

Digital Edition

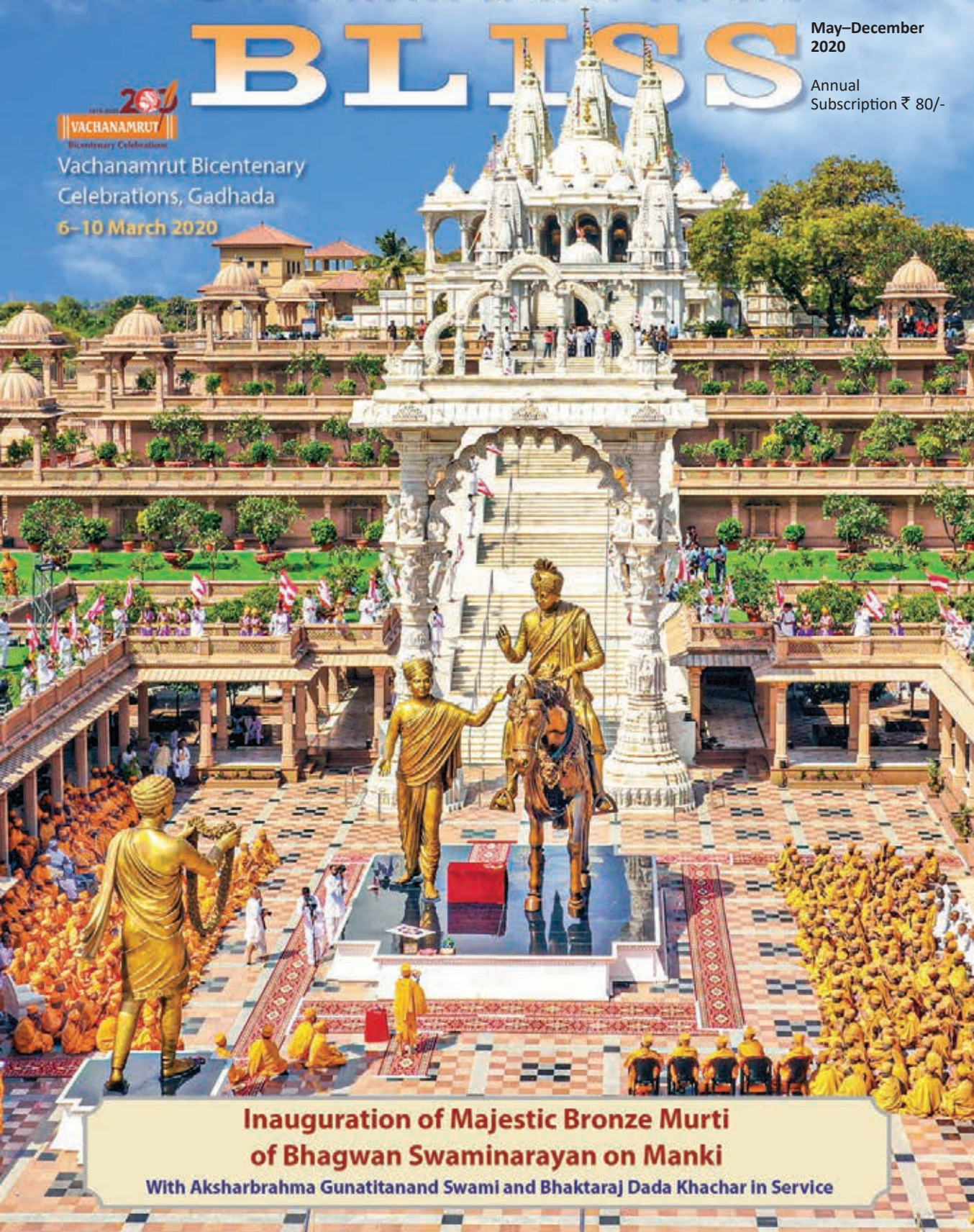
# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

May–December  
2020

Annual  
Subscription ₹ 80/-



Vachanamrut Bicenentary  
Celebrations, Gadhada  
6–10 March 2020



**Inauguration of Majestic Bronze Murti  
of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on Manki**

**With Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami and Bhaktaraj Dada Khachar in Service**





## 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF LONDON MANDIR 12–23 August 2020

Inaugurated by Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1995, the BAPS Mandir in London has become an established landmark of Hindu dharma throughout Europe. It continues to contribute to the personal, social and spiritual well-being of all. The 25th anniversary was celebrated with numerous engaging and enlightening online programmes. *Top*: Resident sadhus on the steps of the decorated mandir. *Bottom*: Mahant Swami Maharaj lights an inauguration divo. *Inset*: Swamishri performs the 25th *patotsav mahapuja*.

**Note:** Due to the coronavirus pandemic restrictions still in place, Swaminarayan Aksharpathi's printing press and offices are not yet fully functional. Hence, *Swaminarayan Bliss* cannot currently be printed. This digital edition of *Swaminarayan Bliss* is being released for the period from May to December 2020. A bimonthly digital edition of *Swaminarayan Bliss* will continue to be published until full functionality is restored.



# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

May–December 2020, Vol. 43, No. 3



Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj



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

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Rupees	Pounds	US Dollars	India Rupees
1 Year	630	9	14	80
2 Years	1300	18	28	150
3 Years	1900	27	42	220

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

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## NEW YEAR'S BLESSINGS

Swami-Shriji  
Param Pujya Pramukh Swami

Nenpur  
25.10.20  
Sunday  
Dashera

To,  
All BAPS Devotees, Children, Youths, Elders – Female and Male

Please accept our gift for the New Year and Diwali.

Out of his immense grace Brahmaswarup Shree Shastriji Maharaj has himself given to us an extraordinarily priceless, supreme gift. Thereafter, Brahmaswarup Yogi Bapa and Brahmaswarup Shree Pramukh Swami Maharaj have immensely fostered this gift. This gift is – Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj

The essence of all the shastras – Brahma and Parabrahma.

Intensely loved by Mahapurush – Brahma and Parabrahma.

Such spiritual talks were spread by Shastriji Maharaj's wish.

Yogi Bapa used to say, 'Maharaj is Purushottam, Anadi Mul Akshar is Shree Gunatitanand Swami and the Satpurush is the gateway to *moksha* – this is the clear-cut understanding. So, consolidate it in one's life.

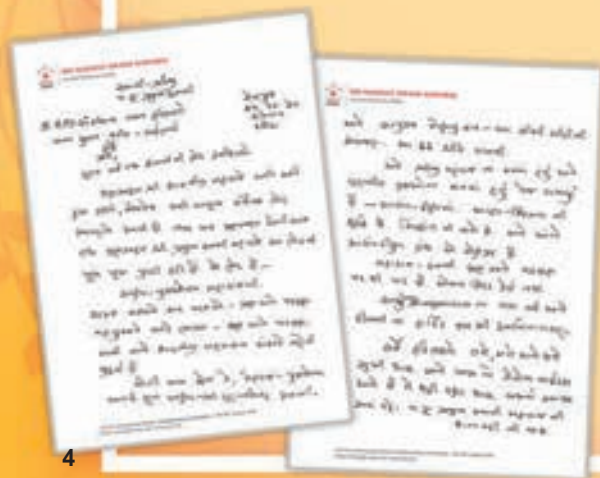
Satsang Diksha was written exactly according to what Shriji Maharaj and the Gunatit Gurus had in mind. It is *agna* and *upasana* in its pure form. It has principled-centred talks. And ultimately, the Satsang Diksha text bestows one with *moksha*.

Maharaj and Swami, Brahma and Parabrahma are supremely above everything. There is no one above them.

Heartfelt Jai Shree Swaminarayan for  
the New Year and Diwali  
from Sadhu Keshavjivandas

May all devotees be physically, mentally and financially happy. And especially, may all be protected from the coronavirus pandemic. May everyone remain in good health.

Glory to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's  
Centenary Celebrations.





**Grand Bicentenary Celebrations at Gadhada,  
the esteemed, sacred pilgrim place where  
Bhagwan Swaminarayan had often stayed  
and delivered the Vachanamrut,  
the essence of all the Hindu shastras.**



V.S. 1876–2076



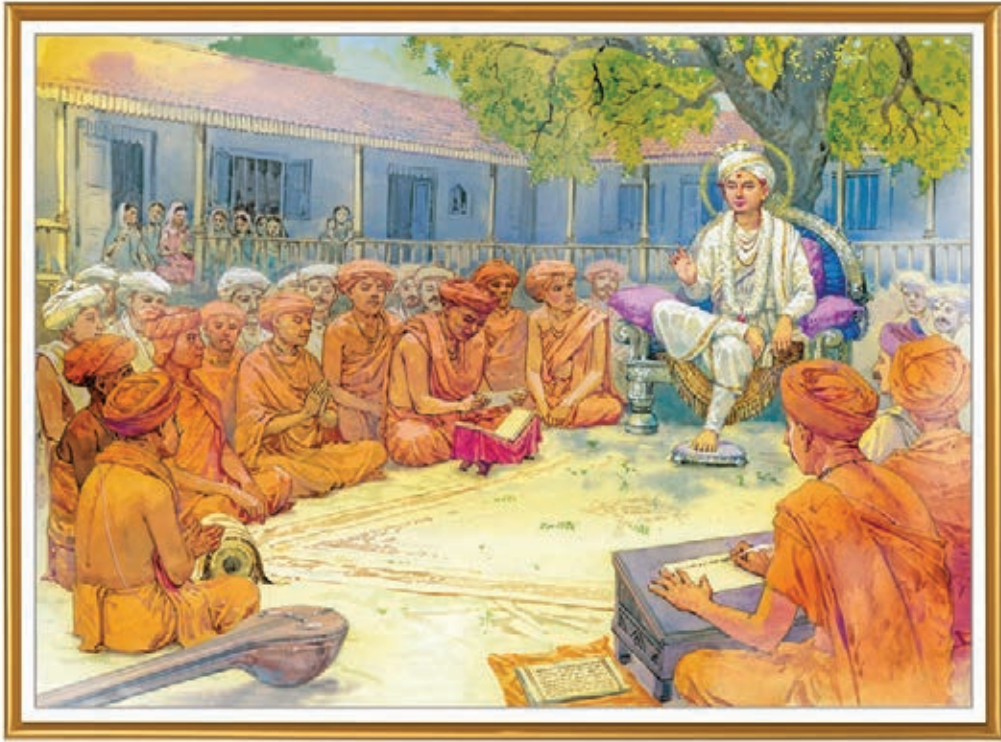
1819–2020 CE

# VACHANAMRUT BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Festively commemorated in the presence of  
Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj

6 to 10 March 2020, Gadhada





A painting of Bhagwan Swaminarayan giving a spiritual discourse in Gadhada

**T**he Vachanamrut shastra comprises the divine discourses of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, which he delivered 200 years ago, and were noted and compiled by his *paramhansas*. Once a major part of the scripture was ready the *paramhansas* presented it to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who checked it and endorsed its authenticity. The discourses were delivered in Gadhpur (Gadhada), Sarangpur, Loya, Panchala, Kariyani, Vartal, Ahmedabad, Jetalpur and Ashlali. The scripture stands out as the paramount spiritual shastra in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. Bhagwan Swaminarayan delivered the discourses from his divine experience and profound scriptural studies during his childhood years. He revealed, “What is this discourse which I have delivered before you like? Well, I have delivered it having heard and having extracted the essence of the Vedas, the shastras, the Purans and all other words on this earth pertaining to liberation. This is the most profound and fundamental principle; it is the essence of all essences” (Vachanamrut Gadhada II 28).

Kishorelal Mashruwala, a renowned Gandhian thinker, pays glowing tributes to the Vachanamrut, “The collection of the Vachanamruts of Sahajanand Swami is a jewel of the Gujarati language. I feel that for an aspirant who wishes to live a thought-provoking and spiritual life, this text of the Gujarati language cannot be discounted by any means. If he reflects and constantly contemplates upon this text, makes an effort to practise its principles and teachings, he will not fail to be uplifted. There’s hardly an equivalent to such a small text, abounding with the secret of spiritual principles and replete with practical advice for realizing them. In many places, the personal experience of the speaker manifests itself.”

The grand finale of the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Centenary Celebrations was held in the presence of Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj in Gadhada during the first week of March 2020. A brief report of the celebrations is as follows.





BAPS Mandir, Gadhadra, decked in festive lights for the celebrations





Mahant Swami Maharaj performs the *puja* of a handwritten manuscript of the Vachanamrut

## Five-day Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations

6 to 10 March 2020, Gadhpur

**T**he BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Gadhpur is perched on a sacred hill by the banks of the holy River Ghela. Decked for the celebrations, the illuminated and decorated mandir seemed like it had descended from a divine abode. It lies on the very spot where 200 years ago Bhagwan Swaminarayan profoundly wished to build a mandir. His dream was fulfilled by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, who sanctified the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj. The mandir was consecrated by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj and developed by Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The celebration events held in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj were: • Vachanamrut

Bicentenary Celebrations • Inauguration of the bronze *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on Manki • Opening of Jiva Khachar's restored *darbar* and • Immersion of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *asthi pushpa* in the River Ghela.

Swaminarayan Nagar, the celebrations venue, hosted the five days of special assemblies.

- The celebrations inspired all to imbibe the lofty teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.
- The celebrations paid tributes to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, a torchbearer of Indian culture and the spiritual ideals of Hinduism.
- The celebrations also paid a devotional tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj on the occasion of his centenary celebrations.

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For a vivid experience of the five-day Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations refer to the videos on [www.baps.org](http://www.baps.org)

## SWAMINARAYAN NAGAR

Formerly, the 5-day Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations in Gadhada was planned on a grand scale, however, with Mahant Swami Maharaj's foresight and instruction it was downsized to a local level in view of the emerging coronavirus pandemic.

When more than 100,000 devotees from India and abroad were scheduled to arrive in Gadhada the celebrations now became limited to about 5,000 devotees from Gadhada and its neighbouring villages. The state government ministers and leading lights of Gujarat appreciated and lauded the BAPS's decision to dilute the celebrations.

The celebrations venue, Swaminarayan Nagar, was created after months of intense voluntary effort by sadhus and youths.

During the five-day celebrations, devotees, well-wishers and school students availed of the exhibitions, spiritual and cultural attractions and the light and sound show. Every evening, the assembly hall hosted a variety of programmes and discourses in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

A brief description of the Swaminarayan Nagar and the evening assembly programmes is as follows.

## SWAMINARAYAN NAGAR

The celebrations venue comprised a giant decorative entrance gate, an ornate spot honouring Bhagwan Swaminarayan – the author of the Vachanamrut, four inspiring educational marquees, an enthralling light and sound show, beautiful *murtis* of great saints and seers of India installed in decorative shrines and a fascinating anamorphic art spot.

The four giant educational marquees and other attractions that inspired the visitors were:

**1. Sahajanand Hall:** Included a wonderful presentation about the glory of the Vachanamrut and how it practically inspires people's lives in a variety of ways.

**2. Muktanand Hall:** Screened a video based on a true story inspiring the viewers to live an addiction-free life. Outside the hall, visitors took pledges at the anti-addiction hut.

**3. Bharatanand Hall:** Showed an inspiring video highlighting the themes of keeping India clean, and conserving water and electricity.

**4. Paramanand Hall:** Portrayed the philanthropic life and work of Pramukh Swami Maharaj through tableaux, photographic panels and videos. Presentations on Swamiji's tireless *vicharan*, daily correspondence, building of mandirs, initiation of sadhus, moral transformations and selfless humanitarian services enlightened and inspired the visitors.

■ **Bhajanand Mandap:** During the five-day celebrations devotees read an allotted number of pages of the entire Vachanamrut, and thus collectively read the entire Vachanamrut 108 times and offered their devotion and tributes to Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

■ **Anamorphic Art Spot:** Thirty-nine 12 feet high laser-cut steel columns were arranged vertically to form an image of Mahant Swami Maharaj, which was visible from a viewing point 100 feet away.

■ **3-D Art Spot:** The 3-D art spot consisted of laser-cut aluminium pieces arranged to create an image of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's face.

■ **Blood Donation Camp:** During the 5-day blood donation camp 326 donors donated 114,100 cc of blood, which was donated to the local blood bank.

■ **Light and Sound Show:** 'Divya Sankalp Gatha' (Story of Divine Aspiration). The spectacular light and sound show was one of the star attractions in Swaminarayan Nagar. The 100 feet wide stage, with an impressive backdrop of a fort wall, came alive through the mesmerizing performances of 250 children and youths.

'Divya Sankalp Gatha', the central theme of the light and sound show, presented the topography of Gadhada, brief history of Gadhada,





School students watching a video in one of the exhibition marquees

the divine *lilas* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Gadhada and the history of how the BAPS Mandir on the hilltop was built. The entire show was created through the tireless efforts of BAPS sadhus and youths. This included the script, lyrics and music, drama, dance, sound recordings, animations, projection, synchronization of light and sound and computer programming. The seamless performances of the dramas, dances and *maha-arti*, and the projection of historical videos were show-stopping and inspiring. The 22-minute light and sound show transported the audience into the corridors of time and history.

The light and sound show was shown daily from 7.00 p.m.

### STUDENTS' CULTURAL PILGRIMAGE (SANSKRUTI YATRA)

Two months prior to the celebrations, BAPS volunteers visited the principals and teachers of various schools in the Gadhada region to inspire them to arrange a cultural visit for their

students to the festival grounds. Daily, from 9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m., the educational halls at the Swaminarayan Nagar were reserved exclusively for the school students. The students were first taken to the BAPS Mandir for darshan and a visit to the audio-visual exhibition, '*Gadhpur jotā re Shriji Sāmbhare.*' Thereafter, the students were led to the four educational halls in the Swaminarayan Nagar. They were inspired by the fascinating presentations on anti-addiction, family unity, cleanliness and conservation of electricity and water.

During the five days, a total of 8,000 students from 80 schools visited the educational marques.

### INAUGURATION OF SWAMINARAYAN NAGAR: 6 March

From 6 to 10 March, the five-day Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations were held on the 100 acres of Swaminarayan Nagar, situated on the road leading from Gadhada to Mandavdhar. On 6 March 2020, the festival ground was



Pujya Dr Swami inaugurates the Swaminarayan Nagar

inaugurated at 9.00 a.m. with Vedic chantings and *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Pujya Dr Swami untied the *nadachhadi* and declared the celebrations venue open for all. Also present were Shri Pratapbhai Khachar (President of Gadhada Municipal Corporation), Shri Sureshbhai Godhani (District President of BJP), Shri Babubhai Jebaliya (Former Chairman of Gujarat Agro Industries), Shri Pratapbhai Chhaiya (President of Congress, urban region), Shri Kiritbhai Humbal (Chairman, Gadhada Marketing Yard), Shri Irfanbhai Khimani (Secretary of the Minority Community) and other dignitaries.

Today, at 7 p.m., Pujya Kothari Swami and Pravinbhai Moru (Member of the Legislative Assembly) inaugurated the 3D mapped light and sound show. Thereafter, they briefly addressed the audience.

The inspiring programmes and assemblies held for five days in the assembly hall at the Swaminarayan Nagar are as follows.

### **WOMEN'S DAY: 6 March**

To celebrate the International Women's Day (on 8 March), the Sanstha's women devotees and volunteers organized a Women's Convention at the Swaminarayan Nagar. To demonstrate the potential and talents of women, young *satsangi* girls, female youths and adult women presented inspiring dramas, mono-acts, speeches and traditional dances. The stage guests, Pujya Nirmalaba – Mahant of Paliyad *gadi*, members of Dada Khachar's descendants, Lilaba Khachar – mother of Chairman of Gadhada Municipal Corporation and others, lauded the stage performances and presentations. (For details refer to *Premvati*, March–April 2020.)

### **PROCESSION IN HONOUR OF THE VACHANAMRUT: 7 March**

On 7 March, the second day of the celebrations, a grand ceremonial procession was carried out in Gadhada to pay tributes to the Vachanamrut. The procession commenced at 2.30





Ceremonial procession on the streets of Gadhada

p.m. and included skilled horse riders, youths on bikes wearing decorative headgear, Manki *rath* with a large *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, hundreds of swamis, bhajan groups from various regions of Gujarat, children and teenagers enthusiastically dancing to the tune of bhajans and women carrying the auspicious *kalashes* with coconuts on their heads.

The procession commenced from the PTC College and proceeded to M.M. High School, Botad Jhpo, Mandavdhar Road and finally concluded at the Swaminarayan Nagar. The colourful and devotional procession stretched for one kilometre and was welcomed and appreciated by countless people along the route.

In the evening assembly, prominent citizens of Gadhpur were felicitated on the main stage.

### HONOURING LEADERS AND DIGNITARIES OF GADHADA: 7 March

The evening assembly at Swaminarayan Nagar honoured the leading lights and dignitaries of

Gadhada. Aksharvatsal Swami gave an enlightening speech on 'Vachanamrut and Gadhada'. Thereafter, the assembly was conducted by Mahavirbhai Khachar, a descendant of Dada Khachar. Some of the invited guests and leaders spoke glowingly about the BAPS and the selfless services and works of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj.

■ Shri Hareshbhai Sodhare, President of the Bar Association, said, "The BAPS and Pramukh Swami Maharaj have spread the glory of Sanatan Dharma in the whole world. We are all fortunate and blessed that Shri Swaminarayan Bhagwan chose Gadhada for his spiritual works. Because of that, not only the name of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, but the names of Gadhada and Dada Khachar are also being sung all over the world."

■ Shri Ashraf Lakhani opined, "Two hundred years ago, a large portion of the Vachanamrut was delivered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in this Gadhada village. If one were to live a life in

accordance to the teachings of the Vachanamrut, one would become God-realized. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life was like that. After the terrorist attack on Akshardham he appealed to all to maintain peace. He was impartial towards all and I, too, was a recipient of his grace. I profoundly congratulate and celebrate the Santha's works."

■ Shri Pratapbhai Khachar, a scion of Dada Khachar, expressed, "We sincerely acknowledge and thank the BAPS for installing the 25-foot-high *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the 17-foot-tall *murti* of Dada Khachar. I also thank the BAPS for conducting the anti-addiction drives and tree-planting programmes in Gadhada."

■ Shri Sanjaybhai Thakar, President of Gadhada Educational Group, averred, "Bhagwan Swaminarayan's teachings [Vachanamrut] are divine words and lofty, similar to that of the Bhagavad Gita, Ramayan and Shrimad Bhagvat. Though Bhagwan Swaminarayan was a profound Sanskrit scholar he spoke the Vachanamrut in a simple language so that ordinary people could understand. I laud the Sanstha for making great efforts in digitalizing the Vachanamrut. The BAPS, a worldwide organization, could have celebrated this festival elsewhere, but it chose to do so in Gadhada. I thank the Sanstha for this."

■ Professor Shri R.G. Pandya, a renowned writer and historian, shared his thoughts, "From the viewpoint of history I would say that the Akshar-Purushottam Sanstha has catapulted the Swaminarayan Sampradaya on to a global level. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has said that one should preserve the sacred places of Bhagwan's *lilas*. I congratulate the BAPS for reconstructing and preserving the *darbar* of Jiva Khachar. Bhagwan Swaminarayan inspired literature of global standards and built six mandirs, which were by no means ordinary feats. Similarly, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj tolerated intense hardships to build mandirs."

■ Dr Kalathiya shared his experience, "A few days ago, where an excavator could not be deployed the swamis of the BAPS entered the dirty, mosquito-infested and boggy waters of the River Ghela to clean it. I congratulate the dedication of the BAPS swamis. Bhagwan Swaminarayan prescribes about cleanliness in his Shikshapatri. Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj picked up the used *da-tans* of the devotees. Oh, how great he was! He gave us the message of cleanliness. By Mahant Swami Maharaj's darshan I have understood the glory and divinity of a Sant. I experienced divinity when I looked at Mahant Swami Maharaj's eyes for the first time. I can never forget that experience. For three minutes I became oblivious to everything around me. The reason being that Mahant Swami Maharaj is the Satpurush belonging to the spiritual succession of Gunatitanand Swami. It is a matter of great fortune when he showers his grace upon us."

Thereafter, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Convener of BAPS, honoured and appreciated all the stage guests and then spoke about the glory of the Vachanamrut and the awesome story of how the BAPS Mandir, Gadhada, was built.

In conclusion, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the assembly, "Shastriji Maharaj derived the Akshar-Purushottam principle from the Vachanamrut. Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj emphasized the Vachanamrut, because it is the essence of all the shastras and the divine words of Bhagwan. Through it we can deal with our daily worldly tasks and also attain *moksha*. The Vachanamrut contains everything up to *moksha*. The Vachanamrut being a purely spiritual text, yet it also teaches things that benefit us in our social life.

"The Vachanamrut even contains knowledge related to science. Shriji Maharaj has said in the Vachanamrut, 'Even after splitting the atom countless times one still finds space.' Where there





*Asthi-pushpa* immersion ritual in the River Ghela, Gadhada

is space or ether one can still split it. Now we see these words have come true. One has to have faith. By having faith and a subtle vision one can personally understand the Vachanamrut on reading it.

“Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj had all realized the Vachanamrut. We cannot perceive that all the knowledge of our *brahmand* lies in the Vachanamrut. However, when we explore we can perceive it. So, it is all true.

“Shriji Maharaj has said in Vachanamrut Gadhada I 1, ‘One who realizes this knowledge can see the five eternal entities.’ The knowledge Shriji Maharaj has given is supreme. One *mukta* runs countless *brahmands* and when such countless *muktas* combine they still cannot equal Aksharbrahma. And Shriji Maharaj is infinitely above Aksharbrahma.

“In this Vachanamrut, Shriji Maharaj has said one should spiritually associate with the

Satpurush. Only then would the essence of life surface and be attained and realized. Thereafter, one will experience joy and bliss.”

Finally, Adhyatmaswarup Swami, Kothari of Gadhada Mandir, appreciated the prominent leaders and donors for their presence and gave the vote of thanks. The invited guests came on to the stage and offered their respects to the *mur-ti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and to Mahant Swami Maharaj.

### **ASTHI-PUSHPA IMMERSION RITUAL: 8 March**

The sacred Khalkhaliyo in the River Ghela and the Purushottam Ghat were sanctified hundreds of times by Bhagwan Swaminarayan during his *snan lila* with his *paramhansas* and devotees. Today, in the morning, the holy *asthi-pushpa* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj were scheduled to be ritually immersed by Mahant Swami Maharaj in the River Ghela. Several days before, swamis and volunteers worked





tirelessly in cleaning the Purushottam Ghat and Khalkhaliyo. Then, to facilitate the immersion ritual they constructed a stage in the middle of the River Ghela and a connecting walkway from Purushottam Ghat.

Thereafter, the state government made arrangements to fill the riverbed of Ghela with the fresh waters of River Narmada.

Prior to the actual immersion ritual a *mahapuja* and *pujan* of the *asthi-pushpa* were performed in the morning by Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami and senior swamis. Thereafter, Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke about the glory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the reminiscences associated with Gadhadra. Then, Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the final rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of the *kalash* containing the *asthi-pushpa*. This was followed by a collective chanting of the Swaminarayan *dhun* for the fulfilment of many wishes. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the divine occasion, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a person whose *asthi-pushpa* could have been immersed in [the rivers] of the whole world, but we have done so wherever proper arrangements could be made. Pramukh Swami Maharaj incorporated Shriji Maharaj in every part of his body.” Then, with the chanting of the final ritual *shloks* in the presence of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Swamishri poured the *asthi-pushpa* and holy water into the River Ghela. In addition, Dr Swami, Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami, Viveksagar Swami, Ghanshyamcharan Swami and senior swamis also offered the *asthi-pushpa* into the River Ghela. Swamishri then bathed Shri Harikrishna Maharaj in the River Ghela and finally took a dip in the holy waters. All felt blessed by the darshan and also recounted how 18 years before Pramukh Swami Maharaj had bathed in the River Ghela (8 January 2002) on the occasion of the Swaminarayan Mahamantra Bicentenary Celebrations.

## SANT CONVENTION: 8 March

In the evening, a convention of spiritual heads of several prominent mandirs and religious institutions was held in Swaminarayan Nagar. The many swamis and mahants who were present included Pujya Vishwambhar Bharti Babu (Mahamandaleshwar, Junagadh), Pujya Vikramgiri Babu (Mahant of Moghiba ni Jayga, Shihor), Pujya Kanaiyagiri Babu (Mahant of Dhareshwar Mahadev, Samadhiyala) and others.

After the initial speeches by senior swamis, Shri Maheshdan Gadhvi, a renowned educationist, said, “The tears of the suffering classes in society were gently wiped by Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his swamis. One cannot fail to see God in people who serve in this way. He [Pramukh Swami Maharaj] respected people of all religions. He had camaraderie for everyone.”

■ Pujya Kanaiyagiri Babu shared his sentiments, “The present age is of science and technology. Only saints show us how to save dharma and sustain one’s existence. Saints like Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj are doing such work.”

■ Pujya Vikramgiri Babu praised, “The Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha has spread the glory of Hindu culture throughout the world. This Sampradaya beholds all *sampradayas* to be equal. Along with the tradition of worshipping the five principal deities of Sanatan Dharma this Sampradaya has, through this festival, shown and celebrated the traditions of Sanatan Dharma. Today, I am reminded of the Kumbh Mela of Allahabad on seeing so many *santos* who are like the forms of *paramhansas*. By virtue of the merits of many births one can have darshan of worshipful and respectful swamis.”

■ Pujya Jhinaram Babu explained about the goal of life, “To make our life worthwhile this Sanstha often celebrates such festivals. However, life becomes worthwhile only when we give up



Sant Convention on 8 March 2020

anger, lust, greed, infatuation and take the refuge of God and his Sant. This festival makes our life become worthwhile.”

■ Pujya Mahamandaleshwar Bharti Bapu mentioned the divine works of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and recalled his divine association with Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He blessed, “More than 200 years ago Bhagwan Swaminarayan delivered the Vachanamrut here in Gadhada. The saints have, through our shastras, explained to us how to live and manage our relationships in this world. The saints have gifted us with spiritual wealth. This can be presently seen in Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *sant parampara*.

“In 1959, after circumambulating the River Narmada, I had the darshan of Yogiji Maharaj at the Shahibaug Mandir [in Ahmedabad]. He blessed me by giving me a pat. From then onwards my relationship [with this organization] has been alive.”

In conclusion, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the special assembly, “All these *santos* are highly

pure and great. All are endeavouring in their own ways and are of immense benefit to all. I am indeed very happy and pleased. There is nothing greater than *santos* coming together in this way to foster mutual love and give the benefit of their wisdom and presence.

“Bhagwan Swaminarayan has said, ‘God resides where there is harmony (*samp*), fraternity (*suhrudbhav*), compassion (*daya*) and moral discipline (*maryada*).’ Bhagwan is so great that even the Vedas cannot describe his glory, but he resides [where these four things exist]. How great this is! So, all should mutually practise *samp* and *suhrudbhav* and go to wherever there is *sant samagam*. Even if you listen to two words, it will benefit a lot. It would not suffice even if one were to touch the dust of these holy swamis’ feet to one’s head. I pray that we often meet each other with mutual love.”

Thereafter, Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami honoured the four *santos* and Shri Maheshdan Gadhvi with shawls. Finally, Swamishri and all the guests performed *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj.





Senior sadhus perform the *mahapuja* rituals for the Vachanamrut Tula Ceremony

Swamishri and the invited *santos* saw the light and sound show, ‘Divya Sankalp Gatha.’ Swamishri appreciated the show and praised, “It is supremely excellent!”

### VACHANAMRUT PUJAN AND TULA RITUAL: 9 March

On the occasion of the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations a Vachanamrut Pujan ritual was organized. The senior swamis performed the initial *mahapuja* rituals and thereafter Swamishri performed the final rituals. Hundreds of devotees also participated in the *mahapuja* rituals and felt elated.

Swamishri blessed the occasion, “Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself came to earth out of his abundant compassion. He gave darshan, performed many *lilas* and gave his happiness to all. He came here [to Gadhada] because of the devotion and love of sterling devotees like Dada Khachar and Jiva Khachar. Shriji Maharaj stayed in Gadhada for 25 years because of Dada Khachar’s love, devotion and sacrifice.

“Now, what remains for us to do? To remain resolute in the *niyams* given to us by Shriji Maharaj. One has to have spiritual faith, but one also needs to be strongly anchored to *niyam* dharma.

“Shriji Maharaj defines those who are steadfast in observing *niyams* as *ekantik* devotees. There were many *ekantik* devotees in Shriji Maharaj’s time and there are also many today. These devotees guide us all.

“One should have steadfast faith that, ‘Bhagwan is true and he is the all-doer.’ I pray that may all observe the *niyams* given by him with the sentiments that he is the all-doer.”

Since it was Fagan *sud* Punam the evening assembly celebrated the birthday of Bhagatji Maharaj and a special Vachanamrut Tula ceremony was held. In the first half of the assembly, swamis discoursed about the glory and greatness of Bhagatji Maharaj on the basis of many Vachanamruts: ‘Bhagatji Maharaj’s unswerving love for the Satpurush and its fruits’, ‘Bhagatji Maharaj’s God-realized state’ and ‘Bhagatji



Mahant Swami Maharaj during the Vachanamrut Tula ceremony

Maharaj’s passion to spread satsang.’ In addition, the *sadguru* swamis also spoke inspiring words. Then, Bhadrash Swami spoke about ‘The weighing of a scripture that cannot be weighed’ and Jnaneshwar Swami spoke on ‘Devotees, spirit of dedication’. Thereafter, the rituals of *pujan* and *tula* of the Vachanamrut commenced. Swamishri performed the *pujan* of a handwritten manuscript of the Vachanamrut, which was placed in the *tula*. Thereafter, the devotees offered their devotion in the *tula*. The women devotees also performed the *tula* of the Vachanamrut in the women’s section.

Swamishri then extolled the glory of Bhagatji Maharaj and the dedication of the devotees. He said, “Whatever Gunatitanand Swami instructed, Bhagatji Maharaj obeyed and attained the *param ekantik* spiritual state. No one could bear the insults and rebuffs he tolerated. He was introduced as ‘One who remains calm and unruffled in the midst of severe insults, then know him to be Bhagatji’. Such was Bhagatji Maharaj, who belongs to our guru *parampara*. Shastriji was a

symbol of guru bhakti, whereas Yogiji Maharaj never tired in taking Shastriji Maharaj’s name. And Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not merely talk but accomplished so many works. Pramukh Swami Maharaj totally sacrificed and dedicated his entire life.

“Today, you have offered *pujan* to the Vachanamrut by performing the *tula* ritual. Thus, your *seva* has reached Shriji Maharaj’s lotus feet. Now, remain in good spirits and become one with the Satsang-fold.”

Then, the *sadguru* swamis honoured Swamishri with a variety of decorative garlands. ♦





Mahant Swami Maharaj presides over the grand finale celebration assembly

# Grand Finale Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations

10 March 2020, Gadhada

*Samvat 1876, Maghshar sudi 4 (21 November 1819), Gadhada.*

On this day, two hundred years ago, a historic milestone occurred in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. Bhagwan Swaminarayan delivered his first Vachanamrut discourse to his *paramhansas* and devotees. Thereafter, Shriji Maharaj discoursed for the next ten years at various places in Gujarat, and his *paramhansas* meticulously noted and compiled them into the Vachanamrut.

The Vachanamrut, born out of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's profound study of the shastras, personal experiences and supreme divinity, contains the essence of all the Hindu shastras and is a repository of spiritual guidance and inspiration to all aspirants.

In December 2018, Mahant Swami Maharaj

announced and launched the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations in Rajkot. Since then, many events and programmes about the Vachanamrut have been organized to enlighten the worldwide Satsang community. The grand finale celebration was slated for 10 March 2020, (Fagan vad 1, Samvat 2076), in Gadhada.

On the evening of 10 March 2020, the celebration assembly commenced on the grounds of Swaminarayan Nagar. The entire event was relayed live throughout India and abroad.

The stage comprised a backdrop of enlarged panels of handwritten manuscripts of the Vachanamrut and a cut-out silhouette of the hillock in Gadhada. The *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and the Guru Parampara were installed in the centre of these panels. At their lotus feet was arranged the seat of Mahant



A drama presentation of devotees in the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan praising the Vachanamrut

Swami Maharaj, flanked on either side by the seats of the *sadguru* swamis.

At 5.15 p.m., the celebration assembly commenced with the singing of *dhun* and prayer by swamis. This was followed by a brief video on the Vachanamrut Bicentenary programmes celebrated worldwide at all BAPS centres in the previous 15 months.

Thereafter, a wonderful drama was enacted, in which characters like Dada Khachar, Vasta Khachar, Jiva Khachar and others from the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan lavished praises on the Vachanamrut.

Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadresh Swami expounded upon the unique features of the Vachanamrut discourses: subject matter, principle of Akshar-Purushottam revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, simplicity of language and presentation and as the essence of all the Hindu shastras.

A video was shown, portraying the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy propagated by Shriji Maharaj and validations of Gunatitanand Swami as Akshar through references of Bhagwan

Swaminarayan's declarations, experiences of the *paramhansas*, stone inscriptions and *murtis* of Gunatitanand Swami installed in mandirs.

Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke, citing references from the Vachanamrut and narrating incidents, about the importance and glory of the Gunatit Satpurush as the means to attaining God-realization.

A video displayed testimonials of devotees with reference to the Vachanamrut that the Ekantik Satpurush is present today. They shared



Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurates 'Brahma Ghosh' by Bhadresh Swami





Children and youths perform a beautiful traditional dance

their personal incidents of spiritual bliss, transformation of *swabhavs* and the conviction of attaining *moksha* through the association of the living Gunatit Satpurush.

Brahmavihari Swami narrated the experiences of devotees about their spiritual association with the Satpurush and their experience of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's teaching in the Vachanamrut that the *atma* is different from the physical body.

BAPS children and youths performed a beautiful traditional dance accompanied by a devotional lyrics describing the glory of the Vachanamrut as the essence of all the Hindu shastras.

Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami inspired all to daily read and contemplate upon the Vachanamrut, and also imbibe its principles and practise the spiritual sadhanas.

Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami's stimulating address emphasized upon reading the Vachanamrut and contemplating about the *mahima* of all.

Pujya Dr Swami explained the special glory and importance of reading the Vachanamrut in order to practise unimpeded bhakti in daily life.

Thereafter, Aksharvatsal Swami briefly

explained about the renovation of Jiva Khachar's *darbar*, and the 25-ft-high bronze *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on his mare, Manki, Gunatitanand Swami and the 17-ft- high *murti* of Dada Khachar installed in front of the BAPS Mandir as per the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Both the newly accomplished projects were ritually inaugurated and thrown open for all by Mahant Swami Maharaj this morning. Thereafter, an introductory video of Jiva Khachar's *darbar* was shown.

Then, Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated 18 Swaminarayan Aksharpith print publications written by scholarly swamis and devotees about the different aspects of the Vachanamrut (see page 29).

Thereafter the *sadguru* swamis and swamis residing and serving in Gadhada honoured Swamishri with garlands.

BAPS children performed a thrilling traditional dance to celebrate the occasion. At that time, Mahant Swami Maharaj performed *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and the historical handwritten manuscript of the Vachanamrut.



Pujya Dr Swami



Pujya Kothari  
Bhaktipriya Swami



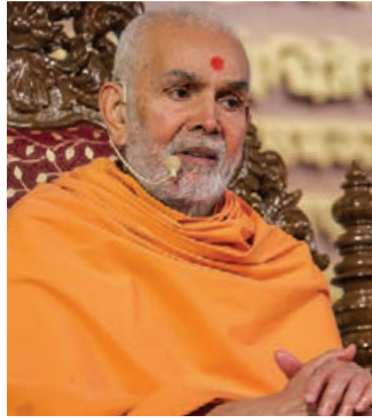
Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami



Pujya Viveksagar Swami

Finally, the assembly climaxed with Mahant Swami Maharaj's blessings, "The Vachanamrut explains to us about *agna* and *upasana*. Today's celebration programme was wonderful because of the profound elaborations delivered about the Vachanamrut. The deep mysteries of the Vachanamrut were extracted and served to all. If a staunch atheist imbibed these mysteries he would become a theist. That is what was discussed and presented here today. There is still a lot more *jnan* in the Vachanamrut.

"Once, Yogiji Maharaj arrived in Jinja, Uganda. Yogi Bapa went to the mandir terrace to perform the *kalash* rituals. There, a devotee came to Yogi Bapa and said, 'Swami, I perceive *manushyabhav* in you.' The devotee thought that Yogi Bapa would show him a miracle so that he would experience *divyabhav* in him. But Yogi Bapa interestingly replied, 'If there are any lapses in my *panch vartmans* [moral vows] then strike my head five times with your own shoes. Other than that, it is not my concern that you get *manushyabhav* [in me].' What a perfect answer! Likewise, one should continuously observe *agna*. We should consolidate *agna* and *upasana* within ourselves. Through the Vachanamrut we will attain the highest realization. We will understand the essence



of Shriji Maharaj's descent on earth through the Vachanamrut.

"Dr Swami stated that we should not see others' faults. Shriji Maharaj also says, 'When a devotee does not look at another devotee's faults but sings his virtues, then he has intensely served me. This is what I believe.' On the other hand Shriji Maharaj says, 'No matter what a *sant*

may be, whether a great person or a scholar, but if he lapses into finding faults in a devotee, he will decline [spiritually].' These are the two essences. On one who sees the virtues of a devotee, Shriji Maharaj becomes intensely pleased [*rajipo*]. His *rajipo* means *moksha*. Thus, such wonderful talks were expressed today. I congratulate everyone."

Since it was also the day of Fuldol, Mahant Swami Maharaj devotionally sprayed coloured water on Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Shri Harikrishna Maharaj also sprayed the holy coloured water on Swamishri. The *sadguru* swamis also sprayed coloured water on Shri Harikrishna Maharaj.

Finally, Swamishri, the audience and countless devotees watching the live broadcast from their homes performed the *arti*. The Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations concluded with vibrant *jais* and a traditional dance by children and youths.







Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj fulfils the wish of and pays tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj by inaugurating the grand 25-feet-high bronze *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on Manki in Gadhada

# Installation of the Bronze Murti of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on Manki

6 March 2020, Gadhada

*Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated the 25-ft-high bronze murti of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on Manki, his mare, along with Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami and Dada Khachar in front of the main steps of the BAPS Mandir in Gadhada*

‘**G**adhadu māru ane hu Gadhadāno  
[Gadhada is mine and I am Gadhada’s].’  
These affectionate words of Bhagwan

Swaminarayan reflected his deep bond with the great pilgrim place of Gadhada, Dada Khachar and his family. Gadhada had also been a witness to Shri Hari’s unique bond with Gunatitanand Swami and vice versa.

Historical records show that Bhagwan Swaminarayan often visited the hillock in Gadhada, by the River Ghela, and performed many *lilas* there. He also made efforts to build a grand mandir, which could not be realized in his lifetime. However, his dream was fulfilled 125 years later by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, the third



Bhaktraj Dada Khachar’s 17-feet-high murti will forever inspire all with his devotion, service and dedication to Bhagwan Swaminarayan







Swamishri and swamis before the *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on Manki, Gunatitanand Swami and Dada Khachar in front of the mandir

spiritual master in the succession of Gunatit gurus. Thereafter, the mandir was completed by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj and developed later by Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Then, Pramukh Swami Maharaj resolved that a monumental bronze *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on Manki, his mare, be installed before the mandir. Work on this project began in his time and was finally fulfilled and inaugurated by Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj on 6 March 2020.

In this entire project, colossal efforts were made by Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Ishwarcharan Swami. Along with him, Shrijiswarup Swami, Aksharvatsal Swami and Kirtisagar Swami endeavoured untiringly. Under their guidance and direction a model was made by expert artisans in Ahmedabad. The renowned

artist, Vasudeo Kamath, made the line sketches of the *murtis*.

The *murtis* have been installed in front of the beautifully carved marble archway that lies by the mandir steps. It seems as if Bhagwan Swaminarayan has descended on the hillock with his dear and eternal servant, Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami, with the pious Dada Khachar welcoming him with a garland.

In memory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's stay in Gadhadra for 25 years, the height of the bronze *murti* is also 25 feet. This is the tallest *murti* of Shri Hari in the entire Swaminarayan Sampradaya. Simultaneously, the 17-feet-high *murtis* of Gunatitanand Swami and Dada Khachar are also unique in the entire Swaminarayan Sampradaya.

On 6 March, Mahant Swami Maharaj



Swamishri performs *pujan* of Shri Hari's lotus feet

performed the initial inaugural rituals of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's imposing *murti*. He offered flowers and rice grains at his lotus feet and untied the *nadachhadi* tied around the pedestal of the *murti*. Inscribed on all sides of the pedestal are the names of 1,041 villages in which Bhagwan Swaminarayan personally visited. On this occasion Mahant Swami Maharaj also gave darshan and blessings to the descendants of Dada Khachar.

On 11 March 2020, Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *pujan* and *pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on Manki, *sevak* Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami and Dada Khachar. Prior to that, the senior swamis completed the initial *mahapuja* rituals and thereafter Swamishri performed the concluding *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* rituals. Then, Swamishri

performed *pujan* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's lotus feet, Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami's holy feet and of Dada Khachar's and Manki's feet. Swamishri also performed the *pratishtha*



Untying the *nadachhadi* tied around the pedestal





Performs *puja* of Dada Khachar's feet



Swamishri consecrates the shrine and performs *pradakshina*



Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami informs Mahant Swami Maharaj about the grand *murtis*

rituals of the holy *charanarvind* installed in a beautiful marble shrine to the right of the grand *murtis*. The shrine symbolizes the spot where Bhagwan Swaminarayan made many divine wishes on the hillock. Swamishri also circumambulated the shrine and offered his respects and devotion.

Finally, Swamishri blessed the gathering, “Whoever does darshan of these grand *murtis* and remembers them at the time of death, then Shriji Maharaj will come riding on Manki and liberate his soul to Akshardham.”

Swamishri then blessed the devotees who had sponsored the *murtis*: Shri Arvindbhai Shantubhai Patel (Cincinnati, USA) and

Priyavadanbhai Sureshbhai Patel (Tampa, USA). Swamishri also divinely blessed Shri Nilkanthbhai Ghanshyambhai Patel (Nairobi), the third sponsor, who was unable to attend the occasion.

The grand *murtis* were ritually declared open as a tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who had envisioned the entire project, on the occasion of his ongoing Centenary Celebrations. The historic event infused pride and joy in the hearts of all. ♦

# Mahant Swami Maharaj Inaugurates Swaminarayan Aksharpith Publications

10 March 2020, Gadhada

The new print publications in Gujarati are as follows:

- Prasthan Chatushtaye Brahma Ghosh (in Sanskrit): Sadhu Bhadreshdas
- Vachanamrutma Ekantik Dharma: Sadhu Prabhucharandas
- Vachanamrutma Satsang: Sadhu Rasikviharidas
- Swayamne Nirkhie Antar ni Ankhe: Sadhu Brahnaviharidas
- Vachanamrut na Vishishta Artha Ghatano Guru Parampara Dwara: Sadhu Aksharjivandas
- Vachanamrutma Buddhittatva nu Nirupan: Sadhu Chinmaydas
- Itihas ni Atariethi Vachanamrut: Sadhu Adarshjivandas
- Vachanamrutma Dasbhav: Sadhu Yogendradas
- Vachanamrutma Shri Hari na Vastra-Paridhan ane Fulona Shangar: Sadhu Mukundcharandas
- Vachanamrutma Jnan Nirupan: Sadhu Priyaswarupdas
- Vachanamrutma Drashtanta Bodh: Sadhu Shrijikirtandas
- Vachanamrutma Shrimad Bhagvat na Patro: Sadhu Viveknishthdas
- Vachanamrutma Nitya Sadhana: Sadhu Jnanvardhandas
- Vachanamrutma Management na Siddhanto: Prof. A.C. Brahmabhatt
- Vachanamrutma Antardrashti: Sadhu Jnantruptadas
- Vachanamrutma Ashro ane Nischay: Prof. Ramesh M. Dave
- Vachanamrut ane Shikshan: Harikrishna Shastri
- Shriji Charitra Vihar, Parts 1, 2 and 3 (Marathi Edition)
- Bhagwan Shri Swaminarayan – Divya Lilao: Sadhu Aksharvatsaldas
- Vachanamrutni Vishishtao: Sadhu Jnanananddas
- Vachanamrut Yuvano Mate: Sadhu Jnannayandas
- Vachanamrutma Bhakta-Bhagwan Sambandh: Sadhu Shrutiprakashdas
- Vachanamrutma Bhakti Nirupan: Sadhu Bhaktisagardas
- Vachanamrutma Pragattu Paramhansonu Vyaktitva: Sadhu Madhurvadandas
- Maru Jivan Sugandhi Bane: Sadhu Amrutvadandas
- Tamaso ma Jyotirgamaya (Speeches in Hindi about the Vachanamrut – in pendrive).







# Shri Jiva Khachar's Darbar

The newly restored divine and historic darbar of  
Jiva Khachar in Gadhada







### In Jiva Khachar's Darbar:

- Bhagwan Swaminarayan lived for three years and performed innumerable *lilas*.
- Shri Hari celebrated the Rangotsav, Raasotsav, Vasantotsav, Diwali, Annakut and other festivals to bless and enrich devotees with his divine joy and priceless memories.
- Shri Hari discoursed and enlightened all with his divine wisdom and the Vedic principles.
- Shri Hari pleased his *paramhansas* by joyfully serving them meals.





A painting depicts Jiva Khachar offering humble respects to Bhagwan Swaminarayan in his *darbar*

**L**ike the avatars of Bhagwan Ram and Krishna, Bhagwan Swaminarayan performed countless *lilas* (divine activities) for the joy and spiritual liberation of innumerable pious souls. Among the many villages and towns he visited or stayed during his travels in Gujarat, Gadhada (Gadhpur) had earned his unprecedented favour and blessings. The reason for this was the profound love and selfless bhakti of the devotees of Gadhpur. The narrations about the love and devotion of Bhaktaraj Abhel Khachar, Bhaktaraj Dada Khachar, Bhaktaraj Laduba and Bhaktaraj Jivuba in the Satsang scriptures are legendary. Bhaktaraj Jiva Khachar was also a dedicated and devout devotee. During his initial years in Gadhada, Bhagwan Swaminarayan resided in Jiva Khachar's *darbar* and performed many divine *lilas*.

Jiva Khachar was not only a royal chief who had selflessly dedicated himself at the holy feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, but his name and fame had earned him the respect and honour of

Maharaja Vakhatsinhji of Bhavnagar, who gave him a prominent seat in his royal court. On several occasions Bhagwan Swaminarayan expressed his joy and pleasure on Jiva Khachar for his virtues of politeness and generosity.

The village of Gadhada was established by Dana Khachar, who had two sons: Jiva Khachar and Unnad Khachar. Since Unnad Khachar was the younger son, his family came to be known as 'Nani Deli or [Small House]', whereas Jiva Khachar and his family came to be known as 'Moti Deli [Big House]'. Jiva Khachar of the 'Moti Deli' had a son named Puja Khachar, and his son's name was Jiva Khachar.<sup>1</sup> The latter was deeply impressed when he first saw Bhagwan Swaminarayan during his maiden visit to Gadhada in 1803. He was convinced that Shri Hari was Paramatma. Subsequently, he invited him to his home and requested him to permanently reside in Gadhada. But this did not occur at that time. Later, on 10 February 1805, Bhagwan Swaminarayan arrived

<sup>1</sup> Jiva Khachar and Abhel Khachar were cousin brothers. Thus, Jiva Khachar was the uncle of Dada Khachar.



A tableau of Jiva Khachar and his family in the newly renovated *darbargadh*

in Gadhada for the second time because of the profound devotion of Abhel Khachar and Jiva Khachar. He then decided to stay there.

Historical texts narrate many accounts of Jiva Khachar's bravery. Though he was a Kshatriya his speech was like that of a scholar. When the dough-ty Jiva Khachar came into Shriji Maharaj's association he gave up his vices and started turning the *mala* instead of wielding his sword. Furthermore, he gave up his addictions to tobacco and opium and became absorbed in bhakti. Countless Kathi *darbars* were transformed under the divine influence of 25-year-old Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Jiva Khachar's year of birth is unknown. However, in 1805, when Bhagwan Swaminarayan arrived in Gadhada, there is a reference of Jiva Khachar's 15–17-year-old eldest son, Bhoka Khachar, of having offered his services in decorating Gadhada. So, when Shri Hari first arrived in Gadhada Jiva Khachar's age must have been between 35 and 40 years.

Jiva Khachar passed away one year before

Shriji Maharaj's earthly departure in 1830. At that time Jiva Khachar must have been about 60 to 65 years old. In context to the details mentioned, we can assume that Jiva Khachar was probably born around 1770.

Jiva Khachar and his wife, Kunvarba, had four children: two daughters – Amulaba and Amriba, and two sons – Bhoka Khachar and Desa Khachar. The entire family, along with Jiva Khachar's younger brother, Mulu Khachar, and his family, were totally dedicated to Shri Hari.

In the Sampradaya's historic texts (like the *Hari-Charitramrut-Sagar*), incidents have been noted about Jiva Khachar's devotion and his daughters' bhakti for Shriji Maharaj. Bhagwan Swaminarayan declared and praised that the two sisters' bhakti was like that of Kushalkunvarba, Laduba, Jivuba, Rajba and Minbai, who were *ekantik* devotees.

In 1805, Shri Hari stayed at Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh* and the latter dedicated his entire family and all his resources in Shriji Maharaj's service. Because of his profound bhakti, Maharaj stayed at





Pramukh Swami Maharaj made tremendous efforts in the development of the BAPS Mandir precincts in Gadhada and Jiva Khachar's *darbar*

Jiva Khachar's home for three years. Thereafter, Shri Hari went to stay at Abhel Khachar's home and often visited Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh* to bless all with the divine joy of his *lilas*.

Over the past two centuries, swamis and devotees have often visited Jiva Khachar's *darbar* for darshan. However, since the last few decades these visits were barred because of the ruined state of the *darbargadh*. Thereafter, Pramukh Swami Maharaj resolved to rebuild and renovate the holy *darbar* of Jiva Khachar and open it for darshan.

Subsequently, Pramukh Swami Maharaj discussed about renovating the sacred *darbar* with the descendants of Jiva Khachar, who were staying there at the time. The homes and precincts were eventually acquired by the BAPS and Swamishri made appropriate living arrangements for Jiva Khachar's descendants. The task of remaking and renovating the *darbargadh* began thereafter and all the historic and traditional details were incorporated. With the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the guidance of Ishwarcharan Swami the renovation work was executed by Adhyatmaswarup

Swami, Kothari of the BAPS Mandir in Gadhada. Aksharvatsal Swami researched about the historic buildings and their locations in Jiva Khachar's *darbar* and the *lilas* of Shri Hari from the Sampradaya's historical texts.

With the references to all these details Shrijiwarup Swami prepared a master plan of the *darbargadh*. Then, the décor and embellishments in each room of the *darbargadh* were accomplished by Brahmacharan Swami, Divyanandan Swami and other swamis. To enlighten the visitors about the divine *lilas* of the *darbargadh* an audio-visual presentation was prepared by Parag Shastri and Parth Gajjar.

On the morning of 6 March 2020, Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated the renovated *darbargadh* of Jiva Khachar amidst Vedic chantings and in the presence of Jiva Khachar's descendants. The latter felt honoured to be present and receive Mahant Swami Maharaj's blessings.

In the evening, Swamishri and the *sadguru* swamis took a detailed guided tour of the *darbargadh*. Ishwarcharan Swami and Aksharvatsal



Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurates the newly renovated *darbargadh* of Jiva Khachar and declares it open for all

Swami explained the importance and glory of all the places. Swamishri was very pleased and blessed all the swamis who had served in creating the exhibitions and the *darbargadh*.

On 11 March 2020, Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *pratishta* rituals of Shri Hari's *charanarvind* installed in a shrine, where Shri Hari used to sit under a neem tree to deliver discourses.

Swamishri went to the veranda of the *darbar* where Shri Hari rode the Manki swiftly from one end to the other. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had also served lunch to his *paramhansas* on this same veranda. A similar ambience was recreated today whereby swamis sat in the veranda and also outside in the open ground for lunch. Swamishri served laddus to each of the swamis seated in the veranda and revived the memories of Shri Hari's divine *lila*.

In the same corridor of this *darbargadh*, Bhagwan Swaminarayan had pulled the ropes of a churn to produce butter from buttermilk. In memory of this *lila*, Swamishri also pulled the ropes of a churn with Tyagvallabh Swami. A beautiful tableau has been created to show the *lila*

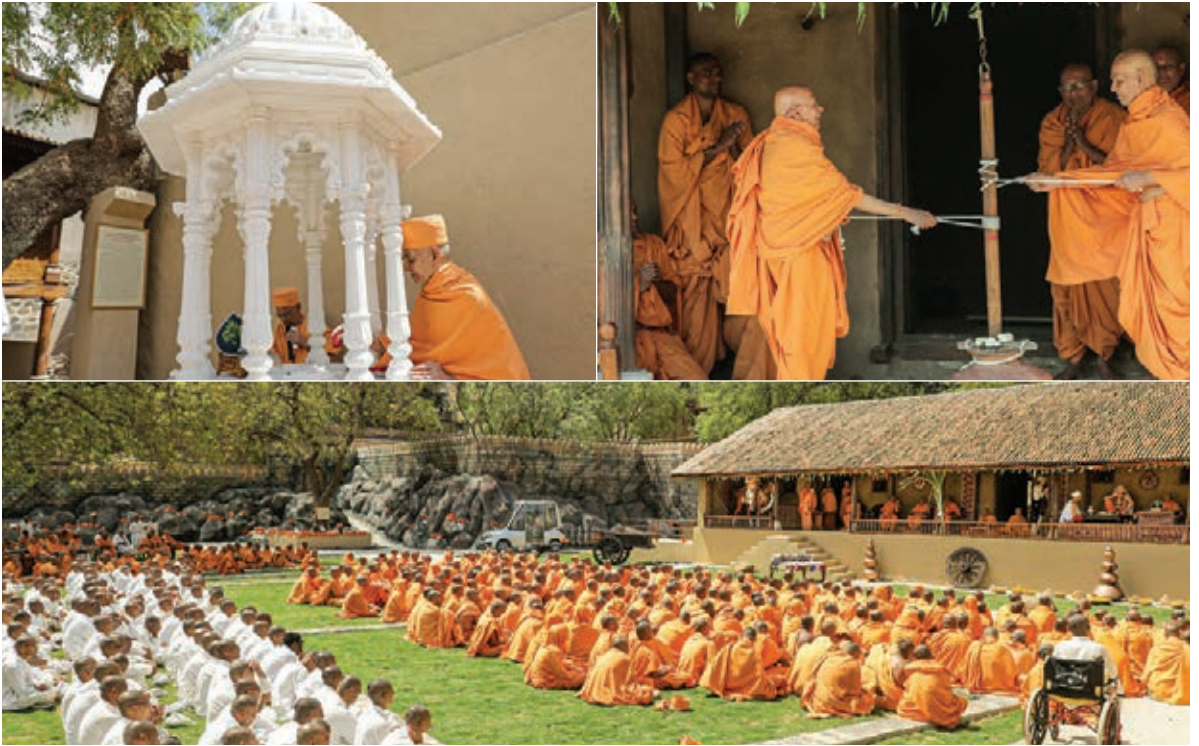
of Bhagwan Swaminarayan having lunch on this veranda, while Jiva Khachar and his family are devotionally coaxing Maharaj to eat. Swamishri performed the *arti* of Maharaj's *murti*.

Finally, Swamishri's lunch arrangements were made next to the tableau of Shriji Maharaj having lunch. At that time, Aksharvatsal Swami narrated the wonderful *lilas* performed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the *darbargadh*. Finally, Swamishri extolled Jiva Khachar's bhakti, "Jiva Khacher's bhakti was unparalleled. He was a great devotee. So, one should sing his virtues and



Swamishri avidly listens to the *lilas* of Shriji Maharaj





Swamishri consecrates the shrine made under the shade of the 'Muni Neem' tree, where Shriji Maharaj discoursed on many occasions. Swamishri also churns buttermilk and thereafter offers *thal* to Thakorji with the swamis seated in the open ground

glory. Shriji Maharaj says, 'One may not be able to serve me, but I believe that by singing the virtues of devotees one has served me immensely.' Jiva Khachar had done a lot of bhakti and sacrificed so much [for Shriji Maharaj], therefore his faults are of no measure at all. And Shriji Maharaj had accepted his *seva* and dedication. He came to Jiva Khachar during his last moments, stroked his body with his hand [to bless him], and after he passed away Maharaj performed the cremation

rites by lighting his funeral pyre. Therefore, we too should sing Jiva Khachar's glory and offer bhakti to Shriji Maharaj and please him."

In this way, under the auspices of the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations, the entire Swaminarayan Sampradaya has been gifted with the unique renovated *darbargadh* of Jiva Khachar. It is open for all to have darshan of this unique holy place, where Shriji Maharaj resided and performed many divine *lilas*. ♦



Swamishri performs *arti* of Maharaj's murti

Swamishri praises Jiva Khachar's bhakti





**Above:** Swamishri with the descendants of Dada Khachar and Jiva Khachar before the bronze *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami and Dada Khachar and **(below)** at the newly renovated *darbargadh* of Jiva Khachar





# Bhaktaraj Jiva Khachar's Holy Darbargadh

The spiritual abode of Gadhpur is a popular pilgrim place where countless devotees flock every year to have darshan of the places and objects sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. One such holy place is the newly renovated *darbargadh* of Jiva Khachar. A brief introduction to the sanctified places is as follows.



## 1. Seats Outside Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh

Here, one can see the raised platforms (*otla*) outside the main door of Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh*. There were once two neem trees, flanking the *otla*.

In the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Darbars held *dayra* (music performances, in which people gather to listen to the performer sing bhajans and deliver religious as well as social discourses) under the neem trees.

Here, on these two *otla*, Bhagwan Swaminarayan sat many times and specially discoursed to his sadhus. Sometimes, Shri Hari also slept on the *otla*. Thus, this place, outside the main door of Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh*, witnessed many of Shri Hari's *lilas*.



An animation shot of an aerial view of Bhaktaraj Shri Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh* in the great pilgrim abode of Gadhpur. In the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the *darbargadh* had a large precinct, which included many houses and a wall encircling it. Bhagwan Swaminarayan performed many divine *lilas* in the enumerated houses. Let us understand those *lilas* in numerical order.



2



## 2. Bhaktaraj Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh: Inside View of the Main Door

This is the inside of the *darbargadh*'s main door. On either side are seating areas as per the royal tradition. Bhagwan Swaminarayan sat here on many occasions to discourse to his disciples. He also sat here and took lunch on many occasions. Shri Hari pleased and showered his divine joy upon his Kathi friends.

3



## 3. Bhagwan Swaminarayan Sanctified the 'Muni Limbo', Where He Discoursed Many Times

Bhagwan Swaminarayan sat beneath the 'Muni Limbo' (neem tree) many times and held spiritual assemblies, and also instructed his *paramhansas* to sing bhajans.

The name 'Muni' before the neem tree is derived from a disciple named 'Muni'. Due to his guru's curse he was reborn as this neem tree. Then, by Shri Hari's association the tree was liberated and it subsequently withered and died. Thereafter, Shri Hari infused another *jiva* into the tree and it became alive and green again. So, in remembrance of this incident, Shri Hari named it 'Muni Limbo'.

4



## 4. Stable Where Manki Was Tethered

This is the stable of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's favourite mare, Manki. The stable floor was about three feet below ground level, where Manki was kept. When Shri Hari was residing at Jiva Khachar's home he was gifted with Manki for his travels. Many times, even at night, Bhagwan Swaminarayan rode Manki in the courtyard of Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh* and sanctified the grounds.



#### 4. Sacred Kitchen

Touching the north-facing room in Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh*, this extension was used as a kitchen for Shri Hari. Below this kitchen is Manki's stable. During Shriji Maharaj's three-year stay in Jiva Khachar's *darbar* his meals were cooked here. Bhagwan Swaminarayan also dined in this kitchen many times.



#### 5. Jiva Khachar's Original Residence Where Shri Hari Performed Many Divine Lilas

To the west of the Muni Neem tree and to the left of Manki's stable lies Jiva Khachar's original house with its rooms on a high plinth and an east-facing veranda. In 1805, Bhagwan Swaminarayan came to Gadhada and initially stayed in these rooms. He generously served lunch to his *paramhansas* while they were seated on the east and west verandas.



#### 6. Large Granary in Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh

Jiva Khachar was very generous and charitable. He served food rations in charity to pilgrims and mendicants from his *darbargadh*. This circular granary still exists today, in which four tons of grains can be stored.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan inspired the construction of this granary, and many times he personally served grains to mendicants who came here.

During the grave famine of 1869 Jiva Khachar contemplated on committing suicide because the stock of grains in his almshouse was exhausted. At that time, Shriji Maharaj came and blessed him, saying there would never be a shortage of grains in his granary.

Sometimes, Shri Hari sat by the window behind this granary and donated grains to those who came begging for alms.





7



## 7. Longest Veranda Outside the Sacred Six Rooms of Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh

These six rooms were sanctified often by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. In 1805, when Shri Hari arrived in Gadhpur, he stayed in these rooms of Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh* for three years. During his initial stay in the *darbargadh* he inspired the construction of these rooms. In each of these rooms, he discoursed, dined, slept and revealed his divinity on many occasions.

8



## 8. Shri Hari Rode His Manki on This Eastern Veranda of Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh

One of the most fascinating of Shri Hari's *lilas* in the *darbargadh* of Jiva Khachar was the way he rode Manki with finesse on the eastern verandah.

Because of Jiva Khachar's wish Bhagwan Swaminarayan rode Manki up an incline on the north side to climb up on to this eastern verandah. Then, he swiftly rode it from one end to the other several times, without letting his *chogalu* on his *pagh* touch the beams. The Kathi devotees were greatly impressed by his equestrian skills.

Shri Hari also served lunch to and celebrated the Rangotsav with the *paramhansas* on this veranda.

9



## 9. Shri Hari Performed Many Lilas on This Western Verandah of Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh

Here, too, on this western verandah of the *darbargadh*, Shri Hari generously served lunch to his *paramhansas*. Once, he observed the solar eclipse here and revealed his divinity to all. Shriji Maharaj also sat on this veranda and delivered discourses on many occasions.



### 10. Shri Amulaba's and Shri Amariba's North-facing Rooms in the Darbargadh

Formerly, here (open ground), were located the north-facing rooms of Amulaba and Amriba, the two daughters of Jiva Khachar. Due to their profound bhakti Bhagwan Swaminarayan sanctified their rooms by celebrating festivals, delivering discourses and having lunch.



### 11. Location of Mulu Khachar's Former Rooms

The rooms of Mulu Khachar, the brother of Jiva Khachar, were once located here (open ground) in the *darbargadh*. The rooms, built on a high plinth, were east and west-facing. This place lies in the southern direction after entering the main door of the *darbargadh*.

Shri Hari celebrated Janmashtami and other festivals here. In this open courtyard, Shri Hari organized games like *kabaddi* and *hututu* for the Kathi Darbars to enjoy. Maharaj also rode his Manki here on several occasions.

On the large open ground of Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh* Shriji Maharaj often had a *mandap* set up for the purpose of delivering spiritual discourses or celebrating festivals like Rangotsav and others.



### 12. Shri Hari's Meditation Room in the Southern Direction of Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh

Here, in the southern direction of the *darbargadh*, were two small rooms in which Bhagwan Swaminarayan often meditated alone on his divine form. Sometimes, he also rested here as well.

This is the location of one of the rooms.







### 13. Entrance from Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh to the Hillock in Gadhadra

From the above entrance of Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh* Shri Hari was often inclined and interested in going to the hillock situated in the southern direction. Formerly, there was a wall around the hillock. In the northern part of the old wall, Shri Hari often entered the hillock to rest in the open. In the southern part of the hillock, Shri Hari rested many times on a turret located in its western corner.

Shriji Maharaj made plans to build a grand mandir on the hillock. His wish was fulfilled by Shastriji Maharaj, and later Pramukh Swami Maharaj developed it according to Shri Hari's wish.

### Other Holy Places in Jiva Khachar's Darbargadh

Due to the ravages of time, many of the places in Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh* no longer exist today. For example, the *darbargadh's* south-facing rooms, a large kitchen, a big plot of open land behind the *darbargadh* where temporary accommodations were arranged for the *paramhansas* during festivals, rooms for senior *paramhansas*, Shri Ram Khachar's north-facing rooms, Rajba's room, a large rest house for the *paramhansas* made by Jiva Khachar opposite the *darbargadh* and many other places were all sanctified by Shriji Maharaj. Details about these places and Shri Hari's *lilas* are found in the Sampradaya's texts.

Even today, one experiences the divine presence of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Jiva Khachar's *darbargadh*. ♦



Grand finale Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations at the BAPS Mandir, London

# Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations

14 & 15 December 2019, BAPS Mandir, London

**D**uring 2018 and 2019 special programmes and events were organized at BAPS satsang centres in India, USA, UK, Europe, Africa, Asia Pacific and the Gulf countries to commemorate the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations.

Some of the noteworthy programmes held in 2018–2019 in the UK and Europe included: *parayans*, *jnan-satras* and special assemblies. The grand finale celebration was held at the London Mandir on 14 and 15 December 2019. The central theme was ‘The Vachanamrut: An Unexpected Journey’. The stage backdrop portrayed a wonderful fusion of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s era, 200 years ago, and the present age. The entire programme highlighted how the Vachanamrut provides guidance and solutions to issues and challenges in our modern life. The celebration assembly included audio-visual presentations, animation, traditional

dances, dramas and inspiring speeches by swamis.

The concerted efforts of 160 children, youths and devotees made the cultural programmes fascinating and inspiring. Mahant Swami Maharaj’s video blessings crowned the entire celebration programme.

## VACHANAMRUT READING YAGNA IN KUWAIT

Under the auspices of the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations a reading *yagna* of the Vachanamrut was organized at the BAPS satsang centre in Kuwait. A total of 105 children, youths and devotees participated for eight days, spending eight hours daily. During the 200-hour reading *yagna* they collectively read the entire Vachanamrut eight times. ♦





# SELFLESS SERVICES BY BAPS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC



Since March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic has taken centre stage in the lives of people throughout the world. It has interrupted the ‘normal’ flow of life and led to many changes in lifestyle. The future course of events is still uncertain and much patience and unity is still required to bring the situation under control.

During these unusual times, support networks of all types have assisted the vulnerable and needy to cope with the circumstances. BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, through its centres, sadhus and devotees worldwide has contributed in many ways by providing localized and focused social and spiritual support.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, building on the sentiments of selfless service practised by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, lived his life ‘In the joy of others’ and inspired many ventures that continue to benefit countless people globally. In the wake of this pandemic, Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj responded to the need of the hour and inspired the many BAPS projects implemented during the pandemic. The following pages present an overview of the main social and spiritual services selflessly performed by BAPS sadhus and devotees worldwide.





Serving hot meals



Preparing fresh vegetables for distribution

## BAPS RESPONDS TO THE PANDEMIC

As the entire world seemingly came to a sudden halt, the dramatic changes led to much disturbance in the daily lives of individuals, families and communities. Naturally, the financial fallout of the lockdowns was acutely felt and movement restrictions meant that vulnerable groups were disproportionately affected. Devotees at BAPS centres in India, the USA, Canada, the UK, Europe, Africa, the UAE, Australia and New Zealand reached out to help their local communities in various ways. These multi-faceted initiatives have helped the elderly and needy to remain informed, safe and supported.

## PUBLIC HEALTH SAFETY AWARENESS

Even before the first case of coronavirus infection was detected in Gujarat, in the interest of public health and safety, BAPS reduced the international Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations, scheduled from 5 to 10 March, into a local festival.

Worldwide, every week, hundreds of thousands of people attend the over 20,000 assemblies for children, teenagers, youths and adults that are conducted at BAPS mandirs and centres. All these assemblies were suspended and the need for social distancing and personal hygiene widely promoted.

Public announcements and publications, including summaries of government guidance, delivering important advice on remaining safe and healthy,

and support people in various other aspects of their lives that have been impacted by the pandemic, were made and provided.

Health awareness videos, seminars and presentations in English and Gujarati to educate the public on its collective responsibility to help stem the rapid spread of this deadly virus.

## GLOBAL RELIEF ACTIVITIES

To support the needy amid the pandemic hardships, devotees at BAPS centres worldwide rallied to serve and provide for local communities as required. They provided:

### Hot Meals

Daily, hot freshly cooked meals were prepared and packed for distribution to the needy. Also, hot meals, snacks and drinks were delivered to local hospitals, fire brigades, police stations, and other places for emergency workers and front-line personnel.

### Fresh Vegetables

During the lockdown, fresh vegetables, such as potatoes, brinjals, cabbage, cauliflower, gourd, tomatoes, chillies, lemons, ginger, etc., were distributed.

### Ration Kits

Ration kits containing flour, dal, rice, oil,



A family participates in an online assembly



Variety of relief items

spices, gur, etc. were distributed to needy families.

## Medical Support

Personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, masks, sanitizer, beds, ventilators, health care packs, and other medical consumables and equipment were distributed.

## Financial Assistance

Monetary donations to hospitals, NGOs and other non-profit organizations were made to support their activities during the pandemic.

## Emotional Support

Phone calls from sadhus and volunteers to individuals and families provided support, solace and guidance to many using available communication channels.

## Community Support

Assistance to the elderly and vulnerable to collect shopping, drop off medications and run essential errands.

Supporting other charitable organizations to deliver fresh fruit and vegetables as well as grocery bags to the needy.

Supporting hospitals and key work places, such as police stations, fire stations, local food banks, local councils, essential schools, care homes, etc., by providing food and other useful

supplies as well as letters and cards of gratitude for their heroic staff.

## SPIRITUALITY AT HOME

Due to the restrictions necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus, in-person gatherings have not been possible. Hence, in place of the weekly assemblies at BAPS mandirs and centres, online assemblies and apps, have enabled everyone to participate from home, provided regular spiritual guidance and reinforced the importance of adhering to the government guidelines to contain the pandemic.

These creative and enjoyable assemblies and apps, presented in various languages, reinforced spiritual, social and moral values and family harmony.

In addition, prayer and *mahapuja* sessions have been held to provide inner peace and strength in these challenging times.

## Sabhas

Every week the Ravi Sabha (Sunday Assembly) for all has been broadcast online and, where available, via local TV channels.

*Parayans* and speech series were also broadcast. These include: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Lecture Series (11 May to 9 June 2020), Shravan Month Parayan (20 July to 19 August), Adhik Mas Parayan (2–16 October),



Bhakti Parva (17–24 October) and Aksharbrahma Gunatit Satra Vykhyanmala (2–17 November).

Major festivals were celebrated online: Swaminarayan Jayanti, Guru Punam, Pramukh Swami Maharaj Smruti Din, Jal Jhilani, Shastriji Maharaj Smruti Din, Mahant Swami Maharaj's 87<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration and others.

Major milestones were also marked by webcasts that enabled devotees throughout the world to celebrate and participate live in the events with Swamishri: 75th Patotsav of BAPS Mandir, Atladara; London Mandir Suvarna Mahotsav Celebrations; Swaminarayan Akshardham Amalak Pujan Ceremony, Robbinsville; and Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami Murti-Pratishtha Mahotsav.

In addition, weekly local sabhas for *bal-balika*, *yuvak-yuvati*, *sanyukta* and *mahilas* were conducted via social media platforms.

In India, the broadcasts have been in Gujarati and Hindi. In other countries broadcasts have also been in English to especially cater for the children and youths. The content has also been tailored to suit the target audience. Every week there have been separate webcasts for different age groups.

These webcasts offer a unique online experience to all devotees and well-wishers, supplementing their use of social media, conference call *goshthis*, online video platforms and the official BAPS website to help them stay virtually connected with members of the satsang community.

Many of these broadcasts have been pre-recorded, and were possible due to efficient planning and the coordination by sadhus, *karyakars*, the audio-visual department and others. The behind the scenes efforts for speakers to prepare and deliver their content, the high quality video and audio recording, editing, special effects, uploading and other aspects of production was remarkable. It took many hours and late nights to produce each broadcast, especially since each component would often have to be recorded in

different locations and then integrated into a continuous presentation.

Such endeavours have been accomplished by teams based in India, the UK, USA, Canada, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the UAE.

It is truly commendable that such rich, creative, informative, inspiring and spiritually uplifting broadcasts have been provided. They have served as excellent substitutes to in-person attendance.

### Swamishri's Puja Darshan

During this time, Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj has been in Nenpur, a village near Ahmedabad. In addition to his daily vicharan photo, video and blessings, Swamishri's puja has been broadcast on specified days at different times for the convenience of devotees worldwide to enjoy his darshan. Daily, prayers continue to be offered for an early end to the pandemic, and the good health, happiness and prosperity of all.

### Mandir Darshan

Online darshan of the *murtis* and *artis* at *shikharbaddha* mandirs in India and abroad have been arranged for all at specified times during the day.

### Adhiveshans

During the pandemic lockdowns, *adhiveshans* for *balaks*, *balikas*, *kishores*, *kishoris*, *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* were organized. The sadhus and *karyakars* motivated and assisted the children, teenagers and youths to prepare for the *adhiveshans* using social media in creative ways. The participants were then tested online over video calls by the examiners. Various conditions were stipulated to ensure integrity from all. See news section for further details.

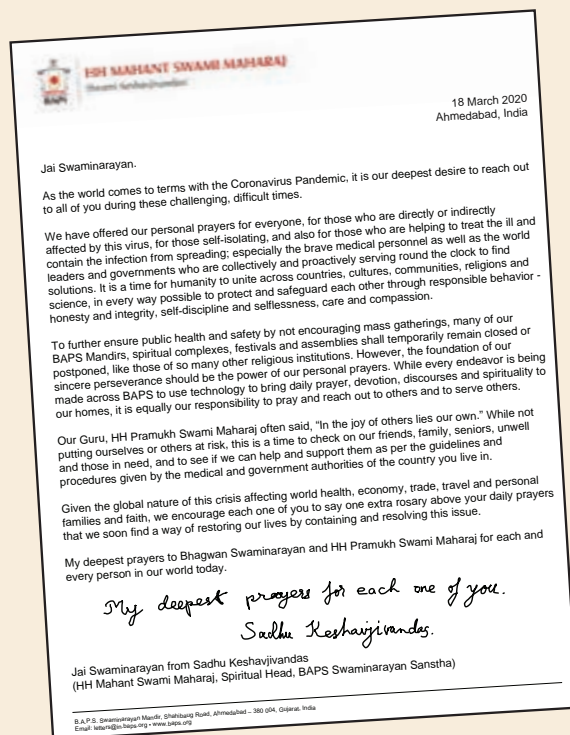
### Prayer and Mahapuja Assemblies

The sudden changes caused much emotional and financial impact on people. To help provide

# Prayers by HH Mahant Swami Maharaj



From the onset of the pandemic, Mahant Swami Maharaj has offered daily prayers, motivation and guidance, insisting that all play their part to help bring the situation under control. He has personally written several open letters to all devotees, offering support and guidance for their own health and safety, and insisting that they adhere to all government regulations and continue to engage in satsang.



## International Day of Prayer

14 May 2020

Mahant Swami Maharaj supported the efforts of other spiritual leaders by praying on the International Day of Prayer declared by the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity in the UAE on 14 May 2020.

Swamishri prayed, “May we together overcome the coronavirus crisis as soon as possible. And may the peace and bliss of God spread everywhere, and be experienced by every heart, in every home, in every corner of this world.”

Other religious and world leaders who supported this call include:

- Pope Francis, Head of the Catholic Church

- Sheikh Ahmed El Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque, Egypt
- Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of the UAE
- Ronald S., Jewish Congress President
- António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, England
- Presidents and prime ministers of many countries.





A student attends the online medico-spiritual conference. These events have provided peace of mind, inner strength and positivity to the young and old, online prayer and *mahapuja* assemblies have been held in which all could participate from home. Sadhus at the mandir would lead the prayers. These have provided tremendous comfort and courage to all. For details, see news section (p. 88).

## Other Events

For the past 28 years, AARSH in Gandhinagar has been hosting a quarterly lecture series in which distinguished, learned and experienced scholars speak on a wide variety of topics of general interest and value. Due to the lockdown restrictions preventing in-person attendance, the last two of these lectures have been streamed live online and have attracted a sizeable audience.

Also conducted online: Kirtan Aradhanas, Annual Medico-Spiritual Conference for Medical Students, online *samuh* puja, *shibirs*, seminars, Matru-Devo Bhava celebration and other events.

These webcasts have given a unique online experience to devotees, bringing people together and providing a spiritual connection even amid the need for social distancing during lockdown.

## APPRECIATION AND PRAYERS FOR COVID WARRIORS

The novel coronavirus has been a tough and

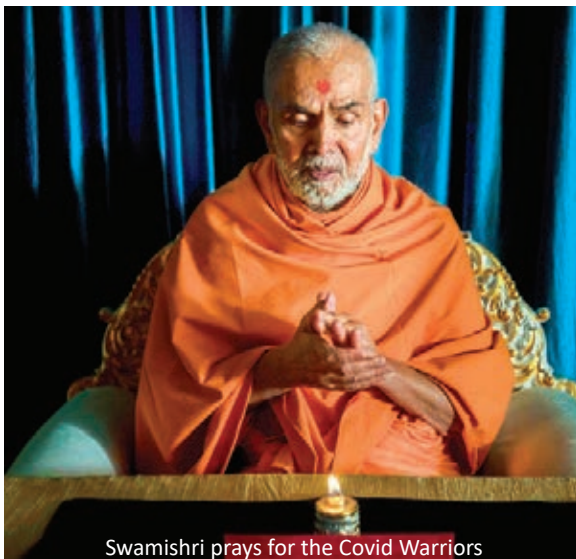


A family participates in an online *mahapuja* ceremony. This has been an unfamiliar challenge to all, especially the medical and allied professions. Without medications and effective treatment protocols, there has been a worldwide struggle to manage the infected and control the spread of the virus.

Despite the risks, countless brave professionals from many fields have courageously executed their duties to help those in need.

The public in all countries have been deeply grateful to these brave 'Covid Warriors' for their selfless efforts.

Governments have encouraged people to participate on designated dates and at specified times in a multitude of nationwide gestures to demonstrate their appreciation and admiration. People appreciated the services of the carers by clapping, singing,



Swamishri prays for the Covid Warriors



BAPS appreciates the sacrifice of the Covid Warriors lighting *divos* and praying for their well-being. Such acts have been repeated at intervals to show the continued public support for the frontline personnel.

Worldwide, BAPS sadhus residing in the mandirs and the devotees at their homes participated in these tributes to the brave Covid Warriors and they continue to pray for their good health and safety.

In the UK and USA, children from many BAPS centres prepared 'Thank You' cards to present to their local hospitals. Also, in recognition of the long working hours of these frontline personnel and their difficulty in accessing fresh food, BAPS centres provided hot meals and snacks to local hospital staff.

BAPS in the UK produced a video, 'Serving Together, In the Joy of Others', paying tribute to



Gratitude messages from BAPS children to Covid Warriors the thousands of key workers serving in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The video is based on a poem with each part of the poem recited by British Hindus of BAPS, who are serving on the frontline in a wide array of fields, including as medical professionals, hospital administrators, lab researchers, shopkeepers, a hospital chef, a bus driver – even a pilot.

The video pays tribute to and thanks all key workers who are serving tirelessly and selflessly to protect the people of Great Britain and to save lives, often at the risk of their own.

A similar video by BAPS in the USA appreciated the work, dedication and sacrifice of all frontline workers. ♦



Sadhus light divos to support and pray for the Covid Warriors





Ambassador of India to France felicitates BAPS



Governor of Maharashtra felicitates BAPS

## BAPS Recognized for Covid Services

From the outset, BAPS has proactively served during the pandemic to provide focused, localized services. The volunteers involved in these endeavours have risked their own health to serve, but have derived great satisfaction and joy. Their efforts have been warmly appreciated by all, especially the recipients whose kind words have helped to encourage the volunteers.

In addition, on a more formal level, BAPS's services have been acknowledged by various authorities.

In New Zealand, on 15 August 2020, India's 74th Independence day, The High Commissioner of India in Wellington, HE Muktesh K. Pardeshi presented a 'Certificate of Appreciation' to BAPS Charities for their

selfless volunteerism in New Zealand during the Covid-19 lockdown.

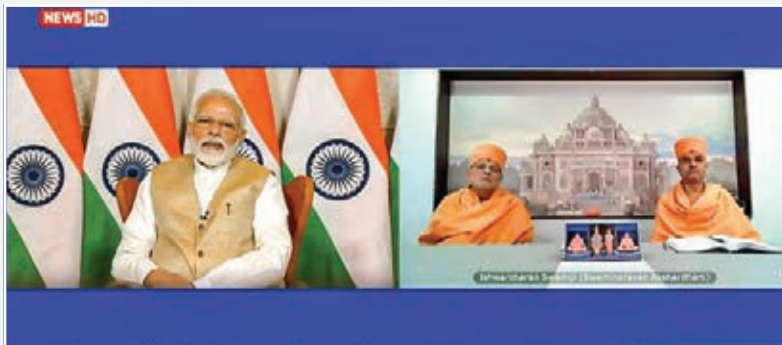
Also, on 15 August, in Paris, the Ambassador of India to France, HE Vinay Mohan Kwatra, commended the services of BAPS at a special Independence Day event.

On 9 September at the Raj Bhavan, the Governor of Maharashtra, HE Bhagat Singh Koshyari, presented a certificate of appreciation for the Covid-19 relief work by BAPS.

On 30 March, the Hon. Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi invited the BAPS to participate in a video conference with gurus and representatives of 16 selected spiritual and social organizations to play an active role in promoting the right awareness throughout the country to limit the spread of the coronavirus.



High Commissioner of India felicitates BAPS, Wellington



Puji Ishwarcharan Swami and Brahmavihari Swami in video conference with PM Narendra Modi

On 10 July, the Consul General of India in Dubai, Shri Vipulji, wrote, “I would like to place on record my appreciation and heartfelt thanks to all volunteers of BAPS for their dedication to serve the most needy people during Covid-19. For the last three-and-a-half months, BAPS volunteers have rendered invaluable assistance in all aspects of Covid relief initiatives of the Consulate, including free ration distribution, setting up temporary shelter for jobless labourers, finalization of

passengers including completion of paper work for their repatriation on Vande Bharat Mission flights and also assisting passengers at Dubai and Sharjah airports.”

On behalf of BAPS Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Brahmavihari Swami presented the scope of the BAPS relief activities and pledged support to the government’s measures for the wellbeing of the citizens of India. ♦

## BAPS Participates in National Day of Prayer at the White House

7 May 2020, Washington DC



The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha was invited to participate in the National Day of Prayer in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington D.C. in the presence of the president and vice president. The National Day of Prayer is an annual event, formally enacted in 1952, celebrating faith and prayer in the nation’s life.

This year’s event allowed the country to join together to offer prayers for those affected by the coronavirus pandemic, the brave healthcare and other frontline workers and for the recovery of the country.

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence offered their prayers followed by prayers from religious leaders representing Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam.

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) was invited by the White House to participate. Shri Harish Brahmhatt represented BAPS and was recognized at the prayer meeting where he recited the Shanti Paath from the Vedas. Speaking at the prayer meeting, he said, “In these troubled times of Covid-19, social distancing and the lockdown, it’s not unusual for people to feel anxious or not at peace. The Shanti Paath or the Peace Prayer does not seek worldly riches, success or fame, nor is it a prayer for any desire for heaven. It is a beautiful Hindu prayer for peace, *shanti*. It is a Vedic prayer derived from the Yajur Veda.”

BAPS was honoured to represent the Hindu community on this special occasion of prayers.



# BAPS COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

## Worldwide Summary

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha centres worldwide rose to the challenging circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic and helped to alleviate the difficulties of the vulnerable and needy. The following is a summary of the relief projects undertaken by BAPS in the initial months of the pandemic lockdowns and restrictions.

### INDIA



**30,000+**  
PPE donated



**8.6 million+**  
food & care packages  
distributed



**100,000+**  
phone calls of support



**₹1.1+ crore**  
support for Covid-19  
equipment



**607,710**  
hot meals  
provided



**over 1,500 L**  
sanitizer distributed



**6,000+**  
volunteers involved



**40+**  
major cities

### UK AND EUROPE



**50,000+**  
meals  
home-delivered



**12,800+**  
families served



**21,100+**  
phone calls of support



**1,100+**  
volunteers involved



**210**  
hospitals & key  
workplaces supported



**over 75,000 kg**  
fresh vegetables and  
food distributed



**16+ million**  
online views for  
motivation guidance



**61+**  
major cities

## USA



**113,500+**  
PPE donated



**83,000+**  
food & care packages  
distributed



**30,000+**  
phone calls of support



**\$200,000+**  
support for Covid-19  
equipment



**100+**  
hospitals  
supported



**900,000+ hrs**  
spiritual support via  
online assemblies



**3,000+**  
volunteers involved



**50+**  
major cities

## CANADA



**45,000**  
PPE donated



**8,000+**  
food & care packages  
distributed



**30,000+**  
phone calls of support



**2,000+**  
volunteers involved



**14**  
hospitals  
supported



support through  
virtual community  
gatherings



**9,000+**  
educated through  
webinars



**43+**  
major cities

## AFRICA



**6,000+**  
PPE donated



**10,600+**  
care packages  
distributed



**over 5,900 L**  
sanitizer distributed



**1,200+**  
water tanks donated



blood donated



**26,500+**  
meals provided



**over 118,000 kg**  
of food grains and fresh  
vegetables distributed



**30+**  
major cities



## AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND



**23,500+**  
meals provided



**1,750+**  
care packages  
distributed



**10,000+**  
phone calls of support



**1,200+**  
volunteers



blood donated



**11,000+**  
educated through  
webinars



**over 30,000 kg**  
fresh vegetables and  
food distributed



**13**  
major cities

## UAE



**1,000+**  
masks donated



**500+**  
families regularly  
supported



**250+**  
provided accommodation  
& rent assistance



**75,000+**  
meals provided



blood donated



motivation  
through webcasts



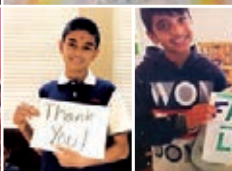
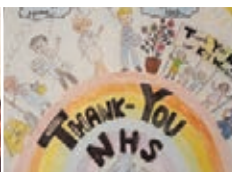
**6,000+**  
volunteer man-hours



**175+**  
repatriation assistance

## THANK YOU

BAPS sincerely appreciates the support of all who helped in these relief activities. BAPS salutes the frontline workers who risked their health to serve society selflessly.





# SATSANG DIKSHA

A Precious Gift from  
Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj

5 July 2020, Nenpur



*On the auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima, on 5 July 2020, Guruhari Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj presented a historic gift to the BAPS Satsang community in the form of a book.*

*Written in Gujarati by Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj himself, 'Satsang Diksha' is a concise text which forms a part of the voluminous 'Akshar-Purushottam Samhita'. The Gujarati prose is also presented as 315 Sanskrit verses.*

*In Satsang Diksha, based on the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Mahant Swami Maharaj concisely describes the philosophical principles to be understood and the daily personal practices of devotion to be undertaken by all BAPS devotees. Thus, it is a shastra explaining the principles of agna and upasana as revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.*

*This text represents a special message directly from Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj to all BAPS devotees, clearly revealing the path everyone must follow to attain ekantik dharma and experience the bliss of God.*

*He has requested every devotee to read it daily.*

*When presenting the Satsang Diksha shastra to the BAPS Satsang community, Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj dedicated the text at the feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Gunatit gurus under the auspices of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations (1921–2021).*

**S**upreme Parabrahma Bhagwan Swaminarayan manifested on this earth out of his infinite compassion to liberate countless souls. He established the divine Satsang fellowship, and nourished and fostered the timeless traditions of Hinduism. Through his revelation of the Vedic principle of 'Akshar-Purushottam Darshan' he identified the path for attaining the highest *moksha*.

In his moral and spiritual teachings, detailed in the Shikshapatri and Vachanamrut, Bhagwan Swaminarayan provides a practical guide of spiritual sadhanas for the experience of happiness through moral behaviour, social dealings and spiritual knowledge. Both shastras include the essence of the Hindu shastras.

Over the past two centuries, the Gunatit gurus have nurtured the spiritual tradition and knowledge founded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan to inspire and bless countless *mumukshus* with the experience of the highest divine bliss.

A concise form of the spiritual knowledge and sadhanas propagated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Gunatit gurus is presented for all *mumukshus* in the Satsang Diksha shastra authored by Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Swamishri started writing this shastra in Navsari on 30 January 2020 – Vasant Panchmi (Maha *sud* 5, V.S. 2076) – and completed it on 2 April 2020 – Swaminarayan Jayanti (Chaitra *sud* 9) in Nenpur. He wrote this shastra amidst his unceasing and



Swamishri performs the ritual *pujan* of the Satsang Diksha shastra



tireless *vicharan*, daily satsang assemblies and events, personal meetings with sadhus and devotees, and the daily correspondence and administrative responsibilities of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. Quite often, Swamishri wrote until late at night or during the early morning.

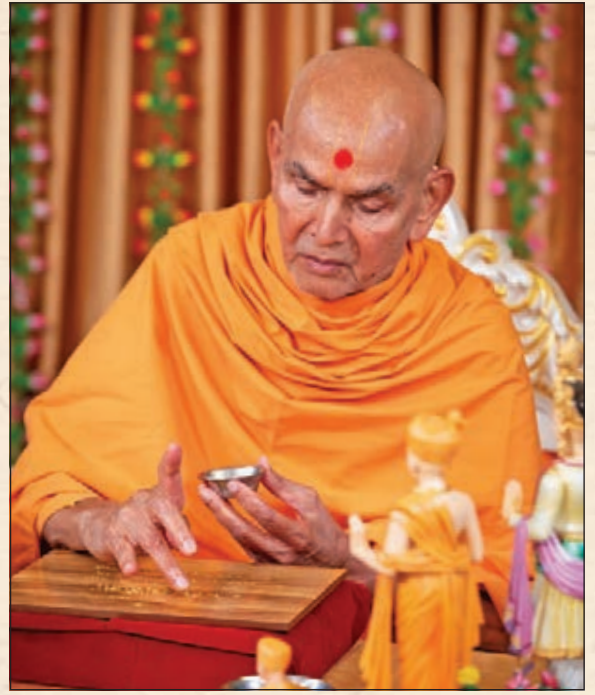
Once Swamishri had finished writing the shastra, he involved senior and scholarly sadhus of the BAPS – Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pujya Viveksagar Swami, Pujya Atmaswarup Swami, Pujya Anandswarup Swami, Pujya Narayanmuni Swami, Pujya Bhadresh Swami and others – to enrich its language, wherever required.

The Satsang Diksha shastra forms a part of the Akshar-Purushottam Samhita shastra, a Sanskrit text which expounds the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s philosophy and bhakti tradition. On Swamishri’s instructions, the Gujarati Satsang Diksha shastra he had written was rendered into Sanskrit by the Sanstha’s renowned scholar, Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadresh Swami. Thereafter, Swamishri checked the Sanskrit translation with the original Gujarati verses and made necessary changes.

On 5 July 2020, the auspicious day of Guru Purnima, in Nenpur, Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *pujan* rituals of the ‘Satsang Diksha’ shastra and dedicated it with profound devotion at the lotus feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami, Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj and Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

By gifting this shastra, Swamishri has blessed the present and future generations with a concise version of the philosophy and teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Gunatit gurus. It clarifies and inspires everyone’s spiritual sadhanas for attaining ultimate *moksha*.

The Swaminarayan satsang is a unique and practical way of life in consonance with the Vedic Akshar-Purushottam principle and has been practised by countless *satsangis* since the

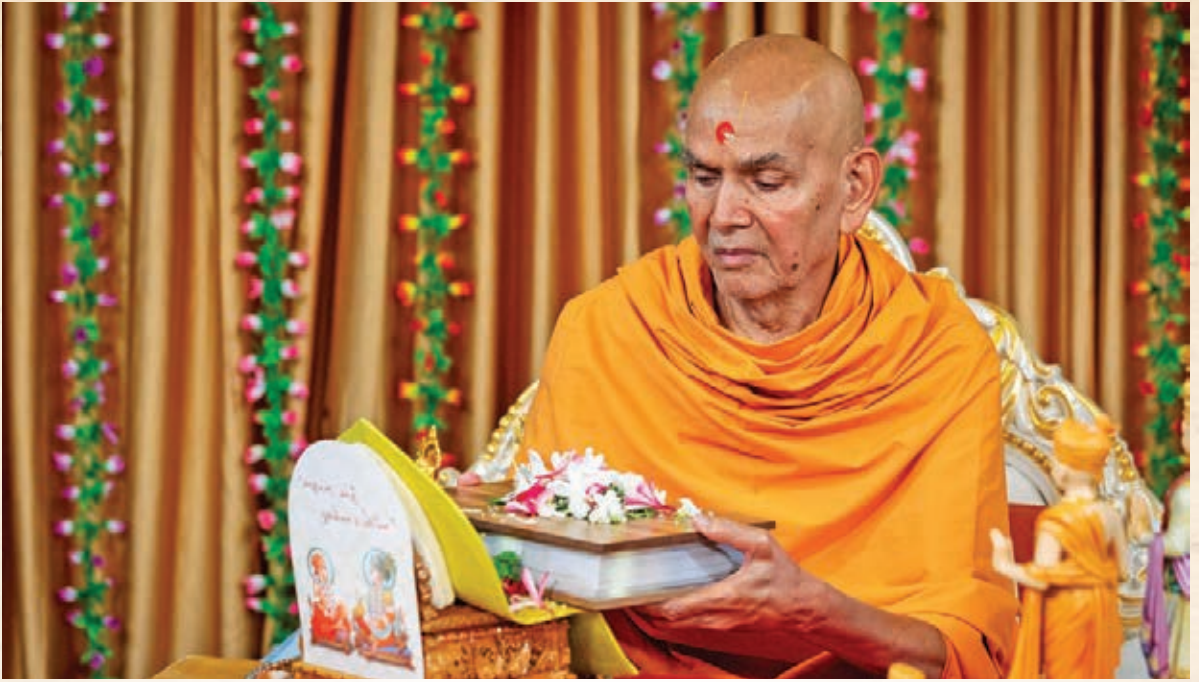


Swamishri performs *pujan* of the Satsang Diksha shastra time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. For the spiritual nourishment and growth of the Satsang, Bhagwan Swaminarayan inspired an unceasing *parampara* and legacy of Aksharbrahma Gunatit gurus.

*Agna* and *upasana* are the two principles of satsang explained and elaborated upon by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in his divine discourses, which have been compiled as the Vachanamrut. These two principles are also reflected upon in the books, kirtans and discourses of his *paramhansas*.

Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami’s discourses consolidate the supreme divinity of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, spiritual sadhanas and principles in the lives of countless sadhus and devotees. Through his discourses, Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj propagated that Gunatitanand Swami is Aksharbrahma and Bhagwan Swaminarayan is Parabrahma Purushottam. Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj tolerated colossal hardships and opposition to enshrine the principle of Akshar-Purushottam as revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He consecrated the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam in the central shrines of *shikharbaddha* mandirs. Brahmaswarup Yogiji





Swamishri presents the Satsang Diksha shastra to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj

Maharaj fostered the Satsang with the nectar of *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta*. He established the BAPS children's and youth forums, and Sunday satsang assemblies to nourish the devotees with the principles of *agna* and *upasana*. Brahaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Herculean efforts developed the BAPS into a global organization. He inspired the writing of shastras, consecrated 1,200 mandirs, blessed 1,000 youths with saffron *diksha* and organized socio-spiritual services for the uplift of society.

Presently, through the leadership and blessings of Pragat Brahaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj, over 1,000 sadhus and countless devotees continue to be enlightened with the fundamental principles of satsang. His teachings that we are the followers of one God, one guru and one principle, and must cultivate humility, harmony and *mahima* for all have nurtured an atmosphere of divinity and love in the Satsang.

Since the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Sampradaya has seen the creation of shastras that nourish the principles of *agna* and *upasana* among its followers. Further, shastras related to

philosophy, spiritual sadhana, bhakti, *niyams* and dharma, and other aspects of spirituality have helped in disseminating and consolidating the satsang way of life among devotees.

Mahant Swami Maharaj had long wished that a single shastra be written to summarize the teachings of all the shastras of the Sampradaya. He discussed this with the senior sadhus and accepted their request to carry out the *seva* of writing such a shastra himself.

The resulting shastra, Satsang Diksha, includes a wide range of essential topics: Bhagwan Swaminarayan is Parabrahma Purushottam Narayan, supreme, the all-doer, always has a divine form and is forever manifest on earth; the Gunatit guru is Aksharbrahma, the embodiment of Narayan, because he is eternally God-realized, and the ideal for all spiritual aspirants to attain the *brahmic* state; and profound love and *atma-buddhi* for him are the essence of all sadhanas.

The principle of becoming *aksharrup* – to offer humble devotion to Purushottam – is delineated in this shastra. In addition, it advocates daily contemplation as part of one's sadhana on thoughts such



as having attained Parabrahma (*prapti*), Bhagwan's all-doership (*karta-harta*), earning Bhagwan's pleasure (*rajipo*), *atma*, the ephemeral nature of the world, *mahima* through association, perceiving others' virtues, *divyabhav* and introspection.

Satsang Diksha also encompasses aspects such as support (*paksha*) for devotees, abstaining from discouraging talks and not looking at others' flaws. It includes the purpose of establishing mandirs and bhakti rituals such as darshan and *mansi*. It also guides on the daily practices for devotees, such as obeying *niyam-dharma*, having good behaviour, attending the weekly satsang *sabha*, performing personal daily puja and *mansi*, conducting *ghar sabha*, and performing *arti* and other rituals before the *ghar* mandir.

The word *diksha*, which is part of this shastra's

title, means firm resolve, unshakeable faith and total sacrifice. The message of this shastra is to resolve to personally consolidate the principles of satsang related to *agna* and *upasana* in one's life, and to attain firm faith in and totally dedicate oneself for these two principles.

Satsang Diksha contains the quintessence of all that needs to be understood and practised in Satsang as propagated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Gunatit guru *parampara*.

Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj has truly blessed the entire Satsang fellowship by writing this shastra to reveal the satsang principles as taught and established by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Gunatit gurus. We will forever remain indebted to him for his contribution and grace. ♦

## Satsang Diksha Padhramanis in North America



In a letter referring to the Satsang Diksha, Mahant Swami Maharaj wrote, "My inner enthusiasm is that I visit each home and explain all these talks 'one to one' to everyone. But due to the many limitations, this is not feasible. However, as this *granth* has reached everyone's home, believe that I have visited."

Swamishri has graciously gifted the Satsang Diksha shastra to the entire BAPS satsang family. So, when the printed copies of the shastra became available, everyone was eager to honour and welcome it into their homes. Hence, with the support of the *karyakars*, the Satsang Diksha text was hand delivered to the homes of all devotees in Canada and USA. The devotees devoutly and joyously honoured and received the printed texts at their homes, believing that Swamishri himself was visiting them in the form of the Satsang Diksha.

In total, thousands of *padhramanis* took place in several hundred cities throughout USA and Canada during which many thousands of Gujarati and English printed copies of the Satsang Diksha shastra were delivered.





## Satsang Diksha Sanskrit Shlok Memorization Competition

11–13 September 2020, India

As per the wish of *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj, the Satsang Pravrutti Central Office in Ahmedabad organized separate competitions for *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* to memorize the Satsang Diksha shastra.

After a preparation period of six weeks, a total of over 8,200 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from throughout Gujarat and Mumbai participated in the zonal competitions.

Due to the restrictions enforced by the coronavirus pandemic, the participating youths were assessed by the examiners over a WhatsApp video call. A total of 1,237 examiners assisted in

this process.

The participating *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* were graded by the number of *shloks* they recited correctly. Despite the short preparation time, 164 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* memorized the entire shastra (315 *shloks*), 70 memorized over 250 *shloks*, 100 memorized over 175 and 209 memorized over 125. Many of the remaining memorized over 45 *shloks*.

The enthusiasm of the youths to fulfil Mahant Swami Maharaj's wish was evident in all. Swamishri blessed all the youths by writing a letter, appreciating and rewarding their efforts.

Swami-Shriji  
P.P. Pramukh Swami

Nenpur  
12.9.20  
Saturday

### Bountiful Blessings...

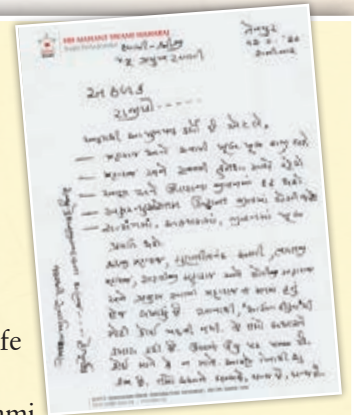
As you have followed the *agna* and memorized:

- Maharaj and Swami will be extremely pleased
- Maharaj and Swami will always be with you
- *Agha* and *upasana* will be consolidated in your life
- The principle of Akshar-Purushottam will be established in your life
- You will progress greatly in satsang, studies and life.

That which was in the minds of Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj has been written.

There is no greater status than that [attained by] 'Satsang Diksha'. So, you have all done an outstanding job. You have attained the highest status. Do not be concerned whether others believe this or not. To you all: Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!

**Jai Swaminarayan with great affection,  
from Sadhu Keshavjivandas**





## Satsang Diksha: National Complete Shlok Memorization Competition Felicitation Assembly

16 October 2020, India

The *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* who had participated in the zonal competitions and memorized all 315 Sanskrit *shloks* of the Satsang Diksha were eligible for this national competition coordinated by the Satsang Pravrutti Central Office.

A total of 368 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* took part and were thoroughly tested online via video calls by 38 examiners. Of the participants, 273 youths (152 *yuvaks* and 121 *yuvatis*) were assessed to have correctly memorized all 315 Sanskrit *shloks*. A further 28 had correctly memorized 300 *shloks* and 8 had memorized 285.

For all these *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* a special online felicitation assembly was held in the presence of Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj, who was in Nenpur.

The assembly began with inspiring speeches by Pujya Doctor Swami and Pujya Ishwarcharan

Swami. Then, Atmaswarup Swami, narrated the effort and diligence with which Mahant Swami Maharaj had written this historic shastra.

After arriving in the online assembly, Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj were honoured with *pujan* and garlands.

In Swamishri's presence, *yuvaks* from various centres presented recitals of the Sanskrit *shloks* in traditional Vedic style.

Then, after a video depicting the zonal and national competitions, *yuvaks* and *sadhus* narrated the testing circumstances the youths overcame to memorize the *shloks* and the efforts they had put in.

Swamishri then unveiled the awards that would be sent to the youths, stamped and signed a certificate and sanctified copies of the Satsang Diksha text that each youth would receive.

To honour and felicitate the youths Swamishri





showered flower petals in their direction and also gestured to embrace them as a mark of his blessings.

To further felicitate the participating youths and honour their outstanding achievements, all the sadhus of the Sanstha, watching this live broadcast from their respective mandirs, performed *dandvats* to all the youths.

Then, on behalf of all the youths, Yagnapriya Swami, voiced a prayer to Swamishri.

Swamishri then blessed, “There are no words to describe what you have achieved. You have attained realization of God. Now if you sincerely live by the *niyams* and dharma, you will all flourish.”

Thereafter, Swamishri blessed all the winners by stroking his hand over their names on the winners’ list. Also, as a gesture of presenting the award to each personally, he placed an award on each name on the list.

Then, Swamishri blessed all the *yuvaks* individually as their live streams were displayed in sequence on the large LED screen in front of him.

This memorable and moving assembly concluded with everyone joining Swamishri to perform the *arti*.



# Shri Ram Janmabhumi Mandir Shilanyas

5 August 2020, Ayodhya



An artistic rendering of the Mandir design at the birthplace of Bhagwan Shri Ram, Ayodhya

## PUJAN AND PRAYERS BY HIS HOLINESS MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ

3 August 2020, Nenpur

It was an occasion of immense joy for all Hindus that the construction of the majestic Shri Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, an emblem of faith and spirituality, at Ayodhya, the historic birthplace of Shri Ram, commenced in the presence of the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, and revered sadhus from across India.

On the historic occasion of the foundation stone-laying ceremony, due to the restrictions enforced by the coronavirus pandemic, a limited number of spiritual leaders and saints were invited as representatives of the richly diverse culture and tradition of India. Amongst them, Mahant Swami Maharaj, was also cordially invited.

Thirty-one years ago, when the national movement for the construction of Shri Ram Janmabhumi Mandir began, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had sanctified the first Ramshila of Gujarat with Vedic rituals on 16 August 1989. Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who had prayed for many years for the construction of this mandir, had sanctified this first Ramshila on the

auspicious day of Rakshabandhan. Coincidentally, on the same occasion of Rakshabandhan, on 3 August 2020, Mahant Swami Maharaj also performed the Vedic *pujan* of the Shri Ram Rakshak Yantra and Shri Ram Yantra for placement in the Shri Ram Mandir foundations and prayed for the earliest completion of the mandir.

On this occasion, Mahant Swami Maharaj, said, “As a result of the many years of resolute faith, austerity and sacrifice of countless devotees and *sant*-mahatmas, the construction of the majestic mandir at the birthplace of Shri Ram is going to commence. I am immensely pleased. This mandir will provide inspiration to countless generations about Sanatan Dharma, our culture, values and spirituality. Countless generations will learn the supreme values and prescripts from the divine life of Shri Ramchandraji. This mandir will remain a prestigious pinnacle of the Hindu faith.

“Our gurus Param Pujya Yogiji Maharaj and Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj constantly prayed for this Ram mandir for many years and had inspired countless devotees to participate in it. They kindled faith in all, that the Shri Ram mandir will certainly be built at the birthplace of





Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj performs *puja* of the first Ramshila, 16 August 1989, Ahmedabad

Shri Ram. The construction of this Ram mandir is commencing on the foundations of dedication, sacrifice and prayers. I congratulate and convey my best wishes to the Hon. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Government of India, the Indian judiciary and to all those engaged in the construction of this mandir.

“May the construction of this mandir be completed at the earliest, with unity, without any obstacles, and may Bhagwan Shri Ramlalla be installed with grandeur. Also, may the present [coronavirus] crises be resolved at the earliest. I

pray so from the bottom of my heart and sincerely request you all to do the same.”

### MANDIR SHILANYAS CEREMONY AT THE BIRTHPLACE OF BHAGWAN SHRI RAM 5 August 2020

The joy was palpable throughout Ayodhya as the city welcomed the mahatmas and dignitaries from throughout India for the historic Shilanyas Ceremony of the Shri Ramjanmabhumi Mandir in the presence of the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendrabhai Modi, Leader of the RSS Shri



Mahant Swami Maharaj performs *puja* of Shri Ram Rakshak Yantra and Shri Ram Yantra, 3 August 2020, Nenpur



Mahant Swami Maharaj performs *arti* of Shri Ram Rakshak Yantra and Shri Ram Yantra, Nenpur



Historic Shilanyas Ceremony of Mandir in Ayodhya at the birthplace of Bhagwan Shri Ram, Ayodhya, 5 August 2020

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi (near right) performs the Shilanyas Ceremony in Ayodhya

Mohanrao Bhagwat, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Shri Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh Governor Shrimati Anandiben Patel and Head of the Shri Ram Janmabhumi Tirthkshetra Nyas Trust Pujya Mahant Nrutyagopaldasji.

A total of 170 revered mahatmas and dignitaries from throughout India had been invited. The distinguished mahatmas represented 36 Hindu traditions. Among them, Mahant Swami Maharaj, spiritual leader of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, had also been invited. Although he was unable to attend in person, he expressed his profound feelings in a letter to the Prime Minister, “Although I am not able to attend in person, I am present there through my inner spirit.”

Representing Swamishri on this auspicious occasion were Brahmavihari Swami and Aksharvatsal Swami. They reached Ayodhya on 4 August. There, they had a meeting with Pujya Mahant Nrutyagopaldasji; Shri Nrupendra Mishra, head of the mandir construction; Shri Champatrayji, General Secretary; Shri Govindgiriji, Trust Treasurer; Shri Dineshji and others to discuss the mandir construction project.

During this meeting, Shri Govindgiriji recalled, “We clearly remember that 31 years ago in 1989, Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the

*pujan* of the first Shri Ram Shila. Then, the Ram Shila Pujan Project really took off throughout the country and was successful.” These *shilas* were among those placed in the foundations.

On 5 August, at 10.00 a.m., the preliminary rituals began at Bhagwan Shri Ram’s birthplace, led by Shastri Shri Gangadhardatta Pathak and experienced pandits from Banaras. The main *yajman* for these rituals were the royal couple of Ayodhya, Shri Vimalendra Mohan and his wife.

Observing the rituals, accompanied by an insightful and informative commentary by Shri Champatrayji, were the invited guests in the audience and the countless viewers worldwide watching the live broadcast. He commented, “The enthusiasm for this occasion is everywhere. Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sampradaya have sent a specially sanctified Ram Yantra. The Shankaracharya of the Kanchikamkoti Pith has sent an engraved plate. The blessings of all revered mahatmas have also been received.”

At 11.35 a.m., Prime Minister Shri Narendra-bhai Modi reached Ayodhya. He first visited the famous Shri Hanumangadhi Mandir for darshan and then arrived at the Ram Janmabhumi site. He humbly offered sashtang prostrations to the Shri





Aksharvatsal Swami and Brahmavihari Swami offer the Ram Yantras sanctified by Thakorji and Swamishri after the Shilanyas Ceremony, with Shri Champatrayji



Mahant Swami Maharaj's letter to the Prime Minister on the occasion of the Shila Pujan and Aksharvatsal Swami placed the Ram Yantras worshipped and sent by Mahant Swami Maharaj in the foundations, while Shri Gangadhardatta Pathak recited Vedic mantras.

While the rituals were being performed in Ayodhya, Mahant Swami Maharaj in Nenpur and thousands of BAPS sadhus and devotees throughout the world chanted the *dhun* in prayer for an early and successful completion of the mandir construction. ♦



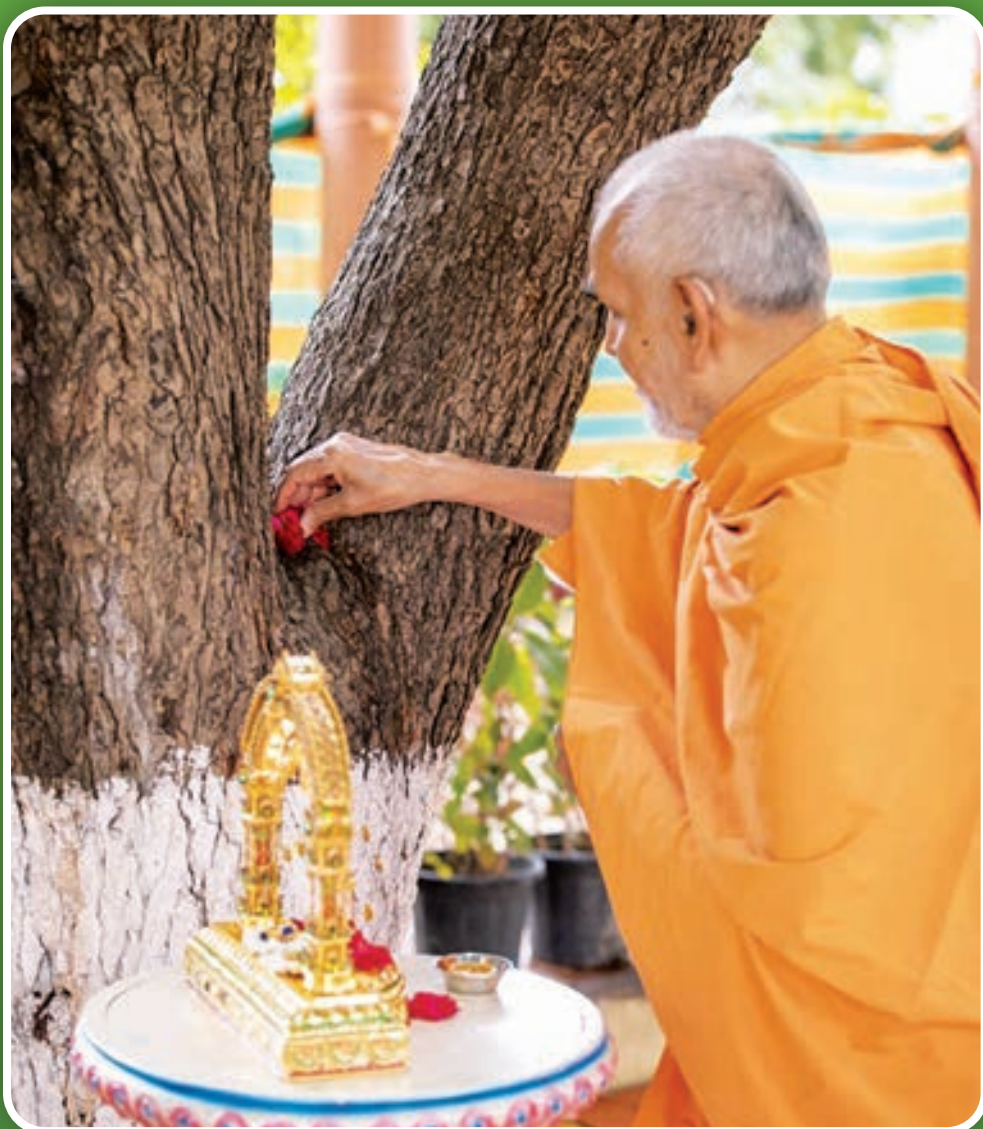
Assembly of the historic Shilanyas Ceremony of Ram Janmabhumi Mandir



# *Prakruti Vandana*

## HONOURING NATURE

30 August 2020







Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj observes plants at a farm, Sarangpur

Nature and the environment are an integral part of our life. Since ancient times, Hindus have respected and cared for nature in all its forms. A healthy, thriving natural environment is essential for sustaining healthy human life. Thus, it is everybody's responsibility to ensure that nature and the environment are cared for and nurtured in a way that will continue to support the well-being of all. The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha has contributed to this effort in many ways for many years. Under the guidance of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, BAPS has advocated and implemented numerous projects that promote environmental care. In India, the UK, North America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the world, BAPS volunteers have engaged

in tree-planting, recycling, water conservation and other projects. In addition, BAPS has endeavoured to use environment-friendly construction and building maintenance techniques whenever possible at its 1,200 mandirs worldwide.

Continuing this care for nature and the environment, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj

Pramukh Swami Maharaj frequently said that if you take care of nature, nature will take care of you. He inspired people to plant hundreds of thousands of trees and guided us on how to care for nature and the environment.

- Mahant Swami Maharaj

as well as all BAPS sadhus and thousands of devotees worldwide performed 'Prakruti Vandana' – special worship rituals to trees and plants to honour their role in sustaining life on earth and to promote environmental care and awareness. While adhering to safety guidelines for the coronavirus pandemic, all performed special rituals, which included chanting of the Vedic Shanti Paath (Universal Peace Prayer), and *pujan* and *arti* of a tree or plant.



After performing *pujan* and *arti*, Swamishri embraces a tree, Nenpur



Pujya Doctor Swami performs *pujan* of a tulsi plant and the sacred *khijdo* tree, Sarangpur

In Nenpur, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *pujan* and *arti* of a tree to inspire all to continue to care for the environment and nature.

While performing the honour rituals in Nenpur, Gujarat, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj said, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj frequently said that if you take care of nature, nature will take care of you. He inspired people to plant hundreds of thousands of trees and guided us on how to care for nature and the environment. Let us all resolve today to protect the environment and ensure a healthy human future.”

As per the wish of Mahant Swami Maharaj, 1,100 BAPS sadhus and thousands of devotees in India, the UK, USA, Canada, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East and other BAPS centres worldwide performed the special rituals at 11.00 a.m. local time.

Of special note is that several historic and sacred trees were among those worshipped. In

Sarangpur, Doctor Swami honoured the Shami tree sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan; in Ahmedabad, Tyagvallabh Swami worshiped a neem tree planted at the request of Brahmaswarup



Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami performs *pujan* of a sacred neem tree, Ahmedabad





Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and sadhus perform *arti* of the sacred banyan tree, Gandhinagar

Shastriji Maharaj; at Akshardham in Gandhinagar, Ishwarcharan Swami honoured the generations-old banyan tree sanctified by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj; and at Akshardham in New Delhi, Dharmavatsal Swami and other saints performed *pujan* of the *jambu* (rose-apple) tree sanctified by Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

On this occasion, BAPS International Activities Convener Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami said, “From Vedic times until today, our leaders have urged us to take care of our environment. His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired all to take care of the environment, by engaging in various environmental activities including the planting of thousands of trees. His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj continues this task today, inspiring everyone to take care of the environment. We need to carry on this nature-friendly heritage, appreciate God’s divinity at work in nature, pass on these values to the next generation and resolve to continue to care for our surroundings. Respecting nature is a habit to be practiced throughout our life, not just for a day. Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said that if we take

care of nature, nature will take care of us. Living in tune with nature will make our lives more meaningful and happy, and will benefit future generations.”

Such widespread participation in these worship rituals was a fitting tribute to the environmental activities inspired by Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj as we continue to celebrate his birth centenary. ♦



Pujya Kothari Swami ties a *nadachhadi* to a tree, Pune





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1. Swaminarayan  
Akshardham, New Delhi  
2. BAPS Mandir, Gondal  
3. BAPS Mandir, Sarangpur  
4. BAPS Mandir, Nairobi  
5-8. BAPS families perform  
*pujan* and *arti* of plants at  
their homes.



5



6



7



8

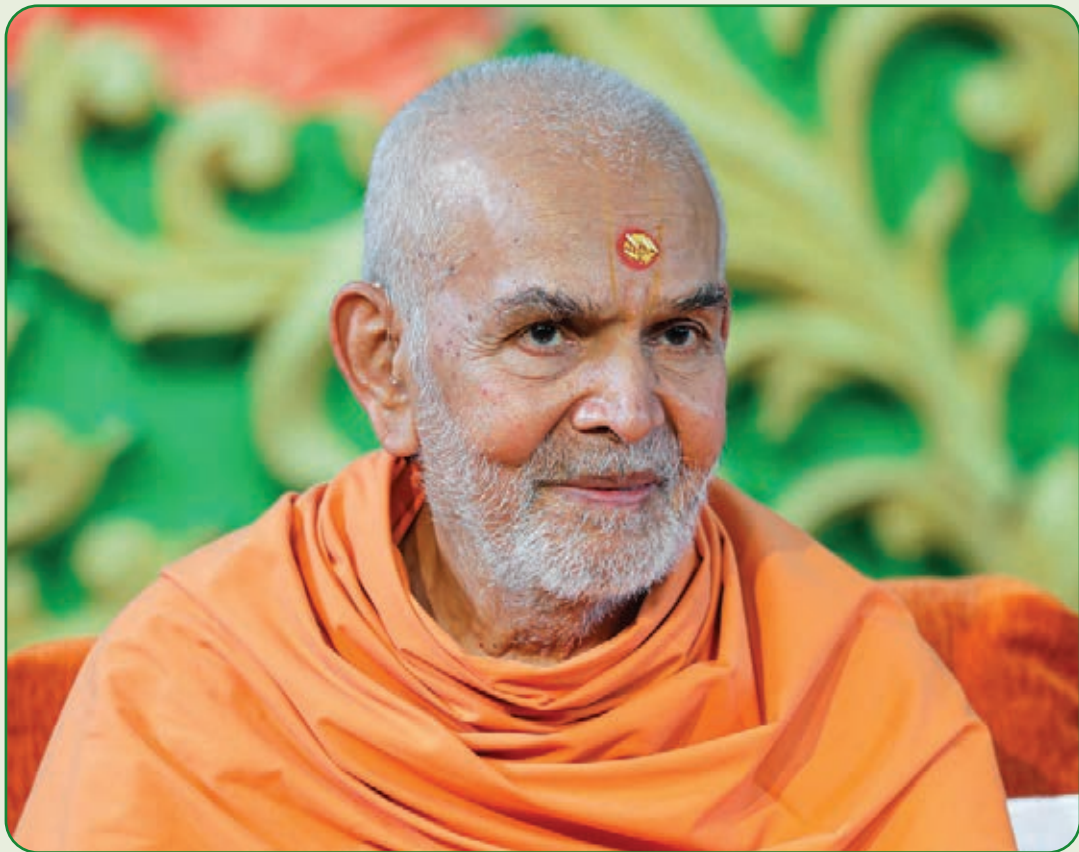


# Vicharan

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

January to October 2020

Surat, Navsari, Atladara, Anand, Gadhada, Sarangpur, Ahmedabad, Nenpur



Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, and in the interests of public health and safety, Swamishri's planned *vicharan* schedule was halted and since 18 March 2020, he has been residing at Shantivan in the holy village of Nenpur, near Ahmedabad, sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

To prevent the possibility of large numbers of devotees gathering for Swamishri's darshan and endangering their health, Swamishri himself decided that his *vicharan* and that of the *sadgurus* and other sadhus should also be stopped.

This meant that Swamishri's planned and much anticipated *vicharan* to the USA, Canada and the UK also had to be postponed.

However, from Nenpur, Swamishri has continued to grant puja darshan and give blessings and nourish the Satsang through the various festival celebrations and other events.

The following is a brief summary of Swamishri's *vicharan* prior to his stay in Nenpur.



Swamishri lights the inaugural lamp for the 'Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan', Surat

## JANUARY

### SURAT

Swamishri resided in Surat from 14 December 2019 to 26 January 2020.

#### 17, Friday

Swamishri performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals and *arti* of the *murtis* for BAPS mandirs in Chhalala (Dhari region), Saras (Surat region), Karanpur (Mehsana region) and Kasor (Mahelav region).

#### 19, Sunday

In the evening Sunday assembly, Swamishri launched the 'Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan' as part of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations, in which groups of male and female devotees will visit the homes of well-wishers to convey Pramukh Swami Maharaj's message of family harmony.

## FEBRUARY

### NAVSARI

During his stay in Navsari from 26 January to 10 February, Swamishri performed the

*murti-pratishtha* of the new *shikharbaddha* mandir on 30 January (see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, March–April 2020 for details).

#### 4, Tuesday

Swamishri performed the Vedic *pratishtha* rituals and *arti* of the *murtis* for BAPS mandirs in Vangan (Navsari region), Kathor, Godadha, Umarvav, Vegi and Manekpur (all in the Sankari region). He also performed *pujan* of the *shilas* for the BAPS mandir being constructed in Bilimora.



Swamishri performs *murti-pratishtha* rituals, Navsari



## ATLADARA

Swamishri resided in Atladara from 10–20 February 2020.

### 10, Monday

On the way from Navsari to Altadara, Swamishri went for darshan at Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthplace in Chansad and offered prayers.

At Atladara mandir youths of the marching band honoured Swamishri on his arrival and children showered flowers while thousands of devotees joyously welcomed him.

### 12, Wednesday; Volunteers Assembly

In the evening, a special assembly was held in Yagnapurush Sabhagruh in preparation for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 99<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. At the end, Swamishri blessed, "Just as Nilkanth Varni selflessly served Sevakram, Pramukh Swami Maharaj served everyone. So, to be able to serve in his birthday celebrations is our chance to offer great bhakti. Do not miss out on this great opportunity. By giving up desires, anger, greed, attachments, jealousy, deceit, hypocrisy and serving Shriji Maharaj, one will truly benefit. This occasion is such that Shriji Maharaj will certainly help."

### 14, Friday; Inauguration of New BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya

In the morning, Swamishri inaugurated the newly built 225-student capacity *chhatralaya* with modern amenities, located in the grounds of the BAPS Niramay Ayurvedic and Naturopathy Centre.

Swamishri performed the Vedic inauguration rituals at the hostel entrance and also performed *pujan* and *arti* of the *murtis* in the hostel's main prayer hall.

In the inauguration assembly, he blessed the students, "You are all here to study, so study sincerely. This *chhatralaya*'s role will be fulfilled when you all study well. Yogi Bapa used to say,



Swamishri with Shri Hari Krishna Maharaj outside the new BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya, Atladara

'Do something new.' For you, this means to study properly. Study so well that you break all records. May Maharaj and Swami bless you all to succeed."

### 15, Saturday

The evening assembly commemorated the inauguration of the new BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya. The invited guests present included, Shri Yogeshbhai Patel (Minister of State for Narmada Development), Shri Parimalbhai Vyas (Vice-chancellor, MS University, Vadodara) and others.

The students presented an excellent programme highlighting the efforts of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj in nurturing everyone spiritually.

At the end, Swamishri blessed, "This *chhatralaya* is for character-building. You must all develop your character as such that people say, 'He is a student of the BAPS Chhatralaya.' And also do not lapse in your studies. Here, you will develop in all ways."



Swamishri waves a BAPS flag during the celebrations launch assembly, Atladara



Shri Samarjitsinh Gaekwad with Swamishri at the Lakshmi Vilas Palace, Vadodara

## 16, Sunday; Atladara Mandir Amrut Mahatsav and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Birthday Celebrations Launch

The evening assembly was held at the vast Navlakhi Ground in the presence of over 35,000 devotees and well-wishers.

Based on the theme 'Namo Namaha He Pramukh Swami!', the assembly focused on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine manifestation, divine works and the hardships he tolerated. Through speeches, videos, thematic dances and skits the topics were elaborated upon. After the presentations, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami addressed the assembly, "How will we celebrate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthday? It is essential that we learn to live by the virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Let us develop unity, friendship, *divyabhav*, *mahima* and other qualities to celebrate his birthday. This is an opportunity to reveal his glory to all. Let us understand his glory and explain it to others."

Thereafter, Swamishri, Tyagvallabh Swami and other sadhus waved the BAPS flags as announcements for the launch of the celebrations

were joyously made.

Then, Swamishri blessed, "It feels as if we are seated in Akshardham. The reason is Pramukh Swami Maharaj. When Shastriji Maharaj appointed him as the president, he (Pramukh Swami Maharaj) pledged to serve the devotees and dedicate himself entirely. His pledge was genuine and truthful. He silently and sincerely lived by it. To serve the devotees, he never cared for his own physical needs.

"Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived so selflessly that he reached to the core of everyone's heart. He gave tremendous joy to everyone. Even if you celebrate his birthday every day it is not enough. There are two ways to celebrate his birthday – externally and internally. Internally is to remove all our faults and drawbacks. In particular, ill-will or hostility towards others. Shriji Maharaj and the Gunatit gurus do not like those with such enmity. Also, shed ego, jealousy and other base natures to truly celebrate this occasion. The real benefit of this celebration is that we progress spiritually."





Maharaja Samarjitsinh guides Swamishri around the historic Lakshmi Vilas Palace, Vadodara

### 17, Monday; Visit to Lakshmi Vilas Palace

Bhagwan Swaminarayan had been invited to Vadodara by the then ruler, Gaekwad Sayajirao II, in 1816. Bhagwan Swaminarayan graced the palace and blessed the Maharaja.

Similarly, the present Maharaja Samarjitsinh Gaekwad invited Mahant Swami Maharaj to visit and sanctify Lakshmi Vilas Palace in Vadodara. He received and welcome Swamishri with great devotion, honour and respect. Swamishri garlanded and blessed the Maharaja. Swamishri also paid respects to the royal throne by placing a garland on it. The Maharaja then guided Swamishri around the historic palace (see *Swaminarayan Bliss* March–April 2020, p. 52).

### 18, Tuesday; Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan Launch

In the morning, in the presence of the trustees of Umiyadham, Swamishri performed the Vedic *pujan* of the *brahma shila*, *nidhi kumbh* and other objects for the Umiyadham Mandir project (see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, March–April 2020, p. 51).

In the evening assembly, the Sanstha-wide

project ‘Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan’ under the auspices of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Centenary Celebrations was formally launched in Swamishri’s presence.

A drama titled ‘100 Days for Swamishri’ motivated all to fully commit themselves to the Parivarik Shanti Abhiyan.

Then, Swamishri blessed the Shatabdi Sevaks participating in the project, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj did so much just for us. He never sat



Swamishri performs the *pujan* rituals for Umiyadham, Atladara

idle for even one second. In comparison, we have to do very little. For this project 100 days are not enough. For us, he dedicated his entire life. So, you should make this the priority for 100 days.

“The whole world needs family harmony. There are problems everywhere. People do not understand each other or listen to each other. Everybody does as they please. That’s why this is necessary.

“When you go house-to-house with this message of family harmony, you may face problems. But remember the difficulties faced by Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. In comparison, our difficulties are insignificant. So, engage in this sincerely. Manage your time and talk to one or two people daily. Then, much will be achieved.

“Yogi Bapa had said, ‘If we do not announce you, you will not be pleased.’ To earn the *rajipo* of the great Sadhu is a big achievement. Everything is included in that. If you engage in their work, then Maharaj-Swami and the Satpurush are always with you. Others may insult you, but resolve ‘I want to please Swami.’ If you do not announce [Pramukh] Swami, then you are not a true disciple.”

Then, Swamishri officially launched the project by using a remote control to draw back the curtains to reveal the *divo*, which was also lit remotely. *Jai naads* filled the atmosphere as flower petals were showered.

Swamishri inaugurated the printed literature to be distributed in this project and the ‘Pramukh Setu’ and ‘Prerna Setu’ mobile apps specifically created for this project.

As Swamishri waved a BAPS flag, a parade of senior volunteers in full project attire walked past Swamishri and received his blessings.

## ANAND

Swamishri stayed in Anand from 20 February to 5 March

## 20, Thursday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals and *arti* of the Shri Nilkanth Varni *abhishek murti* to be consecrated in Melbourne, Australia.

## 24, Monday

Swamishri collectively gave *vartman* to children and new devotees and initiated them all into Satsang.

## 25, Tuesday

Swamishri performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals and *arti* of the *murtis* for BAPS mandirs in Balasinhora, Samarkha (repeat *pratishtha*), Chikhodra (Nilkanth Varni *murti*) – all in the Anand region; and Harichandni Muvadi (Nadiad region).

## 23, Sunday; Vidyanagar Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya Annual day

In the evening assembly, the 56th Annual Day of the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya (APC) in Vidyanagar was celebrated. The resident students presented a drama on how to resist *kusang* and other programmes.

Referring to the drama, Swamishri blessed, “You stay in this *chhatralaya* and so have remained resolute. But even the slightest lapse causes much loss. The power of *maya* is tremendous,



Swamishri sanctifies prayers written by Vidyanagar APC students, Anand





Swamishri during the Sakar Tula, Anand

so be careful. Observe the *niyams* given by Shriji Maharaj. First you need to believe that whatever Shriji Maharaj says or does is for our good. Everyone has to observe *niyams* – youths, students, adults or even if you're 100 years old. Shriji Maharaj considers only them as *satsangis*.

“Second, *nischay*. If you observe *niyams* and have *nischay*, nobody can block your path to Akshardham.”

## MARCH

### 1, Sunday; Pramukh Guru Pujan Celebration

As a mark of honour for Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj, devotees honoured Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj in a *sakar tula* ceremony.

The assembly programme featured a drama and thematic dances by children and youths, speeches by the sadhus and bhajans.

Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami said, “By serving such a sadhu, we become pure, pious and fault-free. We become eligible for Akshardham.”

Swamishri blessed, “This celebration is all due to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His footsteps have graced the entire world. He has blessed all devotees with peace and resolved everyone's questions. During Shastriji Maharaj's time, he faced many challenges and tolerated a lot. That is the reason we are able to enjoy all this in great comfort.

“He didn't just talk about dharma, *gnan*, *vairagya* and bhakti, but lived them. He strengthened unity between all and accomplished much work as a result.

“Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj do not ask for anything, but they do everything for God. I wish only to receive the affection of all the sadhus and devotees. Nothing else. I pray that you all be pleased upon me.”

After Swamishri's devout and humble blessings, the *sakar tula* ceremony took place in the presence of over 400 sadhus and 22,000 devotees.

### 3, Tuesday; Nadiad Chhatralaya Annual Day

In the evening assembly, the 28th Annual Day



Students of Nadiad *chhatralaya* with Swamishri, Anand

of Nadiad Chhatralaya was celebrated. Students presented a drama titled ‘Shilpa Sarjak.’

Swamishri blessed, “In addition to guidance about *niyam*-dharma, you also receive *jnan* in the *chhatralaya*. This gives you inner peace, since you have taken refuge in God.

“God is sheltering us. So, we do not need to worry. That you have been moulded in this way shows the great benefits of the *chhatralaya*. Now, also talk to and help others live in this way.”

Swamishri blessed the students who had been observing austerities for many weeks in the build-up to his visit and also those who undertook observances to continue in the long term.

### GADHADA

During Swamishri’s stay here from 5–12 March, he presided over the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations (see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, May–December 2020, pp. 5–44).

### SARANGPUR

Swamishri stayed in Sarangpur from 12 to 16 March.

### AHMEDABAD

Swamishri was in Ahmedabad from 16 to 18 March. After routine medical checks Swamishri went to Nenpur.

### MARCH TO OCTOBER

#### NENPUR

Swamishri’s daily routine of puja, *arti*, *katha*, *sabhas*, personal reading, letter and phone correspondence, Sanstha administration and meetings, walking and exercises has continued. He has presided over the webcasts of major festival celebrations and other special assemblies.

He is taking adequate rest and is in good health. ◆

*From Swamishri’s daily report in Gujarati by Sadhu Brahmavatsaldas. Translation of excerpts by Sadhu Amrutvijaydas*





## INDIA

### NEW BAPS MANDIRS

17–19 January 2020,

New Naroda, Ahmedabad



A flourishing suburb of Ahmedabad, the weekly satsang *sabha* in New Naroda began in 2007. With an influx of devotees settling from nearby villages, the need for a local mandir arose.

After suitable land was acquired, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami performed the *bhumi pujan*. To celebrate the mandir inauguration, a kirtan *aradhana* by the sadhus and youths was presented on 17 January.

On the morning of 18 January, a *yagna* was performed in which 501 *yajmans* participated and in the afternoon, the *murtis* to be consecrated were honoured in a *nagar yatra*.

On the morning of 19 January, Pujya Dr Swami and Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami performed the Vedic *pratishtha* rituals and consecrated the *murtis* in the new mandir.

Mahant Swami Maharaj had previously performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals and *arti* of the *murtis* on 26 November 2019 in Bochasan.

### Bhadreshi (Jhalavad Region)

15–16 February 2020

Bhadreshi, in the Jhalawad region, had been sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The BAPS Satsang here was established in 1992. In 2018, Shri Raghubhai Patel donated land for a mandir.

On the morning of 15 February, 160 *yajmans* participated in the *yagna*. In the afternoon, a grand *nagar yatra* took place honouring the *murtis*.

On the morning of 16 February, the *murtis* were consecrated with full Vedic rites in the new mandir by Pujya Viveksagar Swami.

Mahant Swami Maharaj had previously performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* and *arti* of the *murtis* on 26 November 2019 in Bochasan.

### Dolatpara, Junagadh: 15–17 February 2020

The mandir inauguration celebrations featured a wonderful *nagar yatra* of the *murtis* on 15 February.

On 17 February, the *murtis* were consecrated in the new mandir with full Vedic rituals by Yogiswarup Swami.

Mahant Swami Maharaj had previously performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals and *arti* of the *murtis* on 7 November 2019 in Rajkot.

### ONLINE ZONAL YUVA ADHIVESHANS

17–19 May 2020

During the lockdown in India, *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from BAPS centres in Gujarat, Maharashtra and other states participated in the online Zonal Yuva Adhiveshans.

Youths competed with others from centres in their zone. They participated in four competitions: Vachanamrut Mukhpath (Memorization),



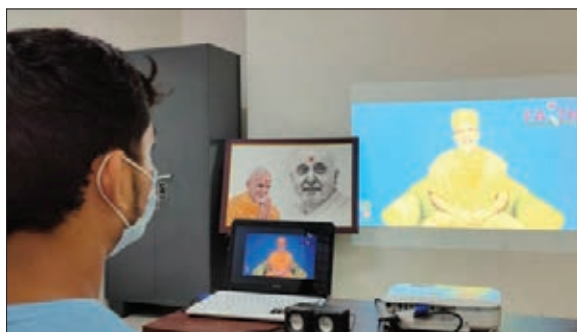
Sahajanand Namavali Mukhpath, Poster Design and Script Writing.

On 17 and 19 May, a total of 2,155 *yuvaks* and 3,358 *yuvatis* took part online in the two *mukhpath* competitions. Each participant was tested by an assessor over a Whatsapp video call. While reciting their memorized material, the youths were required to keep their eyes closed to ensure fairness.

Youths also submitted their poster design and script entries online to the Satsang Activities Central Office in Ahmedabad for assessment.

Zonewise results were declared separately for *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* for each competition.

## VIRTUAL MEDICO-SPIRITUAL CONFERENCE 3–4 October 2020



Over 530 medical students from throughout Gujarat tuned in to participate in the online Medico-Spiritual Conference based on the theme 'Faith: Winning Formula for Life'.

The 2-day conference featured guidance from Pujya Doctor Swami, as well as inspiring speeches by learned and experienced BAPS swamis and other professionals which helped to cultivate faith

in God and guru, trust in others and self-belief among the delegates. Special audio-visual presentations reinforced the conference theme. The highlight of the conference was the blessings from Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj.

## UK & EUROPE

### ONLINE FAMILY SHIBIR 12 July 2020



On 29 December 2019, Mahant Swami Maharaj wrote a letter to the UK & Europe Satsang Mandal explaining the fundamental importance of *abnik* (daily personal practices of devotion) for one's spiritual progress and as a personal contribution to the 25th anniversary celebrations of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London.

Making this the central theme, a special online one-day family *shibir* was organized to better understand the meaning, method and benefits of these daily devotional practices and how to improve their quality.

The *shibir* covered daily puja, *arti*, *thal*, *mansi* and *cheshta*, as well as the importance of a *ghar* mandir through a series of enlightening video presentations, discourses by senior and learned swamis, demonstrations, and interactive exercises throughout the day. The learning included inspiring examples from the exemplary lives of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The *shibir* began with *samuh* puja where families performed their personal puja in unison with the aid of an online tutorial. Families



then enjoyed the webcast darshan of Mahant Swami Maharaj's puja that was recorded earlier in Nenpur, India.

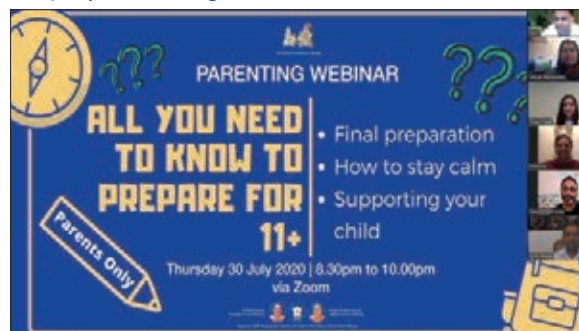
The webcast sessions continued thereafter, providing detailed guidance on the various aspects of personal daily satsang and the sharing of best practices. The teachings were supported with worksheets and prepared resources with opportunities for members of the family to participate in these practices at home.

During the afternoon, families held discussions on how to improve the quality of their collective devotion at home. They also had time to enjoy fun family activities.

Following the evening session, families also joined the live webcast of the sandhya *arti* and the *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni Maharaj in London while joining in at their own homes. The enlightening day concluded with *samuh cheshta*, also webcast from London.

## PARENTING WEBINAR FOR ELEVEN-PLUS EXAMS

30 July & 5 August 2020



The Eleven-Plus (11+) is an important examination administered to some students in the UK in the final year of their primary education. It governs admission into secondary schools which rely on academic selection. This typically challenging time for many parents and children has been exacerbated this year due to the current lockdown.

Over 160 families of Year 5 children attended the webinars during which teachers and experts

provided a deeper insight into the competition for school places and encouraged parents to maintain a realistic perspective on their children's potential.

Attendees also learnt how best to prepare for the exams, with specific tips on the exam papers, including the importance of 'quality over quantity' and investing time to practise and learn from past papers.

The webinar also revealed valuable life skills that participants can harness to help them in their future academic and professional lives.

## ASIA PACIFIC

### SWAMISHRI SANCTIFIES MURTIS FOR DEVOTEES OF AUSTRALIA

4 July 2020, Melbourne



In Nenpur, Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj presided, via video conference, over the sanctification of 500 sets of metallic *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj for the devotees of Australia to keep in their homes and offer devotion. Swamishri performed the *pujan* of one set of *murtis*, while in Melbourne, Australia, swamis performed the *mahapuja* rituals of the other *murtis*. They applied a *chandlo* and tied a *nadachhadi* to all of the *murtis*.

### BAL-BALIKA AND KISHORE-KISHORI KARYAKAR ADHIVESHAN, PHASE 1

11–12 July 2020

A total of 172 *bal-kishore karyakars* and 197 *balika-kishori karyakars* from 12 BAPS centres in



Australia and 5 in New Zealand (participated in Phase 1 of the *adhiveshan*.

This phase focused on the daily devotional rituals of Satsang (*ahnik*) which included memorizing the *arti*, *thal*, *stuti*, *shloks*, *dhun*, *prarthana*, as well as selected Vachanamrut passages, selected Swamini Vato and the Sahajanand Namavali.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic restrictions, this *adhiveshan* was conducted online. Participants were tested by the assessors via video calls.

### MAHAPUJA TO SANCTIFY MURTIS BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir 12 July 2020, Auckland, New Zealand



In Nenpur, Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj presided, via video conference, over the sanctification of 200 sets of metallic *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj for the devotees of New Zealand to keep in their homes and offer devotion.

Thereafter, with the coronavirus pandemic under control in New Zealand, a special *mahapuja* was conducted at the BAPS Mandir in

Auckland. Around 300 devotees at the mandir and many more online performed *pujan* of the Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj *murtis* which had been remotely sanctified by Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj.

### AKSHARA GURU YOGENA: BAL-BALIKA SHIBIR

18 July 2020



More than 1,000 *balaks* and *balikas* from throughout Australia and New Zealand participated in this online Bal-Balika Shibir based on the theme 'Akshara Guru Yogena' which elaborated upon the *ashray diksha* Mantra given by Mahant Swami Maharaj on the auspicious day of Shri Hari Jayanti in 2019. The *shibir* helped to strengthen the attachment (*jodan*) of the *balaks* and *balikas* with gurus Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Through sessions presented by swamis, hands-on activities, video call breakout discussions led by local *karyakars*, and other activities, the children were taken on a journey through which they understood and appreciated the importance and role of a guru in their daily life.

As part of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations, the children pledged to live by the teachings given by Swamishri, such as, daily personal satsang and regular participation in their *ghar sabhas*.

### PUJAN OF 'SATSANG DIKSHA' 23 August 2020

Over 3,000 families from BAPS centres





throughout Australia and New Zealand participated in a special *pujan* ritual of the ‘Satsang Diksha’ shastra written by guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj. The *pujan* rituals were led by swamis at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Sydney, Australia, while, through a live webcast, devotees devoutly performed the *pujan* rituals in their homes.

The swamis encouraged all devotees to memorize the verses of the Satsang Diksha and emphasized that Swamishri has expressed his profound delight and blessings to all who are memorizing the Satsang Diksha. Mahant Swami Maharaj has blessed that everyone would progress in all ways by memorizing the Satsang Diksha shastra.

Thus, to attain Mahant Swami Maharaj’s blessings, many devotees pledged to daily recite and memorize the verses.

## MAHAPUJA FOR STUDENTS

20 September 2020



Over 300 *kishores* and *kishoris* from 13 BAPS centres in Australia and New Zealand simultaneously participated in a special online *mahapuja*

to offer prayers for the success of the youths in their studies and especially for their final exams beginning in October.

BAPS swamis led the *mahapuja* rituals, while the youths participated by performing the Vedic rituals in their homes. After the *mahapuja*, Pujya Bhaktipriya(Kothari) Swami gave blessings and inspiration from India on how to prepare well and stay motivated for study and exams, especially in these challenging times.

## MIDDLE EAST

### PRAYERS FOR HUMANITY

14 May 2020, Abu Dhabi, UAE



Over 2,000 families and more than 5,000 participants from over 56 countries joined online to participate in the prayer assembly held by the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi. The webcast assembly was in support of the noble ‘Prayers for Humanity’ initiative of the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity (HCHF).

The assembly began with an address by Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj and continued with prayers from various Indian communities. Guest speakers included Shri Pradeep Kumar Rath of the Odia Samaj, Shri Ravi Kale who recited a prayer in Marathi, Shri S. Venkatesh who shared a prayer in Tamil, and Shri Shiv Kumar who offered prayers in Malayalam. All viewers were able to follow and understand each of these earnest prayers through the English subtitles provided.

Devotional songs were also sung by BAPS

youths and other groups. This was followed by a heartfelt prayer video.

Thereafter, Brahmavihari Swami gave the closing remarks of the prayer assembly.

This online prayer assembly concluded with a touching gesture of lighting a lantern or candle as a symbol of hope and prayer for the world.

## NORTH AMERICA

### ONLINE FAMILY MAHAPUJA 29 March 2020, North America



At each of its six *shikharbaddha* mandirs in North America a *mahapuja* was held for the well-being of all and a quick resolution to the pandemic.

The swamis residing at the mandirs performed the rituals, while over 12,000 families throughout USA and Canada took part in the ceremonies from the safety of their homes.

This special *mahapuja* gave peace of mind and inner strength to the devotees.

### DEVOTEES PARTICIPATE IN 24-HOUR PRAYERS

#### 4 April 2020, Canada

Over 2,800 BAPS devotees from across Canada joined online for 24 hours of continuous prayers (*akhand dhun*) to pray for all the affected and the good health of the frontline workers working day and night to save lives.

BAPS devotees participated in the prayers from their homes across the country. The 24



hours of prayer began in Halifax and moved across Canada to end in Vancouver, moving across thousands of kilometres and spanning several time zones across the country.

## AFRICA

### ONLINE MAHAPUJA CEREMONY 26 April 2020, Africa



Over 16,730 devotees from over 4,180 families in 16 countries across Africa devotionally performed the *mahapuja* rituals at their homes following the lead of sadhus at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Nairobi, Kenya. The *mahapuja* was also performed at all 29 BAPS mandirs across Africa by the resident pujaris. As per the wish of Mahant Swami Maharaj over 211 recitations of Shri Sahajanand Namavali were completed during the *mahapuja* ceremony.

At the conclusion of the *mahapuja* ceremony, Bhaktipriya (Kothari) Swami blessed all through a live broadcast from India. ♦



## TRIBUTES



**PUJYA BHAKTIPRASAD SWAMI, Nadiad**

**Passed Away: 20 April 2020, Age: 77**

A native of Nadiad he lived in Karamsad. As a youth, Pujya Bhaktiprasad Swami regularly visited the Santram Mandir. He came into contact with Yogiji Maharaj and was drawn by his piety and saintliness. Yogiji Maharaj initiated him on 28 June 1961 in Gondal.

For 30 years he served as the pujari of the BAPS Mandir in Bochasan, as well as assisting in the *gaushala* and the farm. For the past 20 years he served as *bhandari* in Anand and when required went on *vicharan* to the villages. He always remained busy by seeking out *seva*. In addition, he was skilful in making *tilakiya* and made them for Swaminarayan Aksharpath. Thousands of devotees use them in their pujas. He suffered a heart attack and passed away to Akshardham.

We pay tribute to Pujya Bhaktiprasad Swami, a humble and dedicated sadhu.



**PUJYA JNANVALLABH SWAMI, Nadiad**

**Passed Away: 14 April 2020, Age: 73**

His father, Shri Chhotalal Panchal, a native of Nadiad, was a staunch devotee of Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj. From 1967, before taking *diksha*, Jnanvallabh Swami served in Gondal at the wish of Yogiji Maharaj. For 14 years, he engaged day and night in wide-ranging duties: watchman, housekeeping, serving the guests, and others. He also helped the pujari sadhus.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated him on 12 April 1981, during the Bhagwan Swaminarayan Bicentenary Celebrations. He had learnt classical singing as a youth and delighted all with his devout singing before Thakorji. He served for 22 years in Bhadra as pujari and also enthusiastically assisted other sadhus with their duties. He never had any complaints or expectations and spent his time in offering devotion.

Due to kidney failure, he was receiving treatment in Ahmedabad for the past two years, where he passed away to Akshardham. We pay tribute to the humble and devout Pujya Jnanvallabh Swami.



**PUJYA TATTVAVIVEK SWAMI, Sarangpur**

**Passed Away: 6 July 2020, Age: 26**

Pujya Tattvavivek Swami, who was an electrical engineer, was initiated by Mahant Swami Maharaj on 25 January 2018, during the Akshar Deri Shardha Shatabdi Mahotsav in Gondal. He was studying and serving at the Sant Training Centre in Sarangpur. He excelled in studies, and was always enthusiastic and meticulous in performing his duties. He passed away due to a sudden brain hemorrhage. We pay out tributes to him.



**PUJYA BHARAT BHAGAT, Lakhiani**

**Passed Away: 26 July 2020, Age: 60**

A native to Lakhiani village in the Botad district. Before receiving *diksha* he served in the *gaushala* at Sarangpur. Pujya Bharat Bhagat was initiated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj on 15 August 1979. Initially, he served in Bhadra, and then for 15 years in Dangra. He served there humbly and was always smiling.

For the past six years he was in Rajkot. He suffered from diabetes and other ailments. We pay our tributes to him.



**SHRI PRATAPBHAI RAVAL, New York**

**Passed Away: 13 May 2020, Age: 95**

While living in Mumbai, Pratapbhai was drawn towards Yogiji Maharaj. In 1974, at the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he gave up his job and went to serve as the pujari of London mandir. In 1977, Pramukh Swami Maharaj stationed him as the pujari of the mandir in Flushing, New York. For many years he served there with great dedication and devotion. He also attended to the mandir's housekeeping and discoursed to youths to consolidate their satsang and observance of *niyam*-dharma. He was also a poet who wrote many outstanding verses. For 60 years, he wholeheartedly, humbly and with true understanding served the Sanstha. We offer our heartfelt tributes to him.



**SHRI PROF. RAMESHBHAI M. DAVE, Mumbai**

**Passed Away: 29 August 2020, Age: 80**

Shri Rameshbhai received *vartman* from Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. Through his dedicated services he earned the blessings of Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. His father was Shri Mahipatray Dave, a scholar and elder brother of Shri Harshadray Dave. Their ancestor, Veljibhai Dave was blessed by Gopalanand Swami, "Velji's family tree will flourish."

Thus, as his third-generation descendents, Mahipatray, Harshadray and their two other brothers were staunch devotees of Shastriji Maharaj. These Dave brothers earned the innermost blessings of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

So, Rameshbhai was raised in an environment surrounded by satsang. From a young age, he was interested in the Sampradaya's history, philosophy and literature. With the blessings of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he completed a PhD in Philosophy and for many years taught at the SIES College in Mumbai. After retiring from teaching, he served as the director of the Anantacharya Indological Research Institute from 1999 to 2016.

In his student years, he travelled to the villages with Yogiji Maharaj and, as a Brahmin, he served Thakorji and Yogiji Maharaj in the kitchen and in other special ways. From 1960 to 1970, such close association with Yogiji Maharaj strengthened his *niyam*, *nishchay* and *paksha*. As a scholar, he enthusiastically explained the glory of satsang to others. He introduced many leading scholars of Mumbai and India to Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj and explained to them the glory of the Gunatit Sant.

He also represented the BAPS at many academic conferences and seminars, presenting research papers and speeches on Bhagwan Swaminarayan's philosophy. He wrote many articles, books, research papers on topics ranging from Swaminarayan Vedanta to the Sampradaya's bhakti tradition.

Rameshbhai made notable contributions when the *yuvak* and *bal mandals* prepared handwritten magazines to present to Yogiji Maharaj.

By the wish of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Rameshbhai assisted Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami in setting up the Satsang Examinations framework. He wrote the *Ghanshyam Charitra*, *Nilkanth Charitra*, *Sahajanand Charitra* and other exam books. He also contributed notably to the setup of the Pragna exams. Rameshbhai also had deep knowledge of *jiyotish* and *muhurt* texts with which he



helped to determine scriptural timings of various important mandir events. When Pramukh Swami Maharaj became the guru in 1971, Rameshbhai met Diwaliba, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's mother, and prepared Swamishri's *janmakshar* (horoscope). In 1980, he accompanied Swamishri on his overseas Satsang *vicharan* during which he delivered many speeches in English.

Through such *seva* and bhakti, Rameshbhai earned the blessing of four Gunatit gurus. Due to their acquaintance since they were youths, Mahant Swami Maharaj often referred to him as a friend. His passing away is a great loss for the Sanstha. Our heartfelt tributes to him.

- *Sadhu Bhaktipriyadas (Kothari Swami), Mumbai*

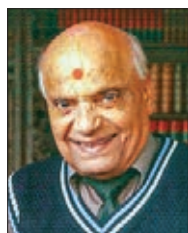


### **SHRI PURUSHOTTAMBHAI MORJARIA, London**

**Passed Away: 1 April 2020, Age: 98**

Having joined the Satsang since the time of Shastriji Maharaj, Purushottambhai Morjaria was one of the stalwart devotees of the BAPS in England. Previously residing in Kampala, Uganda, he came into contact with Shri Maganbhai and then with Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. His faith in Akshar-Purushottam increased day-by-day. He moved to London in 1972 and served with the same dedication, devotion and enthusiasm. At the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he served as a trustee of BAPS UK and also as the Sanstha's chief accountant from 1977 to 1991.

He served and pleased four Gunatit gurus. We pay our utmost tributes to him.



### **SHRI KESHAVAL P. BHATT, London**

**Passed Away: 19 August 2020, Age: 85**

Originally from Jinja, Uganda, Shri Keshavlal Bhatt was a stalwart devotee of the UK Satsang. He served in Jinja in 1960 when Yogiji Maharaj inaugurated the mandir there and, for many years ensured its security amid the volatile local situation. He settled in London in 1972 and from 1977 to 1995 served as UK and Europe National Coordinator for the Satsang Exams. We offer our tributes to him.



### **SHRI BAVAJIBHAI RANCHHODBHAI PATEL, Anand**

**Passed Away: 16 July 2020, Age: 90**

Bavajibhai was the son of Ranchhodbhai Bakorbhai Patel, a stalwart devotee of Shastriji Maharaj. Bavajibhai served four Gunatit gurus with great dedication and devotion. In 1950, he served Sadguru Nirgundas Swami during his final illness. Bavajibhai accompanied Yogiji Maharaj on his 1970 Satsang *vicharan* in Africa. Even in old age, he sincerely offered bhakti and inspired such service and devotion for Satsang in his children and extended family. Our tributes to such a dedicated devotee.



### **SHRI VINUBHAI DAHYABHAI PATEL, London**

**Passed Away: 2 April 2020, Age: 77**

Fondly known as 'Mahatma', Shri Vinubhai received *vartman* into Satsang from Nirgundas Swami and had also served Shastriji Maharaj. He sincerely served and offered bhakti as per the wishes of Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj till his last breath. Our heartfelt tributes to him.

**SHRI BHAGATSINH GOVUBHA RANA, Acharda****Passed Away: 6 February 2020, Age: 90**

A native of Acharda village, Shri Bhagatsinh was drawn towards Yogiji Maharaj and served the Satsang with great dedication and faith. Whenever Yogiji Maharaj or Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited Acharda or Narayan Dhare to celebrate the Bhadarvo Amas (New Moon), his family served unreservedly. He presented his son (presently, Purushottamjivan Swami) to serve at the feet of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. We pay our tributes to such a dedicated devotee.

**SHRI JADAVJIBHAI MEGHJIBHAI THAKKAR, Bhuj****Passed Away: 13 July 2020, Age: 77**

Shri Jadavjibhai was a native of Khavda – a town on the western border of Gujarat. After he came into contact with Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1978, he gave up all his addictions and wholeheartedly adopted the practices of Satsang. Due to his devotion, Pramukh Swami Maharaj arranged a *parayan* of the Shrimad Bhagvat in Khavda in 1999. The Gujarat earthquake in 2001 severely damaged Khavda. Pramukh Swami Maharaj adopted the town and rebuilt it. This rebuilding was overseen by Jadavjibhai. When former USA president Bill Clinton visited Gandhinagar Akshardham, Jadavjibhai was one of the few people Swamishri introduced to him. We pay our tributes to him.

**SHRI VASANTBHAI OZA, London****Passed Away: 28 March 2020, Age: 94**

A native of Rajkot, Vasantbhai lived for some time in Mombasa before settling in London in 1977. Drawn to Satsang by Yogiji Maharaj, he served in many ways. He was an avid reader of the Sampradaya's texts, notably having read the Bhaktachintamani over 300 times. His devotion pleased the Gunatit gurus. We offer our heartfelt tributes to him.

**SHRI DR NARAYANBHAI KANSARA, Gandhinagar****Passed Away: 12 September 2020, Age: 87**

Dr Narayanbhai was a respected scholar of ancient Indian literature. In 1980, when he was director of the Veda Vignan Academy, a well-known research institute, he was drawn by the saintliness and piety of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. After the Yogiji Maharaj Centenary Celebrations in 1992, he dedicated his life to Satsang. From 1997 to 2014 served as the director of AARSH in Gandhinagar. He organized many conferences and seminars and contributed to many papers and books published by BAPS and Shri Somnath Sanskrit University. In 2001, he was felicitated by the President of India, an honour he dedicated to Thakorji. We pay our tributes to such a scholarly devotee.

**SHRI DHIRUBHAI VALLABHBHAI BHAVSAR, Valvada****Passed Away: 29 February 2020, Age: 84**

A native of Valvada, Shri Dhirubhai joined the Satsang in 1971. For many years, when sadhus visited his tribal region, he and his family arranged for their stay and meals. Drawn by Dhirubhai's devotion, Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited his home four times. As per the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Dhirubhai went for darshan to Sankari Mandir on every *punam*. We pay our tributes to him.



**SHRI CHANDUBHAI DAHYABHAI PATEL, Ahmedabad (Rakanpur)****Passed Away: 14 September 2020, Age: 83**

A native of Rakanpur, near Ahmedabad, Shri Chandubhai was a devotee of the Gunatit Guru Mandal which followed Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj. The last guru of this householder tradition, Pujya Shri Punjabapa, selected Shri Chandubhai as the next guru. However, Chandubhai declared to all his devotees, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj is the present guru in the Gunatit guru tradition of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He is our gateway to *moksha*. Let us all offer our devotion to him.” Thus, Chandubhai spent his life as an ardent disciple of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He pleased Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. His entire family are dedicated followers of BAPS. We pay our heartfelt tributes to such a stalwart and knowledgeable devotee.

**SHRI PRAVINCHANDRA NANALAL RAVAL, Mehsana****Passed Away: 22 December 2019, Age: 71**

From 1990, Shri Pravinbhai accompanied the sadhus in their *vicharan* in the villages of North Gujarat. He served extensively during the construction of the *shikharbaddha* mandir in Mehsana. He was also a leading *karyakar* for the *bal mandal*. After retiring in 2006, he served full time in the mandir kitchen. For many years, he cooked food for Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Mahant Swami Maharaj and many senior sadhus. He also attended sincerely to the devotees. We pay our tributes to such a dedicated devotee.

**SHRI CHIMANBHAI VALAND, Ahmedabad****Passed Away: 30 August 2020, Age: 76**

Shri Chimanbhai's father, Chhotabhai, was a staunch devotee of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Following in his footsteps, Chimanbhai wholeheartedly obeyed Pramukh Swami Maharaj's wish and joined to serve the Sanstha full-time. He lived a simple and devout life. Serving for many years in the magazines department and also the Sanstha's Children's Activities Central Office, especially in the Bal Prakash magazine section. He served the Sanstha full time for 47 years. We pay our sincere tributes to him.

**SHRI DARSHANBHAI KESHAVALAL PATEL, Ahmedabad****Passed Away: 15 September 2020, Age: 78**

Shri Darshanbhai was drawn to the Satsang in 1997. He had a flower decoration business and donated his services on innumerable celebrations of the Sanstha, mandir *pratishthas*, and other occasions. Our heartfelt tributes to him.

**SHRI MAHENDRABHAI PATEL, London****Passed Away: 13 June 2020, Age: 78**

Mahendrabhai moved from Kenya to London in 1972. He was a dedicated devotee who served Pramukh Swami Maharaj in many ways. He presented to Swamishri his eldest son, who was initiated into the sadhu-fold (presently, Anandpriya Swami). Shri Mahendrabhai served enthusiastically in London mandir for many years. His contributions to the Satsang in South London were noteworthy. We pay our humble tributes to him.

**SHRI KIRITBHAI RAVJIBHAI PATEL, Ahmedabad****Passed Away: 17 July 2020, Age: 69**

A native of Sunav, Kiritbhai lived in Ahmedabad. He had a non-ferrous alloy casting business, which led to his initial contact with Pramukh Swami Maharaj. In 1990, while the Gandhinagar Akshardham was being built, a large *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan was to be made. It was a challenge which Kiritbhai accepted, and he was drawn to the Satsang. After the opening of Akshardham in New Delhi in 2005, Kiritbhai served there in the parking department for six years. Returning to Ahmedabad, he served in the Ahmedabad Satsang Pravrutti Office. We pay our heartfelt tributes to such a dedicated devotee.

**SHRI HARESHWARBHAI MOHANBHAI DAVE, Mumbai****Passed Away: 26 September 2020, Age: 89**

A native of Kukadiya village in the Sabarkantha district of North Gujarat, Shri Hareshwarbhai lived in Mumbai. He was drawn into Satsang through Yogiji Maharaj. He served the satsang in Himmatnagar, Mehsana, Gadhada, Sarangpur, Mumbai and other places in many ways. He was an ever-present volunteer at the World Peace Yagnas organized by the Sanstha.

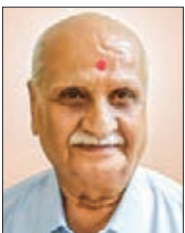
For 10 years, he served in the Nilkanth Varni *abhishek* hall in Dhuliya. He was keen on discourses and due to his devotion, Pramukh Swami Maharaj stayed at his homes in Kukadiya and Mulund (Mumbai). Our sincere tributes to him.

**SHRI ARVINBHAI HIRABHAI PATEL, Trivendram (Kerala)****Passed Away: 23 September 2020, Age: 64**

A native of Ravapar in Kutch, Shri Arvinbhai's father, Hirabhai, set up a business in Karachi (Pakistan). There, he came into the contact of Shastriji Maharaj. At the time of the Partition in 1947, he moved to South India. Arvinbhai became more attached to the Satsang through his contact with Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He gave dedicated service to the Sanstha in South India. We pay our tributes to him.

**SHRI ANANTRAY KANJIBHAI SHETH, Coimbatore****Passed Away: 17 August 2020, Age: 83**

A native of Navagam (Loliyana) in Saurashtra, Shri Anantray lived in Coimbatore since 1976. As one of the pioneer devotees of Satsang in Coimbatore, he served there with dedication and devotion, earning the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. We pay our tributes to such a staunch devotee.

**SHRI ARVINBHAI BHAVSAR, Ahmedabad****Passed Away: 6 August 2020, Age: 80**

Shri Arvinbhai joined the Satsang in 1993 and since 1998 served in the Sanstha's Planning Cell with tremendous enthusiasm, commitment and care. We pay our tributes to him. ♦



# SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARPITH PUBLICATIONS

## Audio Books in Gujarati



*Bhagwan Shri Swaminarayan*, Parts 1 to 5, are available free of cost in audio format from the Sanstha's website. Listen with ease to the interesting and inspiring life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan written by Harshadrai T. Dave.

Click on the link to access the audio books:

<https://www.baps.org/Publications/Audios/Audio-Book.aspx>



*Bhagwan Shri Swaminarayan na Bhaktratno*, Parts 1 to 8, are available free of cost in audio format from the Sanstha's website. The lives of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's great devotees will enrich one with faith, devotion, integrity and service.

Click on the link to access the audio books:

<https://www.baps.org/Publications/Audios/Audio-Book.aspx>



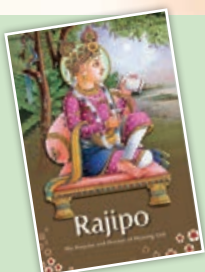
*Brahmaswarup Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj nu Vistrut Jivan Charitra*, Parts 1 to 3, are available in audio format from the Sanstha's website. All will be inspired by Swamishri's love for God and his guru, his unfathomable efforts, selflessness, and respect and affection for all.

Click on the link to access the audio books:

<https://www.baps.org/Publications/Audios/Audio-Book.aspx>

<https://www.baps.org/PramukhSwamiMaharaj/Jivan-Charitra-part-1-Videos.aspx>

## English Print Publication



*Rajipo* elaborates upon the purpose and process of pleasing God and guru. Wonderful examples of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's disciples illuminate the path of attaining *rajipo*. *Rajipo* is a translation of the popular Gujarati publication, 'Karie Raji Ghanshyam'. It was rendered into English by the *yuvatis* of USA: Bhavna Pokal, Dipali Vyas, Akshara Patel and Deepa Patel.

The publication is available at all BAPS bookstores.

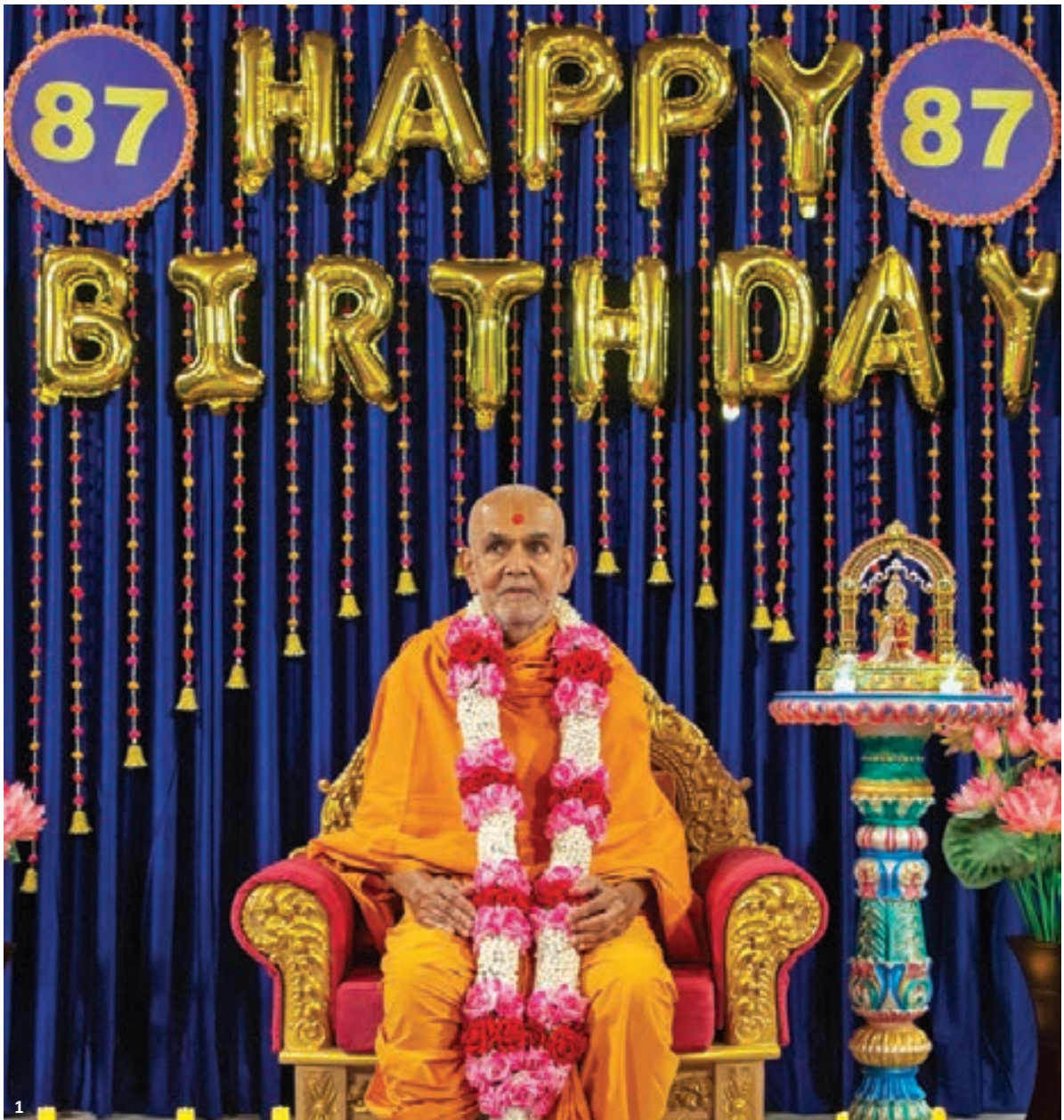


## JAL-JHILANI CELEBRATION

29 August 2020, Nenpur

Bhagwan Swaminarayan sanctified the village of Nenpur, near Ahmedabad, many times. Mahant Swami Maharaj celebrated the auspicious Jal-Jhilani festival here. Swamishri performed the *pujan*, *abhishek* and *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and steered the remote-controlled boat carrying Thakorji through the water pool. He also performed the *pujan* and *arti* of Shri Ganapatiji. At the conclusion of the celebration, Swamishri immersed Ganapatiji in the water.





### **MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S 87TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

**13 September 2020, Nenpur**

Thousands of devotees throughout the world joined online to participate in the grand birthday celebration assembly and offer their heartfelt respects and prayers to *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj.

1. Swamishri honoured with a garland.
2. Swamishri honours Shri Harikrishna Maharaj with flowers.

Printed and Published by Sadhu Swayamprakashdas on behalf of Swaminarayan Aksharpith and Printed at Swaminarayan Mudran Mandir, Shahibaug Road, Ahmedabad - 380 004 and Published from Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Shahibaug Road, Ahmedabad - 380 004. Editor: Sadhu Swayamprakashdas.