthquake, his practical proposal to conduct a regular *ghar sabha* (family assembly) that enabled innumerable families to live

harmoniously, and his tireless crusade to wean individuals from addictions and save them from dire consequences.

The following is a brief summary of the theme and messages of the light and sound show:

The show begins with brief proclamations by dignitaries, public personalities, leading professionals, royals and others from various countries on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s unique saintly personality.

Then, it celebrates Pramukh Swami Maharaj through three aspects of his work to uplift mankind.

First, Pramukh Swami Maharaj engaged diligently to uplift the common man and rebuild lives. After the earthquake in Bhuj on 26 January 2001, Pramukh Swami Maharaj immediately arranged for hot meals in remote devastated villages. He went on to provide long-term assistance by rebuilding villages, houses and schools.

Second, family harmony is easily broken through arguments and conflict. To prevent such dire situations, Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave a solution to families: Ghar Sabha – Family Assembly. By family members sitting together, eating together, trying to understand one other and talking about moral values, families are able to keep unity throughout the ups and downs of life. The show recalls Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s priceless lesson that relationships are worth more than property. His guidance led to thousands of families settling differences, and experiencing harmony and peace.

Third, in today’s modern world, when a person feels depressed or lonely, he tends to abandon morality and resorts to addictions. Addiction to alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other harmful habits ruin one’s own life and one’s family harmony. To prevent such situations and empower people to walk the path of



Akshar Band from Gondal



Youths from Tanzania perform acrobatics

righteousness, Pramukh Swami Maharaj continuously endeavoured to free people from addictions and inspired four million people to give up their destructive addictions. The show depicted his efforts and the benefits of abandoning addictions.

Modern technology has created a more advanced society. However, despite these advancements, Pramukh Swami Maharaj stressed the importance of maintaining values instead of becoming robotic. His universal values of love, compassion and faith in God are critical to ensuring that man does not become an emotionless machine, but rather a force of completeness and harmony.

The light and sound show, choreographed entirely by BAPS volunteers, combined the use of fire, light, live dances and video, and featured over 500 costumes and props with programmed LED lighting and 3D projection mapping. It was performed on a grand 185 feet long and 90 feet deep. The performing stages were at three levels – 5, 7.5 and 10 feet – and the backdrop, on which the 3D-mapped visuals were projected, was 55 feet high.

Around 320 youths from the BAPS schools in Sarangpur, Gondal, Raisan (near Gandhinagar), Rambhas (Dang), Atladara and Tithal along with youths from Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar, Kalol and Rajkot performed in the show. Youths from

all backgrounds and upbringings practised for six months in their respective centres and then gathered in Sarangpur for rehearsals during the Diwali break. Thereafter, the cast came to Ahmedabad on 1 December 2022 for final rehearsals.

During the festival, the 23½-minute show was performed four times every night, after 6.30 p.m. The seating capacity of the ground was 25,000. Daily, around 90,000 people watched the show. In total, the light and sound show was performed 125 times and viewed by over 2.8 million people.

Pre-show entertainment included performances by the acrobatics team from Tanzania, and the bands from Dhuliya, Nairobi and Gondal.

### **Bands and Acrobatics**

For the entire month, three bands performed multiple times daily: Pramukhraj Drum Band from Dhuliya which performed in the Nasik drum style – comprised 100 youth performers playing five different traditional instruments; Akshar Band from Gondal – comprised 130 performers and used 18 different instruments in the brass, bagpipe and flute sections to present 18 devotional and patriotic tunes; Yogi Marching Band from Nairobi, Kenya – comprised 55 youths



Talent Stage for youths

playing 12 different instruments presented 24 devotional tunes.

From morning, the bands performed at various locations throughout the *nagar*, on the light and sound show stage at night and to welcome dignitaries to the *nagar*.

Also, a team of 10 African youths from Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, presented as exhilarating acrobatics show multiple times daily in various locations.

### Talent Stages

In the Bal Nagari, two talent stages provided a platform for children and youths to showcase their various talents: instrumental music performances, devotional singing, Sanskrit verses recitals, magic shows, yoga, gymnastics, traditional dances – Bharatnatyam, Kathak and others, aerobics, puppet shows, miming and other skills. On one stage, the *balikas* and *yuvatis* performed and on the other *balaks* and *yuvaks* performed. A total of over 460 talented child and youth artistes presented 76 different talents and skills. They presented 2,775 performances, which were viewed by over 3,018,300 people.

### SIGNBOARDS

The Signboards Department was responsible for designing, printing and putting up signage at appropriate locations to guide

the visitors and also provide information about the exhibitions and displays. They also prepared signage for the Premvati stalls, bookstores, parking areas and any signage required by the other festival departments.

In total, the department printed around 200,000 sq. ft of signage, erecting over 8,770 signs of varying sizes.

### DARSHAN ARRANGEMENTS

To ensure smooth flow of visitors through the exhibitions, light and sound show, Akshardham Mandir and Pramukh Swami Mahamurti, arrangements were made at each location by volunteers under the guidance of the lead swamis: Harikishore Swami and Adarshswarup Swami in the exhibition halls, Hariprakash Swami at the Akshardham Mandir and Pramukh Swami Maharaj Mahamurti; Jnanvijay Swami and Harinarayan Swami at the light and sound show, and Aksharcharit Swami at the glow gardens.

In the four main exhibitions, volunteers arranged the chairs and railings, inside the marquee and in the waiting areas. Also, special arrangements were made for invited guests and dignitaries from throughout India and abroad. The volunteers were trained to efficiently and safely coordinate entry to and exit from the marquee for each show. Due to their diligence, time was saved which permitted more shows to take place.

Each of these exhibitions was shown in two marquees, each with a seating capacity of over 1,300. The exhibitions were continuously open from 8.30 a.m. till 10 p.m. And despite the large flow of visitors to each exhibition, all volunteers greeted everyone cordially and respectfully.

Daily, over 100,000 visitors had darshan in the Akshardham Mandir. Their clockwise route around the mandir podium enabled darshan of all the *murtis* and adjacent decorations. Twice a day *arti* was performed, and young children



Visitors wait in line to see The Jungle of Sheru



Yagna rituals in progress

devoutly sang bhajans and Vedic verses before the *murtis*.

The darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Mahamurti filled visitors with awe and emotion. The 'Clock of Goodness' display surrounding the *murti* added to everyone's understanding of Swamishri's selfless services. Here, also, thousands participated in the morning and evening *arti* rituals.

The glow gardens were illuminated from 6 to 11 p.m. They were designed to allow visitors to proceed steadily from one display to the next. The appeal of the colourful, decorative and meaningful displays was such that people naturally stopped to take photos. The volunteers on duty ensured that bottlenecks in the visitors flow through the gardens were promptly cleared.

## YAGNA

Pramukh Swami Maharaj always performed *yagnas* to mark significant occasions and celebrations thus sustaining ancient Vedic Sanatan Hindu traditions. In keeping with this custom, Vishwa Shanti Mahayagnas were conducted by the Yagna Department during the Shatabdi Mahotsav. Under the guidance of Shrutiprakash Swami, Anirdesh Swami and Priyaswarup Swami, a total of 6 swamis and 70 volunteers served in this department.

Preparation for the Vishwashanti Mahayagna began six months in advance with people registering online and choosing their preferred *yagna* date and time.

Each registrant was issued a unique QR code which encoded their *yagna* date and time. They were also sent instructions for preparations before the *yagna*.

On arriving at the Yagna Kutir, which was built in a traditional style out of bamboo and cane, each participant was given a half-hour introduction about the importance of the *yagna* rituals and how Pramukh Swami Maharaj himself strongly advocated *yagnas*. Then, the two-hour Swaminarayan *yagna* ceremony would begin, where each mantra sung was explained to each participant to understand the significance of the *yagna* rites and rituals.

Mahant Swami Maharaj lit the *yagna jyot* using the flame of the 155-year-old *akhand divo* burning in the Akshar Deri in Gondal. The *yagna jyot* was kept alight day and night over the festival period.

The Yagna Kutir had five Yagna Kunds, each accommodating 4 couples – 8 people.

Over the 32 days, 121 *yagnas* were performed by over 8,700 participants from India, USA, Canada, UK, France, Australia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa and other countries.



Devotional offerings in a bhajan kutir



Volunteers clean a toilet block

Over 805,000 *ahutis* – offerings of rice in the *yagna* flame – were offered during the *yagnas* by participants and by swamis, guests and others while chanting verses from the Satsang Diksha, Sahajanand Namavali and Purush Sukta, and mantras in honour of Lakshmi-Narayan, Shiv-Parvati, Surya, Ganesh and Aghor.

The *yagna jyot* remained lit continuously for the entire festival period. It was extinguished with a special ceremony in the presence of *sadguru* swamis on 15 January 2023 bringing the Vishwashanti Mahayagna to a close.

## BHAJAN KUTIRS

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life centred around offering bhajan – devotion to God – and inspiring others to do so. He was forever engrossed in bhakti through turning the *mala*, singing devotional songs and *dhun*, reading shastras, and other forms of worship. The two bhajan *kutirs* (huts) – one each for males and females – welcomed all to engage in various forms of devotion amid the tranquil surroundings. They were made of bamboo, giving them an auspicious ambience like the holy ashrams of the great saints and sages of the past. Bamboo *shikhars* and *kalashes* were placed atop these *kutirs*. A range of auspicious flowers, plants and fauna surrounded the *kutirs* adding

to the divine, auspicious atmosphere. Special arrangements were made outside the bhajan *kutirs* to ensure everyone's footwear was kept safe and tidy.

Inside each was a small replica of the Akshar Deri, the sacred memorial shrine of Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami at the BAPS Akshar Mandir Gondal.

Each bhajan *kutir* housed a *hari* mandir where two *artis* were performed daily at 8 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. After the *arti*, spiritual discourses and devotional songs are presented by sadhus and devotees.

Daily, visitors came to offer their devotion in many ways. Throughout the day, the bhajan *kutirs* echoed with the sounds of spiritual discourses, recitations of Shastra and prayers verses (e.g. Satsang Diksha, Sahajanand Namavali), singing of bhajans to the accompaniment of musical instruments, chanting of *dhun*, and personal and collective prayers. They were a place where people offered personal devotion through turning *malas*, *pradakshina*, *dandvats*, *panchang pranams*, mantra writing and other forms of worship.

Inspired by the messages of the *nagar*, thousands of people took the satsang vows, pledged to become addiction-free and do daily puja.



Women volunteers perform housekeeping tasks at night

### HOUSEKEEPING

Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, “Where there is cleanliness, there is godliness.” Bringing Pramukh Swami’s statement to life, The Housekeeping Department also had the challenging task of ensuring that the more than 600 acres of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar – comprising 200 acres of visual exhibits and displays, 325 acres of parking, and over 75 acres of kitchens and accommodations for thousands of volunteers – remained clean, day and night. The meticulous cleanliness was the strongest testimony of BAPS’s awareness of and commitment to sanitation. This difficult task was admirably accomplished by the efficient and dedicated efforts of the 10 swamis and 2,150 volunteers of the Housekeeping Department.

Around 1,700 dustbins – some made using plastic bottles – were placed throughout the *nagar* and were regularly emptied. The collected waste was segregated and appropriately discarded every day.

Most of the waste generated from the large quantities of fruits and vegetables consumed during the festival was converted into compost to recycle organic waste, while discarded vegetables and leaves were sent to nearby *gaushalas* as feed for cattle.

Teams of men and women volunteers were



Medical department

assigned to clean all the 250 toilet blocks throughout the *nagar* at regular intervals round the clock to ensure that they were clean at all times.

Internal office areas were cleaned by the respective departments, but all cleaning of public and parking areas and waste disposal management was the responsibility of the Housekeeping Department.

Every night, using various machinery, volunteers swept the 2.1 million sq. feet of paver blocks throughout the festival site to maintain a dust-free environment.

During the day, volunteers continuously roamed amid the visitors picking up and disposing of any litter. In the Bal Nagari, this duty was carried out by *bal* and *balika* volunteers.

The volunteers included doctors, lawyers, accountants and other professionals who had no experience of housekeeping. Yet, they enthusiastically engaged in the tasks assigned to ensure a clean, hygienic festival site minimizing the risk of illness. Mosquito control measures were also used.

### MEDICAL

Two large health care marquees, one on Shanti Marg and the other on Narayan Marg, and eight clinics were set up which provided free medical treatment to all visitors and volunteers



Night security

in the *nagar*. Experienced doctors diagnosed and treated patients. The medicines were also provided free of charge.

In addition, the medical department had set-up 14 clinics at the various off-site residencies for volunteers and devotees.

The department provided first aid, outpatient consultations, in-patient treatment, CPR and other emergency care, and arrangements for minor eye, ENT, dental and other surgical procedures. Arrangements were also available for initial blood tests, ECGs, ultrasound, echocardiography and X-rays and physiotherapy.

To facilitate the easy movement of stretchers and wheelchairs, the doctors themselves arranged to lay 1,600 sq. ft of vitrified tiles in the main clinic marquees.

The department also operated 12 ambulances and 6 ICU on wheels to treat and transfer patients from within the festival site to the *nagar* clinics or off-site hospitals for emergency treatment. Arrangements had been made with local hospitals to treat patients transferred from the *nagar*. These included: BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital, Civil Hospital, Ashirvad Hospital, K.D. Hospital, Health One Hospital and U.N. Mehta Hospital.

The facilities were staffed day and night, and ambulances were stationed at strategic

locations so that patients from anywhere on the site could be brought to the main clinics within 5 to 7 minutes.

Clinics for the volunteers were operational from April 2022, during the preparations for the celebrations, and in the wind-up phase.

In total, around 185,000 people were provided medical care during the festival month and about 115,000 volunteers were provided medical care before and after the festival.

In association with 25 local blood banks, stations were set up where swamis, volunteers and visitors could donate blood. Over the festival period, 5,628,950 cc (11,896 pints) of blood was donated.

Under the guidance of Adbhutanand Swami, Vedmanan Swami and experienced *satsangi* doctors, around 780 experienced physicians, cardiologists, neurologists, gynaecologists, paediatricians, general surgeons, ophthalmologists, orthopaedic surgeons, ENT surgeons, radiologists, pathologists, dermatologists, dentists, physiotherapists, nurses, pharmacists and other specialists, as well as paramedicals devotionally volunteered their time to serve in the centenary celebrations.

## SECURITY

The Security Department was responsible for the all-round safety of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar and so liaised closely with the local police and fire departments of Ahmedabad. Under the guidance of Uttampriya Swami, Shrijinandan Swami, Sadhucharit Swami, Shri Nirmalsinh Rana and Jayesh Patel, 21 swamis and 4,000 men and women volunteers carried out the various duties. The department also monitored the entry and exit of visitors and the pedestrian flow throughout the *nagar*. At the entry gates and other locations, door frame metal detectors were positioned to screen people entering that area.



CCTV monitoring room

In an event like this anti-social elements, especially pickpockets, take advantage of the crowds and ply their nefarious trade. To counter this, male and female volunteers were trained by the police to spot and tackle such people. Due to the alertness and prompt actions of the volunteers and police such opportunists were caught. Although pickpocketing gangs roamed around, the scrutiny of the volunteers and police minimized the problems. Many pickpockets were caught and due to the tight security in place, others were discouraged.

The local police provided full support by setting up a temporary but fully operational police station to process any cases and paperwork.

Throughout the month, the station was staffed day and night by senior police officers, police inspectors, constables, members of the State Reserve Police (SRP) and other trained personnel. Their constant presence and vigilance were a major deterrent to anti-social syndicates. Fully trained and equipped bomb disposal squads were also on site.

The fire department stationed trained personnel as well as 5 fire engines, 29 water hose reels and over 750 fire extinguishers of various types. They also trained volunteers in how and when to use the different fire extinguishers.



A volunteer of the Inquiries and Lost & Found Department helps a visitor

To facilitate monitoring of the vast festival site, over 850 CCTV cameras were fitted. The *nagar* was divided into five zones: A to E. In each zone, feeds from the cameras were sent to a central location where trained volunteers continuously monitored, observed and acted on the prevailing situation. This helped to manage the flow of visitors on the festival grounds. On several occasions, the keen eyes of the volunteers identified individuals experiencing health issues and directed the medical department to dispatch appropriate aid.

Volunteers would continue to patrol all corners of the festival site during the night as well.

Also, a quick response force of 250 trained volunteers were ready to tackle any emergency.

Another duty of the department volunteers was to escort visiting dignitaries to ensure that their journey to and from the festival site was hassle-free and to make appropriate arrangements in the *nagar* as per their protocol guidelines.

## INQUIRIES AND LOST & FOUND

For the first time in a major BAPS festival, an Inquiries and Lost & Found Department was set up. Throughout the festival site, there were six inquiry offices and six information

booths, which were managed by Jnanvijay Swami, Prayagmuni Swami and over 250 volunteers. From here, visitors could get information about the *nagar*, seek help for any lost property and assistance to find lost family members.

Lost or misplaced items or people were received and kept safe until a relative or owner was traced. Details of the item or person were entered into a database accessible at all the department's locations.

At the festival entry gates, for the safety of young children, the department arranged to give children a slip with their name and contact mobile number of a responsible adult to enable the speedy reunion of lost children.

When a person lost an item or relative, they would go to the nearest information desk and register details of the lost item or person. The software would analyze descriptions of lost and found items or people and match them. After contacting and verifying the owner, and after taking a photo of the owner, the item or person was returned to the owner or relatives.

Throughout the festival, over 800 phones, keys, wallets, jewellery and other valuable items were returned to their owners. Also, over 1,100 people were reunited with their relatives.

At the six main booths, specially trained caretakers were stationed to care for children while their relatives were located. In some cases, the lost person had no information on who they had come with. Yet, the volunteers patiently traced the required details through other sources.

Also, volunteers identified by special sashes moved around the *nagar* to provide assistance to visitors.

## GUEST RELATIONS

The Guest Relations Department served as a

hub from where the appropriate arrangements for invited guests and conference delegates were made. Under the guidance of Brahmavihari Swami, Shukmuni Swami, Aksharprem Swami, Amrutvijay Swami, Prasannamuni Swami, Arshpurush Swami, 20 swamis and about 1,400 male and female volunteers served in this department.

In the build-up to the festival, four online training sessions were held to prepare the volunteers for their duties.

Six months prior to the celebrations, all the *kothari* swamis of BAPS mandirs, Shatabdi department heads, as well as other swamis and volunteers were requested to enter the names and brief details of the guests they wished to invite into the PSM Connect portal – a custom made database. The names entered included national and state level professionals, public and religious personalities, prominent businesspeople, senior education administrators, senior elected representatives, senior government officers, senior judges, senior police officials, senior political leaders and others.

Then, after Diwali, printed invitations were sent, each with a unique QR code to identify the guests. As the festival approached, the inviting swamis and volunteers obtained the date on which their guests would be visiting to facilitate resource allocation during their visit. To facilitate parking arrangements, dated digital parking passes were sent to all invitees, along with route maps and directions.

When the guests arrived their details were obtained by scanning their QR code. They and their accompanying group members were issued wristbands and allocated guides to escort them around the *nagar* and explain the details of the various attractions and exhibitions. The Guest Relations Department looked after around 21,470 groups, totaling over 147,300 guests.



Guests register at the reception counter



A guide escorts a dignitary on a tour of the site

In addition, the Guest Relations Department was also responsible for the stage guests attending the evening assemblies. Several months before the festival, senior swamis prepared an extensive list of who to invite and on which date. A special invitation pack was prepared for each invitee which was hand delivered by designated swamis or senior volunteers. The invitees were from all over India, and some were from abroad. If the suggested date was not convenient to the guest, they would be given a date of their choice.

After the guests confirmed the date on which they would visit the *nagar*, volunteers would liaise with them to prepare their itinerary. When they arrived, they were given a guided tour of the *nagar* as per the time available before taking their seat on the evening assembly stage. The stage guests had a personal meeting with Mahant Swami Maharaj and were interviewed to record their feedback. In total, throughout the festival, 487 stage guests graced the evening assemblies.

In addition, provisions were made to enable new registrations during the festival period since many guests encouraged their family and friends to visit after they had visited. In such cases, digital invitations were sent to facilitate their arrangements.

### Professional Conferences

About six months prior to the festival, various professional and academic bodies were contacted to offer them the opportunity to hold a one-day conference for their registered members on the festival grounds.

Under the guidance of Brahmavihari Swami and Jnanvatsal Swami, a team of swamis and volunteers organized 14 professional conferences in the 1,000-seating capacity conference marquee. The following professional bodies held conferences:

Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GCCCI), Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), Indian Medical Association (IMA), Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (CREDAI), National Association of Realtors (NAR), Entrepreneurs Organization (EO) & Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), Bar Council of Gujarat, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), National Human Resource Development Network (NHRDN), Shaikshik Sangh, Gujarat Institute of Civil Engineers and Architects (GICEA), Tourism Development Society, India Drug Manufacturers Association (IDMA) and Indian Association for Amusement Parks & Industries (IAAPI).

Each conference began at 9.30 a.m. and featured a morning technical session in which



Swagat Kaksh

the presentations were by distinguished national and state level professionals. In the post-lunch session, a BAPS swami gave a brief speech and an introductory video of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj centenary celebrations was shown.

Thereafter, after a concluding technical session, the delegates were given a guided tour of the *nagar*, which continued until evening. The delegates departed after dinner.

In total, over 13,200 delegates attended the 14 professional conferences.

### Academic Conferences

Under the guidance of Aksharvatsal Swami, Bhadresh Swami, Shrutiprakash Swami and Atmatrupt Swami, 7 academic conferences were hosted in the 250-seating capacity conference dome. The academic conferences were held over two days, and featured subject-related paper and research presentations as well as panel discussions by leading scholars. Guided tours of the *nagar* were arranged for the delegates during their two-day stay.

The following academic conferences were held, which were attended by over 1,675 scholars and other delegates: Temple Architecture in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA); Empowerment of Scheduled Castes – Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR); Sant

Sahitya – Akshardham Academy for Research in Social Harmony (AARSH); Darshan Parishad – Central Sanskrit University, Shri Somnath Sanskrit University, Veraval; History – Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR); Women Empowerment – SNTD Women’s University, Mumbai.

### MEDIA RELATIONS

Under the guidance of Jnaneshwar Swami, Vivekjiwan Swami and Apurvamuni Swami, 12 swamis and over 230 volunteers served to publicize news of the centenary celebrations to the public. During the year, training sessions were held for the volunteers.

During the festival period, 1,116 reporters and 602 cameramen covered news of the *nagar*. In addition, 6,200 family members and colleagues of reporters visited. To guide them, 45 teams of volunteers and 6 spokespersons were available.

The daily press release in Gujarati, Hindi and English was sent digitally to over 2,800 media representatives.

The festival was covered by 71 TV channels for many hours. They broadcast over 1,445 videos. Thousands of news articles were printed in Gujarati, English, Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, Kannada, Punjabi and Sanskrit in India. The festival was highlighted online by many media houses and on social media.

Print and electronic media in the UK, USA, Canada, Africa, Australia, UAE and other countries also published news of the celebrations.

Prior to the festival, over 2,000 specially designed hoardings were put up in many cities and towns.

The positive impact of the festival was such that some of the media personnel who came were inspired to quit their addictions.

### SWAGAT KAKSH

The Swagat Kaksh (Welcome Area) provided



International Reception Centre (IRC)



BAPS Stores

an orientation point for the landowners, builders and others who had in some way contributed to and supported the festival. Also, local dignitaries visiting from the many BAPS centres throughout India were received here. From here, they were guided on the various *nagar* attractions and how to view them.

Reception desks for the main BAPS centres throughout Gujarat and other states were set up, which were manned by swamis and volunteers from that centre. Visitors from that centre were welcomed by them and guided to ensure a smooth visit.

Visiting mahatmas were cordially received and honoured. Appropriate arrangements for their visit to view the *nagar* were also made.

Throughout the month, over 367,000 visitors and 1,000 mahatmas were served by the department.

Under the guidance of Jnaneshwar Swami, Rajeshwar Swami, Shriji prakash Swami, Bhaktitanay Swami, Chinmay Swami, Akshartilak Swami and Yagnasetu Swami, other swamis and 500 volunteers served in this department.

### INTERNATIONAL RECEPTION CENTRE (IRC)

A special area was set up to cater for the devotees visiting from overseas. From here, the devotees were provided information about the

Shatabdi Mahotsav – attractions, assemblies, maps, programme schedules and other guidance. A travel desk enabled devotees to make train and plane reservations, rent vehicles and book hotels. Facilities were also arranged to enable them to acquire local phone SIM cards and exchange currencies.

Over 76,900 devotees from 57 countries visited during the festival.

### BAPS STORES

Under the guidance of Yogivallabh Swami, Vimalmaran Swami and Adarshcharit Swami, the BAPS Stores Department was operated by 11 swamis and 1,200 volunteers.

There were 19 BAPS Stores, including two megastores, throughout the *nagar*. They sold around 1,500 items, including books in Gujarati, Hindi, English and other languages, puja items, *murtis*, incense sticks, BAPS herbal care products, T-shirts, and other gifts and mementoes.

### TELECOM & CCTV

The Telecom Department managed all the communication requirements before, during and after the celebrations.

They coordinated with the Vodafone and Jio telecom operators to ensure enough capacity to cope with the massive simultaneous load.

Around the periphery of the *nagar*, 19 mobile



Digital message board to guide visitors



Icons of some of the apps used by departments

coverage on wheels (COW) units were set up, so that they did not interfere with the elevation and aesthetics of the *nagar* design. Also, within the *nagar*, 49 high power small cell (HPSC) units were placed.

The telecom operators also stationed Quick Response Teams (QRT) to rapidly resolve any technical issues and reduce the downtime of equipment.

In case of networks being jammed due to overwhelming usage, each department was given walkie-talkies to use at assigned frequencies and channels to ensure that essential communication could continue in such situations.

As many of the departments were dependent on real time access to their applications and databases a 6,500 MBPS lease line was used. In conjunction with the IT Department, to ensure rapid speeds, 35 km of optical fibre cables were laid to connect the departments and 90 km of CAT6 cables were used to network the computer systems and the more than 850 CCTVs were installed.

## SCREENS

The LED screens used in the shows and exhibitions, on the festival stages, and throughout the *nagar* were set up and maintained by the Screens Department. Over 110 screens, totalling around 22,900 sq. ft, were used.

A special feature was the digital signage software developed inhouse by swamis and volunteers to ensure that the information displayed on the public message boards was up to date, uniform and location specific.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The IT Department provided computers, hardware, Wi-Fi and local area network connectivity, TVs, cloud storage and other technical assistance to the other departments.

The department provided desktop computers, laptops, printers, network switches, servers, access points, UPS units, network racks, fibre locations, cloud servers and splicers to ensure that all departments had the necessary resources to perform their duties.

The department also provided 225 televisions of various sizes to the departments, eg. Stage, Guest Relations, Media Relations, exhibition halls, etc.

## Software and App Usage

To help manage their requirements, many departments prepared custom-built software and apps. The following are some of the software and apps that were developed:

- PSM Nagar: For public use, this app had the following main features: *Nagar* timings, special notices, information about the

*nagar* attractions and amenities. Parking information and directions. Feature that allowed visitors to save their car location. *Nagar* map with feature to show route from one location to another. Location of the nearest restroom, medical centre, inquiries booth, Premvati stall and bookstore. The app was designed specially to enable navigation even at times of probable network congestion.

- Bal Nagari: three apps – for volunteer management, activity reports, public feedback.
- Swayamsevak Dal: for volunteer management.
- Darshan Yatra: to register and schedule the pre-arranged visits to the *nagar* for devotees from throughout India.
- PSM100 Utara: to manage the accommodations for devotees visiting the festival. This was integrated with the Darshan Yatra app.
- PSM Connect: for the Guest Relations Department to manage guest registration and guide allocation.
- PSM Glory: for the Media Relations Department.
- Audio-Visual Department: app to manage equipment usage and other resources
- Sound: to manage equipment and resource usage.
- Swayamsevak Bank: for the safe-keeping of volunteers' money during the festival.
- Swagat Kaksh: to register guests for the general reception.
- Medical Department: three apps – to manage doctors rotas, pharmacy stock and patient details.
- General Stores: to enable the festival departments to order any item stocked in the General Stores Department.
- Kitchen: to manage daily menus, quantities of the various ingredients required and stock levels of raw materials.
- Yagna: online registration for the *yagna*.
- Consumer Store: small retail store for volunteers.
- BAPS Store: for transactions and stock maintenance at the gift stores.
- Premvati: for transactions and stock maintenance at the Premvati stalls.
- Transport: four apps – to manage transport shuttle services for volunteers, to monitor fuel refilling, to register drivers and vehicles with necessary documentation, and parked vehicle counting.
- Digital signage: to control messages displayed on the public digital signboards.
- Exhibition Waiting Time Management: to control timer boards outside each exhibition to show the waiting time.
- Exhibition Dome Playback: player which keeps lighting in sync with the show. This also incorporated central monitoring and management to help ease public flow. This was integrated with the Digital Signage application and Exhibition Waiting Time Management application to calculate expected waiting times for each exhibition based on remaining show times and current queues and display this information to the public and the flow control teams around the campus.
- Media Logging System: to log media and documents in a multi-hierarchical manner to allow for quick search and retrieval.
- DMX recorder and player: to record and provide automated playback of lighting in sync with the shows.
- Network Monitoring and Management: System to monitor all critical networked systems around the campus, provide pre-emptive alerts and allow instant configuration of network parameters all around the campus at once.

(Reports compiled based on information from department heads.) ◆



# BAPS *Volunteers Services*

## **Introduction**

1,000 BAPS swamis and 80,000 male and female volunteers offered their unstinting services during the making and running of the 600-acre Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar in Ahmedabad. Fifty-three different volunteer departments managed the preparations and the month-long grand celebration. Volunteers served for a period of 15 days to one year. The volunteers mainly hailed from Gujarat and some from other parts of India, USA, UK, Europe, Africa, Australia and New Zealand. They came from all stratas of urban and rural society, from rich to poor and professionals to unskilled.

Their sagas of perseverance, grit, dedication and devotion are inspiring and

unparalleled. The 8,000 male and female volunteers of the kitchen department worked day and night to cook over 100,000 meals thrice daily. The 4,400 parking and traffic control volunteers humbly remained unbudging in their positions outside the festival venue, braving heat and cold. The security volunteers remained steadfast in their duties even during the cold nights in remote parts of the celebration site. The housekeeping department's 2,100 volunteers, out of which 600 were women, were seen sweeping and operating cleaning machines even at 1 a.m. The children volunteers in the Bal Nagari and youths in the cultural department also performed and served indefatigably. The volunteers became the toast of all the stage guests and 12.1 million visitors.

The underlying spirit driving the volunteers in their *seva*, despite the long hours, challenging difficulties, immense hard work and remote locations, was to pay homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and please guru Mahant Swami Maharaj.

A few incidents out of the thousands who did monumental *seva* are as follows.

### Major Turning Point

Sanjay Patel, age 46, was an accidental volunteer from Lavarpur village near Gandhinagar. Once, he was passing by the under-construction Pramukh Swami Nagar and saw some swamis and volunteers engaged in landscaping work and laying paver blocks. He asked one swami whether he could join them? The swami told him that he could try and then decide whether he liked it or not.

That day of *seva* turned out to be a turning point for Sanjay. Being a hardcore alcoholic, he realized that his craving for alcohol had suddenly subsided. This fascinated him because he had been trying to find a way to shake off his addiction. So, he decided to do *seva* for 15 days, which totally redeemed him from his addiction.



Subsequently, he decided to do *seva* till the end of the celebrations and even thereafter.

### Company Owner Serves as a Driver

Himanshu Karia, a 36-year-old volunteer, owns a lucrative pharmaceutical company in Rajkot. He came to do *seva* while the *nagar* was being built, and joined the construction department. He learnt there were many tractors in service, but there was a dearth of drivers. He had never driven a tractor before but realized that if he learnt to drive he would be of great



help. So, regardless of his status as a proprietor of a company, he unhesitatingly hired a tractor tutor and learnt to drive. Himanshu's opportune *seva* was appreciated by all.

### Served Regardless of a Physical Disability

Ramanbhai Patel, age 64, was from Thangadh, Surendranagar. He has only one normal working hand, yet he enthusiastically joined as a volunteer in the transport and parking department. He diligently stood at his assigned location and waved his one hand to direct the traffic. No matter how harsh the day and night

temperatures were, he never abandoned his duty. Ramanbhai's welcome smile and spirit to serve evoked respect among the motorists and bike drivers.

### Utter Humble Sevak

Purshottambhai Bhalia, 63 years old, was a Deputy CEO of the Bank of Baroda in London, UK. He gave up his job and comfortable lifestyle to do *seva* for one year at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. He humbly performed a variety of *seva* assigned to him: housekeeping in flats, assisting a plumber volunteer by carrying his tools and equipments, and on certain occasions he even did the plumbing himself. His zeal for doing *seva* was commendable.

### Female Volunteers

More than 22,000 female volunteers served unremittingly and painstakingly in several departments. They served in the kitchen department for hours on end, slicing vegetables, preparing *puranpuris* and *samosas*. They also helped in making the glow garden, laying paver blocks, and in serving and running the Premvati foodcourts. Out of 2,100 housekeeping volunteers 600 were women, who tirelessly offered *seva* during the cold nights and scorching afternoons. The young teen girls who performed in the Sea of Suvarna won the hearts of all the visitors. The women volunteers at the Nari Utkarsh Mandapam were greatly applauded for organizing special assemblies on relevant topics, enacting fascinating dramas and presenting inspiring cultural programmes.

Some inspiring stories of women volunteers' *seva* are as follows:

### Menial Seva

Madhuben Patel of Latipura, Padra, is a retired high school teacher who voluntarily chose to clean the toilets and bathrooms at Gate 6 in the *nagar*. She and her team of 20 women

volunteers patiently cleaned the toilets, urinals and floor every hour throughout the day. They performed such menial *seva* for the entire month, without an iota of boredom or irritation and with gusto.

### Ready to Serve Either Way

The positive attitude of volunteers and their ebullience to do *seva* inspired their near and dear ones to support them. One such woman volunteer was Sonalben Patel of Vadodara. She had registered for 100 days of *seva* in the kitchen department. A few days prior to joining her *seva*, her mother-in-law was diagnosed with a tumour in her chest and surgery was advised. Sonalben decided to forgo her voluntary *seva* and serve her mother-in-law.

The next day, her mother-in-law called her and insisted that she go for *seva* and please Mahant Swami Maharaj. She added, “Do not forgo your *seva*. I will manage my situation. Do not worry about me.” Sonalben replied, “I will come back at the time of your surgery.” However her mother-in-law insisted that there would be no need for it. Subsequently, as per Swamishri’s blessings and grace, the surgery was accomplished successfully and Sonalben was not required to return home to serve her mother-in-law.

### Troupe of Acrobats Offer Tributes

Mr Sems Amani, a choreographer of the Maputu Theatre Group from Tanzania, stated, “I have come here from Tanzania to perform acrobatics and offer my heartfelt gratitude to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I first met him in 1999 when he presented me a medal for my stage performance. I still cherish it as a memory of that moment.

“When I first met him, I experienced immense peace and bliss. He had also inspired me to give up meat, alcohol and smoking. I am grateful to him for those words of inspiration as



well as for building a school and hospital near my village in Dar-es-Salaam.”

The Maputu Theatre Group, comprising a troupe of 10 African performers, performed on the Bal Nagari Talent Show stage twice a day. They also performed daily at 6.10 p.m. on the ‘Light and Sound Show’ stage. Their acrobatics and gymnastics left the audience in awe and joy.

### A Lifetime Opportunity

Ms Sneha Chotaliya, a London born 25-year-old PhD researcher and dentist from Kings College, London, said, “Pramukh Swami



Maharaj impacted every single aspect of my life; educational, professional, social and personal. Through letters, Pramukh Swami Maharaj guided and inspired me at every juncture of my life, fulfilling every role, as a friend, a parent, a teacher and a mentor. When someone is this important to you, you would do anything for that person. Volunteering as a guide in the Bal Nagari for the 30-day celebration is my way of thanking Pramukh Swami Maharaj and contributing to his legacy. For me, it's a once in a lifetime opportunity to serve and give a little back to my guru who means everything to me

and made me what I am.”

### Repaying Back Through Seva

London-based Ms Pooja Barot, a mechanical engineer and successful entrepreneur, praised, “I attribute my success as a female entrepreneur to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It is he who inspired me and guided me through letters every step of the way, right from starting my business to resolving the challenges I faced when setting up my senior citizens’ domestic care business. I am here with my family serving as a volunteer in the International Reception Centre to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj for all that he has did for our society, culture, and most importantly for empowering women all over the world.”

### Deferred Her Studies to Do Seva

Titiksha Devaiya, a computer engineer from Gujarat, had gained admission to study abroad. However, when she received a call for *seva* from the BAPS women’s wing, she signed up for 15 days. Once she started doing *seva*, she was so inspired to continue that she motivated her parents to join her in *seva* for the glow gardens. Every day, she travelled 24 km to the festival grounds for *seva*. Ultimately, she deferred her study programme abroad and extended her *seva* till the end of the festival.

### Service to Guru and Nation

Mihali Modi is a commercial pilot from Meghalaya, while her father Manishbhai Modi is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian Air Force. Manishbhai did not take a single leave from his duties for the entire year in order to serve for one month at the festival grounds in the glow gardens. Inspired by her father, 23-year-old Mihali put her lucrative job prospects on hold and travelled all the way from Shillong to do *seva* for 45 days. She said, “During my

*seva*, I adapted to situations like resting under a tree during breaks from the humid weather and using the common toilets. I learnt management skills and teamwork. I do 12 hours of *seva* daily and it is great fun.”

Service to the nation and service to the guru is the motto of this family – a true inspiration for all.

### Reciprocating the Guru's Love with Seva

19-year-old Agna Patel from London, UK, is a student of maths and statistics at the London School of Economics. She volunteered for 30 days at the Pramukh Swami Nagar as a guide to explain about the large 25-foot-high by 45-foot-long bubble wrap painting of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, which she had helped to create.

Agna recalled, “It was a wonderful experience to work on the bubble art painting. I fondly remember going every day after school with my friends to our London Mandir in Neasden. We would be given a sheet of bubble wrap and paint. There would be numbers behind each bubble and our role was to inject the paint into each of them by using a syringe. I was one of the young ladies who had volunteered for this service, and it brought me great joy and an amazing feeling that I was contributing to Pramukh Swami's centenary celebrations.” Describing her connection to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Agna said, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj touched my heart from a very young age. I was drawn to Pramukh Swami. Both my parents are devotees but even as a girl I felt his love and compassion. I felt connected to him through the letters I wrote or just his presence during his visits to London. Doing this bubble art is



my way of trying to return a fraction of the love he had given me.”

### An Attitude of Profound Seva

Surat resident and a successful businessman, Shri Kishore Sapolia is driven around by his chauffeur at home. In spite of his luxurious life, he decided to join the large contingent of volunteers at the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar by serving as a driver.

Along with his duties as a driver he also liaised with the traffic police officers to help maintain a smooth flow of the thousands of cars that visited daily. Like him, there were 3,500 volunteers serving and managing the traffic, transport, and parking department. They worked in two shifts, from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 11 p.m.

### Seva Hones Life Skills

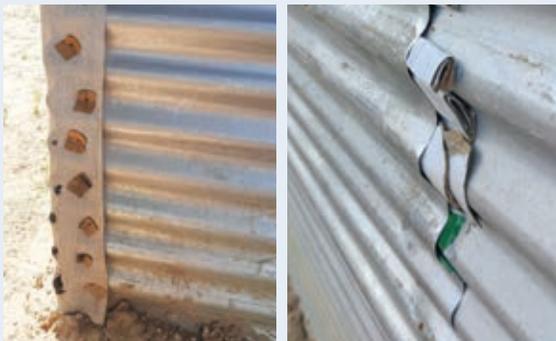
Dr Bansari Davda MD, an Assistant Professor at LG Hospital, Ahmedabad, said, “I was determined from the very beginning that I wanted to do *seva*, regardless of whatever it was. I was assigned the *seva* of making the seating arrangements at the Nari Utkarsh Mandapam. It involved arranging chairs in the hall and ensuring that everyone got a seat before each show began. While serving, among the most important skills I learnt were that of conflict management and how to remain calm and composed in difficult situations. I am blessed to have made new friends and I will cherish this experience for the rest of my life.” ◆

# Special Seva

Snakes had appeared when levelling the land in the past grand BAPS festivals in 1981, 1985 and 1995, but only for a short duration. On the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations site, both the frequency and duration of snakes had increased. In this regard, Mahant Swami Maharaj’s blessings on two occasions conferred protection to all and thus nobody was bitten. He had said, “*Raksha thashe.*” Here we cite the story of this special *seva*.

In 2021 and again in early 2022, the 600-acre site in Ognaj was cleared of foliage and the land levelled. During the summer of 2022, the appearance of snakes was rare. Their frequency increased drastically when the monsoon in June flooded the land, including the snake burrows. Around this period the tin-shelters for the volunteers were being built. This provided snakes a dry area to reside. They entered through the spaces between two overlapping tins sheets and those at the corners of each tin-shelter, which had wider spaces. These were then sealed with cardboard or jute cloth (see photo). Two nearby hospitals offered to treat snake-bitten victims and acquired anti-snake venom. Ultimately, their services were not needed.

Initially, the landowners sent their expert snake rescuers. Personnel from the Indroda Nature Park in Gandhinagar also helped. Yet, when the frequency increased to about five or more per day, rescuers were needed constantly



on site. At this time, swamis in T’ithal, near Valsad, sent two youths from an animal rescue centre, who stayed for about ten days and then returned.

The day before they left, an 18-year-old volunteer named Dhruv<sup>1</sup> happened to witness them rescue a snake. He then informed the swamis in charge about his experience in animal rescue and that he had pledged to do *seva* for six months. Dhruv and his uncle were immediately appointed to rescue snakes until the celebrations ended on 16 Jan 2023. Special boxes were made to hold the reptiles caught. Dhruv caught snakes with his hands and a V-shaped rod. Pincers could inadvertently rupture a snake’s vital organ, causing its death. To protect his feet, Dhruv was given a pair of boots with steel toe-caps. He was only bitten once by a small, non-venomous kukri snake which he had held in one hand while placing a monitor lizard in a box with his other hand.

The rescued snakes were released about five kilometres away in a natural forest area.

Dhruv’s risky *seva* provided immense relief and reassurance to the thousands of volunteers on site and devotees who were accommodated in nearby residential schemes during the festival.

From June 2022 until January 2023, the total number of reptiles rescued were as follows:

Venomous species: cobra, krait, Russell’s viper	106
Non-venomous species: rat snake, common kukri, red sand boa, common sand boa, checkered & striped keelbacks, Keith’s sand snake, common trinket snake	146
Monitor lizard <sup>2</sup>	17
Total	269

(Cont. on p. 205)

1. Name changed.
2. Though the monitor lizard is not venomous, it was translocated because its presence was discomforting to people.

# Impact and Benefits of the Celebrations



**T**he one-month long Pramukh Swami Maharaj centenary celebration was visited by 12.1 million guests and people from all parts of India and 40 countries. The exhibitions, Bal Nagari, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's giant 30-foot-high *murti*,  *jyoti udyans* (glow gardens), light and sound show, evening assemblies and volunteers' selfless *seva*, impressed and left a deep impact on countless visitors. Children, youths and parents took pledges to improve their lives. More than 11,000 people pledged to give up addictions and over 250,000

children took various pledges like bowing to parents, studying well, and others.

Some interesting takeaways shared by visitors are as follows.

## 1. INSPIRATION TO QUIT ADDICTIONS

Anandbhai Pattni is a news reporter for a TV channel in Ahmedabad. He was addicted to smoking cigarettes and chewing tobacco for the last 26 years. His parents' and wife's persistent efforts to make him quit had failed. However, on 21 December, Anandbhai visited Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar with



his wife and two children. After seeing the Sea of Survarna show, his six-year-old son, Lakshya, took a pledge to daily bow down to his parents and obey them. Then, Lakshya was given a small children's booklet, 'Making the Right Choices'.

After returning home that day, Anandbhai started explaining the booklet to Lakshya. On reading the page about staying away from people who smoked, Lakshya instantly retorted that he would stay away from him. Anandbhai was deeply affected by his son's words and resolved to give up his stubborn addiction. The next day, he came to the *nagar* and quit his addictions.

The impact of the exhibitions and shows inspired thousands to refrain from addictions and other bad habits.

## 2. A COUPLE RESOLVES NOT TO DIVORCE

A couple was on bad terms with each other for quite some time. Their bitter relationship could no longer be remedied and sustained. So, they decided to divorce each other. However, on learning about the centenary celebrations, they came to see Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar together. After seeing the show, 'Broken Hearts, Broken Homes' ('Tute Hriday, Tute Ghar') both of them resolved to give up their differences and live a harmonious life together. The show portrayed Pramukh Swami Maharaj's message of family harmony and doing *ghar sabha* (family assembly). Thereafter, the couple went before the giant *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and pledged to mend their differences and stay

happily together.

Countless more were inspired by the show to practise family harmony.

## 3. ADOPTING A VIRTUE OF CLEANLINESS

A couple had come to Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar with their three-year-old daughter. All of them were fascinated by the various shows and displays. After a tiring walk around the *nagar*, the couple and daughter sat on a bench to rest and satiate their thirst and hunger. Both husband and wife took turns in feeding their daughter. During that time, their daughter's eyes were following a housekeeping volunteer's efforts in picking up litter. She spontaneously got down from the bench and walked away from her parents to find litter. She found a piece of paper, grabbed it, and made great efforts in putting it in a dustbin. Thereafter, she gleefully returned to her parents. Her parents, who had been watching her all the while, patted her with appreciation for taking a cue from the volunteer.

The cleanliness in the 600-acre Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar was a consequence of the massive efforts of 2,100 unsung volunteers of the Housekeeping Department. Thousands who visited the *nagar* appreciated their efforts and were inspired to reinforce the virtue of cleanliness in their lives.

## 4. MOTIVATED TO OFFER VOLUNTARY SEVA

Dixit Chaudhary, Dhaval Patel, Rasik Patel, Bhavik Patel and Harshil Prajapati are in their mid-thirties. They all live in a block of flats located on the fringe of the celebration ground. Every evening, they returned home from work or business at around 7.30 to 8.00 p.m. After dinner, they engaged themselves in voluntary *seva* during the celebration. Dixit declared, "We were not registered volunteers or devotees of BAPS. We had witnessed for the past one year, amid severe heat and rain, the intense voluntary efforts of swamis and youths in preparing the celebration

site. This inspired us to serve by standing at one of the road junctions to the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar from 9 p.m. to around 1 a.m. We guided visitors who were lost or helped those who had forgotten the parking lot in which they had parked their vehicles. Moreover, sometimes, if someone was broke we helped by donating money for their transport. We had also given rides to visitors from outside Ahmedabad to their destination or to the nearest bus stop.”

Witnessing the *seva* of swamis and volunteers ignited a spirit of selfless service in many good Samaritans.

### 5. GAVE UP ANGER

Lakshmanbhai Parmar had a volatile nature. Minor disturbances would make him explode with anger. His visit to the cultural shows at Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar turned out to be a change of heart for him. He became inspired with positive thoughts and vibrations.

After viewing a show, a child-volunteer inspired him to take a pledge to improve himself. Lakshmanbhai revealed, “I didn’t have any addictions, but the child-volunteer spoke to me about giving up anger. Usually, it is parents or elders who teach their children, but here it was children inspiring the seniors. I resolved before the child-volunteer to never lose my temper.”

The content and presentations of the various exhibitions and shows sparked off a change of heart or attitude in many visitors.

### 6. KEY TO FAMILY HARMONY

Rajdan Gadhvi saw the show ‘Broken Hearts, Broken Homes’. He was impressed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s message of family harmony. He decided to follow Swamiji’s message of doing daily *ghar sabha*. He opined, “As the head of the house, if I learn to understand my family members then peace and harmony will prevail in my house. I took a resolution to do *ghar sabha* daily.”



### 7. DEEP IMPACT AND APPRECIATION

Daily, 25,000 devotees came from distant towns and cities to visit Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. The Accommodations Department made free of cost arrangements for their 1 ½ days stay in flats. Volunteers attended to them at the flats.

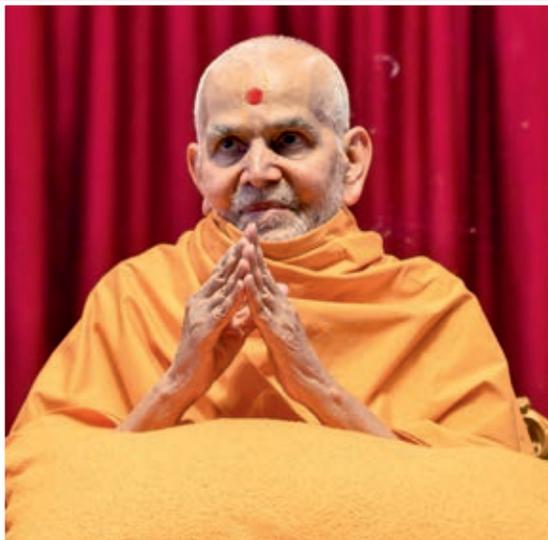
One such accommodation venue was Kunj Nest in the suburb of South Bopal, which was 15 km away from the celebration site. Fourteen male volunteers of Ahmedabad attended to the devotees, serving them loyally and with enthusiasm in spite of being far away from the buzz and excitement of the celebrations. They would remain awake to welcome the devotees at any hour of the day or night. On their arrival, the volunteers would help them carry their luggage and usher them to their allotted flats. They would also solve any problems regarding shortage of water, breakdown of a water heater or any other difficulty.

The local residents observed the selfless *seva* of the volunteers for the entire month. Also, during their conversations with the volunteers they learnt that they had taken leave from their lucrative jobs and businesses to serve. Deeply impressed by their *seva* and sacrifice, the local residents decided to honour them on the last day of their *seva*. Thus, on 13 January 2023, the residents praised and honoured the 14 volunteers with woollen shawls.

Similarly, the unflinching dedication and services of many other volunteers also made a deep impact on and evoked sentiments of appreciation in others. ◆

# Well-Wishers Felicitation Assembly

17 January 2023



A felicitation ceremony was held to thank the thousands of well-wishers for their generous services, material donations and cooperation for the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations.

Many farmers and builders had provided their land for the celebration ground. Many builders and well-wishers had given their new flats and homes as accommodations for swamis and devotees from abroad and all parts of India. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) and other officials of various government departments also unstintingly offered their services and support.

The felicitation assembly was addressed by several swamis, builders and well-wishers.

**Aksharvatsal Swami** said, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj centenary celebration was a festival of inspirations. All those who came here received noble inspirations and resolved to change their lives.”

**Shri Yatindrabhai**, a prominent official of the AMC, said, “The Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebration was unforgettable and unimaginable. Along with 80,000 volunteers, I

have also had the opportunity and good fortune to serve on behalf of the city corporation.”

**Shri Sureshbhai Patel**, builder and owner of Gopi Farm, said, “We and all the villagers are indebted to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj for celebrating this festival on our land. Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar was so captivating that, on entering it, it made everyone forget the sense of time. I firmly believe that if we sincerely seek the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and put in hard work, then he will shower his grace upon us.”

**Shri Ankitbhai**, owner of Rajiv Engineering, said, “It is our greatest fortune that we are born in this century and were able to witness the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations. We learnt management skills, discipline, humanity and kindness. The motto of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, ‘In the good of others, lies our own,’ is the main lesson for all of us.”

**Shri Ketanbhai**, a builder and head of Vivanta Group, said, “I am grateful to you for giving us the opportunity to serve in the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations through the flats we offered as accommodations for the volunteers. The uncompleted construction work in our flats would have taken six months to finish, but I experienced that by the grace of God it was accomplished in just three months. Peace will prevail in our society if we live by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s motto, ‘In the good of others, lies our own.’”

**Pujya Ishwarcharandas Swami** said, “With your cooperation, such a miraculous, wonderful celebration took place. Millions of people came and received noble inspirations. Everyone from different sects and religions came to this



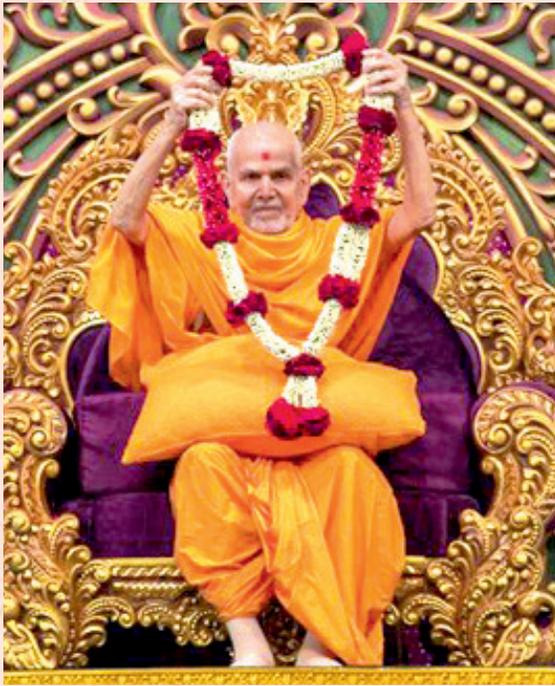
festival with enthusiasm and love by the grace of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the divine blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj emphasized unity. Such a gigantic festival was possible through everyone's united efforts. God inspired everyone, and everyone cooperated."

Then, he appreciated all the farmers and builders of Lapkaman, Rakanpur, Ognaj, Bhadaj and Santej, who had given their land for use. He also thanked the builders and hotel owners who had arranged for the accommodations of swamis, devotees and volunteers in their hotels and flats. He thanked the AMC, Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority (AUDA), Ahmedabad Housing Corporation, Ahmedabad Municipal Transport Service (AMTS), Gujarat State Transport, GMC, Gujarat Electricity Board (GEB), PWD, Fire Brigade, APMC, police personnel, Sanitation-Health Department, Airport Authority of India, CISF, and many other officials from the Government of India and Government of Gujarat. He also thanked the reporters, photographers, editors, bureau chiefs and owners of newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, and TV channels. He also thanked those who donated equipment and provided services for the stage, sound and cold

storage. He acknowledged those who had donated seeds, cereals, potatoes, vegetables, ghee, cooking oil and other rations. He also appreciated those who had donated electric materials, IT hardware, walkie-talkies, LED bulbs, CCTVs, water tanks, pipes, boilers, trucks, JCBs, tractors and buses. Furthermore, construction companies, telecom companies, road contractors and suppliers were also thanked for their services.

A declaration was made by Mr Hitesh Barot, from the AMC Standing Committee, that the housing colony located in the nearby Science City area would henceforth be named as 'Pramukh Swami Nagar Awas'.

Finally, **Mahant Swami Maharaj** blessed the assembly, "Everyone felt that Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary was celebrated with grandeur and divinity. More than one crore people took inspiration from Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar by having darshan. All of you offered services for the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Mahotsav with an open heart, by considering it to be your own celebration. With your cooperation this festival has been accomplished without any hindrances. This centenary celebration is a 'Festival of Cooperation'. May Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj bless you all with happiness and peace." ♦



# VOLUNTEERS



*A special assembly was held in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj and sadguru swamis to honour and offer appreciations to the volunteers. The grand assembly was held on the vast grounds of Pramukh Swami Sabha Gruh adjacent to the main festival site.*

**M**ore than 80,000 volunteers and many devotees rendered their selfless services that ranged from 35 days to one year at the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar.

The backbone of the Pramukh Swami Nagar was its dedicated force of 80,000 volunteers and swamis engaged in over 48 departments. These volunteers and swamis formed a diverse group of professionals and skilled workers that came from different geographical, academic and social backgrounds, resulting in an effective mosaic of servant-leaders and workers. Many of the volunteers who served in the festival took time out from their professional careers and businesses, while many others left such positions to serve full time. They all admirably balanced their personal, family, social, professional and volunteer duties. These volunteers engaged in physical services,

planning, management and implementation in all the departments of the *nagar*.

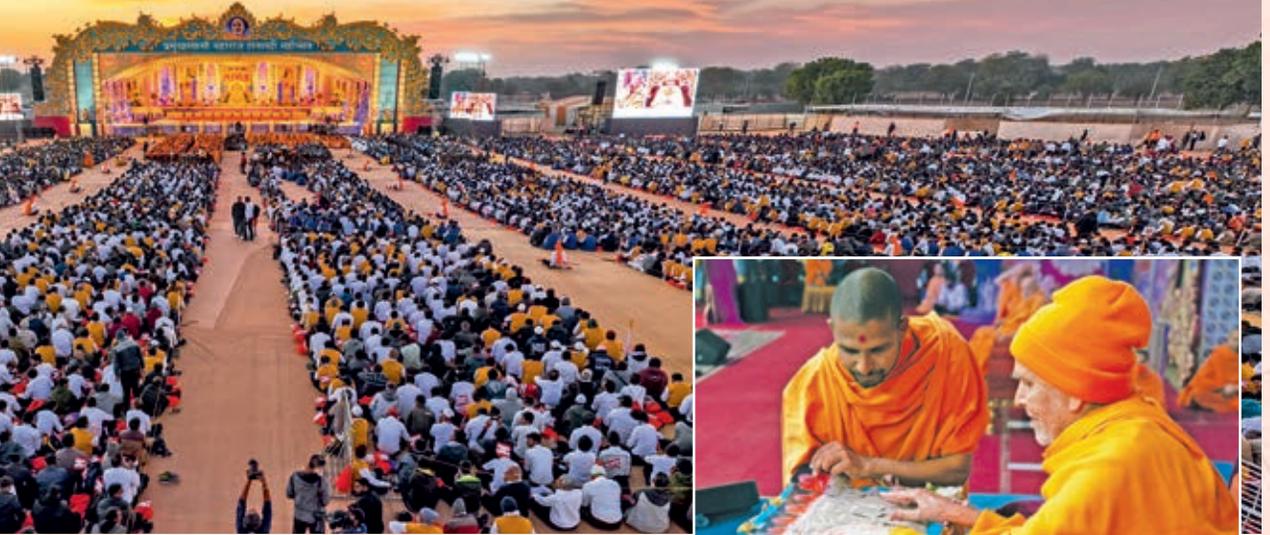
Speeches by Vivekmunidas Swami, Atmatruptdas Swami and Yagnapriyadas Swami applauded the spirit of *seva* of the volunteers and shared many inspirational stories.

BAPS Women's Wing co-coordinator, Shri Bhaskarbai Patel, applauded the *seva* of the women volunteers and shared their inspiring incidents.

Thereafter, Pujya Ishwarcharandas Swami, International Convener of BAPS, expressed, "All the 80,000 volunteers who served with utmost devotion, dedication and discipline in the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations have earned the innermost blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj."

In conclusion, **Mahant Swami Maharaj**

# FELICITATION ASSEMBLY



blessed the selfless services and devotion of the volunteers, “The way all of you have served is exceptional. I bow down to all of you. This celebration has been historic. You all are fortunate to have served and witnessed this celebration. This festival inspired and served millions. This festival was to please God and guru. All the senior swamis, other swamis and volunteers have offered their selfless *seva*.” ♦



# Moods and Impressions

Opinions sourced from video interviews of people who visited Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar

- ◆ I had seen the photo of the gate. At that time I had thought that I must visit this place. If one doesn't see it, one will miss an important chance in life. – *Male visitor*
- ◆ Upon entering, I felt that this place was different. I feel like coming again and again. – *Lady visitor*
- ◆ We were driving past and I saw the *maha-murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and it was like an eye-catcher, like an icon. – *Lady visitor*
- ◆ I really liked the big *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the lighting and everything. I also really liked the Bal Nagari and enjoyed its tour. – *Girl (8 years)*
- ◆ This show (Our India, My India) is very nice. I used to throw waste here and there. But from now on, I will not do so. – *Boy (Primary School)*
- ◆ I realized the amount of water I waste while washing clothes. I will now reduce such wastage of water. – *Lady visitor (after viewing Our India, My India)*
- ◆ To give free education to poor children who are unable to afford it. This is the inspiration I got from here. – *Male youth (after viewing Our India, My India)*
- ◆ I came here two days ago and I felt, Wow! This place is amazing. It is so big. It reminds me of Disneyland. – *Male youth*
- ◆ After coming here, I saw the humility of the volunteers here was commendable. – *Lady visitor*
- ◆ I also feel like joining in *seva* here. – *Male youth*
- ◆ The combination of management and spirituality is amazing. I have no words to describe it. – *Male visitor*
- ◆ It focuses so much on addictions, so today I have given up my addiction to *paan* and *mava*. I have resolved never to be addicted to them. – *Male*



visitor (after viewing *Chalon Tod De Ye Bandhan*)

- ◆ The experience that those with sight can have, we had the same experience through listening. – *Blind lady*
- ◆ The management is superb. I would like to give hundred out of hundred. It is praiseworthy. One will not face any disturbances. – *Male visitor*
- ◆ Upon seeing the shows here, I feel that Pramukh Swami Maharaj is also touring this place with us. – *Lady visitor*
- ◆ After doing darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, one is infused with faith and enthusiasm. – *Elderly man*
- ◆ I cannot believe what I am seeing here today. What great love he (Pramukh Swami Maharaj) had shown for all those people here. – *Young lady*
- ◆ Coming here made me feel very nice. Seeing all the sculptures made me feel cool and calm. – *Young girl (10-year-old after visiting the Bal Nagari)*

- ◆ After coming out of here, every individual gains a feeling of maintaining cleanliness. – *Male visitor*
- ◆ A *sant* like Pramukh Swami Maharaj is so selfless, that he has worked only for our liberation, for our betterment. – *Elderly man*



# Media COVERAGE

The media coverage of Pramukh Swami Nagar during its construction stage and during the month-long celebration was overwhelming. In addition, throughout 2022, many Gujarati newspapers and magazines in Gujarat, Mumbai and USA carried weekly articles on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life, work and personality and teachings. During the celebrations, from 15 December to 15 January, over 100 Gujarati newspapers, 50 Hindi, English and other language newspapers, 175 digital platforms, 25 TV news channels and 15 magazines covered various aspects of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar. Our heartiest gratitude to all the media outlets, social media platforms, bloggers, radio media like Akash Vani (Gujarat) and My FM (Divya Bhaskar), and others for covering the event. A record of the media that covered the event is as follows.

## HEADLINES OF MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

- Ek sathe anek chamatkaro sarajto Mahotsav  
- Chitralekha (Gujarati weekly magazine)  
19 December 2022
- Prerna no, seva-samarpan no Mahotsav  
- Chitralekha, 21 November 2022
- Adhyatma ane jnan-vignan no sangam  
Ahmedabad ne angne Pramukh Swami Shatabdi Mahotsav no anokho avasar  
- Abhiyan (Gujarati weekly magazine)  
24 December 2022
- Adbut, Apurva, Avismaraniya  
Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Shatabdi Mahotsav  
- Sadhana, 24 December 2022
- Kevi rite nirman pamyu vishal Pramukh Swami Nagar?  
- Abhiyan, 29 December 2022
- PM to Inaugurate Birth Centenary Celebrations of Pramukh Swami Today  
- The Times of India, 4 December 2022
- All Set for the Big Day  
- The Indian Express, 14 December 2022
- Volunteering in Devotion to Bapa  
- Ahmedabad Mirror, 14 December 2022
- Lakho haribhakto ni upasithiti ma Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav no bhavya shubharambh  
- Gujarat Samachar, 15 December 2022
- Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav no Divya Prarambha  
- Nav Gujarat Samay, 15 December 2022
- Pramukh Swami ne Mandiro ko Adhyatma aur



adhunikta se joda: Pradhan Mantri

- Rajasthan Patrika, 15 December 2022

- Bal Nagari ma sanskaro na sinchan sathe navi pedhi taiyar karvano avsar

- Gujarat Samachar, 17 December 2022

- Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar ma 1 lakh loko ne jamadva 11,000 swayamsevak khade page seva ape chhe

- Divya Bhaskar, 21 December 2022

- Pramukh Swami Maharaj nishkam karma yogi hata: Mohan Bhagvat

- Divya Bhaskar, 22 December 2022

- BAPS na swayamsevako nu samarpan asamanya utsah-ekta batave chhe: Laender Paes

- Jai Hind, 24 December 2022

- Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary: Inside the 'city' built for the event

- The Indian Express

Sunday, 18 December 2022

- Adbut Ayojan... Anokho Vahivat

- Dharmalok (Supplement of

Gujarat Samachar)

22 December 2022

- 27 Premvati nu sukan 4,000 mahila swayamsevika na hath ma

- Nav Gujarat Samay, 6 January 2023

- 12.1 Million Visit Centenary Fete

- Ahmedabad Mirror, 16 January 2023

- Making World Happier (Speaking Tree)

- The Times of India, 16 January 2023

- PSM100 Concludes with Tribute from Devotees

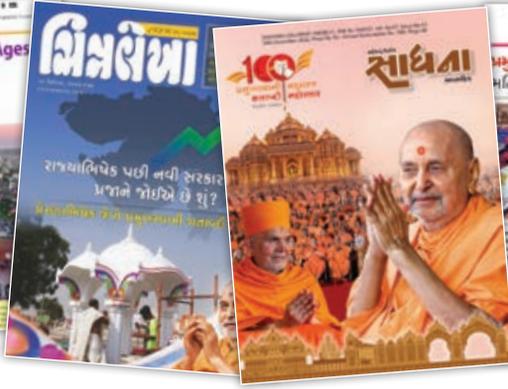
- The Times of India, 16 January 2023

Names of Gujarati, English, Hindi and other dailies, magazines, TV channels, digital platforms and News agencies that covered the event.

GUJARATI DAILIES

Divya Bhaskar (all editions); Gujarat Samachar (all editions and weekly supplement, Dharmalok); Nav Gujarat Samay; Sandesh (weekly supplement: Shraddha); Akila, Rajkot; Phulchab (weekly supplement: Dharma Darshan); Gujarat Mitra, Surat; Gujarat Today; Jai Hind; Kutch Mitra; Janmabhoomi, Mumbai; Mumbai Samachar;





Mid-day, Mumbai; Sanj Samachar, Rajkot; Western Times; BK News (weekly supplement: Dharma); Immigration Times (Gujarati and English edition); Hi-India, The Community First (National edition); Patnagar Network (special supplement); Purva Gurjari (weekly special supplement); Sign Show (weekly edition, Mumbai); The South Asian Times, USA; Gujarat Samachar, UK; Gujarat Samachar, Asian Weekly in Europe; Garvi Gujarat, London; and others.

**MAGAZINES**

Chitralkha; Abhiyan; Panchjanya; Organiser; Sadhana; Feelings; Aras-paras; Asian Voice, USA; Divya Sanskar; Saptrangi; Sukh Shanti Samruddhi; The NRI World; Uma Shrushti; Achalaa; and others.

**TV NEWS CHANNELS (ALSO COVERED IN DIGITAL)**

Gujarat First; TV9 Gujarati; ABP Asmita; News18 Gujarati; Zee 24 Kalak; VTV; Sandesh; Mantavya News; GSTV, DD Girnar; DD News, Aaj Tak; India TV; ABP Live Hindi; Zee News; and others.

**DIGITAL**

Divya Bhaskar Network; Aajkaal; ETV Bharat; Gujarati Jagran; BBC Gujarati; Gujarat Information; Gujarat Tak; Narendramodi.in; Speakingtree.in; Times of India, The Indian

Express; India Today; The Economic Times; The Print; The Telegraph; The Tribune; The Week; BBC News India; Mint; News18; News Nation; News9; News Today24; NDTV; One India; Outlook India; Republic.com; Financial Express; India News; Gujarat Samachar, Europe; Gujarat Weekly, Canada; Amar Ujala; CNBC TV18; India.com; Jagran; Nae-Duniya; TV9 Hindi; Deccan Herald, Karnataka; Imphal Times; Etemaad English; Khaleej Times, UAE; LE-Monde; Indo-American News South Asia; TV9 Telugu; Namaste Telangana, Telugu; and others.

**ENGLISH DAILIES**

Times of India; Indian Express; Ahmedabad Mirror; The South Asian Times; Hindustan Times; Lokmat; Bangalore Mirror; Free Press Journal; Western Times; and others.

**HINDI AND OTHER LANGUAGE DAILIES**

Navbharat Times; Rajasthan Patrika; Samna, Mumbai; Maharashtra Times, Mumbai; Lokmat, Maharashtra; Dainik Bhaskar, Dhule and Nasik; Sakaal, Dhule; Amrut Bhasa, Sanskrit; and others.

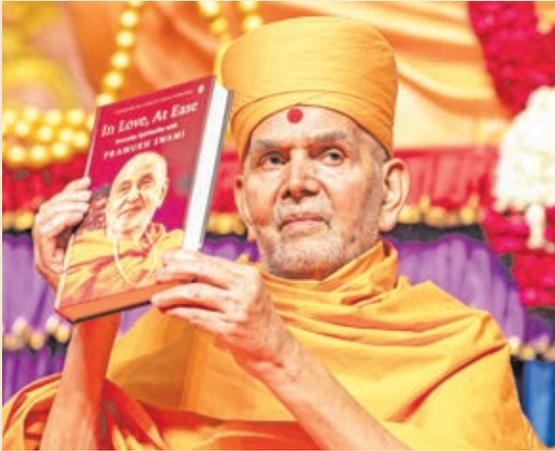
**NEWS AGENCIES**

PTI; ANI; UNI; AFP; Reuters; and others. Some headlines about the celebrations from newspapers and magazines are as follows. ♦





# Books Launched During the Centenary Celebrations



Over thirty-five books in English, Gujarati and regional languages were inaugurated by Mahant Swami Maharaj during the 30-day centenary celebrations.

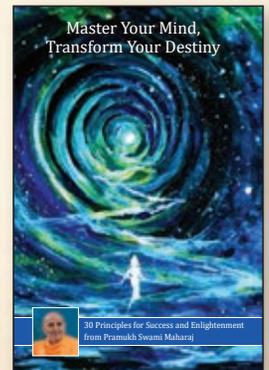
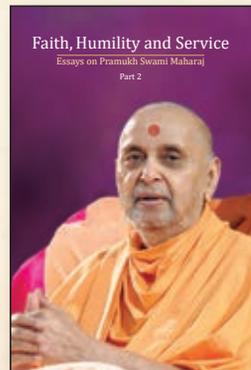
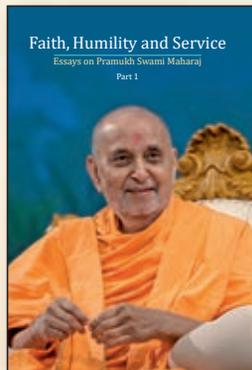
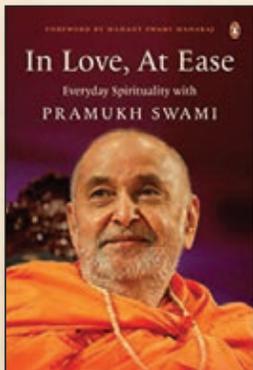
The books were mainly published by Swaminarayan Aksharpath and are available at all BAPS bookstalls and

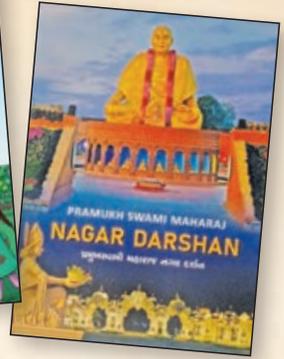
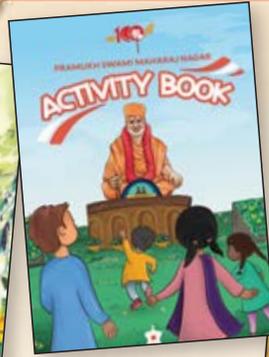
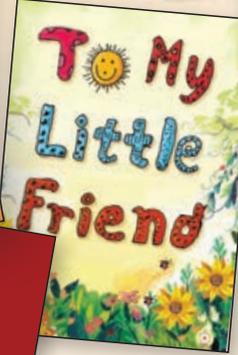
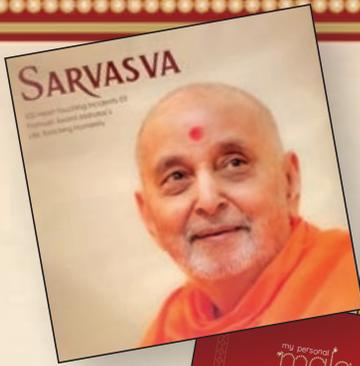
on [baps.store.org](http://baps.store.org)

A list of the books are as follows.

## ENGLISH

- In Love, At Ease: Yogi Trivedi
- Sarvasva: Life, Moments and Association of Pramukh Swami Maharaj (photo book)
- Faith, Humility and Service, Parts I and II: BAPS Swamis
- Master Your Mind, Transform Your Destiny: Sanjay Patel
- To My Little Friend (English & Gujarati): HH Mahant Swami Maharaj
- For the Joy of Others
- This Is the Brahmic State
- Ideal Devotion
- My Personal Mala: My Daily Companion
- The Tales of the Bal Nagari
- Aadarsh Sant – Pramukh Swami Maharaj
- (Let's Follow) Shanti's Way
- Buzo – Honour, Love, Respect
- Bal Nagari Activity Book
- Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar Activity Book
- Pramukh Swami Maharaj – Goodness 24 Hours (English & Gujarati)
- Pramukh Swami Maharaj – Nagar Darshan (English/Gujarati/Hindi)





**GUJARATI**

- Jeva Joya-Janya: Ketan Mistry
  - Satsang Diksha – Purvardh & Uttarardh: Adarshjivandas Swami
  - Varta Re Varta
  - Balnagarini Vartao
  - Thaie Shanti Jeva
  - Aadarsh Sant – Pramukh Swami Maharaj
- Nine books on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's virtues:
- Aa Chhe Brahmi Sthiti
  - Daya ane Divyatana Amar Hastakshar
  - Ajod Bhaktipurush
  - Adivasio na Vatsalyamurti

- Gurubhakti no Viral Aadarsh
- Karuna Murti Sant
- Parivarik Ektanu Anokhu Premchhatra
- Shastra Vidhi na Viral Puraskarta
- Viral Gurudev

**INDIAN REGIONAL LANGUAGES**

- Shatdal Parimal (Odia)
- Bhagwan Swaminarayanna Nari Ratno, Parts 1, 2 & 3 (Bengali)
- Sadhutanu Shikhar – Mahant Swami Maharaj (Odia)
- Shishu Satsang Vihar (Hindi & Marathi) ◆



# Centenary Build-up

*Devotees everywhere enthusiastically arranged and participated in many events, activities and projects to commemorate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary over the seven-year celebratory period.*

**S**arangpur, 19 December 2015. During the 95th birthday celebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the last celebrated in his physical presence, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami declared the launch of the multi-year Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav, with the plan to celebrate the centenary in 2021. He announced, “We will celebrate this centenary in a way never celebrated before anywhere in the entire cosmos.” And hailed, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav *ni jai*.”

Thus, in Pramukh Swami Maharaj's presence his centenary celebrations were officially inaugurated by lighting of the inaugural *divo* by Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Dr Swami, Pujya Kothari Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pujya Viveksagar Swami and Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami.

Sadly, Pramukh Swami Maharaj left his physical body on 13 August 2016. However, his continued presence through Mahant Swami Maharaj invigorated everyone. And from 27 November to 7 December 2016, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 96th birthday was celebrated in Surat. Subsequently, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthdays were celebrated in Anand (2017), Rajkot (2018) and Mumbai (2019).

Momentum and anticipation for the centenary gathered speed. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 99th birthday celebration was to be held in Chansad, his birthplace, in 2020 and the centenary in Ahmedabad in 2021.

At the beginning of 2020, the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations were held in Gadhada and the India-wide Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan had been organized to raise awareness of the upcoming Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations. Preliminary meetings for the centenary and initial ground preparations were also taking place.

But then everything came to a crashing halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Worldwide restrictions stipulated by governments came into force and for many months, large-scale in-person events were prohibited. Hence, the planned centenary festivities were postponed and replaced by online celebrations. In 2020 and 2021, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthday were celebrated online.

In early 2022, as the pandemic seemed to be easing, the Omicron wave hit and again restrictions came into force.

Thereafter, from March 2022, most government restrictions were lifted. Subsequently, the



2015: 95th Birthday Celebration, Sarangpur



2016: 96th Birthday Celebration, Surat



2017: Akshardham 25th Anniversary, Gandhinagar



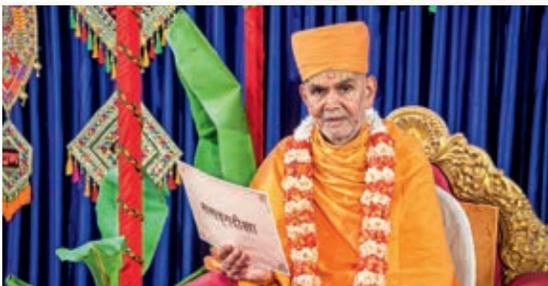
2018: Memorial at Mansarovar



2019: National Yuva Adhiveshan, Sarangpur



2020: Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami *pratishtha*



2020: Satsang Diksha *parayan*, Nenpur

centenary celebrations were scheduled to be held from 15 December 2022 to 15 January 2023 and preparations on the 600-acre festival grounds were again initiated.

As the world opened up, BAPS centres worldwide took the opportunity to celebrate the centenary in their localities.

Before and after the lockdown periods, numerous events and projects were conducted, introducing many to the life, work and teachings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and inspiring countless to adopt his practical teachings in their personal, family, professional, social and spiritual lives.

The following is an overview of some of the major activities and events conducted by BAPS centres worldwide to celebrate the centenary in the years leading up to the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations.

## INDIA

### 2017

- Gandhinagar Akshardham 25th Anniversary.

### 2018

- Mansarovar memorial spot in honour of Nilkanth Varni's pilgrimage and sprinkling of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's holy ashes.

### 2019

- National Bal-Balika Adhiveshan, India: 40,000 boys and girls competed in 9 competitions.
- National Yuvak-Yuvati Adhiveshan, India: 20,000 teenagers and youths participated in 9 competitions.

### 2020

- Grand celebrations in Nenpur and worldwide on 31 October to mark the *murti-pratishtha* of Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami next to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Start of annual Gunati Satra Lecture series.

### 2020-1

- Mahant Swami Maharaj wrote the Satsang

Diksha shastra and dedicated it to Pramukh Swami Maharaj on his centenary. Over 10,000 children, teenagers, youths and adults memorized the 315-verse shastra.

- ‘Eva Sante Namu Hu Shish’: Series of videos depicting Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s outstanding efforts for society – Narmada Dam Project, Bhuj Earthquake, Morbi Dam Disaster and Gujarat Famine.

## 2021

- Inauguration of the holy village of Chansad, birthplace of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, renovated by the collaboration of the Government of Gujarat and BAPS.

## 2022

- Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan: Over 72,800 men and women volunteers contacted over 2.4 million families in 10,000 cities, towns and villages to enlighten them on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s messages for family harmony. About 425,000 families pledged to conduct regular *ghar sabhas* and over 1.2 million families pledged to pray together daily.
- Inauguration of the renovated Ambli Vali Pol (Yagnapurush Pol).
- De-addiction Campaign by 16,000 *balaks* – over 1.6 million people pledged to quit their addictions.
- Environmental Awareness Campaign by 14,000 *balikas*. Over 1.2 million people resolved to save water and electricity and 750,000 pledged to plant and nurture trees.
- In association with AARSH, Gandhinagar,



2021: Chansad village renovation



2021: Karika memorization, Sarangpur



2020-1: ‘Eva Sante Namu Hu Shish’ video series



2022: Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan



2022: De-addiction rallies, India



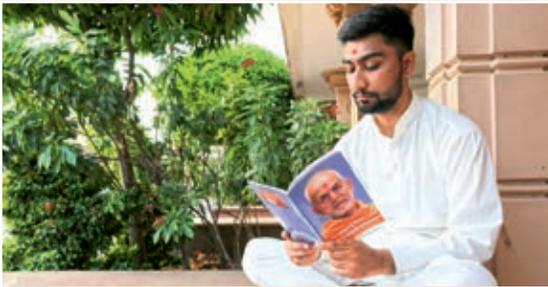
2022: Ambli Vali Pol re-inauguration



2022: Manav Utkarsh Parva, India



2022: Sant Sammelans, India



2022: Online Satsang Knowledge Tests, India



2022: Sant vicharan, India



2018-22: Centenary Kirtan Aradhanas, UK & Europe

series of 18 academic seminars at universities in Gujarat on a variety of topics related to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

- ‘Manav Utkarsh Parva’ at cities in Gujarat to highlight Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s messages for personal spiritual development.
- Sant Sammelans held at 29 BAPS centres: attended by thousands of mahants, mahamandaleshwars, mahatmas, ashram heads, swamis and *acharyas* to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.
- Online Satsang Knowledge Tests. Based on the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj over 13,000 *yuvaks* and *yuwatis* from throughout India participated in the online test.
- Sant Vicharan: BAPS swamis visited 111,000 homes in 4,846 cities, towns and villages to convey Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s teachings.
- Hundreds of kirtan *aradhanas* at BAPS centres throughout India.
- Regional centenary celebration assemblies.

## UK AND EUROPE

### 2018–22

- ‘Tasmai Shri Gurave Namah’: 125 musical tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

### 2021–2

- ‘The First of Its Kind’: 14-part documentary video series of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s unparalleled efforts in creating the London Mandir.
- Docuseries: ‘1921 to Forever’ on the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



2022: ‘The First of Its Kind’ video series, UK

## 2022

- Centenary celebration assemblies: ‘Inspired Living’
- Centenary Nagar Yatras, Vishwa Shanti Mahayagnas, ‘Sant Param Hitkari’ Shatabdi Discourses
- 10-day Festival of Inspiration and Island of Heroes.
- Wembley Stadium Arch and Blackpool Tower lit in red and white (colours of the BAPS flag) to honour Pramukh Swami Maharaj.
- ‘Jivya Amare Kaj’ Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Finale Celebration.
- Memorial Tree and Plaque dedicated to Pramukh Swami Maharaj at Westminster.
- British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak offers tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.
- Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s centenary celebrated in the UK House of Commons.
- Nilkanth Varni *padhramani* project by BAPS Women devotees (over 4,000 *padhramanis* in 40 centres).
- Bubble wrap painting of Pramukh Swami Maharaj (world record certified by *Guinness World Records*).
- Inauguration of BAPS Research Institute in London.

## NORTH AMERICA

### 2021

- *Murti-pratishtha* of Tapomurti Shri Nilkanth Varni at Swaminarayan Akshardham, Robbinsville. Swamishri performed the Vedic rituals online from Sarangpur. Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami performed the rituals in Robbinsville;
- ‘Swami Karuna Aparampar’: 6-part video series of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *vicharan* in the six regions of North America.

### 2022

- Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations Assemblies titled ‘Param



2022: Festival of Inspiration, London



2022: Blackpool Tower lit in red and blue, UK



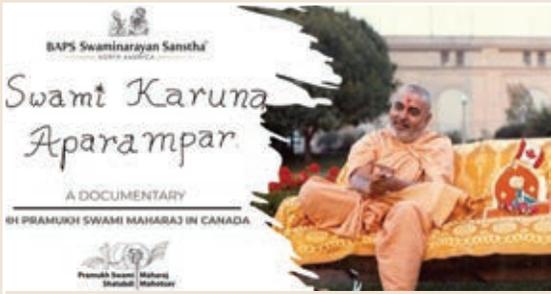
2022: Honour in the House of Commons, UK



2022: BAPS Research Institute inauguration, UK



2021: Tapomurti Shri Nilkanth Varni *pratishtha*, USA



2021: 'Swami Karuna Aparampar', North America



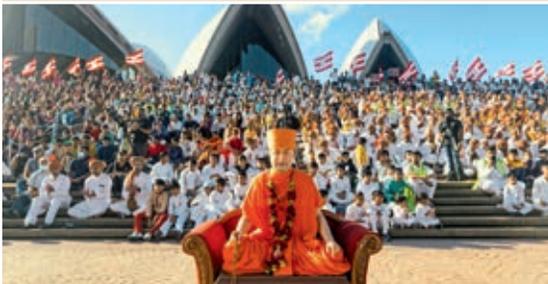
2022: 'Param Shanti' celebrations, North America



2022: Niagara Falls lit in red and blue, Canada



2022: Festival of Inspiration, Nairobi, Kenya



2022: Centenary Celebration, Sydney Opera House

Shanti' at over 100 locations.

- 'The World Is One Family: The Life and Message of Pramukh Swami Maharaj' celebrated and honoured at the United Nations, New York.
- Centenary Blood Donation Drives at over 100 centres – over 4,000 pints (2,273,000 cc) of blood collected.
- Niagara Falls illuminated in red and white in honour of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.
- Pramukh Swami Maharaj honoured in the Canadian parliament.
- Inauguration of BAPS Research Institutes in Robbinsville (USA) and Toronto (Canada).
- Unity Forums in association with other Hindu organizations.

## AFRICA

### 2022

- Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Festivals (7 to 10 days) at Kampala, Uganda; Nairobi, Kenya; Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Lusaka, Zambia.
- Sant Vicharan: BAPS swamis visited 10,000 homes in 12 countries.
- Unity Forums in association with other Hindu organizations.

## ASIA PACIFIC

### 2022

- Shatabdi Mahotsav Sabhas (regional); Centenary Celebrations at the footsteps of the Sydney Opera House, Great Barrier Reef (Cairns), Uluru (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Mt. Buller, The Buchan Caves (Victoria State), Federal Parliament (Canberra), Skies of Australia (Cairns), Stockton Bight Sand Dunes (Port Stephens).
- Shatabdi Ghar Sabha Project, Shatabdi Padyatras, Centenary Cycle Challenge.

- Shatabdi Bhakti Yagna.
- Shatabdi Shibirs.
- Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan.
- Centenary celebrated by making World's Largest Eggless Cake (certified by *The Australian Book of Records*).
- Inauguration of BAPS Research Institutes in Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide (Australia).
- BAPS swamis present Hindu values of unity and dialogue at the R20 Conference in Bali, Indonesia. ◆



### 2016-22

Scores of venues and roads worldwide were named in honour of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. ● Ahmedabad 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg' on western side of Sabarmati River front ● Toronto: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Road (Clarewing Road) ● Long Island, NY: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Drive ● London, England: Pramukh Swami Road (Brentfield Road) ● Jaipur: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg (from Ajmer Road to Bharat Apartments) ● Nairobi, Kenya: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Avenue (Masuri Road) ● Delhi: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg (6 km highway in front of Akshardham complex) ● Bengaluru: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg (outside BAPS mandir). Veraval: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Dwar – entry gate to Shri Somnath Sanskrit University.

(Cont. from p. 184)

On many occasions, when the snake frequency was high the rescuers hardly slept, had no time to go to the food dome and thus ate either one meal or snacks or fruit.

Amazingly, as per Swamishri's blessings regarding *raksha* (protection), snakes drastically decreased during the celebrations. From 15 December 2022 to 16 January 2023, only

five kraits and cobras appeared. Moreover, the landowners had divulged that vipers increased annually during winter. This natural event also never transpired.

As a senior sadhu observed, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj provided a divine *raksha kavach* (protection shield) over the entire celebrations site. ◆

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Nationality: Indian

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I, Sadhu Swayamprakashdas, hereby declare that the above mentioned information is true to my knowledge.

(Signed) Sadhu Swayamprakashdas. Date: 5-3-2023



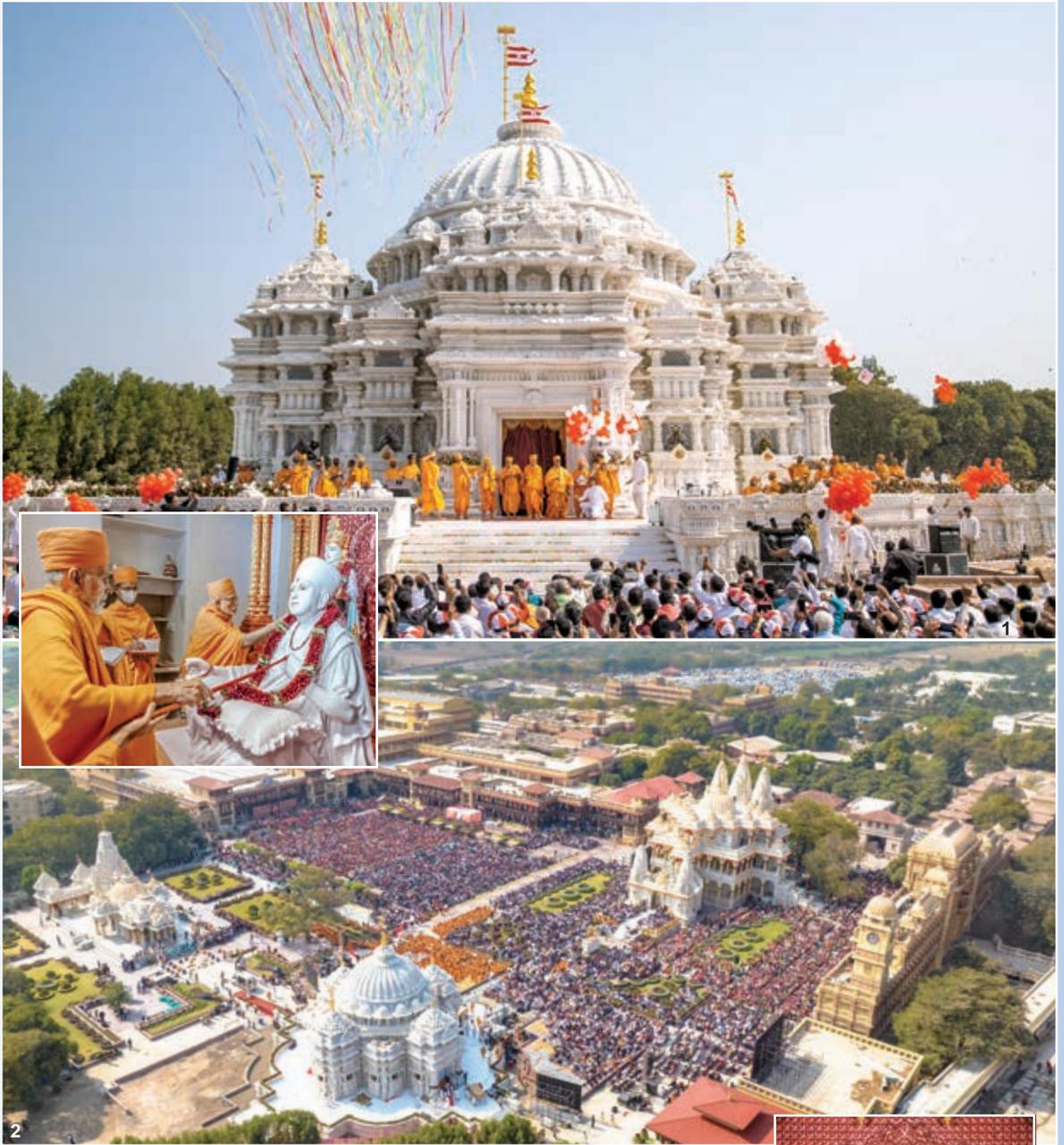
*Thank You*

Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
for giving us Mahant Swami Maharaj,  
a successor in whom  
we see your image.



#### INAUGURATION ASSEMBLY, Ahmedabad

1–2. On 14 December 2022, Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi and HH Mahant Swami Maharaj ritually inaugurated the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav (14 December 2022). 3. Thereafter, over 100,000 devotees attended the inauguration assembly. 4. One of the daily evening assemblies (Gujarat Day) as part of the International Convention for Better Living at Pramukh Swami Nagar (4 January 2023).



**MURTI-PRATISHTHA OF PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ SMRUTI MANDIR  
26 January 2023, Sarangpur**

1. Swamishri and *sadguru* swamis on the platform of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Smruti Mandir, intricately carved from Makrana marble.

*Inset:* Swamishri performs the *pratishtha* rituals.

2. Aerial view of the inauguration assembly, showing the main mandir (right), Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir (left) and the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Smruti Mandir (centre).

*Inset:* *Murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the new Smruti Mandir.

