

# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

March–April 2019

Annual Subscription ₹ 80/-



**Grand BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Dhuliya**

Inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj,  
the Mandir was consecrated by Mahant Swami Maharaj



## MURTIS OF THE NEW BAPS SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR, DHULIYA



Brahmaswarup Bhagatiji Maharaj



Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj



Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj



Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj



Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj



Shri Sita-Ram



Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj



Shri Shiv-Parvati



Shri Lakshmi-Narayan



Shri Vithoba-Rukmini





BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Dhuliya

# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

March–April 2019, Vol. 42, No. 2



Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj

**Founder:** HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
**Editor:** Sadhu Swayamprakashdas  
**Contributors:** Sadhu Vivekjiandas, Sadhu Amrutvijaydas  
**Designer:** Sadhu Shrijiswarupdas  
**Published & Printed by:** Swaminarayan Aksharpath, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad - 380004, India

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Outside India (By Air Mail)			India
	Rupees	Pounds	US Dollars	Rupees
1 Year	630	9	14	80
2 Years	1300	18	28	150
3 Years	1900	27	42	220

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

## CONTENTS

- 4 Shri Hari Saves Vasta Khachar
- 7 History of Swaminarayan Satsang in Khandesh
- 15 Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Vicharan in Khandesh
- 27 Murti-Pratishtha Celebrations, Dhuliya
- 32 Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Dhuliya
- 34 The Vachanamrut, An Introduction, Part 1
- 38 The Fool of All Fools
- 39 Mahant Swami Maharaj's Vicharan
- 52 Living with Swamishri
- 56 40 Universities Honour Mahamahopadhyaya Swami Bhadreshdasji
- 57 Brahmavihari Swami Awarded Honorary Doctorate
- 58 Global Conference of Human Fraternity
- 60 BAPS News
- 66 Annual Summary of BAPS Community Services, 2018: North America
- 69 New English Publications
- 70 New Audio & Video Publications

# SHRI HARI SAVES VASTA KHACHAR

*Jiva Khachar and Budha Dhadhal poison Vasta Khachar's mind with negative thoughts about Shri Hari. In spite of Maharaj cautioning Vasta Khachar, the latter succumbs to Jiva Khachar's evil designs...*



## VASTA KHACHAR'S TROUBLED MIND

Budha Dhadhal's poisonous words whipped up a raging tempest in Vasta Khachar's mind. Budha Dhadhal spewed more poison, "Bapu, Shri Hari utters nectarine words to impress the Kathis and spread his own glory. Now, if all the Kathis do not become wary of his sugar-coated words Maharaj will take over everyone's homes and properties without fighting a single battle. Vasta Bapu, think of how much he has burdened you financially! He extravagantly celebrated Diwali and Annakut at your place, and invited the devotees to increase his own glory."

Budha Dhadhal's words evoked a series of images of Diwali and Annakut in Vasta Khachar's mind: There were thousands of devotees and sadhus. Maharaj was seated on a platform giving darshan and discourses and the devotees were loudly hailing his name. Vasta thought, "I bore the monetary burden and Shri Hari took the advantage of enhancing his fame and popularity!"

Vasta's mind was in a deadly churn. Jiva Khachar discerned the turmoil on Vasta's countenance and decided to halt their onslaught for a while. He winked at Budha Dhadhal to remain quiet.

In the evening, Maharaj sent a *parshad* to call Vasta Khachar. The *parshad* told him, "Shri Hari has said that your stay has been arranged at Dada's *darbar*. So, come with your horse." When the *parshad* departed Jiva Khachar shot a critical remark, "Did you hear that! Maharaj does not approve of your stay here."

Vasta Khachar was unable to respond to

Jiva Bapu and looked downwards. Shortly thereafter he said, "I think I should go to Dada Khachar's *darbar*."

Instantly, Budha Dhadhal fired another scathing salvo, "Then go ahead if you wish to get more taste of his chicanery and lose more ground, but mark my words!"

## HIS SOUL WILL FALL FROM MOKSHA

Vasta Khachar walked his way to Dada Khachar's *darbar*. Shri Hari asked him, "Have you come with your horse or not?"

Vasta Khachar replied, "Tomorrow, I wish to return to Kariyani. So, I felt why change my lodgings for a day." Then, looking at Maharaj from the side of his eyes, he saw the saddened face of Shri Hari. Maharaj felt that Vasta's soul would definitely fall from the path of *moksha*. And, Jiva Khachar's servant, Budha Dhadhal, would not hesitate in pouring more poison in Vasta's heart.

Shri Hari sighed and said, "Well, because of your social ties with Jiva Khachar you may do what pleases you. But, do not be taken in by his and Budha Dhadhal's talks."

Shri Hari's words aroused the poison that had been poured in his heart. Vasta Khachar found Budha Dhadhal's words to be true. He felt Shri Hari was spreading his tentacles around him. He thus remained quiet. Silence reigned for a short while. Then, Vasta Khachar got up and said, "I'm going."

Muktanand Swami, Mulji Brahmachari, Dada Khachar and others simply looked on. When Vasta had left, Maharaj expressed, "Poison has been poured in his heart. Now, whatever little

that is left will be poured by Budha Dhadhal. Then, Vasta Khachar will not come for my darshan at Dada's *darbar*."

The next day, Vasta Khachar did not come to meet Maharaj and left directly for Kariyani. When Maharaj got news of this he was saddened further.

Vasta was the nephew of Macha Khachar, who was a pillar of the *sampradaya*. Through his uncle's association Vasta had grown in importance as a leading devotee. His soul had absorbed the true hues of satsang. However, due to the vitiating effects of bad company (*kusang*) he was spoiling his *moksha*. Shri Hari said, "To die physically is not only death. When a devotee of God falls from the path of *moksha* or *ekantik* dharma it is considered to be his death." All those who were seated there understood the crux of Maharaj's words.

#### **VASTA KHACHAR'S SOUL BELONGS TO US**

Shortly thereafter, Maharaj told Muktanand Swami, "Swami, Vasta Khachar's soul belongs to us. Can we allow him to go to *narak*?" So saying, Maharaj told Bhaguji, his attendant, "I want to go to Kariyani early tomorrow morning. Tell Dada Khachar to get ready as well."

#### **BHAKTI IS NOT TO DECEIVE THE GULLIBLE**

Early next morning, Shri Hari left for Kariyani with Muktanand Swami, two swamis, Dada Khachar and a few *parshads*. Shri Hari had not declared to anyone in the *darbar* where they were going. Maharaj reached Kariyani by dawn. At that time, Vasta Khachar had completed his morning ablutions. He was standing before a recess in the wall where he had kept the imprints of the *murtis* of Dharma-Bhakti, Maharaj and Nar-Narayan Dev given to him by Shri Hari for daily worship. But his mind was in turmoil. His mind was caught in a whirl of thoughts: There must be Jiva Khachar's approval in whatever Budha Dhadhal had said. After all, Jiva Khachar is an intelligent person. The King of Bhavnagar also honours him. Thus, whatever he believes cannot be false.

Vasta Khachar's mind was vacillating between whether to give up worshipping the *murtis* or

to continue his daily bhakti rituals like a naïve devotee? By that time, Shri Hari walked into his home and omnisciently declared, "Vasta Khachar, these bhakti rituals are not to entrap those who are gullible or naïve. They liberate those who are trapped in *maya*."

Vasta Khachar looked behind him with surprise on seeing Maharaj standing before him. Vasta questioned himself, "According to Budha Dhadhal's talks is Maharaj a wizard who has come to take away the Kathis' properties or is he more than that?"

Shri Hari looked at Vasta Khachar and smiled, saying, "Bapu, if my intentions were to confiscate the small amounts of land and property of the Kathis then why did I reject the offer of an entire kingdom made by the queen of Dharampur? You may have two to five villages as your kingdom, whereas the queen owned 500 villages."

Vasta Khachar felt a jolt within on hearing Shri Hari's words. He thought, "Maharaj is reading aloud the thoughts in my mind. Is he a Brahmin sorcerer or someone special?" Vasta Khachar could not decide what to make of it all.

#### **BLESS ME THAT I NEVER PERCEIVE MANUSHYABHAV IN YOU**

Shriji Maharaj came out into the courtyard and sat on a cot. Muktanand Swami and other swamis sat before him. Dada Khachar also sat nearby. Vasta Khachar slowly came out from his room. His face and eyes were downcast. He folded his hands and apologized, "Maharaj, forgive me for my fault. Budha Dhadhal clouded my mind. I also saw Jiva Khachar's approval in what Budha Dhadhal was saying. Maharaj, I am merely a *jiva*, unlettered and unable to comprehend the depths of spiritual knowledge. Thus, my thoughts swayed and strayed. But you have saved me. You have grasped my inner thoughts and given me solutions. Now my heart is free and clear. Maharaj, bless me that I never perceive *manushyabhav* in you."

Shri Hari was pleased with Vasta Khachar's confession and regrets. He blessed, "Vasta Bapu,

one cannot overcome perceiving *manushyabhav* through blessings. For that, one has to nurture spiritual understanding and spiritual association (*samagam*), and avoid bad company (*kusang*). I had told you not to go, but you were unable to refuse him because of your family ties.”

“Yes, Maharaj, I disobeyed your instruction and went there. Then, Budha Dhadhal’s words pierced my mind.” Vasta Khachar spoke out of remorse, with tears streaming from his eyes and hands folded in humility and submission.

### ARE ALL THESE KATHIS FOOLS?

Dada Khachar had been listening quietly all the while. However, when Vasta Bapu mentioned what Budha Dhadhal had said about Maharaj, Dada Khachar bristled, “Vasta! You anchored your trust in none other than the vile Budha Dhadhal. Is Sura Bapu naive? Is Dada Bapu of Botad a fool! All these Kathis – Valas, Khumans and Khachars – are all happy and joyous due to their association with Shriji Maharaj, whereas the divinity of Shri Hari in your heart has been eclipsed. What a blunder you have made! Till now, Budha Dhadhal had eaten so much sanctified food served by Maharaj. In spite of this, he became averse when Shri Hari did not take him along for lunch at Dharmakul’s house. From then on he gave up serving Maharaj and Jiva Khachar gave him refuge. You trusted the words of such a worthless person and perceived *manushyabhav* in Maharaj!”

Vasta Khachar listened to Dada’s rebuke with his head downwards. Then, he admitted, “Dada, what you say is true. Buddha Dhadhal said to me that Maharaj was going to give away the homes of the Kathis to Dharmakul.”

Muktanand Swami was amazed with how *kusang* could wreck a person in only 24 hours. He thought that years of effort had gone into consolidating Vasta’s spiritual faith and yet it crumbled so easily! He told Vasta Khachar, “Vasta Bapu, one should give up one’s relationship with someone who speaks against Maharaj, no matter how strong your affiliation with him may be. Otherwise, your

*moksha* will be spoilt and you will lose the purpose of having got this human birth!”

### DO NOT SHAME VASTA

Vasta Khachar’s heart burned with the fires of repentance. He was once a brave Kathi, but now bereft of spiritual brilliance he had lost the sheen on his face. Then Maharaj addressed him, “Bapu Vasta Khachar!”

Vasta Khachar immediately urged, “Maharaj, you should not address me in such a formal manner. Call me Vasta.”

Shri Hari smiled and remarked, “Now, your heart has been cleansed. Whenever you come again to Gadhpur you must reside in the *darbar* and not anywhere else. And if you do go elsewhere stay with someone of strong faith. Then, your satsang will be sustained and flourish without any obstacles.” Thereafter, Shri Hari stood up to leave. Vasta Khachar humbly prayed, “Maharaj, have lunch here before you depart.” Shri Hari politely refused, “Not today. I’ve not informed anyone of my departure in Gadhada, so if I’m late in getting there everyone will become anxious and start searching for me.”

Shri Hari then adjusted the saddle on Manki, mounted it and pulled the reins to spur Manki towards Gadhada. Muktanand Swami, swamis and Dada Khachar also bid adieu to Vasta Khachar.

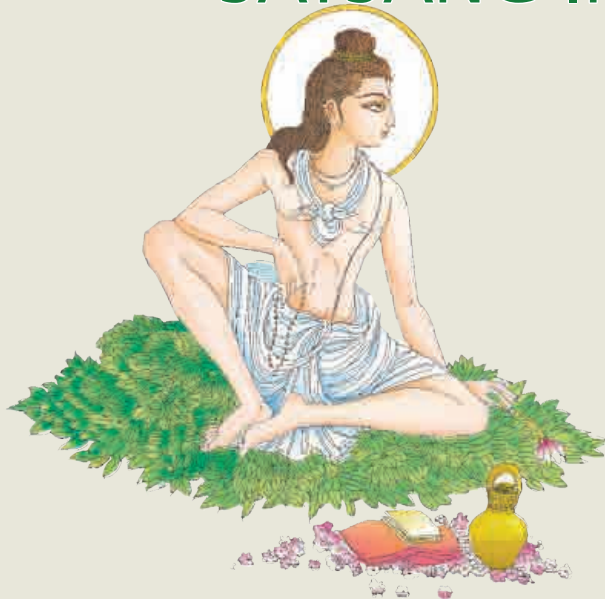
When Shri Hari returned to Gadhada it was nearly noontime. Everyone in Dada’s *darbar* was wondering where Maharaj had gone. Mukund Brahmachari, Maharaj’s personal attendant, was pacing to and fro from Akshar Ordi to Dada’s *darbar*. However, when Maharaj arrived everyone felt at ease. Then, everyone started enquiring from Maharaj and his entourage about where they had been. Maharaj had instructed beforehand to those who were with him not to disclose any details or mention Vasta Khachar’s name. ♦

(Contd. in next issue)

Translated from the Gujarati text of  
*Bhagwan Swaminarayan* authored by Shri H.T. Dave



# HISTORY OF SWAMINARAYAN SATSANG IN KHANDESH



**T**he region from Songadh to Buranpur in the northwest of Maharashtra between Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh is known as 'Khandesh'. The Khandesh region contains the districts of Dhuliya (Dhule), Jalgaon and Nandurbar. In the past, the population comprised predominantly of Ahirs and cowherds. Thus, since the residents were cowherds the area was also known as 'Kānāno Desh' or 'Kandesh'. Subsequently it became known as 'Khandesh'. This name became prevalent, since during the time of Muslim rule, the headquarters of a 'Khan Sahab' was also located here.

Dhuliya is located near the National Highway 3 which leads from Mumbai to Agra and National Highway 6 which leads towards Surat. Such easy accessibility adds to Dhuliya's importance.

In the Rig Veda, this region is called Rishikh Desh. It is believed that in Pauranic times, the ashrams of Agastya Rishi and Karna Muni were located here in this region. People also believe that Valmiki's ashram was in Valjhari, a town 40 *gau* (approx. 120 km) from Dhuliya.

Maharashtra is also the land of revered devotees like Jnaneshwar, Tukaram, Namdev and others.

Over 200 years ago, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, in the form of Nilkanth Varni sanctified the Khandesh region of Maharashtra.

Thereafter, Bhagwan Swaminarayan's succession of Gunatit gurus continued to bless the region and strengthen satsang in the faithful.

The devotees of Khandesh are renowned for their dedication and sacrifice, ardent devotion, pure understanding of *upasana* and other virtues.

To commemorate the *murti-pratishtha* of the new *shikharbaddha* mandir in Dhuliya, inspired by Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj and inaugurated by Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj, the following is a brief account of the history of Swaminarayan satsang in the Khandesh region.

## BHAGWAN SWAMINARAYAN AND KHANDESH

Having began his India-wide pilgrimage at the age of 11, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, then known as Nilkanth Varni, was in Khandesh and other parts of Maharashtra from November 1798 to January 1799. Aged 17, he visited Pandharpur, Pune, Buranpur, Malegaon, Nasik, Tryambakeshwar and other places.

In particular, details of his stay in Malegaon have been recorded in the texts of the Sampradaya. Oral traditions also reveal that he bathed in Panjra River in Dhuliya and stayed on its banks for several days. And it is near this sanctified location that the new BAPS *shikharbaddha* mandir has been built.

## SWAMINARAYAN SADHUS IN KHANDESH

Bhagwan Swaminarayan instructed many of his sadhus to travel in Khandesh to inspire satsang. As a result, many devotees regularly undertook the long journey to Gujarat to attend the *murti-pratishtha* of Vartal mandir, Fuldol and other celebrations. This has been documented in the *Haricharitamrut Sagar* and other texts of the Sampradaya.

In Prakaran 12 of the *Bhaktachintamani*, Nishkulanand Swami has presented a list of the main devotees of Khandesh. The service rendered by devotees of Khandesh has also been noted. Once, when Bhagwan Swaminarayan was in Surat, he suffered from a severe toothache, which required removal of the affected tooth. The procedure was performed by a Vaidya from Khandesh. That holy tooth was preserved and is now on display in Akshardham, Gandhinagar.

As directed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Sadguru Muktanand Swami, Sadguru Krupanand Swami, Sadguru Manjukeshanand Swami and others frequently toured in Khandesh to inspire satsang. Adbhutanand Swami and his group of 60 sadhus, we well as Vignananand Swami, Nishkulanand Swami, Kidisakhi (Bhagvadanand Swami: singer) and others nurtured satsang in this region.

## AKSHARBRAHMAN GUNATITANAND SWAMI IN KHANDESH

The texts of the Sampradaya reveal that Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami frequently visited the Khandesh region, both as a member of the groups of Muktanand Swami and Krupanand Swami and also with his own group of sadhus. His discourses attracted many devotees from near and far and strengthened their satsang. The devotees of Khandesh were so drawn to Gunatitanand



Swami's discourses that they often travelled to Junagadh to listen to them.

Once, after the Jal-Jhilani festival, Swami set off on a satsang tour of the towns and villages surrounding Junagadh. At that time, three Vanik devotees from Khandesh reached Junagadh. Learning that Gunatitanand Swami was out, they decided to track him down. So, they went

from Una to Babariyawad to Bagasra and eventually caught up with him in Samadhiyala. They had Gunatitanand Swami's darshan, and prostrated to him. Swami stood up, embraced all three devotees and blessed them by placing his hands on their heads. He then sat with them at length and enquired about their well-being and remembered other devotees and their families from their village.

These Vanik devotees were astonished by Swami's recollection of their family details. But this was the result of Swami's previous extensive *vicharan* in that region. Thereafter, Swami made appropriate arrangements for them to accompany him for a few days before they returned home (*Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami: Life and Work*, Part 1, p. 378).

## BHAGATJI MAHARAJ AND KHANDESH

Bhagatji Maharaj also had a special spiritual rapport with the devotees of Khandesh. Although he never visited the region in person, he nurtured and strengthened their satsang and spirituality.

There are many accounts of how Bhagatji Maharaj used his divine powers to bless the Khandesh devotees. The following incident is an example.

The sister of Uttam Patel, a resident of Sakora village, was possessed by an evil spirit that prevented her from leading a normal life. Frustrated, Uttam Patel went to Dhuliya to seek the guidance of Vignandas Swami, a



highly respected disciple-saint of Bhagatji Maharaj.

Vignandas Swami told him to take his sister with a group of devotees who were going to Mahuva to see Bhagatji Maharaj. So, with his sister and brother-in-law, Uttam Patel went with Kevaldas of Khandesh and Naranbhai Chhanabhai of Palana to Mahuva.

On reaching, they went to Mahuva mandir, where Bhagatji Maharaj was discoursing. Sitting the sister on the mandir steps, the men entered. Seeing them, Bhagatji Maharaj stood up and immediately went out on to the mandir steps. Seeing Bhagatji Maharaj, the sister fell at his feet. Bhagatji Maharaj asked the devotees who she was and what she wanted. The Khandesh devotees said, “She is the sister of Uttam Patel and is possessed by an evil spirit.” Bhagatji Maharaj gazed at her, sent her into samadhi and he entered her body. All the evil spirits exited. The sister became elated and began to behave like Bhagatji Maharaj. She was initiated into satsang and then the Khandesh devotees returned home.

After they returned home, the sister engaged continuously in devotion. Due to Bhagatji Maharaj having pervaded her, all her actions became like Bhagatji Maharaj’s – she proclaimed ‘I am Bhagatji’ and would talk, walk, discourse, sit, meditate and do everything like he did. Everyone realized that Bhagatji Maharaj had entered her and that through her he was present in Khandesh. So, devotees in the villages welcomed her to visit their homes. She would reveal people’s inner thoughts and fulfil their wishes. She would bless them and give excellent discourses on the Vachanamrut. The devotees of Khandesh were delighted to have such spiritual inspiration at their doorstep.

As a result of this, devotees in many villages developed firm conviction in Bhagatji Maharaj



and groups set off every month to go to Mahuva. In Dhuliya, Vignandas Swami, a staunch disciple of Bhagatji Maharaj, and his sadhus, also discoursed about Bhagatji Maharaj’s glory. Thus, in contrast to the opposition in Saurashtra, the faith in Akshar-Purushottam here was strengthened.

The devotees of Khandesh sent the money to pay for Bhagatji Maharaj’s medications. But Bhagatji Maharaj would use the money for building the mandir. So, the Khandesh devotees would send separate amounts – for the construction of the mandir and for his medications.

The devotees of Khandesh went to Mahuva for Bhagatji Maharaj’s darshan in his final days on earth. At that time, a plague had afflicted the region. So, as per the arrangements by the British, everyone was quarantined in tents on the outskirts of the town, given medications and only allowed to enter after 24 hours.

When the devotees of Khandesh and Vaso reached Bhagatji Maharaj, he said, “I was going to go to Dham yesterday, but have stayed till today for you. So do darshan.” Only after they had left did Bhagatji Maharaj pass away to Akshardham. Such was their love for him.

Bhagatji Maharaj displayed his divine powers to the devotees of Khandesh on innumerable occasions. Shastriji Maharaj often spoke about them in his discourses.

He said, “Bhagatji visited this place three times in a divine form. Once, at Bhukhandas Patel’s house, there was a child crying when the ladies were busy in their work while singing bhajans in praise of Bhagatji Maharaj. Bhagatji appeared in a divine form and quietened the child by rocking its cradle. On another occasion, Bhagatji gave darshan in the eastern compound and bathed at the well that is situated there. On the third occasion,



he possessed one of the ladies<sup>1</sup> here and toured the villages through her. Bhagatji Maharaj saw the affection the devotees here possessed and he had granted them a lot of bliss.”

### SHASTRIJI MAHARAJ AND KHANDESH

Shastriji Maharaj visited Khandesh on numerous occasions. These visits have been documented in his detailed biography and his letter correspondence with the devotees of Khandesh.

Even before establishing the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha in 1907 CE (V.S. 1962), while he was a sadhu in the Vartal diocese, Shastriji Maharaj visited Khandesh.

In the *Swaminarayan Prakash* (Issue 5, 1939), the editor writes, “Shastriji Maharaj visited Khandesh every three years.” He had a lot of affinity for the devotees there. On 11 December 1946, he wrote in a letter to them:

“To come there, I and five others will prepare and go to Ahmedabad and reach Atladara on Friday. But it is not possible to know the wish of Swami-Maharaj. Last night I had arthritic pain in the whole of my right leg. Still, we didn’t change our minds and left. The other leg was also painful. When we got off the cart, I could not walk at all. I was carried to the home of the teacher. Now they will carry me onto the train to reach Ahmedabad and then Atladara. Hopefully, even if

there is some improvement and I can walk, then I will certainly come. But due to this I will not be able to come, so be happy. Ashabhai and others will come. That’s all. If the pain goes, then the five of us will definitely come.”

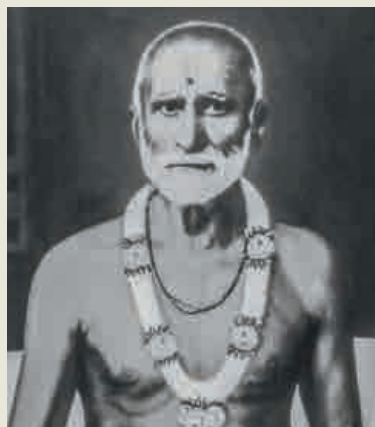
Such was Shastriji Maharaj’s desire to please the devotees despite his painful predicament.

Among the illustrious sadhus of his group, the saintly Purushottamdas Swami was, in fact, a native of Khandesh. He was reverently known as ‘Brahmarshi’. Vignandas Swami frequently visited Khandesh and strengthened the faith in Akshar-Purushottam and Bhagatji Maharaj among the devotees. Nirgundas Swami also visited regularly to nurture the satsang. Describing the efforts of Shastriji Maharaj and his sadhus in nurturing the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* in Khandesh and the dedication of the devotees, Shri Harshadbhai T. Dave writes in the detailed biography of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj:

“About 300 years ago, Patels from Charotar had migrated to Khandesh. Their Gujarati culture mixed with the Marathi. Even their language had developed in that way. The visits of the sadhus had its impact and the residents developed the virtues of satsang. However, the groups of sadhus who had helped these virtues bloom, eventually stopped visiting. And soon, Satsang in Khandesh declined.

“During that time, the sadhus of the old mandir in Vartal could not bear the increasing popularity of Pragji Bhakta spreading in Gujarat through Vignandas Swami. Therefore, with the intention to stop him spreading this glory, they sent Vignandas Swami and his group to Khandesh. However, wherever musk, saffron and sandalwood are placed their fragrance cannot remain concealed. Vignandas Swami planted the seeds of the pure knowledge of Akshar-Purushottam there and began to spread the glory of Pragji Bhakta as

1. This female devotee was Nimdibai. Her native place was Mohadi. Her father was Vedubhai and her brother was Bhushan. She was married to Vanubhai and her in-laws were from Sakore. In her old age, Nimdibai became blind in both eyes.



(L to R) Vignandas Swami, Purushottamdas Swami and Nirgundas Swami: three stalwart saints who endured many difficulties and contributed enormously to the growth of satsang in the Khandesh region

someone who propagates the *upasana* and is the form of [Gunatitanand] Swami. Satsang began to spread in Khandesh through the strength of the pure conviction in his words and everyone began to make their way towards Mahuva because of this. Pragji Bhakta gave darshan in a divine form in Khandesh and countless aspirants were drawn to him. The result was that the Akshar-Purushottam faith spread in many villages of Khandesh.

“Thus, the Vartal authorities sent Vignandas Swami from Khandesh to Chhapaiya. And, as a result, the Satsang in Khandesh did not get the nourishment it needed. However, after leaving Vartal, Shastriji Maharaj often visited Khandesh with Nirgundas Swami’s group and pleased the devotees with his discourses. Nirgundas Swami endured many difficulties and his visits inspired the devotees to start attending the festivals in Bochasan. They developed the conviction that after Pragji Bhakta, Shriji Maharaj was now present through Shastriji Maharaj. This conviction inspired them and they decided to call Shastriji Maharaj to Khandesh and celebrate a festival there. Nirgundas Swami enthusiastically arranged the Vasant Panchami festival on 5 February 1919 (V.S. 1975) in Mohadi.

“The devotees of Khandesh were delighted with the opportunity to offer devotion to guru Shastriji Maharaj. They included Vitthal Mahajan, Dhanji Mahajan and Laldas Mahajan. They wrote letters to Japi, Kusumbe, Varkheda, Nardana

and Dhuliya to invite everyone to the festival in Mohadi. Shastriji Maharaj and the sadhus went all the way from the outskirts to Vitthal Mahajan’s house where Swamishri’s accommodation had been arranged. They walked while jovially singing and reached their destination after two hours.

“On the morning of Vasant Panchami in Mohadi, the marquee was packed with devotees from Khandesh. Swamishri asked for a small, low flat platform and decorated it himself. Then, he placed the Shikshapatri on it and worshipped it using sandalwood paste, rice and flowers. He performed the *arti* and then revealed, ‘Today is the birth anniversary of the Shikshapatri, the birth anniversary of Nishkulanand Swami and it is also my birth anniversary today.’ Having said this, he explained the glory of the Shikshapatri and narrated Nishkulanand Swami’s life story as well. The devotees then performed Swamishri’s *pujan* and honoured him on his 54th birthday.

“He himself then made *vedmi* and offered them in Thakorji’s *thal*. When ‘Vasudev Hare’ was called out, the devotees sat in lines to eat. He dipped the *vedmi* in ghee and served the devotees. Thus, Shastriji Maharaj’s birthday was celebrated for the first time and this privilege was enjoyed by the devotees of Khandesh.

“Drawn by the affection of the devotees, Shastriji Maharaj had come to Khandesh to bestow them the bliss of satsang. The devotees



of Khandesh had great affection for Shastriji Maharaj. Swamishri had come to this region because of their deep affection and absolute faith, and to give them the bliss of satsang.

Swamishri stayed in Mohadi for a few days and bestowed the devotees the bliss of satsang. Swamishri used to bathe with the sadhus and devotees at the well by the tree in the east where Bhagatji had given darshan in a divine form. While they bathed, Swamishri would narrate historic episodes from the lives of Bhagatji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami and Shriji Maharaj.

“Swamishri departed from Mohadi and proceeded with the sadhus and local devotees to Japi. Swamishri stopped his touring of other villages and visited there due to the request of Dhondu Master. Nirgundas Swami had arrived there two days earlier in order to make preparations. He had made all the arrangements in the mandir. The land in the mandir’s compound was very uneven and rocky. Dhondu Master’s sister had spread sand everywhere so that Swamishri would not be hurt by any stones and so that they could collect the dust sanctified by the touch of his feet.

“Swamishri entered the mandir and prepared his resting area. Then, he took Mohan Bhagat’s hand and went to the rear of the mandir to the bathroom. Soft sand had been spread there as well. Swamishri asked Mohan Bhagat, ‘What is this soft substance they have spread everywhere?’

“Mohan Bhagat replied, ‘Dhondu Master has spread this soft sand so that the stones don’t hurt your feet.’

“Swamishri understood the significance behind this. He asked him, ‘What does he want?’

“Mohan Bhagat said, ‘Bapa! His sister is wealthy; however, she has been married for 12 years and despite that she does not have a child.’

“Swamishri then said, ‘Hasn’t Nirgundas Swami given them a vow to follow?’

“No one knew about what Nirgundas Swami had said, except for Dhondu Bhagat, his sister and Mohan Bhagat. Mohan Bhagat had experienced



At this place in Mohadi, Shastriji Maharaj revealed his birthday. Mahant Swami Maharaj celebrates the 100th anniversary of that occasion on 10 February 2019

Swamishri’s omniscience on several occasions and so he was not surprised. He wanted Swamishri’s stamp of approval on Nirgundas Swami’s words. He patiently replied, ‘Yes, he has given it.’

“Swamishri then said, ‘Maharaj will fulfil Nirgundas Swami’s words within 12 months.’ And Shastriji Maharaj’s words came to be true.”

## DEDICATION OF THE DEVOTEES OF KHANDESH

“The devotees of Khandesh dedicated everything to Shastriji Maharaj. Chedibai of Mohadi learnt that money was needed for the *kalashes* of Sarangpur mandir. Chedibai immediately removed all the jewellery and ornaments she was wearing and told Mohan Bhagat, ‘Please tell Swami Bapa that I do not have cash at hand, but I am giving my jewellery. If this is insufficient for the *kalashes*, then I will give more jewellery.’

“Mohan Bhagat gave Swamishri all her jewellery and her message. Swamishri was very pleased to hear this and said, ‘The *murti* of Ranchhodraiji [in Dakor] was equivalent to the weight of the nose ring of Gangabai, the wife of the devotee Bodana. There are plenty of ornaments here. From these we will be able to arrange for the *kalashes* and many other things as well.’

“Mohan Bhagat gave Chedibai this message. When she heard this, a stream of tears flowed from her eyes realizing that Shastriji Maharaj had taken her small sacrifice to be worth more.

“Shastriji Maharaj had acquired 10,000 *vighas* of land in some villages of central Gujarat – Shrijipura, Purushottampura, Radhu, Swamipura, Narayanpura and others – for the upkeep of the BAPS. The devotees of Khandesh paid for the taxes on the land.

“Himlalbhai of Varkheda in Khandesh, Dhondu Master of Japi and Nanu Mahajan requested Purushottam Swami to invite Swamishri to celebrate the Vasant festival in Khandesh. Purushottam Swami saw their affection and wrote to Swamishri. However, Swamishri replied to this letter saying, ‘It is not possible to come at the moment.’ All the devotees were very disappointed by this. They asked Purushottam Swami to write another letter to Swamishri. However, Purushottam Swami told them, ‘We shouldn’t keep this type of insistence. We should do according to his wishes. Despite that, if your feelings are genuine, then Swamishri will give you darshan tomorrow. All of you pray for that.’

“Swamishri’s letter that he would not be able to come had arrived on 8 January 1922 (*Posh sud* 10, V.S. 1978). [On the following day,] Purushottam Swami was giving discourses on the morning of *ekadashi*. Suddenly, Nirgundas Swami, Nilkanthdas Swami, Shrikrishna Swami, Keshavlalbhai from Anand, Purushottam Jhorabhai, Manibhai Naranbhai, Motibhai Nathabhai and Ishwarbhai Prabhudas arrived at the mandir and said, ‘Jai Swaminarayan.’ The sadhus had their belongings on their shoulders and they were tired from travelling. However, one could see the joy on their faces when they saw Purushottam Swami and their fatigue disappeared. Nirgundas Swami announced, ‘Let’s go, Swami has arrived.’ Now there was no end to their joy.

“They all went outside. All the sadhus and devotees prostrated as Swamishri dismounted from his cart. Swamishri was holding a stick in one hand. Then, holding Ishwarbhai’s hand, Swamishri went to the mandir. Swamishri had Thakorji’s darshan and offered his prostrations.

Nilkanth Swami brought a pitcher of water. Swamishri washed his face and feet, before sitting down on his seat. Swamishri then said, ‘Due to the affection you all have and because of Purushottam Swami’s insistence, I could not stay away. I already wrote a letter saying no, but Nirgundas Swami said that we should go and so we left immediately and came here.’

“Swamishri travelled to Varkheda and Mohadi with the sadhus and then went to Kusumbe, where Narsinh Bhakta, who was like Narsinh Mehta, was overjoyed! Whether it be day or night, he would take cymbals in his hands, tie jingle bell anklets and sing bhajans whenever Swamishri instructed.

“He used to compose bhajans on Swamishri’s glory, on devotion and knowledge and through these entertain Swamishri and the audience. This poet-devotee was always indifferent towards the world because of his intense renunciation. He would chant ‘Swami, Swami’ all the time and would spend his time in discoursing and spreading knowledge. He had deep love for Swamishri.

“Swamishri departed from Kusumbe and went to Sakora and Songir. He stayed for three days in Songir. Having given everyone there the bliss of his darshan and association, they all prepared to go to Bochasana via Nardana.

“They were all eager that Swamishri celebrate the Vasant Panchami festival in Khandesh. However, they realized it wasn’t Swamishri’s wish. As he departed, they stood there with folded hands and with tears in their eyes. The pain of this separation was unbearable for Narsinh Bhakta of Kusumbe. This 30-year-old youth believed Swamishri to be his life. The mere thought that Swamishri was now going to proceed to Gujarat triggered an unbearable anguish in his heart. He could not bear the intense pain of separation from Swamishri and left his body within one week!

“All the Khandesh devotees knew that this was all due to Nirgundas Swami’s efforts. Nirgundas Swami would visit Khandesh every year. He would discourse to everyone and keep

their satsang ever fresh. He had also explained Swamishri's boundless greatness to everyone. The devotees there firmly believed that Shriji Maharaj was ever manifest in Swamishri. They knew they could never repay their debt to Nirgundas Swami for his hard work. They would stand there with hands folded, ever ready in his service.

"Swamishri knew that these devotees were very loving and they treated Nirgundas Swami as a member of their family. There were countless such incidents highlighting the love of the Khandesh devotees. People were astounded in the way Swamishri had spiritually nourished them through his *vrutti*, despite them being physically far away from him.

"One special quality of Nirgundas Swami was that he would never lapse in his reverence to guru Shastriji Maharaj. He would never consider himself to be the doer in any work. He would offer it all to Swamishri's grace. Even in a rush, he would never forget this awareness or say, 'Go, this will work out,' but would say, 'It will become better through the blessings of Swami Shastriji Maharaj.' From his words it was evident to everyone that he possessed devotion with an understanding of Swamishri's glory.

"Swamishri arrived in Japi and stayed in the mandir. The evening assembly was held in the mandir. Many of the Khandeshi devotees who had toured the villages of Mohadi and Japi with Swamishri were seated in the assembly in front of him, as were the sadhus.

"In this way, Swamishri travelled through the villages of Japi, Kusumbe, Galvada and Varkheda. He then left Khandesh to go towards Gujarat, in order to make his way to Sarangpur to celebrate the Fagan *sud* 15 festival (16 March 1919)."

In addition to Purushottamdas Swami other devotees from Khandesh who gave dedicated life-long service to the BAPS include Mohan Bhagat, who served tirelessly during the construction of the Akshar Deri in Gondal, and Chindo Bhagat, who spent many years serving in Bochasan and

earned the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

When Shastriji Maharaj visited Khandesh, talks and discussions on the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* continued throughout the night. In a letter to the devotees of Africa written on 7 December 1938 from Varkheda in Khandesh, Shastriji Maharaj gave a detailed reasoning of the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*.

Shastriji Maharaj often remembered the devotees of Khandesh for their faith, devotion and services. Nirgundas Swami noted this in a letter to Kuberdas of Bhavnagar in 1916.

Yogiji Maharaj visited Khandesh only once in his life, in 1919 with Shastriji Maharaj.

In 1931, during his *vicharan* in Khandesh, Purushottamdas Swami fell severely ill. So, he returned to Bochasan, where Yogiji Maharaj served him with great affection. However, on Magshar *vad* 4 (28 December 1931), Purushottamdas Swami passed away to Akshardham. Yogiji Maharaj had a small memorial shrine built there at his cremation spot.

Even though Yogiji Maharaj only visited Khandesh once, his saintliness had a profound and inspiring impact on the devotees.

## PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ AND KHANDESH

Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited Khandesh on many occasions and inspired many activities for the benefit of the devotees and other residents of the region. The pinnacle was the pink stone *shikharbaddha* mandir, for which he himself performed the *pujan* of the foundation *shilas* (4 March 2013, Ahmedabad) and the first pillars (24 July 2014, Sarangpur). He also performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the new mandir (6 August 2015, Sarangpur).

Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj has visited Khandesh 21 times and nurtured the faith, devotion and service of the region's devotees. ♦

*Translated from Swaminarayan Prakash, March 2019  
by Sadhu Amrutvijaydas*





In 1976, Pramukh Swami Maharaj travels in an oxen cart at night to please the devotees of a village in Khandesh

# PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN IN KHANDESH

## INTRODUCTION

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's relentless efforts and loving bonds for the poor devotees of Khandesh in Maharashtra was unique and historic. The devotees of Khandesh are meek-natured and exuberant in spiritual faith. They are held in high esteem because of their unique contributions and dedication during BAPS's nascent and challenging stages. They have been lauded as one of the foundational pillars of the organization. Their contributions in physical effort, mind and wealth gained them the blessings and *rajipo* of Shastriji Maharaj. Because of their diehard *paksh* for and faith in Shastriji Maharaj they also gained the favour of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Thus, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's arduous *vicharan* in Khandesh, spanning over six decades, can fill volumes. We present some glimpses of his unparalleled *vicharan* in Khandesh.

1. From December 1953 to 10 February 1954, for about two-and-a-half months, Pramukh Swami Maharaj travelled with Mota Swami (Yagnapriya Swami) in an oxen



Courtesy: www.mapsofindia.com

cart in Khandesh. Accompanying them were Mukhi Swami, Hira Bhagat and Purushottam Bhagat of Anand.

During this first *vicharan* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Khandesh he asked the devotees in a satsang assembly in Songir, “How many were present during the *murti-pratishtha* of Bochasan Mandir?” Sixteen devotees responded that they were present on the occasion in 1907.

2. Between 19 and 31 January 1976, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did *vicharan* in Khandesh with 20 swamis and devotees. Processions were carried out in all the villages. The devotees had taken photos with Pramukh Swami Maharaj during his visit to their homes.
3. Swamishri had sanctified the homes (*padhramanis*) of devotees during his visit between 2 and 4 December 1976. Shri Harshadbhai Dave was also present during this *vicharan*.
4. Swamishri sanctified Khandesh again from 13 to 17 May 1979. At that time he had travelled by road from Indore and reached Amalner at 1.15 a.m. During this *vicharan* Swamishri explained the glory of the pilgrim places to Durgeshbhai Dave and other devotees of London.
5. After arriving from his London *vicharan* to Mumbai in 1982, Swamishri left for Khandesh on the third day. From 2 to 8



May 1982, he travelled in the scorching heat of Khandesh. The swamis and devotees who were with him reminisce today about the discomforts and difficulties Swamishri had silently tolerated.

6. Swamishri visited Khandesh again from 16 to 20 January 1988 and performed the *bhumi puja* for a mandir in Amalner.
7. After celebrating the Amrut Mahotsav in December 1995, Swamishri travelled straight to Khandesh for *vicharan* between 4 and 10 January 1996. At that time Swamishri performed the *bhumi puja* of Dhuliya Chhatralaya. He also performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *hari* mandirs in Varkheda and Amalner. During this *vicharan* there were 44 swamis and devotees with Swamishri.
8. In 1998, Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *vicharan* in Khandesh would forever be remembered because he had disregarded the doctors’ instructions not to go due to





Whenever Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited the villages of Khandesh the devotees elatedly carried out processions, and arranged satsang assemblies, *parayans* and personal visits to their farms

his heart ailment. Swamishri travelled to Dhuliya and stayed there for two days, 18 and 19 June, and performed the *murti-pratishtha* of the *hari* mandir and opening ceremony of the Chhatralaya. Swamishri selflessly fulfilled the wishes of and pleased the devotees of Khandesh.

9. In 2003, after performing the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *shikharbaddha* mandir in New Delhi, Swamishri travelled to Dhuliya. From 12 to 21 February Swamishri visited the holy villages and recalled their historical and divine importance. He performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Varkheda, Japi, Songir, Mohadi, Galvada and Kusumbe. Swamishri also visited and sanctified the farm of Chhaba Master.

The ritual opening of Swaminarayan Chowk in Amalner and Pramukh Swami

Maharaj Marg in Dhuliya was held in Swamishri's presence. Swamis from North America and devotees from abroad had joined Swamishri during his visits to the sanctified villages.

## DISCOMFORTS AND DIFFICULTIES

The devotees of Khandesh still remember the difficulties and discomforts that Swamishri had to tolerate during his *vicharans* in Khandesh. Some excerpts are as follows:

1. Travelled to all the holy villages by oxen cart in spite of the bumpy and dusty roads.
2. Lived in small mud huts for eight days.
3. Bathed in rivers during the cold winter mornings or in farms by pulling water from wells. Answered nature's call in the open farms.
4. Cooked food on stoves fuelled by wood and thereafter scrubbed the pots and pans.





Swamishri personally visited the homes of devotees in Khandesh to bless them and strengthen satsang in their family



5. Amidst the blistering heat there were no electric lights and fans. The scourge of mosquitoes and bugs was prevalent in the poor villages. The local dialects and languages made communication challenging.

In spite of all these difficulties, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's efforts and zeal in his *vicharan* remained unflagging. The devotees welcomed him and celebrated his arrival like Diwali and Dashera. They prepared *rangolis* and lit oil lamps as if it was New Year's Day. Swamishri rejoiced in pleasing them.

The local devotees would decorate their carts and bathe their oxen, pierce lemons into their horns and then stick incense sticks into the lemons. Then they would invite Swamishri to sit in the decorative and fragrant oxen cart and carry out processions in all the villages. These celebratory scenes contrasted with Swamishi's grand processions on the

streets of London, New York, Chicago, Toronto and Nairobi. But for Pramukh Swami Maharaj it was all the same; in fact he enjoyed the presence of the poor devotees of Khandesh.

### EXHAUSTING VICHARAN

For the devotees of Khandesh, 19 January 1976 is firmly etched in their minds. On that morning, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Shahda village. Thereafter, he travelled to Khetiya village in Madhya Pradesh and then arrived in the afternoon at Dondaicha in Khandesh. By nighttime, he reached Songir. During this long *vicharan* from Madhya Pradesh to Maharashtra Swamishri had visited four villages. A satsang assembly was held at night in Songir. By the time the assembly concluded it was 11.30 p.m. Then, to fulfil a devotee's wish Swamishri gently stroked his cow's head and blessed it.

Swamishri fulfills the wishes of the devotees by visiting their homes





Swamishri pleased the devotees by sanctifying their homes, regardless of the pains and discomforts he had to face

In 1976, Ambalalbhai of Shahda carried out a procession of Swamishri in his village in an open tractor on a cold winter night. The pathway was illuminated with Petromax lamps. The procession consisted of two persons dancing ahead and two more following at the rear. In spite of this, Swamishri did not get bored or upset. The next day, Ambalalbhai insisted upon Swamishri to climb the stairs to his terrace and asked, “Can you see the water tank over there?” Swamishri replied, “Yes, I can see it.” Then Ambalalbhai said, “Now you’ll have to bless it from here. All the village people drink the water supplied from the water tank. Now bless it so that they all become *satsangis*.” Swamishri was pleased upon Ambalalbhai. Then, Ambalalbhai donated a piece of his land for the construction of a mandir. Today, by Swamishri’s grace, there is a *hari* mandir in Shahda. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was

touched by the loving bhakti of such devotees.

In 1982, three days after landing in Mumbai from his *vicharan* in England, Swamishri departed for Khandesh to do *vicharan* in the scorching summer month of May. On 3 May 1982, Pramukh Swami Maharaj departed from Dhuliya for satsang *vicharan*. The holy village of Varkheda was not in the itinerary but Swamishri included it. The heat was unbearable. The outages of electricity had rendered ceiling fans and coolants useless. After doing *pradhramanis*, Swamishri expressed a wish to visit Madhubhai Gajmal Patel’s home in nearby Japi village. The attendant swamis wished they should not go because of the severe, sapping summer heat. However, Swamishri insisted upon going to Japi. On reaching there, Swamishri came to Madhubhai’s house. The first sentence Swamishri uttered was, “We have come to fulfil your wish!” Madhubhai was elated on hearing this. The swamis

Swamishri sanctifies devotees’ homes and a well



accompanying Swamishri were perplexed and thought what Madhubhai's wish could be.

The answer to that question unfolded shortly thereafter: Two years before, Madhubhai had asked Swamishri in Mumbai about where to dig for a well in his farm. Swamishri asked him, "Which spot do you have in mind?" Madhubhai made a line drawing of his farm and made a spot on it. Swamishri suggested that he dig on any spot on the downward slope of his farm. In so doing, he struck an abundant source of water at only fifty feet. Madhubhai rejoiced and pledged that he would use the well water only after Swamishri came and drank it.

When Swamishri came to know of Madhubhai's pledge, he asked for the water to be sent to him. The water was offered to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri, and then the sanctified water was sent back to Madhubhai. But Madhubhai still continued observing his pledge. Thus, the all-knowing Swamishri arrived at Madhubhai's home to fulfil his pledge. Madhubhai was overwhelmed by Swamishri's effort and care in fulfilling the wish of a small devotee like him living in a non-descript and poor village of Khandesh.

On that same evening, Swamishri left Japi to return to Varkheda. A satsang assembly was arranged with oil lanterns because there was no electricity. Swamishri wrote letters in the lantern light. After completing the *cheshta* at 11.15 p.m., Swamishri retired for the night in the absence of electricity. But he could not sleep, so he got up and reposed a while later. But sleep still evaded him. It was 2.00 a.m. Jnanpriya Swami asked, "Swami, are you unable to sleep?"

Swamishri replied, "Yes, it's too hot!"

"Do you want to sleep outside?"

"Let us go..." And Swamishri got up. The terraces of homes in Varkheda were made of mud that was pounded to make it hard and strong. The terraces continuously stretched from one home to the next. Jnanpriya Swami spread their mattresses

on the terrace. When Swamishri lay down to sleep the wind stopped altogether. Subsequently, mosquitoes started biting them. So, Swamishri sat up. At that time, it started raining unexpectedly. So, Swamishri returned to his room. But he couldn't sleep.

At 3.30 a.m., Swamishri got up by himself and went to the terrace carrying a small potful of water in his hand. He walked along the terrace stretching all the way to the end of the street below. Swamishri was on his way to perform his morning ablutions.

Jnanpriya Swami had seen Swamishri climb up the stairs to the terrace. Thinking that Swamishri would return soon, he did not get up to follow him. Fifteen minutes elapsed and still Swamishri had not returned. So, Jnanpriya Swami came out of the house and switched on his torch to see whether anyone was coming from afar. But there was no one. Then, he woke Dharmacharan Swami and they both started searching on the terraces for twenty minutes. Swamishri was nowhere to be seen. Then all the sadhus were awakened and were told to search for Swamishri. They all searched in the entire village of Varkheda. On not finding Swamishri everyone was gravely worried, because, after his cataract operations he found it difficult to see without his spectacles. And, Swamishri had gone without his spectacles.

The sadhus then went searching towards the mandir built by the *paramhansas* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The mandir is located on the outskirts of Varkheda village. On seeing Swamishri approaching them with an empty pot the sadhus ran up to him and asked a barrage of questions, "Where did you go?" "You should have taken someone with you!" "It was dark and there are potholes; what if something had happened to you?" "There are wild animals and snakes here!" "We are at your service; you should have at least woken us up!"

Swamishri replied with a calm smile, "Where had I gone? See, I'd taken this pot with me."



Everyone broke out laughing. Then Swamishri explained, “Why should I trouble you by waking you up so early? I know this village like the back of my hand. So, I went [to answer nature’s call] by myself.”

Swamishri spoke the last words so naturally and straightforwardly that they reflected his love for the local devotees and his frequent visits.

Thereafter, Swamishri came to his lodging and sat down in a small area to take his bath. The cramped situation clearly portrayed the extent of the difficulties he had to face during his *vicharan* here.

Furthermore, he had not been able to unwind from the fatigue of his hectic schedules after his England *vicharan* and the subsequent jet lag. Before he could acclimatize in Mumbai from the cold weather of England he had rushed for his *vicharan* in Khandesh, where the temperature was 45°C. And, with the unscheduled meal times and rest hours during the Khandesh *vicharan* anyone’s health would be upset.

After his bath, Swamishri felt a little refreshed. Thereafter, he slept for a while, did his puja and left for Dhuliya. Such innumerable occasions occurred during his *vicharans* in Khandesh and other places.

## THE DEVOTEES OF KHANDESH

The local devotees used to ask Swamishri where to dig for water in their farms, where to arrange the front door of their homes, what type of crops they should farm and other things. For them, Swamishri was their advisor, guide and guru.

Atmaram Vaman, a devotee of Mohadi, did not have a child. With his advancing age this problem worried him. Eventually, he wrote a letter to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Swamishri replied and blessed, “You will get two sons like [Bhakta] Prahlad.” Atmaram Vaman was blessed with two sons: Prahlad, the eldest, practices as a doctor in Mumbai, and Ghanshyam is a professor in a college.

Swamishri also cared for the education of the devotees’ children in Khandesh, and that they also become financially stable and strong in satsang. So, he established a modern hostel (*chhatralaya*) in Dhuliya.

Once, Swamishri was travelling from Indore to Khandesh for *vicharan*. The driver was supposed to take the road to Amalner, but he inadvertently drove ahead and reached Paroda. Swamishri arrived in Amalner at 1.15 a.m. In spite of the delay and the exhausting journey, Swamishri was fresh and joyous. He never complained or got irritated when it got late, about the severe heat, when he had to walk long distances in a farm or in a narrow congested street, and when he had to stay in a small house or in the open. He never thought about his physical discomforts, pains and unscheduled, tiring programmes.

Today, many photographs of Swamishri’s *vicharan* in Khandesh testify to his care and love for the devotees. In one such photo taken in Songir, one can see the inimitable joy on Swamishri’s face while seated in a small open satsang assembly. One cannot forget the scene of Swamishri sitting in a satsang assembly in a narrow verandah of a six-classroom school in Japi. The photograph shows the ease with which Swamishri was seated. Swamishri had blessed and sanctified small villages and schools, schoolchildren, farmers and their farms, wells, homes and domestic animals in Khandesh. Swamishri rattled off the names of so many devotees and their forefathers of five generations. The reason being his frequent visits to their small, poor homes and the bonds he had forged with them.

Once, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Navsari (Gujarat). At that time a teenage *satsangi* boy came for darshan. He met Swamishri and took personal blessings and asked, “I come from Khandesh. Do you know me?”

Swamishri replied frankly, “No, I don’t know you. But, from which village do you come from?”

The boy replied, “I’m from Varkheda.”

Swamishri enquired, “What’s your father’s name?”

“Narendra.”

Instantly, Swamishri recited his forefathers’ names of five generations: “Narendra Vasant, Vasant Rupchand, Rupchand Shyamlal and Shyamlal Daga.” The boy was amazed by Swamishri’s profound bonds with his family.

In 2010, Swamishri was in Mumbai. A devotee from Khandesh came for darshan. Anandjivan Swami introduced him to Swamishri, “Bapa, he is Sonalal from Varkheda.” Swamishri gracefully looked at the devotee and called him, “Come near Sonalal.” Then he added, “The first house on the left in Varkheda is Sonalal’s house.”

Swamishri remembered the locations of countless devotees’ homes. This, needless to say, spoke amply about his heartfelt feelings and selfless love for them.

Whenever Swamishri saw the devotees of Khandesh during big festivals he would invariably recognize them and call them to him. Once, during a grand satsang assembly at the Cross Maidan in Mumbai, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was seated on the stage. He saw the devotees of Khandesh sitting far away, wearing topees and *dhotiyas*. He called them to come onto the stage. But the devotees came and stood below the front part of the stage. Immediately, Pramukh Swami Maharaj got down from his *sinhasan*, sat down on the stage floor before them and lovingly met them and enquired about them. At that time, the renowned litterateur Shri Harindrabhai Dave, who was seated on the stage, saw this and was deeply touched. He often recounted this occasion, saying that he had witnessed Pramukh Swami Maharaj’ deep love for the ordinary, rural devotees.

Once, Swamishri was on his way to the main stage of his birthday celebration. Amidst the large concourse of devotees that had gathered Swamishri saw a devotee ambling away in the distance. The devotee was stout, wearing a black topee, black vest and a *dhotiyu*. Swamishri

recognized who he was from his gait and dressing style. He called out loudly to him, “Oh, Chhaba Master, Chhaba Master!” two to three times. But the devotee was hard of hearing and he kept on walking ahead. On hearing Swamishri’s call, a volunteer ran upto him and said, “Swami Bapa is calling you.” When Chhaba Master looked back, he found Swamishri looking at him. So, he removed his topee and held it in his hand while humbly walking towards Swamishri. He came to Swamishri and declared, “Bapa, you called me from thousands of people!” Then, Chhaba Master’s eyes welled up with tears.

Once, Shivajibhai and Ramesh Bhandari of Kusumbe took their neighbours with them to see Akshardham in New Delhi. Coincidentally, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Delhi. When the devotees of Khandesh came for Swamishri’s personal darshan the swamis said, “The Kusumbe *mandal* has come.” Swamishri affectionately asked about them and also blessed them. As they were leaving Swamishri told them, “Tell my Jai Swaminarayan to Indubhai of Kusumbe.” Later, when Indubhai came to know of this he became emotional.

In 2001, Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s birthday celebration was held in Sankari. Thousands of devotees from India and abroad had arrived for the celebration. During that time the *murti-pratishtha* rituals for five *hari* mandirs of Khandesh were arranged beneath the mandir dome. Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* and then spoke standing for ten minutes while holding the microphone in his hand. He praised the sacrifice, dedication and bhakti of the devotees of Khandesh and mentioned their names and the names of each of the villages. Thereafter, while Swamishri was returning to his living quarters he saw Ramesh Bhandari of Khandesh. Swamishri asked him, “Why were you late? I didn’t see you during the *pratishtha* rituals! Did you arrive just now?”

Ramesh Bhandari said, “Yes Bapa. I was late.” Even amidst a large gathering, Swamishri had

noticed who was present or not and who was late. Such were his bonds with the devotees.

Eighty-five-year old Dhanraj Bapa of Mohadi had once come for Swamishri's darshan in Bharuch. Swamishri was residing at an aspirant's home. When Dhanraj Bapa arrived, Swamishri had finished lunch and was meeting well-wishers and devotees. The host and his wealthy guests were also present when Dhanraj Bapa entered. Despite his worn out *dhotiyu*, ordinary clothes, topee perched on his head, emaciated body and rustic appearance, Swamishri welcomed him with great love, "Come, Dhanrajbhai." Then Swamishri introduced him to the elite gathering, "He is my old friend. He profusely served Shastriji Maharaj. He is a good *bhagat*. He has a lot of *mahima*. He lives in Mohadi and is a Khandeshi. He is very affectionate."

Whenever Swamishri would see the devotees of Khandesh he always instructed the volunteers and organizers, "Allow them to come to me and look after their arrangements."

Once, Swamishri was at the Sankari mandir. Manilal Master of Varkheda, who was blind, came for Swamishri's blessings. Swamishri arranged his stay at Somabhai's bungalow. Here, Manilal fell down while walking without anyone's assistance and suffered a minor fracture. Daily, Swamishri enquired about his meals and told Kothari Prabhu Swami to spend whatever amount of money required for his treatment. Manilal Master was touched by Swamishri's care and concern for him.

In 1979, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had organized a Bal Adhiveshan in Vallabh Vidyanagar. Swamishri had conveyed that the children of *bal mandals* in Khandesh should also participate in the *adhiveshan*. He wrote a letter to Dhanrajbhai of Mohadi about the details of the *adhiveshan* and to bring the children to participate in Vidyanagar. Swamishri had also given details of what to bring with them. He wrote that every child should bring a torch and a small pot (*loto*) for drinking water.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, "We want

to inspire satsang in the whole of Khandesh."

## RESOLVE TO MAKE A MANDIR AND ITS HISTORY

Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the inspirer of the grand *shikharbaddha* Akshar-Purushottam Mandir in Dhuliya. Swamishri had declared during his visit to Dhuliya in 1976 that he would like to make a *shikharbaddha* mandir in Dhuliya. However, at that time there were only a few devotees, so the prospect of building even a *hari* mandir was remote. But Pramukh Swami Maharaj's repeated visits and *vicharan* led to the acquisition of land for a *chhatralaya* and a *hari* mandir in Dhuliya. In 1998, Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited Dhuliya, against the instructions of doctors, to perform the *murti-pratishtha* of the *hari* mandir and *chhatralaya*. In 1995, Swamishri inaugurated a beautiful *hari* mandir in Amalner. Then, with his blessings the construction of more *hari* mandirs in Khandesh began.

In 1980, the dearth of engineering colleges in Gujarat led many students from Gujarat to study in Dhuliya and other places. Pramukh Swami Maharaj heard during his *vicharan* in Dhuliya that Gujarati students were having problems with lodging and boarding. Similarly, students of Maharashtra and Khandesh, who also studied in Dhuliya, found it difficult to manage their daily meals and accommodations. At that time, Swamishri made arrangements for their stay with several acquaintances. But Swamishri felt there was a need for a hostel that would cater to their meals, accommodation and also inspire values in them. And so Swamishri decided to construct a *chhatralaya* in Dhuliya.

In 1982, through Swamishri's inspiration, Shri Shivdas Chaudhari and Shri Mahipatbhai Dave donated two plots of land for the *chhatralaya*. Two more adjacent plots were purchased and in 1982, the ground-breaking ceremony for the *chhatralaya* was performed by Swamishri in the Dhaanmandi area of Dhuliya. At that time Swamishri had





Chhatralaya hall, Dhuliya



Hari mandir, Amalner

uttered, “This land will not suffice for our project.” So, the search for new land began.

In 1990, the Sanstha purchased 10 acres of land belonging to Vakil Mehta in the Devpur area of Dhuliya. Later, another one acre was bought. On Monday, 8 January 1996, Swamishri performed the ground-breaking ceremony for the Chhatralaya on the 10-acre plot. The *chhatralaya*, prayer hall and *hari* mandir were ready in two years. On Friday, 19 June 1998, Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* of the *hari* mandir and the inauguration rituals of the Chhatralaya, a few days prior to his visit to USA for his heart bypass surgery and against the doctors’ instructions. He appointed Anandjivan Swami as the *kothari* (head) of the *chhatralaya* and *hari* mandir. Swamishri always took great interest in the *chhatralaya* and satsang activities.

On 18 February 2003, Swamishri was in Dhuliya and he decided to take a tour of the *chhatralaya* complex and its precincts. It was 6.30 p.m. and the satsang assembly was going on. Swamishri, at the age of 83 years, came out walking from his quarters. On seeing the luxuriant trees he expressed his pleasure, “The trees have grown well. The coconut tree has developed nicely.” Then he advised, “Construct another floor to the *chhatralaya* building.” He also assured for financial aid. On seeing a small corner being left out from the near rectangular precincts of the *chhatralaya*, Swamishri said, “The corner

should not be left out, thus acquire the land.”

Anandjivan Swami replied, “Swamishri, we have all this land which we are barely able to maintain.”

Swamishri instructed, “It will come in use, so buy it.” At that time, Swamishri’s decision was difficult to understand because no one had imagined of his vision and foresight for a *shikharbaddha* mandir.

A month later, the one acre corner land was acquired. Anandjivan Swami took the land plan to Swamishri and said, “Your wish for the corner land has been fulfilled. A boundary wall has been built around it and now the *chhatralaya* ground is rectangle-shaped and proper.” Immediately, Swamishri advised, “But don’t plant any trees there.” Then he added, “If you want to, plant them by the boundary wall.” It was clear in Swamishri’s mind to build a *shikharbaddha* mandir there.



Hari mandir, Mohadi



Hari mandir, Japi



Hari mandir, Kusumbe

Then, Swamishri glimpsed upon the plans and instructed that more plots be bought. He said, “Buy these plots which will come in use when a large kitchen is built.” A further one acre of land was acquired by Swamishri’s instruction.

Though it was Swamishri’s own dream to build a *shikharbaddha* mandir he seemed to be waiting for an opportune day to start the project. On 24 January 2007, Swamishri was in Mumbai. He instructed Anandjivan Swami to take with him a small *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj for Dhuliya.

Gradually, along with the growth of the *chhatralaya* activities, the local satsang and bhakti related activities also increased in the Khandesh region. On 3 July 2007, at Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s behest, Mahant Swami consecrated the new *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, which could be attired in decorative clothes.



Hari mandir, Galvada

On 3 January 2011, Mumbai, Anandjivan Swami reminded Pramukh Swami Maharaj about the proposed *shikharbaddha* mandir in Dhuliya. At that time, Swamishri was signing letters to the devotees and replied casually, “Presently, *shikharbaddha* mandirs are being built in many places, so one should definitely be built in Dhuliya.”

At Swamishri’s instruction, Mahant Swami came to Dhuliya for three days – 26 to 28 February – to appeal to the devotees for donations for the *shikharbaddha* mandir project.

On 17 March 2011, Swamishri spoke in Sarangpur about the *shikharbaddha* mandir in Dhuliya, “Have patience, it will turn out well; do not be hasty, it will turn out to be very good.” Swamishri had spontaneously uttered these words and blessed Anandjivan Swami.

In 2011, Swamishri suffered a heart attack in Bharuch. Thereafter, he was brought to recuperate at the Dadar mandir in Mumbai. During his stay there he gave guidance and instructions for the proposed mandir in Dhuliya.

On 3 November 2011, while Swamishri was resting in his room in Mumbai mandir he told Anandjivan Swami, “Order bricks for *pujan* of the *shikharbaddha* mandir. Dhuliya is a town; there’s a railway; it is good. Now, I am not keeping well physically. I am weak, so I will shower flowers. Will you be able to bring the bricks to me here?” He thus wished to perform the *shilanyas* rituals for the Dhuliya mandir while resting in his room.

The next day, 4 November 2011, Swamishri had the *abhishek* done on Shri Nilkanth Varni and prayed for the Dhuliya *shikharbaddha* mandir to be done well and quickly.

On the evening of 9 November 2011, from Mumbai, Swamishri rang Anandjivan Swami and informed, “At present, the construction of many other mandirs are ongoing and so it would be difficult to acquire stones [for the Dhuliya mandir].” Thus, Swamishri postponed the *shilanyas* rituals for the *shikharbaddha* mandir to a later date. And so, Swamishri had strongly desired for a stone mandir to be built in Dhuliya.

One-and-a-half years later, the *shila puja* rituals were arranged by Swamishri’s wish in his presence in Ahmedabad. On 4 March 2013, the *shila puja* rituals were performed in the presence of 1,000 devotees from Khandesh and the local devotees of Ahmedabad. Swami Maharaj performed the *mahapuja* rituals in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

From 4 March to 11 November 2013, *shila*-assemblies for the proposed *shikharbaddha* mandir were held in 342 villages of Khandesh. The congregations were informed about the importance of the mandir and thereafter the *shila* and *kalash puja* rituals were performed amidst the chanting of the Janmangal Namavali.

On 18 October 2013, the *bhumi puja* rituals were performed on the mandir site in Dhuliya. On 20 October, the *bhumi khandan* rituals were performed and on 25 November 2013 the *shilanyas* rituals were performed at Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s behest by Mahant Swami and Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami in the presence of 65 swamis and 6,500 devotees. At that time, 1,715 devotees had participated in the *shilanyas mahapuja*.

During the mandir construction, swamis, volunteers and well-wishers helped and contributed their services. Punjabi Sikhs of the Seva Singhe gave their crane free of cost for the construction work.

The mandir was constructed under the supervision of volunteers from the Sanstha’s

Planning Cell.

On 6 July 2014, a copper *nalika* was established. On 24 July 2014, *pujan* of the first pillar was performed in Swamishri’s presence in Sarangpur. Swamishri looked at the carved pillar, placed his finger to gauge the depth of the carvings, performed its puja and expressed his satisfaction and joy.

On 8 September 2014, *pujan* was performed of the first batch of carved stones transported by truck from the workshop in Rajasthan to Dhuliya.

On 26 September, the first pillar was ritually established on the mandir site in the presence of 4,000 devotees.

On 6 August 2015, Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of all the *murtis* to be installed in the Dhuliya *shikharbaddha* mandir, in which 350 devotees were present. Swamishri spoke joyously to his attendant swamis, “I am happy on doing the *murti-pratishtha* of the *murtis* for the Dhuliya mandir.”

Through the grace of Pramukh Swami Maharaj the land of Khandesh, sanctified by Shastriji Maharaj, was being blessed with the colours of satsang. During the initial years of satsang, swamis from Mumbai mandir used to visit there twice a year. Pramukh Swami Maharaj frequently visited Dhuliya due to the devotion and dedication of the late Mahipatbhai Dave and his family members.

Mahant Swami Maharaj, after succeeding Pramukh Swami Maharaj as the guru, visited and blessed Dhuliya twice in two years. Before that, he had visited Khandesh 19 times. He had inspired and blessed the devotees of Khandesh during his visits in spite of the discomforts and difficulties of travel and other arrangements.

Through the blessings and efforts of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Gunatit gurus the satsang in Khandesh has flowered and now been crowned with the ornately carved *shikharbaddha* BAPS Mandir in Dhuliya. ♦

*Translated from Swaminarayan Prakash, March 2019  
by Sadhu Vivekjiandas*





# MURTI-PRATISHTHA CELEBRATIONS

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Dhuliya  
8–10 February 2019

*Sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and great saints and devotees such as Jnaneshwar, Tukaram, Namdev and others, Maharashtra continues to harbour the fragrance of their faith, devotion and service.*

*Inspired by Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the BAPS shikharbaddha mandir in Dhuliya, in the Khandesh region of Maharashtra, is captivating. The murti-pratishtha of the grand new mandir was performed by Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj on 10 February 2019. The mandir will continue to nurture the devotion and service of the faithful for generations to come. The following are highlights of the memorable murti-pratishtha celebrations...*



Visitors view the 'Paramanand' exhibition



Grand procession through the streets of Dhuliya

## SWAMINARAYAN NAGAR

Adjacent to the mandir campus, the 12-acre Swaminarayan Nagar festival grounds hosted the 3-day celebrations. The vast celebration site included a large assembly hall, exhibition halls – Sevanand, Muktanand and Paramanand, and separate Bhajananand marquees for men and women to offer various forms of devotion – singing *bhajans*, writing mantras, performing *malas* and *pradakshinas*, etc.

Every night, the 'Mandiram' light and sound show was projected on the mandir and was seen by thousands of people.

Thousands of devotees from Maharashtra and elsewhere visited and were inspired by the Swaminarayan Nagar.

On 7 February, Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *prasad-pravesh* rituals of the new mandir.

## 8 FEBRUARY: GRAND NAGAR YATRA

The grand, colourful *nagar yatra* (procession) through the main streets of Dhuliya paraded the 22 *murtis* to be consecrated in the mandir. Installed on beautifully decorated thematic chariots (*raths*), the *murtis* cast their divine blessings on the city and its people.

Beginning at 2.30 p.m., from Gindodia Oil Mill (Malegaon Road), the procession passed through Agraser Chowk, Panchkandil Chowk, Gandhiputda Chowk, Nehru Chowk, Devpur

Devmandir Chowk and also crossed the bridge over the Panjra River which had been sanctified by Nilkanth Varni, before arriving at the BAPS mandir at 6.30 p.m., having covered 5 km.

The procession stretched for over 1.5 km and was flagged off by senior devotees of Dhuliya. En route, Mayor Shri Chandrakant Sonar performed the *pujan* of Thakorji. At intervals along the route local officials, representatives of spiritual and social organizations and other well-wishers also honoured the procession by showering flowers and rice. In addition, along the route, many well-wishers provided refreshments (water, juices, etc.) for the thousands of devotees participating in the procession.

This was the first time ever that such a procession had taken place in Dhuliya. The police were delighted by and appreciated the discipline of the participants and the management of the entire procession by the BAPS volunteers.

The procession featured: turbaned youths with a banner at the front, youths on motorcycles, traditionally dressed children dancing, sadhus singing bhajans, youths performing traditional Maharashtrian and tribal dances, boys performing lezim routines, the drum band of dancing youths of BAPS Varkheda, a *murti* of Shastriji Maharaj on a cart – symbolizing his *vicharan* in the region, children of the Varkari Sampradaya in traditional dress singing bhajans, Rajasthan camel dancer, women devotees in festive dress, 120





Devotees of Khandesh play rhythmic tunes on the drums



Swamishri observes the *nagar yatra*

women devotees carrying *kalashes* on their heads, 200 women devotees reverently carrying the Vachanamrut wrapped in red cloth on their heads to commemorate the Vachanamrut Bicentenary (1819–2019), women devotees devoutly carrying Bhagavad Gitas, Upanishads, Jnaneshari Gitas and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *sutras* wrapped in red cloths on their heads, young girls performing lezim routines, woman devotees dancing.

The procession's main attractions were the 18 decorated floats bearing the *murtis* to be consecrated in the new mandir.

The *raths* had been prepared over the previous four months by volunteers from Japi, Varkheda, Mohadi, Songir and other villages, under the guidance of Divyanand Swami.

As the procession arrived at the mandir, Swamishri and the *sadguru* swamis viewed the various presentations from a stage set up at the entrance of the Swaminarayan Nagar.

Thereafter, Swamishri performed the evening *arti*.

## 9 FEBRUARY: YAGNA FOR WORLD PEACE

At the auspicious time of 8.00 a.m., the Vishwashanti Mahayagna (Yagna for World Peace) began. Under the guidance of Shrutiprakash Swami and other *sadhus*, learned pandits conducted the Vedic *yagna*. Over 2,000 *yajmans* participated in the *yagna*, seated around 283 *yagna kunds*.

At 11.00 a.m., Mahant Swami Maharaj, and

the *sadguru* *sadhus* arrived to perform the concluding rituals of the *yagna*.

In the evening assembly, a splendid dance-drama presentation depicting the history of satsang in Khandesh was performed by children of Surat and youths of Mumbai. The excellent script in Hindi was written by Shri Harikrishna Shastri and directed by Shri Paresh Hingu.

## 10 FEBRUARY: MURTI-PRATISHTHA AND ASSEMBLY

The *murtis* to be consecrated had been placed in their shrines. At 6.00 a.m., on the auspicious morning of Vasant Panchami, Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami (Kothari Swami) performed the *snapan vidhi* of the *murtis*.

At 8.00 a.m., the initial *murti-pratishtha* rituals were performed by the *sadguru* and other senior swamis in the various shrines.



Swamishri during the *murti-pratishtha yagna*





Swamishri unties the *nadachhadi* to inaugurate the mandir

At 10.00 a.m., Swamishri arrived with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and was welcomed by the rhythmic tunes of the drum band. He climbed the front steps and arrived on the main mandir podium.

Swamishri then sat before the central shrine. Also, present were Maharashtra State Minister for Tourism Shri Jayakumar Raval and Shri Subhash Bhamre, MP for Dhuliya in the Lok Sabha.

Shri Bhamre said, “Today is a historic day for Dhuliya. I have seen Swaminarayan Akshardham in Delhi. It is outstanding. It is great that such a grand mandir has been built here in Dhuliya. If anyone asks now about what there is in Dhuliya, I will proudly talk about this grand mandir. Today, I am delighted to declare that the main road in front of the mandir will be named as ‘Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg’. I will never forget having received Mahant Swami Maharaj’s blessings today.”

Then Shri Raval said, “I have not seen God, but I humbly welcome the manifest form of God, Mahant Swami Maharaj. In many respects this small city of Dhuliya has lagged behind, but in the spiritual realm it has advanced. This mandir will inspire all future generations. I have visited the beautiful BAPS mandirs in London, Houston, Ahmedabad and other places and this beautiful mandir in Dhuliya is a great addition. As the minister for tourism, I am confident that this mandir will become an important pilgrimage place in

Maharashtra. The government of Maharashtra will make road and rail arrangements to enhance accessibility.”

Thereafter, Swamishri honoured the guests and began to perform the concluding *murti-pratishtha* rituals. This was the first time that the new *shloks* singing the glory of Akshar-Purushottam were being recited in a *murti-pratishtha* ceremony. While Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj in the central shrine, Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami performed the rituals of Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami performed the rituals of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Shri Radha-Krishna Dev, and Pujya Doctor Swami performed the rituals of Shri Nilkanth Varni. Other senior swamis performed the rituals of the *murtis* of the Gunatit gurus and other devas.

After performing the rituals of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Swamishri went to all the other shrines to perform the *pujan* of each *murti*.

Meanwhile, the *murtis* in the *garbhagruha* were adorned with garments and ornaments and an *annakut* was arranged before them. On Swamishri’s return to the central shrine, he performed the *murti-pratishtha arti*.

After the *mantra-pushpanjali*, Swamishri instructed Pujya Kothari Swami to shower sanctified rice grains on the devotees as blessings. After the rituals, as Swamishri descended the mandir’s front steps to go to the assembly, flower petals were showered from a small plane in honour of the *murti-pratishtha* celebration.

The entire *murti-pratishtha* ceremony had been relayed live to screens in the assembly marquee.

Youths performed a traditional dance to welcome Swamishri. Then, after Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior sadhus, he inaugurated the following publications: *Vachanamrut* (Marathi), *Jene Gune Rijhya Girdhari* (Marathi, translated by Suresh Kale) and *Divine Discourses: The Wisdom of Pramukh Swami Maharaj* (English).



Swamishri reverently touches a mattress sanctified by Shastriji Maharaj

Thereafter, on behalf of Dhuliya Mahanagar-palika, Shri Sadavratji presented a plaque to Mahant Swami Maharaj declaring that the road in front of the mandir will be named ‘Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg’.

Swamishri then blessed the assembly, “A mandir like this in Khandesh was unimaginable, yet it has been built. This is astonishing. We have seen such mandirs in Gujarat, but in Dhuliya and surrounding areas, people are amazed. People will come here for darshan and be inspired. Bhagatji Maharaj cast his blessings on this region in a divine form. That is why satsang has flourished. And Shastriji Maharaj tirelessly visited every house to nurture satsang. Pramukh Swami Maharaj also visited every devotee in this region. Shastriji Maharaj also wrote a letter from here to the devotees of Africa.”

Then, as per the wish of Swamishri, Shri



Swamishri blesses the murti-pratishtha assembly

Arunbhai Gujarati addressed the assembly, “By building this mandir, BAPS is not only nurturing spirituality, but also humanity. The BAPS promotes discipline and honesty. Whenever I think of BAPS, I think that ‘B’ stands for ‘Behaviour’, ‘A’ for ‘Affection’, ‘P’ for ‘Peace and Purity of Mind and Spirit’ and ‘S’ for ‘Service’. This Sanstha embodies values (*sanskars*), affection, (*sneh*), peace (*shanti*) and service (*seva*). Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a beacon for all humanity. Under his guidance, the BAPS has performed outstanding work. I pray to Mahant Swami Maharaj that he continues to bless Khandesh through his divine gaze, touch and speech.”

The assembly concluded with a vote of thanks by Kothari Anandjivan Swami. ♦

*Translated from Swaminarayan Prakash, March 2019  
by Sadhu Amrutvijaydas*



Youths perform a traditional dance in the murti-pratishtha assembly





## SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR DHULIYA

**T**he new BAPS *shikarbaddha* mandir in Dhuliya is located off the national highway from Mumbai to Nagpur, in the Devpur suburb of Dhuliya.

Constructed of pink stone from Bansipahadpur in Rajasthan on a 12-acre site, the mandir is a major attraction for all in the Khandesh region.

The mandir faces east and has five *shikhars* (pinnacles) and is surrounded by an elegant colonnade. Climbing the 24 steps at the front of the mandir, the visitor arrives on the vast podium. To

the left is the shrine of Shri Ganapatiji and to the right is the shrine of Shri Hanumanji.

Proceeding, the visitor climbs three steps to enter the pillared main *mandap* under the main dome. The sculpted pillars are decorated with *murtis* of avatars, devas, rishis, revered saints and devotees.

Among these *murtis* are those of Swaminarayan saints and devotees, and revered devotees of Maharashtra – Ramdas, Eknath, Changdev, Tukaram, Tukdoji and others.





At the base of the main dome, along its inner perimeter, are the *murtis* of Brahma, Varun, Vayu, Sarasvati, Kubera, Vishnu-Lakshmi, Vishwakarma, Indra, Surya-Agni, Kartikeya, Dharmaraj, Shiv-Parvati, Ganeshji and others. At the centre is a beautiful stone chandelier.

Continuing forward, the visitor arrives before the *garbhagruha*, which is beautifully sculpted out of marble. In the central shrine of the *garbhagruha* are the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, in the right shrine is the *murti* of Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj, and in the left shrine are the *murtis* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Shri Radha-Krishna Dev.

The *mandovar*, the rear of the *garbhagruha*, is embellished with creative designs and statuettes of devas, *dikpals*, avatars, devotees and saints. It hosts the *murtis* of some of India's holy rivers – Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati,

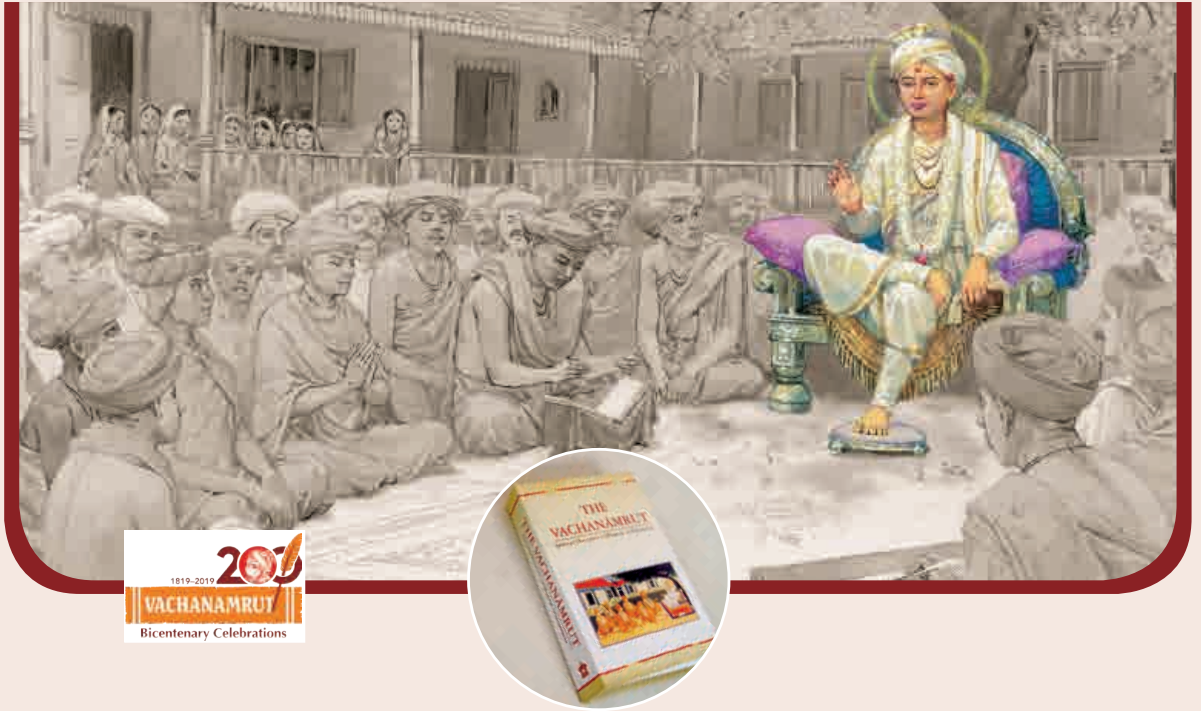
Godavari – and devotees and saints of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya.

There are three staircases – front, left and right – leading up to the mandir. Surrounding the mandir is a vast luscious garden of colourful flowers, shrubs and trees. Enclosing the mandir and the garden is a colonnade, where visitors can view the mandir and garden from different perspectives.

Under the mandir podium, on the ground floor is the Abhishek Mandapam, which houses the *abhishek murti* of Shri Nilkanth Varni, the *murtis* of the Gunatit gurus and *murtis* of Shri Vitthalji-Rukmaniji, Shri Lakshmi-Narayan, Shri Sita-Ram and Shri Shiv-Parvatiji.

Atop, the mandir is crowned by *shikhars* and domes with golden *kalashes* and flagpoles. ♦

*Translated from Swaminarayan Prakash, March 2019  
by Sadhu Amrutvijaydas*



# THE VACHANAMRUT

## An Introduction, Part 1

**T**he Vachanamrut is a compilation of Parabrahman Bhagwan Swaminarayan's teachings in 273 discourses. During this current year, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha is celebrating the bicentenary of the Vachanamrut: 1819–2019. In this first article of the series, we consider its uniqueness among Sanatan Dharma's shastras by discussing its authenticity, teaching style, *mahima* (glory) as revealed by the guru *parampara*, scope and selected contemporary events during the decade of the Vachanamrut discourses.

First, a word about the compilers. The four *paramhansas*, namely Muktanand Swami, Gopalanand Swami, Nityanand Swami and Shukanand Swami were sadhus of such great integrity that they noted even their own failings which Shriji Maharaj pointed out. Secondly, they were present throughout the discourses which they heard firsthand. Thirdly, in every

Vachanamrut they noted details such as the date and location. An eminent scholar of Gujarat, Bhogilal Sandersara, commented:

“Among all these sacred shastras the position of the Vachanamrut is unique because the discourses of Bhagwan Swaminarayan were compiled verbatim. There is a reference to the place and time of the discourses; a note of the year, month and day; a description of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's garments and even the names of people participating in the dialogues are mentioned. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has himself authenticated it. Thus there is no room for interpolation.”

John Carman, former professor of comparative religion at Harvard, noted, “Students of Indian religious history are constantly faced with the difficulty of the lack of firm and definite dates in this history. But in this book (Vachanamrut), every discourse is precisely dated.”

After compilation, the four *paramhansas* showed the collection of the Vachanamruts to Shriji Maharaj for scrutiny. We glean this from Loya 7, in which Nityanand Swami shows the collection (as completed up to that date) to Maharaj, who examines it and is greatly pleased with it.

Finally, Maharaj also testifies to the truthfulness of his talks on several occasions, by taking an oath on the names of his beloved *paramhansas*. In Gadhada III 2, he says, “I swear by this assembly of sadhus that there is not even the slightest untruth in this matter.” He has also similarly sworn by the names of the *paramhansas* in Gadhada II 13.

Hence, among the shastras of Sanatan Dharma, the Vachanamrut is unique from the point of view of its scholarly compilers, the dating and the endorsement by the speaker – Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself – about the contents.

## TEACHING STYLE

The discourses are similar to that of the Upanishads in which dialogues occur between the guru and pupils. In the Vachanamrut the questions occur as follows:

1. Shriji Maharaj to *paramhansas*
2. *Paramhansas* to Shriji Maharaj
3. *Gruhasthas* to Shriji Maharaj
4. *Gruhasthas* to *paramhansas*
5. *Paramhansas* to each other.

In Loya 8, Maharaj teaches young *paramhansas* how to pose questions. In Gadhada I 78, Gadhada II 6 & Loya 6, he debates with young *paramhansas*, while in Gadhada I 32, 66 & Gadhada II 66, he debates with senior *paramhansas*. In Gadhada I 31, he summons Muktanand Swami and Brahmanand Swami to answer Yoganand Muni. He agrees with the answer and then adds his own wisdom. This technique, of Maharaj asking the *paramhansas* to answer questions and then adding his own remarks when necessary, is often witnessed throughout the Vachanamrut.

The *katha* assembly is so informal that besides *paramhansas* and *gruhastha* scholars,

questions are also posed by women devotees (Gadhada I 31, Gadhada III 25), a 12-year-old boy, Bhagubhai (Vartal 10), Maharaj’s teenage nephews, Raghuvirji and Ayodhyaprasadji, and farmers such as Kakabhai of Rojka (Gadhada I 70) and Kandas of Bochasan (Vartal 2).

A vitally important attribute of a religious teacher is the ability to be strict and objective in the interpretation of the shastras. When the need arose, Maharaj was direct enough to point out fudged beliefs of either the listeners or by society. In Gadhada I 42, he noticed some Vedantis in the assembly. Hence, he expounded on Shankaracharya’s true teachings and the misinterpretations by his later followers.

In Gadhada I 77, a sadhu starts to denounce dharma on the strength of his *nishchay* (conviction) for Bhagwan, probably saying something of the order that one does not need to observe the rules of dharma when one has a firm conviction of Bhagwan. Maharaj feels so strongly about this, that he has no qualms about the choice of words in describing such a person, “A person who forsakes dharma under the pretext of the *jnan* of Bhagwan should be considered demonic.”

Another of Maharaj’s sublime teaching attributes is tact. He uses tact to resolve difficult dialogues or questions. On several occasions, an elderly and venerable sadhu such as Muktanand Swami, twenty-two years older than Maharaj and who was once his guru, gives an answer which is not wholly correct. Maharaj wants to acknowledge this, but prefers not to dishearten him at the same time. In Gadhada I 67 and Gadhada III 2, in reply to Muktanand Swami’s answer, Maharaj artfully says, “It is true that there is a deficiency in *vairagya*, but it appears to me that...” (Gadhada III 2) and then gracefully gives his own valid answer, simultaneously maintaining Muktanand Swami’s dignity.

A desirable requisite in teaching is to praise pupils when they perform well, to boost them further. Simultaneously, they should also be corrected and admonished on failing to meet an expected



## Important Events During the Decade of the Vachanamrut (1819–1829)

- 1819 Vachanamrut discourses begin, Gadhada (21-11-1819).
- 1820 Shriji Maharaj reveals to Gopalanand Swami his six reasons for incarnating on earth, in Kariyani (October–November 1820).
- 1821 Shriji Maharaj reveals the glory of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami as: ‘This is our *tilak*’ (*sevak* Aksharbrahman) (19-3-1821).
- 1822 Inauguration of Nar-Narayan Dev Mandir, Ahmedabad (24-2-1822).
- 1823 Inauguration of Nar-Narayan Dev Mandir, Bhuj (15-5-1823).
- 1824 Inauguration of Lakshmi-Narayan Dev Mandir, Vartal (3-11-1824).
- 1825 Grand welcome by Maharaja Sayajirao in Baroda (November 1825).
- 1826 Shriji Maharaj writes the code of conduct – Shikshapatri, in Vartal (12-2-1826).
- 1827 Shriji Maharaj appoints Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami as the mahant of Junagadh mandir (under construction) (11-4-1827).
- 1828 Inauguration of Ranchhod-Trikam & Radha-Raman Dev Mandir, Junagadh (1-5-1828) and Gopinath Dev Mandir, Gadhada (20-10-1828).
- 1829 Last Vachanamrut discourse, Gadhada (25-7-1829).
- December–January 1830 Shriji Maharaj’s final illness begins.

standard. Yet the virtues needed by the aspirant for attaining *moksha*, if imbibed sincerely, are still appreciated by Paramatma and the Satpurush out of their divine grace.

In the Vachanamrut, Shriji Maharaj never fails to appreciate such virtues of the *paramhansas* and devotees present in the gathering.

In Gadhada III 26, he praises and vouches for Mayaram Bhatt, Mulji Brahmachari and Nishkulanand Swami in observing their dharma unflinchingly should they come in contact with money or women.

In Gadhada I 73, Gadhada II 38 and 52, Gadhada III 1, 22 and 24, and Loya 3, he lauds the different virtues of many devotees. In Gadhada II 41, he appreciates the egoless devotion to Bhagwan by Ratanji and Miyaji (a Muslim devotee). Maharaj had no hesitation in appreciating the devotion of a non-Hindu, at a time when varna and sectarian rigidity prevailed. In Loya 3, we witness Maharaj’s phenomenal memory, lauding the virtues of no less than 22 devotees. Two of these, the Kathi brothers Bhimo Dev and Sardu Dev of Gundali had never even met him. Yet he sincerely appreciated their sacrifice; they

died while fighting dissenters who insulted and expelled some *paramhansas* out of their town.

As we study the Vachanamrut we become aware of Maharaj’s ingenuity in teaching. His talks sparkled. They came ‘alive’ by changing the location, varying the time of *katha*, using vivid imagery and examples from common everyday occurrences which were familiar to the listeners and they could easily identify with, and posing questions.

In Gadhada I 22 the *paramhansas* have just sung kirtans. Maharaj then talks about *smruti* of God while singing and mentions musical instruments that are present in front of him, such as; *mrudang*, *sarangi*, *saroda*, *tal*. In public speaking jargon, this is known as using ‘local colour’.

In Panchala 1, he uses local colour by mentioning a burning torch, that is lighting the gathering. In Panchala 4, he gives the example of Bhago and Mulo, identical twins present in the *katha*. In Sarangpur 5 he initiates the *katha* in a way that grabs the listeners’ attention. He commands the *paramhansas* to pose vexing (*vankda vankda*) questions to remove boredom. At the end of Kariyani 1, he says, “Now let us stop this

discourse, and as the assembly has become inert, someone please sing some pleasing kirtans.” But too much of a good thing can also lead to monotony. So, in Gadhada II 34, he even says, “Please stop the devotional kirtans, and let us conduct a question-answer session in order to dispel lethargy.” In Gadhada I 26, he frames a sentence so creatively, “Now please stop singing and listen as I sing a kirtan in the form of a discourse.”

## MAHIMA

The Swaminarayan Sampradaya’s gurus have sung the immense glory of the Vachanamrut.

### Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami

- “Maharaj has uttered much about his innermost secrets, wishes and principles (*siddhants*) in the Vachanamrut. One should focus one’s attention on these and imbibe them” (Swamini Vato 2.76).
- “There is no text greater than this Vachanamrut” (Swamini Vato 10.91).
- “The Vachanamruts contain the essence of the four Vedas, six-shastras and eighteen Purans. In these Maharaj has elucidated principles. Hence one should study them” (Swamini Vato 6.19).
- Whenever he requested a sadhu to bring a Vachanamrut text, he would say, “Bring *amrut*. This shastra is *amrut* on earth.”

### Yogiji Maharaj

- On 3-10-1969, Yogiji Maharaj wrote in his blessings in the Gujarati edition of the Vachanamrut, “One who will drink this *amrut* will be graced with a seat next to Maharaj.”
- “One who will read the Vachanamrut 108 times will be graced with the darshan of Shriji Maharaj.”

### Pramukh Swami Maharaj

- “We should read the Vachanamrut even if we do not understand it. Bhagwan’s words are like viable seeds; someday they are bound to sprout.”

- “Just as there is no need to bathe (elsewhere for spiritual purity) after bathing in the Ganga, similarly after reading the Vachanamrut, nothing else remains to be read. One must read this shastra for a quarter of an hour every day.”

## SCOPE

Shri H.T. Dave, the renowned BAPS scholar who first translated the Gujarati Vachanamrut into English, elucidated the scope of the Vachanamrut: “The Vachanamrut supremely elucidates true Vedantic understanding, discusses the gist of the four Vedas, expounds on the twelve Vedic *mahavakyas*, discusses the interdependence of *Samkhya*, *Yog*, *Vedant* and *Panchratra* texts, describes the necessity of *Samkhyanishta* and *Yognishta* to attain *atma*-realization, and reveals the constant manifestation on earth of the God-realized Satpurush – who boosts *bhagwat dharma*, is the gateway to *moksha* and is the spiritual guide for the devotees. The shastra also expounds on *ekantik dharma* comprising *dharma*, *jnan*, *vairagya* and *bhakti*, the spiritual state of *Gunatit*, the manifest (*pragat*) *Gunatit* Satpurush – who is the medium to attaining the *gunatit* state, Parabrahman Paramatma and his abode *Brahmadham*, and principles which aid the aspirant to attain *atyantik moksha* – ultimate liberation.”

Another scholar, P.B. Vidyarthi, former Professor of Philosophy, Ranchi University, opined, “It is to be reckoned as one of the most edifying sacred texts, every word of which is packed with profound wisdom enshrined in the traditional Indian literature like the Upanishads, Gita, Mahabharat, Ramayan, and Panchratra.”

In the next article, we shall discuss Shriji Maharaj’s adornments, the Vachanamrut’s language and the simple analogies and imagery used by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. ♦

(For details see *Vachanamrut Handbook: Insights into Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s Teachings*, Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2007)

# THE FOOL OF ALL FOOLS

**A**braham Lincoln said, “You may fool all the people some of the time, you may even fool some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.”



But in today’s world “We can. And we do.” Every time we introduce ourselves are we really as good as we make out to be? We mask our mistakes, fudge our failures, shroud our shortcomings, veil our weaknesses and camouflage our character by showcasing our successes and glorifying our gifts. People reveal part truths and post truths. Real truth is lost somewhere between the two and their many shades. In our world of hollow truths, decorated truths, disguised truths and virtual truths... dishonest leaders, politicians, professionals, salespersons and vendors are having a field day. And who suffers? We do. At our cost and our cause, a web of lies eclipses reality. While we seek sympathy as helpless sufferers, we forget that we perhaps may be the greatest contributors to this chaos of deceit.

These days, to find fools is not difficult, and to find people who fool is even easier. But who is the greatest fool of all? Us, ourselves! Bhagwan Swaminarayan has clarified in his spiritual teachings called the Vachanamrutam, “Who is the greatest fool of all fools? The person who knows everything external, and nothing internal. The *jiva* who sees and observes the attractive and the unattractive, witnesses childhood, youth and old age, as well as countless other things of the material world but fails to see, observe and know one’s spiritual self is the greatest fool of all fools, the vilest of the vile, the lowest of the low and the most ignorant of the ignorant” (Gadahada I 20).

Knowing everything and everyone, but not knowing yourself is farcical. The story of ten fools, often told by His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj vividly captures the message. A flock of ten friends embarked upon an adventure. Crossing rivers, scaling mountains, traversing forests, they arrived into open fields. Suddenly, one screamed, “Oh my God, one of us is missing. We started off with ten and now there’s only nine.” They hurriedly sat in a circle, began counting and cried for the missing tenth. Once again, the first counted each one and wailed loudly as he reached the ninth. Number one was on his left and number nine was on his right. Where was the tenth? The second did the same and so did the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth... The tenth was nowhere to be seen. They all kept crying like fools till a wise man pointed out that each one counted everyone, except himself.

The missing tenth is us ourselves. Of what use is knowing the ends of the universe, if we cannot understand the secrets of our own soul; of what use is forecasting the weathers of the week, if we cannot predict the moods of our own mind? It is as foolish as the monitor of the class calling out every name, except remembering his own. Without knowing ourselves, we will get nowhere. To show us a way even google maps first asks us our location. Without knowing where we are, or who we are, we will go nowhere. In life, despite our public success, we often suffer private failures. Within ourselves, we may remain lost always, in all ways like the missing tenth.

No wonder ‘Know Thyself’ has remained a timeless secret that echoes along the corridors of universal spirituality. But is anyone listening? ♦



# Vicharan

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

September–December 2018

Atladra, Ahmedabad, Sarangpur, Bhavnagar, Mahuva,  
Dhari, Gadhada, Gondal, Bhadra, Bochasan, Rajkot, Sarangpur, Mumbai



Swamishri performs *arti* of Thakorji in the Janmashtami celebration assembly, Ahmedabad

## SEPTEMBER

### ATLADRA: 1–2

#### 1, Saturday

A symbolic Janmashtami festival was celebrated in the evening assembly. Swamis spoke about offering bhakti coupled with the glory of God and bhakti with fidelity towards the guru. Thereafter, youths performed a traditional dance with gusto. Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior sadhus. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “There is a timeless tradition that Bhagwan and his Sant manifest on earth, but people do not realize who they are. The rishis who were performing a *yagna* did not give alms to Krishna and his friends. Instead, the rishis pursued to strike Krishna with pieces of firewood. Whereas, the rishis’ wives gave them alms. Only spiritual aspirants can recognize and associate with God.”

## AHMEDABAD: 2–23

During Swamishri’s stay special days were celebrated: Janmashtami (3) Children’s Day (9), E-Vivek Din (11), Mahant Swami Maharaj’s 85th Birthday Celebration (13), Bhakti Din (15), Youth Day (16), Gramya Din (17), Samjan Din (19) and Jal Jhilani Festival (20).

### 3, Tuesday; Krishna Janmashtami Festival

The evening assembly was celebrated as Krishna Janmashtami. A beautiful *annakut* was arranged in all the three shrines of the mandir.

Atmaswarup Swami, Bhaktisagar Swami and Ishwarcharan Swami addressed the evening festival assembly about the life and message of Bhagwan Shri Krishna. After Swamishri’s arrival, youths performed a traditional dance on the past-times of child-Krishna. Finally, Swami blessed the



An enthralling performance by children about the story of Lindiyo the lion, Ahmedabad

assembly, “We are very fortunate to have had gurus like Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Shastriji Maharaj. We have seen their lives and actions and are convinced about their greatness. We have attained the pure mode of worship (*upasana*) through Shastriji Maharaj’s grace. So, we are blessed. Thus, keep doing bhajan and bhakti. Give up stubbornness, ego and jealousy and imbibe virtues like *mahima* (glory), *gun grahan* (looking at other’s virtues) and others.”

### 7, Friday

Swamishri inaugurated two Swaminarayan Aksharpith publications for Amazon Kindle: *Yogiji Maharaj, An Unforgettable Guru and Yug Vibhuti Pramukh Swami Maharaj*; and *Sadhuta na Shikar: Mahant Swami Maharaj* was inaugurated by Ishwarcharan Swami.

Later, a video recording of Swamishri’s blessings for the World Hindu Congress, 2018, in Chicago, was made. Swamishri spoke in English about peace, unity and oneness.

### 8, Saturday

Swamishri inaugurated a USB pendrive of bhajans sung by the late Yogicharan Swami. Out of 6,000 recorded bhajans sung by Yogicharan Swami in India and abroad 1,000 were chosen and released in an audio pendrive under the name ‘Sahajanand Charan Upāsi...’

Prior to the inauguration, Ishwarcharan Swami spoke glowingly about Yogicharan Swami’s multiple talents and virtues of humility, service and dedication.

### 9, Sunday; Children’s Day

A captivating musical ballet on the story of ‘Lindiyo’, titled ‘Vanraj’, was performed by children and volunteers. In his blessings, Swamishri said, “This story was often narrated by Yogiji Maharaj, and gives us a lot to think about. We are neither meek like Lindiyo [sheep] or [as brave as] a lion, but a mixture of both – ‘gheta-sinh’. We have been ‘gheta-sinh’ for innumerable births because we did not have the association of a true lion [the Satpurush]. However, now that we have the association of a ‘lion’ we will realize ourselves as *atma* and behave accordingly. Only after attaining the state of *gunatit* will we attain *mukti* and become eligible to experience infinite happiness.”

### 11, Tuesday; E-Vivek Din

In the evening assembly, youths performed a drama portraying how the indiscriminate use of mobile phones and social media damages a youth’s academic studies and personal life. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed, “The content of the drama is absolutely true. One finds this to be the case in so many places in society. It is sugar-coated poison. By coming to satsang one will be

safeguarded, but still one needs to exercise discrimination. Lapses in discrimination lead to lots of complications. Satsang is the answer.”

## MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ’S 85TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

13 September 2019, Ahmedabad

According to the English calendar, today marked Mahant Swami Maharaj’s 85th birthday. Swamishri was greeted auspiciously with designs of flower petals and oil lamps along his pathway. An *annakut* of chocolate cakes was arranged before Thakorji in the mandir.

The evening celebration assembly was themed on ‘Vandu Sant Mahant Swami Guru ne...’ Shrijiswarup Swami, Brahnavihari Swami and Atmaswarup Swami shared their experiences of Mahant Swami Maharaj. Thereafter, youths performed a traditional dance to honour Swamishri. Then, Anandswarup Swami and Ishwarcharan Swami spoke about the glory of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Swamishri was honoured with garlands. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the congregation, “Shriji Maharaj is the all-doer and Gunatitanand Swami remains as his servant. We have attained them. So, for our happiness and benefit we should remain as their servant [*das*]. Untold joy will be experienced by remaining so.

“We should remember good things and leave



E-Vivek Din, youths perform an inspiring skit before Swamishri, Ahmedabad

other things out, because bad things spoil our intellect and everything. Keep your mind divine and you’ll have no problems. To achieve that abide by Maharaj’s *agna*.”

The whole congregation performed the *mantra-pushpanjali* and *arti* rituals to offer respects to Swamishri.

## 20, Thursday; Jal Jhilani Festival

The Jal Jhilani Festival was celebrated during Swamishri’s morning puja. It was interspersed with bhajans, *arti* and boatrides for Shri Harikrishna Maharaj in a small water pool. The fifth and final *arti* was performed by Mahant Swami Maharaj, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami. Thereafter, Swamishri and the *sadguru* swamis ritually submerged the small *murti* of Shri Ganapatiji in the water pool.



Mahant Swami Maharaj’s 85th Birthday Celebration in Ahmedabad in which youths perform a traditional dance





Swamishri and *sadguru* swamis celebrate the Jal Jhilani festival by performing the final *arti*, Ahmedabad

Finally, Swamishri blessed the celebration assembly, “There is no other means to cross the ocean of life other than by gaining the grace of Maharaj and Swami. Can anyone swim the Pacific Ocean? The ocean of life is far more difficult to cross.”

## 22, Saturday

Swamishri inaugurated three Gujarati books published by Swaminarayan Aksharpath, *Swaminarayan Bhaktaratno*, Parts 1, 2 and 3 written by Aksharjivan Swami.

## SARANGPUR: 23–29

### 27, Thursday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *mur-tis* for the new BAPS *hari* mandirs in Saiyadpura (Surat) and a *chhatralya* in Bhangadh.

### 28, Friday; Shastriji Maharaj’s Smruti Parva

Swamishri personally served *dudhpak* and blessed 600 sadhus, *parshads*, *sadhaks* and devotees. In the evening celebration assembly, Aksharcharan Swami talked about Shastriji Maharaj’s saintliness, Viveksagar Swami discoursed about Shastriji Maharaj’s principle-based faith, Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami elaborated upon Shastriji Maharaj’s eternal presence and Dr Swami spoke about Shastriji Maharaj’s glory. Thereafter, a wonderful skit unfolded the

glory of Shastriji Maharaj through the words of his devotees: Galbhai, Soma Bhagat, Moti Bhagwandas, Ashabhai, Maganbhai, Prabudas Lala and Manibhai of Salad.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the festive assembly, “We have to focus on consolidating spiritual faith in ourselves. We have attained the two divine entities of Akshar and Purushottam, thus we must have immense faith in them. To please Maharaj and Swami by imbibing resolute faith is called *moksha*.” Thereafter, Swamishri was honoured with garlands.

## BHAVNAGAR: 29–30

### 30, Sunday; Children’s Day

The highlight of the Children’s Day evening assembly was a drama themed on DAS: Divyabhav,



Swamishri offers *dudhpak* to Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj to celebrate the Shastriji Maharaj Smruti Parva, Sarangpur

# Mahant Swami Maharaj's 85th Birthday Celebration

3 October 2018, Bhavnagar



After his morning puja Swamishri blessed, “Everything belongs to Maharaj and Swami. We have to offer humble devotion to them. Nothing is in our hands. Maharaj and Swami came on earth out of their immense grace upon us. When we enshrine them in our hearts we will become pure and free of our base nature. By having *divyabhav* towards them our spiritual liberation is guaranteed, however, perceiving *manushyabhav* in them results in our downfall. Maharaj will remain manifest on earth for millions of years.”

Thereafter, Swamishri was honoured with garlands by *sadguru* and senior swamis. Then, Swamishri inaugurated an Amazon Kindle version of the Gujarati publications *Purushottam Boliya*

*Prite* and *Yogi Vani*, by Swaminarayan Aksharpath.

In the evening, from 5.00 to 8.00 p.m., Swamishri's 85th Birthday Celebration was held on the grounds adjacent to the mandir complex. The celebration theme was “Amar Varso Gunatitno...” The celebration programme comprised of speeches, videos and traditional dances. The speakers expounded on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's virtues of dharma, bhakti, compassion, humility and his divine influence on others and how these virtues are reflected today in Mahant Swami Maharaj's life.

Viveksagar Swami spoke about the continuity of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Gunatit Guru *parampara* and that Pramukh Swami Maharaj lives on today through Mahant Swami Maharaj. Thereafter, Narayanmuni Swami, Aksharvatsal Swami, Atmatript Swami, Anandswarup Swami and Atmaswarup Swami spoke about how the virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj are seen today in the life of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Thereafter, children and youths performed a beautiful traditional dance extolling the divine virtues of Mahant Swami Maharaj. Finally, Swamishri blessed the festive congregation, “Maharaj and Swami are above all and everything. Offer and surrender everything to him. After having their association on whom should we impress upon? The infinite *muktas* serve Maharaj with humility. Maharaj is the all-doer. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's saintliness was extraordinary. His saintliness was such that Shriji Maharaj liked it. We should offer *upasana* [worship] to Shriji Maharaj by believing ourselves to be the form of Gunatitanand Swami.”

Then, audio and video sets of Mahant Swami Maharaj's blessings were inaugurated by the *sadguru* swamis. The distribution of 5,000 saplings to promote the Santha's tree-planting programme was announced. Mahant Swami Maharaj sanctified 10,000 medical kits prepared for the flood-hit victims of Kerala.

Swamishri was then garlanded by *sadguru* swamis and senior sadhus. Finally, 30,000 devotees performed *arti* and offered their respects to Shriji Maharaj and Swamishri.



In Swamishri's presence, youths perform a drama on *ghar sabha*, Bhavnagar

no Abhav-Avgun and Samp. The message of perceiving all devotees associated with God and his living Sant to be divine was conveyed. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed, “Yogiji Maharaj has said in his prayer to Shastriji Maharaj, ‘O Shastriji Maharaj, no matter what those associated with you may be like may we perceive them in the highest respect.’ What a great statement. Maharaj has said that one who perceives the glory of others and serves them and looks at one’s own fault is a *das*. We have to become the servant of a servant of servants.”

## OCTOBER

### BHAVNAGAR: 1-10

During Swamishri's stay, the evening satsang assemblies were themed on Daily Puja (1), Samarpan Din (2), Mahant Swami Maharaj's 85th Birthday Celebration (3), Ghar Sabha Din (6), Youth Day (7), Gramya Din (8) and Chhatralaya Din (9).

### 6, Saturday; Ghar Sabha Din

In the evening Ghar Sabha Din assembly, three skits were performed before Swamishri. Thereafter, a question was asked after every skit.

**Skit 1:** Businessmen and celebrities had gathered to understand how to do *ghar sabha* and what its benefits were. Thereafter, Swamishri was asked, “What do you have to say in brief about *ghar sabha*?”

Swamishri replied, “*Samjan ni gangotri*. [A

wellspring of understanding].”

**Skit 2:** A scene showed that people had no time to hold *ghar sabha*. Swamishri was asked how householders could spare time to do *ghar sabha* amidst all their multiple responsibilities?

Swamishri replied, “One must understand the value and greatness of *ghar sabha*. It recharges you. Secondly, out of two tasks, say you were to earn millions of rupees from one and ₹25,000 from the other. Which task would you do? Doing *ghar sabha* is like getting millions of rupees. By doing *ghar sabha* all the members gain understanding, which will facilitate mutual understanding and unity.”

**Skit 3:** A humorous scene was created where each member of the family finds a reason not to attend the *ghar sabha*. Swamishri was asked how to do *ghar sabha* in such a situation.

Swamishri replied, “This happens because one fails to consider the importance and glory of *ghar sabha*. So, one should start doing it alone. Slowly, all the members will join in.”

### MAHUVA: 10-14

During Swamishri's stay, the evening satsang assemblies were themed on Guru Prapti Din (12) and Guru Bhakti Din (13).

### 11, Thursday

In the evening satsang assembly, a drama, ‘United Family’, was enacted. Thereafter, a





Swamishri says understanding others is the key to harmony, Mahuva

traditional dance comprising of children, youths and seniors was performed. Swamishri blessed the assembly, “How can we introduce *samp* (harmony)? Through understanding. Through this, one can understand others. Today, no one wants to understand others. When one thinks negatively, things begin to deteriorate and life disintegrates. Through understanding each other our problems will be solved.”

### **DHARI: 14–18**

During Swamishri’s stay, the evening satsang assemblies were themed on Children’s Day (15) and Youth Day (16).

### **15, Monday; Children’s Day**

The evening satsang assembly was celebrated as Children’s Day and was themed, ‘Our Friend.’ Children asked Swamishri to teach them meditation like Jhina Bhagat did to his friends by the banks of River Shetrunji. Thereafter, children engaged Swamishri to play ‘Pass the Ball’ game with them. Then, Swamishri complied to the children’s request to bless them with a pat like Yogiji Maharaj. Thereafter, Swamishri guided them on how to excel in studies. In addition, children also asked Swamishri to sanctify laddus as *prasad* for all the children. Finally, Swamishri motivated the children to study well, to abide by *niyams* and to attend the satsang *sabha* regularly.

### **16, Tuesday; Youth Day**

In the evening Youth Day assembly, youths performed a drama ‘Suraksha Kavach’, related to *niyam*-dharma. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed, “When scientists invent something beneficial for us, we immediately accept it without any arguments. Similarly, Bhagwan does not make anyone unhappy. He wishes to make all happy. And that is why he has given us *niyams* to follow. When we observe them we’ll be happy. Bhagwan is the greatest of all scientists.”

### **GADHADA: 18–23**

### **18, Thursday, Dhari, Amreli, Gadhada**

During Swamishri’s journey from Dhari to Gadhada he briefly stopped over at Amreli to see the ongoing construction of the *shikharbaddha* mandir. Thereafter, Swamishri was honoured with garlands and he briefly addressed the satsang assembly.

### **22, MONDAY**

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Havant (England).

### **NOVEMBER**

### **GONDAL: 1–9**

During Swamishri’s stay, an evening satsang assembly was themed as Children’s Day (6), Diwali Celebration (7) and New Year’s Day and Annakutotsav (8).

On 1 and 2 November, Swamishri gave the *bhagwati diksha* to Nirgun Bhagat and named him Sadhu Nirgunmurtidas and named Trushilbhai *sadhak* as Sadhu Vedananddas.

### **7, Wednesday; Diwali**

In the late afternoon, Swamishri arrived on the mandir podium to perform the *mahapuja* rituals for sanctifying new accounts books for the New Year (Chopda Pujan *mahapuja*). Devotees were seated in the mandir precincts with their accounts books. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed

# Celebration of Sharad Punam

24 October 2018, Gondal



Swamishri and sadguru swamis participate in the kalash yatra, Gondal

After his morning puja, Swamishri, sadguru swamis and others carried out a brief *kalash-yatra*. The *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and Swamishri's Harikrishna Maharaj were installed in a chariot decorated with flowers. All carried water-filled *kalashes* and the sadguru swamis pulled the chariot. Children showered flower petals as the chariot passed by. The *kalash yatra* terminated at the Akshar and Brahm Kunds.

At 11.15 p.m., Swamishri arrived at the Brahm Kund. Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was placed on the *charananrind* in the middle of the *kund*. Swamishri and the sadguru swamis performed *abhishek*. Thereafter, Swamishri showered the holy water on swamis and devotees and chanted *dhun*.

From 8 to 11 p.m., the main Sharad Punam festival assembly, celebrating the 234th birth anniversary of Gunatitanand Swami, was held in the mandir complex. The programme was interspersed with speeches, *arti* and a traditional *raas*. Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami spoke about 'What does it mean to become *aksharup*', Viveksagar Swami explained about 'How to become *aksharrup*', Ishwarcharan Swami spoke about 'Gunatit is present today', youths of Jasdan performed a drama and Dr Swami inspired all to live a moral life. Thereafter, Swamishri inaugurated an audio publication of speeches by Viveksagar Swami on 'Swabhav Vash Sansar'. Then, Swamishri was garlanded by sadguru and senior swamis.

Finally, Swamishri blessed the festive assembly, "The glory of Gunatitanand Swami is infinite. Each *mukta* [of Akshardham] has the power to create one *brahmand*, however if we were to combine the powers of infinite *muktas* they do not compare to Gunatitanand Swami's infinite divine powers. Such was Gunatitanand Swami's greatness, yet he remained humble. He gathered the footwear of sadhus, tied them in a bundle and carried it on his head. Secondly, Shriji Maharaj has said that by merely not perceiving faults in others one attains Akshardham. Also, one who observes *niyams* and offers *upasana* attains Akshardham."

In conclusion, Swamishri and the entire gathering performed the final *arti*.



Devotees perform a drama during the Sharad Punam Celebration assembly



the gathering, “May God grant you whatever you have asked for during the *mahapuja* ceremony. Live so that Bhagwan is pleased. Whatever that displeases Bhagwan give it up. Whatever we do to please Bhagwan gives us *moksha*. Whoever has attained satsang is worthy of *moksha*. Satsang means having harmony (*samp*), fraternity (*suhradbhav*) unity (*ekta*), humility (*daspanu*), glory (*mahima*) and seeing the virtues in others (*gun grahan*).”

## 8, Thursday; New Year’s Day and Annakutotsav

After his routine darshan of Yogiji Maharaj’s and Shastriji Maharaj’s rooms, *arti* of Akshar Deri and Thakorji, Swamishri performed his morning puja in the Yogi Sabha Mandap. Later in the morning, Swamishri arrived in the New Year’s Day assembly and blessed the congregation, “May all be happy in body, mind and wealth. Also, may good times prevail and all be able to do bhajan well.

“Satsang means inner purity. The more the inner purity, the more peace you’ll have within. There is no peace in anything related to the body. Where there is inner purity, there God and his Sant reside. Their home is our heart.” Thereafter, Swamishri went for darshan of Yogi Smruti Mandir. Then, Swamishri went for *annakut* darshan in the Akshar Deri and performed *arti*. At 11.25 a.m., Swamishri went for *annakut* darshan in the main mandir and performed *arti*. In all, 815 food items



Swamishri performs the *mahapuja* rituals during Chopda Pujan and Diwali day, Gondal

were offered to Thakorji in the three shrines.

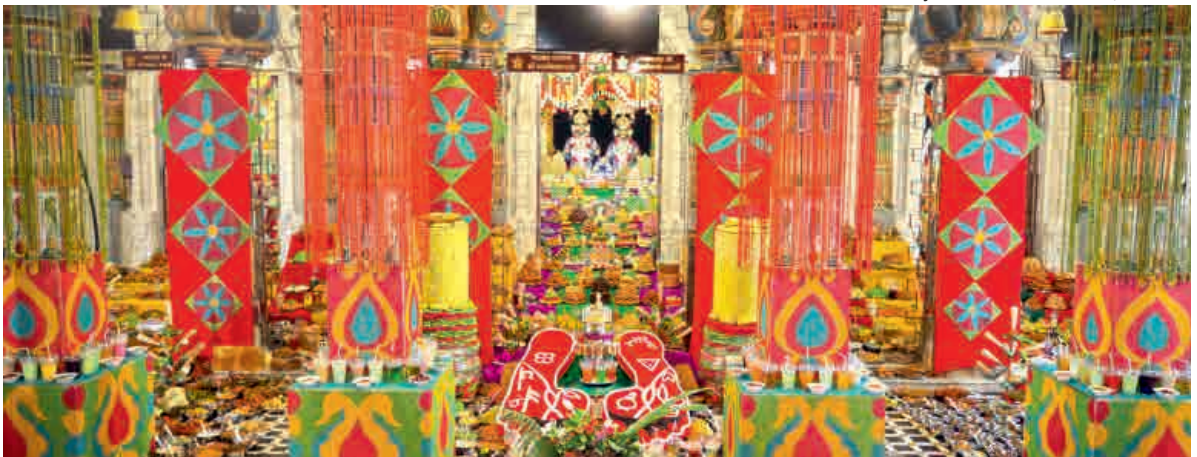
## BHADRA: 9–13

### 12, Monday (Labh Pancham)

After completing his morning puja, Swamishri blessed, “Once, Yogi Bapa was in Gondal on the auspicious day of Labh Pancham. Yogi Bapa said, ‘What type of benefit does one derive on this day? To have *divyabhav* for the devotees of God.’ By having *divyabhav* everything is included. As long as one has *dehbbhav* one will experience pain and misery. When we side towards satsang we will experience peace and happiness. Satsang deals with things within and not without.”

During late afternoon, Swamishri, swamis and devotees visited the holy places in Bhadra: the old Swaminarayan Mandir which was once the home of Vashram Suthar, the shop where Mulji Bhakta

Annakut offered to Thakorji in the main mandir, Gondal







On Prabhodini Ekadashi, Swamishri performs his morning puja with a variety of vegetables in the backdrop, Bochasan

had told a *bawo* to stretch his leg so that he could throw him to Akshardham, the village square where Mulji saw old people gossiping, the well in which Mulji threw stones and the shrine on the way to the River Und where Vashram Suthar wished for the liberation of innumerable ants to Badrikashram. Then, Swamishri visited the field where Maharaj gave darshan to Mulji Bhakta and told him that “Brahma *tej* has dried”. Thereafter, Swamishri came to the banyan tree by the River Und and circumambulated the shrine in memory of Shriji Maharaj. Here, Swamishri and the gathering sang *dhun* and offered prayers. Then, a small assembly was arranged on the very farm that belonged to Gunatitanand Swami. Swamishri performed *arti* and blessed the assembly, “Yogi Bapa’s birthday was celebrated on this farm. He stayed here for seven days and bathed in the river and performed puja daily.”

### BOCHASAN: 13–30

During Swamishri’s stay the symbolic festivals and days celebrated were Shakotsav (15), Vasant Panchami (16), Shri Hari Jayanti (17), Pushpadolotsav (18), Prabhodini Ekadashi (19), Yogi Jayanti (20), Hindola Utsav (21), Dev Diwali (23), New Mahapuja, *arti* and Sahajanand

Namavali rituals and Rath Yatra (24) Karyakar Din (25), Sharad Punam (27), Yuva Talim Kendra Din (28) and Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s Birthday Celebration (30).

### 19, Monday; Prabhodini Ekadashi

According to tradition a variety of vegetables were arranged (*shak ni hatadi*) before Thakorji in all the three shrines of the mandir and a *rangoli*, comprising of vegetables, was arranged on the mandir grounds. Swamishri performed his puja in the Pramukh Swami Sabha Gruh. A vegetable shop was set up on the stage to mark the celebration of Prabhodini Ekadashi. Today, also marked Tulasi Vivah, Dharmadev’s birthday, Shriji Maharaj’s *diksha*, Shriji Maharaj’s appointment as the spiritual head and Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *parshad diksha* day. Thereafter, Swamishri raised each vegetable given to him and sanctified them.

### 24, Saturday; New Mahapuja, Arti and Sahajanand Namavali Rituals

At 10.00 a.m., Swamishri arrived on the mandir grounds. A small procession to honour the historic event was arranged. A *murti* of Shastriji Maharaj was installed in a decorative *rath* and the small *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, brought



Swamishri and *sadguru* swamis perform the historic new *mahapuja* rituals before Thakorji, Bochasan

from Sarangpur, were installed in a palanquin. As Swamishri and the *sadguru* swamis started circumambulating the mandir youths waved the BAPS flags, devotees of Badalpur sang and played *bhungals* in their inimitable style and children blew conch shells. After completing one *pradakshina*, Swamishri ascended the mandir steps to perform the new *mahapuja* rituals. Ishwarcharan Swami gave an introduction to the historic occasion. He said, “By the instruction and inspiration of Mahant Swami Maharaj a new *mahapuja* has been written by Bhadresh Swami. For the first time ever in the BAPS an exclusive *mahapuja* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Guru Parampara and *akshar muktas* will now be performed.”

Swamishri himself performed the *mahapuja* rituals before the main shrine of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj. Before Swamishri were installed the small *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj (from Sarangpur).

Dr Swami performed the *mahapuja* rituals with Swamishri’s Harikrishna Maharaj installed before him. Similarly, Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami performed the *mahapuja* rituals. According to Swamishri’s wish the rituals were also performed at the holy feet of Shri

Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj inside the mandir shrine by Anandswarup Swami and Jnaneshwar Swami. Devotees also performed the *mahapuja* rituals under the mandir dome.

At 10.28 a.m., the new *mahapuja* rituals commenced under the guidance of Shrutiprakash Swami. At 11.15 a.m., the chanting of the new Sahajanand Namavali started and thereafter prayers were offered and the new *arti* (Jai Swaminarayan, Jai Akshar-Purushottam,...) was performed at 12 noon. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the occasion, “Shastriji Maharaj said, ‘I’ve tonsured my head for the sake of Akshar-Purushottam.’ These words reflect everything about his dedication and sacrifice. We, too, must also behold these words, meaning we too have tonsured our heads not for others but for Akshar-Purushottam. It was only when Maharaj and Swami came to earth from Akshardham that we got their association. Consolidate our faith in them. There should be no lapses in that. Shastriji Maharaj tolerated immensely. He was divine and the all-knower. The new *mahapuja* and *arti* have been performed. Doing them with an understanding will endow you with peace, peace, peace and *moksha*.”

Swamishri took lunch at 12.52 p.m.





Swamishri performs *arti* during the *shilanyas* rituals for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Smruti Mandir, Sarangpur

In the evening assembly, Swamishri celebrated a symbolic Rath Yatra festival.

## 29, Thursday

After completing his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *mur-tis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Davda (Nadiad), Kava (Himmatnagar), Davad (Himmatnagar) and Chitroda (Himmatnagar).

## DECEMBER

### BOCHASAN: 1-2

### RAJKOT: 2-16

Swamishri was given a warm welcome and cheerfully honoured at the Rajkot mandir.

From 5 to 15 December, Swamishri celebrated Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 98<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations and launched the year-long Bicentenary Celebrations the Vachanamrut (11 Dec.) at Swaminarayan Nagar on the outskirts of Rajkot. For details refer to special issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss*, January-February 2019.

### SARANGPUR: 16-17

### 17, Monday; Pramukh Swami Maharaj Smruti Mandir Shilanyas Rituals

The *shilanyas* rituals for Pramukh Swami

Maharaj's Smruti Mandir was arranged immediately behind the present memorial shrine. The *sad-guru* swamis performed the initial *mahapuja* rituals until Swamishri arrived to perform the *pujan* rituals of the *yantra* and *nidhikumbh*. Then, an audio recording of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's exposition on Vachanamrut Sarangpur 7, *Naimisharanya Kshetra*, was relayed. Thereafter, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the occasion, "Swami Bapa's principal credo, 'In the joy of others lies our own...' is an international principle. Scientists also endorse the sentiment. Swami Bapa not only gave this maxim but he also lived it. He exemplified this highest sentiment. He did not care for his body. He strived for others and lived for all. He did not spend a second for himself. Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj are always present here. When one consolidates one's faith in them, one will transcend the joys and miseries and honours and insults of this world."

Then, Swamishri and the *sadguru* sadhus entered the *gart* (excavated pit) to perform the final *shilanyas* rituals. Amidst Vedic chantings Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami sprinkled *abil*, *gulal* and rice grains sanctified by Swamishri in the smaller *gart*. Thereafter, the *yantra* and *nidhikumbh* were



placed and cement was poured into the *gart*. At 12.00 noon, the first *shila* was placed. Finally, the *mantra-pushpanjali* and *arti* rituals were performed. Then, all swamis poured cement into the *gart* and all the devotees showered flowers into the *gart*.

At 4.30 p.m., Swamishri departed for Bhavnagar to fly to Mumbai.

## MUMBAI: 17-31

During Swamishri's stay in Mumbai the evening satsang assemblies were themed on Kirtan Aradhana (20), Pushti Din (22), Saujanya Din (23), Shishu Din (24), Satsang Pariksha Din (27), Bal Din (28), Yuva Utkarsh Din (29), Rajasthan Devotees' Day (30) and Announcement of Youth Adhiveshan (31).

### 22, Saturday; Pushti Din

The evening satsang assembly was themed Pushti Din. Youths performed three skits related to satsang reading and thereafter questions were asked to Swamishri.

■ After the first skit, youths asked Swamishri the need for satsang reading when they were following all the *niyams*.

Swamishri replied, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj said, 'At least read satsang books for 15 to 20 minutes daily.' It develops your intellect and consolidates satsang values. Many virtues in life come through satsang reading. To behave as *atmarup* one needs to engage in satsang reading."

■ After the second skit, youths asked, "How to find time when we don't have time to spare?"

Swamishri asked a question, "Do you have faith in Shriji Maharaj?" The audience replied, "Yes." "If someone were to offer you 1 million dollars would you not spare time to do something! Likewise, if you have faith in Maharaj's words then what he has said is worth a trillion dollars. If we were to get one million dollars for reading for 15 minutes we would take time out to do so."



Youths perform a skit to promote satsang reading, Mumbai

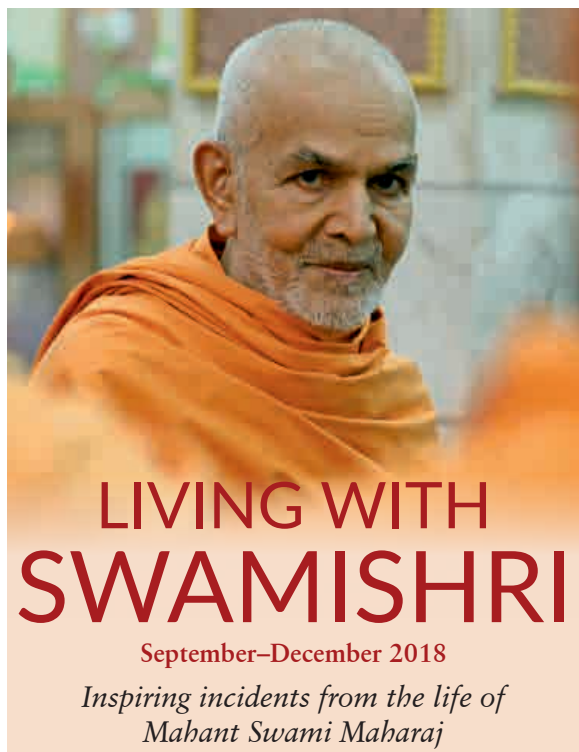
■ After the third skit, youths asked, "How can we inspire today's youths to read satsang books when they believe that they are overburdened with their academic studies?"

Swamishri replied, "Once, a woodcutter got an order to cut more trees for the day. So, thinking that he did not have the time to sharpen his axe he started cutting trees. He could not cut even the daily number of trees he used to. Similarly, doing satsang is like sharpening the edge of an axe. Satsang stabilizes the mind, which enables one to do a lot more work."

### 29, Saturday; Yuva Utkarsh Din

In the evening, 4,700 youths had gathered for the special youth development assembly. Jnanvatsal Swami spoke on 'Ultimate Intelligence – Spiritual Quotient'. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "It is nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice.' One is known to be good or bad by one's nature [*swabhav*]. So, one must improve one's *swabhavs*. If one makes a show of one's goodness, which is deceptive from within, one cannot sustain one's image. By accepting whatever that is good, one becomes good. One must have an inner desire to create harmony (*samp*). You have to repeat in your mind that 'I want to become good' and you'll become so." ♦

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



## SEPTEMBER

### TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

5, Ahmedabad

The head of a TV channel in Gujarat asked Swamishri, “I have achieved a lot as a journalist, but how can I become a better human being?”

Swamishri replied, “[By having] genuine faith in Bhagwan.”

The journalist asked another question, “Today, we find the media overdoes things and creates lots of disturbances. Even I am sometimes disturbed. How can I become stable?”

Swamishri replied, “The answer will come from your experiences.”

The reporter later expressed, “Swamiji’s answer was appropriate. I understand that I should become more mature through my experiences.”

### SWAMISHRI’S DIVINE WORK

7, Ahmedabad

Swamishri sat on his bed to lie down for his afternoon rest. Bhadrash Swami said to Swamishri, “Now, the doorway to *moksha* lie down to sleep.”

Swamishri smiled and revealed, “If [he] were to sleep then things would go awry. [He] never sleeps. [He] only appears to do so.”

Other swamis enquired out of curiosity, “If you do not sleep then where do you go [mentally]? Do you go elsewhere to do [spiritual] work? What do you do?”

Swamishri candidly replied, “No, [I’m] here; amongst the devotees. [My mind] is always with the devotees. While having meals, outwardly [my] eyes are on the meal but mentally [I think], ‘May all attain liberation [*kalyan*], and may there be goodness and wellness for all.’ That is the prayer that goes on every second.”

Atmatrupt Swami asked, “You do all this naturally?”

Swamishri said, “Yes.”

Atmatrupt Swami enquired, “Have you come on earth for this?”

Swamishri replied, “Yes. Bhagwan has sent [me and instructed], ‘Go and do [spiritual] work.’”

### GUNATIT SANT IS ETERNAL

12, Ahmedabad

Santcharit Swami asked Swamishri, “Swami, according to the English calendar, tomorrow is your birthday. Should we celebrate it with *nirdosh buddhi*, *samp*, *suhradbhav* or *ekta*?”

Everyone present felt Swamishri would single out one of his favourite virtues. But Swamishri smiled and revealed a different answer altogether, “The birthdate is of this world. I’m birthless. Other souls have taken many births. Your bones are spread everywhere on earth. Not one place is left out!”

The Gunatit Sant is eternal.

## OCTOBER

### THAKORJI’S COMFORT

3, Bhavnagar

Swamishri’s 85th Birthday Celebration assembly was being celebrated in a large marquee. Swamishri was told to sit on a high seat in an open

decorated chariot, so that the devotees could have his darshan. The chariot proceeded on the central path of the giant marquee. Swamishri was holding Shri Harikrishna Maharaj a few inches above the pillow resting on his lap. Subsequently, the decorative backdrop of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj partly covered Swamishri's face. Someone told him to lower Thakorji and rest him on the pillow so that all could have darshan of his face. But Swamishri shook his head sideways to say no. He did not want Thakorji to have a bumpy ride by resting him on the pillow. He was happy about his face being partly eclipsed and also did not mind holding Thakorji aloft.

To resolve the situation, an attendant swami came and removed the pillow on his lap. Subsequently, Swamishri naturally lowered his hands a little and maintained the comfort of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. All were then happy to have darshan of Swamishri's face and Swamishri's supreme devotion to Thakorji became apparent to all.

## NOVEMBER

### ACKNOWLEDGING SEVA

#### 18, Bochasan

Swamishri was returning in a golf cart to his room after completing his morning puja. Someone pointed to four people standing by the mandir complex's gate and said, "Swami, they serve as the mandir watchmen." Swamishri was meant to only shower his blessings by looking at them, but he called the watchmen and blessed them by placing his hand on their heads and shoulders.

Swamishri personally acknowledged their services and filled their hearts with joy.

## DECEMBER

### FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS

#### 7, Rajkot

Swamishri had decided to see the entire three-hour musical ballet, 'Sant Param Hitkari', in the evening satsang assembly. The attendant swamis tried to explain to Swamishri that it would be

better if he left midway so that his other routine could be accomplished in time, prior to his bedtime. But Swamishri was resolute in his decision in spite of having seen the ballet many times. At 10.00 p.m., Apurvamuni Swami came to Swamishri and said something. Immediately, Swamishri got up to leave. The attendant swamis were surprised and accompanied Swamishri to his residence.

Swamishri was asked about what Apurvamuni Swami had told him. But Swamishri had been unable to hear him because of the programme and thus replied, "I don't know!" Then Swamishri added, "I thought if I got up then all (the *sadguru* swamis and the guest) would be able to get up as well."

Swamishri always thinks about others comforts and conditions. He even gives up his own resolves on many occasions for the benefit of others.

## ABOVE ALL WORLDLY BARRIERS

#### 8, Rajkot

Swamishri blessed a child from Melbourne by gently tapping his head. The child's father tried to prod him to ask Swamishri when he would visit Melbourne again.

Swamishri responded, "I'm there!"

The Gunatit Satpurush is above all barriers and limitations of time, earth and space.

## BHAGWAN IS THE ALL-DOER

#### 8, Rajkot

Apurvamuni Swami asked Swamishri, "When any work is successfully accomplished through your blessings then swamis and devotees praise you, 'Through your blessings everything was accomplished well.' At that time, don't you get thoughts that you had done it?"

Swamishri replied emphatically, "No, Bhagwan does everything, so there is no question of having any other thoughts. I am not capable of doing anything."

Apurvamuni Swami asked another question, "When such large festivals are organized everyone starts praising you for their success. However



when something goes wrong then people start blaming you. Do you ever think that something may go wrong or bad?”

Again, Swamishri stressed, “No. I have left everything upon Bhagwan [as the all-doer].”

Apurvamuni Swami added, “Don’t you get stressed during such a large undertaking and responsibility.”

Swamishri replied calmly, “Nothing of the sort.” ♦

## ANSWERS AND REVELATIONS

September–December 2018

*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*

### SEPTEMBER

Q. Swamishri was asked, “How can we make you smile?”

A. “Observe *niyam* and imbibe *nischay* and they will enable you to attain Akshardham.” (1, Atladra)

■ *Kusang* takes you towards *dehbbhav*, wherein lies all the problems and conflicts of the world.

■ As a person becomes purer through the association of the Satpurush he leans more towards and realizes the Satpurush and Bhagwan.

(7, Ahmedabad)

Q. A child asked Swamishri, “What can we children do to please you?”

A. Swamishri replied, “Have good habits and do satsang.” (14, Ahmedabad)

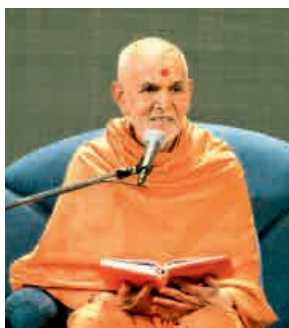
■ The essence [of doing satsang] is to dissolve one’s [worldly] desires for the sense pleasures (*vishays*). And why can’t this be achieved when we have the association of the supreme Bhagwan. Before him all things (worldly pleasures) are like chaff.

(16, Ahmedabad)

Q. A swami asked, “Tell us in one sentence what is *brahmavidya*?”

A. Swamishri replied, “To see all as divine.”

Q. “What should we do to realize this?”



A. Swamishri answered, “You have to make efforts.” (16, Ahmedabad)

Q. A child asked, “Swami, we want to see divinity in all. But, from where can we get such ‘spectacles’ to see it?”

A. Swamishri instantly replied, “From the Satpurush.”

(18, Ahmedabad)

■ Engage your mind in thinking about what we have gained (*prapti*), ‘How [great] Bhagwan is and how [insignificant] I am. It is surprising for an ant to meet an elephant.’ By grasping this all tensions will be dissolved.

(19, Ahmedabad)

### OCTOBER

Q. How can we purify our hearts?

A. Swamishri wrote, “By doing dhyān of the Gunatit gurus and by bonding with them.”

(1, Bhavnagar)

Q. Swami, what one word do you have to say about *ghar sabha*?

A. It is a wellspring of [spiritual] understanding (*samjan ni gangotri*).

(6, Bhavnagar)

Q. Who is an ideal youth according to you?

A. One who has character and inspires character in society.

(7, Bhavnagar)

Q. The *kishores* of London asked Swamishri, “What four virtues are required to go to Akshardham?”

A. Swamishri replied, “Uproot *abhav-avgun* [in oneself] altogether. Then cultivate *divyabhav*, *mahima* and *das na das*.” (9, Bhavnagar)

■ One’s mind becomes drawn to new things. Bhagwan is ever new! If one understands his glory (*mahima*) then one’s mind will naturally become engaged to him.

■ Do not keep one’s mind in social affairs but engage it in Bhagwan. Then one is said to have done satsang and understood the glory of satsang.

■ True knowledge is to give up (one’s desires) for one’s body and transcend the gross (*sthul*), subtle (*sukshma*) and causal (*karan*) to do bhajan. This is known as having done bhajan. (16, Dhari)

■ One who is humble (*nirmami*) has patience (*dhiraj*) and is forgiving (*kshama*), has transcended the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal) and states (waking, dream and deep sleep). (22, Gadhada)

## NOVEMBER

■ One must have the belief that ‘They [devotees] are all *satsangis* and are my relatives’; only then can one have *paksh* for them. Also, by not having *abhav-avgun* for anyone one can exercise *paksh* for them. Otherwise, it would be difficult to side with them. (1, Gondal)

Q. A *bal karyakar* asked Swamishri, “With what thought in mind should we run the children’s activities?”

A. Swamishri replied, “Believe all to be *muktas* and have *divyabhav* for them.” (6, Gondal)

Q. A swami asked, “Swami, what should we do so that you will always remain with us?”

A. Swamishri smiled and said, “Have *divyabhav* for all – it is the master key!” (8, Gondal)

Q. An aspirant asked Swamishri, “How can we pay our debts to you?”

A. Swamishri replied, “Observe *dharma-niyam* and have *divyabhav*.” (10, Bhadra)

Q. A youth asked Swamishri, “In your presence, we get strength to get rid of our bad habits. However, when you are far away from us our bad habits return. What should we do to permanently get rid of them?”

A. Swami replied, “[Have] *mahima*.”

(13 Bhadra)

■ The ABC of satsang is to realize one’s *atma* to be different from the body. Only thereafter will all one’s spiritual works be accomplished. As long as one’s body and *atma* are entwined with each other no efforts (for *moksha*) will bear fruit.

(17, Bochasan)

Q. A youth asked, “What expectations do you have from us?”

A. Swamishri expressed, “Yogi Bapa’s credo of *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta*. Then, do not take *abhav-avgun* of others. And, behave as such so that the guru is not shamed.” (20, Bochasan)

## DECEMBER

Q. Shri Dharmabhavukji, Professor of Management, Hawaii University, asked Swamishri, “How can one who has renounced everything perform any worldly activities?”

A. Swamishri replied, “Bhagwan is the all-doer. We are not the doer. Leave everything upon Bhagwan because he does everything.” (8, Rajkot)

■ “The essence of the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato is, ‘Maharaj and Swami, Brahman and Parabrahman.’ The words [of the two shastras] will take you to Bhagwan.” (31, Mumbai) ♦

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



## 40 Universities Honour Mahamahopadhyaya Swami Bhadreshdasji

16 January 2019, Lucknow

Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University hosted the representatives of over 40 universities at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Scientific Convention Centre in Lucknow to honour Mahamahopadhyaya Swami Bhadreshdasji with two awards for authoring two unique contemporary Sanskrit texts – the ‘Swaminarayan Bhashya’ and the ‘Swaminarayan-Siddhant-Sudha’.

On behalf of the State of Uttar Pradesh, Deputy Chief Minister Shri Dinesh Sharma, conferred the ‘Acharya Pravar’ award, and on behalf of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Vice-chancellor Dr N.M.P. Verma awarded the title of ‘Excellence in Philosophy’ to Bhadresh Swami.

Also present at the felicitation assembly were Dr Mahrukh Mirza (Vice-chancellor, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Arabi-Farsi University), who presented a felicitation letter in Arabic,

Shri Kuvarshekhar Vrajendraji (Vice-chancellor, Shobhit University), and vice-chancellors and representatives of 40 other universities.

Addressing the assembly, the Chancellor of Sagar University, Shri Balvant Jani said, “Akshar-Purushottam Darshan is a Vedic darshan independent of and distinct to the darshans known to this date, such as Advait, Vishishtadvait, Dvait, etc. The Swaminarayan Bhashya, written on the basis of the Prasthanatrayi, and the Swaminarayan-Siddant-Sudha are both traditional and authentic texts.”

Deputy Chief Minister Shri Dinesh Sharma said, “Like Shankaracharya and Ramanujacharya, Bhadresh Swami comes in the lineage of acharyas and by conferring him the title of ‘Acharya Pravar’ the State of Uttar Pradesh is honoured.”

Governor Shri Ram Naik also acknowledged



this historic work by sending his letter of felicitation.

Bhadresh Swami addressed the gathering, “All this work has only been possible due to the grace of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj and guru Mahant Swami Maharaj. I offer all the acclaims to their lotus feet.”

Narayanmuni Swami gave the concluding remarks, “This ceremony is historical as 40 universities and the Deputy Chief Minister himself have gathered to felicitate Bhadreshdas Swami. This shows their love and respect towards educational accomplishments. This historic ceremony celebrates the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan which proclaims that



one should become *aksharrup* and offer *upasana* to Purushottam.”

The event concluded with the singing of the national anthem. ♦

## Brahmavihari Swami Awarded Honorary Doctorate

17 February 2019, Ahmedabad



In recognition of Brahmavihari Swami’s contributions to social services, spirituality and scholarship, Gujarat University conferred an honorary doctorate on him.

Representing Gujarat University, Vice-Chancellor Shri Himanshubhai Pandya presented the honorary PhD degree during a ceremony at the BAPS Mandir in Shahibaug in the presence of thousands of devotees. ♦

### SWAMINARAYAN BLISS INFORMATION STATEMENT

1. **Printer's Name:** Sadhu Swayamprakashdas
2. **Publisher's Name:** Sadhu Swayamprakashdas
3. **Place of Publication:** Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad-4.
4. **Period of Publication:** Bi-Monthly.
5. **Editor's Name:** Sadhu Swayamprakashdas

I, Sadhu Swayamprakashdas, hereby declare that the above mentioned information is true to my knowledge.

**Nationality:** Indian

6. **Owner's Name:** Swaminarayan Aksharpith

**Address:** Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad-4.

7. **Printer's Name:** Swaminarayan Mudran Mandir, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad-4.

(Signed) Sadhu Swayamprakashdas. Date: 5-3-2019



Brahmagavihari Swami addresses the Global Conference

## Global Conference of Human Fraternity

3–4 February 2019, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Celebrating 2019 as the Year of Tolerance, the UAE organized a historic Global Conference of Human Fraternity in conjunction with the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis, the first ever to the UAE by a sitting pope. The two-day conference, held at the regal Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi, was the first of its kind in the Arab world, and was graced by more than 700 religious leaders, clerics and scholars representing the Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and other faiths from across the world. Representing the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Brahmagavihari Swami was specially requested by the Royal Court to deliver the keynote address in the inaugural session in this unique conference hosted by the Muslim Council of Elders under the patronage of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Inaugurating the conference on 3 February, HE Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Tolerance, said, “This gathering

enables us to counter the extremism, prejudice, hate, aggression, greed and oppression that violate the very idea of human fraternity.”

Following His Excellency on stage, a panel of eminent religious and spiritual figures gave their views on how the world can live as one community by instilling tolerance and love. The notable speakers included HE Ahmed Aboul Gheit from Egypt, Secretary General of the Arab League; Dr James Zogby from the USA, Founder and President of the Arab American Institute; His Beatitude Bishop Yulius, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church; Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit from Norway, Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches; HE Ali Al-Amin from Lebanon, Member of the Muslim Council of Elders; and Brahmagavihari Swami from India, representing the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha.

HE Ahmed Aboul Gheit said, “The Global Conference of Human Fraternity celebrates the essence of humanity and diversity.”



His Holiness Pope Francis addresses the conference



Religious leaders and dignitaries during a conference session

Dr James Zogby said, “This historic event has gathered hundreds of leaders from every part of the world to discuss the oneness of humanity.”

His Beatitude Bishop Yulius said, “Fraternity among diverse people is the safety valve that preserves human existence. Dignity is a virtue God has afforded everyone regardless of nationality or religion.”

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said, “We are all members of one human family, it is our responsibility that we all reflect God’s love for man and live as one family for the sake of mankind.”

HE Ali Al-Amin said, “The UAE has set a perfect example of tolerance and peaceful co-existence among diverse communities. This gathering reinforces the human bond, calls for dialogue between all nations and religions, and rejects fanaticism.”

Brahmavihari Swami concluded the session, touching upon the truth of human fraternity, “Until we humans learn to happily talk and walk with one another, share and care for each

other, even boundless progress and prosperity will still be worthless.... Of what use is upgrading the world, if we downgrade human lives and relations?”

Further, he emphasized, “All essential elements – sun, earth, water, air and space are universal. If Creation is universal, then the Creator is universal and so should be all religions, as they are the pathways to God.”

He went on to add, “As home to more than 200 nationalities, the UAE is a model of peaceful coexistence. Tolerance in the UAE is a verb, not a noun. It is seen in action every day. The country has set up ministries for tolerance and happiness, created policies, laws and regulations, and is celebrating a whole year. Tolerance in the UAE is not cosmetic, it is not skin deep; it is the very soul of this country.”

Brahmavihari Swami seamlessly elaborated the all-embracing outlook of Hinduism, expressed gratitude towards the Rulers of the UAE and remembered His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s speech in the UN Millennium World Peace Summit in 2000 which highlighted the importance of interfaith dialogue. As the ultimate example of fraternity, he narrated an eyewitness account of the ideal friendship between Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj, which transcended all barriers of position, profession, education, language and religion.

Brahmavihari Swami further explained his own experience within the UAE. “I stand here as a witness to the UAE’s tolerance and inclusiveness by granting land for the BAPS Hindu Mandir.”

The UAE’s spirit of global harmony was at the forefront of this first Global Conference of Human Fraternity which was hosted by The Muslim Council of Elders, with an inaugural keynote address by a Hindu sadhu and the concluding address by HH Pope Francis at The Founder’s Memorial. The message of peace, harmony and fraternity was loud and clear – “Either we build the future together, or have no future.” ♦





## INDIA

### BAL-BALIKA KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

21 December 2018 to 19 January 2019, Gujarat



Over 7,000 children's activities volunteers representing over 500 zones attended the 15 annual *shibirs*.

The central theme of the *shibirs* – 'Aksharam Aham Purushottam Dasosmi' – was presented through speeches by *sadguru* sadhus, senior and learned swamis, videos and workshops. The volunteers were also guided on developing necessary skills to carry out their duties in their centres.

### SATSANG PRAVRUTTI KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

21 December 2018 to 20 January 2019, Gujarat



The annual *shibirs* for BAPS satsang and youth activities volunteers in Gujarat were based on

the theme 'Our Ideal: Vachanamrut' to commemorate the bicentenary of the Vachanamrut (1819–2019).

The 21 separate *shibirs* held at various mandirs were attended by over 14,400 men and women volunteers of the youth and satsang activities wings.

Through speeches, discussions and videos the volunteers were given practical guidance on topics such as *agna*, *upasana*, *suhradbhav* and others based on the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Vachanamrut.

### USA AMBASSADOR TO INDIA VISITS SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM

23 January 2019, New Delhi



United States Ambassador to India, Kenneth Juster, visited Swaminarayan Akshardham. Ambassador Juster received a traditional welcome and then offered his respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir, performed *abhishek* on the *murti* of Shri Neelkanth Varni and also viewed the Sanskruti Vihar exhibition.

Before departing, Ambassador Juster commented in the visitor's book, "Thank you for a wonderful tour of the fabulous Akshardham Temple. This is a marvelous complex and provides a good overview of India's history and culture."

## PRAYERS AND CONDOLENCES FOR THE CRPF PERSONNEL

15 February 2019



Mahant Swami Maharaj offered his heartfelt prayers and condolences for the tragic deaths of the 40 CRPF personnel during the terrorist attack in Kashmir on 14 February 2019. He prayed for the peace of the departed souls and the speedy recovery of the injured, and also that God provides strength and calmness to the bereaved families and the people of India to bear this sad and distressing loss.

Prayers were also offered at all BAPS mandirs and centres to mourn the tragic loss of lives.

## MEDICO-SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES

15–17 & 22–24 February 2019, Sarangpur



From throughout India, a total of over 920 doctors representing a wide range of medical and surgical specialities attended the two conferences at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir.

The theme, 'Nisithavan Bhava: Swarupnishtha, Swadharmanishtha, Sangnishtha', was effectively elaborated upon through insightful speeches by senior and learned swamis, workshops, panel and

group discussions and video presentations. The conferences provided practical guidance to the doctors on how to balance their personal and professional duties by incorporating spirituality in their lives.

## 'PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ MARG'

25 February 2019, New Delhi



In memory of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, many towns and cities throughout India and abroad, have named roads and buildings in his honour.

Recently, the Delhi government honoured the creator of Swaminarayan Akshardham by renaming the 6 km stretch of road that passes in front of Swaminarayan Akshardham from Vikas Marg to Noida Bridge as 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg'. The public ceremony was held in the presence of BAPS swamis, the Public Works Department Minister Shri Satyendra Jain, other government officials and dignitaries.

## VACHANAMRUT JNANSATRAS

February–March 2019, India



As part of the Vachanamrut Bicentenary and

Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebrations, a total of around 100,000 devotees attended the one-day Vachanamrut Jnansatra discourses delivered by learned BAPS swamis at 50 locations throughout Gujarat and Mumbai.

The day-long events featured discourses explaining the history and glory of the Vachanamrut and how its principles can be applied in all aspects of one's daily life.

### **CONSUL GENERAL OF JAPAN RYOJI NODA VISITS SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM 12 March 2019, Gandhinagar**



Consul General of Japan to India Shri Ryoji Noda, visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in Gandhinagar to experience India's ageless beauty, borderless culture and timeless values. Consul General Noda was greeted by senior volunteers of Akshardham.

During his visit, he offered respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir, performed *abhishek* on the *murti* of Shri Neelkanth Varni and also watched 'Mystic India' – the first large format film about India.

Sharing his sentiments, Consul General Ryoji Noda wrote, "I am really impressed. I appreciate your kind and well-coordinated guidance."

## **UK**

### **'TIMELESS' HINDUISM SEMINAR BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR 17 November 2018, London**

Over 150 Hindu youths from schools and



universities in and around London attended the third event in the 'Timeless' series exploring the continued relevance of Hinduism in today's modern world.

Delegates listened to thought-provoking talks delivered by swamis on positivity, the perceived conflict between religion and modernity and contemporary issues affecting youths.

Following the talks, the participants engaged in interactive workshops involving team-building activities and group challenges and explored how shastras such as the Ramayan and Mahabharat help one to navigate daily life.

One delegate, who had never visited the mandir before, wrote, "I really enjoyed the event! It completely changed my perceptions of what religion is like in the 21st century. I used to think it was completely outdated. The event was also really well organized, and everyone here is so open and willing to answer any questions that I had."

Another participant commented, "The talks and sessions were presented in a really imaginative way. I had never thought that Hinduism would be relevant in dealing with the issues that we're facing and seeing all around us everywhere. The event has definitely inspired me to try and find out more about my religion."

### **KISHORE-KISHORI MANDAL WINTER CAMPS December 2018, London & Leicester**

The UK Kishore-Kishori Mandal organized special winter camps at the BAPS Swaminarayan mandirs in London and Leicester.

As part of the ongoing Vachanamrut





Bicentenary Celebrations, the camps were titled ‘Eternal Ink’, which provided an opportunity for delegates to explore the scripture in greater detail and enhance their connection with the Satpurush – the living embodiment of the Vachanamrut.

Participants had provided feedback on contemporary issues affecting their day-to-day lives via a survey prior to the event. Their responses formed the basis of the specific subjects covered during the camps, which included academic pressures, faith versus logic and finding one’s identity.

The subjects were covered through a variety of presentations, group discussions and thought-provoking guidance from senior volunteers and swamis. These sessions offered practical solutions by drawing upon the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Vachanamrut.

The camps proved to be a thoroughly enjoyable and insightful experience.

## INTERFAITH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

9 February 2019, London

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir hosted various Hindu and Christian faith groups to participate in a community workshop.

The event was co-organized with Near Neighbours – a national organization that brings together people in communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse.

The workshop enabled constructive and personal interaction between people who live near one another and have different outlooks, cultures, attitudes or beliefs; facilitated open and honest conversation about issues of concern to ‘everyday’

people in local communities, not just civic or religious leaders, that could otherwise be difficult to talk about; and provided a springboard for further conversations, interactions and collaborative action to strengthen local civil society.

More than 50 members from various Hindu and Christian organizations in and around the London Borough of Brent attended the workshop, including Ms Jaymini Patel, Director of the Brahma Kumaris, Reverend Dr R.F. Leao Neto of the Harlesden Methodist Church, Mrs Harsha Trivedi, President of the Brahmin Society North London, Father Christopher Phillips from St Mary’s, Willesden, Cllr Tom Miller from Willesden Green, and BAPS devotees and volunteers.

The cordial and constructive dialogue included personal testimonies and experiences, and focused on practical ways to enhance community integration as well as a future vision of the local community through mutual respect, understanding and cohesion.

## KUC: ULTIMATE MASTERMIND CHALLENGE 1–31 October 2018, UK & Europe

Over 900 children aged between 5 and 14 participated in the Kidz Ultimate Challenge (KUC): Ultimate Mastermind Challenge at more than 30 mandirs and centres across the UK and parts of Europe.

This year’s competition built upon the previous achievements of the KUC in 2016 and nurtured the children’s appetite for continued spiritual knowledge and progress.

Participants were organized into three age



groups and prepared diligently for several months for the Challenge, learning and memorizing key spiritual concepts and principles about Hinduism and BAPS.

Many *karyakars* volunteered their time to assist the children in their preparations. After the competitions, the consensus of the *karyakars* was, “Many of the children studied far beyond what was required for their age group and answered the questions with great confidence.”

Participants received a certificate and trophy as a reward for their success.

## ANNUAL CHARITY CHALLENGE LAUNCH WITH NSPCC

9 February 2019, London



The BAPS Annual 10K Challenge was launched at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir.

The official partner for this year’s charity Challenge, which will take place on 28 April, is the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) – the UK’s leading charity campaigning and working to protect children from neglect, harm and abuse.

Previous national partners for BAPS and BAPS

Charities have included Age UK, the Alzheimer’s Society, the Anthony Nolan Trust, Barnardo’s, Breast Cancer Care, the British Heart Foundation, Carers UK, Diabetes UK, KIDS, and Macmillan Cancer Support.

More than 3,000 enthusiastic participants of all ages and backgrounds from around the country will participate in fun and healthy activities such as abseiling, mountain climbing, a static cycle ride, and the Spartan Race to raise funds for various worthy causes and local charities.

Dr Mayank Shah, a BAPS volunteer, said, “The NSPCC’s vision to not only protect children today, but prevent abuse in the future and transform society for every child is truly inspiring. We at BAPS share that vision and are guided by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj’s message to serve and care for each child to in turn create a better world for everyone. Children form an integral part of BAPS activities and we are honoured to have an opportunity to further the great work of the NSPCC.”

## AFRICA

### INDIA TRIP BY BAPS YOUTHS, AFRICA

17 December 2018 to 5 January 2019



A total of 70 *kishores* and *kishoris* from BAPS centres throughout Africa visited India to learn more about BAPS satsang and Indian culture. In this *yatra* the youths experienced the culture of various Indian states. Covering over 4,000 miles, the youths experienced travel in various modes of transport such as boats, buses, rickshaws, bullock carts, elephant rides, planes, trains, jeeps and cars.

Among the places visited were Ahmedabad, Pindwada, Mathura, Vrindavan, Udaipur, Jaipur, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Chhapaiya, Ayodhya, and the historical caves of Ajanta and Ellora.

The highlight of the trip was the darshan and blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj for three days in Mumbai.

## NORTH AMERICA

### BAPS CELEBRATES INDIAN AMERICAN CULTURE, TEXAS STATE CAPITOL 6 February 2019, Austin, TX



The Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott met members of BAPS and recognized their many years of community service and contributions of the Indian American community across Texas. In his remarks, Governor Abbott thanked BAPS and its volunteers for supporting their communities throughout Texas, and for participating in efforts that enrich communities throughout the state. A resolution recognizing BAPS and its contribution in Texas was read during the 86th Legislative Regular Session.

Throughout the day, BAPS members met over 50 Texas State Representatives and Senators, along with their staff, to inform them of the Hindu-American community's traditions and beliefs and their activities in Texas.

The evening programme highlighted the various contributions of the Indian American community to the economic and cultural fabric of Texas and the unique role of BAPS mandirs,

which provide a prominent platform for India's rich culture and heritage.

Matt Shaheen, Texas State Representative, District 66, remarked, "BAPS has a great history of community service dedicated to peace and harmony. BAPS strives to care for the world by caring for society, families, and individuals, and is making a positive impact in Texas."

The event left both government officials and community members with a stronger connection and understanding of Indian American culture, core values and contributions in Texas.

## ASIA PACIFIC

### FOOD & WINTER CLOTHES FOR THE HOMELESS December 2018 to January 2019, UK



BAPS Charities centres throughout the UK collected thousands of items of warm winter clothing, such as, jumpers, jackets and trousers, and tinned food for distribution to the homeless. At each centre, the collected items were donated to local charities for distribution: Luton (items donated to NOAH Enterprise), Coventry, (Coventry Winter Night Shelter), Manchester (Age UK), London (Crisis, Brent Foodbank, Wembley Foodbank and The Salvation Army in Harlesden), Chigwell (Whitechapel Mission, Barnardo's), Leeds (Emmaus), Preston (Emmaus), and South London (Croydon Community Foodbank, Croydon Foodbank and Croydon Nightwatch).◆





## **Annual Summary of BAPS Community Services 2018: North America**

### **WALKATHONS**

- 76 Locations in North America
- Over 23,000 walkers

### **ENVIRONMENT**

- 130,000 trees planted in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy & Tree Canada
- 300,000 trees planted in last 3 years

“BAPS Charities has continued to show that serving as good stewards to the planet and engaging the next generation in this stewardship is a collective responsibility that you don’t take lightly. From all of us at The Nature Conservancy, thank you very much for your support.”

**- Mark Tercek**

**President and CEO, The Nature Conservancy**

### **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

BAPS Charities provides philanthropic support to community organizations around the country working to address global challenges with local populations, improving cornerstones of society from education to health.

Below are the many organizations BAPS Charities supported in 2018 in cities throughout North America.

#### **Education**

- Boys and Girls Club of Clifton, Clifton, NJ

- CB Cares Educational Foundation, Warrington, PA
- Columbia County Foundation for Children, Augusta, GA
- Fort Bend ISD Education Foundation, Houston, TX
- Irving Schools Foundation, Dallas, TX
- Jersey City Public School, Jersey City, NJ
- Just for the Kids Education Foundation, Philadelphia, PA
- Lexington County School District One Education Foundation, Columbia, SC
- Lilburn Elementary School, Atlanta, GA
- Middlesex County College Foundation, Edison, NJ
- Milpitas Unified School District, San Jose, CA
- PACE Center for Girls, Jacksonville, FL
- Prince George’s County Public Schools, Washington, DC
- Robbinsville Board of Education, Robbinsville, NJ
- Stafford MSD Education Foundation, Houston, TX
- Sunflower House, Kansas City, KS
- The Educational Excellence Foundation, Detroit, MI
- Wake Education Partnership, Raleigh, NC



### Health Care

- American Cancer Society, Jackson, MS
- Cooper University Hospital, Cherry Hill, NJ
- Foundation for Morristown Medical Center, Parsippany, NJ
- JFK Medical Center Foundation, Edison, NJ

### Community

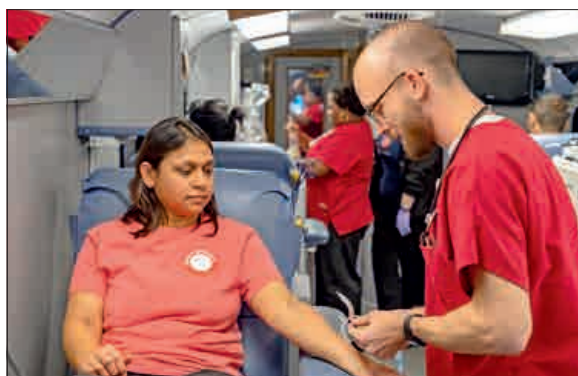
- American Red Cross, Newport News, VA
- Behind the Badge Charities, Houston, TX
- Canton Community Foundation, Detroit, MI
- Child Adult Resource Service, Indianapolis, IN
- City of Boynton Beach, Miami, FL
- Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Boston, MA
- Newsday Charities, Long Island, NY
- Pomeroy Recreation & Rehabilitation Center, San Francisco, CA
- Poverello House, Fresno, CA
- Texas Burn Survivor Society, San Antonio, TX
- The Nature Conservancy

- Town of Sharon, South Boston, MA
- Town of Westborough, Westborough, MA

### Fire & Police

- 109th Precinct Community Council, New York, NY
- Bartlett Fire Protection District, Chicago, IL
- Beltsville Volunteer Fire Department, Washington, DC
- Chino Valley Independent Fire Dist., Los Angeles, CA
- Colmar Volunteer Fire Company, Lansdale, PA
- Fuller Road Fire Department, Albany, NY
- Hillsborough County Fire Rescue, Tampa, FL
- Irving Citizen's Fire Academy, Dallas, TX
- Newington Volunteer Fire Department, Hartford, CT
- Robbinsville Professional Firefighters, Robbinsville, NJ





## HEALTH

### Health Fairs

- 58 locations in North America
- 10,441 participants benefited in 2018
- 1,779 volunteers, doctors & healthcare professionals
- 436 Health Fairs since 2009, benefiting over 100,000 participants

“What I think your charity, BAPS Charities, is doing now is huge, because you are actively caring for people; you are intervening in such a way that they can make real health care decisions and improve outcomes. It is really innovative. It is more than just an average health fair.”

- Douglas W. Curran, MD  
President, Texas Medical Association

### Children's Health & Safety Days

- 20 locations in North America
- Over 2,100 participants

BAPS Charities Children's Health and Safety Days encourage dialogue between children and their families about healthy living while providing participants with the tools and resources to make better lifestyle choices.

### Health Awareness Lectures

Providing an avenue for medical professionals to share important preventative care measures, BAPS Charities Health Lectures provide the public at large with information to improve their lives through healthier living.

- 200 lectures in 58 centres

- 6 topics: Facts About Cholesterol & Fats, Dementia Prevention, Cancer Prevention, Preventative Medicine, Mental Health and Oral Health

### Blood Donation Drives

- 45 locations in North America
- 1,499 pints donated

### Flu Vaccination Drives

On average, 226,000 people are hospitalized every year because of influenza and 36,000 die – mostly elderly (Source: CDC). BAPS Charities Flu Vaccination drives organized across North America reduces the risk from this contagious disease.

- 32 locations in North America
- Over 1,300 people benefited

### Bone Marrow Drives

BAPS Charities organizes bone marrow registration drives to increase the chances of patients with leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma or other blood disorders finding a match in the donor registry for bone marrow transplants.

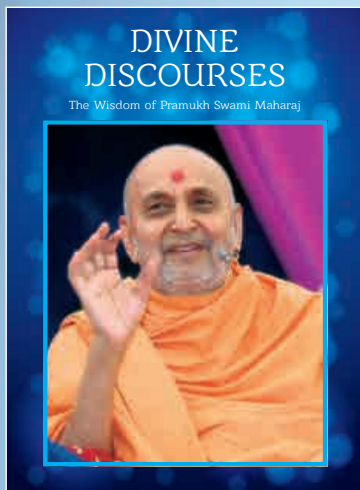
- 5 drives in North America
- 116 new individuals registered
- 6,523 individuals added to registry since 2005 in 123 drives

## DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS

BAPS Charities helped those affected by the California Wildfires and Hurricane Florence. ♦



# NEW PUBLICATIONS



Translations by  
Sadhu Vivekjiandas  
Sadhu Amrutvijaydas  
Sadhu Mangalnidhidas

## DIVINE DISCOURSES

**The Wisdom of Pramukh Swami Maharaj**

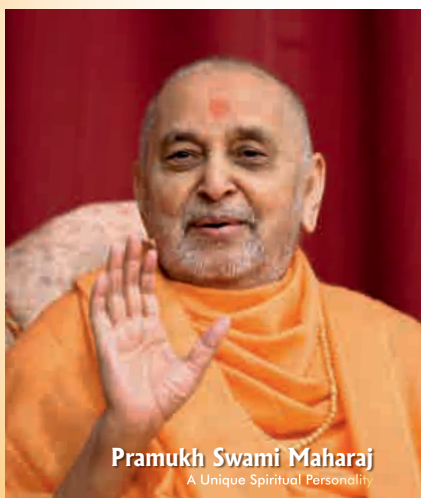
Translation of 31 discourses delivered  
by Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
on various subjects...

- ◆ Value-Based Education
- ◆ Source of Eternal Peace
- ◆ Righteousness and Unrighteousness
- ◆ Medicine for the Mind
- ◆ We Are All God's Children
- ◆ True Intelligence
- ◆ Kusang
- ◆ Snapshot of Society
- ◆ Niyam, Nischay and Paksh...

## Pramukh Swami Maharaj

**A Unique Spiritual Personality**

(An Introductory Booklet)



- ◆ Tireless Travels
- ◆ Personal Counselling
- ◆ Children & Youths
- ◆ Family Harmony
- ◆ Value-Based Education
- ◆ Healthcare Services
- ◆ Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation
- ◆ Tribal & Community Welfare
- ◆ Lofty Spirituality
- ◆ Tributes...



Publisher: Swaminarayan Aksharpath, Ahmedabad ◆ Available at all BAPS bookstores in India and abroad

예외가 발생




Download free from  
<https://www.baps.org/PramukhSwamiMaharaj/Jivan-Charitra-Part-1-Audio-Book.aspx>

# દિવ્યવાણી

## સંપુટ - ૪

# દિવ્યવાણી

A portrait of a Hindu monk with a white beard and orange robe, likely a spiritual leader, set against a colorful, abstract background.

**प्रामुख्य**  
छवि कथा

70 Swaminarayan Bliss ♦ March–April 2019





**MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN: SURAT, MAHELAV & NASIK**  
January–February 2019

1. Grand Uttarayan (Jholi) celebration assembly, Surat, 14 January 2018.  
(Inset: Mahant Swami Maharaj hails the *jholi* call, ‘Swaminarayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho...’)
2. Swamishri performs the *murti-pratishtha* of the new Nilkanth Varni Abhishek *murti* and guru *parampara murtis*, Mahelav, 31 January 2019.
3. Swamishri performs the *puja* and *arti* of the first sculpted pillar installed at the under-construction BAPS mandir in Nasik, Maharashtra, 12 February 2019.





### **PRAYER AND TRIBUTE ASSEMBLIES FOLLOWING THE PULWAMA ATTACK**

BAPS centres worldwide held prayer assemblies following the terrorist attack in Pulwama, Jammu & Kashmir, India.

1. Swamishri with Shri Hari Krishna Maharaj during the prayer assembly, Pune, 14 February 2019.

2-3 Prayer assembly in Ahmedabad, 17 February 2019.

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