

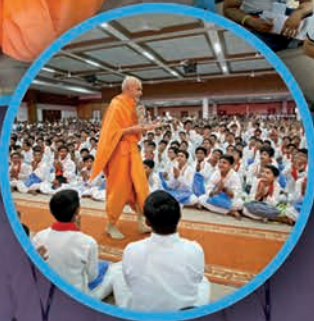
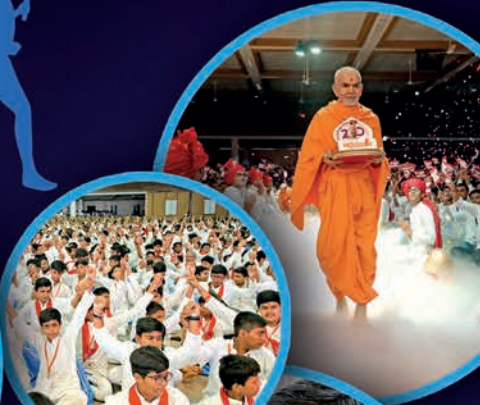
July–August 2019

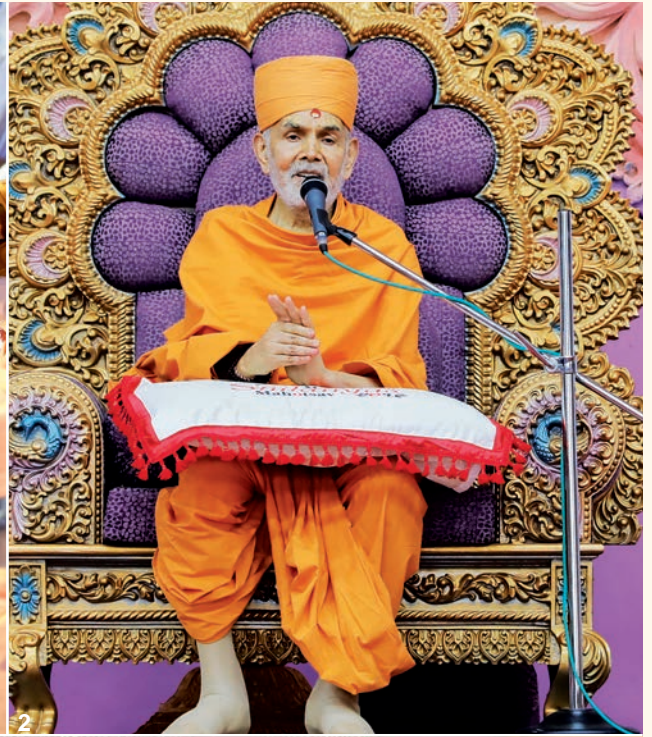
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SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

Bal-Balika and Yuva-Yuvati ADHIVESHANS

May–June 2019, Sarangpur





**GRAND SHILANYAS RITUALS OF THE
BAPS SHIKHARBADDHA SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR IN MORBI
12 June 2019**

On 12 June 2019, by Pramukh Swami Maharaj's wish and under the aegis of Mahant Swami Maharaj, the industrial town of Morbi (near Rajkot) witnessed the grand Vedic foundation stone-laying ceremony of the BAPS *shikharbaddha* Swaminarayan Mandir. Mahant Swami Maharaj and the *sadguru* swamis performed the *shilanyas* rituals in the presence of thousands of devotees and well-wishers and thereafter Swamishri blessed the gathering. The pink stone mandir will be built near the banks of the River Machchhu.

1. Swamishri performs the *shilanyas* rituals. 2. Blesses the assembly. 3. *Shilanyas* rituals being performed in the excavated foundation pit (*gart*).



National Bal-Balika Adhiveshan, Sarangpur

SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

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

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FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE PRATISHTHA IN VARTAL

*Shri Hari celebrates the annakut festival in Gadhpur.
Thereafter, he decides the date for
the murti-pratishtha of the mandir in Vartal...*



A JIVA BECOMES PURE WHEN SATSANG IS THE SOLE GOAL

As long as one's *jiva* has not imbibed satsang one fails to understand Shri Hari's true glory. Though one may claim to be a *satsangi* one cannot transcend one's base nature of infatuation for the sense pleasures and hatred towards others. Only when satsang becomes the goal and not merely the means can one's *jiva* become pure.

Shri Hari discoursed to his sadhus, "When one behaves with the conviction that one's Lord is the all-knower, only then can one follow his wishes. One cannot become a *satsangi* by merely applying the *tilak-chandlo*, wearing a *kanthi* and saying the *mala*."

Shri Hari decided to celebrate the festival of Sharad Punam in Gadhpur. The festival was sponsored by Jivuba. Soon, large groups of *paramhansas* and devotees started streaming in. Jivuba made all the arrangements for all the guests. During his discourses to the *paramhansas* and devotees Shri Hari stressed on *ekantik dharma*. Thereafter, Maharaj instructed the devotees to return to their homes and the *paramhansas* to continue with their *vicharan*. He also added that they should all congregate in Vartal for the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony in October.

Shri Hari told Gangaba of Jetalpur and other

Brahmin women who had accompanied her, as well as Prabhashankar of Pipalav and a few other devotees to stay and celebrate the *annakut* festival in Gadhada.

Jivuba wished to make preparations for the *annakut* and so told her younger sister Laduba, "You make the arrangements for the Diwali celebration." But Laduba replied, "The *annakut* celebration includes Diwali, so let me prepare the *annakut*."

Jivuba was aware of her sister's profound bhakti and thus felt that by displeasing her there would be no joy in the celebrations. So, she complied, "Sister, you may make the preparations. Let us talk to our brother [Dada Khachar] and convey it to Shri Hari."

Shri Hari was very pleased by their mutual understanding and harmony. Thereafter, Laduba started the preparations for the *annakut* celebration.

THE BLISS IN AKSHARDHAM

During the day the devotees helped in the preparations for the Diwali and *annakut* celebrations, and at night they listened to Shri Hari's discourses. Maharaj sat in the passage outside Vasudev Narayan's room. The *paramhansas* sat before him and the women devotees sat far

behind the neem tree in the courtyard. One day, a woman devotee conveyed a question during the discourse, “Maharaj, in Akshardham what type of bliss does Bhagwan give to the devotees?”

Shri Hari was pleased to hear the question and revealed, “While a devotee is doing darshan of Bhagwan in Akshardham he simultaneously experiences the joys related to his five senses. Bhagwan’s beauty (*roop*), his words (*shabda*), touch (*sparsh*), taste (*ras*) and *gandh* (fragrance) are incalculably blissful, which a devotee does not experience in anyone or anything else because of Bhagwan’s supreme beauty. Thus, a true devotee remains absorbed in the *murti* of Bhagwan. Such is the wonderful bliss he experiences in my form. This bliss can be experienced here because Akshardham is here also. But, because you perceive *manushyabhav* in my form that is why you cannot experience divinity.” Everyone was pleased to hear Shri Hari’s candid discourse.

Shri Hari added, “Realize the form of Aksharbrahman and forge an association with him. Through his association attain the state of *askhar mukta* and experience the divine bliss of Akshardham in this very birth. One will then realize the glory of Bhagwan, whom one desires to attain in this very birth. Until one has not realized this, one will feel spiritually unfulfilled and deficient. Only by realizing the glory and greatness of the incarnate form of Bhagwan can one savour the joys of inner fulfilment.

* * *

Amidst a small gathering of devotees Shriji Maharaj celebrated the *annakut* festival in Gadhpur with great festivity and joy. As per Maharaj’s instruction, a large number of devotees were on their way to Vartal for the mandir *pratishtha* ceremony.

PREPARATION FOR THE FESTIVAL IN VARTAL

It was October 1824. Shri Hari was in Gadhpur. The mandir in Vartal was ready, thus

Brahmanand Swami wrote a letter to Shri Hari, “With the mandir ready may you decide the auspicious date for the *murti-pratishtha* festival.”

As soon as Maharaj received the letter he called Mayaram Bhatt and Purushottam Bhatt of Ruvad village. Both the devotees were expert astrologers. Shri Hari told them to find an auspicious date for the Vartal Mandir *pratishtha*. Shortly thereafter, they came with the auspicious date of 3 November 1824 (Kartik *sud* 12, Samvat 1881).

Shri Hari wrote a letter with the *pratishtha* date and added, “Send the invitations for the *pratishtha* festival to all the devotees on my name, ‘Likhavint Swamishri Sahajanandji.’ In addition, send a messenger to deliver the invitations to the Gaekwad of Vadodara, Nawabs of Surat, Khambhat, Junagadh and Mangrol, royals of Saurashtra and the King of Dharampur. All of them have sympathy and respect for us. Since thousands of devotees will come for this occasion stock ample food rations for the daily meals. Clear the grounds on the outskirts of Vartal for the arrangement of accommodations for the *paramhansas*. When I arrive there I will decide as to who to make the chief patron of the *yagna*.”

Maharaj gave the letter to Aksharanand Swami and told him to leave for Vartal and inform all to make the arrangements. Shri Hari had explained other details of the *pratishtha* ceremony to Aksharanand Swami.

SHRI HARI SENDS SWAMIS TO VADODARA TO GET THE LAKSHMI-NARAYAN MURTIS

Six months prior to the mandir *murti-pratishtha*, Shri Hari had made the arrangements for the *murtis*. In April 1824, Maharaj had sent Muktanand Swami and Nityanand Swami to Vadodara. He told them, “A person called Amichand Sheth lives by the Mandvi Gate and his forefather had buried the ancient *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan in his house. Ask him to give the *murtis*.” Maharaj also gave a letter addressed to Amichand.

The two senior swamis came to Vadodara and gave Shri Hari's letter to Amichand. On reading it, Amichand recalled Nilkanth Varni, whom he had met twenty-five years ago. He thought for a few seconds and asked himself, "Have these swamis really been sent by Nilkanth Varni or could they be fakes?" Then, he looked at them in a scrutinizing manner. On noticing the aura of saintliness on their faces his doubts dissolved.

Amichand Sheth said, "Swamis, I have the ancient *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan which Nilkanth Varni had revealed to me through his all-knowing powers. At that time he told me, 'In future, I'll send my swamis to take these *murtis*.' Today, his words have come true." Then, Amichand led them to a separate room to stay for the night and gave them food materials to cook a meal. However, on seeing gur and ghee in the tray the swamis told him to take them away because they wished to cook a simple meal of dal and *bati* (baked wheat balls) and not make any laddus.

YOU HAVE TO FULFIL MY WISH OF MAKING LADDUS

Amichand Sheth was surprised to hear that they did not want gur and ghee to make laddus. He always served sweet items to sannyasis whenever they came to his house, which they lovingly savoured. So, he humbly said, "When Nilkanth Varni came here I had wished to feed laddus to him. But he refused and replied, 'I am going to leave early in the morning. But I'll take some other *seva* from you later.' And, he has sent you to take that *seva* from me today. I feel most blessed! But you'll have to fulfil my wish to have laddus. It will bring me peace and satisfaction."

Both Muktanand Swami and Nityanand Swami appreciated his sentiments and accepted the gur and ghee. They prepared lunch and a sweet item, offered *thal* to Thakorji and ate a little of the sweet food. Amichand Sheth was satisfied and happy. He brought the *murtis* and the swamis were astonished to see the beautiful *murtis* of

Lakshmi-Narayan. Instantly, they felt such exquisite *murtis* should be installed in Gadhpur, which was Maharaj's most sanctified place. So, they decided to take the *murtis* with them to Gadhpur.

ON THE WAY TO GADHPUR

The *murtis* were carefully placed in a bullock cart and packed with grass and straw on both sides so that they would not break on any impact. Then, the swamis departed from Vadodara with the two *murtis* and took the direct road to Gadhpur. However, because of Shri Hari's wish to install them in Vartal, there was an unexpected spell of heavy rain in the summer month of April (Chaitra). The soil turned muddy and waterlogged and the cart got stuck. The bullocks were unable to pull it out. Then, two more bullocks were brought from Kashidas Mota's home. They were yoked to the cart, but the cart did not budge an inch. By now everyone was exhausted and at a loss as to what to do. At that time Kashidas Mota said, "Swamis, leave the *murtis* with me for now. Then, later on ask Maharaj what to do with them."

The two swamis found Kashidas's suggestion to be reasonable. They thus decided to let Kashidas take care of the *murtis* for now, and gave the reins of the bullocks to him. As soon as Kashidas stroked the bullocks and nudged them to pull the cart out, to everyone's surprise both the wheels came out of the soggy and sticky land. The swamis thus understood that Shri Hari had wished otherwise.

The cart was brought to Kashidas's house and the *murtis* were offloaded and placed inside the home. At that time, Kashidas wished to make a mandir in Bochasan and have the *murtis* consecrated in it. ◆

(Contd. in next issue)

Translated from the Gujarati text of

Bhagwan Swaminarayan authored by Shri H.T. Dave

"Today's
balak is
tomorrow's citizen
and
today's *balak* is
tomorrow's *ekantik*."

- Mahant Swami Maharaj

"...the
moment you
decided to
participate in the
adhiveshan you
started earning
rajipo."

- Mahant Swami
Maharaj

National Children's & Youth ADHIVESHANS

28 May to 8 June 2019, Sarangpur

2,000

Bal-Balikas

&

3,822

Yuva-Yuvatis
in Sarangpur





National Bal-Balika Adhiveshan OBJECTIVES & FORMAT



Inspired by Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj, as part of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary (1921–2021) and Vachanamrut Bicentenary (1819–2019) Celebrations, the Akhil Bharatiya Bal-Balika Adhiveshan (National Bal-Balika Adhiveshan) was launched in December 2018.

ADHIVESHAN OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

- To bring out the latent talents within *balaks* and *balikas*.
- To instil and strengthen character, values and satsang in their lives.
- To help them become better *satsangis*.
- To encourage them in their studies.
- To equip them to be able to serve their family, society and nation.

When children imbibe noble character and values in their lives, there will be peace in the home. Such children become a source of pride for their families.

Children taking part in the *adhiveshan* will develop a sound foundation from which they can become good volunteers, orators and leaders in the future, allowing them to contribute to satsang and society.

By memorizing the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan and Satsang Mukhpath, the children learnt and consolidated essential satsang knowledge which would be useful to them throughout their life and will help them to better understand the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*.

The Speech, Storytelling and Mono-acting competitions helped to develop the children's

oratory, acting, expressive and presentation skills, and confidence. By learning to be good public speakers they would be able to serve the Sanstha, society and country.

Through the Solo Kirtan Singing, Solo Dance, and Drawing & Colouring competitions, the artistic and creative talents of the participants were encouraged.

FORMAT AND COMPETITIONS

Participating *balaks* from BAPS centres throughout India competed in one of four divisions: City, Rural, Chhatralaya (Hostel) and Outside Gujarat & Mumbai, depending on which division their *bal mandal* belonged to.

Further, in each division there were two age groups: Group 1 (8–10 years) and Group 2 (11–13 years).

The same divisions and groups applied to the participating *balikas*, whose competitions were held separately.

The *adhiveshan* was held at three levels: Zonal in March, Regional in May and National in May–June. The Zonal and Regional levels were held at centres decided by the Bal Pravrutti Madhyastha Karyalaya to where the children travelled to participate, while the final phase of the National



MUKHPATH

43,902

balaks and balikas participated
in the Satsang and Akshar-
Purushottam Darshan Mukhpath

Bal-Balika Adhiveshan was held in Sarangpur in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

As an entry requirement for the *adhiveshan*, all the children of all divisions and groups had to memorize certain sections of the *Prathmik Mukhpath* booklet, as specified for their age group. At the Zonal and Regional Levels, this would be tested orally. In the Akhil Bharatiya Bal-Balika Adhiveshan, they would take a written test. Only by scoring over 60% (Group 1) or 70% (Group 2) would a participant be eligible to win prizes in other competitions.

At each level, children from centres in the same division competed in their appropriate age groups in the following satsang- and talent-based competitions:

GROUP 1 (AGES: 6 to 9)

Mandatory Competitions

1. Satsang Mukhpath (oral): Memorize in sequence as many as possible of the 25 chapters, each containing 20 items.
2. Satsang Q&A (written): Study the first 50 of the 100 questions and answers in the *Satsang Jnan Prashnottari* booklet.

Optional Talent-based Competitions (Children could participate in one or more)

3. Storytelling: Tell a story with an inspiring message in 3–5 minutes.
4. Mono-acting: Enact a motivating story in 2–3 minutes.
5. Colouring: Use crayons, paint, etc. to colour a printed drawing.

GROUP 2 (AGES: 10 to 14)

Mandatory Competitions

1. Satsang Mukhpath (oral): As for Group 1.
2. Satsang Q & A (written): Study all 100 questions and answers.

Optional Satsang- and Talent-based Competitions (Children could participate in one or more)



SPEECH

8,236

balaks and balikas participated



SATSANG Q & A

38,780

balaks and balikas participated



DRAWING & COLOURING

27,399

balaks and balikas participated



SOLO KIRTAN SINGING

10,523

balaks and balikas participated



MONO-ACTING

11,474

balaks and balikas participated



STORYTELLING

17,150

balaks and balikas participated



SOLO DANCE

6,952

balaks and balikas participated

(Cont. on p. 19)



National Bal-Balika ADHIVESHAN

28 May to 1 June 2019, Sarangpur



Swamishri during the inaugural assembly at the Pramukh Mandiram with a cutout *murti* of Swami Bapa



Waving the flag from Akshar Jharukho



Lighting the inaugural lamp



Children welcome Swamishri by waving white and red handkerchiefs

FIRST DAY: 28 MAY (TUESDAY)

Arrival and Registration

The rustic, quiet atmosphere of Sarangpur was suddenly transformed and charged with enthusiasm and excitement on the arrival of 2,000 BAPS boys (*balaks*) and girls (*balikas*) from Gujarat and other states for the National Bal-Balika Adhiveshan (Convention). The steady stream of buses entering the parking lots of the

BAPS mandir commenced from early morning and continued till late afternoon.

Thereafter, every participant registered his or her name at a counter, where each was provided with an ID card, duffel bag, cap and pen.

From 4.30 to 5.00 p.m. the children appeared for their primary written test. This was followed by dinner and the opening ceremony.

Opening Ceremony

The grand opening ceremony took place at the Pramukh Darshan Vatika. At 8.30 p.m., Mahant Swami Maharaj entered the Akshar Jharukho with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Children gave a tumultuous welcome to Thakorji and Swamishri by waving white and red handkerchiefs to the beats of kirtans.

Two children, Dev Trivedi and Dhyanam Patel, anchored the inaugural assembly. Children, dressed in black, arranged themselves to display the total number of participants (1,962). Thereafter, the children collectively created a giant heart with red and white paper pieces and excitedly declared to Swamishri, “We love you.” Swamishri reciprocated their sentiments and joyfully replied, “I love you all.”

Then, Swamishri kindled the inaugural lamp and unveiled the logo of the *adhiveshan* amidst thunderous applause by all the children. Thereafter, a large cloth with the *adhiveshan* logo was suspended over the entire assembly of children. Swamishri came down from Akshar Jharukho to the Pramukh Mandiram. When the large suspended canopy with the logo was removed all the children were astonished at not seeing Swamishri in the Akshar Jharukho. At that time the curtains of Pramukh Mandiram (the ground floor cabin) were drawn open and everyone saw Swamishri wearing a *pagh* and pushing Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s wheelchair with a cutout *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj placed on it. The novel darshan evoked a wave of ecstasy among the children.

Swamishri was then garlanded by the swamis of the Children’s Activities Central Office.

Children attired in their local regional dresses welcomed Swamishri in their local languages. They also offered popular local food dishes to Swamishri and then welcomed him by performing their regional dances: a tribal dance, *bhangra* of Punjab, *raas* and others. The marching band from Khandesh gave an excellent performance.



Boys arrive in Sarangpur for the *adhiveshan*



Registration

Children then asked Swamishri, “How much do you love us?” Swamishri spread his hands wide and said, “I love you all a lot.” Thereafter, all the children happily offered a garland of harmony (*samp*) to Swamishri by holding and raising each other’s hands together.

Then, all joined Swamishri in performing the *arti*. The volunteers requested Swamishri to make the children sway and dance by gesturing with his hands. Subsequently, as Swamishri waved two handkerchiefs to the beats of kirtans children danced and swayed joyfully.

Then, Swamishri was asked, “As children, what type of courageous Akshar-Purushottam volunteers should we become? Write the answer for us.” Swamishri wrote, “**You have to fight against *maya* and smash it into pieces. You will do so by the grace and greatness of Maharaj and Swami.**”



Colourful entrance gate welcomes children for the *adhiveshan*



Mandir grounds with inspiring posters of past *adhiveshans*

In conclusion, a wonderful traditional dance was presented on the theme of Swamishri's blessings. After Swamishri's departure, the remaining part of the inaugural event lasted for one-and-a-half hours.

SECOND DAY: 29 MAY (WEDNESDAY)

Children assembled early in the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh to attend Swamishri's morning puja. Thereafter, children sang kirtans and recited verses during the puja. Some inspiring incidents were narrated of how children had memorized verses.

After Swamishri's puja, Atmaswarup Swami announced, "Swamishri was highly pleased with yesterday's inaugural assembly." Then, Swamishri expressed his wish to tie the sanctified threads (*nadachhadi*) to all the boys, but since this was not feasible due to the time constraint

Swamishri tied *nadachhadis* on behalf of all on the wrists of Vishwaswarup Swami (national head of children's activities) and Divyaratna Swami. Then, Swamishri sanctified *nadachhadis* for all the children.

Two small children came onto the main stage and asked Swamishri, "All the children here have done *mukhpath* to please you. So, are you happy upon them?" Swamishri replied, "The day you decided to do *mukhpath* from then onwards I'm pleased with you."

After Swamishri's puja darshan, children left to participate in the competitions arranged at various places in the mandir complex. The competitions commenced at 8.30 a.m. and lasted till 6.00 p.m., with a one hour lunch break.

From 6.30 to 8.00 p.m. a special assembly was arranged in the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh. After Swamishri's arrival, *arti* was performed. Then Swamishri was appointed as a judge and given three cards with the words 'Nice', 'Very Nice' and 'Wonderful'. Swamishri was told to assess the presentations by the children by raising one of the cards. Swamishri generously appreciated all the participants by raising the card with the word 'Wonderful'.

Thereafter, Swamishri was told to play the role of a competitor and two young boys were appointed as Swamishri's judges. Firstly, the two children registered Swamishri as a competitor by filling in the details of his identity card. They asked Swamishri, "Your full name please." Swamishri replied, "Sadhu Keshavjivandas." "Which standard are you in?" Swamishri said, "Zero." "Your medium of study?" Swami answered, "Gujarati." "Your *mandal* [group]?" Swamishri replied, "Akshar-Purushottam." "Which competition will you be participating in?" Swamishri said, "Storytelling." "The title of your story?" Swamishri replied, "Samp." In this way, both children prepared the identity card and then placed it around Swamishri's neck.

Then, the two judges informed Swamishri and



Written exam



Akshar-Purushottam Darshan mukhapath



Delivering a speech in the assembly



Mono-acting

the audience about the rules and regulations of the day-long competitions. Thereafter, Swamishri beautifully narrated the story of how pigeons escaped from the net cast by a hunter by remaining united.

In conclusion to the assembly, Swamishri blessed all the children, saying, “I especially congratulate you all. You have all fought with your mind and overcome it. You prepared for the competitions by punishing and restraining your minds. You have dedicated yourself for Akshar-Purushottam. Thus, be strong, do not give up and collapse, and consolidate *nishtha* in your lives. Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj are genuine. Tread along their path. They can grant *moksha*. By doing what the Satpurush says, he will place you onto the road towards Bhagwan. Be courageous and fight against *maya*. Study, play and do other things – all for the sake of consolidating faith in Bhagwan.”

Thereafter, children got the opportunity of Swamishri’s dinner darshan.

• Presentations and Performances in the Assembly

On 29 May (second day), selected children presented and performed before Mahant Swami Maharaj. Swamishri responded to them and gave special memories to all. He appreciated and praised their performances by saying, “Extraordinary.”

• Judges’ Opinions

All the competitions were judged by swamis. They were impressed by the tremendous efforts put in by the children and praised their innate potential.



Swamishri and children release balloons from the mandir podium and grounds

They opined:

- “From their recitations it was clear that they had a clear understanding of *upasana*. And they gained introductory knowledge of Indian philosophy.”
- “It humbled us after witnessing the preparations made by children.”
- “Their immense efforts were abundantly reflected in their four to five minutes speech presentations.”
- “I was impressed on seeing the way children performed and acted. One could also see their efforts, their parents’ support and the profound enthusiasm of the volunteers.”
- “During their performances I experienced their inner powers and talents surfacing. By preparing for the *adhiveshan* children were

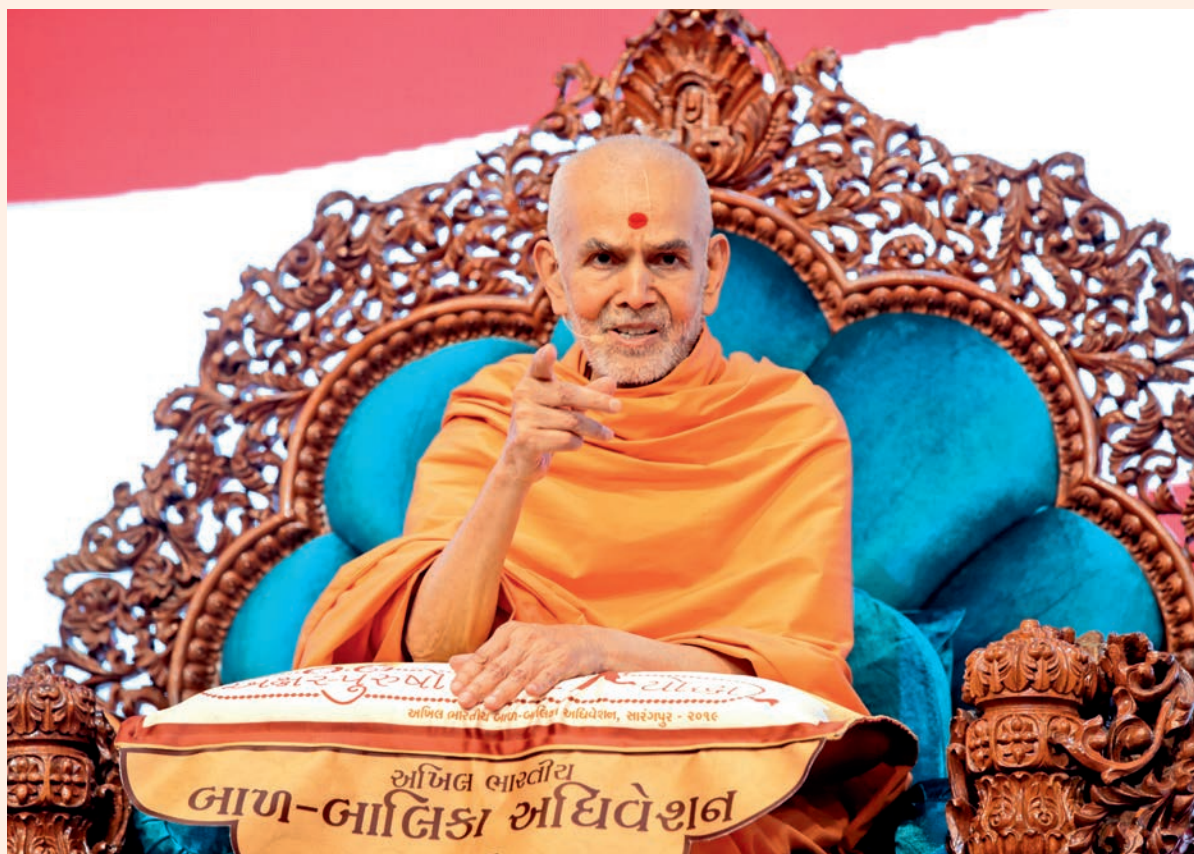
spared from engaging themselves in futile activities. In fact, their time and vacation was put to the best use.”

- “With regards to their singing many sang superbly and with devotion.”

THIRD DAY: 30 MAY (THURSDAY)

At 5.00 a.m., *balaks* and *balikas* sat in rows in the vast mandir grounds. Swamishri descended the mandir steps after doing Thakorji’s darshan and stood on the podium, bowing down to all the children.

Swamishri was given a string tied to the *adhiveshan* logo and a bunch of colourful balloons. He released the logo and balloons into the air amidst the hail of thundering *jais* by the children. At the same time, children also released balloons into the air.



Swamishri blesses the *bal-balika adhiveshan* assembly

Later that day, all the children travelled to Gadhada for darshan at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir and the exhibition – ‘Gadhpur Jotā Mane Shriji Sāmbhare’. They also visited the sacred places in Sarangpur and the Kashtabhanjan Mandir of Hanumanji.

FOURTH DAY: 31 MAY (FRIDAY)

Shibir on Akshar-Purushottam Upasana

It was Yogi Jayanti today. Children sang bhajans and also narrated incidents of Yogiji Maharaj during Swamishri’s puja. Thereafter, a two-day *shibir* on the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* for all children commenced. Firstly, children holding banners carried out a parade on the *shibir* theme song. Then, a skit was performed and a question was asked to Swamishri, “An Akshar-Purushottam braveheart is one who fights against *maya*. But how should we fight against and win over *maya*?”

Swamishri answered, “It is difficult to fight *maya*. Since we have *nishtha* [faith] in Maharaj and Swami we will vanquish *maya* with their divine strength. Maharaj and Swami are on our side. They live in such a way that we are drawn towards them with love.

“Yogi Bapa liked those who spoke spiritedly during an assembly. In spite of them making mistakes he liked someone speaking in a confident manner.

“Becoming attached to him [Yogiji Maharaj] with love means becoming attached to Maharaj and Swami with love. Yogi Bapa had never talked to us about philosophy. He merely showered his love upon us. When Yogi Bapa came to Anand there often used to be only him and me. In spite of having done my puja I used to rub off my *tilak-chandlo* and then go to his puja. The reason being, Yogi Bapa would himself apply the

tilak-chandlo on my forehead. O, how much I enjoyed that. He must have done the *tilak-chandlo* 40 times on my forehead.

“I want to meet everyone, but the congregation is very large. So, you have to cultivate spiritual understanding. By obeying *agna*, one has passed, whereas one who does not follow *agna* then, in spite of playing in [Bhagwan’s or guru’s] lap, he is thousands of miles away.”

After Swamishri’s departure from the assembly, the children attended the first day of the *shibir*.

At 7.00 p.m., Swamishri arrived in the *shibir* assembly and took his seat in the audience. A drama, ‘A War in the Jungle’, was enacted before Swamishri. Thereafter, Swamishri came onto the stage and played the role of a judge to assess the recitations of kids who had completed 25 *mukh-path* chapters. Thereafter, Swamishri was asked to mono-act sentences that would be told to him. Swamishri was asked, “What is our [satsang] family like?” Swamishri spread both his arms wide and indicated that it was united.

The second question was, “How should one behave towards a devotee?” Swamishri bowed down and thereafter folded his hands to indicate *dasbhav*.

The third question was, “What should one do after seeing another’s fault?” Swamishri made a large cross in the air with his fingers.

The fourth question was, “What should one do with *maya*?” Swamishri gestured with his hands that one should wrestle and fight against it.

Then, a child asked Swamishri, “We have all eaten a lot in Sarangpur, but give us food for our *atmas* so that we never forget it in our lifetime.” Swamishri replied, “Have *divyabhav* for all.”

FIFTH DAY: 1 JUNE (SATURDAY)

Awards Ceremony and Blessings

On 1 June, Swamishri was heading towards the main hall in a golf cart led by children in a small toy train. When Swamishri arrived on the



Swamishri presents a trophy



Swamishri blesses a child after the final assembly

stage he saw the awards were displayed on both sides of his *puja*.

Children sang bhajans during Swamishri’s *puja* and over 30 children from Mumbai recited the Sahajanand Namavali. Swamishri was very pleased and called all of them and blessed them.

Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “All of you have decided to memorize the Sahajanand Namavali, therefore do it. By reciting it once every week you will forever get *rajipo*.”

Today, the children attended the *shibir*. As a grand finale to the 5-day National Bal-Balika Adhiveshan the girls received their awards in a ceremony held in the afternoon at the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh. In all, they received 347 awards.

At 7.00 p.m., Swamishri came to the award-giving ceremony for boys at the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh. As the winners were announced they came onto the stage and received their



Children rejoice at the end of the *bal-balika adhiveshan*

awards from Pujya Kothari (Bhaktipriya) Swami. Thereafter, each *balak* stood besides Swamishri for a photo shoot. Then, Swamishri personally blessed each of the winners. Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami gave *prasad* to each *balak*. A total of 604 awards were given.

In the second phase of the award-giving ceremony, the names of those children who had earned most prizes were announced. A prize for the best zone was also declared. Children who had not qualified for any prizes got the opportunity of Swamishri's *samip* darshan and received a memento from a *sadguru* swami.

Swamishri's Blessings

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the occasion, "If you all become bravehearts in the true sense then Maharaj and Swami will be with you.' Remember the words in the true sense. This means not in an artificial way – saying one thing

and behaving in an opposite way. By imbibing the virtues you have learnt here of a true braveheart Maharaj and Swami will be with you. I am happy about that and so too are the swamis. There is no joy in artificial things. Progress in becoming a true braveheart. You have indulged in the sense pleasures for infinite births. Soulfully believe that the Satpurush is genuine and consolidate this within you, expecting nothing else in life. If you follow this, you will become a braveheart in the truest sense."

Swamishri blessed the assembly of children and departed from the main stage. Swamishri's blessings, darshan and grace during the past five days had touched and inspired the kids. All felt deeply appreciated and felt indebted to Swamishri for all the *labh* he had given. The participants also experienced that the *adhiveshan* was not confined only to competitions, but it was a divine, grand and great experience.

Highlights of Swamishri's Blessings

During the 5-day National Bal-Balika Adhiveshan, Swamishri had lovingly blessed the children through his discourses on several occasions. Brief extracts of Swamishri's blessings are as follows:

1. "Today's *balak* is tomorrow's citizen and today's *balak* is tomorrow's *ekantik*. By the grace of Maharaj and Swami all these *balaks* will wrestle and kick *maya* away to progress ahead" (28 May, morning puja blessings).
2. "When you decided to participate (in the *adhiveshan*) from then onwards you gained *rajipo*" (29 May, morning puja blessings).
3. "Maharaj and Swami are on our side. Through their blessings we can achieve anything" (31 May, morning puja blessings).
4. "*Rajipo* can be said to be like a billion rupees, whereas dust would gather on other awards. No one enquires about your awards. They merely lie there. However,

the award of *rajipo* will remain with you forever. *Rajipo* is like hiring a taxi, whose meter starts the moment you hire it and regardless of whether you use it or not. Likewise, the moment you decided to participate in the *adhiveshan* you have earned *rajipo*. Then imagine how great a *rajipo* one gets as a participant" (1 June, morning puja blessings).

5. "If you become [Akshar-Purushottam] bravehearts in the truest sense then Maharaj and Swami are with you. What did I say? In the truest sense: not artificial. It should not be like saying something and doing something else. If you do what you have learnt here then Maharaj and Swami will be with you. They won't go away" (1 June, blessings in the evening assembly). ◆

Translation: Sadhu Vivekjiandas

(Cont. from p. 9)

3. Akshar-Purushottam Darshan Mukhpath (oral): Memorize as many as possible of the 51 mantras, shloks, Vachanamrut quotations, etc. on the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan.
4. Storytelling: As for Group 1.
5. Speech: Present a 4–5 minute speech on any one of six predefined topics
6. Solo Kirtan Singing: Sing a bhajan.
7. Solo Dance: Perform a dance to a bhajan.
8. Mono-acting: As for Group 1.
9. Drawing and Colouring: Draw a picture on one of five topics and colour it by using paint, crayons, pens, pencils, etc.

All the planning, rules and regulations, required literature and other guidance and support was given by the Bal Pravrutti Madhyastha Karyalaya (Children's Activities Central Office)

based in Ahmedabad.

On 3 March 2019, over 25,000 *balaks* and 15,000 *balikas* from 8,278 BAPS Bal-Balika centres across India took part in the first competition level – the Zonal Adhiveshan.

On 5 May 2019, over 8,000 *balaks* and 4,000 *balikas* progressed to the second level, taking part in the Regional Adhiveshan.

The children in Group 1 competed at the Zonal and Regional levels. For logistical reasons, there was no national level event for them. Only qualifying children in Group 2 progressed to the Akhil Bharatiya Bal-Balika Adhiveshan. ◆

Sadhu Amrutvijaydas



GIVING UP EVERYTHING FOR THE ADHIVESHAN

To prepare for the adhiveshan, balaks and balikas gave up their play and vacation time, while some even cancelled their holiday trips! Disability, illness, the passing away of a loved one – nothing could deter these participants. Below are just a few of the inspiring incidents revealing how they balanced time challenges, family commitments and emotional setbacks

CHILDREN'S DETERMINATION

Not Giving Up Despite Father's Demise

Harsh Jaykishanbhai Khamar of Patan *bal mandal* studies in the 8th grade. His father was admitted to a hospital due to poor health. Just days before the Zonal Adhiveshan, Harsh's father's health worsened and he suddenly passed away on 1 March 2019. Harsh was deeply saddened by his father's death, but he remained firmly intent on taking part in the *adhiveshan*. The

mourning ceremony was to be held on 3 March, the same day as the Zonal Adhiveshan. Harsh remained calm and firm in the face of this tragic loss. After the ceremony, with his mother's permission, he participated in the Zonal Adhiveshan.

Similarly, Nadiad resident Chirag Rangvani's father also passed away. Yet Chirag, too, remained mentally and emotionally strong and prepared for the *adhiveshan*.



Unsuccessful Participants Pray for Others

Two *balikas* from Ahmedabad, Khushi Hingu and Krishna Panchal, took part in the Regional Adhiveshan, but did not progress to the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan stage. Yet these two selfless *balikas* helped to prepare *mukhpath* papers for the *balikas* who had progressed. Also, Khushi and Krishna prayed for the success of their fellow *balikas* who had progressed. During the day, they would even go to Shahibaug Mandir to prepare decorations to be used in the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan in Sarangpur.

Resolute in the Face of Illness

Sajal Keyurbhai Patel of Patan studies in the 5th grade. He had various stomach illnesses for two months. Then, on the night of 4 May 2019, having developed a high fever and severe headache, Sajal had to be admitted to hospital. He was released after treatment and reached home at 2.30 a.m. His father had passed away three years ago, so he called his *mama* (maternal uncle) to come early next morning to help him.

His *mama* is disabled. At 5.30 a.m, Sajal, his mother and *mama* left for their region's main centre, Himmatnagar, on a three-wheeled Activa scooter. They arrived at 8.30 a.m., just in time for the Regional Adhiveshan. There, he gave *mukhpath* of 12 chapters, despite being tired and sick!

Cancelled Overseas Trip

The family of Jeet Sunilbhai Bhatt of Satellite in Ahmedabad had planned a trip to London to visit his *mama*. Even his ticket had been booked, yet he said, "No, I don't want to go to London. I've been selected for the *adhiveshan*, so I would like to prepare as best as I can and earn Swamishri's *rajipo*."

Similarly, the family of Param Tiwari of Anand had planned to go to the Shilanyas Mahotsav in Abu Dhabi. But they postponed their visit so that Param could prepare for the *adhiveshan*.

Competed Despite Blood Transfusions

Vandan Mayurbhai Thakkar of Mulund, Mumbai, suffers from an illness called thalassaemia

since birth. This means he has to have a blood transfusion about twice a month. Following the Zonal Adhiveshan, he went to Dubai for treatment and a vacation, but returned before the Regional Adhiveshan. Immediately after returning, he had to have a blood transfusion on 30 April 2019. Yet, on 1 May, Vandan successfully gave *mukhpath* for all 25 chapters. Also, he performed well in the Satsang Q & A, storytelling and mono-acting competitions. During his month-long stay in Dubai, Vandan's *karyakars* had helped him to prepare for *mukhpath* via video calls.

Blind Balak Does Mukhpath

Keyur Mukeshbhai Priyan of Nikol in Ahmedabad has been blind since birth and his body remains weak and frail. Yet, Keyur memorized chapters from the Satsang Mukhpath and studied for the Satsang Q & A by listening to audio recordings of the texts, and repeatedly revising them word-for-word. He successfully memorized 25 chapters and 100 questions as well. Keyur is also a good singer. With his parents' help, he worked exceptionally hard. Keyur won a prize in the Mukhpath competition and earned Swamishri's *rajipo*.

Took Part Despite Operation

Kunj Patel of Ahmedabad had a major kidney operation on 26 February 2019. The following week, he participated in the Zonal Adhiveshan and qualified for the Regional Adhiveshan.

Staying Strong in the Face of Obstacles

Jeel Patel of Vadadla near Petlad had just recovered from a hand fracture when his father suffered a fatal heart attack and passed away on 4 May. Still, on 5 May, he participated in the Regional Adhiveshan. He had memorized 25 chapters, and a hundred questions and answers.

Jeel prepared for the *adhiveshan*, despite the uncertainty about his admission to a new school and his family's financial difficulties, with the



Swamishri blesses Keyur, a blind participant from Ahmedabad

understanding that whatever Maharaj does is always for our own good.

Unbearable Kidney Stone Pain

Mit Rathod of Ahmedabad suffered from repeated bouts of pain due to stones in both his kidneys. The day before the Regional Adhiveshan, the doctors gave him a choice: be admitted for treatment or tolerate the pain. Deriving strength from how Mahant Swami Maharaj completes his daily routine despite many health challenges, Mit decided to delay admission and to participate in the Regional Adhiveshan.

He was selected for Satsang Mukhpath, Satsang Q & A, Storytelling, Speech and Mono-acting.

Memorized with Understanding

Tilak Chudasama studies in Standard 3. Having progressed to the Regional Adhiveshan, he memorized all 25 chapters of the Satsang Mukhpath and thoroughly studied the Satsang Q & A booklet.

Once, during his family's *ghar sabha*, his parents were discussing how *atma* darshan is possible. To their immense surprise, Tilak answered their question by quoting a passage from Vachanamrut Vartal 11, and added that by developing profound



Mit, a differently-abled child from Gondal, participates in the *adhiveshan*

love for the Satpurush, Mahant Swami Maharaj, *atma* darshan is possible.

Not only had the young *balak* memorized the passage, but had understood its meaning as well.

Mukhpath Despite Disability

Mit Kotadiya of Bhojraj Para, Gondal, is severely physically handicapped and requires assistance to complete all his daily activities.

After the *adhiveshan* was launched, Anantcharan Swami said in the *bal sabha*, “God has given us infinite abilities.” This motivated Mit to participate. He told his mother, “In any way possible, I want to participate in the *adhiveshan*.”

So, with the help of the audio books prepared by the Sanstha, he persevered. In the Zonal Adhiveshan, he memorized 10 chapters. In the Regional Adhiveshan, he memorized 20 chapters.

Studies Boosted

Amit Chavda of Surat performed poorly at school. But by participating in the *adhiveshan*, he developed his abilities of reading and memorizing to reach the Akhil Bharatiya Bal-Balika Adhiveshan. This has also helped him to improve in his studies at school.

Some gave up on their favourite pastimes... some sacrificed vacation fun... some disregarded

illness and physical pain... some overcame the sorrow of a family death... they all stood strong amidst many challenges... all with a common aim: to earn Mahant Swami Maharaj’s *rajipo*. These children worked hard and participated in the *adhiveshan* and passed with distinction.

We bow down to these children who, like flowers, have spread the fragrance of satsang and *sanskars* around them, and thus earned the priceless *rajipo* of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

SUPPORT OF PARENTS

Parents Help Their Children to Prepare

Agna, who studies in the third standard, had participated in the *adhiveshan*. Whenever her mother helped her with preparations, her four-year-old sister, Upasana, would be around too. So, she also started picking up the *mukhpath*. Thus, four-year-old Upasana learnt by heart five complete chapters. For the Zonal Adhiveshan, Agna had memorized eight chapters. But her mother felt that Agna could memorize all 25 chapters.

So, for the Regional Adhiveshan, Agna memorized 25 chapters with the help of her parents. In the morning, her father would help her prepare new *mukhpath* and revise what she had already memorized. Her mother, a school teacher, would help her after school. Whether it be in the bathroom, in the car, while playing, while her mother was cooking or during the *ghar sabha*, the only focus was the *adhiveshan*. Besides Satsang Mukhpath, Agna also won prizes in Satsang Q & A, Colouring and Mono-acting.

Her mother said, “The *adhiveshan* has benefited me immensely. Both my daughters, Agna and Upasana, have learnt a lot from it.”

Helping Both Their Daughters

Khushi and Palak, two sisters who attend the *balika sabha* in Mumbai, participated in the *adhiveshan* – Khushi in Group 1 and Palak in Group 2. Their father’s name is Anandbhai Thakkar.

Since the girls are studying the CBSE syllabus,

along with the *adhiveshan*, they also had their final exams in the same month. Their mother removed the TV cable connection. So, instead of watching TV, they would listen to the *adhiveshan* audio. Similarly, they would listen to the audio while bathing, getting ready and eating. Due to their hard work, Palak won five prizes and Khushi won three prizes in the Zonal Adhiveshan.

These girls had their exams just prior to the Zonal Adhiveshan and then they had school before the Regional Adhiveshan. Just before the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan, Palak was seriously ill, hence had to take complete bed rest. Even in such conditions, their mother helped her to work hard for the *adhiveshan*. And as a result, in the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan, Palak won prizes in Satsang Mukhpath and Storytelling.

Grandmother and Mother Help to Prepare

Nayan Shukla of Bharuch studies in the 8th standard.

His 64-year-old grandmother has only studied up to the ninth standard, many years ago. She had to have a leg operation and was advised complete bed rest for two months. While in bed, she would help Nayan to read the questions and answers. In total, his mother and grandmother would daily spend about four to five hours helping Nayan with reading, writing and understanding and prepare him for the *adhiveshan*. They would also test him on whatever he had prepared.

In spite of being busy serving her mother-in-law, looking after guests coming to their house, doing household chores, and looking after *yuvati* activities, Nayan's mother would find time to help him with his preparations as well. While cooking, she would help him to do his *mukhpath*. She would also prepare question papers for him to test his Satsang Q & A knowledge.

Nayan's final CBSE exams finished just two days before the Zonal Adhiveshan. He developed a high fever. Even then, his mother motivated him saying, "You will receive Bapa's

rajipo by participating in the *adhiveshan*." With help from his grandmother and mother, Nayan succeeded in getting a prize in the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan.

Support Despite Lack of Resources

Umesh Rakholia (Standard 5) of Nikol, Ahmedabad, achieved success in the Shishu Adhiveshan through prayers and the support of his parents and *karyakars*. Daily, his parents took him to the *hari* mandir in Nikol where *karyakars* helped him and other *balaks* to prepare.

The mandir is about 4 km from his house and his family does not have a private vehicle. So, his mother or father would drop him there and pick him up again, either by rickshaw or bus. Even at home, he would prepare for the *adhiveshan*.

Parents Would Bring Food and Snacks

Upendrabhai Patel serves as a *sah-nirdeshak* for Ahmedabad Zone 16. He reported that *balaks* used to stay from early morning till late at night in the local *hari* mandir to prepare. So, parents would bring them food and snacks. Not just for their own *balak*, but also for others. The parents were delighted that the children were engaged in such a constructive activity.

Thus, parents and *karyakars* would encourage the children to earn Swamishri's *rajipo*. They would specially take out time from their routine activities to help the children prepare.

EFFORTS BY KARYAKARS

Grasping the *adhiveshan* as an opportunity to please Swamishri, the *karyakars* also poured their hearts into doing whatever was required to help the children prepare in the best way.

Giving Priority to Adhiveshan Preparation

Dipakbhai Soni, *sah-nirdeshak* for Anand 1 commutes daily to Vadodara for work. The round trip takes about four hours.

(Cont. on p. 35)



Akhil Bharatiya YUVA ADHIVESHAN

3–8 June 2019, Sarangpur



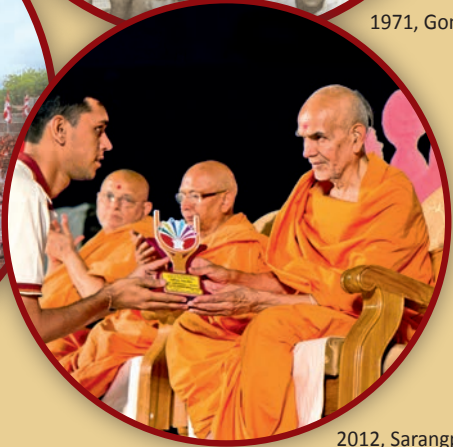
1969, Atladra



1971, Gondal



2012, Sarangpur



2012, Sarangpur

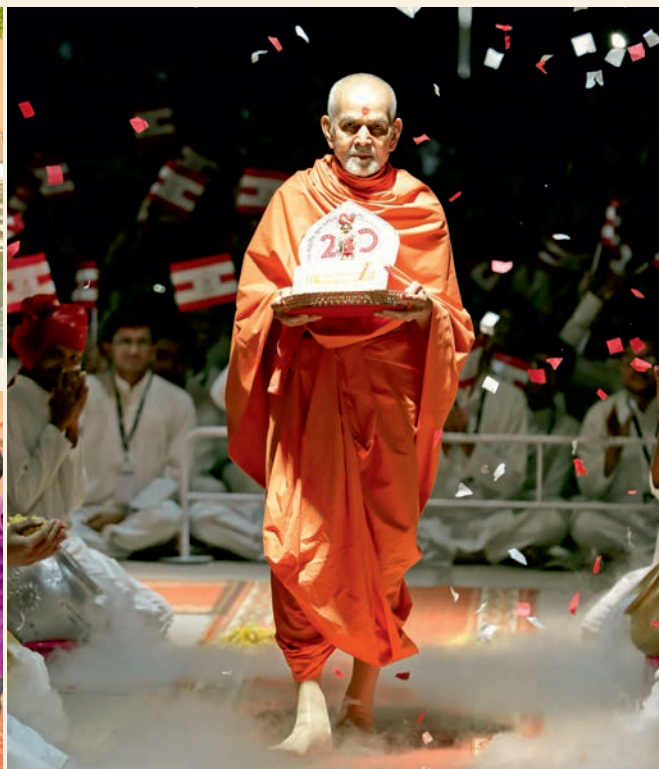
In 1952, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj established the BAPS Yuvak Mandal so that youths could understand and imbibe the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy, develop character and various skills like speaking, memorizing the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato, essay writing, art, singing, drama, *seva* and many more. Thereafter, Pramukh Swami Maharaj expanded the youth activities on a global scale and inspired youths to participate in moral, spiritual, cultural, educational and philanthropic activities. Today, under the tutelage of Mahant Swami Maharaj, the BAPS youth activities is burgeoning further.



Youths arrive in Sarangpur for the *adhiveshan*



Registration



Swamishri is welcomed with Thakorji during the opening ceremony

Continuing the BAPS tradition of organizing *adhiveshan* for youths this year's Yuva Adhiveshan was held to commemorate the Vachanamrut Bicentenary (1819–2019) and Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary (1921–2021) Celebrations. The finals, held in Sarangpur, marked the climax of the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan.

The purpose of the Youth Adhiveshan was to: 1. Consolidate satsang in the youths' lives, 2. Harness youth energy and talents toward faith in satsang and to develop personality and 3. Encourage youths to read and study the Vachanamrut.

This *adhiveshan*, which was launched in December 2018, was held at three levels – Zonal, Regional and National.

Male Youths

At the Zonal Level, 12,767 *yuvaks* participated at 177 venues. At the Regional Level, 3,916 *yuvaks* participated at 37 venues. At the

National Level, 2,028 *yuvaks* participated in Sarangpur.

Female Youths

At the Zonal Level, 8,686 *yuvatis* participated at 169 venues. At the Regional Level, 4,846 *yuvatis* participated. At the National Level, 1,794 *yuvatis* participated in Sarangpur.

The nine competitions held were: 1. Memorizing selected Vachanamrut paragraphs, 2. Question paper on the Vachanamrut, 3. Speech, 4. Elaboration (*nirupan*) on the Vachanamrut, 5. Essay writing, 6. Painting a poster, 7. Video show, 8. Short film making and 9. Drama.

The national finals were held in the presence of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj in two phases: 3–5 June for youths in the City division and 6–8 June for youths in the Rural and Chhatralaya divisions.

The routine for both phases was the same.



Youths joyously wave the BAPS flags while Swamishri lights the inaugural lamp of the *adhiveshan*

DAY 1: 3 & 6 JUNE

Arrival and Registration

In both phases, on 3 June (City Division) and 6 June (Chhatralaya and Rural Divisions), the youths were issued ID cards and a schedule for the times of the competitions they were participating in.

From 6.00 to 8.00 p.m. the welcome assembly took place. After *dhun* and *prarthna*, *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj entered the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh carrying Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, while youths rhythmically played various types of drums to welcome them. Swamishri walked along the centre of the hall towards the stage.

Representing the various regions from where the youths had come, youths performed traditional dances of their regions to welcome Swamishri: Punjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and other regions.

Then, after the evening *arti*, a large model of the prize to be presented to the winners was

carried by youths in a parade through the centre of the hall onto the stage, where Swamishri sanctified it by showering flower petals.

Subsequently, a drama was presented that conveyed the message to all that the real prize of participating in the *adhiveshan* is Swamishri's *rajipo*.

Then, Swamishri blessed the youths, saying, "Just as the charge on a taxi meter begins to accrue from the moment you sit in it, similarly, from the moment you decided to participate in the *adhiveshan* you started earning *rajipo*."

Finally, Swamishri lit the inauguration lamp to mark the commencement of the *adhiveshan*.

DAY 2: 4 & 7 JUNE

After darshan of Swamishri's morning puja and his blessings, all the *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* dispersed to focus on and participate in their various competitions, beginning at 8.30 a.m.

For the *yuvaks*, the competitions were held



Mukhpath competition



Answering a question paper on the Vachanamrut



Delivering a speech before Swamishri



Enacting a drama during the *adhiveshan* assembly

at various locations in the mandir campus. The logistics of the competitions were managed by 37 sadhus and 60 experienced volunteers, who were assisted by 350 youths. In addition, 140 sadhus judged the performances of the youths in the various competitions.

For the *yuvatis*, the competitions were held in the BAPS Vidyamandir campus. There were 146 women judges and 345 volunteers assisting to ensure the smooth conduct of the *adhiveshan*.

The excitement and tension among the youths was palpable throughout the mandir and Vidyamandir campuses as they blocked all distractions to finalize their preparations. Then, once they had participated the relief and joy of having competed was visible on their faces.

Evening Assembly

At 6.00 p.m., after the completion of all the competitions, the evening assembly for all *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj began.

After the evening *arti*, youths presented samples of all the competitions that had taken place. First, all the youths in the assembly, recited Vachanamrut Gadhada I 54 in unison as a demonstration of the Vachanamrut Mukhpath competition.

Then, presentations of the other competitions took place: a video show, speech, *nirupan*, Vachanamrut quiz, short film, drama and poster design, giving an idea of the outstanding efforts and high quality performances of the youths.

Thereafter, Swamishri was requested to draw a message for the youths. He drew a picture conveying the message of 'divyabhav'.

The assembly concluded with Swamishri's blessings.



Swamishri blesses the concluding assembly of the *adhiveshan*

DAY 3: 5 & 8 JUNE

After darshan of Swamishri's puja, the youths participated in a one-day *shibir* on the topic 'Nishtavan Bhava' (Develop Firm Spiritual Conviction) in the presence of Pujya Bhaktipriya (Kothari) Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and other senior and learned sadhus.

The *shibir* featured speeches by the sadhus, a question-answer session with the *sadguru* sadhus, videos and other presentations on the topic.

For the *yuvatis*, from 2.30 to 4.00 p.m., the prize distribution ceremony took place in the Yagnapurush Mandap in the Vidyamandir campus in the presence of senior BAPS women's wing volunteers.

In the evening, the prize distribution ceremony for the *yuvaks* was held in the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh in the mandir campus in the presence of Swamishri and *sadguru* sadhus. ♦

- Sadhu Amrutvijaydas



Swamishri presents a shield to one of the winners



Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami presents an award to one of the winners



How the Youths Prepared for the Adhiveshan INSPIRING STORIES

Nothing worthwhile is achieved without effort, sacrifices, dedication and determination. The potential of youths can be harnessed to benefit them and society in a multitude of ways. But, often, personal, health, family, social and other uncontrollable circumstances can foil the best of intentions.

In preparing for the Zonal, Regional and National levels of the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan, many BAPS *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* faced and overcame a variety of challenges in their quest to prepare as thoroughly as possible for the various competitions and earn the innermost blessings of *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The following stories of *yuvaks* reveal their challenges, how they overcame them and the resulting benefits of their perseverance.

FAMILY CHALLENGES

Himesh Ganatra of Mumbai

His father suddenly passed away just four days before the *adhiveshan* in Sarangpur. After the funeral rites, the family held a prayer gathering in which they arranged for all to offer *abhishek* to Shri Nilkanth Varni. Then, along with his mother and two sisters (who had also qualified for the *adhiveshan*) he came to Sarangpur with the urn of his father's ashes. After competing in the *adhiveshan*, they all went to Gondal to disperse the ashes.

Abhishek Patel of Vadodara

His family have a small flour-grinding mill business. He was due to participate in the Zonal Adhiveshan on 21 April. However, tragically, on

18 April, due to an accident at the mill, his mother sustained fatal injuries and passed away. Despite the emotional shock, he recalled the words of the Vachanamrut and with mental poise participated in the *adhiveshan* and also qualified for the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan in Sarangpur.

Shashikant Chalodiya and his brother of Surat

Ten days prior to the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan, their mother suffered a stroke and had to be admitted to the ICU. While attending to her, they patiently continued their preparations.

Shivam Chauhan of Ahmedabad

He is the sole wage earner in the family. His father has kidney failure and requires frequent dialysis. While fulfilling all his duties and working, he would memorize Vachanamruts till 3 a.m. He memorized 120 for the *adhiveshan*.

Sanjay Rathod (name changed) of Dehgam

He is the only *satsangi* in his family. While he was preparing for the Zonal Adhiveshan, his mother opposed. However, he remained calm and his mother noticed that by memorizing the Vachanamrut, he had changed and mellowed. Slowly, she began to appreciate his preparations and when he qualified for the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan, she wholeheartedly encouraged and supported him to prepare thoroughly.

Vijaysinh Rana (name changed) of Ahmedabad

Due to his job timing, he would memorize Vachanamruts from 11.00 p.m. to 1.30 a.m. His wife objected, but with the understanding he had gained from the Vachanamrut, he calmly and resolutely continued.

Yogesh Rangoliya of Surat

A computer engineer, he works as a web developer. Amid his work duties, and planning arrangements for his own wedding, he memorized 120 Vachanamruts. During this time, his mother

developed a major eye problem and he also served her as required.

Ankur Patel of Vidyanagar Chhatralaya

His father buys and sells vehicles. A relative bought a truck using Ankur's father's name. Then, the relative sold it without telling Ankur's father. The truck was seized and impounded for smuggling alcohol. Since the vehicle was registered under Ankur's father's name, the latter was imprisoned for 21 days while the authorities resolved the matter. Despite the tension this created, Ankur memorized 72 Vachanamruts.

HEALTH CHALLENGES

Ravi Patel of Gavasad

On 11 May 2018, Ravi was involved in a road accident and suffered a severe injury to his left leg. Four inches of bone had to be removed and his leg muscles had been crushed. Doctors said that his leg would have to be amputated. His family spoke to Mahant Swami Maharaj, who blessed that he would not require an amputation. His leg was saved, but over the last year he has had eight operations. Throughout, he has remained mentally strong and upbeat and prepared for the *adhiveshan*. He said, "The Vachanamrut has taught me that the *atma* and body are separate. And due to the body, pain will come. However, identify oneself as the *atma* to overcome the pain of the body."

He is still a long way from full recovery and is confined to a wheelchair. Yet, he came to participate in the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan in Sarangpur.

Dhyan Badheka of Vadodara

Just one day before the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan, he suffered a leg fracture. His doctors strongly advised him not to go to Sarangpur. However, Dhyan was determined to participate and so tolerated the pain and inconvenience. He had memorized 51 Vachanamruts.



A youth prays at the holy footprints of Shriji Maharaj



A youth touches the sacred *khijdo* tree

Bhavesh Hingu of Ahmedabad

Despite his busy work schedule, Bhavesh resolved to memorize one Vachanamrut every day. He also suffered severe abdominal pain and had to have an appendicectomy. Still, Bhavesh memorized 45 Vachanamruts.

Mitesh Unagar of Surat

Just a few days before the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan, Mitesh contracted a severe bout of flu and a throat infection. Having just recovered, he reached Sarangpur. There, at night, he suffered intense pain from a kidney stone. When he was scheduled to present his *mukhapath*, his renal colic caused him more pain. He was taken to Botad for treatment. On returning to Sarangpur, despite his ill health, he gave *mukhapath* for 90 Vachanamruts.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Kirtan Chauhan of Padra persevered for 15 hours a day to memorize 150 Vachanamruts: “My self-confidence has increased and I feel I can succeed in my studies as well.”

Akshay Devaiya of Ahmedabad: “By memorizing the Vachanamruts, I have found the answers to many life-related questions. Before, I used to fear school exams. Now, that fear has gone.”

Vishal Patel of Ilav: “I was nervous about

speaking in public. However, while preparing, I presented my speech before Swamishri in his puja. Now, I am confident.”

Rutvij Soni of Ahmedabad, “The *adhiveshan* has tremendously improved my concentration and memory. I gained confidence for my civil engineering exams. Also, by memorizing the Vachanamrut I have clearly understood the difference between good and bad.”

Hemil Gandhi of Atladara Chhatralaya memorized 150 Vachanamruts: “For four months, we daily spent 7–8 hours memorizing the Vachanamrut. As a result, our understanding, memory capacity and self-confidence have increased significantly. Also, I have become more patient, tolerant and regular in my daily routine.”

Brijesh Dabhi of Ahmedabad memorized Vachanamruts while travelling on the bus: “Memorizing Vachanamruts has given me the strength to observe *niyams* and dharma.”

Kathan Shah of Ahmedabad: “At first, I found reading the Vachanamrut boring. But memorizing the Vachanamrut kindled my interest and increased my knowledge. Also, previously, I could not sit for more than one hour to study. Now I can concentrate for 2–3 hours.”

Ankit Sheladia of Ahmedabad memorized 105 Vachanamruts in four months: “The *adhiveshan* has removed my laziness and helped me in my studies.”



Despite one year of painful treatment, Ravi Patel participates in the the *adhiveshan*



Dhyan Badheka arrives despite a fractured leg

Dhairya Patel of Vadodara prepared by utilizing time between tuitions in the evening and waking up early, “This *adhiveshan* has made me more regular and removed my laziness.”

Vandan Gajera, a student in Gondal: “I used to find biology hard, but now after memorizing Vachanamruts, I find it easier and no longer get bored.”

Parth Sondagar of Dholka: “The *adhiveshan* has helped me to overcome laziness and become regular in my routine. But, more importantly, it has developed my habit of regular reading.”

Hiren Gohil, a student of Ayurvedic medicine in Vadodara: “By studying the Vachanamrut, I realized that the biggest fault in man is ego. It spoils all our work. As a *satsangi*, I should overcome it.”

Jhalak Patel of Karamsad: “The Vachanamrut has taught me how to remain mentally stable amid honour and insult, how to see the virtues in other devotees and see all as divine, and how to attach to the Satpurush.”

Jay Patel of Tarapur, Harsh Yadav of Bhavnagar, Jaimin Gajera of Surat, Jayrajsinh Vaghela of Ahmedabad and many others revealed that they experienced a reduction in their tendency to get angry and were able to remain calmer and more patient in irritating situations.

Manan Gandhi of Vadodara: “Before, I easily became angry and I was stubborn. Now, I have improved and my self-confidence has increased.”

Rakshit Jahangir of Vidyanagar: “I was inspired to overcome anger, ego and jealousy. My attachment for the Sanstha has increased.

Shailesh Karanja of Mumbai: “I used to argue a lot with my parents. By doing *mukhpath* for the *adhiveshan*, my anger has reduced and respect for parents has increased.”

Parth Darji of Mumbai: “By studying the Vachanamrut I experienced great peace. I gained confidence and stability to face challenges in life, since the solutions to all problems are in the Vachanamrut.”

Akshar Visani of Kalikundnagar near Anand: “I realized that the Vachanamrut is the real nectar on earth. In youth, *kusang* and desires increase, but the Vachanamrut guides us on how to enrich and balance our life.”

Vipul Patel of Kungher near Patan: “By memorizing the Vachanamrut, I learnt to introspect, be more stable in praise and insult and avoid taking *abhav-avgun*.”

Hardeep Chauhan of Petlad, “I have total faith that my *moksha* is guaranteed.”

Tejan Koriya, an MA student in Sarangpur, had difficulty in memorizing the Vachanamrut. A friend advised, “Remember that you are doing this to please Shriji Maharaj and Swamishri and continue.” When he did so, he was able to memorize 45 Vachanamruts.

By studying the Vachanamrut while



Swamishri blesses the youths at the conclusion of the *adhiveshan*

memorizing, the youths learnt about the true way to practise satsang in their daily lives, avoid spiritually damaging tendencies, control their emotions, introspect and many other useful and practical things. They realized that the Vachanamrut is a treasure trove of spiritual guidance that has answers to all the pitfalls that can hinder progress in personal, professional and spiritual life.

They also learnt the core philosophical doctrines revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, such as, Bhagwan Swaminarayan is supreme God, God is manifest though the Gunatit Sadhu, the glory and greatness of Aksharbrahman and others.

TIME MANAGEMENT

For all the youths, studies, exams, tuition classes, jobs, family responsibilities, health and other pressures were a challenge. They admirably managed their duties to create time to prepare for the *adhiveshan*. This involved working smartly and efficiently and avoiding time-wasting activities.

Tapan Tilala of Ankleshwar commuted by train to his college where he studies chemical engineering. Every day, after college, he would spend three hours at the railway station memorizing the

Vachanamrut and during spare time at college, he would sit in the canteen to memorize. Tapan had resolved that if he could not memorize three Vachanamruts a day, he would fast on the next day. He memorized 150 Vachanamruts by setting targets and using his time wisely.

Mrunal Patel of Bharuch. In addition to his job, he had to prepare for a government exam. So, from midnight to 3.00 a.m., he would memorize Vachanamruts.

Somnath Link, a native of Punjab, is a student residing at the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar. As the *adhiveshan* approached, he spent 6–7 hours daily in preparation. He revealed, “I have read the texts of 18 faiths. I have also read a 2,000-page book on Indian philosophy. But the Vachanamrut contains all that wisdom.”

Parth Dungarani of Vadodara is a medical student. He set a timetable to spend an hour in the morning and evening to memorize Vachanamruts. In this way he memorized 129 Vachanamruts.

Paresh Vadher of Lodhva is a BA student. Hailing from a farming family, in addition to his studies, helping on the farm, serving as pujari in the local mandir and other responsibilities, he

prepared well for the *adhiveshan*.

Jaimin Patel of Gorva had failed his Standard 10 exams and had poor memory. Yet, determined to please Swamishri, he persevered and managed to memorize 15 Vachanamruts without making any mistakes.

Youths realized that by reducing their use of mobiles, not watching TV or surfing the internet they could save time and use it to prepare for the *adhiveshan*.

In this way, they diligently used the small slots of time they got to prepare for the *adhiveshan* while completing their main daily tasks. Many woke up earlier, stayed up till late and minimized sleep to create time for preparations.

Youths used every spare moment at school, college, work and in their business to prepare. Some even took unpaid leave from their job or delayed starting a new job to prepare.

Some youths had their final college exams on the day of the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan.

Yet, their enthusiasm was such that as soon as they had given the exam, they rushed to Sarangpur to participate in the *adhiveshan*.

To prepare for and succeed in competitions of all types requires a strong will, proper planning and determined implementation of plans. Also, adjustments to cater for personal, health, family, social and other challenges are often required. The youths preparing for the Akhil Bharatiya Yuva Adhiveshan faced many challenges, yet they did not waver or give up.

In this modern era, it is highly commendable that amidst fast-paced and time-restricted daily schedules, and with pressures to perform in every area of life, the youths put in sustained efforts over five months to prepare for the various *adhiveshan* competitions.

We salute and congratulate all the youths for setting such inspiring examples. ♦

- Sadhu Amrutvijaydas

(Cont. from p. 24)

So, he would reach the home of the *balaks* at 7.00 a.m. to check on their progress for the *adhiveshan* and motivate them. On returning at 9.00 p.m. in the evening, he would again visit the *balaks* and encourage them and their parents to prepare properly.

Due to his selfless efforts, the parents also assisted in preparing their children for the *adhiveshan*.

Helped to Prepare Despite a Fractured Foot

Joybhai, a *bal karyakar* from Satellite, Ahmedabad, was teaching the role of Joban Pagi to a *balak* for the mono-acting competition. As Joybhai stood on a chair, three of its legs suddenly buckled and he fell, suffering several fractures in his toe. Doctors told him he should rest for one month.

Despite this, he daily gathered the *balaks*

at his home to guide their preparations for the *adhiveshan*.

A Pilot Helped Children Prepare for Mukhpath

Amitbhai Shah from Mumbai is a pilot with a reputed airline. However, whenever he was not flying, he would spend all his free time to help children prepare for *mukhpath* competitions.

Reduced Job Hours

Niteshbhai Chauhan serves as a *nirikshak* and BSS *sanchalak* in Paldi, Ahmedabad. He was assigned the task of helping the *balaks* with their preparations. He was wondering how he would find time for this *seva*. He works for 14 hours daily at a medical store. So, he decided to cut down on his overtime for about two-and-a-half months. He sacrificed on his income to find time for his *seva*. ♦

- Sadhu Amrutvijaydas



THE VACHANAMRUT

An Introduction, Part 3

This third article discusses the imagery of the Vachanamrut. In all, there are about 497 analogies and anecdotes in the Vachanamrut, incorporating a variety of fields, such as, stories from the Purans and other shastras, agriculture, laundering, animal husbandry, cooking, embroidery, perfumery, warfare, forces of nature, management, diplomacy, Ayurveda, surgery, psychology, cosmic phenomena, astrophysics and many others.

The majority of devotees in the Vachanamrut's discourses were peasants. Only a few were learned householders like Dinanath Bhatt, Chimanrao Shastri and Shobharam Shastri. Erudite ascetics included Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, Muktanand Swami, Nityanand Swami, Gopalanand Swami, Shatanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami and other *paramhansas*. This mixture of the lay and learned would pose a dilemma for any person in explaining profound philosophical concepts and imparting spiritual wisdom. However, Bhagwan Swaminarayan was a teacher who understood the human heart. He therefore amply sprinkled his discourses with anecdotes and analogies, which both groups could easily grasp and identify with. Hence he communicated effectively.

JIVA

In Vachanamrut Gadhada II 12 Maharaj gives an analogy called *rajniti* – polity of ruling a kingdom – in which he likens the *jiva* to a king: “If the king did not know the art of ruling, the people would not obey his orders; rather, they would begin to beat him. Then, his country would become desolate, or he himself would behave miserably because no one would obey his rule.... Similarly, if the *jiva* were to attempt to rule the kingdom in

the form of the body without understanding the art of ruling, then it would never become happy.”

VIGILANCE

The *sadhak* should always remain vigilant; to prevent the mind from falsely attributing faults in Bhagwan and the Satpurush.

In Gadhada II 57, Maharaj talks about the necessity of developing *atmanishtha* to help prevent oneself from projecting *mayik* attributes (*doshas*) in Bhagwan. He uses the common example of the ever vigilant gecko, gobbling up insects near a *divo*: “When a gecko comes near the light of a lamp, it kills any insect that comes near the light. In the same way, the thought that rests within the light of the *atma* destroys everything apart from the *atma*.”

The unpredictable nature of our senses, no matter how great one's control over them, can only be appreciated in its entirety by an eternal *siddha* like Shriji Maharaj.

In Panchala 3, he advocates treating the *indriyas* as enemies, with the analogy of how a king treats his enemies: “One should uproot the *indriyas*, *antahkaran* and *vishays* from the *jiva* and develop love for Bhagwan – only that is appropriate. As long as one has not uprooted them, one should extract work from them in the form of the darshan, touch, etc., of Bhagwan... they should not be regarded as one's benefactors – instead, they should be regarded as enemies... a king who has captured his enemy keeps him chained and extracts work from him; never does the king free him or trust him. If he were to free him or trust him, then the enemy would definitely kill the king. In the same way, if one trusts one's enemies in the form of the *indriyas* and frees them, not

keeping them confined, they will definitely make one fall from the path of Bhagwan.

Maharaj then gives another analogy: “For example, if one spark of fire were to fall on a large heap of gunpowder, then that gunpowder would be completely reduced to ashes. Similarly, such a person’s stability is not certain.”

By using such imagery, Maharaj effectively convinces the aspirant to be ever vigilant of his mind and *indriyas*.

BASE INSTINCTS

The nature of base instincts such as anger, jealousy, ego and others is difficult to understand, more so by the aspirant. A few of Maharaj’s descriptions of such instincts are given here.

Maharaj greatly dislikes one who harbours ill will for a devotee or holds a grudge against him. Some powerful analogies are used to describe a grudge and anger.

In Kariyani 9, Maharaj poses a question about holding a grudge like a *pado* – male buffalo – against someone. *Padas* are well known for holding grudges.

In Loya 1, Maharaj likens anger to the lethal saliva of a rabid dog. He further likens anger to a butcher, an assassin, a tiger, a leopard and a venomous snake. Their common factor is their violent ability to kill.

Shuk Muni then asks whether even a tinge of anger is harmful. Maharaj dramatises his answer: “If a snake were to appear in this assembly at this moment, then even if it does not bite anyone, everyone would still have to rise and scatter; there would be panic in everyone’s heart. Furthermore, if a tiger were to come and roar on the outskirts of a village, then even if it does not harm anyone, all would be stricken with terror and no one would come out of his home. Similarly, even if a trace of anger were to arise, it would still be a source of extreme misery” (Loya 1).

Ego is another of man’s notorious instincts; the source of many of his miseries. All his activities

are fuelled by his desire to be appreciated, to boost his ego. Surprisingly, ego surfaces even in devotional worship to Bhagwan, as revealed so succinctly and satirically by Maharaj in Gadhada II 41. He uses an example which is commonly seen by village people: “The nature of a person, however, is such that he only enjoys doing that which satisfies his ego. Without that, he does not enjoy performing even bhakti of Bhagwan. For example, a dog takes a dry bone to an isolated place to chew on. As a result of the chewing, its mouth is abraded and the bone becomes covered in blood. Then, licking the bone, the dog becomes overjoyed. But little does the fool realize, ‘The taste that I am enjoying is that of blood from my own mouth’.”

CONSTANT ENDEAVOUR

In any endeavour in life, constant effort is the key to success.

In Gadhada I 23, Maharaj talks about the importance of offering uninterrupted bhajan – worship to Bhagwan. But if one engages in worldly activities at one time and then tries to do bhajan at another time, then he will not be able to establish a constant rapport with Bhagwan. For this, constant effort is desirable.

Maharaj then gives the analogy of pouring a potful of water irregularly in one place to create a pool of water: “Consider, for example, a pot that is filled with water and emptied somewhere. If another pot of water is subsequently emptied at the same place on the following day or the day after that, a pool of water will not collect there.... On the other hand, if a trickle of water were to flow continuously, a large pool of water would soon be formed.”

In Gadhada II 33, Maharaj advocates incessant endeavour to remove one’s insuperable instincts of passion, anger, covetousness and others, by giving a different analogy, familiar to those present, who fetch water from a well: “Due to the daily drawing of water from a well, the constant

rubbing of even a soft rope can cause a groove in the very hard rock on the edge of that well. Similarly, for one who is a sadhu and who continuously remains active in his efforts for eradicating his *swabhavs*, how long can those *swabhavs* remain? They most certainly will be destroyed.”

In the same vein, how can one be freed from a cursed *buddhi* – one which induces him to constantly find faults in Bhagwan and his Sadhu? In Kariyani 2, Maharaj takes the opportunity of using the immediate surroundings of the assembly, to select a suitable example (his garments), to support his answer, as he did in Panchala 1 – about the torch: “This piece of cloth which I wear on my head and a thick cloth like a carpet, cannot be washed with the same effort. Why? Because this thin cloth is cleaned immediately by washing it with only a small amount of soap. On the other hand, to wash a thick cloth, it must be soaked in water for two to four days, then boiled over a fire; only then, after it is washed with soap, does it become clean. Similarly, if a person whose intellect is cursed, observes *niyams* only to the extent that everyone else does, then that flaw will not be eradicated.”

KUSANG (BAD COMPANY)

In Gadhada I 18, in order to stress the importance of avoiding *kusang* on the spiritual path, Maharaj vivifies convincingly: “If he sits in a gathering of materialistic people in a lavish seven-storey haveli decorated with beautiful mirrors and comfortable seats, and if those materialistic people are seated wearing various types of jewellery and fine clothes, and are exchanging liquor amongst themselves, with prostitutes performing vulgar dances to the accompaniment of various musical instruments – then the person’s *antahkaran* will unquestionably be adversely affected... Therefore, if one thoughtfully examines the influence of good company and evil company on the *antahkaran*, their effects can be realized.”

NATURE OF THE MIND

Even for a distinguished philosopher, it would be challenging to simultaneously describe the nature of the *chitt* (mind) and interest a group of lay villagers, enabling them to understand its intricate workings. Yet, Maharaj does just that: “Everyone’s *chitt* is like honey, or like water saturated with jaggery, sugar or *sakar*. If, for example, a fly or an ant were to fall in that liquid, it would become stuck in it. If a human touched it, it would stick to the person’s finger as well. The *chitt*’s nature is similar; it sticks to whatever object it recalls. In fact, the *chitt* even attaches itself to things that are utterly insignificant, such as stones, or rubbish, or dog excrement – things in which there is not even the slightest pleasure.... Such is its sticky nature” (Gadhada II 6).

To keep the mind occupied, Maharaj uses an example which is familiar to the common peasant, which involves flowers and seeds. Maharaj then links this to recollecting the episodes of Bhagwan’s *lila*, to subdue the mind.

“The mind is saturated with desires for the world. But, in the manner in which sesame seeds are imbued with scent by padding them between alternating layers of flowers, the mind should be similarly saturated with flowers in the form of the constant remembrance of Bhagwan’s divine actions and incidents – coupled with an understanding of his greatness. The mind should constantly be entangled in a web in the form of these divine actions and incidents of Bhagwan, and thoughts relating to Bhagwan should be constantly conceived in the mind” (Gadhada I 38).

CURBING DESIRES

The desire to enjoy the *panchvishays* is never-ending. For example, we know that after relishing a food item that we are really fond of, such as, ice cream, in as much quantity as we like, we feel contented. Yet the next day, the craving to eat ice cream remains. The same principle holds true for the other *vishays* of touch, sight, smell

and hearing. One is never contented and the desires remain ever more powerful. Total and lasting fulfilment never results by succumbing to and palliating our desires. Shriji Maharaj explains: Craving for the *panchvishays* for fulfilment by enjoying them, is like trying to pour water into a fissure which has opened up in the ground, reaching into the bowels of the earth. It will never be filled. Similarly, the *indriyas* will never be satiated even with the utmost enjoyment of the sense-objects (Gadhada II 47).

ANALOGY OF SWEET MILK AND SNAKE VENOM

Maharaj uses the analogy of milk and snake venom in six different ways. The gravity of what he wishes to convey through this analogy, firmly penetrates devotees sitting in the assembly.

In Gadhada I 35, Maharaj compares the venom to finding faults in Bhagwan and his Sadhu, thus poisoning the otherwise great intellect of a devotee.

In Loya 10, Maharaj makes a subtle concept lucid. He says that when the *jiva* fully realizes the repugnance of the worldly charms, he then ceases to be attracted by them, just as one who sees snake venom falling in sweet milk will be repelled by it.

Throughout the Vachanamrut, Maharaj reveals his immense dislike of one with ego. In Loya 17, he compares the ego-conscious devotee to a man drinking milk laced with snake venom: “He who identifies his self with the body will definitely bear contempt for the sadhu and will eventually fall from Satsang – either after one month or two months; after one year or two years or even ten years; or maybe at the time of death or even after death – he will certainly fall” (Loya 17).

“After his death” means that the ego will be hampering the *jiva*’s spiritual progress even in the births that follow.

One who has no knowledge of Bhagwan’s glory and greatness is not able to liberate anyone

and one should not even listen to his discourses. Maharaj calls him, ‘spiritually impotent’ in Vartal 12. Those who listen to such a person are likened to drinking poisoned milk and liable to fall from the spiritual path.

In Gadhada III 12, Maharaj compares devotees who have excessive attachment towards their relations to the saliva of a snake. The attachment will surely hamper the devotee’s spiritual progress.

Finally, Maharaj explains in Gadhada III 19 that, though one may not be attached to his relatives, one can get attached to someone nursing him during illness. This attachment is also likened to venom in milk. It will disturb his devotion to Bhagwan.

A close look at the above examples shows Maharaj’s creativity in using one simple analogy to convey six different concepts, all vitally important for the spiritual progress of a devotee and easily understood by him. In the foregoing analogies, Shriji Maharaj derives one concept using one analogy, a straightforward and common teaching method. However when he draws several different concepts from the same analogy in different Vachanamruts, we are forced to bow down to his supranormal ingenuity.

These examples are just a few from the treasure trove of analogies that Maharaj used in his discourses. He also used analogies in a series of letters collectively known as *Vedras* – nectar of the Vedas, written exclusively to his *paramhansas* and elaborating the *panch vartmans*. *Vedras* is replete with imagery, with an average of one analogy every fourth sentence.

From the examples of imagery discussed, one can appreciate Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s immense knowledge. In addition, he possessed a phenomenal flair in using simple imagery to simplify abstruse philosophical truths and imparting them in a form understandable to the layman. ♦

(For details see
‘Vachanamrut Handbook’ pp.182–198)

Keep an Eye on Our i

Praise and you won't have to raise your voice. Nothing improves our hearing better than praise. William Shakespeare rephrased, "Praises are my wages", and Sant Tulsidas summarized, "Man lives for and lives on praises." The deepest desire in every heart is the desire to be appreciated. Perhaps healthy appreciation is a need, but greed for appreciation is a disease.

I know of a successful person who pays people to praise him... at parties, in meetings... regularly through calls or messages. He feels depressed if he doesn't hear great things about himself. If this is shocking, then what are paid columns, commissioned biographies and hired PR companies who artfully craft the public image of personalities? It's sophisticated self-projection. Modern narcissism!

While we ridicule Narcissus for losing himself in his own reflection, are we not his mini-versions? Almost in every photograph we seek our face first. From the age-old compulsion of carving our names on tree trunks to the contemporary craze for selfies settles the case of our self-fascination.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan calls it 'The bone of ego' in the holy Vachanamrut (Gadhada II 41), "A dog doggedly chews upon a bare, bloodless bone till its own gums bleed. Tasting fresh blood, the dog relentlessly relishes the bone. But little does it realize that it is its own blood." This is how egoists fool themselves. Their self-absorption, acute narcissism, drives them to spend their money, energy and time to self-aggrandize till they completely expend themselves. In living to impress others, they depress themselves. Egoists think they are becoming bigger and bigger, but the truth is they are becoming smaller and smaller. He who



cheers ME, ME, ME, only hears ME, ME, ME, in reality, begins to fear ME, ME, ME.

Egoistic fears and inferiorities compel us to fake success, steal credit and usurp praise. Once an ant and an elephant were crossing a rope bridge. As it swayed and swung, the ant arrogantly said, "See my friend, together we sure moved the mighty bridge." It's like the man who pours a glass of water in the sea and spends his whole life running around the coast trying to measure how high he raised the sea-level!

Inflating our egos, distorts and disturbs our inner balance. Deflating it, unburdens us. The way to overcome ego is through Smallness, Greatness and Togetherness. First accept the Smallness of our existence. Mere ants in a forest or drops in an ocean, we are nothing in the vast universe. Our earth is an insignificant dot, so just be humble!

Think of the Greatness of God, who created the wonders of the universe. Even if you believe there's no God, we know for sure that you and I did not create the world. So, be humble!

However, the easier way is to befriend someone who has mastered the art of Smallness and Greatness. Togetherness in mind and spirit with the enlightened reveals egolessness in ways much simpler.

Once, on my French book, Pramukh Swami Maharaj wrote, "i BLESS YOU." I joked, "This is completely reverse. In English, the 'I' is always capital, and the rest of the words are small. Here you have dotted the i..." Swamishri gave me a timeless secret I can never forgo or forget. **"In life, always keep the i small."** Let's keep an eye on our i.



Vicharan

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

January–March 2019

Mumbai, Surat, Mahelav, Dhuliya, Nasik, Pune,
Selvas, Tithal, Navsari, Sarangpur

JANUARY

MUMBAI: 1–14

During Swamishri's stay special days were celebrated: Akshar-Purushottam Din (2), Yuva Karyakar Din and Ghar Sabha Din (3), Brahmakilol Din (4), Samaydan Yagna Din (5), Ravi Sabha Din (6), Varni Vicharan Din (7), Annakut Din (1,100 food items were offered to Thakorji) (9), Sadachar Din (10) and Symbolic Jholi Din (13).

2, Wednesday; Akshar-Purushottam Din

In the evening satsang assembly, Viveksagar Swami spoke about the history of the Akshar-Purushottam principle. Thereafter, the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan volumes, authored by Bhadresh Swami, were honoured in a procession by carrying them in a decorative palanquin and throughout the assembly hall. Bhadresh Swami was honoured and interviewed in the assembly.

3, Thursday; Ghar Sabha Din

A drama on *ghar sabha* (daily home assembly) was performed in Swamishri's presence. Thereafter, youths performed a traditional dance. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed, "Ghar *sabha* forges such an understanding that it dissolves any differences and problems among the family members. Even a multi-millionaire, out of lack of proper understanding, will experience conflict, conflict and conflict.

"In difficult and challenging times, *ghar sabha* will provide inner peace. Pramukh Swami



'Narayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho...' Swamishri proclaims the *jholi* mantra, Mumbai

Maharaj made a great contribution by gifting us the *ghar sabha*. One's peace grows as spiritual understanding dawns, in spite of one's ordinary conditions in life. Thus, all should do *ghar sabha* and you will experience a miracle."

13, Sunday; Symbolic Jholi Utsav

The symbolic Jholi celebration was held in the evening on the grounds of Bhakti Park. The celebration theme was 'Narayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho'. Speeches by several swamis were related to Bhagwan Swaminarayan's compassion, hailing Gunatitanand Swami as Aksharbrahman and spreading the Akshar-Purushottam principle. Pujya Kothari Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke about Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The programme also included videos and traditional dances by children and youths.



‘Narayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho...’ Swamishri proclaims the *jholi* mantra, Surat

Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “By donating a single food grain you will get *punya* worth infinite times more. Thus, you will get the fruits of whatever [spiritual] things you do here. The final outcome will be *moksha*.” Thereafter, Swamishri and the entire congregation of 12,000 devotees performed *arti*. The assembly climaxed with Swamishri and senior swamis hailing the *jholi* mantra, “Swaminarayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho!” Swamishri then blessed the devotees as they filed passed before him.

SURAT: 14-29

During Swamishri’s stay special days were celebrated: Announcement of the Vachanamrut Bicentenary Celebrations (20), Brahmotsav (21), Gramya Din (24) and Bal Din (26).

At 10.26 a.m., Swamishri departed from Mumbai by flight and landed at Surat airport at 11.00 a.m.

In the evening, from 6.00 p.m., a welcome and *jholi* assembly was held. Swamishri was honoured with garlands and welcomed with traditional dances by children and youths. In his blessings, Swamishri said, “Shriji Maharaj has said that if one offers even a miniscule amount of something, he considers it to be like Mt Meru. You have all offered *seva* with body, mind and wealth, and with devotion and love. Thus, you will all become

happier.” Then, Swamishri, Viveksagar Swami and Ghanshyamcharan Swami hailed the *jholi* mantra. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the devotees as they filed passed before him.

15, Tuesday

After his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Umarsadi, Vankaal and Godthal (Tithal region); Miyapur (Sankari region) and Taadpaada (Navsari region). Swamishri also performed the re-*pratishtha* rituals of several *hari* mandirs.

20, Sunday

The evening satsang assembly was themed on the Bicentenary Celebrations of the Vachanamrut. Viveksagar Swami spoke on *upasana* being the essence of the Vachanamrut. Thereafter, children and youths performed a beautiful traditional dance. A drama, ‘The Royal Road to Akshardham’, was enacted by youths. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Vachanamrut is a very important scripture. It resolves all spiritual problems, questions and doubts. So, one must read it with a singular focus. Maharaj has said in the Vachanamrut, ‘The Sant is the essence of all essences.’ Listen to it from the Satpurush.”

28, Monday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Kanthraj (Surat rural region).

FEBRUARY

MAHELAV: 29-5

During Swamishri’s stay special days were celebrated: Pratishtha of Nilkanth Varni Abhishek Murti and Guru Parampara (31), Karykar Din (1 Feb.), Mahila Din and Bal-Yuva Din (2), Holi of Flowers festival (3) and Vidyanagar Chhatralaya Annual Day (4).



Swamishri performs the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of Shri Nilkanth Varni, Mahelav



Swamishri sanctifies and places the first pillar, Nasik

31 January, Thursday; Pratishtha of Nilkanth Varni and Guru Parampara

A beautiful *annakut* was displayed before Thakorji in all the three shrines of the mandir. Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami performed the initial *pratishtha* rituals of the Shri Nilkanth Varni *abhishek murti* and the Guru Parampara *murtis*. As soon as Swamishri arrived, he performed the final rituals. At 11.36 a.m., Swamishri performed the *pratishtha arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali*. Thereafter, he performed the first *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni by pouring saffron-scented water. There was joy and ecstasy among all the devotees. Then Swamishri showered his blessings, “Shastriji Maharaj focussed upon the work he had to do. He never wished to project his greatness. He broke the shrine which commemorated the place where he was honoured and weighed with sugar and gold jewellery. There was nothing other than Maharaj and Swami in his heart. We have to become *dasna, dasna, dasna das*. We should be loyal to the extent that we do not require anything other than Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. If you wish to transcend the *brahmand* there are no persons other than them who can help you do so. Shastriji Maharaj resounded the name of

Akshar in the whole world. Nilkanth Varni [*abhishek murti*] will fulfil the good wishes of all.” Thereafter, Swamishri attended the *pratishtha* assembly and blessed the large gathering.

2, Saturday

Bhadresh Swami offered the newly written handbook on the Akshar-Purushottam *murti-pratishtha* rituals to Mahant Swami Maharaj. Swamishri then offered it at the holy feet of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and then gave it to Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, who then went inside the shrine of Shastriji Maharaj in the mandir sanctum and placed it at his holy feet. The newly composed *pratishtha* rituals would now be used for performing all the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of BAPS mandirs.

Then, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Kasor (Mahelav), Vijol (Bodeli), Jackson and Florence (USA).

DHULIYA: 5-11

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *shikhabaddha* BAPS Mandir in Dhuliya on 10 February 2019. (For details of Swamishri’s stay, *yagna*, *nagar-yatra*, and the *pratishtha* rituals



Swamishri performs the *murti-pratishtha* rituals for various BAPS *hari* mandirs, Sankari

refer to *Swaminarayan Bliss*, March–April 2019, pp. 27–33.)

NASIK: 11–13

12, Tuesday

Swamishri came to the *shikharbaddha* mandir construction site to ritually place the first pillar of the mandir. Prior to the final ceremony, Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami had completed the *mahapuja* rituals. Swamishri poured white cement in the hole beneath the suspended pillar. Thereafter, the senior swamis also added white cement. Then, with the help of a crane Swamishri placed the first pillar at 11.10 a.m. on the mandir site. Finally, Swamishri performed *pujan* of the pillar, performed *arti* and offered *mantra-pushpanjali*.

After Swamishri had been honoured with garlands he blessed the occasion, “This is a sacred place of pilgrimage. Hundreds of thousands of people come here [to Nasik] and they will all come here too. This is Maharaj’s place because he had come here. The Nasik mandir will be supreme and very successful.”

The main assembly to commemorate the laying of the first pillar was held in the evening.

PUNE: 13–19

During Swamishri’s stay several special programmes were held in the evening assemblies: Subodh Din (14), Bal Din (15), Satpurush Din (16) and Mandir Patotsav and Symbolic Jholi festival (17).

15, Friday; Satpurush Din

The evening programme was celebrated as Satpurush Din. After *abhangas* on the subject of helping others were sung, a drama was enacted on how BAPS volunteers, on Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s instruction, had cleaned and provided relief to Muslims in the flood-ravaged town of Morbi in 1979. Thereafter, *abhangas* on *parabhakti* were sung and a video about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s and Mahant Swami Maharaj’s *parabhakti* was shown. Then *abhangas* about the virtue of humility were sung and an incident was narrated on it.

Shri Arun Tiwariji, co-author of *Transcendence*, addressed the assembly. Then, *dhun* was sung for the peace of 44 soldiers killed in the Pulwama terrorist attack. In conclusion, Swamishri paid tributes to the deceased soldiers.

17, Sunday; 2nd Patotsav of Pune Mandir

Swamishri performed *abhishek* of Nilkanth



Swamishri showers flower petals during the Holi festival. The mammoth gathering during the Holi festival, Tithal

Varni. A wonderful *annakut* was arranged before Thakorji in the mandir shrines and before the divine avatars in the Abhishek Mandap. Swamishri performed *arti* in all the three shrines of the mandir.

In the evening assembly, the Jholi festival was celebrated in Swamishri's presence and all the devotees got the opportunity of *samip* darshan.

SANKARI: 19-26

On 19th morning, Swamishri visited the Shri Sadhu Vaswani Mission on the invitation of its trustees. The latter welcomed and honoured Swamishri. Thereafter, Swamishri visited the memorial shrine and placed a flower bouquet and an oil lamp before the *murti* of Shri Sadhu Vaswani.

At 5.50 p.m., Swamishri departed from Pune by flight and landed at 6.30 p.m. at Surat airport. Thereafter, Swamishri travelled by car and arrived at Sankari Mandir at 7.40 p.m.

During Swamishri's stay special programmes were celebrated: Holi of Flowers festival (24) and Bal Din (25).

23, Saturday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the

murtis for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Bhagwanpura (Karcheliya region), Vankaner (Bardoli region), Itadva (Palsana region) and Songadh (Ukai region).

MARCH

SELVAS: 1-5

During Swamishri's stay the evening satsang assemblies were themed on Humility Day (1), Values for Children Day (3) and E-Vivek Day (4).

TITHAL: 5-12

During Swamishri's stay a Holi of Flowers festival was celebrated (10).

10, Sunday

The evening satsang assemblies were held nearby on the mandir Naimisharanya grounds. When Swamishri arrived youths performed an exciting traditional dance, during which swamis and devotees honoured Swamishri with garlands. Thereafter, Swamishri performed *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Then, Swamishri blessed the mammoth gathering, "Yogi Bapa says in his prayer in Mahelay, 'O Shastriji Maharaj, may we believe those who are associated with you to be like a crown on our head.' By having such glory would make one great. In fact, you would



Mahant Swami Maharaj performs the morning *arti* of Thakorji and the *kalashes*, Navsari

be sitting in Akshardham. One should definitely have this attitude.”

Thereafter, Swamishri showered flower petals on Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and then senior swamis showered flower petals on Swamishri and vice versa. Finally, Swamishri sanctified flower petals that were then showered upon the devotees as they filed passed before him.

11, Monday

After completing his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *pujan* of the *murtis* of BAPS *hari* mandirs in Rumla and Mogarvadi (Rumla region), Vankal (Murla region), Kelavani and Bhensdhara (Tiskari region), Bigari (Dharasana region), Barvaadi (Ambaach region) and Sadakpor (Chikhli region). Then, Swamishri also performed *pujan* of the *kalashes* and flagstaves of the *hari* mandirs.

NAVSARI: 12–18

During Swamishri’s stay the evening satsang assemblies were themed on: Samarpan Din (16) and *pujan* of *kalashes* and flagstaves of the under-construction *shikharbaddha* mandir in Navsari (18).

On the evening of 13 March, Swamishri took a round to observe the mandir construction work.

17, Sunday

After his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *pujan* of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Kelavani (Kaprada regions: Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj and Guru Parampara canvas *murtis*) and Italva (Palsana region under Sankari mandir: all-in-one *murti*).

18, Navsari, Surat and Sarangpur

Swamishri travelled by road to Surat airport, flew by plane to Bhavnagar and then headed by road to Sarangpur.

SARANGPUR: 19–31

During Swamishri’s stay special festival and evening satsang assemblies were held: Volunteers’ assembly (19), Bhagatji Maharaj’s Birthday Celebration (20) and Fuldol Festival (21).

20, Wednesday; Pragji Bhagat Jayanti

After Swamishri’s morning puja, Swamishri blessed the assembly on the occasion of Bhagatji Maharaj’s 190th birthday celebration, “Shastriji Maharaj said, ‘How much Bhagatji Maharaj had understood the glory of Bhagwan!’ These words of his are not ordinary. In fact, so much is encapsulated in them. These words were uttered by

Shastriji Maharaj, who propagated the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. How deeply must he have been impressed that such words came from his mouth. Bhagatji Maharaj sang the glory of Gunatitanand Swami when the latter was being profusely insulted and disrespected. To have faith in him in such times is really extraordinary. Any one else would simply move away from him or do bhajan in a remote corner. But Bhagatji sang the glory of Akshar.

“Bhagatji never retaliated against anyone. He simply extended his line [by singing Swami’s glory and remaining humble] and thus embraced all. How much trust Bhagatji Maharaj had in Maharaj and Swami! In such dismal situations Bhagatji sang the glory of Akshar.

“Bhagatji Maharaj did not build one *hari*

mandir, he did not write a single article and he was uneducated. How difficult it was in those times to accept him as a guru. Truly, one who is a *bhakta* can understand and realize a *bhakta*.”

Thereafter, Swamishri inaugurated a Sanskrit publication, *Brahmopadesh Rasayanam* by Shrutiprakash Swami. The publication was a selection of Swamini Vatos for Sanskrit pandits.

23, Saturday

After his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *pujan* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Vishwakarma Nagar in Junagadh. ♦

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

PUSHPADOLOTSAV

21 March 2019, Sarangpur

During Thakorji’s morning darshan in the main mandir, Swamishri sprayed saffron coloured water on the *murtis* of Dham, Dhama and Mukta in the middle shrine. Thereafter, Swamishri sprayed coloured water on the sadhus seated beneath the mandir dome.

The evening Fuldol Festival was themed on the Colours of Vachanamrut to commemorate the Bicentenary Year of the Vachanamrut. The beautiful stage backdrop included a rainbow of colours, a giant replica of the Vachanamrut, an exquisitely large *murti* of Shriji Maharaj, Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Guru Parampara. After each speech a short dance was performed by children and youths of Botad on a lyric about the glory of the Vachanamrut. The backdrop also had quotes from the



Vachanamrut upon which all the speeches were based. Adarshjivan Swami conducted the entire festival assembly. The speeches by swamis were as follows:

- Narayanmuni Swami: Essence of the Fuldol festival.
- Ghanshyamcharan Swami: The incarnate



form of Bhagwan is supreme.

- Anandswarup Swami: One who becomes *brahmarup* is eligible to offer worship to Purushottam.
- Viveksagar Swami: Bhagwan's form is present on earth along with Akshardham.
- Ishwarcharan Swami: Having faith in the living form of guru, who is the form of Hari.
- Dr Swami: One who observes the *agna* of the Satpurush lives in the *atma* state.

Finally, Swamishri blessed the mammoth gathering, "Today, is the festival of colours and we have to get coloured by the colour of divinity. Shriji Maharaj has said, 'The sadhus and devotees are divine.' There is no doubt in Shriji Maharaj's words. All should believe others to be divine. This is the truth; whether you believe it or not. These are Maharaj's words, thus one has to believe them and only then can one become God-realized. This is the essence of the Vachanamrut.

"One who has resolute faith becomes indifferent to the worldly joys and miseries. There are many devotees today who have such

resolute faith."

Then, the festival climaxed with the *ran-gotsav*. Mahant Swami Maharaj did *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj with *chandan*, rice grains and flower petals. Thereafter, Swamishri sprayed coloured water on Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Thakorji also sprayed coloured water on Swamishri.

Swamishri inaugurated the Gujarati audio book of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's biography, Part 1, narrated by Narayanmuni Swami; videos of Pramukh Swami Maharaj on the baps.org website and the Marathi edition of *Satsang Vihar*, Part 2. Thereafter, Dr Swami inaugurated an audio CD of the blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

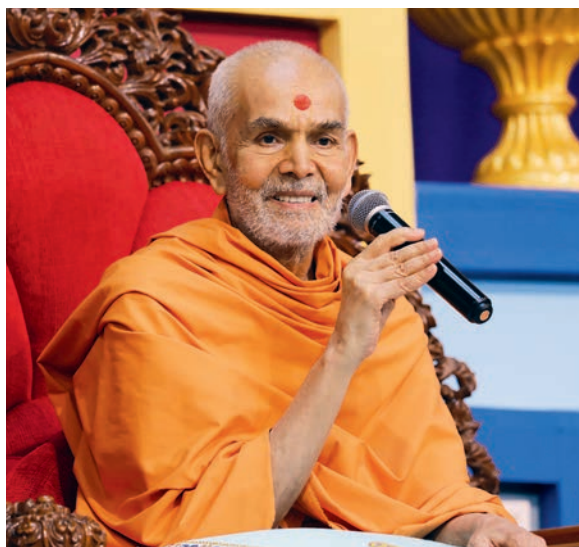
The *sadguru* swamis honoured Swamishri with garlands and then showered flowers upon each other. Finally, Swamishri showered flower petals upon the devotees through two large-sized pipes. All rejoiced and danced with the shower of sanctified flower petals and Swamishri's darshan from close quarters.

More than 65,000 devotees were given sanctified food dishes as *prasad*.

LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

January–March 2019

Inspiring incidents from the life of Mahant Swami Maharaj



JANUARY

DESPITE THE ODD HOUR

23, Surat

Shrijinandan Swami of Surat recalled an incident before Mahant Swami Maharaj, “In 2012, a consecration [*pratishtha*] ceremony of a *hari* mandir was organized in Vankal village. We had requested you to come and you agreed to perform the *pratishtha*. However, the auspicious time for the ritual was 5.00 a.m. The time was rechecked to find an appropriate hour, but the *panchang* showed the same time to be auspicious. When we informed you about the early time you happily agreed and came to perform the *pratishtha*. Thereafter, you also blessed the *pratishtha* assembly and pleased everyone.”

Swamishri disregarded his own daily morning routine and discomfort to perform the consecration ceremony. His devotion to God and straightforwardness in complying to the wishes of those who had organized the occasion touched everyone.

GURU-CENTRIC

23, Surat

Gurumanan Swami asked Swamishri, “While giving *samip* darshan to the devotees what do you think about them?”

Swamishri replied, “They are all *muktos* [liberated souls] and they are all divine.”

Shrutipriya Swami asked, “They are divine because of Mahant Swami’s association?”

Swamishri instantly denied, “No, they are divine because of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s association.”

Shrutipriya Swami argued, “While the devotees came before you for *samip* darshan, the bhajan that was being played had the name of Mahant Swami.”

Swamishri replied, “It doesn’t matter what is written in the kirtan, but all are divine because of Pramukh Swami’s association.”

The unique aspect of all the Gunatit gurus has been to give credit and praise to their gurus. When our lives are self-centric, the genuine guru is always God and guru-centric in all his actions and words. Such a guru is an ideal for all spiritual aspirants.

FEBRUARY

JOY IN SPITE OF COMMOTION

3, Mahelav

After Swamishri’s blessings in the evening assembly, Shri Harikrishna Maharaj (Swamishri’s Thakorji) was going to be honoured by a few devotees. Thereafter, flowers petals would be showered upon the devotees as part of the Holi celebration. In spite of the announcement that the devotees who were to honour Thakorji should come first, things went awry. The reason being that when a few people sitting in the front row got up, the rest also stood up and jostled towards the stage to take

the first opportunity of being showered with petals.

The volunteers made efforts to control the chaotic situation and soon things became near normal. Furthermore, the contraption used for blowing the flower petals broke down. So, the swamis on the stage started showering the petals with their hands. During this harrowing time Swamishri was gently smiling and lovingly casting his divine gaze upon the devotees as they filed passed. When the celebration concluded Swamishri smilingly asked for the microphone and said, “All those young and old, who filed passed were very happy and joyous! Some even stumbled and fell, but they too were happy.”

Then, as Swamishri was returning to his residence he shared, “There was joy in all.” Kothari Gunnidhi Swami was perplexed and asked, “Swamishri, I don’t understand how you saw joy in all the prevailing commotion and indiscipline! What is the reason behind your joy?”

Swamishri replied emphatically, “All are *muktas*.”

Uttamyogi Swami asked, “In spite of you being inclined upon and insistent about discipline, yet you were happy!”

Swamishri revealed, “When one perceives all to be *muktas* one experiences joy even when they create an uncomfortable situation.”

Swamishri’s divine perception for all is reflected by his ever-joyful state.

NO MENTAL BURDENS

16, Pune

Abhayjivan Swami, the pujari of the BAPS mandir in Pune, was showing Swamishri the newly made crown and other ornaments for Thakorji. Swamishri took the crown in his hand and worringly commented, “Oh, how heavy it is!”

Jnanvatsal Swami said, “More than the crown’s weight is a title’s burden – ‘Pragat Brahmaswarup!’”

Swamishri responded with a smile and replied, “For someone else, but not even an iota for me!”

Jnanvatsal Swami probed, “Not even the

slightest?”

Swamishri revealed, “No. I have left everything upon Maharaj and Swami. They are the all-doers, so why should I worry!”

Jnanvatsal Swami stated, “An 85-year-old who has such a responsibility like yours would never be able to sleep. It’s a great thing that you can sleep soundly.”

Shrutipriya Swami added, “He goes to sleep the moment he lies down.”

Swamishri smilingly said, “I can sleep in any place.”

MARCH

MOKSHA

10, Tithal

Shivang Rao, a *satsangi* youth, came to seek Swamishri’s blessings on his birthday. He asked, “Swami, my birthday gift!”

Swamishri smiled and replied, “*Moksha*.”

The Gunatit Satpurnush gifts ultimate *moksha* to spiritual aspirants.

A STAUNCH OBSERVER OF NIYAMS

18, Bhavnagar

Somprakash Swami narrated an incident of Swamishri when the former was a youth working in a diamond polishing unit. “In 1974, I had invited Mahant Swami to sanctify the diamond polishing unit where I worked. It was morning time. Many had gathered for his darshan. Then, suddenly someone cried aloud, ‘There’s a small girl here; the swamis will have to fast!’

“Once the home visits [*padhramanis*] were over it was lunchtime. But Mahant Swami did not sit down to have lunch. I realized then that Swamishri had decided to fast. Now the fact was that no girl had touched him, but because of the commotion and words uttered by someone Swamishri had decided to fast. I requested him and even cried before him, telling him to have lunch. But Swamishri did not budge in his resolve. So, I too decided to fast, but Swamishri explained

to me, “We sadhus have to abide by our *niyams*, so we have to fast, but you can take your lunch.”

That day, Swamishri resolutely observed a fast even though there was no breach in his *niyams*.

HUMILITY PERSONIFIED

29, Sarangpur

Swamishri was travelling in a golf cart towards his residence in Pramukh Udyan. An attendant swami asked Swamishri, “On arriving daily at the mandir for darshan you bowed and paid respects to the sadhus’ footwear arranged by the

steps. Then, while you were on your way to the puja hall to do puja, you also bowed down to the footwear belonging to the devotees. So, were you pleased or did you bow down because they were arranged in a disciplined manner?”

Swamishri naturally replied, “Both.”

Then, the attendant swami enthusiastically expressed, “You bowed down to them!”

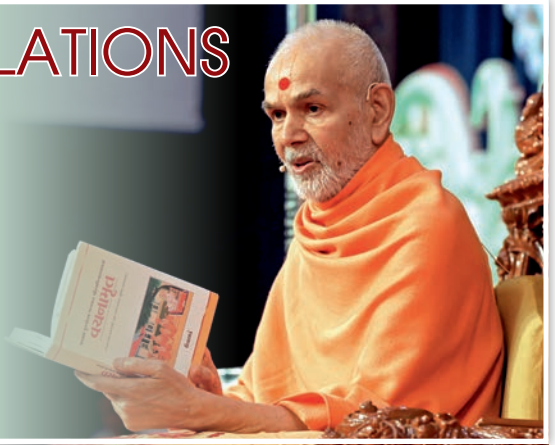
Swamishri responded with glory towards all, “I want to touch the dust of their feet.”

Swamishri’s humility touched and inspired all. ♦

ANSWERS AND REVELATIONS

January to April 2019

When questions were posed to Mahant Swami Maharaj he revealed his spiritual understanding, perspective and sometimes his own spiritual state. Let us see some of his fascinating answers and revelations



JANUARY

■ A divine soul is one that realizes its faults (*avguns*), whereas one who is devilish sees the faults in others.

■ The measure of whether your satsang is ripe or unripe lies in your perceiving virtues or faults in others. (2 Mumbai)

■ One who indulges in the pleasures of the physical body is a pauper, no matter how great he may be. However, when a person behaves as *atmarup* he is of a different type altogether.

(16, Surat)

■ Someone asked Swamishri, “Who are you?” Swamishri smiled and said, “Sadhu.” “But tell us your real form.” “Ekantik Sadhu,” replied Swamishri.

(21, Surat)

FEBRUARY

Q. Mahant Swami Maharaj was asked, “What should we do to please you?”

A. “Consolidate *agna* and *upasana* [in one-self], which is not a small thing. In them everything is included. With these two wings one can fly to Akshardham.”

■ The essence of the whole Vachanamrut is to spiritually associate with Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami and the Sant. (1, Mahelav)

MARCH

■ There are benefits in remaining humble and great losses in becoming arrogant. (1 Selvas)

■ To be the humblest servant of servants of devotees is the safest and secured path. (7, Tithal)

■ When there is one-thousandth part of ego

in oneself it still spoils everything. It makes one's life topsy-turvy.

■ Arrogance distorts one's inclinations and thoughts. But when one does satsang humbly one progresses further and further.

■ True greatness lies in seeing the virtues of others and one's own faults. (9, Tithal)

■ One who wears saffron clothes may not be a renunciant (*tyagi*). However, one who is inclined towards austerity and renunciation is a true renunciant.

■ In spite of whatever difficulties you have, you'll remain happy by having spiritual understanding and *upasana*. (3, Mahelav)

■ One who serves the God-realized Sadhu with body, mind and speech experiences the highest peace. He remains ever cool and peaceful even in extremely difficult times. (22, Sankari)

■ When one's mind becomes pure one experiences wonder and joy in all activities. (24, Sankari)

■ Believe that 'I want to be good and the best'. By bearing this in mind and doing all your work, you will be able to progress tremendously. (25, Sankari)

■ By seeing the virtues of others one experiences peace, whereas by looking at others' faults one experiences inner turmoil.

■ Like we search for faults in others we should look for our own faults. See our own faults only but never appreciate our own virtues. (28 Selvas)

Q. Om Desai was studying in 12th Science and wished to become a doctor. He asked Swamishri, "Bless me and say some inspiring words so that I can get mental strength."

A. Swamishri replied, "I can!" (14, Navsari)

Q. Brahmavatsal Swami asked Swamishri, "According to the Vachanamrut and your discourse 'Bhagwan is specially pleased by observing austerities'. But what is the reason behind that?"

A. Swamishri revealed, "One's thoughts remain more engaged in Bhagwan." (15, Navsari)

Q. Gunmanan Swami asked Swamishri, "What should we do to attain the divine state of Bhagatji Maharaj?"

A. Swamishri replied, "Have resolute *upasana* and *agna*. Be firm in *agna*. There is no need for anything else. Everything else will follow thereafter." (20, Sarangpur)

Q. Mitbhai asked Swamishri, "You sprayed us with the colour of faith [*nishtha*], but what should we do to increase that colour of faith?"

A. Swamishri replied briefly, "*Agn*a [follow the instructions]." (22, Sarangpur)

Q. An eight year old boy named Kavish Barot of Chicago asked Swamishri, "You seem to be like Bhagwan, so are you Bhagwan?"

A. Swamishri candidly replied, "No. I'm a servant of Bhagwan." (24, Sarangpur)

■ You have to learn from satsang to bow down to others and not make others bow down to you. Furthermore, understand others to be greater than you, and believe yourself to be insignificant.

■ Do not do anything that ignites hatred and controversies. Understand others' glory (*mahima*). Understand yourself to be inferior and others to be superior. Thus, all spiritual endeavours (*sadhanas*) are included in this. (31, Sarangpur) ◆

From Swamishri's daily report in Gujarati by Sadhu Brahmavatsaldas.
Translation of excerpts by Sadhu Vivekjiandas



Guru Purnima Celebration

16 July 2019, Bochasan

On 16 July 2019, the Guru Purnima celebration was held in Bochasan in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj. On this day, countless Hindus offer obeisances to their gurus. Veda Vyas is revered today as the *adi* guru for his seminal contribution of the shastras he wrote and compiled.

The Guru Purnima celebration was held at the Swaminarayan Baug near the BAPS mandir, Bochasan. The assembly commenced at 8.30 a.m. with *dhun* and prayers. The colourful stage backdrop included the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Guru Parampara. The assembly was themed on Bhagwan Swaminarayan's teachings from the Vachanamrut about the virtues of the Gunatit Sant. Speeches by swamis and *sadguru* swamis on the virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj were interlaced with brief thematic dances by children and youths. The programme was as follows:

- Bhaktisagar Swami: The glory and significance of Guru Purnima.
- Adarshjivan Swami: Gunatitanand Swami,

the ideal guru.

- Atmaswarup Swami: Bhagatji Maharaj's equanimity.
- Anandswarup Swami: Shastriji Maharaj's divine virtues.
- Viveksagar Swami: Pramukh Swami Maharaj's tolerance and self-control.
- Tyagvallabh Swami: How to serve and associate with the guru.
- *Pushpanjali* ritual to offer respects to Mahant Swami Maharaj.
- Satsang publications in Gujarati by Swaminarayan Aksharpith were inaugurated by Swamishri and a *sadguru* swami:
 - Bhakti in the Vachanamrut: Bhaktisagar Swami.
 - The relation of Bhakta-Bhagwan in the Vachanamrut: Shrutiprakash Swami.
 - The personality of the *paramhansas* from the Vachanamrut: Madhurvadan Swami.
 - Uniqueness of the Vachanamrut: Jnananand Swami.



- Vachanamrut for Youths: Jnannayan Swami.
- Video publication of Mahant Swami Maharaj's inspiring incidents on baps.org website.
- Biography on Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Part 2: Adarshjivan Swami.
- Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami talked about the equanimity of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Finally, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the mammoth assembly, "We believe in offering devotion to the manifest form of God. Do not think less of the bhakti you offer, because you have the association of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Swami Bapa [Pramukh Swami Maharaj] did so much for us. He spent every second of his life serving others. He wrote a letter to a devotee from a railway platform, spoke on the phone to countless and did many other things. Now it is for us to do something for him.

"We must also understand how fortunate we are by virtue of our association with Maharaj. If we don't, then the loss is ours. The attainment [*prapti*] we have is worth billions of rupees and the worldly things we have, like a home, etc., is

worth two paise. Thus, we must feel spiritually joyful and strong and understand our association with Maharaj."

Finally, Swamishri and the *sadguru* swamis performed *arti*.

More than 50,000 devotees from India and abroad offered their respects to *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj and dispersed with servings of *prasad* in a packed dish.

LUNAR ECLIPSE SABHA

From 1.30 a.m. to 4.30 a.m., Swamishri attended the all-night vigil *sabha* during the lunar eclipse (*grahan*), praying, doing bhajan and listening to discourses by the *sadguru* swamis. Youths of the BAPS Chhatralayas also performed wonderful skits with moral and spiritual messages. A *kirtan-antakshari* between swamis charged the assembly with devotion and joy.

Finally, in his blessings, Swamishri stressed, "We have heard talks tonight which were good, humorous and informative, but if we take *abhav-avgun* of others then whatever we have heard would go in vain. Always see and imbibe the virtues of all."

In all, over 500 swamis and 28,000 devotees attended the *grahan* assembly. ♦

Tribute and Prayers for Param Pujya Swami Satyamitranand Giriji Maharaj

25 June 2019

“I am deeply saddened by the passing away of Param Pujya Swami Satyamitranand Giriji Maharaj, who attained *mahasamadhi* on the morning of 25 June 2019.



The passing of Padma Bhushan Swami Satyamitranand Giriji Maharaj is a tremendous loss for India and the world. His love for humanity was not limited in any narrow confines and his vision of the Bharat Mata Mandir in Haridwar reflects his worldview. His services to the tribals and poor will continue to inspire many.

Swami Satyamitranand Giriji Maharaj had met His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj many times, and both shared a profound friendship and mutual respect for each other as spiritual leaders. I pay respectful homage and tributes to the pious soul of Param Pujya Swami Satyamitranand Giriji Maharaj.”

On behalf of the
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha
Sadhu Keshavjivandas
(Mahant Swami Maharaj)

CHATURMAS NIYAMS

12 July to 19 October 2019

As instructed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Shikshapatri and by the wish of *guruhari* Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj, devotees should undertake extra spiritual observances during the four holy months of Chaturmas. This year, Chaturmas is from 12 July 2019 (Ashadh *sud* 11) to 8 November 2019 (Kartak *sud* 11). To please Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj, the following extra observances should be undertaken:

Reading

The following books should be read throughout the year:

1. *Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj*, Part 1.
2. *Jeva Me Nirakhiya Re*, 4... (*Divine Memories*, Part 4) (Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj's divine memories of Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj.)
3. Publications for the Vachanamrut Bicentenary year (1819–2019).

Austerities

- One month *dharna-parna*, *chandrayan*, etc. or *ektana* during the month of Shravan (1 to 30 August 2019).

Listening

- Daily listen to 7–10 minutes of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's incidents and blessings.
- Daily listen to one track for two months.

Darshan

- Video darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, 7–10 minutes daily to commemorate his Centenary Celebrations (1921–2021).

Devotion

- Daily turn an extra five *malas*. Perform extra *dandvats*, *pradakshinas*, etc. as per one's capacity.
- Inspire one friend to join satsang, such that they daily apply *tilak-chandlo* and perform puja.
- Contemplate for five minutes every day on the *mahima* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj – his virtues, work and divine form.

Gun Kathan

- Every week, narrate in person or via letter, email or social media, one incident of Pramukh Swami Maharaj to as many relatives and friends as possible.

Family

- Conduct *ghar-sabha*: gather your family to read about, listen to, have darshan of and contemplate on our guru.
- Once a month, for one year, invite a family to your *ghar sabha*. (Invite the same family every month, not new families each time.)
- Inspire one family to start conducting their own *ghar sabha*.

Note: During Chaturmas, devotees should not eat brinjals, white and red radish, sugarcane and *mogri*.



TRIBUTE

PUJYA BHAGVATPRIYA SWAMI, KOLKATA

Passed Away: 29 May 2019, Age: 80 years

On 29 May 2019, the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha lost a wise, virtuous and senior saint, Pujya Bhagvatpriya Swami, who passed away in Kolkata.

Pujya Bhagvatpriya Swami was born in the Bhawanipore area of Kolkata on 13 June 1939. Thereafter, his family moved to Mumbai. His family were staunch *satsangis* and frequently associated with Shastriji Maharaj. At the age of 10, he had the darshan of Shastriji Maharaj at the bungalow of Shri Gulzarilal Nanda and also earned Shastriji Maharaj's blessings by singing a kirtan in his puja.

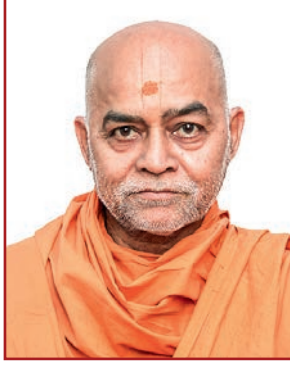
In 1960, he was initiated by Yogiji Maharaj and was fondly respected as one the 'Nine Yogeshwars'. His *parshad* name was Anupam Bhagat. In 1970, he accompanied Yogiji Maharaj on his overseas satsang tour to Africa and UK. As instructed by Yogiji Maharaj, he studied Sanskrit for 15 years in Mumbai and earned a PhD.

In 1974, by the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he moved to Sarangpur to serve as the first teacher in the Sant Training Centre and teach music, Sanskrit, shastras, *sampradayik* history and other subjects. He also stayed for some time in Gondal and strengthened satsang in the nearby villages.

In 1981, on the occasion of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's bicentenary, Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave him the *bhagvati diksha* and named him Bhagvatpriya Swami.

In 1985, Pramukh Swami Maharaj posted him to the BAPS Mandir in Kolkata, where he served as the mahant till his last breath.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj used to respectfully address him as 'guru' and throughout the Satsang,



he was known as 'Guru Swami'. He was very fond of kirtans and was constantly engaged in reading and contemplation. Throughout his 60 years as a sadhu, he lived a regular pious routine as per the commands of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He was very introspective and never criticized others or gossiped.

In the past, he had suffered from oesophageal cancer, but with Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings he recovered. He suffered from several illnesses, yet never complained. He would always say that God knows everything and the only way to be happy is to accept and live by his wish.

On 29 May 2019, at 5.30 a.m., he was preparing to perform his daily puja, when his breathing rate increased. Within minutes, his eyes closed, he said 'Jai Swaminarayan' and passed away to Akshardham.

Immediately, Mahant Swami Maharaj was informed. He chanted the *dhun* and gesturing with his hand said, "Maharaj has seated him in Akshardham." Swamishri paid tribute to him saying, "We took *diksha* together. Since he became a sadhu, he lived a regular devotional life and never lapsed in the vows of a sadhu. For years as per the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he lived far away in Kolkata, but never once lapsed in his *niyams*. He was very dedicated. Whatever task he was allotted, he did with total dedication and never sought the limelight. He lived a simple and saintly life."

As per the wish of Mahant Swami Maharaj, Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami travelled from Mumbai to perform his final rites. ♦

INDIA

SHILANYAS CEREMONY FOR NEW BAPS MANDIR

11 May 2019, Kurukshetra, Haryana



Kurukshetra is a city in the state of Haryana in North India and is also known as the 'Land of the Bhagavad Gita'. Swarupanand Swami, a *paramhansa* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan was also from Kurukshetra.

Shri Gulzarilal Nanda, a loyal devotee of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj and twice caretaker Prime Minister of India, founded the Kurukshetra Vikas Samiti, now known as the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB). During that time there was a temple of Katyayani Devi in the middle of the Brahma Sarovar, where Shri Gulzarilal Nanda placed the painted *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and guru Shastriji Maharaj and to this date *pujan* of these *murtis* is still performed there.

Over the years Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Mahant Swami Maharaj and other BAPS swamis have travelled regularly to many places in Haryana to conduct satsang assemblies, visit the homes of devotees and nurture satsang. With the growth of satsang activities the need for a mandir arose.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony for the new BAPS Mandir in Kurukshetra took place in the esteemed presence of Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pujya Gyananand Swamiji of Gita Gyan Shodh Sansthan and Anandswarup Swami. The Vedic Shilanyas Ceremony began with the Shri Swaminarayan Mahapuja, after which the main foundation stones were laid into position in the central foundation area. Thereafter, after the rituals were completed, the many devotees from Kurukshetra and surrounding villages who had attended the Shilanyas Ceremony also laid bricks in the foundation. In the subsequent celebration assembly Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Anandswarup Swami addressed the devotees and well-wishers.

Previously, on 16 April 2019 in Gandhinagar, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj had performed the *pujan* of the main *shilas* that were placed in the foundation area.

MURTI-PRATISHTHA OF NEW BAPS MANDIR 22-24 May 2019, Sirohi



Three days of celebrations marked the inauguration of the fifth BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Rajasthan.

On the evening of 22 May, a programme of bhajans was presented by the famous devotional singer of Rajasthan Shri Prakash Mali (Mumbai)

and Yogiprem Swami.

On the morning of 23 May, a grand procession of the *murtis* to be consecrated in the new *hari* mandir took place through the streets of Sirohi. This *nagar-yatra* included more than 900 women carrying *kalashes* in traditional celebratory style on their heads and many other colourful presentations by children and youths. In the afternoon, a Vishwashanti Mahayagna for World Peace was performed in which more than 650 devotees took part. On the morning of 24 May, Anandswarup Swami consecrated the *murtis* in the new mandir to the accompaniment of Vedic verses. More than 5,000 devotees and well-wishers, from the local community and from various cities of Rajasthan devoutly took part.

Thereafter, a celebratory assembly was held in which the chief guest was the Maharaja Saheb of Sirohi, Padmashri Shri Raghuversinhji.

CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA

21 June 2019, Statue of Unity, Gujarat



The United Nations have declared 21 June as the annual ‘International Day of Yoga’.

This year marked the 5th annual International Day of Yoga, which the Government of Gujarat celebrated at important places of history, heritage, culture and religion. One historic celebration took place at the recently inaugurated Statue of Unity on the banks of the Narmada River. The Governments of India and Gujarat requested BAPS to help plan and coordinate the event wherein over 1,000 sadhus would perform yoga

in synchrony. Senior religious leaders and sadhus from various organizations were invited to participate in the event, showcasing unity. 500 BAPS swamis participated in the yogic exercises.

Brahmavihari Swami addressed the assembly on behalf of BAPS and all religious leaders and sadhus. He highlighted that Parabrahman Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself had mastered eight-fold yoga and had taught it to Swaminarayan sadhus. Pramukh Swami Maharaj regularly practised yoga and, currently, Mahant Swami Maharaj, also practises yoga and inspires others to do so as well.”

He added, “We thank our Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi for taking the lead on raising global awareness of the benefits of yoga. We also remember His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, whose constant prayers and perseverance led to the completion of the Narmada Dam project.

“Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj has a vision of harmony and unity. Swamiji always says that the world is troubled by disharmony and the solution is unity.”

Shri Vijaybhai Rupani, Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat, reiterated, “Yoga in reality unites the body, mind and soul with God. Hence, the Statue of Unity has been blessed by the holy presence and prayers of hundreds of enlightened sadhus.”

HOME MINISTER SHRI AMIT SHAH SEEKS BLESSINGS OF MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ

4 July 2019, Ahmedabad



Union Home Minister of India, Shri Amit

Shah, visited the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad, to receive the blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The Home Minister was warmly welcomed at the main gate of the mandir by Brahmavihari Swami and Kothari Atmakirti Swami.

Thereafter, Shri Amit Shah was garlanded and welcomed by Mahant Swami Maharaj in the presence of Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and other senior BAPS swamis.

Then, prayers for national peace and harmony were offered by reciting the Vedic Shanti Path. Afterwards, Shri Amit Shah performed the *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. Swamishri blessed Shri Amitbhai by applying a *chandlo* to his forehead. Then, Swamishri tied a *nadachhadi* to his wrist, praying for the protection of all. The sadhus also recited special Mahamrutunjay Mantras as Swamishri showered him with sanctified rice grains and blessed him to lead the nation, saying, “May both you and our beloved Prime Minister continue to unite our nation and its people to create a new India. May you attain the progress of 20 years in the next 5 years.”

While Shri Amitbhai fondly and emotionally remembered Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Swamishri presented him a special holy relic of Pramukh Swami Maharaj along with a rosary. Also, to commemorate the auspicious Rath Yatra celebration, Swamishri presented Shri Amitbhai with a model of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on his horse, Rojho, and blessed, “May India gallop towards progress in leaps and bounds.”

YUVA SEVAK SABHA KARYAKAR SHIBIR **13–14 July 2019, Ahmedabad**

A total of about 650 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from throughout Gujarat who serve as *sanchalaks* and assistant *sanchalaks* and manage the Yuva Sevak Sabha (YSS) *mandals* attended this special *shibir* organized by the Satsang Activities Central Office.

The YSS was launched August 2018. It is a



monthly gathering of selected youths for a deeper understanding of satsang.

At present 3,340 *yuvaks* attend the 122 YSS *yuvak mandals* and 2,476 *yuvatis* attend the 86 YSS *yuvati mandals*.

The *shibir* provided guidance for the *sanchalaks* to help them better perform their duties and to inspire them in their personal spirituality.

The *shibir* featured speeches and presentations by senior and learned swamis, and experienced senior volunteers, discussions, audio-visual presentations, teamwork sessions and other activities.

UK

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONVENTION **1–2 June 2019, Yarnfield Park Conference Centre in Stone, Staffordshire**



More than 500 volunteers from the UK, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland gathered for an enlightening leadership convention. The event aptly coincided with the start of National Volunteers Week in the UK.

The convention helped volunteers to

strengthen their spiritual understanding and personal devotion as they serve other devotees in their respective centres.

Swamis shared their spiritual wisdom through motivational discourses drawing upon the teachings of Hindu shastras, Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the exemplary lives of the Gunatit gurus who have served with compassion, humility and uncompromising dedication.

Innovative video presentations, personal reflections, interactive workshops and question-answer sessions further guided the volunteers.

In an inspiring video message to the convention, Mahant Swami Maharaj emphasized the importance of imbibing unity, strengthening one's personal satsang and fostering a higher level of spiritual understanding.

PARENTING SEMINAR

17–18 May 2019, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London



In the presence of Pujya Doctor Swami, a national parenting seminar was held, focusing on effective parenting through unity in the home. The seminar featured a series of personal testimonies from families, video presentations, discourses from swamis and enlightening panel discussions. Topics included: the balance between professional and family life, salient sources of happiness that children have experienced from spirituality and time with their families, importance of quality time with children, *ghar sabha* and teachings from the Ramayan as ideals of family unity.

Doctor Swami encouraged the parents to

inculcate values and noble principles in children from birth, and emphasized the necessity of children participating in spiritual activities in the home. He also stressed the importance of a trusting bond between children, parents and grandparents, encouraging elders to guide their children, while stressing that they listen to the needs and aspirations of the younger generations.

ASIA PACIFIC

VICHARAN BY PUJYA KOTHARI SWAMI AND SADHUS

16 February to 15 May 2019



Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami (Kothari Swami) and a group of sadhus visited BAPS centres in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji to nurture satsang and traditional values within devotees and well-wishers.

During this Satsang tour, Pujya Kothari Swami gave inspiring discourses every morning, while the evening satsang assemblies were themed on various topics, such as, Samjan, Shravan, Swadharma, Seva and others and featured speeches by sadhus, skits by children and youths, videos and question-answer sessions with Pujya Kothari Swami.

Other highlights of the *vicharan* included the inauguration of the new BAPS Mandir in Griffith, NSW, Australia, Satsang Shibirs and Bal Shibirs, a special cultural programme titled 'Pratibimb', on the subject of value-based parenting, kirtan bhakti performances and family outings.

Also, Pujya Kothari Swami and the sadhus were warmly welcomed during their visits to the Parliament Houses in Melbourne, Canberra and

Adelaide, where they prayed for peace and prosperity for all.

This three-month Satsang Vicharan by Pujya Kothari Swami and the sadhus deepened the understanding of satsang in devotees and inspired them to strengthen the practice of spirituality and devotion in their daily lives.

BAPS WALKATHON **27 May 2019, Sydney**



Over 700 community members of all ages

came with their families to participate in the annual BAPS Walkathon in Sydney, themed 'Building a Better Community, One Step at a Time'. The event was held at the picturesque Sydney International Regatta Centre in Penrith at the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

This year, the annual BAPS Walkathon raised over \$14,000. The funds raised were donated to Nepean Public Hospital, Plumpton High School and Samarpan Inc. to support their public health, education and disability services to the community.

State government Minister Dr. Geoff Lee and Penrith council members, Cllr Karen McKeown and Cllr Todd Carney, supported and encouraged all the participants by congratulating them on their service and desire to give back to the community. ♦

NEW PUBLICATION



BRAHMASWARUP SHRI PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

Part 2

The newly inaugurated second part of Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj's detailed biography, published by Swaminarayan Aksharpith, covers the period from 1971 to 1974. It is full of inspiring stories that give an insight into the divine, saintly life of Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The book also contains QR codes that link to 40 specially edited videos, providing around 400 minutes of historic footage that elucidate the text.

Part 2 is now available from all BAPS bookstalls. Also, the MP3 audiobook version of Part 1 can be downloaded from www.baps.org free of charge.

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Inspired by: HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj



Blessed by: HH Mahant Swami Maharaj



1



2

3



CELEBRATIONS OF RATH YATRA FESTIVAL AND INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA

4 July 2019 and 21 June 2019

On 4 July 2019, Mahant Swami Maharaj festively celebrated Rath Yatra at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Ahmedabad in the presence of thousands of swamis and devotees.

1. Mahant Swami Maharaj and senior swamis pull the chariot with the *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Thereafter, a colourful *rath yatra* procession was carried out in the mandir precincts.

2. On 21 June 2019, the International Day of Yoga was celebrated by Mahant Swami Maharaj and thousands of swamis and devotees at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Ahmedabad and all BAPS centres.

3. More than 350 BAPS swamis participated in the International Day of Yoga celebration held near the Statue of Unity on the banks of River Narmada. The programme was organized by the Government of Gujarat and held in the presence of Chief Minister Shri Vijaybhai Rupani, state ministers, swamis and others.



GURU PURNIMA CELEBRATION IN BOCHASAN

16 July 2019

On 16 July 2019, the Guru Purnima Celebration was held in Bochasan in the divine presence of HH Mahant Swami Maharaj from 8.30 to 11.30 a.m. The speeches by *sadguru* and senior swamis were themed on the divine virtues of the guru as taught by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Vachanamrut.

In his blessings, Mahant Swami Maharaj said, "We believe in offering devotion to the manifest form of God. Pramukh Swami Maharaj did so much for us. He spent every second of his life serving others."

1. Swamishri and *sadguru* swamis on the celebration stage.
2. Puja Tyagvallabh Swami garlands Swamishri.
- 3 & 4. Swamishri blesses the mammoth celebration assembly

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