

SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

January–February 2025

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international
Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav
Grand Finale Celebration

7 December 2024, Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad



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MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA
December 2024

1. Swamis and devotees enjoy Swamishri's darshan in the large new *sabha* auditorium.
2. Swamishri on a visit to observe the new intricately decorated mandir.

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Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj



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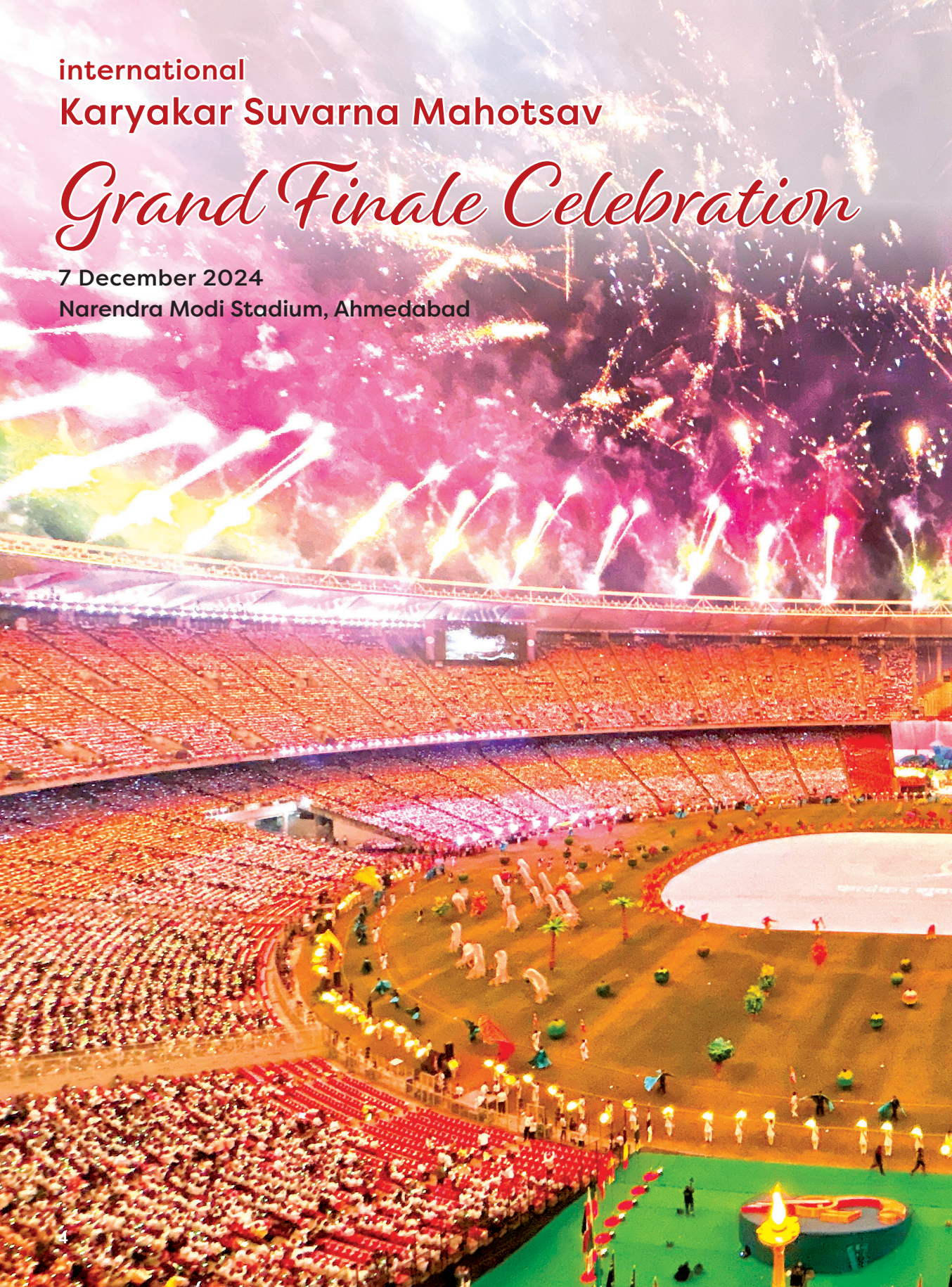
In April 1978, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired and inaugurated the first issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The bi-monthly magazine serves to enlighten BAPS youths, seniors and well-wishers about the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy and the Gunatit guru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

international
Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav

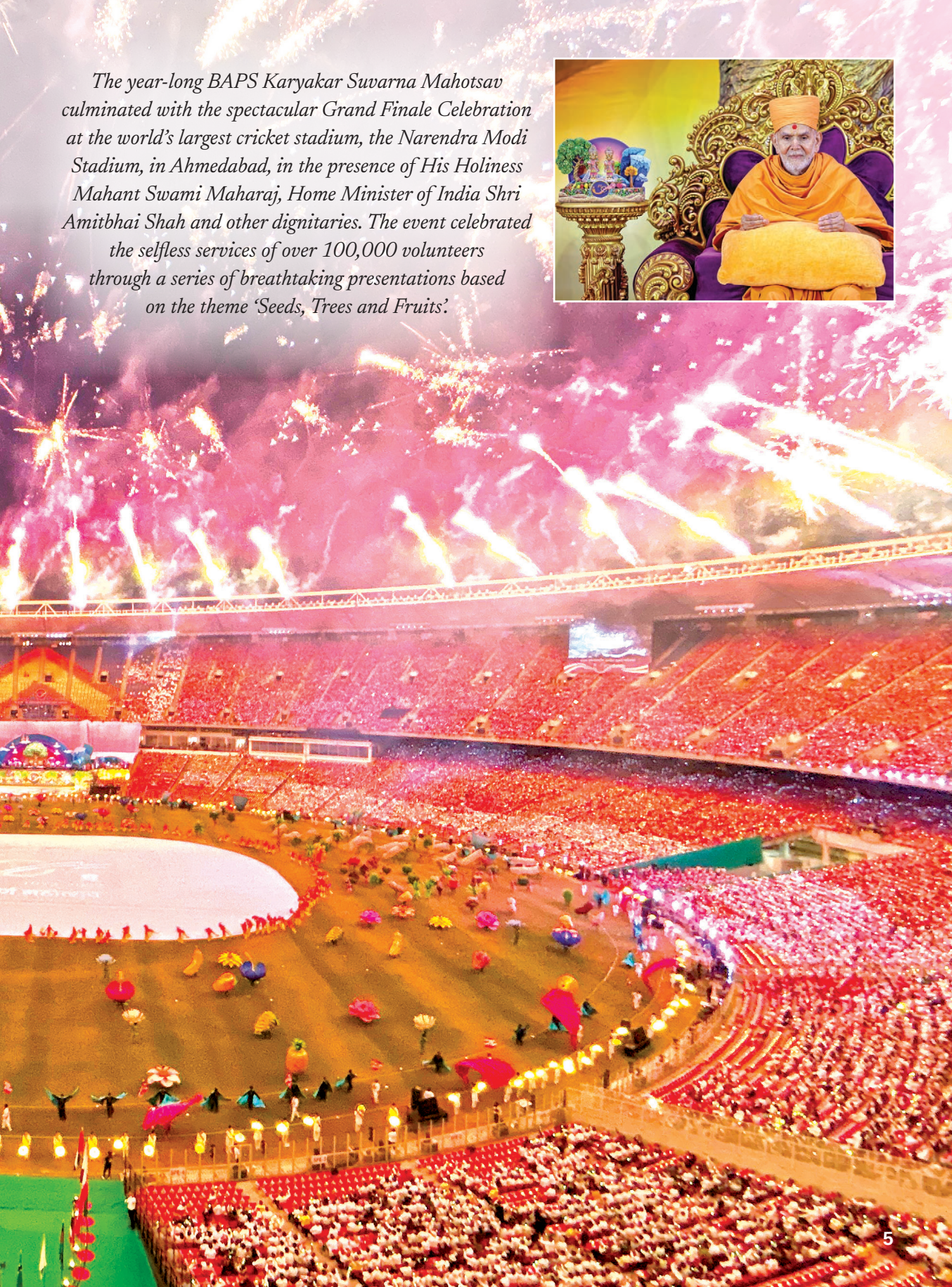
Grand Finale Celebration

7 December 2024

Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad



The year-long BAPS Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav culminated with the spectacular Grand Finale Celebration at the world's largest cricket stadium, the Narendra Modi Stadium, in Ahmedabad, in the presence of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, Home Minister of India Shri Amitbhai Shah and other dignitaries. The event celebrated the selfless services of over 100,000 volunteers through a series of breathtaking presentations based on the theme 'Seeds, Trees and Fruits'.



PRE-PROGRAMME

Before the celebration assembly commenced, a video showcased the various programmes and events held throughout the year at BAPS satsang centres to felicitate *karyakars* and commemorate the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav (KSM). The video featured key milestones such as the KSM launch assembly in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj, *karyakar jnan-satras*, *sant-karyakar* discussions, *sant-karyakar* get-togethers, *karyakar* online exams, *karyakar din* events, inauguration of the Karyakar Talim Kendra in Sarangpur, and the Divya Sannidhi Parvas – special *karyakar* conventions in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Also, the traditional drum band from Dhule, Maharashtra, played rhythmic tunes as the gathered *karyakars* responded joyfully.

STAGE

The vibrant, mesmerizing main stage, accompanied by two satellite stages, beautifully depicted the celebration assembly theme of seeds, trees and fruits. The main stage featured *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and the guru *parampara* floating on clouds around a magnificent *kalpavruksh* tree, under which Mahant Swami Maharaj was seated. Complementing this was a resplendent rainbow, clouds, the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav logo and other designs portraying the theme.

GRAND FINALE CELEBRATION BEGINS

The programme commenced at 5:00 p.m. with the chanting of the Swaminarayan *mahamantra* by BAPS youths, and was followed by a mellifluous rendition of the Sankalp Geet – the *karyakar* anthem, ‘*Ame sau Swāminā bālak jivishu Swāmine mâte...*’ The resounding chorus of 100,000 *karyakars* joining in this anthem of *seva* filled the stadium with divine joy, leaving many in tears of bliss and gratitude.



WELCOME ADDRESS: YAGNAPRIYA SWAMI



Welcoming the volunteers who had come from throughout India, USA, UK, Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East, and many other parts of the world, Yagnapriyadas Swami, head swami the BAPS Satsang Pravrutti Central Office, said, “From the start, Mahant Swami Maharaj has shown his immense enthusiasm for this celebration to pay tributes to the *karyakars*. He expressed his wish to personally meet every *karyakar*, and if his health had permitted, he wished even to visit the home of every *karyakar*. Inspired by his deep regard for *karyakars*, the year-long events were organized to honour and appreciate their contributions, culminating in this grand event at the Narendra Modi Stadium as a fitting tribute to their many decades of dedication.

“In a heartfelt letter to the *karyakars*, Mahant Swami Maharaj wrote, ‘I remember you every day.’ When asked why he had such enthusiasm for greeting the volunteers, he replied, ‘Because of the dedication of the *karyakars*.’



Mahant Swami Maharaj is welcomed to the celebration assembly on specially created flower chariot

“BAPS *karyakars* have consistently prioritized selfless service over their personal comfort. Pramukh Swami Maharaj often told the *karyakars*, ‘Be righteous and create a righteous society.’ To fulfil this vision, BAPS *karyakars* visit villages, towns and cities regularly, inspiring people to refrain from addictions and lead virtuous lives rooted in honesty and self-discipline.

“The international children and youth development activities by BAPS are also conducted by these committed volunteers. The *karyakars* also take the lead in organizing and executing festivals and relief work in the aftermath of earthquakes, cyclones, floods and other natural disasters. They actively participate in and lead social campaigns such as tree plantation drives, cleanliness initiatives and tribal welfare projects.

“To ensure the success of these activities, *karyakars* dedicate significant amounts of time, by adjusting their personal commitments and social responsibilities. They seek no comfort, reward or recognition but remain steadfast in their *seva*.

“These volunteers are truly the hands and feet

of the Sanstha. Both Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj have often praised them, calling them, ‘Like sadhus,’ ‘Like a moving mandir,’ and ‘More valuable than gold.’”

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ’S WELCOME

At 5:30 p.m., Mahant Swami Maharaj was welcomed into the stadium, seated on a chariot decorated with flowers. While he circumambulated the perimeter of the ground, he gave darshan and offered his humble *pranams* to all the volunteers.

Around 550 children, donned in five-foot tall rose petals were lined up on both sides of Swamishri’s circular path. As the chariot advanced, the rose petals swivelled to transform into golden petals, symbolizing that the association of the Satpurush has a transformative effect on people’s lives. Also, five-foot diameter *mala* beads scattered around the central ground unified into a circular rosary signifying that the Satpurush unites people of different backgrounds to serve with purity and goodness. This heartfelt tribute and welcome



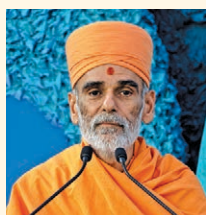
Main photo: Children welcome Swamishri. As the flower chariot passes by each rose petal turns to gold and the scattered *mala* beads unite to form a rosary. *Inset photos:* Children and youths present during the assembly and *karyakars* in the stands wave BAPS flags

beautifully expressed the volunteers' connection with Mahant Swami Maharaj.

This unique presentation was performed by 955 children and youth *karyakars* dressed in handcrafted floral petals and beads.

Subsequently, as Swamishri exited the stadium to make his way to the main stage, the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav anthem, '*Sevā ki Ek Param Jyoti Mahān...*', echoed throughout the stadium while the performers created magnificent floral patterns and formations of *diyas*, homes and the word 'Swagatam' (Welcome) in Hindi in a scintillating visual display on the central ground.

ADDRESS BY ANANDSWARUP SWAMI



Anandswarup Swami narrated short stories about the selfless dedication of volunteers who have served the nation and society over the past five decades, "These volunteers

have been serving selflessly with devotion, without any expectations of money, position or recognition. They serve with love and dedication to please their guru and God. In the Vachanamrut, Bhagwan Swaminarayan extols such *seva* as a form of devotion. Inspired by the lives of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj, these volunteers have achieved unimaginable spiritual heights through their *seva*.

"For example, during the 34-day Yogiji Maharaj Centenary Celebration in 1992, which included the inauguration of Swaminarayan Akshardham in Gandhinagar, millions of devotees visited the festival site. Impressed by the grand scale and impeccable management of the festival, an IIM professor met Doctor Swami to understand the management. Doctor Swami explained that the success of such a massive event was due to one key factor: the selfless services of the volunteers, whose sole aim was to please Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



“Once, Pramukh Swami Maharaj remarked, ‘Even if I offer a million prostrations to these volunteers, it would still not suffice.’

“We are deeply thankful to Mahant Swami Maharaj for granting us this incredible opportunity to felicitate 100,000 volunteers together.”

Thereafter, Adarshjivan Swami shared the words of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj in praise and acknowledgement of the invaluable contributions of BAPS *karyakars* over the years. They are as follows.

On 22 August 2001, during a speech in Bharuch, Pramukh Swami Maharaj said, “Every *nirdeshak*, *sah-nirdeshak*, and *nirikshak* (*karyakar*) of BAPS is a mandir personified. Every *sant*, devotee, and *karyakar* of BAPS is a pilgrim place personified.”

On 21 June 2001, while addressing *karyakars* in Tithal, Pramukh Swami Maharaj expressed, “Your sacrifice is as significant as renouncing a great kingdom. I hold all of you, who have imbibed Akshar-Purushottam *nishtha* in your hearts, in the highest regard.”

On 3 July 1990, during a Karyakar Shibir in

New York, Pramukh Swami Maharaj described BAPS *karyakars*, “All those who are involved in the *seva* of this satsang are like our crown jewels.”

Many dignitaries also expressed their admiration for the BAPS *karyakars*. The late Shri K.K. Doshi, who served for many years as the Indian ambassador in numerous countries, conveyed his appreciation to Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Delhi, “Having such *karyakars* is a great blessing for society. We often hear that India will become a superpower in the 21st century. When I see the BAPS *karyakars*, this future seems truly achievable. I feel proud to be an Indian because Pramukh Swami Maharaj has nurtured such selfless *karyakars*.”

Similarly, B. Swaroop, from India’s Settlement Commission, remarked, “I am amazed by the organizational capabilities and dedication of BAPS *karyakars*. I am deeply impressed by how these volunteers accomplish great tasks without the need for formal offices and without any conflicts.”

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ AND DIGNITARIES ARRIVE ON STAGE

Ishwarcharan Swami, International Convenor of BAPS, welcomed Mahant Swami Maharaj on the stage with a garland. He also warmly welcomed the Honourable Union Home Minister Shri Amitbhai Shah and the Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel with garlands.

Additionally, on the two stages flanking the main stage, senior swamis of BAPS honoured the other ministers with garlands and mementos.

LIGHTING THE INAUGURAL LAMP

Following this, Mahant Swami Maharaj, Honourable Union Home Minister Shri Amitbhai Shah, and Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel ceremonially lit the inaugural lamp to mark the commencement of the grand finale celebration.

Simultaneously, as the lamp was lit on stage, a digital lamp and giant Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav



Aerial view of the stadium during the welcome presentation by over 900 children and youth performers

logo, placed on the opposite side of the stadium, illuminated. The bright displays, surrounded by the national flags representing volunteers from 30 countries captured everyone's attention.

Moments later, the entire stadium became alive with the sparkle of fireworks that illuminated the ground periphery, creating a breathtaking spectacle. The electrifying atmosphere was amplified by the enthusiastic cheers of 100,000 *karyakars*, celebrating this extraordinary moment with great delight.

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI'S VIDEO MESSAGE

In his video message, Honourable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendrabhai Modi praised the selfless spirit of the volunteers, offering his heartfelt wishes and respects for the occasion. He said, "Jai Swaminarayan to Param Pujya Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj, revered swamis, members of the *satsangi* family, and esteemed dignitaries. I bow at the feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on this auspicious occasion of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav, which coincides with the 103rd birth anniversary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the resolutions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj are bearing fruit today, thanks to the tireless efforts and dedication of Param Pujya Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj.

"I feel immense joy in witnessing this grand celebration, involving nearly one lakh dedicated volunteers, along with vibrant cultural performances by the youths and children on the theme of seeds, trees, and fruits. Though I am not physically present, I can feel the energy



Mahant Swami Maharaj, Shri Amitbhai Shah and Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel light the inaugural lamp



Mahant Swami Maharaj on the main celebration stage with senior BAPS swamis and invited dignitaries

of this remarkable event. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Param Pujya Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj, the swamis, and all those who have contributed to this grand and divine occasion.

“The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav marks a significant milestone in the 50-year journey of dedicated service. Fifty years ago, a pioneering initiative began, connecting volunteers to selfless service. Today, it is heartening to see lakhs of BAPS *karyakars* serving with utmost devotion and dedication. This is a monumental achievement for any organization, and I convey my best wishes to BAPS for this noble cause.

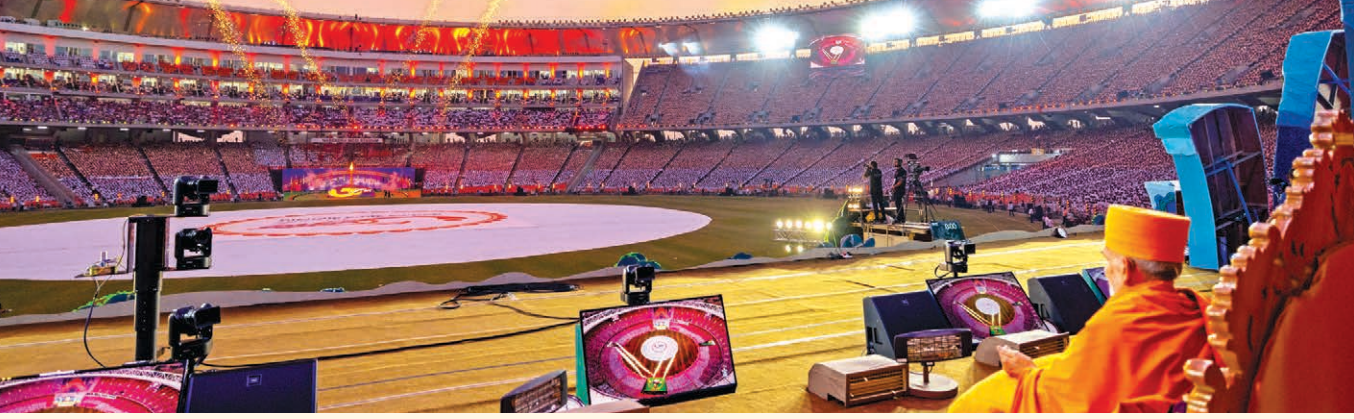
“The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav is a celebration of the humanitarian teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. It showcases decades of service that have transformed the lives of millions. I feel fortunate to have witnessed BAPS’s remarkable service campaigns up close, including the Bhuj earthquake relief work, the reconstruction of Narayan Nagar, the assistance during the Kerala floods and landslides in Uttarakhand, and even during the recent global COVID pandemic.

“I recall how BAPS transformed mandirs into centres of *seva* during the COVID crisis. I would also like to mention another such incident, which people know less about. When the war in Ukraine intensified, I called one swami of BAPS and asked for help. BAPS workers swiftly organized support for Indians to be evacuated to Poland. Their ability to mobilize volunteers from across Europe overnight reflects their unmatched organizational strength and global contribution to humanity.

“I express my gratitude to all BAPS volunteers,



Prime Minister Shri Narendrabhai Modi addresses the celebration assembly via video



Swamishri's view of the stadium and assembly from the main stage

who bring positive change to millions of lives worldwide. Their tireless efforts reach the remotest corners of society, empowering individuals and uplifting communities. These volunteers are truly an inspiration, worthy of respect and admiration.

“BAPS’s work strengthens India’s global influence. With over 1,800 Swaminarayan mandirs in 28 countries and more than 5,000 spiritual centres, BAPS showcases India’s spiritual heritage and identity. These mandirs are living reflections of India’s ancient culture and values. I feel fortunate to have participated in the consecration of the Swaminarayan Mandir in Abu Dhabi, which has received global recognition. Such efforts highlight India’s cultural glory, diversity and human generosity.

“The values established by Bhagwan Swaminarayan guide this remarkable journey of *seva*. His life dedicated to the welfare of all beings continues to inspire. BAPS has been promoting the same humanitarian values globally that were propagated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

“BAPS’s work can be summarized in these lines:

‘Nadiyā na piye kabhi apnā jal,

Vriksh na khāye kabhi apnā fal.

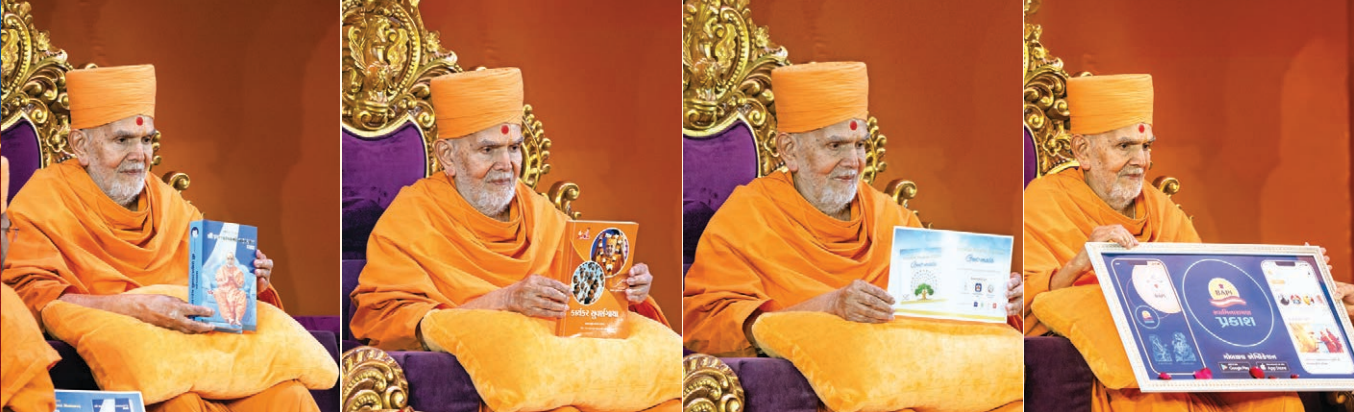
Apne tan ka, man ka, dhan ka, Dujo ko de jo dān hai,
Woh sachcha insān, are, Is dharti kā Bhagwān hai.’

(Meaning, ‘Rivers do not drink their own water, and trees do not consume their own fruits. One who selflessly dedicates their body, mind and wealth to others is not just true human but a manifestation of God on earth.’)

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s love and blessings have been a cornerstone in my life. His affection felt like that of a father and his guidance has shaped me even before I was in public life, and afterwards during my tenure as Gujarat’s Chief Minister and India’s Prime Minister. I cherish moments like the Narmada water reaching Sabarmati when Pramukh Swami Maharaj came to bless that occasion, and also organizing the Swaminarayan Mahamantra and Mantra Lekhan Mahotsav under his leadership. These ideas of promoting *mahotsavs* of ‘Mantra Lekhan’ are unique in themselves. I have always received his blessings in all the social welfare activities.

“I, as a *karyakar*, can feel the divine presence and memories of Pramukh Swami Maharaj today. In our culture, it is said, ‘Seva Param Dharma’ – selfless service is the highest dharma. I emphasize that such selfless service transcends devotion, faith, and worship. It is a way of life that strengthens spiritual journeys and transforms society. Institutionalized selfless service, like that of BAPS, solves major challenges and eradicates societal evils. When lakhs of *karyakars* unite with a shared purpose, it becomes a tremendous force for the nation.

“As India progresses towards becoming a developed nation, I urge BAPS volunteers to take resolutions and work on causes such as natural farming, promoting unity in diversity, fighting addiction, reviving rivers, and adopting sustainable lifestyles. I would urge you take one resolve for a year and dedicate that year to fulfil that resolve. Initiatives like Mission LiFE



From left: Swamishri inaugurates: *Pramukh Swami Maharaj Jivan Charitra*, Part 10; *Karyakar Suvarna Gatha*; *Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav Geetmala*; and BAPS Swaminarayan Prakash mobile application

(Lifestyle for Environment), Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam (One Tree in the Name of Mother), Fit India, and Vocal for Local need your active participation.

“In January 2025, the ‘Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue’ will gather ideas from youth to shape India’s future. I encourage young BAPS volunteers to participate and contribute.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj championed Indian family culture and strengthened the concept of joint families and family harmony through the ‘Ghar Sabha’ initiative. I urge you to carry forward this legacy. As India aims for development by 2047, the next 25 years are equally crucial for every BAPS *karyakar*.

“With the blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, I am confident that this incredible campaign of selfless service by BAPS workers will continue with the same dedication and strength. Jai Swaminarayan.”

On the occasion of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav, a new module titled ‘Seva, Shraddha, Samarpan’ was launched for BAPS *karyakars* on the Nammo App. This platform enables BAPS volunteers to log their contributions and share their experiences related to various volunteer activities.

NEW PUBLICATIONS LAUNCHED BY MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ

Then, Swamishri launched some new print, audio and digital publications.

- *Pramukh Swami Maharaj Jivan Charitra*, Part 10 in Gujarati, authored by Adarshjivan Swami.

- *Karyakar Suvarna Gatha*, a Gujarati book compiled by Saralchitt Swami, featuring inspiring stories of selfless service by BAPS *karyakars*.

- *Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav Geetmala*, an audio album featuring specially composed songs presented during the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav.

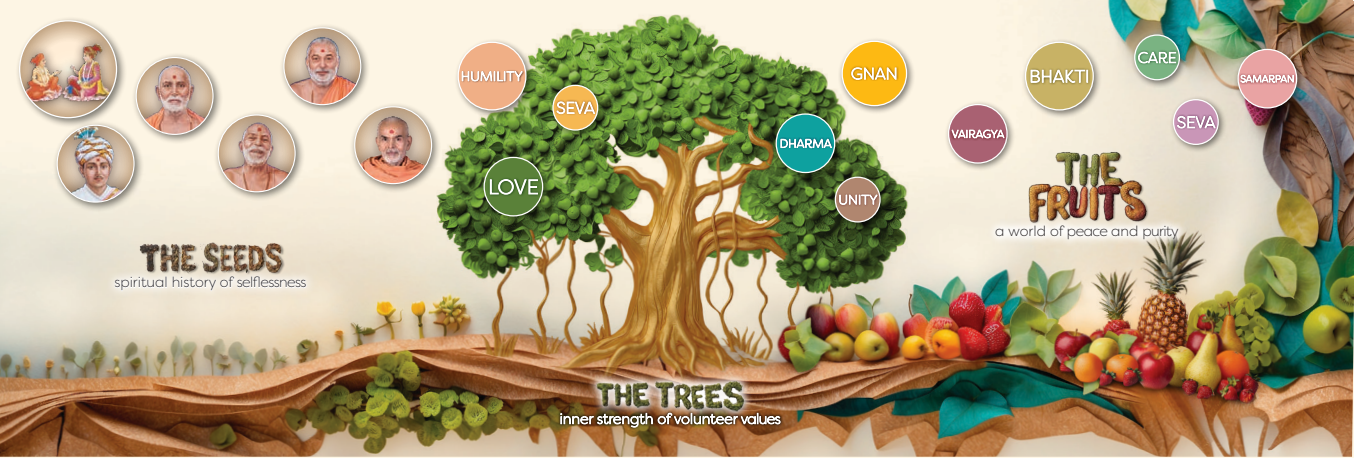
- The ‘BAPS Swaminarayan Prakash’ mobile application, offering inspiring articles, BAPS news, motivational speeches, and access to past editions of the *Swaminarayan Prakash* magazine.

ADDRESS BY DOCTOR SWAMI



Thereafter, Doctor Swami addressed the gathering with his inspiring insights, “What I am witnessing today in this Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav is truly a first-of-its-kind event.

This has been made possible through the inspiration of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Gunatit gurus. The purer we are, the more God works through us. We must align our lives and work with the conscious understanding that God is omniscient. We should honour our parents and gurus and treat every individual with respect. As stated in the Gita, we must perform our duties with integrity. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was able to achieve the unimaginable because of his pure heart. Every festival ultimately imparts the lesson to lead a virtuous life. I pray to Bhagwan Swaminarayan that we may gain the strength to lead such a pure and virtuous life.”



MAIN PROGRAMME: PRESENTATIONS ON SEEDS, TREES, AND FRUITS

Thereafter, the central theme of the programme, 'Seeds, Trees, Fruits', was brought to life through enthralling presentations. The 160x140-metre field area of the stadium was transformed into a stunning presentation arena, featuring a series of mesmerizing performances by 2,000 youths and visual projections through 70 projectors. In sync with the presentations and projections, the pre-programmed 100,000 LED wristbands given to the volunteers seated in the stadium lit in 17 different colours and numerous designs such as the Indian tricolour, BAPS logo and many other thematic patterns.

THE SEEDS

FIRST SEGMENT: THE SEEDS – THE BEGINNING OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

In this segment, performers were dressed as seeds of various fruits, grains and flowers to depict the inception and nurturing of the BAPS selfless volunteer tradition over the past 117 years. The performers danced and performed to the music and commentary and brought to life the idea of seeds. As the seeds sprouted, they became united, disciplined, and organized. After the performance, a video presentation highlighted a brief history of BAPS volunteer activities.

The presentations depicted how the seeds of volunteerism were first planted by

Children in a variety of seed costumes symbolize the beginning and blossoming of the BAPS *karyakar* tradition



Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, the founder of BAPS, and later nurtured by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj, leading to their gradual growth and development.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a central administrative office and structure for volunteers in 1972, in Mumbai, to guide and engage volunteers in large-scale service activities. Later, he also inspired a parallel central office and structure for BAPS women's activities.

ADDRESS BY ISHWARCHARAN SWAMI



In his address, Ishwarcharan Swami, a witness to the growth of the BAPS volunteer activities since its inception, shared, “During the time of Shastriji Maharaj, thousands of volunteers came together to build mandirs. Later, when Yogiji Maharaj became the spiritual head of BAPS in 1951, he initiated the children's and youth activities. Through thousands of letters and personal counselling, he established hundreds of children's and youth forums and inspired thousands of satsang assemblies. Pramukh Swami Maharaj then nurtured this seed into a mighty tree, tirelessly travelling and inspiring millions globally. Today, under Mahant Swami Maharaj's

love, guidance and inspiration, these activities have flourished further.

“May we always remember our gurus and continue engaging in satsang and *seva*. Let us purify and transform ourselves, and, as PM Shri Modiji urged, make a firm resolve to contribute to society. Let us seek the blessings of Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj to guide us on this virtuous path.”

THE TREES

SECOND SEGMENT: THE TREES – A VALUE-BASED VOLUNTEER FORCE

This segment illustrated how the tiny seeds of selfless service grew into flourishing and sturdy trees, which symbolized how the BAPS volunteer activities spread across India and the world. The presentation also highlighted the inspiring stories of volunteers who remained steadfast in their duties despite facing adverse circumstances and challenges.

Videos showcasing the personal experiences of volunteers were displayed, narrating how Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired individuals to engage in various service activities such as education, cleanliness drives, literacy campaigns, anti-addiction activities, family unity and more.

Youths in tree and bushes costumes represent the spread of BAPS volunteer activities throughout India and globally





Kayakar Suvarna Mahotsav logo and flags of 30 nations where BAPS *karyakars* are engaged in *seva*

The video testimonials highlighted his care for volunteers' personal growth, his teachings on human nature and management, and his ability to instil qualities like truth, service, faith, and humility in volunteers from all walks of life – be they farmers, scientists or professionals from both India and abroad.

The *karyakars* whose video testimonials were showcased: Shri Jayendrabhai Vinchhi, Surat, Gujarat; Shri Rajeshbhai Gandhi, Amreli, Gujarat; Shrikrishna Pandya, Gondal, Gujarat; Shri Kanubhai Patel, Robbinsville, USA; and Shri Dineshbhai Patel, London, UK.

Thereafter, the central ground was filled with volunteers dressed as flourishing trees and blooming plants to symbolize the robust growth of these volunteers as selfless *karyakars*. Using laser projection the words *satya*, *seva*, *namrata*, and *shraddha* were projected in Hindi letters on the ground. In addition, to portray the volunteers' resilience in *seva* during adverse situations visual projections and physical portrayals of lightning, cyclones, and storms were presented.

STORIES OF WOMEN VOLUNTEERS

Thereafter, Jayesh Mandanka narrated some incidents from the lives of women volunteers of BAPS, highlighting their unwavering commitment to *seva* even in challenging circumstances.

Anandiben, Khadalpur, North Gujarat

After losing her husband, Anandiben became the sole breadwinner for her family, caring for her two sons, aged eleven and nine. Despite

her limited primary education and numerous hardships, she took up cooking for five to six families to support her household. Over time, she learned to use a mobile phone and a vehicle to facilitate her *seva*. She also developed leadership and communication skills, enabling her to help others in need.

Lataben Chaudhari, Vyara-Mandvi, South Gujarat

Lataben serves as a *sanyojika* in the BAPS *karyakar* cadre. Her day begins at 7 a.m., working on a farm for two hours, followed by teaching at a school from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. After completing her household chores, she travels up to 60 km to visit villages, inspiring people about education, health, de-addiction, and value-based living. This relentless *seva* often requires her to return home late at night, sometimes causing difficulties in finding transport. She continues even on Sundays and holidays. Lataben also extends financial support to women in need while skillfully balancing her family, work, and *seva* commitments.

Damyantiben, Karcheliya, South Gujarat

Despite the challenges of transportation, Damyantiben, a farm worker, walks 6 km daily to carry out her satsang *seva*.

Saraswatiben, Kaparada, South Gujarat

Working in a factory to support her livelihood, Saraswatiben walks 8 to 10 km on foot regularly to perform *seva*.

Sangeetaben Pithadiya, Mumbai

After her husband tragically passed away in a workplace fire, Sangeetaben resumed *seva* as

a *karyakar* just seven days later. Her courage and devotion have been a source of inspiration for many in her community.

Sarojben, Rajpipla, South Gujarat

Even in the face of personal loss, Sarojben exemplifies selflessness. The day after her father's passing, she inspired people in four pre-planned assemblies, encouraging them to lead value-based lives.

Lakshmiben Gadhiya, Surat

For the past five years, Lakshmiben has been caring for her husband, who has been in a coma, while also leading volunteer activities as a dedicated *karyakar*. Her ability to manage her family responsibilities alongside her *seva* is truly commendable.

Other stories of volunteers who serve selflessly, by overcoming financial hardships, remote terrains, and life-threatening situations, were shared through speeches and video testimonials.

STORIES OF MEN VOLUNTEERS

Jiteshbhai, Gandhinagar

Jiteshbhai, an engineer in the Gandhinagar Electricity Board, has faced numerous personal challenges. His father has been battling kidney-related issues for years, and his mother suffers from leg and back ailments. After eight years of marriage, he was blessed with two children, only to discover after a year that one of them had muscular dystrophy, an incurable condition. Later, he himself was diagnosed with a health condition. Amidst all this, his job location was changed, requiring him to commute 110 km from home. Despite these overwhelming difficulties, Jiteshbhai remains committed to *seva*, continuing his selfless service every week.

Omprakashbhai, Agra

Omprakashbhai works in Jhansi from Monday to Saturday. After completing his job each week, he travels back to Agra and dedicate his time to organizing *bal sabhas*. His

commitment to nurturing young minds, despite his hectic schedule, exemplifies his devotion to *seva*.

Bachubhai Rathva, Chhota Udepur

Hailing from a remote tribal village, Bachubhai walks through treacherous jungle paths to perform *seva*. Often encountering wild animals on his way, he remains undeterred. His *seva* involves visiting small homes to help individuals overcome addictions and inspiring them to lead pure and value-based lives.

Ketanbhai, Bharuch

When Ketanbhai discovered that his colleague had contracted COVID-19 and needed immediate treatment in Vadodara, he didn't hesitate. He personally accompanied him to Vadodara and ensured he received proper care. Despite the life-threatening risks, Ketanbhai continued his *seva*, supporting his colleague until he fully recovered.

DOCUMENTARY DRAMA VIDEO

A documentary drama video was presented showcasing the inspiring story of BAPS *karyakar* Nileshbhai Rathod, a senior children's activities *karyakar* in Lathidad, Gujarat. Faced with the immense challenge of managing a significant sum for the cancer treatment of Naresh, a close family member, Nileshbhai made the difficult decision to sell his clothing shop, vehicle, and jewellery. Despite being in a grave financial situation, he started working as a vegetable vendor to sustain his family, but never let these hardships affect his *seva*.

Even when he endured the heartbreaking loss of Naresh, Nileshbhai remained steadfast in his commitment to *seva* and continued his responsibilities as a *karyakar*. Fellow *karyakars* suggested that the Sanstha could provide him with financial assistance during such a difficult time, but he declined, stating that his role was to serve, not to seek anything in return from the Sanstha.



Youths in fruit costumes encapsulate the sweet, beneficial outcomes of the selfless services rendered by BAPS volunteers

Remarkably, Nileshebhai prioritized *seva* for the mandir construction over the income he could have earned from selling vegetables. His unwavering dedication exemplifies the selfless spirit of a true *karyakar*.

THE FRUITS

THE THIRD SEGMENT: FRUITS – A SACRED AND PEACEFUL WORLD

This segment highlighted the sweet fruits of the selfless services rendered by BAPS volunteers, which have touched and transformed the lives of millions in society.

A video showcasing BAPS's global humanitarian initiatives highlighted the remarkable efforts of its volunteers. Symbolic depictions of fruits growing in the sky and cloud formations illustrated the extraordinary accomplishments achieved through their selfless services.

Flags representing 30 countries, where BAPS volunteers actively engage in humanitarian work, were prominently displayed, symbolizing their global reach and dedication. The presentation mesmerized the audience, especially with the synchronized illumination patterns and colours of the LED wristbands the volunteers were wearing.

POWER OF MANY BAPS VOLUNTEERS



Following this, Brahmavihari Swami described what many BAPS volunteers together can achieve, "There is no better day and time to honour volunteers than today – the auspicious occasion of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthday. When volunteers are selfless and the fruits of their service benefit all, humanitarian efforts on a global scale become possible.

"Normally, a stadium is divided – one team wins, and the other loses. One side celebrates, and the other mourns. But today, we are one team



Ground video projection of the commendable services performed by BAPS *karyakars* at the start of the Ukraine crisis

– a team of oneness. There is no competition here; instead, this is a moment of completion. This is a programme of enlightenment, not entertainment.

“PM Modi once shared that whoever met Pramukh Swami Maharaj, regardless of their professional capacity, left as a greater person than before.

“What can 100,000 volunteers accomplish? We saw during the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav what 80,000 volunteers achieved. They transformed 600 acres of land into heaven. It became a land of ideas and inspirations – a town of transformation. That was the power of many.”

Then a video showing highlights of the one-month Pramukh Swami Shatabdi Mahotsav held in Ahmedabad (2022–2023) was shown. Over 600 acres of barren land were transformed into a verdant festival site, where 12.1 million visitors gained moral, cultural and spiritual inspirations. Volunteers served with humility, feeding lakhs of people daily, and inspiring many to take

pledges to give up addictions and foster family unity. The 80,000 volunteers devoted themselves completely, offering their time, energy, and resources selflessly.

POWER OF FEW BAPS VOLUNTEERS

Continuing his speech, Brahmavihari Swami said, “Does the power of BAPS volunteers lie in numbers? No, it lies in ‘Samp, Suhrudbhav, Ekta.’ It lies in unity. Because we live and work for one, we can truly experience the power of unity.

“On 27 February 2022, PM Shri Narendrabhai Modi called at 12:30 a.m. requesting our help. Following his request and with the blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj, BAPS mobilized 64 volunteers from 11 countries to serve in Poland on the border with Ukraine, from where Indian students were being evacuated due to the war. PM Modi was well aware of the practical challenges of mobilizing volunteers in a war zone, but he had even greater faith in the BAPS *karyakars*. That is why he made that call at midnight.

“You have earned this trust. Those 64 volunteers served in freezing conditions, sharing just 10 beds among themselves and taking 3-hour shifts to sleep. Let us now reflect on the extraordinary power of just a few BAPS *karyakars*.”

The next video highlighted the BAPS relief work in the Ukraine war zone. It showed how within a day after PM Shri Narendrbhai Modi requested for help, relief camps were operational to provide food, warmth, and shelter to over 3,700 stranded Indian students. A summary:

- 64 BAPS volunteers from 11 countries, collectively travelled 89,000 km to reach the relief camp
- 3,700 students evacuated from Poland
- Over 10,000 hot vegetarian meals cooked and served.

POWER OF ONE BAPS VOLUNTEER

In the final part of his speech, Brahmavihari Swami shared, “Even a single BAPS volunteer has the power to lead change and transform an entire village. It took just one Neil Armstrong to step on the moon, and the world began exploring space. It took just one Thomas Edison to invent the light bulb, and our nights were illuminated. It took just one Mahatma Gandhi for the world to realize that non-violent revolutions are possible. It took just one Edmund Hillary to climb Mount Everest, and suddenly we all felt elevated. It took just one Sardar Patel to unite India and make it strong.

“The darker it gets, the more important a single candle becomes. Each BAPS *karyakar* shines with the light of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. This is because of their character, calibre, charisma, and above all, their guru-bhakti. Let us witness the power of just one BAPS *karyakar*.”

The third video featured stories of the transformative work accomplished by individual BAPS volunteers:

Shashikantbhai Patel, Bavli-Vankaner

Shashikantbhai (1948–2023) inspired transformations of four villages near his native Bavli-Vankaner tribal region of South Gujarat. These villages were once plagued by rampant addiction to alcohol and cigarettes, along with deep-rooted superstitions and widespread domestic violence. The testimonials of locals depicted the dire state of these villages, where life was engulfed in darkness. People feared entering the area after 6 p.m., and domestic violence affected nearly every household. Even children were addicted to tobacco and cigarettes, with many neglecting school. Festivals were marked by animal sacrifices, and in times of illness, villagers turned to *bhuvas* (local shamans) instead of seeking medical care.

Over four decades of tireless effort, Shashikantbhai brought about a remarkable change. A well-educated and experienced lady teacher shared how his work enabled many to pursue higher education, and today, they are helping students in these same villages. An elderly woman expressed that the transformations inspired by Shashikantbhai led them to adopt a pure vegetarian lifestyle rooted in devotion.

Another villager described how Shashikantbhai's efforts created devout, happy lives for the community, where even the children became righteous. Reflecting on the joyful faces of these children, he remarked, “In their smiles, I see the face of Shashikantbhai.”

Dr Dilipbhai Patel, USA

In a jail in California, where 1,500 out of 3,000 prisoners had tested positive for COVID-19, no doctor was willing to enter due to the life-threatening risks. In this dire situation, he stepped forward, stayed for an entire month, and treated the patients with unwavering dedication.

Shri Subhashbhai Patel, Tanzania

In the village of Lugoba, Tanzania, many girl students were abandoning their studies due to the fear of harassment. Witnessing this, Subhashbhai

built the Lugoba Girls Hostel, with a capacity to accommodate 1,500 students, providing them with a safe environment to continue their education.

In addition, he arranged free heart surgeries for 250 children born with congenital heart defects at the Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute, giving them a new lease of life.

Due to his selfless service, over 5,000 African people attended Shri Subhashbhai's final rites to pay their last respects, a testament to his profound impact on their lives.

Shri Nileshbhai, Australia

He has spread the message of family harmony and spiritual values to more than 300 families.

Shri Kuldeepsinh, UK

In just two years, he helped over 550 Indians overcome addictions and inspired them to adopt a vegetarian lifestyle.

Dr Vaghani, Saurashtra, Gujarat

Since 1987, he has provided free medical treatment to thousands of underprivileged individuals.

Shri Kailashbhai, Ukai, Gujarat

For over three decades, he has offered free education to thousands of students in the tribal regions of Ukai.

Shri Dhanjibhai Ghelani, Bhavnagar, Gujarat

For the past 20 years, he has upheld a personal vow to abstain from eating a meal at home until he has helped at least one person overcome their addiction each day.

SHRI BHUPENDRABHAI PATEL, CHIEF MINISTER, GUJARAT



Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel expressed his appreciation and reflections on the event, "I feel fortunate to be present at the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav, held on the auspicious occasion of the 103rd birth anniversary of Pramukh Swami

Maharaj. I bow to Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who shared the profound message of love and peace with the world. The seed sown by Shastriji Maharaj grew into a flourishing tree under the guidance of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Today, through the divine inspiration of Mahant Swami Maharaj, this spirit of volunteerism is bearing fruit and enriching the world. What began in Bochasan has now spread across the globe. The creation of the new mandir in the UAE exemplifies the triumph of the values of Sanatan Dharma on an international stage.

"While we advocate for progress, it is equally important to preserve our invaluable heritage and cultural values. The Swaminarayan Sampradaya plays a significant role in safeguarding and promoting the wisdom of Indian sages, and I commend their efforts in this regard.

"The BAPS Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav is a remarkable celebration of the volunteers' dedication to building a new India. It is truly a golden festival, honouring the extraordinary contributions of these tireless workers. What began with just 11 volunteers has now evolved into a vast network of one lakh volunteers, diligently serving society under the guidance of Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj.

"The global reach of BAPS is a testament to its devotion, with Akshardham mandirs in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Robbinsville, as well as the BAPS Hindu Mandir in the UAE. These magnificent mandirs not only reflect the devotion and dedication of BAPS but also elevate the pride and dignity of Sanatan Dharma, not just in Gujarat or India, but across the world.

"I feel immense pride in attending this grand event and witnessing the socio-religious contributions of the BAPS organization. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj and all the volunteers for their unwavering dedication in making this event a resounding success. Jai Swaminarayan."



Balloons are released by children and youths amid laser lights during a thematic presentation

SHRI AMITBHAI SHAH, UNION HOME MINISTER, INDIA



Honourable Union Home Minister Shri Amitbhai Shah shared his experiences of BAPS volunteers' *seva*, "Jai Swaminarayan. Today's event at Narendra Modi Stadium, the

world's largest, is a truly auspicious occasion as we celebrate the 103rd birth anniversary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav of BAPS. I feel immense pride in witnessing what I can only describe as a 'Mani Kanchan' moment. This is the first programme of its kind in this iconic stadium, where there is no competition – only a collective victory for all, achieved by the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

"Bhagwan Swaminarayan began this Vaishnavite tradition inspired by Vedic roots. BAPS has not only focused on devotion and spirituality, but has also seamlessly integrated social service to society. When I first came into contact with BAPS, I also came into contact with Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

"I want to share that whenever I faced challenges in life, the first phone call I would receive was from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Every time, he would tell me, 'Bhagwan will

make everything alright. Don't worry.' This one sentence would fill me with renewed vigour to face any challenge.

"At the young age of 18, Pramukh Swami Maharaj renounced worldly life to serve his guru and went on to become a monumental figure for our entire country. He instilled a spirit of discipline and service in a monastic organization, inspiring thousands of people. I regard him as someone akin to Adi Shankaracharyaji, who brought transformative change to the saintly community and institutionalized it. His influence has reached millions, instilling the mantra of faith, giving courage to overcome challenges, and motivating individuals to undertake impactful work. In just one lifetime, he built over 1,200 mandirs across the globe, lighting the lamp of spirituality in countless lives.

"The greatest contribution of Pramukh Swami Maharaj has been his emphasis on values and character-building. I have seen in my own constituency that families who practice *ghar sabha* live in harmony. This organization has freed countless individuals from addictions, relieving them and their families from stress and worry. Creating *karyakars* who empathize with the pain of society and inspiring them to work toward a common goal is an incredibly challenging task, yet Pramukh Swami Maharaj achieved this

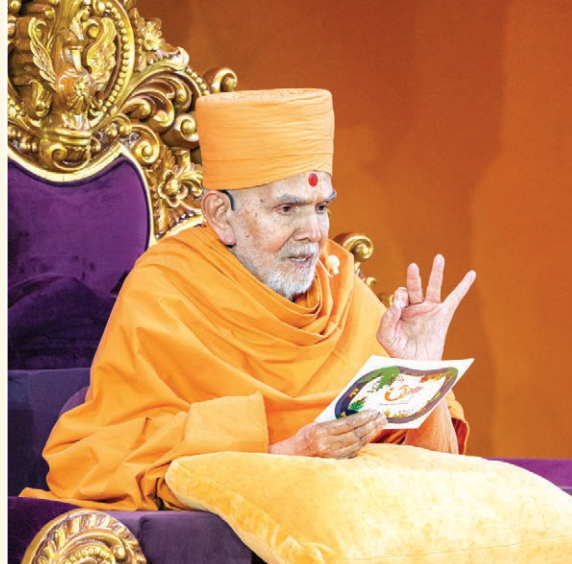
through his life and actions. The contributions of the Swaminarayan tradition in education, character-building, and societal transformation are truly remarkable.

“In 1972, Pramukh Swami Maharaj undertook the monumental task of organizing volunteer activity and transforming it into an institution. Having worked myself in the capacity of a grassroots worker to the national president of an organization, I understand how hard and challenging it is to build an institution. Like a seed growing into a tree that bears fruits, this organization has delivered immense benefits to society through over one lakh dedicated *karyakars*. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s inspiration has effectively channeled culture, dharma, society, and service in an unparalleled manner.

“Today, I can confidently affirm that an organization of over one lakh committed volunteers operating worldwide is truly unimaginable, incomparable, and extraordinary. Inspired by Prime Minister Shri Narendrabhai Modi, 140 crore Indians have resolved to build a great India by 2047, marking the centenary of our independence. I urge all of us to renew our lives with a commitment to culture, dharma, society, service, and the vision of creating a great India. Let us move forward with this spirit, inspired by the values and teachings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

Next, a video presentation showcased Mahant Swami Maharaj’s profound enthusiasm over the past year for honouring the volunteers and his heartfelt sentiments for the celebrations.

Following the video presentation, Adarshjivan Swami elaborated on how Mahant Swami Maharaj’s deep and incessant desire to honour *karyakars* was evident in today’s programme. For the food packets distributed to the *karyakars*, which contained 13 delicious delicacies, Mahant Swami Maharaj expressed his wish to personally prepare and include *motichur* laddus. Fulfilling this wish, he prepared the first ten *motichur* laddus himself.



Swamishri blesses the celebration assembly

This morning, Mahant Swami Maharaj also expressed his desire to personally welcome the *karyakars* by offering sweets to them. To honour this sentiment, BAPS swamis greeted all the *karyakars* arriving at the stadium by placing chocolates in their mouths before the programme began.

Additionally, Mahant Swami Maharaj had written a heartfelt letter to Yagnapriya Swami this morning, further expressing his love and respect for the *karyakars*.

Yagnapriya Swami read the letter, “Today, my joy knows no bounds. I see Yogi Bapa and Pramukh Swami in all the *karyakars*. Since morning, I have been contemplating the *mahima* of and offering *pujan* to all the *karyakars*. I have been applying *chandlo*, *chandan archa* and rice grains, and placing a garland of *mogra* and roses (around their necks) and offering *dandvats* to all. May you all be *raji* (happy) on me.

Jai Swaminarayan with much love from Sadhu Keshavjivandas. All of you, santo and karyakars, are my hands and legs.”

Saturday, 7.12.2024, 10.52 a.m.

BLESSINGS BY MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ

Mahant Swami Maharaj then blessed the celebration assembly, “All of you *karyakars* serve with complete selflessness. Your sacrifices are so immense that no amount of gratitude expressed to



The magnificent *maha-arti* performed by Swamishri, senior swamis, dignitaries, children and youths performers and 100,000 *karyakars*

you would suffice. Our work is to reveal the divine glory of Maharaj and Swami. Without *karyakars*, this work would not be possible. So far, *karyakars* have done unparalleled *seva*, and it will continue in the future as well.

“Whatever we do, the ultimate goal is singular: to become *ekantik*. Being *ekantik* means becoming entirely detached from worldly desires, becoming *akshar-rup*, and worshipping Maharaj. The true reward of service lies in becoming *ekantik* – not visible, not easily understood, but it is genuinely the ultimate fruit. We should serve with *divyabhav*, *suhradbhav*, and *dasbhav*.

“Our focus should be on delving deeply into satsang. At today’s celebration, Amitbhai and Bhupendrabhai are present, and Prime Minister Shri Modi ji has also sent his video message of best wishes. We pray that they all continue to serve the nation well, that peace prevails across the world, and that all *karyakars* remain happy in every way.”

MAHA-ARTI AND CONCLUSION

Following Mahant Swami Maharaj’s blessings, senior swamis honoured him with garlands on behalf of all the volunteers. The festival concluded with the *maha-arti* performed by 100,000 volunteers.

Finally, children, and youth *karyakars* performed a vibrant dance on the lyrics, ‘*Kāryakaranam Abhivandanam, Samarpitanam Abhivandanam...*’ to express reverence and gratitude to all the volunteers.

The grand finale celebration concluded with a spectacular fusion of sensational wristband lighting effects and a stunning fireworks display.

Spirited chants of ‘Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav ni Jai’ concluded the celebration event. The volunteers were overwhelmed and privileged to have witnessed this historic occasion. They all bid adieu with a profound sense of fulfilment, inner joy and a renewed spirit to serve more. The



Swamishri, senior swamis and dignitaries perform the *arti*

celebration reflected an enduring gratitude to those who serve and a message for all to offer *seva* to others.

The celebration was viewed live by countless

devotees and well-wishers in India and abroad through live broadcast on live.baps.org and the Aastha channel.

Sadhu Amrutvijaydas and Bansal Bhalja



Spectacular fireworks display lights the stadium and night sky at the conclusion of the Karyakar Suvama Mahotsav Grand Finale Celebration



Gearing Up for the Grand Finale



The spectacular four-hour International Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav Grand Finale Celebration was a mesmerizing mosaic of colourful costumes, delightful sights, melodious sounds and inspiring presentations. The smooth execution of the event was possible due to the many months of meticulous planning and preparations and the combined and coordinated efforts of swamis and volunteers serving in 38 departments. The following provides a brief account of some of the background efforts that ensured the success of this historic occasion.

SABHA PROGRAMMES DEPARTMENT

Planning for the grand finale celebration assembly began in May 2024. After several rounds of discussions, the ‘Seeds, Trees, Fruits’ theme was finalized. Thereafter, the script was written and each element of the programme was visualized in detail. The programmes team coordinated with the cultural, decoration, audio-visual, and other teams to plan the presentations of each element – including dances, displays, videos, visuals, lighting, projections and other features. A key decision was to set up the main stage, two satellite stages to seat invited dignitaries, and a performing stage in front of the media pavilion. Also, excluding the area of the pitches, the entire grass outfield would be used as a performing arena. A large projection screen would cover the pitches.

CULTURAL DEPARTMENT

Based on the theme and script on the assembly, the cultural programmes team designed the dances and displays appropriate for each element. They choreographed the presentations to match the lyrics of the specially scripted songs and other messages.

The cultural presentation team was tasked to identify and select 2,000 performers. In past celebrations, around 200 would be used for stage performances, so this was a tenfold increase in performers and a larger performance area.

Due to the large size and weights of the props, the children and youths had to meet certain physical requirements. With great support from the BAPS hostels, *vidyamandirs* and youth centres, the required number of performers were selected from the BAPS *vidyamandirs* in Gondal, Sarangpur and Atladara, the BAPS *chhatralayas*

in Nadiad, Vidyanagar and Atladara, and BAPS youths centres in Ahmedabad, Atladara, Surat, Anand, Rajkot, Mumbai, Tithal and Bhavnagar.

Choreography

The creative designers and choreographers were BAPS youths: Yogin Gajjar, Nayan Chhaniyara, Manoj Solanki (Gandhinagar); Kalpesh Patel, Yogesh Kantharia (Surat); and Harsh Bhatt (Bhavnagar). One of the challenges for them was to ensure that the patterns were clearly visible and obvious to the audience sitting at various heights in the stadium periphery.

They divided the ground performance area into quarters and designed dances and displays to match the lyrics, music and mood of the programme. Six weeks prior the grand finale, practices started in Gondal, Surat, Atladara, Anand and Ahmedabad. This team of six youths went regularly to the practice locations, and with the help of other youths, guided the selected performers, many of whom had no dance experience and so were patiently trained. The selected performers at each location were assigned particular portions of the performance, which they practised locally. Due to the large number of performers for each performance, big grounds for practices were required. Where these were not available, that group was further divided to take turns in practising their part of the performance.

The props to be used by the performers were designed and tested by the swamis and lead volunteers. They adjusted the structure and used material that minimized the weight so that the performers could comfortably carry them and perform their routines.



Children and youths practise their presentations



Decoration Department volunteers prepare props at
Raisan Vidyamandir

The participants practised without the actual large props they would be lifting, since they were still being made. So, to mimic the size and weight of the props, each performer held six-foot sticks to help gauge positioning and carried sandbags.

Only on 1 December 2024 were all the performers able to gather at the Narendra Modi Stadium to practise together on the actual performance arena. When all the groups practised in the stadium for the first time, confusion ensued, since the scale of the performance arena was vast and no ground-positioning markers were possible. However, the trainers patiently guided the children and youth performers to orient them in the required ways.

To prevent undue damage to the special grass of the outfield, the practice times were carefully managed to allow the ground maintenance staff to water the grass. Also, the performers practised and performed in bare feet, to minimize damage to the ground.

The presentation was divided into the welcome, seeds, trees, fruits, *maha-arti* and concluding sections.

The cultural presentation team also liaised closely with, among others, the decoration team to ensure that the large, bulky props would be suitable for lifting and performing; the audio-visual teams to ensure proper capture of the dances and displays from multiple angles; and the projection team for the visuals projected onto the ground screens.

DECORATIONS DEPARTMENT

The decorations team were responsible for erecting and embellishing the main and other stages and preparing all the props for the performers. The structure and outer designs of all the props were made using metal rods, cloth, fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) and other materials. Props were designed to be visually striking yet manageable for performers, aligning with the choreography and themes. The following main props were made:

Mala beads: 225, 4 ft (H) x 5 ft (W).

Petals: 570, ranging in size from 4.5 x 3.5 ft to 15 x 8 ft.

Trees, shrubs, bushes and grass: 294, ranging in height from 5 ft to 12 ft.

Seeds of kidney beans, wheat, maize, peanuts and *chana* (gram): 50, ranging in size from 5 to 8 feet.

Fruits – mangos, pineapples, strawberries, grapes, bananas: 60, up to 8 feet high.

Big fruits (each housing around 2,000 balloons for release during the performance) – pomegranate, guava, mango, orange: 6, each 10 feet high.

Flowers of various types: 52, ranging in height from 5 to 15 feet.

Chinese fans: 120

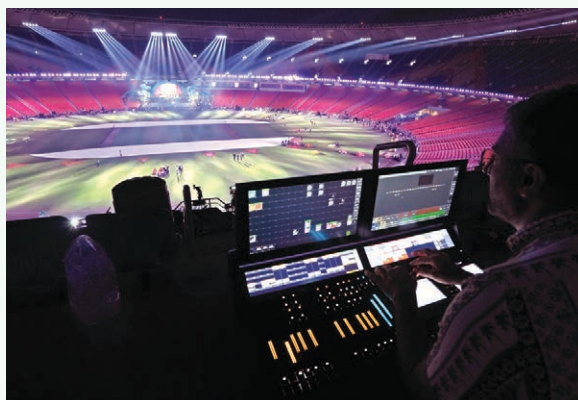
Bird wings: 108

BAPS flags: 100,000

Maha-artis: 200, each with up to 32 *diyas*.



Tailoring Department volunteers



Setting the light and projection sequences

The costumes for all the performers were made by the tailoring department.

TAILORING DEPARTMENT

The Darji (Tailoring) Department achieved several important tasks:

1. Various costumes for all 2,000 performers.
2. Stitching the 190 by 262 ft stretchable projection screen. This was a special non-creasing fabric that also allowed the grass to breathe. The Sky company in Lathidad gave much assistance in accomplishing this task.
3. The 80 by 110 ft Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav logo that was placed at the centre of the ground during Swamishri's welcome parade.
4. Triangular 50 ft wide by 80 ft long welcome banners for hanging on the outer wall of the stadium.

The dedicated efforts of scores of tailors working in shifts successfully completed the tasks in the relatively short time available.

LIGHTING AND PROJECTION DEPARTMENTS

The majority of the grand finale programme took place after sunset. Hence, a variety of conventional and laser lighting and projection was used to enhance the atmosphere and accompany the various performances.

The lighting, projection, cultural, audio-visual, screens and LED wristband teams coordinated the

ambient lighting and the different lighting effects and intensity for each element of the programme to ensure that the images and messages displayed on the large ground projection screen were properly visible.

The in-house lighting and projection teams learnt how to operate the required software and consoles and pre-programmed the sequences as required.

The coordinated efforts of the various departments created an immersive experience that highlighted each element of the programme while maintaining clarity for the audience seated across the stadium.

LED WRISTBANDS

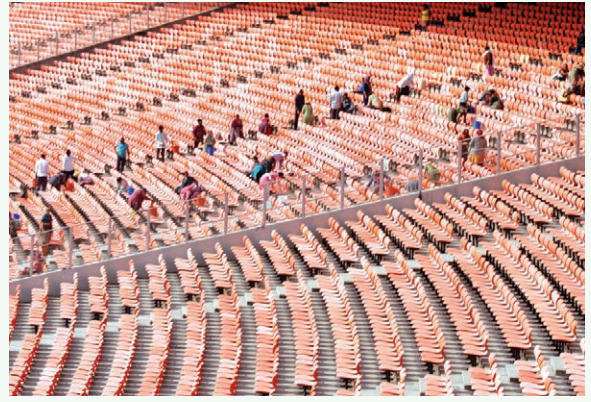
To create static and moving lighting patterns and coloured sequences among the seated 100,000 volunteers, LED wristbands were used. Each of the stadium seats was individually counted and the seats were divided into sections. Then, computer simulations of the various displays and colour patterns were prepared and finalized.

The wristbands were programmed to display various colours, hence each seat was assigned a particular wristband from the 20 programmed variations. Each seating section had combinations of the 20 types to produce the required patterns and colour sequences for that section.

The mammoth task of setting, labelling and



Kitchen Department volunteers stocking rations



Housekeeping Department volunteers clean the stadium

packing the LED wristbands for each seating section took one week. A map for each seating section was prepared, specifying which type of wristband to give the occupant of a particular seat. These meticulous preparations were matched by the efficient and accurate distribution by the Sabha Arrangements Department volunteers. Since this exercise could not be rehearsed, everyone was delighted when the LED pattern and colour sequences were reproduced exactly as planned.

BROADCAST DEPARTMENT

The challenge of filming and broadcasting this event was that, in addition to the main and satellite stages, the performance arena was the 555 by 465 ft ground. Therefore, 360-degree coverage was required.

An experienced team of youths from India, UK, USA, Africa and Australia planned for the event. The team built on its experiences from the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary (2022–3), Robbinsville Akshardham opening (2023) and the Abu Dhabi mandir *murti-pratishtha* (2024), deciding the type and quantity of equipment required, how the visuals would be captured and other operational aspects. Broadcast cameras, Steadicam, Spydercam, drones, and an Agito Dolly on Stage with Mag Track were among the equipment used to ensure a successful broadcast.

ACCOMMODATIONS DEPARTMENT

The Accommodations Department arranged lodgings for over 14,000 volunteers. These included:

1. Volunteers who helped for many weeks in the preparations for the grand finale celebration.
2. The 2,000 performers.
3. Volunteers attending from outside Gujarat.

Around 10 builders provided 900 flats of different capacities at 20 locations to accommodate the volunteers.

The builders accelerated their building completion schedules and ensured that the required amenities and permissions were obtained.

KITCHEN DEPARTMENT

Swamis and volunteers of the Kitchen Department operated out of the BAPS Vidyamandir in Raisan, midway between Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. From 24 November till 8 December the department cooked all the food there and set up a system to supply the required amounts of food for breakfast, lunch and dinner to the volunteers serving at the stadium and at the various accommodation locations.

The department also cooked, packaged, transported and distributed the 100,000 13-item *prasad* dishes for the volunteers on 7 December.

HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT

Prior to the event, the Housekeeping

Department cleaned the entire stadium – sweeping every nook and corner and wiping each seat clean. The stadium staff were impressed by the volunteers' efficient methods – which saved time and water. After the event, the stadium was cleaned in one day to the complete satisfaction of the stadium staff.

CONSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT

The Construction Department set up temporary office and storage spaces for the various departments active at the stadium, as well as extra toilets and bathrooms. They also cleared and levelled large swathes of land on the Sabarmati Riverfront adjacent to the stadium for parking.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

The services of the Transport, Parking, Security, Sabha Arrangements, Medical, General Stores and other departments were instrumental in ensuring the smooth execution of the celebration.

SPCO AND BPCO

The swamis of the Satsang Pravutti Central Office (SPCO), led by Yagnapriya Swami, and the Bal Pravrutti Central Office (BPCO), led by Vishwaswarup Swami, were jointly responsible for the projects carried out during the year-long celebrations and every aspect of the grand finale celebration.

During the last month, they coordinated the daily inter-departmental meetings to review the completed and remaining work and resolve any difficulties.

They meticulously identified past *karyakars* and ensured that, together with present *karyakars*, they attended the the grand finale. They issued QR-coded entry passes to each of the 100,000 *karyakars* who attended, coordinated their arrival and departure modes and timings, and accommodation, if required. The logistical challenges were admirably tackled enabling all to enjoy the occasion without difficulty.

The Grand Finale Celebration was attended



Levelling the Sabarmati Riverfront for parking

by *karyakars* from 15 states throughout India and 31 countries.

GRATITUDE

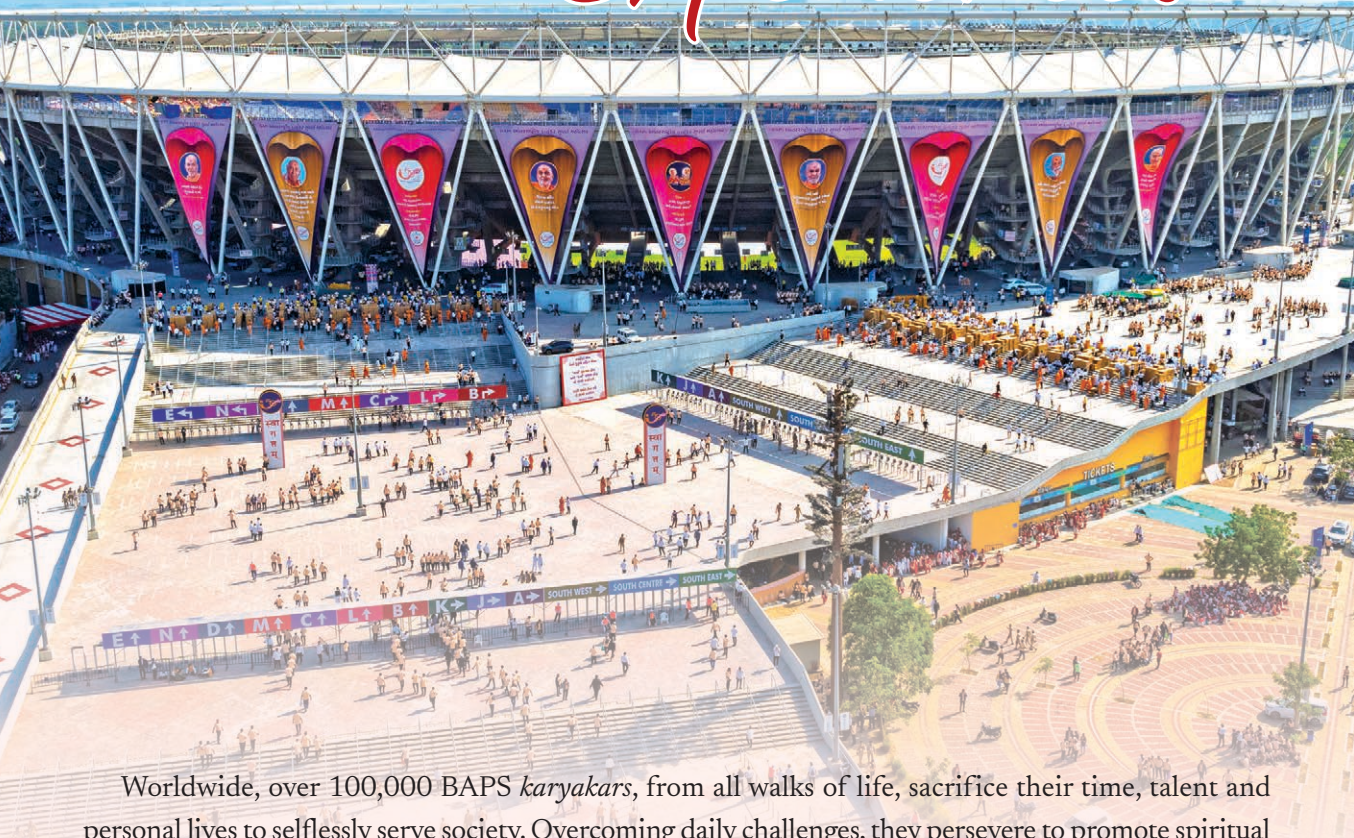
The entire event was possible because of the overwhelming support of the Gujarat Cricket Association, its office bearers and staff. In particular the day-to-day support and guidance of Anilbhai Patel, GCA secretary, and Kashyap Rawal were instrumental in ensuring the timely completion of all preparations and the smooth Grand Finale Celebration.

CONCLUSION

The grand finale of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav transformed the Narendra Modi Stadium into a vibrant canvas of lights, colours and sounds embodying the profound theme of 'Seeds, Trees, Fruits,' representing growth, dedication, and the fruits of collective effort. Each department played a crucial role in creating a seamless and awe-inspiring event that was a testament to the power of collaboration and unwavering dedication. The harmonious interplay between the various teams ensured every detail – from the intricate costumes and dazzling props to the flawless projection and lighting – came together to leave an indelible mark on all the attendees. This event not only celebrated BAPS *karyakars* but also showcased what their unity, devotion, and excellence can achieve. ♦

Sadhu Amrutvijaydas

KARYAKAR *Experiences*



Worldwide, over 100,000 BAPS *karyakars*, from all walks of life, sacrifice their time, talent and personal lives to selflessly serve society. Overcoming daily challenges, they persevere to promote spiritual purity, moral integrity, family unity and social harmony. Serving without expecting recognition or reward, and motivated purely by their heartfelt desire to serve God and guru, they organize cultural and spiritual events, provide emergency disaster relief, conduct de-addiction and environment campaigns, and manage children and youth development programmes. Their care and commitment have touched millions of lives, creating positive changes across generations.

To honour their selfless services, Mahant Swami Maharaj enthusiastically inspired many projects to pay tribute to the *karyakars* throughout the year, culminating in the International Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav Grand Finale Celebration at the world's largest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. *Karyakars* are the backbones of BAPS and their behind-the-scenes services are rarely noticed. This celebration brought them to the forefront, making the invisible *karyakars* visible. It promoted the message that selflessness is the way forward, since nothing is stronger than the hearts of volunteers who want nothing.

With smiles on their faces, a spring in their steps and excitement in their voices, *karyakars* from throughout India and many countries around the world flocked to the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. The sights, sounds and sensations they witnessed were beyond their expectations and left indelible memories they will cherish and share for life.

The following is a selection of their experiences.



Karyakars arrive at the stadium



Karyakars enter the stadium

Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was such an amazing and unimaginable event. I have never seen any organization before which honoured its *karyakars* like this.

Kamlesh Thakur, Delhi

The moment the swamis fed us chocolate was amazing. We felt as if *guruhari* himself had fed us chocolate.

Vinod Shankar Singh, Delhi

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was a once-in-a-lifetime experience where we felt how much Mahant Swamiji Maharaj cares for us.

Yashwardhan Rathor, Jaipur

The *prasad* of chocolate placed in my mouth by the smiling swamis with their own hands will remain a memory for life.

Mukund Vaghela, Mumbai

The BAPS Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was a living testament to the unparalleled love and respect Mahant Swami Maharaj holds in his heart for the *karyakars*. Inviting 100,000 *karyakars* to the world's largest stadium and honouring them before India's political leaders demonstrated the immense value Swamishri places on us.

Kiran Mistry, Mumbai

The amazing presentations in the stadium took me to a different world. I could see the embodiment of harmony, friendliness, and unity.

Suraj Vadhera, Jalandhar

The sweetness of the chocolate placed in our mouths by the revered saints grew even more profound when we learned that it was Mahant Swami Maharaj's heartfelt wish to personally sweeten the mouths of all *karyakars*. How fortunate we are to have such a loving and compassionate guru.

Ashok Kapil, Shimla

The divinity of the event filled my soul with supreme peace, joy, and spiritual energy. It demonstrated how ancient traditions can be seamlessly integrated with modernity to inspire the new generation.

Virendra Vashishtha, Shimla

The immense love and affection Swamiji displayed towards his humble *karyakars* revealed the greatness of a true guru.

Subhash Varma, Shimla

Merely stepping into the world's largest cricket stadium felt like a dream come true, and then having revered saints personally feed chocolates was a surreal moment. The immense love and



Karyakars capture memories of the occasion



Lady volunteer welcomes karyakars by feeding them chocolates

compassion radiating from Mahant Swami Maharaj for the *karyakars* made it feel as though God himself had appeared before us to bless and uplift us.

Lekh Raj Sharma, Shimla

This occasion was extraordinary, divine, and profoundly moving. The programme brought together science, technology, and the spiritual realm in a way that was incredible. Today, I feel a deep sense of honour in being a BAPS *karyakar*.

Kuldeepsinh Rana, Ahmedabad

What I learned from this truly grand and divine festival is to serve selflessly, without any desire for position or status, and with complete humility, and not to focus on anyone's flaws.

Divyen Soni, Ahmedabad

The highlight of the programme was 'The Power of One', which demonstrated how much a single *karyakar* could accomplish for satsang if they chose to dedicate themselves fully.

Jenish Viradiya, Ahmedabad

When Mahant Swami Maharaj's letter was read, his words, filled with love and blessings, touched every heart in the stadium. It was more than just a message; it was a profound personal acknowledgment of the tireless efforts and

sacrifices of the volunteers. Swamishri's joy and enthusiasm in honouring the *karyakars* were visible from afar.

Darshan Rangoliya, Ahmedabad

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was truly excellent. Despite having over 100,000 *karyakars* present, there was no sign of disorder, and even after the assembly concluded, there was no pushing or chaos. I personally had a fractured leg, and though my doctor had advised against attending, I still came and faced no inconvenience.

Pratik R. Bhavsar, Ahmedabad

Even though he is the leader, Swamishri made us feel that the *karyakars* are the crucial link in the Sanstha's various tasks. He has truly treated us as equal to his own hands and feet.

Pathik Pathak, Vadodara

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav is a celebration of inner reflection, in which we align our lives with Bapa's will and strive to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to us with 100% effort. And the outcome is a step forward in the pursuit of true devotion, humility, and living according to his guidance and expectations.

Vipul Patel, Vadodara

Reflecting Swami Bapa's overflowing love for the *karyakars*, when we entered the stadium, senior *karyakars* welcomed us by lovingly and insistently putting chocolate in our mouths. I felt as if a mother was lovingly feeding chocolate to her child.

This entire celebration was no less than an Olympic Games ceremony.

Nidhi Jani, Bengaluru

Compared to the work we do, Bapa has made us worth more than gold, diamonds, and pearls.

Daksha Patel, Nasik

We only do satsang activities in whatever time we can spare, yet Swami Bapa values it so highly. Seeing this made us realize that Swami Bapa understands our glory millions of times more than we understand his glory.

Vasantben Changani, Rajkot

This Mahotsav taught me that true success in life is measured by how much we sacrifice for others. It made the connection of surrender

and service in my life stronger and gave me the motivation to live for others. In this event, I was not just a *karyakar*, but part of a force that is giving a new direction to humanity.

Dr Niyati Vegal, Rajkot

From our welcome in the stadium to the completion of the festival, every arrangement was meticulously taken care of with such dedication that I am at a loss for words to express my gratitude. When Swamishri's letter was read, it felt like every word was filled with the utmost compassion.

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav has become an unforgettable adornment of my life, which I will cherish until the end of my days.

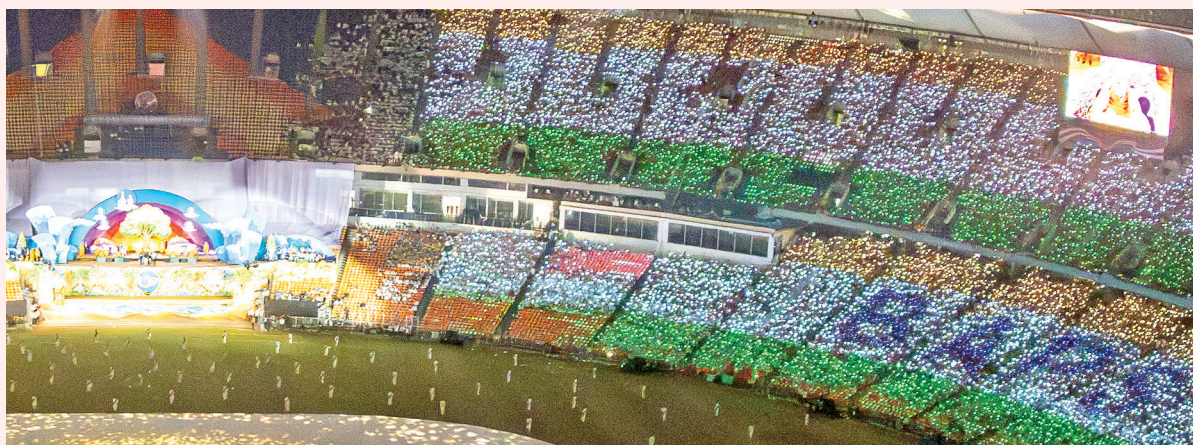
Kajal Kareliya, Gondal

The programme and decorations for the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav were excellent, making it a delight to watch. The performances by the children were outstanding, and the hard work of the saints and *karyakars* behind the scenes was commendable.

Varsha Rokad, Mevasa

Karyakars enjoy the close up darshan of Swamishri as he circles the ground in a beautiful flower chariot





Spectacular light patterns and messages were displayed, using the the LED wristbelts worn by the *karyakars*

Narendra Modi Stadium was not just a stadium; Mahant Swami Maharaj made it feel as if Akshardham itself had descended upon Earth. Every moment of the Suvarna Mahotsav was truly golden and enriching; a golden memory that will remain etched in my heart until my last breath.

Binita Bhayani, Bhavnagar

In our Hindu culture, honour is always given to the guru, but here, the guru is honouring the disciples. The letter Swami wrote to us, expressing his gratitude shows that Bapa has honoured us beyond measure.

Varsha Vala, Bhavnagar

The fact that Swami sat throughout the four-hour long event at the age of 91 just bears testimony to the *mahima* he holds for *karyakars*. When the letter that he wrote prior to the event was read out, it made the entire audience wonder what they had done to deserve such a guru who holds his followers in such high regard and with such humility.

Priyanshi Sheth, Mumbai

The way the kids performed with such precision, enthusiasm, and dedication resulted in the most top notch opening ceremony. The lengths our guru has gone for us, nobody does that. We all owe him our entire life's being to be

the best version of ourselves so he's proud to call us his own.

Priyal Shah, Mumbai

When the little children performed the *arti* of the devotees, our eyes filled with tears. What a unique fortune is ours that the guru bows down to us! We are indebted to Bapa.

Tanuja Patil, Dhule

It is astonishing that the head of such a large Sanstha would think of honouring *karyakars* in such a magnificent way that would resonate worldwide. We are fortunate to be *karyakars* and devotees of such a Sanstha.

Priti Mehta, Kolkata

The way the service, dedication, and commitment of the *karyakars* were appreciated in this celebration is unparalleled. These *karyakars* are a reflection of Mahant Swami's virtuous character.

Nikita Sukla, Bharuch

Such an honour was never given to me even at my wedding. Swami Bapa loves his *karyakars* from the heart, and when he gives such recognition, all the *karyakars* are able to see with deep insight that our service reaches Swami Bapa.

Mina Pipariya, Bhadra



Women *karyakars* enjoy the celebration assembly

As I sat in the stadium and witnessed everything, I was overwhelmed with emotion. I thought to myself, “How much respect have I received, and yet, I haven’t done nearly enough to deserve this.” Bapa, with immense compassion, gave us such divine joy and honour in return for even the smallest service we have offered.

Dipika Panchal, Jambusar

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was truly extraordinary, beyond imagination and utterly magnificent. The organization and arrangements were exceptional, surpassing even our wildest expectations. Every moment brought a unique and fresh experience. In truth, the atmosphere felt like heaven on earth, radiating divine beauty and joy.

Avani Dave, Vadodara

The colourful programme was not only vibrant outwardly but also transformed me from within.

Sangita Talpara, Bhadra

While working for Swami, at times, we might forget him, but this event made us realize how much Swami cares for us and how immense his glory is.

Priyanka Dabhi, Kutch

We have done so little, Bapa, compared to what you do for us. The honour you bestowed upon us, the thoughtfulness you showed for us – no one has

ever considered us this way. You turned our small acts of service into something so grand, hosting such a magnificent and divine programme in such a vast stadium. What a blessed day, what a divine moment.

Pratiksha Solanki, Navsari

Wonderful, otherworldly, unimaginable, unforgettable, transcendent, divine, pure divinity... We have no qualifications, yet Swami Bapa has honoured us in ways beyond measure.

Varsha Prajapati, Vadodara

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav felt like sitting in Akshardham itself. The care Bapa showed for the *karyakars* is unparalleled – greater even than what a mother would do for her child.

Nishtha Patel, Bilimora

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was extraordinary, divine, harmonious, full of camaraderie and love, and an embodiment of ‘BAPS as one family’. Such a magnificent synergy that wherever one’s eyes rested, they witnessed the same divine atmosphere. From the parking area to the venue, the surroundings exuded peace and unity. For the little service I do, I was blessed with recognition that was a thousand times greater.

Kanchan Chaudhari, Selvas

When we see the immense honour and love bestowed upon *karyakars*, we realize how fortunate we are to have such a divine guru as our spiritual guide. Bapa often says that *karyakars* are his hands and feet. Hearing this filled me with energy and determination to do something impactful.

Charvi Patel, Vapi



*Collated and Translated:
Sadhu Amrutvijaydas*



TARUN VIJAY

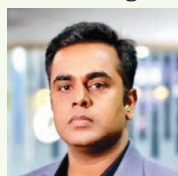
Indian author, social worker and journalist



It is a new dawn in the history of Sanatan Dharma. The world will see a rise of Hinduism in different perspectives. This is like a lotus blooming in a desert. The youths in general are wasting their precious time, indulging in luxury and outward beauty, whereas these *karyakars* of BAPS are showing a direction of progress and peace.

SUSHANT SINHA

Consulting Editor, Times Now NavBharat



In the service of Sanatan Dharma, there are remarkable individuals and organizations, like BAPS, whose contributions need no introduction. They serve Sanatan Dharma and society selflessly, without expecting recognition, media coverage or applause. This is the essence of true selfless service, helping those in need without any bias towards religion or background. BAPS volunteers embody this spirit of *seva*. Whether it is helping the country in times of crisis or building grand temples, BAPS stands as a shining example.

Which organization in the world would call its volunteers together, and organize such a grand event to honour them? And that too, in such a mesmerizing manner that it leaves everyone in awe. In today's world, who truly acknowledges the contributions of volunteers?

Something extraordinary happened in Ahmedabad. The BAPS Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav, held at the Narendra Modi Stadium, was a spectacle to behold. The event was so remarkable that just seeing the pictures could leave one astounded. These volunteers, who work tirelessly without seeking the limelight, are always present in every social service initiative of BAPS. Be it a disaster or a crisis anywhere in the world, BAPS volunteers are always at the forefront of relief efforts. It is for this reason that such a grand celebration was organized to honour them.

The BAPS Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav, hosted at the same Narendra Modi Stadium where the World Cup Final was held, has garnered attention worldwide. The event saw hundreds of thousands of BAPS volunteers gather to celebrate. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself addressed the gathering through a video message, sharing unheard stories about his connection with BAPS volunteers. For

instance, he recalled how a single call from him mobilized BAPS volunteers to assist during the Ukraine crisis.

The programme was unparalleled. I was present at the event, and I must say, even the biggest concerts cannot match what I witnessed there. The entire stadium floor was transformed into a giant screen, showcasing breathtaking visuals of BAPS's history, *seva* and guru *parampara*. The combination of magnificent lighting, projections and storytelling created an atmosphere like no other. The light show, followed by fireworks, left the audience spellbound.

Adding to the experience, each attendee wore a synchronized wristband that lit up in various colours, controlled centrally. This level of coordination and grandeur rivalled even the biggest rock star concerts, and all of this was done to honour the volunteers.

BAPS volunteers never shy away from *seva*, no matter how challenging the situation. During the Gujarat earthquake, over 6,500 volunteers served tirelessly, providing meals to 40,000 people daily for 45 days. They built 655 tin shelters for 3,000 people and distributed medical services to 45,000 individuals through mobile medical vans.

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, 1,000 sadhus and 5,000 BAPS volunteers served tirelessly. They distributed over 600,000 meal packets and ration kits; and extended medical support to the needy.

BAPS also played a critical role during the Ukraine crisis, helping evacuate thousands of Indian students and arranging meals for over 1,000 refugees.

The programme was inaugurated by Amit Shah, the Honourable Union Home Minister, alongside Mahant Swami Maharaj, followed by a spectacular cultural presentation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared an incredible story during the event: When thousands of Indian students reached Poland during the Ukraine war, he personally called

BAPS sadhus around 1 a.m., requesting their help. Within hours, BAPS volunteers mobilized to provide critical assistance, ensuring the students' safety.

This event was not just a celebration; it was a testament to the power of selfless service, unity, and devotion demonstrated by BAPS volunteers."

(Sourced and translated from X (formerly Twitter) handle: @TNNavbharat, 10 Dec. 2024.)

SHWETA JHA OF AAJ TAAK

Associate Executive Producer, TVTN



I was extremely impressed by the way these *karyakars* expressed their feelings and displayed the transformation of life into a golden one, with the mere arrival of Guruji, which looked so simple yet so elegant. A big message was conveyed in a simple and easy way.

ABHISHEK UPADHYAY

Top Secret, YouTube Channel



Every time I have seen BAPS functions in the last few years, I am wonderstruck by the devotion and dedication of the volunteers and feel that Bharat's culture and civilization have a very strong future. I could visualize the heritage of Ram, Krishna, and Buddha live in these volunteers. There is not a single volunteer who has not devoted his life for *seva* of society under the command of the guru in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. The dedication and enthusiasm of spreading the message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is pouring out from their hearts. To make Bharat a 'Vishwaguru', BAPS volunteers have implanted the seeds right here. This is the laboratory where ancient teachings are taught and implemented. Here three things are taught: service, dedication and responsibility.

ASHOK SHRIVASTAV

News Anchor and Writer, DD News



This programme was simply wonderful and divine. I have visited BAPS functions in the past. To maintain and unite the volunteers for the last 50 years and spread the cultural image of Bharat all over the world is very amazing. More than hundred thousand volunteers were sitting in the stadium with discipline and enthusiasm. Swamiji mentioned that being in a cricket stadium, there is always one team which loses and leaves with sadness, but today the entire stadium would leave happily and there will not be any sadness. In this organization, spirituality is combined with *seva* (voluntary services) and involves everyone from kids to youths to elders. Here, volunteers do 100 different services, but they show it as one service.

SHRI KANAKSINH RANA

Director, GTPL



This programme was amazingly good and the way it was organized with volunteers coming from all over India and the world, including the Home

Minister. Everybody so peacefully enjoyed it, which is truly worth appreciating. Guru Mahant Swami Maharaj is so humble and polite in spite of being the head of such a large organization; this is truly wonderful.

SHRI K.A. PUJ

Former Judge, Gujarat High Court



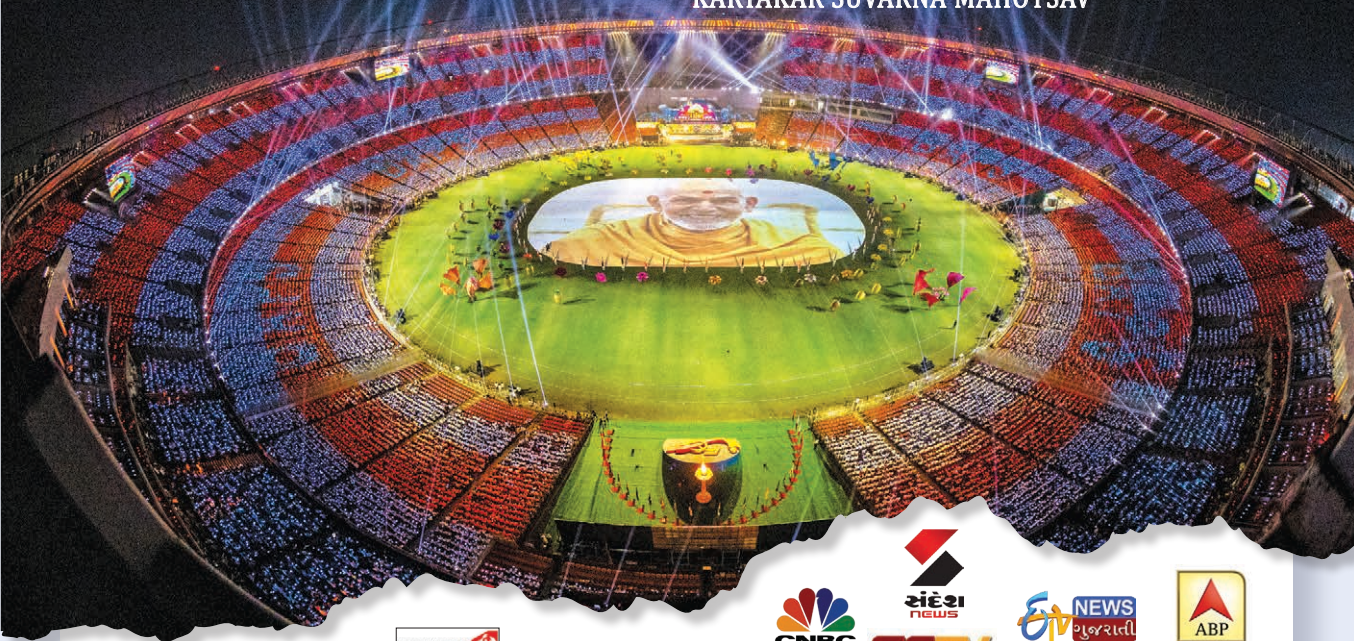
Wonderful, wonderful! I have seen and visited hundreds of functions before, but nothing comes in comparison with what Swaminarayan (BAPS) *karyakars* are doing. It cannot be described in words. This programme is for *karyakar* appreciation and the way each and every *karyakar* is handling this event is itself a glowing example of this event.

I am impressed. Where there is full faith and dedication, there is nothing to be worried about. When we dedicate ourselves with mind, body, soul and wealth, then society gets encouragement to do good work. I had the privilege of meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj on a few occasions and could see his divine power working through these volunteers. ♦



Media COVERAGE

KARYAKAR SUVARNA MAHOTSAV



In the weeks leading up to the International Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav at the Narendra Modi Stadium on 7 December 2024 and in the days following, numerous Gujarati, Hindi and English newspapers, along with regional and national media outlets, highlighted various aspects of the Mahotsav, including its cultural, spiritual and organizational magnificence.

Over 50 newspapers in Gujarati, Hindi, English, Marathi and other languages, along with more than 20 TV news channels and 100 digital platforms, radio stations such as 94.3 MY FM, covered the event extensively. Additionally, social media platforms had widespread engagement, amplifying the global reach of this celebration. Posts, reels, live streams and stories on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube from popular handles created a vibrant digital presence with more than 20 million views of the event.

Our heartfelt gratitude to all the media outlets, digital platforms, social media influencers and radio stations for their invaluable coverage and support. Their contributions played a vital role in highlighting the essence of volunteerism and spirituality that defined the Mahotsav.

A summary of the media coverage is as follows.

HEADLINES OF NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Over 1L BAPS volunteers gather to mark 50 yrs of cadre
PM lauds BAPS volunteers' humanitarian efforts

The Times of India, 8 Dec.



Modi stadium ma darshak nahi, darshan... 1 lakh karyakaro no utsav

1 lakh swayamsevak sathe Modi stadium ma technology ane dharma-sevano 'suvarna' sanyog

Divya Bhaskar, 8 Dec.

BAPS Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav ni adhyatmikta ane adhunikta sathe ujavani

Gujarat Samachar, 8 Dec.

Modi stadium mein sabse bada swayamsevak samman samaroh

Dainik Bhaskar, 8 Dec.

BAPS na ek lakh samarpit karyakaro no bhavya-divya apurva rangarang abhivadan samaroh, sau mantra-mugdh

Nav Gujarat Samay, 8 Dec.

Pick one issue every year, work towards resolution with dedication: PM to volunteers

The Indian Express, 8 Dec.

BAPS pays tribute to 1 lakh volunteers

Ahmedabad Mirror, 8 Dec.

BAPS Suvarna Mahotsav: Stadium banyu swarg

Phul Chhab, 8 Dec.

BAPS na karyakaro na sevakarya ne lidhe vishvama Bharat ni vag vadhi chhe

Janmabhoomi Pravasi, 8 Dec.

BAPS ni shakti ane manav kalyan ma tenu yogdan prashansniya: Modi

Loksatta-Jansatta, 8 Dec.

Modi stadium ma itihash rachayo: BAPS Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav ni bhavyatit ujavani

Sanj Samachar, 8 Dec.

Pura vishwa Bharat ki adhyatmik virasat ka sakshi

Rajasthan Patrika, 8 Dec.

BAPS mule jagbhar vadhla bharaatacha prabhav, pantpradhan Modi yanche gauravodgar -

Lokmat (Marathi), 8 Dec.

Ek lakh karyakaro no yojayo abhivadan samaroh

Jai Hind, 8 Dec.

Aje BAPS no Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav... Coldplay pahela Modi Stadium ma haribhakti nu maha-ayojan

Jay ho...Anand chhayo...BAPSe rachyo itihash

Kutch Mitra, 8 Dec.



BAPS na 1 lakh niswarth karyakaro no apurva rangarang abhivadan samaroh

Akila, 8 Dec.

Names of the Gujarati, English, Hindi and other dailies, magazines, TV channels, digital platforms and News agencies that covered the event are as follows.

GUJARATI DAILIES & MAGAZINES

Divya Bhaskar (all editions in Gujarat), *Gujarat Samachar* (all editions), *Nav Gujarat Samay*, *Sandesh*, *Akila* (Rajkot), *Phhulchhab*, *Gujarat Mitra*, *Jai Hind*, *Kutch Mitra*, *Janmabhoomi* (Mumbai), *Mumbai Samachar*, *Mid-day* (Mumbai) *Sanj Samachar* (Rajkot) *BK News* (North Gujarat), *Gujarat Samachar* (Special Supplement, UK), *Loksatta-Jansatta*, *Chitralkha* and many others.

TV NEWS CHANNELS (ALSO COVERED IN DIGITAL)

India TV, Aaj Tak, Times Now Navbharat, ABP Asmita, News18 Gujarati, TV9 Gujarati, Zee 24 Kalak, Gujarat First, VTV, Sandesh, GSTV, DD Girnar, DD News Gujarati, Mantavya News and others.

DIGITAL

ANI, All India Radio News, MyGovIndia, CMO Gujarat, PM India, Divya Bhaskar Network, DD India, Republic News Network, Chitralkha, Feelings, ETV Bharat, Gujarati Jagran, Times of India, Indian Express, Zee News, The Economic Times, Jagran, Dainik Bhaskar, NDTV India, Patrika, Free Press Journal, The Week, Lokmat, South Asian Times, Amar Ujala, MSN, Indian Express Gujarati, Gujarat Samachar, Patnagar Network News, News

Plus, Amar Ujala, AP Newsroom, NewsX, Jamawat, Vibes of India, Deccan Chronicle and others.

ENGLISH DAILIES

Times of India, *Indian Express*, *Ahmedabad Mirror*, *Western Times*, *The Diaspora Bi-weekly* (US) and others.

HINDI AND OTHER LANGUAGE DAILIES

Dainik Bhaskar, *Rajasthan Patrika*, *Lokmat*, *Punjab Kesari*, *Rashtriya Sahara*, *Herald Young Leader*, *Motherland Voice*, *Amrit Bela*, *Sarhad Kesari*, *Tasveer*, *Tej* and others.

NEWS AGENCIES

ANI, IANS, PTI and others.

SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES

The Mahotsav garnered widespread attention across social media platforms, with numerous handles actively sharing content about the event. Prominent government and official handles such as Narendramodi, MyGovIndia, CMOGuj, AmitShah, PIBHomeAffairs, BJP4India, IHarshSanghavi, and others shared updates and highlights of the Mahotsav.

Additionally, popular social media handles like Garv Chhe Gujarati Chhu, Crazy Amdavad, Amdavadi Crowd, Namaste Amdavad, Amazing Amdavad, and Hello Gandhinagar contributed significantly, alongside other vibrant platforms such as Coldplayindia.in, I Love Surat, Our Ahmedabad, Our Vadodara, Our Rajkot, I Love Jamnagar, I Love Rajkot, Gujarat Samachar Official, TheGujjuRocks, News18 Gujarati, MyRjArchanaJani, Gujarat First, Guju_Jalwa, and many others. ♦



Mahant Swami Maharaj's Profound Respect and Glory for Karyakars

For over four decades Mahant Swami and Dr. Swami, as sadgurus, had addressed karyakars (volunteers) during the annual three-day shibirs (training camps). For all the shibirs, Mahant Swami diligently contemplated, noted and prepared for his speeches by spending at least a week in a quiet satsang centre or mandir. He thoroughly cares for, appreciates and respects the volunteers for their long-standing selfless seva and sacrifice in times of calamity and societal needs, and also for their efforts in satsang projects like ghar sabha, anti-addiction, family harmony, and character- and faith-building in children and youths. When the proposal to celebrate 50 years of seva rendered by the karyakars and to felicitate them was made, Mahant Swami Maharaj enthusiastically approved of it and emphasized that it should be done. Thereafter, the year-long Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was formally launched in 2024. The following incidents reflect Mahant Swami Maharaj's care, love, and respect for the karyakars.

HAILING THE JAI TWICE (Bochasan)



On 22 November 2023 in Bochasan, the swamis of the Satsang Pravrutti Central Office (SPCO) and Bal Pravrutti Central Office (BPCO) sat with Mahant Swami Maharaj to inform him about the year-long Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav programmes for appreciating the *seva* of karyakars. During the meeting, Swamishri underscored the importance of karyakars by raising his hands and said, “If there were no karyakars we would be handicapped.” Thereafter, when Swamishri was requested to be present during the Divya Sannidhi Parva he replied emphatically, “I have (and want) to remain present. Because of other work this is left out.” In the concluding part of the meeting,

Swamishri stressed that the (grand finale) Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav should be celebrated supremely. And then Swamishri hailed the *jai* of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav three times.

Once, Swamishri's attendant swamis asked him whether he hailed the Mahotsav *jai* twice on every occasion so that he could remember it. Swamishri replied, “No, I do so because of their [immense] sacrifice and efforts.”

LAUNCH OF KARYAKAR SUVARNA MAHOTSAV (Surat)

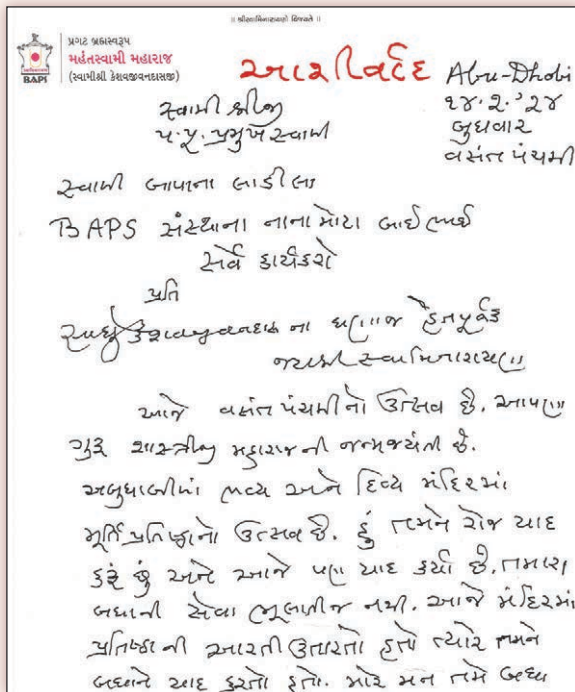


On 28 January 2024, the year-long Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was launched by Swamishri in a grand assembly of karyakars in Surat. Swamishri

was asked in what way he wished to felicitate the *karyakars*. Swamishri responded, “With pure, unbroken rice grains. Swamis will, on my behalf, peel the husks of rice grains and shower them on the *karyakars* to honour them.” Later, Swamishri himself at the age of 91 years peeled 10 rice grains.

On 3 February 2024, Swamishri wrote a letter to swamis from Surat regarding how they should peel the rice grains. One very important point Swamishri mentioned was that while peeling the rice grains they should think about the *mahima* of *karyakars*.

MY MIND IS IN YOU (Abu Dhabi)



On 14 February 2024, Swamishri consecrated the historic BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi, which gained global interest and praise through the international media coverage. It was through Swamishri’s blessings that the mandir was accomplished. Once the *murti-pratishtha* was over, Swamishri retired for his morning rest. After waking up, Swamishri wrote a letter addressed to all the *karyakars*. He instructed his attendant swami to arrange for the letter to be delivered to all the *karyakars* on that

very day. Then, Swamishri added that he should be informed once the letter had reached all the *karyakars*. The content of the letter is as follows.

“Today is the festival of Vasant Panchami. It is the birthday of our guru Shastriji Maharaj. It is the *murti-pratishtha* celebration of the grand and divine mandir in Abu Dhabi. I remember you daily and I have also remembered you today. I just cannot forget the *seva* you all do. Today, while I was performing the *pratishtha arti* in the mandir I was remembering you all.

In my mind, you are all grand and divine Akshardhams created by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, because you are dedicated devotees of Akshar-Purushottam, observe *niyams* and dharma and serve [selflessly].

Your mind is focused on the Abu Dhabi mandir and my mind is focused on you.

May you be victorious, [truly] victorious.”

SWAMISHRI’S WISH TO GIVE LABH (Ahmedabad)



On 23 February 2024, Swamishri returned from Abu Dhabi to Ahmedabad. Here, at the BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital, Swamishri was recuperating after his hectic schedules and exertions in Abu Dhabi.

During his stay at the hospital, Shrutipriya Swami informed Swamishri that for the Divya Sannidhi Parva (camp for *karyakars*) organized in Sarangpur, he would have to go twice each day to the assembly to give *labh*. Swamishri responded emphatically, “I will definitely go.”

Then, on the last day of the *karyakar* camp, it was decided to serve *dudhpak* and mango juice as *prasad* for lunch to all the *karyakars*. Similarly, Swamishri, would also be required to have *dudhpak* and mango juice for lunch. So, Shrutipriya Swami asked whether it would be conducive to him to first have mango juice and then, fifteen to twenty minutes later, drink *dudhpak*. Swamishri agreed to have both the items and said, “Serve me only rice from the *dudhpak*.”

To please the *karyakars* Swamishri agreed, even though having mango juice and *dudhpak* one after the other was not suitable to him.

One day, during Swamishri’s stay at the hospital, he noticed that a swami was not present for peeling rice grains for the *karyakars*. He then revealed, “If my health was good I would have peeled heaps and heaps of rice grains.”

Such was Swamishri’s spirit to honour the *karyakars*.

I WOULD GO TO ALL KARYAKARS’ HOMES (Sarangpur)

On 11 April 2024, the day prior to the Divya Sannidhi Parva in Sarangpur, the swamis of the satsang activities central office sat in a meeting with Swamishri. At that time, Swamishri gestured with both his hands, “If my legs were well and strong I would go to all the *karyakars*’ homes and embrace them.”

Swamishri’s profound inclination to please all the *karyakars* is apparent from his words.

HIS ABUNDANT LOVE AND APPRECIATION FOR KARYAKARS (Sarangpur)

Earlier, Swamishri’s attendant swamis had asked him about what sweet item he wished to be included for lunch for the *karyakars* on the concluding day of the Divya Sannidhi Parva. Swamishri had answered, “*Dudhpak*.”

On the penultimate day of the Divya Sannidhi Parva (11 April 2024) in Sarangpur, Swamishri came to the mandir kitchen at 1.45 p.m., where



the *dudhpak* was being made for the *karyakars* for the following day. Then, Swamishri put 12 rice grains, that he had peeled in Surat, into the large vessel containing milk. Then, he added saffron (kesar) and dry fruits, and mixed them with a ladle.

Shrutipriya Swami asked Swamishri, “Tomorrow, this sanctified *dudhpak* will be consumed by the *karyakars*, so how will it benefit them?”

Swamishri instantly replied, “They will become pure.” Then, Swamishri was asked how much *dudhpak* he would like to drink the next day. He replied one spoonful.

The next day, 12 April 2024, the sanctified *dudhpak* was brought to Swamishri during lunch. Swamishri called the *sadguru* and senior swamis to serve him, and he drank five teaspoons of *dudhpak*. Normally, Swamishri drinks only half a teaspoon or less, but he drank more and beyond his wish in appreciation of the *karyakars*’ *seva* and devotion.

SPECIAL LABH OF CHARAN SPARSH TO KARYAKARS

On 11 April 2024, during the welcome session, Yagnapriya Swami went to Swamishri to offer an ID-card. At that time, Swamishri said, “I want to give *labh* of *charan sparsh* to all the *karyakars* after this session.” Yagnapriya Swami explained that it would not be possible to arrange it so soon, but Swamishri insisted strongly. Subsequently, after due procedures, arrangements were made for the

lead *karyakars* to touch Swamishri's holy feet.

Later, the attendant swamis asked Swamishri as to when he had decided to give this *labh* to the *karyakars*. Swamishri replied, "At the first meeting held in Bochasan." The swamis gently said, "Then, you could have informed us." Swamishri replied, "If I had told you then, you would have cancelled it altogether. That's why I said it at the right time."

HIS PROFOUND WISH TO EMBRACE ALL

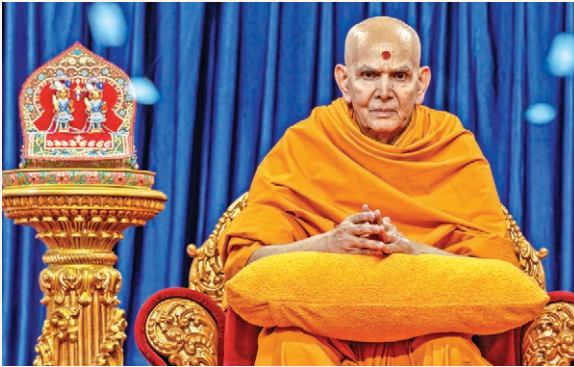
On 14 April 2024, after a meeting with Swamishri, Narayanmuni Swami asked, "Are you satisfied with the way the Divya Sannidhi Parva panned out?" Swamishri said, "No, because I wanted to embrace all the *karyakars*."

Jnaneswar Swami explained, "Swami, all the *karyakars* were very happy and satisfied with the *labh* they got, so do not harbour any dissatisfaction in your mind."

Swamishri replied, "The dissatisfaction will remain in my mind."

Swamishri's profound respect and desire to please the *karyakars* was evident from his words.

PRANAMS TO KARYAKARS (Sarangpur)



On 24 April 2024, Swamishri came on stage during the first Sant Shibir in Sarangpur. As he was about to sit down on his seat with the support of his attendant swamis the compere hailed the *jai* of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav. Instantly, Swamishri let go of the support of his attendant to his left and raised his hand out of respect. Then, he sat on his seat, joined his hands and bowed.

Narayanmuni Swami asked, "Swami, to whom did you offer pranams? Swamishri replied, "The *karyakars*." When asked why he offered pranams to them, Swamishri replied, "[Because] of their dedication and sacrifice."

MADE MOTICHUR LADDUS FOR KARYAKARS (Ahmedabad)



Once, Swamishri rang Brahmatirth Swami, head of the festival kitchen department, and asked him what food items would be packed for the *karyakars* on the day of the Suvarna Mahotsav. Brahmatirth Swami mentioned the items, and Swamishri said he would like to have *motichur* laddus made for the *karyakars*.

On 2 December 2024, Swamishri concluded his morning puja in Ahmedabad in the presence of many swamis. According to Swamishri's instructions a dish containing *motichur*, which was yet to be made into balls, was brought before him. At the same time, Ishwarcharan Swami, Viveksagar Swami, Anandswarup Swami and Yagnapriya Swami were called onto the stage to make *motichur* laddus. Swamishri personally made 10 *motichur* laddus and then got up to leave for his residence. At that time, Adarshjivan Swami requested that since he had specially made laddus for the *karyakars* he too should eat a little (for lunch). Swamishri halted in his steps and asked for the dish of *motichur* laddus to be brought back. Then, Ishwarcharan Swami took a whole *motichur* laddu to feed Swamishri. But, the attendant swamis said that Swamishri would not be able to eat a whole laddu, therefore

offer him a little. However, Swamishri willingly gestured that a whole laddu be offered to him. Ishwarcharan Swami placed a whole *motichur* laddu in Swamishri's mouth. Swamishri was happy and then walked towards his residence.

Swamishri ate a whole laddu for the first time, solely because of his appreciation for the *karyakars' seva* and to please them.

PUJYA KOTHARI SWAMI OFFERS PRASAD TO KARYAKARS (Ahmedabad)

At around 10.30 a.m., on 7 December 2024, the grand finale day of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav, Swamishri rang Brahmaturth Swami and said, "I wish to feed *motichur* laddus to the *karyakars*, but it will not be possible for me to do that. So, I want swamis to personally feed the *karyakars*, on my behalf, when they enter the stadium."

Brahmaturth Swami replied, "With over 50,000 plates already packed with the laddus it will not be possible to do that. However, if you say so, we could feed a chocolate bar each to all the *karyakars*." Swamishri agreed.

Then at 3.00 p.m., as the *karyakars* arrived at the Narendra Modi Stadium, they were given packed food dishes from around 40 counters and Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami, Narayanmuni Swami and other swamis placed a chocolate bar in each *karyakar's* mouth.

Mahant Swami Maharaj's profound sentiments of love for and *rajipo* on the *karyakars* for their selfless *seva* is apparent from the incident.

Then at 5.30 p.m., the grand finale celebration



Yagnapriya Swami reads Swamishri's letter

commenced. Swamishri had already arrived at the backstage room. He asked for Yagnapriya Swami and gave him a letter he had written with reference to the *karyakars*. Swamishri told him to read the letter in the celebration assembly. It is as follows:

"Today, my joy knows no bounds. I see Yogi Bapa and Pramukh Swami in all the *karyakars*. Since morning, I have been contemplating the *mahima* of and offering *pujan* to all the *karyakars*. I have been applying *chandlo*, *chandan archa* and rice grains, and placing a garland of *mogra* and roses (around their necks) and offering *dandvats* to all. May you all be *raji* (happy) on me.

Jai Swaminarayan with much love from Sadhu Keshavjivandas. All of you, santo and karyakars, are my hands and legs.

Saturday, 7.12.2024, 10.52 a.m.

In conclusion, from the launch of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav on 28 January 2024 in Surat to the grand finale celebration on 7 December 2024 in Ahmedabad, Swamishri's gusto and efforts to offer his respects and express his *rajipo* and love for the *karyakars* was incredible. The incidents mentioned about Mahant Swami Maharaj not only enlighten us about his noble and divine insights, but also inspire all to appreciate and perceive the *karyakars'* perennial selfless *seva* and sacrifices in a nobler and greater light. ♦

Sadhu Vivekijivandas

(Inputs by Yagnapriya Swami and Satsang Pravrutti Central Office.)

Diwali Celebration in Vartal

Shri Hari saves Bhaguji from imminent death and thereafter resumes his travels to Kariyani and Vartal...

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS SAVE BHAGUJI

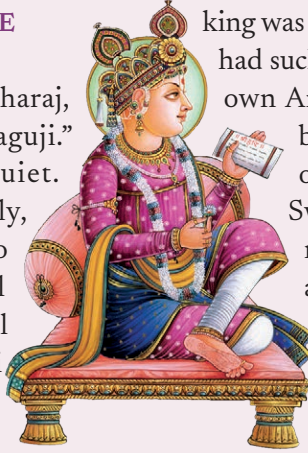
Bechar Chavda beseeched, “Maharaj, no matter what happens save Bhaguji.” Shri Hari turned solemn and quiet. After a little while he spoke boldly, “Bhaguji’s lifespan is destined to be over by today, but I will stall Kal (Death).” Maharaj then added, “Call Sachchidanand Swami.” Swami came and prostrated to Maharaj. Shri Hari instructed him, “Swami, you will have to remain on guard here tonight. When Kal comes, expel him.” Sachchidanand Swami responded, “Maharaj, when I chant your name, how can Kal come near! It can only do so at your bidding.”

FIRST SERVE FOOD TO THE PARSHADS

A few days later, Bhaguji and the injured *parshads* recovered well. Shri Hari bathed them with milk, which is considered to be auspicious, and arranged for *kansar* and chapatis to be cooked for lunch. Prior to eating, Maharaj first came to serve all the *parshads*. Nityanand Swami requested, “Maharaj, you have your meal first and then come to serve them.”

Shri Hari replied, “Today, for my own satisfaction, I shall first serve food to the *parshads*.” Nityanand Swami was touched and his eyes moistened with tears. He thought how greatly Shri Hari cared and loved his disciples. Then, Shri Hari generously served food to the *parshads*. Thereafter, Maharaj washed his hands and returned to Akshar Ordi to have lunch.

The story of Bhaguji’s valour soon reached the court of King Vajesinh Bapu of Bhavnagar. The



king was amazed that Bhagwan Swaminarayan had such a brave gem. He knew that once his own Arab platoon had fled from Gadhada because of the valour and prowess of warriors devoted to Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The king wished to meet Bhaguji, but he postponed it to a later date.

Shri Hari celebrated the Janmashtami festival on 11 August 1826 (Shravan *vad* 8, A.S. 1882) and subsequently the Jal Jhilani and Dashera festivals in Gadhpur. He, however, wished to celebrate Diwali and Annakut festivals in Vartal. Maharaj declared his desire to go to Vartal after celebrating the Sharad Punam festival. Maharaj announced, “All sadhus and devotees come to Vartal to celebrate the Diwali and Annakut festivals.”

After celebrating Sharad Punam, Maharaj instructed the devotees to return home and his sadhus to resume their satsang *vicharan*.

SHRI HARI IN KARIYANI

With eight days left till Diwali, Shri Hari travelled to Kariyani along with his principal sadhus, *parshads* and devotees. Maharaj had earlier instructed Dada Khachar, Jivuba, Laduba and their entire family to come to Kariyani and then to Vartal.

Vasta Khachar, the village chief of Kariyani, was enthused to receive Shri Hari. Long back, his mind had been vitiated by Buddha Dhadhal’s disparaging words about Shri Hari. But, soon after, through Shri Hari’s association and listening to his discourses, his heart was cleansed of *manushyabhav* (perceiving human traits).

At Shri Hari's behest, the sadhus travelling around Gadhada came to Kariyani. Shri Hari was seated in a late evening assembly decorated with oil lamps.

TAKE CARE OF THE DEVOTEES

He discoursed to his sadhus, "Each group should have five sadhus. No two groups should go to the same village, so that the devotees would not be unduly burdened in sustaining you. Our satsang is now flourishing and more mandirs are being established. The cost of maintaining them is borne by the devotees. Therefore, we should keep this in mind and look after the devotees. Serve them by discoursing to and taking care of them, so that satsang is strengthened in their lives. Discourse to them in accordance to their prevailing social conditions. The manner and content of a sadhu's discourse reflect his dignity and spiritual state. Furthermore, the discourses benefit the devotees who listen, as well as the sadhu who speaks."

Then, Shri Hari added, "We have celebrated many Diwali and Annakut festivals here at Vasta Khachar's *darbar*. He does all the *seva* and bears the burden and expenses out of his faith for and dedication to satsang. When a devotee's faith in satsang becomes robust, he never retreats from doing any type of *seva*. Those who have attained this divine association of satsang are truly fortunate and blessed."

Soon, dinner was ready and Shri Hari went to his residence to eat.

DIWALI CELEBRATION IN VARTAL

Shri Hari departed from Kariyani with his followers and arrived in Rojka. His residence was arranged to the west side of the village lake. Kakabhai and Manbhai, the local Kshatriya devotees, felt blessed at Maharaj's arrival. They and the local devotees happily joined in serving Shri Hari and his entourage. Some engaged themselves in cleaning the grains for cooking, the Brahmins started cooking and the local bards

(*chaaran*) regaled the guests.

After having lunch, Shri Hari and his group left Rojka and arrived in Ganf. Manubha Darbar of Ganf received Shri Hari and requested him to stay the night. Maharaj agreed. The next morning, Maharaj left and passed by Kamiyala and halted at Bholad, which is near the river Bhogavati. The Kathis' horses quenched their thirst at the village pond, while some sadhus and devotees took a dip to freshen themselves. Thereafter, Shri Hari travelled to Moti Boru and Vaarna. Here, they all had snacks and then proceeded to Galiyana and Varasda. A Patidar devotee stopped the group at Galiyana and offered them a meal with *kansar*.

The next day, Shri Hari travelled to Varasda and Sojitra. The devotees of Sojitra pressed Maharaj to stay for the night. But Shri Hari was in a hurry and thus replied, "I want to reach Vartal today." Then, Shri Hari and his group left and soon arrived in Vartal.

IN VARTAL

When Shri Hari arrived in Vartal, many devotees from various regions and sadhus travelling in their regions had already arrived. Maharaj reached the mandir for the evening *arti*. While Madhavanand Swami performed Thakorji's *arti*, Shri Hari stood focused, doing darshan of Lakshmi-Narayan Dev. He also remained standing and absorbed in the *murtis* while the *dhun* and *ashtak* were sung. Then, Maharaj prostrated before the deities and also performed *pradakshinas*. Thereafter, a seat was arranged for Maharaj to sit. Four oil torches, behind Shri Hari, were kindled. The mellow, serene darshan of Shri Hari in the soft light satisfied and enthused the devotees.

DIWALI CELEBRATION

The day of Diwali dawned in Vartal. There was joy in the hearts of all. That evening, the *paramhansas* sang festive bhajans on Diwali, while the devotees came forward to perform *pujan* of Shri Hari.

On the following day, New Year's Day, a grand

annakut was offered to the deities. Behanjiba, mother of Kuberdas Patidar of Changa village, had sponsored the entire *annakut*. Shri Hari performed the Govardhan puja and *annakut arti*. Thereafter, Maharaj ate a little *prasad* from the *annakut* and generously served his sadhus, who were seated in rows, by making five rounds.

At night, Maharaj sat in an assembly arranged behind the mandir. He listened to the bhajans sung by his sadhus until midnight. Thereafter, Maharaj retired to bed. Daily, Shri Hari arranged assemblies. One day, Maharaj addressed the assembly, “We celebrate the annual Prabodhini Ekadashi festival here in Vartal. Everytime, we send invitations to the devotees, but from henceforth no invitations will be sent and all the devotees should attend the Prabodhini and Ram Navami festivals. The reason being that we now have a mandir here and the *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan Dev. Therefore, these two festivals are reserved to be celebrated here.”

On the day of Kartak *sud* Ekadashi, (the day Shri Hari discoursed the first Vachanamrut in Vartal), a large shamiana was set up behind the mandir. Another small *mandap* (small makeshift tent) was set up for Shri Hari’s stay, but Maharaj preferred to stay at Vasant Suthar’s home.

Shri Hari arrived in the mandir with his sadhus and went straight for darshan of the deities. Thereafter, he went to the large shamiana, where the devotees performed his *pujan*. That evening, because of *ekadashi*, the sadhus sang bhajans till late night. All were contented by the singing and vigil.

Pujabhai Darbar of Dholera was also present during the celebration of Prabodhini Ekadashi and had stayed thereafter. He requested Maharaj, “The construction work of the mandir in Dholera has already begun. However, if you appoint a

mahant and send him there, then it will accelerate the construction work.” Shri Hari found his proposal to be valid and thus announced to his sadhus, “Is there anyone ready to be the mahant of the construction work in Dholera?” There was no response from anyone. At that time, Muktanand Swami and Adbhutanand Swami were absent in the assembly because they were ill and resting in the sadhus’ quarters. Then, Nityanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami went to inform them about Shri Hari’s appeal. Adbhutanand Swami declared, “If no one is ready, I’ll uphold Shri Hari’s words and go. However, no one will accompany me because the drinking water in Dholera is salty and unsuitable to drink.” After hearing this, Gopalanand Swami and Nityanand Swami brought Adbhutanand Swami to the assembly. Immediately, Shri Hari saw Adbhutanand Swami and said, “Swami, no one is ready to become the mahant of Dholera mandir, therefore you go.”

Adbhutanand Swami got up instantly, and humbly said, “Maharaj, since it is your command, I shall go as the mahant.” Shri Hari was very pleased with Adbhutanand Swami’s readiness to obey his wish. Subsequently, Maharaj stood up from his seat and took his expensive gold-threaded headgear (*moliyu*) with a *topi* and placed it on his head. Then, Shri Hari removed a costly cloth (*shelu*) wound around his waist and wrapped it around Adbhutanand Swami. In addition, Maharaj gave him the Shaligram he worshipped daily to worship. Thus, Shri Hari exhibited his profound *rajipo* and donned Adbhutanand Swami with costly headgear and cloth¹, in spite of him being sadhu. ◆

(Contd. in next issue)

Translated from the Gujarati text of

Bhagwan Swaminarayan authored by Shri H.T. Dave

1. Adbhutanand Swami cut the sanctified *moliyu* into twenty pieces and gave one each to the twenty sadhus who came with him to Dholera. Then, he gave the *shelu* to his attendant disciples and the *topi* and Shaligram to Krishnajivandas Swami. Later, the *topi* and Shaligram were stolen while they were kept in the mandir storeroom. Eventually, none of his later disciples possessed these sacred mementos. - *Adbhutanand Swami nu Jivan Charitra*: Editor and Publisher Shastri Harijivandas, Vartal, 1977.

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN

1 October to 13 December 2024

Junagadh, Gondal, Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad



Children perform a traditional dance on Welcome Day assembly, Junagadh

The *vicharan* report in this issue includes Swamishri's stay in Junagadh (1–13 October), Gondal (13 October to 4 November), Gandhinagar (4–11 November) and Ahmedabad (11 November to 13 December).

OCTOBER: JUNAGADH

1: Arrival

Swamishri departed from Mumbai by flight and landed at Keshod airport. Then, Swamishri travelled by car to Junagadh BAPS Mandir. After eight years, Swamishri arrived in Junagadh. He gave darshan in the *sabha mandap* and the local swamis welcomed him with a 91-foot-long flower garland. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed all and said, “Jai Swaminarayan” and retired to his residence.

3: Welcome Day (Swagat Din)

During the evening welcome *sabha*, children and youths performed an energetic traditional dance. Thereafter, swamis and devotees performed *pujan* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Swamishri in accordance with the 16 rituals prescribed in the *mahapuja*.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “We have attained satsang, which is like a *chintamani* (wish-fulfilling gem), but require *jnan* to understand its value. Otherwise, like a child, ignorant of its price, we use it like a toy to play. So, satsang is rare and priceless, and we have to take care of it.” Finally, Swamishri performed *arti* of Thakorji.

4 October

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha*



On Vidyamandir Din, students offer pranams to Swamishri, Junagadh

rituals of *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs of Jalansar and Ranavav. In the evening, Swamishri gave *samip* darshan to 4,000 devotees of Junagadh.

5: Vidyamandir Din (BAPS School)

Prior to Swamishri's arrival, 67 children of BAPS Vidyamandir, Junagadh, performed a symphony. The evening assembly was themed on 'A Perfect Student', and a drama was enacted to portray the all-round development of students in the Vidyamandir. Five parents shared personal experiences about the benefits their children have gained by studying in the Vidyamandir.

Then, Swamishri answered study and life related questions asked by the students. Swamishri said, "To attain very good results it is important to study honestly and with passion. One has to focus one's mind. To conquer one's mind one requires to do bhakti of God. We have attained Bhagwan through the Satpurush, thus through the latter's blessings everything will work out well."

Swamishri was honoured with garlands and a decorative shawl (*chadar*).

Daily, guests and dignitaries came for Swamishri's satsang and darshan and thereafter

were honoured on the stage. Hundreds of devotees offered their devotion and pleased Swamishri through observing austerities and *padyatras* (pilgrimage by foot).

6: Sanskruti Din (Culture Day)

In Swamishri's presence, a ballet was performed on 'Girnar Dole, Girnar Bole'. The performance portrayed how Mt. Girnar appears in a human form and, as a witness, narrates the divine incidents of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Guru Parampara. The presentation was interspersed with skits, dances and videos. Swamishri also narrated his own memorable incidents related to the Sorath region.

In all, 125 children, youths and devotees collaborated for the grand performance. Swamishri passed his hand on the map of Sorath and blessed for the spread of Gunatitbhav satsang.

9: Bal-Yuva Din

In the evening assembly, children and youths animatedly performed a welcome dance for Swamishri. Then, an impressive message-oriented dance, 'Mobile no Mankoda', inspired



A skit presentation by children and youths, Junagadh

all to exercise restraint and discretion while using the mobile. Then, a drama, ‘Samrat Kusang’, was enacted to show how bad company harasses children and how to avoid it.

Swamishri blessed the occasion through an interesting question-answer session. Swamishri said, “All should attend satsang *sabha*. One gets all the guidance and inspiration from it, and subsequently achieves balance in life. One’s depression is also resolved. Sunday satsang *sabha* will not allow anything bad to happen to you.”

11: Swamishri Visits New BAPS Vidyamandir

In 2008, Pramukh Swami Maharaj gifted a students’ hostel (*chhatralaya*) at the BAPS Mandir, Junagadh, for students of rural areas to study in a town. Then, nearly a decade-and-a-half later, the need for a residential school arose. Mahant Swami Maharaj fulfilled this need, and on 3 February 2022 Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami inaugurated a new residential school on the premises of BAPS Mandir, Junagadh.

Mahant Swami Maharaj visited the residential school (BAPS Vidyamandir) for the first time. He sanctified the hostel blocks: Yogi Chhatralaya,

Pramukh Chhatralaya and Mahant Chhatralaya. Swamishri inaugurated the Mahant Chhatralaya and cast his eyes to bless the classrooms, computer room, meeting room, admin room, prayer hall and dining hall.

Presently, a total of 1,500 students study in the school, out of which 900 reside in the hostels. In all, there are 100 teachers. Swamishri blessed all the students and posed for a photo session with 10th and 12th grade students. The educational complex provides premier education and inspires values in students.

On 13 October, Swamishri departed from Junagadh and travelled to Gondal.

OCTOBER: GONDAL

Swamishri arrived in Gondal on 13 October to a warm and scintillating welcome. He resided there till 4 November 2024.

16: Sharad Punam

The 240th birthday celebration of Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami was held in the evening in the assembly hall. The celebration speeches were themed on Gunatitanand Swami



Swamishri at the *gurukul* prayer hall, Gondal



Swamishri, Puja Kothari Swami, Puja Tyagvallabh Swami and Divyapurush Swami after unveiling the *gurukul* plaque, Gondal

as Akshar, as unique, warm-natured, eternal and joyful. The entire programme was interspersed with dramas and the five customary *artis*. Family members of the Maharaja of Gondal, Himanshusinhji and Jyotirmaysinhji, were honoured in the assembly. Swamishri inaugurated an audio publication by Aksharpith, '*Karie Raji Ghanshyamji...*' Then, 120 children and youths performed an exciting traditional dance while the *sadguru* swamis honoured Swamishri with garlands.

Swamishri blessed the celebration assembly, "The glory of satsang is boundless, because we have the association of supreme Bhagwan. Thus, keep this satsang strong and dear to your heart." In conclusion, Swamishri, *sadguru* swamis and guests performed the final and fifth *arti*.

18: Swamishri Visits Jnanjivandas Gurukul

Swamishri visited the new *gurukul* and unveiled a plaque describing the history of the *gurukul* since its inception in 1966. Swamishri performed his morning puja in the Nilkanth Assembly Hall.

During Swamishri's stay in Gondal, various

days, namely, Yuva Din, Gramya Din, Family Day, Bal Din, Siddhant Din, Convocation of graduates from Yuva Talim Kendra and others were celebrated in the evening assemblies.

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs: Tejlay, Dhanori and Rela (Tithal region); Gulu, Uganda (Guru Parampara); and Gayatri Nagar, Khodiyar Nagar, Sahajanand Nagar, Mota Mandva (Gondal).

29: Dhan Teras

In the morning, according to tradition, Swamishri performed *pujan* of Thakorji's jewellery. A Vishwa Shanti Lakshmi Mahayagna was held on the ghat by the River Gondali. The *yagna* commenced at 4 a.m, with 1,500 *yajmans* (participants) seated around 200 *kunds*. Swamishri arrived in the *yagna* and gave *samip* darshan to all the *yajmans* and sanctified a coconut to be offered in the main fire *kund*, as part of the concluding *yagna* ritual. The entire *yagna* ceremony was conducted by students of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, Sarangpur.



Swamishri blesses the evening Chopda Pujan assembly, Gondal

30: Kali Chaudash

A beautiful *rangoli* was created on the mandir grounds for the occasion. Children sang bhajans in Swamishri's morning puja. Thereafter, Swamishri performed *pujan* of the *murti* of Hanumanji with *chandan*, rice grains and flower petals.

31: Diwali and Chopda Pujan

Early morning, thousands of devotees had assembled for Swamishri's Diwali puja darshan. The mandir complex was decorated with countless lamps. The mandir sanctums were also illuminated by lamps. Swamishri did darshan of Thakorji, performed *arti* and kindled some lamps of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav logo. Then, swamis sang Diwali bhajans in Swamishri's puja. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed by elaborating upon Bhumanand Swami's kirtan, "*Aej Diwali re...*" Swamishri said, "An association with Maharaj and Swami is Diwali. Shriji Maharaj is ever-present through the Gunatit gurus and that is also Diwali. Having such an extraordinary association, we must remain resolute in our *niyams*. *Niyam* and *nishchay* are very dear to Shriji Maharaj, and one who is wedded to them

cannot be stopped by anyone on his ascent to Akshardham."

In the evening, Swamishri and *sadguru* swamis performed the *mahapuja* and Chopda Pujan rituals. Then, Swamishri signed and blessed the account books of Akshar Mandir, Gondal. After performing the *mahapuja arti*, Swamishri blessed the gathering, "On this occasion, I'm reminded of Yogi Bapa. He used to sit in Akshar Deri to perform this ritual lovingly and with *mahima*. He blessed each and every accounts book by signing them and singing the *dhun* for the happiness of all devotees. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had also given his immense blessings here on Diwali. We remember them and pray to Maharaj and Swami that the New Year turns out to be prosperous and blissful for all devotees. When you consolidate *agna* and *upasana* in your lives then Maharaj and Swami will purify your hearts and grant you peace."

NOVEMBER: GONDAL

2: New Year's Day

After his morning ablutions, Swamishri awakened the small *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, bathed them and adorned



On New Year's Day, *annakut* is offered to Thakorji in the main mandir, Gondal

them with garments and ornaments. Then, Swamishri profoundly prayed for the good of all souls and that all devotees be happy in all ways. Thereafter, Swamishri placed Thakorji in his lap and proceeded to the assembly hall to perform his morning puja. Thousands of devotees were present for the New Year's puja darshan. An *annakut* was arranged before the pedestalled Thakorji in the backdrop and another *annakut*, along with the logo of Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav, was arranged in front of Swamishri's puja. Swamis sang bhajans befitting the celebratory occasion.

After completing his puja, Swamishri folded his hands and blessed all the devotees. Thereafter, while chanting the Sahajanand Namavali, Swamishri offered rice grains at the holy feet of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and concluded the New Year's *mahapuja*.

Swamishri blessed all for the New Year, "Jai Swaminarayan on New Year's Day. I pray that everyone's social and financial conditions get better and your devotion too increases. May the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav be celebrated grandly and with fanfare. May we offer bhakti to Maharaj and Swami with purity (*nirdoshbhav*) and without

doubt or fear (*nishankbhav*). We must live up to the *prapti* we have attained, which means we need to consolidate dharma, *jnan*, *vairagya* and bhakti in our hearts."

Swamishri inaugurated an English publication, *Spirience*, authored by Bhadrash Swami and two prominent scientists Shri V.I. Lakshmanan and Shri S. Kalyanasundaram.

Swamishri went to the Yogi Smruti Mandir for darshan of the *annakut* offered to the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. Swamishri sang *thal* and performed *arti*. Thereafter, he proceeded to the Akshar Deri for *annakut* darshan and *arti*. Finally, Swamishri went up to the guru shrines and the main three sanctums of the mandir.

A beautiful and decorative *annakut* had been arranged in front of all the sanctums. After doing darshan, Swamishri sat before the middle sanctum and joined in singing *thals* with the swamis. In conclusion, Swamishri performed the Govardhan puja and *annakut arti*.

Swamishri celebrated the New Year with devotion and joy in the presence of thousands of devotees.

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ GIVES DIKSHA TO 66 EDUCATED YOUTHS

23 and 25 October 2024, Gondal



Newly initiated *parshads* with Swamishri, Gondal

On 23 October, Mahant Swami Maharaj gave the *parshad diksha* to 29 educated youths and on 25 October he gave the *bhagwati* (saffron) *diksha* to 37 youths from India and abroad. The ceremonies were held in the Yogi Sabha Mandap and were attended by thousands of devotees. Both the *diksha* rituals commenced in the early morning during auspicious times.

On both days, after the preliminary rituals were over, Pujya Viveksagar Swami, Pujya Anandswarup Swami, Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami and Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami addressed the assemblies. When Swamishri arrived the remaining *diksha* rituals were accomplished. Thereafter, Anandswarup Swami placed a *kanthi* on each youth, Viveksagar Swami wrapped a *gatariyu* (upper cloth), Tyagvallabh Swami placed a *pagh* and Bhaktipriya Swami applied *chandan* on the forehead, arms and chest. Then, Swamishri gave the guru mantra and blessed each youth. At the same time, Narayanmuni Swami gave a brief introduction of each initiated youth and announced his new name. This was followed by a photo taken of the *parshad* with his father and brothers. Thereafter, Ghanshyamcharan Swami presented each *parshad's* father with a letter of Swamishri's blessings. In conclusion, each father was presented with a memento and *prasad* by senior sadhus.



Newly initiated swamis with Swamishri, Gondal

The mothers were also honoured with flower garlands for dedicating their sons in the service of the Sanstha and society.

After both the *diksha* ceremonies, Swamishri addressed the assembly, "You have all bravely become sadhus. Now, you'll have to perform sadhanas, *seva* and bhakti, and specifically overcome the whims of your mind. Having embraced the path of renunciation, you will be able to conquer your mind.

"Firstly, you'll have to understand what saintliness is. In fact, to tolerate means saintliness. All of you will achieve this and accomplish it easily. However, live a saintly life by practising introspection.

"I congratulate your parents, because they have offered their educated sons with joy at the holy feet of Shriji Maharaj."

Thereafter, *sadguru* and senior swamis garlanded Swamishri. Then, the newly initiated *parshads* and sadhus expressed their joy by devotionally dancing before Swamishri while the bhajan, "*Hālo juvānadā Harivar varvā helo padyo...*", was sung.

Both *diksha* events evoked divinity and joy in the hearts of all. They were watched by thousands of devotees in India and abroad through the live broadcast.



Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel greets Swamishri, Gandhinagar



A karyakar poses a question to Swamishri during the Karyakar Day assembly, Gandhinagar

NOVEMBER: GANDHINAGAR

Swamishri departed from Gondal by flight and arrived in Gandhinagar, the capital of Gujarat, on 4 November and resided till 11 November.

4: Arrival

After a period of over five years, Swamishri arrived at the BAPS Mandir in Gandhinagar and was welcomed by Kothari Vishwavihari Swami and Dharmavatsal Swami. Swamishri advanced towards the mandir on a carpet of flower petals with children showering flower petals. After Thakorji's darshan, Anandswarup Swami garlanded Swamishri on behalf of all. Swamishri said, "Jai Swaminarayan to all" and retired to his residence.

The daily puja darshan and evening assemblies were arranged in a giant marquee behind the mandir.

6: Swamishri's Welcome and Akshardham Day

Today, was the auspicious day of Labh Pancham and the 32nd inauguration anniversary of Akshardham in 1992. The evening celebration assembly was interspersed with speeches, traditional dances and audio-visual presentations. Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami spoke brilliantly about the conception, realization and history of Akshardham.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed, "Bhagwan accomplishes all small and great works in the

Sanstha, and that is why we are all happy. Having such a grand understanding of Bhagwan as the all-doer results in no imperfections in whatever we do. You are all getting good *labh* of Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Vishwavihari Swami and Anandswarup Swami, who are beautifully running Akshardham. In future, you'll get to see new things happen here in this complex. Have courage, faith and trust and take our work forward."

7: Karyakar Day

In the evening Karyakar Day assembly, Adarshjivan Swami spoke about 'Mahant Swami Maharaj: An Ideal Karyakar'. Thereafter, inspiring incidents of *karyakars* in Gandhinagar were narrated. They were also blessed with Swamishri's *samip* darshan.

Thereafter, the Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel expressed his feelings, "Akshardham is a glowing example of faith, grand resolution and collective strength. All who come here experience purity, become more spiritual and their feelings to serve mankind are strengthened."

Swamishri blessed the assembly through a question-answer session. Swamishri said, "We have come here to solely please Bhagwan. Disregard the honour and dishonour that come your way and please Bhagwan. Bhagwan assesses you according to your *bhav* (feelings). Thus, believe Bhagwan to be the all-doer and offer bhakti and *seva*."



Swamishri consecrated the 49-feet-high *murti* of Nilkanth Varni in Akshardham, Gandhinagar

9: Yuva Din

The evening Yuva Din assembly was themed, ‘Internalize Akshardham.’ The youths performed an enthralling drama about internalizing Akshardham. Then, a youth, on behalf of all, offered a prayer to Mahant Swami Maharaj. In response, Swamishri promised, “I promise you that I’ll never leave your hands (i.e. forsake you). Even if you try to leave, I will not leave you.” The entire audience became ecstatic and responded with thunderous claps. Swamishri continued, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj has gifted you with Akshardham. To internalize Akshardham in your lives, *agna* and *upasana* have to be consolidated. *Aгна* means observing *stri-purush maryada*, exercising discretion while using mobiles, and remaining staunch in performing puja, *arti* and

chesta. And *upasana* means having resolute trust in the Satpurush.”

10: Bal Din

In the evening assembly, children presented some captivating incidents from the life of Nilkanth Varni. The programme also included speeches, *parayan*, dances and videos. The incidents of Nilkanth Varni’s victory over Pibek and *seva* of Sevakram were very well enacted. Then, children performed a beautiful traditional drama. Swamishri’s presence in the assembly inspired all.

11: 49-Foot-High Murti of Nilkanth Varni

Mahant Swami Maharaj consecrated the 49-feet-high *murti* of Nilkanth Varni in Akshardham. (For detailed news refer to *Swaminarayan Bliss*, November–December 2024, page 53.)

In the evening, Swamishri departed from Gandhinagar to Ahmedabad.

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER: AHMEDABAD

On 11 November, Swamishri arrived in Ahmedabad at night and stayed till 13 December. The highlight of his stay was the grand finale celebration of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav on 7 December at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

11 & 12: Arrival and Dev Prabodhini Ekadashi

Swamishri was given a festive welcome on his arrival in the evening at the BAPS Mandir, Ahmedabad.

On 12th morning, Swamishri gave puja darshan in the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh to celebrate the festival of Dev Prabodhini Ekadashi. A traditional vegetable shop was created on the stage. After puja, Swamishri displayed various vegetables while announcements of their unique qualities were made. Thereafter, Swamishri proceeded for Thakorji’s darshan in the mandir, where an impressive *annakut* of vegetables was arranged in all the three sanctums. Then, Swamishri performed *arti* in the central shrine.



Swamishri and *sadguru* swamis perform the Haatadi arti on Prabodhini Ekadashi, Ahmedabad

15: Welcome Day

A grand *annakut* was offered to Thakorji in the mandir sanctums. Swamishri performed *arti* and blessed all.

The evening welcome assembly unfolded with a riveting presentation of various festivals from the times of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Guru Parampara. Children, teenagers, youths and senior devotees came on the ancillary stage to offer Swamishri a variety of food items while another group of children and youths danced to the tune of appropriate festive bhajans. Swamishri was very pleased with the devotional, cultural welcome and display of

appropriate messages. The entire 30-minute spectacular welcome presentation involved 1,150 volunteers. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the assembly.

16: Swarupnishtha Din

In the evening assembly, two dramas, 'Eni Rite Rit,' and 'Aa Juda Chhe' were enacted to show that Bhagwan and Satpurush, though they appear as humans, are divine. Finally, Swamishri blessed, "If God is not manifest then who should one worship and obey the commands of? In fact, one requires God to be manifest."



On Karyakar Din, *karyakars* perform a skit before Swamishri, Ahmedabad



A drama of the historic Pramukh Varni Din occasion was enacted by devotees, Ahmedabad

17: Karyakar Din

In the evening *karyakar* assembly, a drama, ‘A Heart of Gold’ was enacted by *karyakars*, which portrayed incidents related to *karyakars*’ *seva* and sacrifice. Then, Swamishri blessed, “Your character and behaviour are such that even gold becomes pale. To become *brahmarup* or *ekantik* is the ultimate or end goal of life.”

19: Yuva Din

The central theme of this evening’s Yuva Din assembly was, ‘One Who Conquers His Mind, Conquers the World.’ The theme was presented through a staged cricket match to show how the youth volunteers or *karyakars* serve satsang despite facing many challenges. Their virtues of obeying *agna*, spiritual understanding, honesty and persevering in *seva* in the face of fierce problems were portrayed.

In conclusion, Swamishri addressed them, “An ideal *karyakar* is one who is wedded to *agna* and *upasana*. *Agna* means observing the *niyams* prescribed by Shriji Maharaj, and it also includes other understandings like believing Bhagwan to be the all-doer.

“Secondly, an ideal *karyakar* is one who practises *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta*. He also

behaves humbly, understands the *mahima* of other *karyakars* and wholly trusts Bhagwan.”

20 & 21: Invited Guests Days

Two evening assemblies were reserved for dignitaries to have Swamishri’s darshan at close quarters. On both days, dignitaries from different walks of life came for Swamishri’s darshan and blessings, including, eminent politicians, industrialists, scholars, journalists, builders, businessmen, professors and others. All of them were briefly introduced and blessed as they stood before Swamishri.

22: Pramukh Varni Amrut Din

The historic Pramukh Varni Din celebrates Shastriji Maharaj’s appointment of 28-year-old Pramukh Swami in 1950 as the president of BAPS at Ambli Vali Pol. This year, 2025, marks the celebration of 75 years of Pramukh Varni Din.

Today’s evening satsang assembly, held in Swamishri’s presence, marked the launch of this milestone year-long celebration. Viveksagar Swami spoke about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life and work. A drama about the historic event was vividly performed by devotees.

Today’s chief guest, Shri Raghuvir Chaudhary,



A skit presentation by children and karyakars on Bal Din, Ahmedabad

a literary doyen, addressed the assembly, “The spiritual legacy of Shriji Maharaj was continued by Pramukh Swami Maharaj and now through Mahant Swami Maharaj. There is continuity in this Sampradaya. Here, one finds not only religious rituals but also *seva* (of mankind). The Swaminarayan Sampradaya has elevated Sanatan Hindu Dharma, given a new direction and inspired more global traction.”

Finally, Swamishri read the pledge made by Pramukh Swami Maharaj on Pramukh Varni Din in 1950, and expressed his sentiments, “Swamishri did not merely speak this pledge, but it reflects his profound feelings for sadhus and devotees. He did not ask anything for himself, but only for the guru. There is utter humility in the pledge, and loyalty and commitment to make sincere, lifelong efforts.”

After *arti*, Swamishri was honoured with garlands.

24: Bal Din

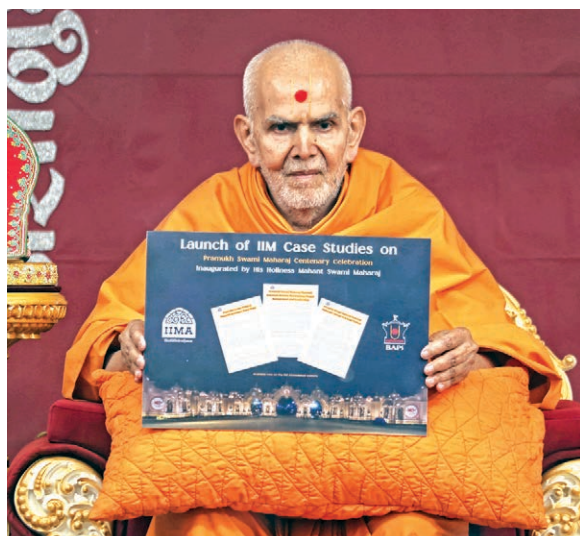
The theme of the evening assembly was ‘Mission Rajipo’. After Swamishri’s arrival, a drama ‘Tel Pali no Vepar’ was enacted to portray the message that by obeying Mahant Swami Maharaj’s *agna* one would become invaluable like gold. And Swamishri’s present *agna* for children

was to memorize the Satsang Diksha. Thereafter, Swamishri launched the project ‘Mission Rajipo’ by kindling the inaugural lamp. Then, subsequent impressive presentations inspired parents to help their children memorize Satsang Diksha.

Children presented a traditional dance with alacrity. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly through a question-answer session, “All parents should properly help their children memorize the Satsang Diksha. It is important for children to know our philosophical knowledge, which will take them to the holy feet of Shriji Maharaj. The fruit of memorizing Satsang Diksha is the attainment of Akshardham.”

25: Mandir Din

Early morning, Swamishri performed the *pujan* and *arti* of the stone for the main sanctum of the *shikharbaddha* mandir in Jagatpur (a suburb of Ahmedabad). The evening assembly highlighted the importance of mandirs in the lives of devotees, with a special focus on the *shikharbaddha* mandir in Jagatpur. After a drama on Dubli Bhatt’s sacrifice, Swamishri elaborated upon enhancing pure sentiments in whatever *seva* and sacrifice we offer.



Swamishri inaugurates the IIM case studies on Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations



(From left) Prof. Vishal Gupta, Saral Mukherjee and Chetan Soman of IIM Ahmedabad

28: Dasatva Din

The evening assembly was themed, ‘Dasatva Din,’ during which a drama, ‘Mangaliyo,’ was enacted. The essence was there is no benefit in flexing one’s ego before Bhagwan and the Satpurush.

Thereafter, Mahant Swami Maharaj made a unique inauguration. Three professors from IIM Ahmedabad, Vishal Gupta, Saral Mukherjee and Chetan Soman, had accomplished three case studies on the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations held in 2022–23, Ahmedabad. Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated the three case studies that are taught at the IIM in Ahmedabad. Prof. Vishal Gupta addressed the large assembly, “We are very fortunate that we got to study the festival. I saw the Nagar being built and witnessed the sacrifice of the volunteers. I believe that probably no management will possibly be able to understand and think about the celebration. I said it was an expression of boundless enthusiasm.”

Swamishri blessed the three professors and the devotees appreciated them with generous applause.

29 & 30 November and 3 & 4 December

Thousands of devotees from Mehsana (29 &

30 Nov.) and Himmatnagar zones (3 & 4 Dec.) came to take Swamishri’s *labh*. In Swamishri’s morning puja, youths and tribal devotees sang bhajans and danced devotionally.

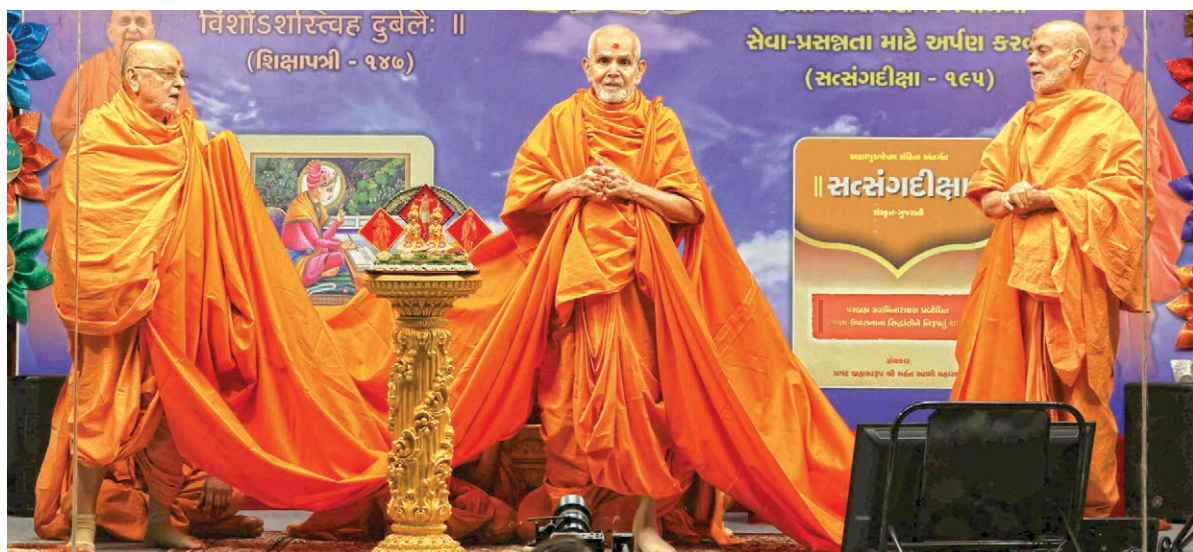
In the evening assemblies, children, youths and *karyakars* presented skits, dramas and dances to please Swamishri. They all also got the opportunity of Swamishri’s *samip* darshan.

DECEMBER: AHMEDABAD

1: Symbolic Jholi Festival

The Sunday evening assembly was celebrated as a symbolic Uttarayan Jholi festival. Both the auditoriums were packed with devotees. First, Swamishri went to Pramukh Swami Auditorium to give darshan. He performed *arti* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and hailed the *jholi* call. Thereafter, cards with pledges for donations by the devotees were collectively offered into Swamishri’s *jholi*. Then, Swamishri came to the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh. Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami spoke about the glory and importance of the *jholi* festival. Then, Swamishri inaugurated an Aksharpith print publication, *Gunatit Dieting*, authored by Dr V.P. Raval.

Swamishri blessed the occasion, “By offering annual *dharmado* (donation) one’s financial and



'Swaminarayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho...' Swamishri, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami proclaim the *jholi* call, Ahmedabad

social conditions improve. I pray that all of you be happy in body, mind and wealth." Then, Swamishri was garlanded by swamis on behalf of all. Swamishri then stood up and, with two *jholis* around his shoulders, hailed the *jholi* call twice, 'Swaminarayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho.' Then, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami jointly hailed the *jholi* call. Thereafter, swamis offered the *jholi* donation cards of the devotees into Swamishri's *jholis*. Finally, Swamishri blessed all.

5: Pujan Rituals of First Pillar for Vyara Mandir

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had sanctified Vyara village, in South Gujarat, 18 times, and Mahant Swami Maharaj had also visited the village after becoming the guru. A mandir is under construction in Vyara, and today Swamishri performed the *pujan* rituals of its first pillar.

On 6 December, Swamishri performed the *pujan* rituals of the first pillar of the under-construction *shikharbaddha* mandir in Surendranagar.

7: Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav

From 5 to 9.15 p.m., the grand finale of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav was held at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

9: Guruhari Jayanti

According to the Indian calender, today (Maghshar *sud* 8) marked Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 103rd birth anniversary. Mahant Swami Maharaj gave darshan during his morning puja to thousands of devotees. Prior to the morning puja, Atmatrupt Swami delivered an impressive speech on Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Then, bhajans were sung by swamis. Swamishri inaugurated a Hindi



Swamishri performs his daily puja on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthday celebration, Ahmedabad

print version of 'If Stones Could Sing', which describes the saga of how Akshardham was built in Robbinsville. Thereafter, a copy of the PhD thesis of Prof. Yogi Trivedi, of Columbia University, was offered to Mahant Swami Maharaj. Swamishri also inaugurated a Gujarati translation of 'In Love At Ease' (by Yogi Trivedi).

Finally, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and swamis who had significantly contributed for the success of the Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav offered garlands to Swamishri.

13: Swamishri Departs for Africa

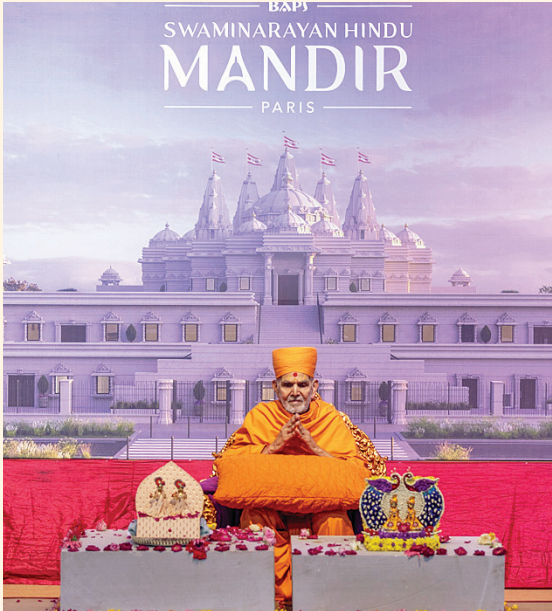
After staying for one month in Ahmedabad, Swamishri embarked at night for his satsang tour to Tanzania to perform the *murti-pratishtha* of the newly built BAPS *hari* mandir in Dar es Salaam. Thereafter, Swamishri was scheduled to visit Nairobi (Kenya) and Johannesburg (South Africa).

Prior to his departure, Swamishri did darshan of Thakorji and gave darshan to the devotees gathered in the mandir precincts. ♦

Translation by Sadhu Vivekjiivandas from a concise Gujarati report by Sadhu Brahmavatsaldas

Swamishri Performs Pujan of First Shila of BAPS Mandir, Paris

9 November 2024, Gandhinagar



In Gandhinagar, Swamishri performs *pujan* of the first *shila* of BAPS Mandir, Paris.

After his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *pujan* rituals of the first *shila* (stone) for the BAPS Mandir in Paris, France. The pre-rituals of the *shila* were performed by Ishwarcharan Swami, Viveksagar Swami and Anandswarup Swami.

Swamishri blessed, "Today, the *pujan* ritual of the first stone for the mandir in Paris has been

accomplished. This project will be completed by the wish of Yogiji Maharaj. Maharaj and Swami will be installed in the mandir. The mandir will be unique and an abode of peace. Countless people will benefit."

Then, Swamishri ritually poured water and *panchamrut* on the two *shilas* and performed *pujan* with *chandan*, rice grains and flower petals. Thereafter, Swamishri took a hammer and lightly struck a chisel on the stone to launch the process of carving. Then, Swamishri performed *arti* of the stones.

Ishwarcharan Swami spoke, "Yogiji Maharaj had instructed Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj (in Paris, 1970) to step down from the plane and sanctify the land. Since then, the land was waiting (for a mandir to be built). Mahant Swami Maharaj will fulfil the wishes of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The devotees of Paris have sacrificed immensely for the mandir construction."

Swamishri then blessed Sanjay Kara, who coordinates the project, on behalf of all the devotees of Paris. Finally, Swamishri also blessed the devotees of Europe and the UK. ♦

Murti-Pratishtha Mahotsav BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir

18–22 December 2024, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania



His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj first established a mandir in Dar es Salaam in 1977, which he re-consecrated in 1999.

Now, in 2024, the mandir has been rebuilt into a multi-storey structure. The grand Murti-Pratishtha Mahotsav of this newly built mandir was held in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj, and over 100 swamis from India and devotees from throughout the world.

On 22 December, in the early morning, Shrutiprakash Swami and other learned scholars recited the Vedic verses, while Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, and Anandswarup Swami performed the *mahapuja* and pre-*pratishtha* rituals.

Thereafter, Mahant Swami Maharaj, performed the consecration rituals for the new *murti* of Ghanshyam Maharaj. The re-consecrated rituals of the original *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami, and Bhagwan Krishna and Shri Radhaji, consecrated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1999, were performed by Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, respectively. Other senior swamis performed the *pratishtha* rituals of the guru *parampara murtis*.

Mahant Swami Maharaj advocated that devotees engage in meditative contemplation to help them ingrain the following three key truths in their hearts: 1. God is the all-doer, 2. I have received the manifest God, and 3. Our duty is to please Bhagwan.

Then, Swamishri performed *pujan* of all the

murtis and offered *abhishek* to Shri Nilkanth Varni. An *annakut* of around 120 delicacies, lovingly prepared by devotees, was offered to the *murtis* and then Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha arti*.

Thereafter, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the devotees with his divine words. He clarified that the consecrated *murtis* are not mere stone, but that Bhagwan lives in the *murtis* with all his divinity. One will reap fruits as per the way one thinks of the *murtis* and by participating in *arti*, *darshan*, and *katha*. Everyone should visit the mandir at least once a day to do *darshan*, since the mandir is not merely a showroom. He ended with a heartfelt prayer that all who have contributed to the mandir and its opening attain lasting happiness, both within and without.

The evening assembly to celebrate the grand mandir opening was themed ‘Hamari Mandir Hai Pehchan’. In his blessings, Swamishri emphasized the importance of thinking of the mandir as one’s own home. He added, “Only if such a sentiment is present will one be able to do *seva* with dedication, resulting in personal improvement and purity of life. If one does *seva* with such pure sentiments, then one will become *ekantik* and *brahmarup*. The sole purpose of a mandir is to help everyone progress on the path of becoming *ekantik*.”

Swamishri expressed his joy for the new mandir by waving the Akshar-Purushottam flag.

After the assembly, Swamishri joined devotees to briefly watch the fireworks display. ♦



INDIA

YUVA SHIBIR: 'ANDAR AKSHARDHAM'

7–11 November 2024, Surat



In October 2023, following the inauguration of the BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham in North America, Mahant Swami Maharaj said, “The physical Akshardham has been built. Now it is time to make Akshardham within.”

Inspired by this vision, over 3,000 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from Surat participated in a five-day residential *shibir* at Akshar Mandir, Gondal. Themed ‘Andar Akshardham’, the *shibir* focused on building Akshardham within by cultivating virtues like *agna* and *upasana* that lead to ultimate happiness.

To help participants internalize these principles, the *shibir* featured insightful discourses by learned BAPS swamis, engaging workshops, creative dramas, videos, dance performances, podcasts, debates, and a vibrant kirtan bhakti programme performed by swamis and youths

Also, in the sacred Akshar Deri, delegates participated in the morning *mahapuja* rituals and offered *pradakshina* around the shrine.

The *shibir* guided attendees in aligning their lives with the vision of Mahant Swami Maharaj by providing practical tools to strengthen their personal spirituality, cultivate virtues, and build a life centred on God and guru.

CELEBRATING INDIAN CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY WITH THE DELHI SANT MAHAMANDAL

21 November 2024, Delhi



As part of its year-long 20th Anniversary Celebrations, Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi hosted a one-day conference to mark the Silver Jubilee of the Delhi Sant Mahamandal (National Capital Region).

The historic conference brought together over 400 sadhus, sages, and *mahamandaleshwars* representing various *sampradayas*, *maths*, ashrams, and mandirs across the Delhi NCR. Esteemed attendees included Shri Mahant Shraddheya Narayan Giri Ji Maharaj (International Spokesperson for Shri Panch Dashnam Juna Akhada, Varanasi, and President, Delhi Sant Mahamandal NCR), Mahamandaleshwar Naval Kishore Das Ji, Mahamandaleshwar Puja Kanchan Giriji Maharaj, Shraddheya Swami Dharendra Puri Ji Maharaj, Jainacharya Lokesh Muni Ji, Shri Mahant Puja Swami Pramod Krishnam ji, Mahamandaleshwar Swami Sarvanand ji Maharaj, Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Balakanand ji Maharaj, Mahamandaleshwar Swami Pragyanand Giri Ji Maharaj, Puja Devkinandan Thakur Ji, and Acharya Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj.

The conference commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by prominent sadhus and *mahamandaleshwars*, accompanied by the recitation

of Vedic chants. Among the topics discussed were Indian spirituality, traditions, spiritual practices, saintliness, unity, and mutual love. The discourses were anchored on the teachings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, particularly his messages: 'Dharma is that which fosters mutual love' and 'In the joy of others lies our own'.

Representing the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Dharamvatsal Swami, Bhadreswami and Munivatsal Swami also presented the inspiring messages of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

After the conference, a new ambulance service was ceremonially inaugurated by the Delhi Sant Mahamandal. This service will support the upcoming Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj in 2025, reflecting the spirit of service and compassion advocated by the gathering.

This momentous conference continued Swaminarayan Akshardham's unwavering efforts to preserve Indian traditions and spirituality while promoting unity, love and peace.

IIM AHMEDABAD CASE STUDIES ON PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ CENTENARY 28 November 2024, Ahmedabad



Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad, one of the most prestigious business schools in India, has released three groundbreaking case studies on the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav, which was held from 15 December 2022 to 15 January 2023. The case studies provide invaluable insights into leadership, large-scale project execution, and innovative management.

These peer-reviewed case studies were

officially launched by Mahant Swami Maharaj at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Ahmedabad in the presence of the authors – distinguished IIM professors, Prof. Vishal Gupta, Prof. Saral Mukherjee, and Prof. Chetan Soman.

Similar to the Kumbh Mela case study by Harvard University, IIM Ahmedabad conducted case studies on the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations, exploring the meticulous planning, execution, and leadership behind the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar (PSM Nagar), a 600-acre spiritual wonderland built in just nine months that hosted over 12 million visitors during the month-long celebrations. The studies provide a comprehensive analysis of the organizational excellence displayed in creating and managing PSM Nagar.

In his case study, Prof. Vishal Gupta, an organizational behaviour professor, has highlighted the celebration's unparalleled scale, people management, service orientation, and leadership principles.

Prof. Saral Mukherjee and Prof. Chetan Soman, professors in operations management, have explored innovations in design, logistics, and sustainability in their case studies, offering a new dimension to managing large-scale projects. They highlight the integration of technology to streamline operations, ensure sustainability, and enhance the visitor experience. They elaborate upon the meticulous planning and logistics involved in constructing a mini-city with diverse facilities in a short timeframe.

During the launch event, Prof. Vishal Gupta expressed, "In September 2022, when I first visited the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar site, it was still under construction. At that moment, I thought, 'The inauguration is set for December, and we are already in September – what could possibly happen in just three months?' But when I saw the completed *nagar* in December, I couldn't believe that such a magnificent place could be built in such a short time. Witnessing the creation of this *nagar* showed me how deeply people can be motivated

to contribute selflessly without any concern for personal gain. Sustaining that level of motivation over time is something no management institute could ever imagine. This *mahotsav*, in my view, symbolizes the limitlessness of the human spirit.”

ANNUAL KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

15 December 2024 to 19 January 2025



A total of over 16,250 male and female *karyakars* attended the 26 Annual Karyakar Shibirs conducted by the Satsang Pravrutti Central Office (SPCO) at Bochasan, Sarangpur, Gondal, Ahmedabad, Sankari, Tithal and Nasik. Based on Mahant Swami Maharaj’s sentiments that *karyakars* are ‘more valuable than gold’, the *shibirs* were themed ‘Suvarnathi Savaya’.

Through speeches by learned and experienced swamis, workshops, activities, thematic skits, and videos of Swamishri’s blessings, the *karyakars* received guidance on how to better perform their satsang *seva* duties and progress in their personal practise of satsang.

SARVA DARSHAN SAMANVAY SATRA

29 December 2024, Kolkata



Many sannyasis, *brahmacharis* and scholars representing the Shankar, Ramanuj, Madhva,

Nimbark, Gaudiya, Shakta and other Darshan traditions of West Bengal participated in the Sarva Darshan Samanvay Satra, organized in the presence of Mahamahopadhyay Bhadreswami at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Kolkata by the Sanatan Sanskriti Sansad.

Among the distinguished attendees were Mahamandaleswar Sri Pranav Chaitanya Puri Maharaj, Sri Vishunupad Kathiababa, Sri Shushidhanand Maharaj, Sri Atmapriyananda Maharaj, Sri Nirgunanand Brahmachari, and Sri Bandhu Gaurav Maharaj.

All spoke about the harmony between the different Darshan traditions that has fostered and strengthened unity, respect and love among the many Sanatan Hindu *sampradayas*. They especially appreciated the efforts of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj in protecting, nourishing and nurturing the core values of Sanatan Dharma.

The Sanatan Sanskriti Sadan also conferred Mahamahopadhyay Bhadreswami with the prestigious ‘Abhinav Prasthantrayi Bhasyakar and Vedant Ratna’ title for his outstanding philosophical contributions in the field of Vedanta.

UK

BRENT FAITH COVENANT LAUNCH AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

13 November 2024, London



Representatives from BAPS Mandir, London, joined faith and community leaders from across the London Borough of Brent at the House of Commons for the official signing of the Brent Faith Covenant. The event, hosted by Dawn Butler, MP for Brent East, in partnership with

Brent Council and the Brent Multi-Faith Forum, marked a significant milestone in fostering interfaith harmony and collaboration.

The Covenant is a powerful reaffirmation of Brent's shared commitment to interfaith harmony and collective action for the greater good of the community. By bringing together diverse faith groups and community representatives, the Covenant highlights the importance of unity, understanding, and collaboration in creating a thriving and inclusive society.

Also present were Parliamentary Secretary of the Cabinet Office Georgia Gould MP, as well as Brent Multi-Faith Forum's co-chairs Rabbi Dr Frank Dabba Smith and Mustafa Field, and the Leader of Brent Council Cllr Mohammed Butt.

The occasion also featured the launch of the Brent Youth Faith Alliance, a groundbreaking initiative led by the Young Brent Foundation. The Alliance aims to empower the next generation of leaders by fostering youth engagement in interfaith dialogue and collaborative efforts.

During the event, Rutvik Patel, a young BAPS volunteer, addressed the audience on behalf of Hindus in Brent. He highlighted the vital role of youths in bridging divides between diverse communities and driving positive change, not only in Brent but across London, Great Britain, and the wider world.

Reflecting on the profound influence of Mahant Swami Maharaj, Rutvik added, "Through his life and teachings, he has shown me the importance of integrity, compassion, humility and harmony – values that now shape my everyday actions. These teachings, which call for selfless service and seeing beyond differences, continue to inspire interfaith dialogue and respect around the world, fostering greater understanding and collaboration among communities."

Dawn Butler MP echoed the sentiments expressed by several speakers, "We are not here to tolerate each other, but to celebrate each other."

Zachary Williams, a manager at the Young

Brent Foundation, elaborated on the Brent Youth Faith Alliance. "This new project," he explained, "offers young people in Brent a unique platform to discuss key issues, share their insights, and tackle challenges within the context of faith. It's a powerful opportunity for youth who often lack a voice in such discussions to bring about real, impactful change."

The historic gathering at the House of Commons stands as a testament to Brent's enduring strength in fostering interfaith harmony, with the BAPS Mandir in Neasden playing a key role in shaping a more inclusive, progressive future.

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES DIWALI AT WEMBLEY STADIUM

14 November 2024, London



The Football Association (FA) partnered with BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, to celebrate Diwali at Wembley Stadium, the home of English football.

This was the first-ever Diwali celebration to be held at Wembley Stadium, marking a historic milestone for the Hindu, Sikh and Jain communities, and a leading example of The FA's commitment to working closely with faith communities across the country to promote participation and engagement in football for all.

The evening included inspiring football talks and interactive panels comprising of professional players and coaches from the sport, including John Barnes MBE, considered to be one of the best English footballers of all time. The presentations served to encourage greater community involvement in the sport and physical well-being.

In a personal video message, FA Chair Debbie

Hewitt MBE said, “A big thank you from me, on behalf of us all at The FA, goes to Neasden Temple – our neighbours in Wembley – who are key partners in tonight’s Diwali celebration. I remember with fondness my own visit to your iconic temple. I will never forget just how welcome you made me feel and that strong sense of togetherness and hope that I felt after my visit. I hope you all feel that same sense of togetherness after celebrating Diwali with us all tonight at Wembley Stadium.”

Pooja Patel, a youth volunteer at the Mandir, spoke of her experiences from participating for a local football club. She explained how Mahant Swami Maharaj advocates physical health as essential for spiritual well-being, and how Swamishri himself played football in his youth days as a left-back.

Youths from the Mandir also enriched the celebrations through vibrant cultural performances, including a medley of uplifting bhajans, Vedic prayers for peace, and a colourful pitch-side dance, followed by the Swaminarayan *arti* that reverberated around the stadium.

Dal Darroch, Head of Diversity & Inclusion at The FA, added, “Today, we have brought together people of Hindu heritage and Sikh heritage – and it has been brilliant! It has been great to see two iconic organizations – both with buildings that are iconic landmarks of the Wembley area and the Brent region – to come together for the first time and to do it here at the home of English football.”

Deepan Lakhani, a leading BAPS volunteer at the Mandir, explained, “We are grateful to the Football Association for hosting this Diwali celebration here at Wembley Stadium. It is an honour to partner with them and celebrate the spirit of Diwali along with members of the wider British Hindu community. His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj emphasizes the importance of ‘widening the circle of harmony’ and working together with everyone. This event represented that through football, an important national sport, we can bring diverse communities together while keeping us all fit and teaching us valuable life lessons.”

BAPS RECEIVES AWARD FOR SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY

26 November 2024, London

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha in the UK



category at the London Dangoor Awards 2024 for the work carried out by the ‘Vadil Seva Kendra’ (Elderly Welfare Centre) in supporting the over-65s.

The London Dangoor Awards (formerly known as the London Faith & Belief Community Awards) shine a light on the unsung heroes of London’s faith communities, working with the Greater London Lieutenancy’s Council on Faith to bring connectedness and recognition to the interfaith scene in London.

This year, the ceremony welcomed Lord Wajid Khan of Burnley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Faith, Communities, and Resettlement – more commonly known as the Faith Minister – who paid tribute to the tireless efforts of London’s diverse community groups who work to support their communities in countless ways.

The award was presented by Lord-Lieutenant Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE, who is the representative of His Majesty King Charles III in Greater London.

BAPS was commended for the comprehensive programme of services to alleviate isolation, improve physical health and mental well-being, and provide hope and joy to the elderly.

Around 80 volunteers serve more than 500 elderly residents in Brent and Croydon, ensuring that the participants can lead happy, healthy, and dignified lives. Inspired by the life and teachings of Mahant Swami Maharaj, the centres are driven by the vision that no elderly person is a burden,

but a blessing. Each one is served with love, respect, and honour.

NORTH AMERICA

BAPS NORTH AMERICAN ACTIVITIES MEETINGS

20–28 September 2024



The Annual BAPS North American Activities Meeting (NAAM) brought together BAPS volunteers across three specialized gatherings to plan for the upcoming year and strengthen their collective efforts in *seva*. Each meeting offered opportunities to reflect on past achievements, gain updates on new policies and projects, and deepen the understanding of BAPS principles while fostering collaboration and unity.

The Children and Youth Activities Meeting, held in Atlanta, GA, on September 20 and 21, brought together over 700 participants. The Satsang Activities Meeting, held in Raleigh, NC, on the same dates, welcomed 316 participants. The Services Departments Meeting, held in Atlanta, GA, on September 27 and 28, saw the participation of 355 individuals. These gatherings laid the foundation for impactful initiatives in the year ahead, empowering volunteers to better serve their communities.

The theme, ‘Samp’, encouraged volunteers to integrate values like *madad* (helping others selflessly), *milan* (collaborating for shared goals), *mahima* (appreciating the greatness of others), and *mafi* (forgiveness) into their personal and collective *seva*. These principles were explored through thoughtful discussions, keynote speeches, and hands-on activities, empowering *karyakars* to

overcome challenges, celebrate unity, and foster a supportive environment.

Attendees engaged in interactive focus groups, outdoor sports, and team-building exercises. The programmes also highlighted collaborative problem-solving and emphasized virtues that build stronger support networks. Through daily devotions such as *arti*, *thal*, and *cheshta*, participants experienced a spiritually enriching environment while fostering *samp*. These meetings laid the groundwork for another impactful year of *seva*.

TULSI GABBARD VISITS BAPS SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM

15 December 2024, Robbinsville, NJ



BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham hosted former Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu elected to the U.S. Congress in 2013. In addition to her distinguished political career, Gabbard serves as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, a rank she has held since 2021.

Her visit coincided with the 103rd birth anniversary celebrations of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, which brought together women of all ages. The celebration featured inspiring speeches and heartfelt vignettes, highlighting his timeless teachings and the significance of faith and service in everyday life.

During her visit, former Congresswoman Gabbard embarked on a campus tour where she explored the universal values expressed through Akshardham’s art, architecture, and cultural exhibits.

As a practising Hindu for many years, Gabbard

admired the spiritual atmosphere of Akshardham. She offered flowers and prayers to the sacred *murtis* enshrined in the mandir.

During her address in the celebration assembly, Ms. Gabbard expressed, “My heart is warmed by this incredible welcome and celebration. To be able to hear about the many thousands of hands and hearts that went into building this iconic temple, and to walk through and see the meaning behind every single one of those sculptures – both the magnificent and the small etchings of some of the most famous stories about Krishna and Arjun from the Bhagavad Gita – was truly inspiring. This place is special because of all of you, your hearts, and your prayers that bring us all together.”

She also reflected on the mandir’s spiritual essence during an interview, saying, “Words are not sufficient to describe the incredible product of the work of so many hands that came together in a spirit of love, kindness, and unity. That welcoming spirit is something I feel here, as I know millions of others do when they visit Akshardham. This is a timeless offering that will bring peace and joy to all who come.”

AFRICA

BAPS REPRESENTATIVES MEET BOTSWANA’S VICE PRESIDENT

27 November 2024, Gaborone, Botswana



BAPS swamis and trustees met Mr Ndaba Gaolathe, Botswana’s vice president and finance minister. They conveyed Mahant Swami Maharaj’s best wishes, honoured him with a garland, and shared details of BAPS’s global and regional activities. During the meeting, the vice president acknowledged the importance of

selfless organizations like BAPS in Botswana’s development. The meeting concluded with the swamis offering prayers for his well-being and success, as well as the prosperity and peace of the entire nation and its people.

BAPS DELEGATION MEETS BOTSWANA’S FOREIGN MINISTER

2 December 2024, Gaborone, Botswana



Swamis and representatives of BAPS in Botswana met Botswana’s newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, Phenyo Butale. They discussed the history of good relations between Botswana and India, as well as the contributions of BAPS in promoting spirituality and value-based living for the citizens of the country. The delegation invited the honourable minister to the opening of the Johannesburg mandir in neighbouring South Africa, and offered prayers for the peace and prosperity of Botswana and all its people.

UAE

KIDS’ DIWALI CELEBRATION

17 November 2024, BAPS Hindu Mandir,
Abu Dhabi



The inaugural Kids’ Diwali celebrations at

the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi provided cultural education, fun activities, and interactive learning experiences designed to engage young minds and hearts.

The celebrations began with over 300 children collectively participating in the sacred *mahapuja* ceremony, which created an atmosphere of devotion and reflection. The children prayed for blessings, happiness, wisdom, and prosperity, and learnt about the values of gratitude and devotion.

“I loved the *mahapuja*! It was so peaceful and special to pray with so many other kids,” said Jap Parikh, one of the young participants.

One of the highlights of the event was a fun and captivating Ramayan drama, imparting valuable lessons on morality, bravery, and the victory of good over evil in a relatable way.

“The Ramayan drama was amazing! I loved seeing the characters come to life and learning about how good always wins,” said Reeva Karia.

In addition to the spiritual and cultural programmes, a vibrant carnival provided children with an opportunity to learn through play. Featuring a variety of fun and educational games, the carnival catered to different age groups and encouraged creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

“It was such a wonderful experience for my child. He came home talking about the values he learned today. I am so grateful for these kinds of events that bring our children closer to our culture,” said Samiksha Padiyar, a parent who attended the event with her family.

The joy, gratitude, meaningful experiences and sense of connection to cultural traditions felt by the children and their families truly reflected the spirit of these celebrations.

BAPS HINDU MANDIR WINS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

20 November 2024, Dubai, UAE

The BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi



received two prestigious accolades at the MEED Project Awards 2024 in association with Mashreq. The Mandir was honoured with the awards for ‘Best Cultural Project in the UAE’ and ‘Best Cultural Project in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)’, recognizing its architectural brilliance, cultural significance, and positive societal impact.

The MEED Project Awards, regarded as the gold standard in the MENA region since 2007, celebrate the best in engineering, innovation, and sustainability. This year’s ceremony, at the JW Marriott Hotel in Dubai Marina, UAE, brought together over 400 attendees, with over 40 nominees representing groundbreaking projects across the region. Categories ranged from education and energy to cultural and transport projects, showcasing the diversity and excellence of MENA’s project landscape.

The BAPS Hindu Mandir Committee, along with their partners at Capital Engineering, attended the event to receive the awards.

Judged on criteria such as engineering and design, technological innovation, project impact, and sustainability, the Mandir stood out for its meticulous craftsmanship, innovative approach, and dedication to fostering peace. It has set a benchmark for cultural and community initiatives in the region, becoming a symbol of harmony and inclusivity.

Brahmavihari Swami emphasized the profound significance of the recognition, “These awards highlight not only the technical and architectural excellence of the BAPS Hindu Mandir but also the spirit of unity and harmony that inspired its

creation. This dream became a reality thanks to the loving generosity of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the guidance of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, who has tirelessly promoted love and inclusivity in the UAE, the Middle East and across the world.”

The MEED Project Awards continue to inspire the industry, honouring projects that shape a better future for the Middle East and beyond.

IGF LEADERS DINNER CELEBRATES UNITY, COLLABORATION, AND INNOVATION

25 November 2024

BAPS Hindu Mandir, Abu Dhabi



the India Global Forum Leaders Dinner brought together distinguished leaders from India and the Middle East for an evening of dialogue, collaboration, and networking.

Speaking on the occasion, Brahmavihari Swami remarked, “This Mandir is a shining example of what can be achieved through mutual trust and harmony.”

HE Sunjay Sudhir, Ambassador of India to the UAE, highlighted the Mandir’s cultural and spiritual significance, “This temple is not only one of the most visited sites in the UAE, but is also a symbol of global harmony and peace, brought to life through the shared aspirations of the visionary leaderships.”

Manoj Ladwa, Founder and Chairman of IGF, emphasized the theme of trust, “Trust is the foundation of the flourishing India-UAE relationship and the bedrock of this great Mandir. It represents the harmony between humanity and nature that both nations aspire to uphold.”

The evening also featured engaging discussions on holistic health, leadership, and community well-being, with contributions from notable figures such as the founder of Tulah, Faisal Kottikollon, cultural and leadership expert, Suhel Seth, and tennis legend, Leander Paes.

Faisal Kottikollon advocated revisiting ancient wellness practices, “Modern medicine views diseases in isolation, but we are a union of body, mind, and spirit. Ayurveda offers a path to holistic health.”

Suhel Seth highlighted the role of spirituality in wellness, “Good health begins with a good soul. The BAPS Mandir reflects the Hindu way of life and serves as an oasis of spiritual healing in today’s world. It is the truest oasis in this desert. Be it at a mandir, mosque or church, at every moment, humanity needs spiritual healing.”

Leander Paes spoke about the unifying power of sports and the balance between cultures, “Sports transcend barriers and my dream is to inspire millions of children through this universal language. Success lies in balancing Western innovations with Eastern wisdom.”

The IGF Leaders Dinner fostered impactful dialogues, reinforcing the region’s commitment to progress and collaboration.

BAPS HINDU MANDIR WELCOMES DEFENCE ATTACHÉS OF OVER 20 NATIONS

13 January 2025, Abu Dhabi



The BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi ushered in the New Year by hosting Defence Attachés, dignitaries and families from more than 20 embassies in the UAE in a unique celebration

of 'Unity, Diversity and Harmony'.

The event brought together Defence Attachés from Belgium, Canada, Comoros Island, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Korea, Mozambique, Tanzania, Serbia, Switzerland and other countries.

BAPS trustees and volunteers traditionally welcomed the delegates with garlands and roses. Thereafter, the delegates ascended the Prayer Dune to offer selfless prayers for world peace, watched the 'The Fairy Tale' immersive show, which recreates the incredible journey of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi, and viewed the 6,500-year-old sub-fossil oaks from the Czech Republic.

Then, the dignitaries admired the Mandir's elaborate architecture and the intricately carved ancient civilizational value tales on the mandir's façade, while learning about how the Mandir inspires spiritual elevation, cultural preservation, and social service.

Then, in a brief address to the guests in 'The Orchard' Brahmavihari Swami said, "The BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi reflects our deep love for God and humanity, our commitment to global harmony, and our belief that, at their core, even those engaged in conflict seek peace. The vast diversity of flowers, faces and races strengthen our belief that God and nature that created us all believe in harmony."

In his vote of thanks, Captain Harpreet Singh Luthra congratulated the Mandir on welcoming two million visitors within the first year. Highlighting its role as a symbol of India-UAE friendship, he emphasized the Mandir's significance as a cultural bridge between the two nations.

The evening concluded with the delegates sharing and discussing ideas of peace and harmony while enjoying a dinner of exquisite Indian vegetarian dishes home cooked by volunteers.

Guest Experiences

Kale Glaicar, Canada: "This mandir is very

beautiful and it is so nice to be welcomed into a place of worship that is open to everyone, regardless of religion. It will help people understand different religions and different cultures. One of the messages is tolerance of different people, different cultures, and different viewpoints. And this just emulates that."

Nicolai Abildgaard, Denmark: "I have thoroughly enjoyed my visit and the key inspiration that I will take away from this visit is that tolerance must be nurtured. I have never been in a place where so much positive vibe and ambient tolerance are portrayed. It is truly magnificent."

Nico Hoornaert, Denmark: "The temple's impressive design and surroundings reflect India's rich culture and spiritual essence. Its creation, the result of over a thousand people working together, shows that 'Alone you go far, but together you go further.'"

Tae ik Yeo, Korea: "I am honoured to be here where different religions can be harmonized in this holy place. I feel today I had a 'spiritual flight' in the Hindu Mandir."

Takayuki Kubo, Japan: "Our experience was truly amazing. We were enveloped in the warm hospitality of the organizers, and felt the powerful sense of unity among the gathering of the delegates, all resonating with the true spirit of the Mandir."

Ms. Andrea Russo, Italy: "The Harmony Wall is symbolic in uniting everyone. The interior of the temple is from Italian marble which makes me proud as these were just stones, but such wonderful carvings gave them life."

Susanne Steiner, Switzerland: "It is a gorgeous, magnificent structure, I love how every detail speaks of harmony."

Rita Rmeily, Switzerland: "May my child come into the world safely and may I be able to become a good mother to her and make her a Harmony ambassador too. I would regularly want to come here to sit and meditate and clear my mind under the Peace Dome." ♦

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<https://pramukh.academy/pramukh-sankalp-programme/>



Pramukh SAMPURN Programme

Guided by *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj's vision, BAPS Pramukh Academy, in Atladara, is dedicated to nurturing honest and character-driven officers committed to serve the nation.

To fulfil this noble mission, dedicated centres at Atladara-Vadodara provide an exceptional platform for college students, both boys and girls, to prepare for the highly competitive Civil Services Examinations conducted by the UPSC and GPSC.

In today's competitive era, the brightest minds begin preparing for these exams while pursuing their college studies. To assist them, experienced experts have meticulously designed the Pramukh Sampurn Programme – an excellent online programme that comprehensively addresses every aspect of UPSC preparation:

- All-in-One Solution – Prelims, Mains, and Interview preparation by experienced mentors.
- Student-Centric Approach – Designed for college students balancing studies and competitive exam preparation.
- Proven Success Path – A structured curriculum from basics to advanced.
- Affordable Excellence – High-quality coaching at an accessible price.

Scan the QR Code or call +91 9998992876 to learn more.

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New BAPS Mobile App

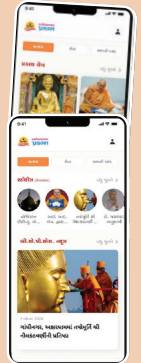


'BAPS Swaminarayan Prakash' mobile app available for Android and iOS.

- Regular daily updates of BAPS events and activities worldwide
- Digital versions of the monthly *Swaminarayan Prakash* magazine, established by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj in 1938.
- Informative and inspiring essays and articles
- Audio and video clips of profound spiritual messages and important BAPS news.

Search 'BAPS Prakash' on Google Play Store and Apple App Store to download the app.

Scan the QR code for more details.





BAPS MANDIR, DAR ES SALAAM

1. Swamis engrossed in the darshan of Swamishri's morning puja, 30 December 2024.
2. Swamishri performs the *murti-pratishtha* arti, 22 December 2024.

Inset: After performing the *murti-pratishtha*, Swamishri is engaged in darshan of Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj.

International
Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav
Grand Finale Celebration



Swamishri blesses all the karyakars till
the final spectacular fireworks display