

SWAMINARAYAN **BLISS**

May-June 2018

Annual Subscription ₹ 80/-



Mahant Swami Maharaj's
Asia-Pacific Vicharan

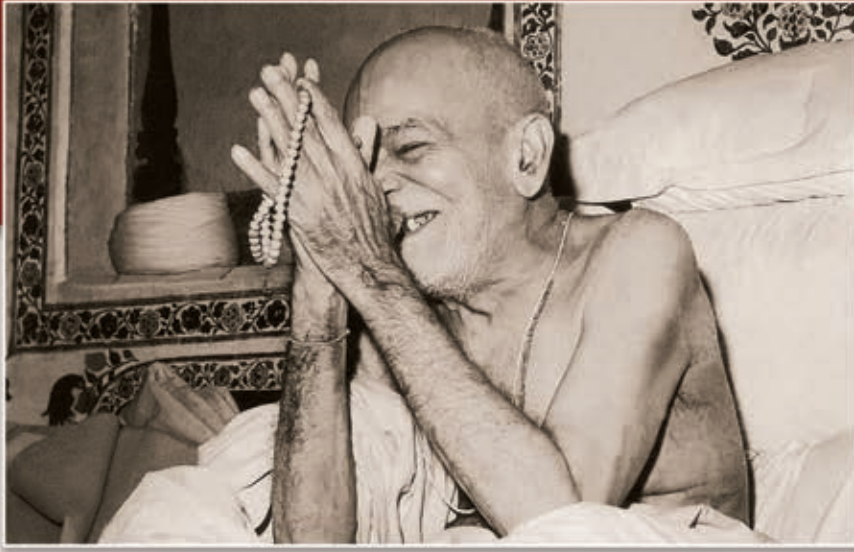


MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

February–March 2018

1. Devotees rejoice as Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj sprays them with sanctified saffron-scented water during the Pushpadolotsav Celebration, Sydney (2 March).
2. Swamishri performs the *arti* during the evening assembly at the North Shore Event Centre, Auckland (17 February).
3. Swamishri performs the evening *arti* during the public assembly at the Sleeman Sports Complex, Brisbane (24 February).

Cover page: Mahant Swami Maharaj during the *karyakar shibir*, Gold Coast, Australia (20 March 2018).



SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

May-June 2018, Vol. 41, No. 3



Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj



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.

Founder: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

Editor: Sadhu Swayamprakashdas

Contributors: Sadhu Vivekjiandas, Sadhu Amrutvijaydas

Designer: Sadhu Shrijiswarupdas

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Outside India (By Air Mail)

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

CONTENTS

- 4 Pleased by Resolute Faith
- 7 Mahant Swami Maharaj's Vicharan: Asia-Pacific
- 25 Yogiji Maharaj: An Icon of Motherly Love
- 29 Impressions of Yogiji Maharaj
- 31 Burnout: Causes, Consequences and Coping
- 37 Mahant Swami Maharaj's Vicharan: India
- 42 Living with Swamishri
- 45 Vicharan in Gulf Countries: Pujya Doctor Swami and Sant Mandal
- 47 Murti-Pratishtha Mahotsav, Tokyo, Japan
- 49 BAPS News
- 52 Somnath Sanskrit University Honours Pujya Viveksagar Swami
- 53 Tribute: Mahendrabhai Mithabhai Patel
- 54 E-Publications

PLEASED BY RESOLUTE FAITH

Shri Hari attends the post-death rites of Himraj Shah and showers his rajipo upon the bereaved sons for their robust faith and steadfast spiritual allegiance...

I ONLY INVITED FIFTY SADHUS

Five-hundred *paramhansas* entered into Gadhadi village while chanting the Swaminarayan *dhun*. The village bazaar and lanes were replete with the saffron colour. It was a soothing sight, but Amba Sheth was perplexed by the presence of a multitude of sadhus. He thought had he erred in inviting so many *paramhansas* or had Maharaj misunderstood his words? In this baffled state, Amba Sheth darted in and out of his house not knowing what to do. The *paramhansas* had started streaming into his street and in front of his house. Soon thereafter, Maharaj arrived at Amba Sheth's house.

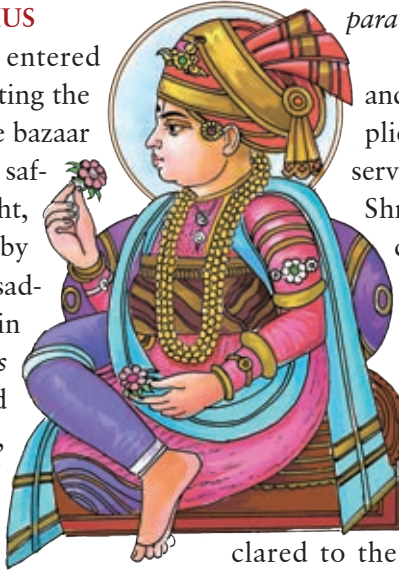
Shri Hari smiled at Amba Sheth's tensed countenance. The latter stated, "Maharaj, I believe I had asked you to come with only fifty *paramhansas*!"

"And, I added another zero to it," Maharaj spoke cheerfully.

"But Maharaj, what about my prestige? How will I manage to feed so many?"

Shri Hari smiled and reassured, "Amba Sheth, a true devotee will never lose face or suffer humiliation. In fact, God always augments the prestige and glory of his devotees."

In spite of hearing Maharaj's words Amba Sheth was not convinced. So, he spread a large cloth on the ground and told Shri Hari, "I have ten members in my family. You place the amount of laddus and *ganthiya* that will suffice for us to eat on this cloth. Thereafter, you can serve your



paramhansas as you wish."

Shri Hari smiled at Amba Sheth and added, "Sheth, you have truly applied your brain intelligently. I shall serve you food for ten persons." Then Shri Hari placed some *motaiya* laddus and *ganthiya* on the cloth, and Amba Sheth placed them safely in his house.

Maharaj then covered the stock of laddus and baskets of *ganthiya* with a cloth. Then, he placed a *murti* of Thakorji and ignited a *divo*. Thereafter, Maharaj declared to the *paramhansas*, "Come and take the food and find a place to sit down and eat." After Maharaj finished serving all the sadhus, he got up to have lunch.

All the while, Amba Sheth was watching Maharaj's *lila* with amazement. Once Maharaj finished eating he told Amba Sheth, "Now, you can take care of your stock of laddus and baskets of *ganthiya*."

Amba Sheth went into the room where the stock was kept. On removing the cloth over the laddus and *ganthiya* he was surprised to find that nothing had diminished.

So, Amba Sheth concluded that to equally perceive divinity in Shri Hari's human and divine acts is true bhakti. He recalled that he had perceived *manushyabhav* when Shri Hari placed his hand on Adiba in Gadhadra, and now he had witnessed the divine miracle Maharaj performed by feeding 500 *paramhansas* from food made for only 50 persons. And thus, his reverence for Shri Hari was revived.

HIMRAJ SHAH GOES TO DHAM

In Gadhpur, Dada Khachar had started making preparations to celebrate the Vasant festival to be held in the presence of Shri Hari. A few days later, news of Himraj Shah's demise arrived. Shri Hari was saddened by Himraj Shah's departure. He declared, "I'd like to go to Sundariyana once his crematory rites are over." A couple of days later Bhagabhai and Hirabhai, the sons of Vanasha, arrived in Gadhada. After Maharaj consoled them Hirabhai expressed, "Maharaj, you had come to liberate our grandfather while he was talking to us. We are all happy and satisfied that by your grace our grandfather lived a worthy spiritual life." Shri Hari was pleased with the understanding of both the brothers.

WE WILL ADHERE TO SATSANG

Then Hirabhai described, "Maharaj, we had invited our relatives and community members for lunch as part of the post-death rites. But the relatives in Dhandhuka declared, 'Only when you break the Swaminarayan *kanthi* and put on the Vaishnav *kanthi* will the whole community come to attend your lunch function.' We boldly refused to comply. Then they gave us another option, 'At the time when the community members come and sit down for lunch, you remain secluded inside a room and not come out to meet them. Then we will declare that Himraj Shah's sons have given up satsang. If you agree with this proposal we shall come for lunch.' In response, my father, Vanasha, clearly replied, 'We will not give up our *kanthis* and satsang. If the community members wish to attend, they can do so, otherwise *satsangis*, who are our true relatives, shall attend the ritual lunch.'"

Shri Hari was pleased with Hirabhai's unremitting faith. He immediately called Dada Khachar and said, "I wish to celebrate the Vasant festival in Sundariyana because Himraj Sheth's sons have invited us to celebrate it there. So, stop the preparations here." Then, Maharaj called Anand Swami

and instructed him, "You go with these two brothers to Sundariyana and make preparations for the Vasant festival." Dada Khachar immediately accepted Shri Hari's command.

Hirabhai and Bhagabhai left with Anand Swami and some sadhus to Sundariyana. Preparations for the Vasant celebration in Sundariyana began in earnest. Punjasha and Vanasha (sons of Himraj Shah) made arrangements for musicians to play during Maharaj's grand welcoming ceremony. Shri Hari's residence was arranged at Jethabhai's house. Laduba and Jivuba's stay was arranged at Bhanji Mehta's house and Dada Khachar would be accommodated at Bhaga Sheth's home. Various other arrangements were also completed.

On 1 February 1824 CE (Maha *sud* 1, A.S. 1880), Shri Hari proceeded with a group of *paramhansas* and devotees towards Sundariyana. As Maharaj approached the village, the devotees of Sundariyana were waiting excitedly on the outskirts to welcome him. When Shri Hari arrived he was offered flower garlands, and the music band played auspicious tunes with the accompaniment of the drum beats. Soon, Shri Hari arrived at his residence and went inside to freshen up. Thereafter, on observing the kitchen arrangements he felt the food rations would not suffice. Maharaj informed, "I have invited many devotees from near and far off places for the festival. So, order an additional 800 lbs of ghee and sugar each, and more food rations." Instantly, Vanasha sent one of his men to Dhandhuka to purchase the extra rations.

THE FEAST WAS CANCELLED FOR BRAHMINS IN DHANDHUKA

Vanasha informed Maharaj, "The committee of *baniya* businessmen in Dhandhuka have cancelled their annual feast for Brahmins because the Brahmins have become Swaminarayan *satsangis*. The amount they were going to spend for the feast will now be used for other charity work.

Thus, we should also invite the Brahmins for the feast in Sundariyana.”

Shri Hari, after listening to Vanasha, felt certain people were still biased and averse towards the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. They erroneously believed that the Swaminarayan Sampradaya was a new organization which was not from the Vaishnav tradition, and so they should oppose it.

Maharaj pondered for a while and replied, “Send invitations for the feast to all the Brahmins.” Vanasha was pleased to hear this.

VASANT FESTIVAL IN SUNDARIYANA (1824 CE)

With the Vasant (spring) festival scheduled a few days later Shri Hari called Vanasha and said, “The festival venue in the village will be too small for a large gathering. So, let us celebrate it outside the village where there is a large open space.”

Then, Maharaj asked him, “How much *gulal* have you ordered?”

Vanasha replied, “Maharaj, 140 kg.” Shri Hari was satisfied and then instructed him about the feast, “Brahmins of different lineages will come, so you will have to make separate seating arrangements.”

Shri Hari gave detailed suggestions and instructions because he wanted to have Himraj Shah’s post-death rites to be conducted in the best possible way.

The day of the Vasant festival arrived. As a concourse of devotees flocked into Sundariyana from all directions, Vanasha, Punjasha and members of his family were greatly pleased. As soon as Shri Hari stepped out of his residence, donned in white clothes, the devotees started sprinkling *gulal* on him, and he, too, reciprocated by sprinkling *gulal* on them. The scene in the narrow lane of the small village turned lively and awash with devotion. Then Maharaj announced, “Let us all go outside the village where the festival venue

has been arranged.” Thereafter, Maharaj briskly walked to the outskirts.

Shri Hari took his seat on the platform and asked for the baskets of *gulal* to be brought near to him. Maharaj commenced the festival by sprinkling *gulal* on the sadhus and devotees. The sadhus and devotees divided themselves into groups and started throwing *gulal* upon each other. The festival of colours carried on till afternoon. Finally, Maharaj got down from the platform. His face was red-hued and his clothes had turned red.

Shri Hari took the support of two *parshads* and walked to his residence. Here, he sat by an open window while the sadhus and devotees sat before him for darshan. Maharaj looked resplendent and beamed with joy. He was pleased with the sons and family of Himraj Shah for their resolute faith.

SHRI HARI GIVES HIS CLOTHES TO HIMRAJ SHAH’S FAMILY

Maharaj changed the clothes he was wearing and donated his upper garment (*angarkhu*) to Jethasha, his trousers (*surwal*) to Punjasha and his headgear (*pagh*) to Vanasha. The three brothers felt deeply honoured and pleased to receive Maharaj’s grace. Then, Maharaj embraced some of the devotees and pressed his feet on the hearts of others as a symbol of his *rajipo* upon them. The joy on Maharaj’s face was prominent and everyone realized how happy he was with the three brothers.

Then, Maharaj bathed in the courtyard of his residence. Mulji Brahmachari prepared *thal* at Vanasha’s house, where Maharaj took lunch. In the evening, Shri Hari went to Modjibhai’s house and attended a satsang assembly.

◆
(Contd. in next issue)

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

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN

February–March 2018, Asia-Pacific



Pramukh Swami Maharaj had visited countries in the Asia-Pacific region in 1984, 1996 and 2002 and nurtured the satsang there.

Following in Pramukh Swami Maharaj's footsteps, Mahant Swami Maharaj's *vicharan* to the Asia-Pacific region began on 3 February 2018. Swamishri gave the title 'Suhrad Yatra' to this *vicharan*. The following is a brief report of his visit to Singapore, Australia and New Zealand up to 27 March 2018. Devotees, young and old, at all BAPS centres prepared joyously and enthusiastically for Swamishri's visit and were spiritually uplifted by his visit.

FEBRUARY

3, New Delhi, Singapore

Swamishri and the accompanying group of sadhus departed late at night from New Delhi, arriving at Changi Airport in Singapore on 4 February in the early morning.

4, Singapore

At 5.45 a.m., Sureshbhai Patel, other devotees and *balaks* welcomed Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri at the airport.

In the evening, the welcome assembly was held at the BAPS *hari* mandir on Joo Chiat Road, where



Swamishri at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Singapore



Swamishri performs his morning puja, Melbourne

an *annakut* had also been offered to Thakorji.

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, “It is notable that Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj have been consecrated here in Singapore. Even though the mandir is small, a mandir is a mandir. The supreme Bhagwan manifested on earth. We are his devotees. We are truly blessed. In comparison to him we are totally insignificant. Even the devas aspire to be born into satsang. But only if one has true spiritual desire is one born here. We are so fortunate. Now, all must strengthen one’s personal *nishtha*.”

5, Singapore, Melbourne (Australia)

Swamishri flew from Singapore to Melbourne in Australia. After a 3,855-mile journey, Swamishri arrived at his residence at 2.30 a.m. (local time). Even at this late hour, devotees, youths and children were eagerly awaiting for Swamishri’s darshan. Devotees hailed the *jai naad*, youths joyously waved flags and children danced in delight.

7, Melbourne; Bal-Kishore Din

At a short distance from the BAPS Mandir in Melbourne, a large marquee and other facilities had been set up in the ‘Swaminarayan Nagar’, where the morning and evening assemblies were held during Swamishri’s stay.

Today, after Swamishri’s morning puja, Craig

Ondarchie, Member of the Victorian Legislative Council, welcomed Swamishri. The resident sadhus of Australia also garlanded Swamishri.

Youths presented a skit and posed a question to Swamishri. In reply, Swamishri quoted from *Purushottam Bolya Prite* and said, “Shriji Maharaj says that if one remembers this assembly at one’s end time, then one’s destiny is improved.

“Those who have attained this satsang are immeasurably fortunate. Maharaj says, ‘Even if one is the king of countless *brahmands*, but if one has not attained satsang then one’s life is wasted.’ It is difficult for us to believe this. If this is understood, then one is blessed. This satsang we have attained is priceless, like having found billions of rupees. But one’s mind is an obstacle. This satsang is attained as a result of all sadhanas. We are seated at the feet of God, so we have abundant peace.”

When Swamishri arrived for the evening Bal-Kishore Din assembly at the Swaminarayan Nagar, a welcome dance by children and teenagers was performed. Then, the Consul General of India in Melbourne, Shri Rakesh Malhotra, honoured Swamishri.

The central theme of the Bal-Kishore Din assembly was ‘*Nirdosh Buddhi*’, which was presented in the form of two short classroom dramas.

The setting for the dramas was ‘Yogi Das Medium School’. In the first classroom scene, Swamishri drew a sketch of two people bowing to each other and wrote under it ‘*Das no das*’ (in Gujarati). From this, the children concluded that to develop *nirdosh buddhi*, one must develop *dasbhav* and bow to all, know Swamishri as Akshar and that Maharaj is manifest through him, and understand everyone’s *mahima* (greatness).

In the second scene, Swamishri was asked, “How can firm *nirdosh buddhi* and *dasbhav* be developed towards all?”

Swamishri blessed, “To behave as *atma* is difficult, but since Maharaj-Swami have been attained it will be done. They have simplified everything.



Youths present in the Yuva Din assembly, Melbourne



Swamishri presents an Amrut Kalash to Hon. Colin Brooks, Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, Melbourne

Even by their touch or divine gaze one becomes *brahmarup*. So be strong. There is no need to seek elsewhere. Everything will be understood and accomplished.

“We have taken countless births. This time, a human birth has been attained. In an auction, just as an item worth *lakhs* of rupees is acquired for ten rupees, similarly satsang has been attained. This is a notable attainment. So, never leave satsang. Gunatitanand Swami has said, ‘Forego ten million tasks, but endeavour for *moksha*.’ Apart from Maharaj and Swami, nobody can grant *moksha*. So, hold on to satsang. If satsang is firmly practised, *moksha* is guaranteed. Akshardham is attained.”

8, Melbourne; Yuva Din

The evening Yuva Din assembly was based on the theme ‘Brahmavidyani College,’ in which the main subject of study was *sahanshilta* (tolerance). Following a fine presentation by the youths and recollections of incidents of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s tolerance, Swamishri blessed, “From Shriji Maharaj onwards, till today, all have been tested. Without testing, rankings cannot be given. Tests can crop up at any time and be difficult to negotiate. But if one persists, God will assist.

“Everyone faces minor inconveniences, but the determined are those who face big tests and

still remain strong in satsang. The greater the difficulties they face, the more enthused and joyous they become. With faith in God, all difficulties are successfully overcome.

“By tolerating, one pleases God. You can achieve anything. Yogiji Maharaj has said, ‘On one who tolerates and forgives, the Sant is pleased from within.’

“This is not possible as long as one is body-centric. Only when one is *atma*-centric or has firm faith in God can one tolerate. Embed this principle in your life. By tolerating you will experience peace and all who interact with you will also experience peace.”

9, Melbourne

In the evening satsang assembly, the consequences of engaging in *abhav-avgun* were presented through a drama.

Then, Swamishri gave guidance on how to avoid engaging in *abhav-avgun*, “All people aspire for fame. Superficially, they may display humility, but within, this desire remains. But unless one becomes humble to all, greatness is not attained. True spirituality is humility and service. To fulfil one’s wish for fame, one must become humble – then one will not engage in *abhav-avgun*.”

Then, Colin Brooks, Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, honoured Swamishri and



Youths present a drama during the evening public assembly at Margaret Court Arena, Melbourne

addressed the assembly, “The volunteer work done by the BAPS Sanstha is truly inspirational. And Swamishri! Seeing so many children here today to listen to your messages fills me with great hope. Your messages of peace, sacrifice and promoting others are truly great.”

Then, Jnaneshwar Swami and Atmaswarup Swami honoured Swamishri with a shawl prepared by the *yuvatis* on which they had written the virtues of each other on decorative flower petals.

10, Melbourne

Today, Swamishri gave *vartman* to new devotees and initiated them into satsang.

Swamishri was honoured by leaders representing the many Indian communities of Melbourne city and Victoria State.

Blessing the evening Suhradbhav Din assembly, Swamishri said, “Unity (*samp*) is the divine power of God. Disunity (*kusamp*) is Kaliyug. Where there is unity, there is accomplishment and divinity. One may be poor, but will be happier than a billionaire. So, wherever you go, create unity; this is what God likes.

“God resides where there is unity, friendship, compassion and respect. Where these four exist, there is *moksha*.”

11, Melbourne

The evening public assembly was held in central Melbourne at the Margaret Court Arena. Children, teenagers and youths presented an excellent cultural programme titled ‘*Shanti: Ek Khoj*’ (A Search for Peace).

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, “Peace is at the feet of the Gunatit Sant. Secondly, peace resides in believing Bhagwan as the all-doer. Without his wish even a dry leaf cannot move. This is difficult to accept, but by engaging in satsang, such understanding develops. Only by believing God as the all-doer will one experience peace.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj often said, ‘In the joy of others lies our own.’ This is true and today even science supports this.”

In the assembly, Mr Matthew Guy, Leader of the Liberal Party, and Mr Craig Ondarchie were present.

12, Melbourne; Satsang Shibir

A one-day Satsang Shibir was held on the theme, ‘*Bhāgya Jāgyā Re...*’.

In the morning session, Swamishri blessed, “Develop a habit of doing that which pleases God. Shriji Maharaj is the one who grants the fruits of our actions. So, by doing what he likes, one benefits, but by acting wilfully there is no benefit. When the sun rises, there is no need for a *divo*; when it rains, no *kosh* is needed to irrigate the fields; and when one sits in a boat, one does not need to tie *tumbdas* (water pots) to stay afloat. Similarly, by doing what pleases God, infinite endeavours are accomplished.”

In the evening session, Councillors Henry Barlow, Tom Joseph and Damien Rosario honoured Swamishri.

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, “Everyone is an *akshar-mukta*, because they have the association of God. If this sentiment is developed, then one experiences limitless joy in one’s heart. Just as an ant in a flower garland reaches



Children present before Swamishri during the Bal Din assembly, Auckland

God, we, too, have the association of God. So, view everyone as divine. That is *brahmavidya*. By following God's commands, one reaches closer to God; otherwise, even if one is seated in his lap, one is distant. To progress faster than the speed of a rocket, believe everyone to be divine. Then you will experience Akshardham here and be at supreme peace."

13, Melbourne (Australia), Auckland (New Zealand)

Pramukh Swami Mahaaj had visited New Zealand in 1996 and 2002. In 2002, he consecrated the BAPS Mandir in Auckland and in subsequent years, through his blessings, BAPS Mandirs were inaugurated in Wellington, Christchurch and Rotorua.

Mahant Swami Maharaj flew from Melbourne and arrived at Auckland International Airport in New Zealand. Swamishri reached the mandir at 6.00 p.m. (local time). After performing the *arti*, Swamishri was garlanded by senior devotees and then granted *samip* darshan.

14, Auckland; Bal Din

The evening Bal Din assembly was based on the theme '*Evā Santne Nāmu Hu Shish...*'. The presentation by the children demonstrated that Mahant Swami Maharaj possesses the same

virtues as Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The fluent and confident presentation by the *balaks* was greatly enjoyed and lauded by all. Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, "If one keeps Shriji Maharaj within, then one attains all virtues. By developing firm *nishtha* and trust in Shriji Maharaj and by obeying his wishes, he is pleased. Then, all virtues are acquired and all faults are banished.

"By keeping trust in Shriji Maharaj and following his commands, he remains with us, the Sant remains with us and all virtues are attained. If his wishes are followed, Maharaj grants happiness. Everything is included in *agna*. So, observe all major and minor commands. By doing so, Akshardham is easily attained. There is benefit and happiness in following God's commands. There is nobody superior to Shriji Maharaj. And God is manifest through the Sant. God has not left us. His succession is eternal. Shastriji Maharaj has said, 'The Satpurush never leaves from this earth.' This is his promise. His work will continue, so spread the doctrine of Akshar-Purushottam." Then, the *bal karyakars* honoured Swamishri with a garland and Swamishri sanctified rice grains hand-peeled by the women devotees.

15, Auckland; Yuva Din

In the evening Yuva Din assembly, youths



Kishores present a skit before Swamishri during the Kishore Din assembly, Auckland

presented a drama titled ‘*Mālānā Mankā*’. Then, Swamishri blessed, “Whatever is done, if one does with *divyabhav*, then one becomes a bead of the *mala*.”

“Yogiji Maharaj showered much affection on us. Despite our mistakes, he would lovingly guide us to follow his wishes. He gave us so much affection, that our mistakes were eradicated and we progressed. We ignored all social pressures and did as he wished. Ishwarcharan Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Kothari Swami and others did only as he wished and so they gained a place as beads on his *mala*.”

As part of today’s programme, around 200 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* had written notes to Swamishri of their mistakes and placed them in a *yagna kund*. Swamishri showered rice and flowers in the *yagna kund*, forgiving them and blessing them.

16, Auckland; Kishore Din

In the evening Kishore Din assembly, an entertaining presentation depicted the various aspects of the parent-teenager dynamic. The youngsters asked Swamishri, “We want to observe the *niyams*, but lapse. Please guide us so that we develop firm affection and are able to follow all your wishes.”

Then, Swamishri blessed, “Shastriji Maharaj would say, ‘Be first in studies and be first as a sadhu.’

Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj all excelled in their studies. By the wish of Shastriji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj left his studies and became a sadhu. He had trust that the Satpurush speaks the truth and will result in benefit. If this is accepted, then his commands are obeyed and everything is achieved.

“Yogi Bapa used to tell youths to study [daily] for at least three hours. If the [mobile] phone is constantly being used, one cannot study and many other thoughts fill the mind. Pramukh Swami Maharaj firmly warned against misusing the phone. This is your age to study. But if you do not focus on studies and do other things instead, you cannot pass. You should play, but in appropriate measure only. This is the era of competition. Even a single mark can make a difference.

“Yogi Bapa and Pramukh Swami Maharaj are from beyond this world, but they mix with us. This develops affection towards them and their commands are observed. By following their *agna*, Akshardham is attained.”

17, Auckland

The evening assembly was held at the North Shore Event Centre, in which a drama titled ‘Sanskriti: Ek Khoj’ was presented. The drama depicted India’s rich values and heritage, and how Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj have endeavoured to sustain and nurture these traditions throughout the world.

Swamishri blessed the assembly, “The incidents presented in the drama are true. The children, youths and adults who associated with Pramukh Swami Maharaj have developed such honesty. Daily, in Akshardham (Delhi and Gandhinagar), such incidents occur in which the volunteers return the money misplaced by visitors. Pramukh Swami Maharaj taught, ‘This is our duty.’

“In satsang, the knowledge of *atma* and Paramatma is taught. This leads to supreme peace. By developing a bond with Paramatma, he assumes all responsibilities. Even the children,



Drama performance during the evening public assembly at North Shore Event Centre, Auckland

along with their studies, are taught the knowledge of *atma* and Paramatma. So, they are free from worries and tension and live with integrity. They live as per the guru's wish. They believe themselves to be *atma* and offer bhakti to Paramatma. Following God's commands is the main thing. This is what all devotees do."

18, Auckland; Shri Nilkanth Varni Pratishtha

In the main hall of the BAPS Mandir in Auckland, opposite the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, a beautiful *abhishek mandap* had been built, in which the *panchdhatu abhishek murti* of Shri Nilkanth Varni was to be consecrated.

Jnaneshwar Swami performed the initial *pratishtha* rituals. Then, at 11.15 a.m., to the accompaniment of Vedic verses, Swamishri performed the concluding *murti-pratishtha* rituals. Swamishri performed *pujan* and *arti* of the *murti* and then performed the first *abhishek* using saffron-scented water, praying for the good and progress of all.

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, "While performing the *arti* I prayed that Nilkanth Varni fulfils everyone's noble wishes. Offer *abhishek* to him with your wishes, and if you have no wishes, still offer *abhishek* with devotion. He is God and we are his servants; offer such devotion. God is manifest in this *murti*, so he will fulfil all wishes."

19, Auckland

In the morning, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of the *murtis* for the new BAPS Mandir in Hamilton.

In the evening assembly, a drama depicting the favourable atmosphere generated by keeping unity was presented.

Then, Swamishri blessed, "With unity, any



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



In Auckland, Swamishri performs the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of the *murtis* for the new BAPS Mandir in Hamilton

task is possible. If you have unity, you will not have to search for God. God himself will come to you. Only where there is unity is there *moksha*. Without unity, even if one can fly in the air, it is meaningless. The fruits of unity and friendship are permanent, since they take one towards God and lead to *moksha*. And one experiences the joy of living with God.”

20, Auckland, Wellington

From Auckland, Swamishri travelled to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand. Swamishri’s stay was at the home of Shri Anilbhai Parbhu. On arrival, Swamishri blessed the devotees who had observed austerities in celebration of his visit.

In the evening, Swamishri went to the BAPS Mandir, where many devotees had gathered for the welcome assembly.

After the evening *arti*, Swamishri sanctioned a booklet titled ‘Samp Sutra’ prepared by the *balaks*.

21, Wellington

The evening assembly was held at the Indian Community Hall, in the Petone suburb. Swamishri blessed, “We are made of three things: body, mind and *atma*. With the body, one should observe the *niyams*. Even animals, birds and nature follow their *niyams*. Many people eat to

live, while others live to eat. We should use our intelligence for good. The mind has three aspects: mind (*man*), bad mind (*kuman*) and good mind (*suman*). The company one keeps determines the mind’s way of thinking and the direction of one’s life. By associating with *kusang*, the mind becomes bad, and through *satsang*, the mind becomes good. Even the mighty have been humbled by the mind. The mind controls everyone. Even the educated are not able to control their minds. But *satsang* can transform the mind. It purifies the mind, transforming its outlook and one’s life. And with a stable mind, one remains joyous in all circumstances. By following the commands of God and his Sant, the mind can be controlled. By controlling the mind, one attains happiness.”

22, Auckland (New Zealand), Wellington (Australia)

Brisbane, on the east coast of Australia, is the capital of Queensland State. With Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s blessings, the BAPS Mandir here was inaugurated in 2014.

Mahant Swami Maharaj flew from Wellington to Brisbane. Swamishri’s stay was in the Runcorn suburb, where a large number of devotees had gathered to welcome him.

Swamishri blessed the devotees who had been

observing austerities for the past six months in honour of his visit.

23, Brisbane; Bal Din

Swamishri went to the BAPS Mandir in Kingston for darshan, where he appreciated and sanctified the artworks prepared by children for the Bal Din.

The evening Bal Din assembly was presented in the form of a cricket match between two teams: Good Habits vs. Bad Habits. The Good Habits team included *samp*, *nirlobh*, *ekta*, *pramanikta*, *nishkam* and *divyabhav*. The Bad Habits team included *kusamp*, *krodh*, *chori*, *lobh*, *kusang* and *vyasan*. The Good Habits team won due to their unity.

After a traditional dance by the balaks, local MPs, councillors and other dignitaries welcomed Swamishri.

24, Brisbane

The evening public satsang assembly was held at Sleeman Sports Complex. Children, teenagers and youths presented the dramas ‘*Antarkhoj*’ and ‘*Nachiketa*’, followed by devotional dances depicting various annual festivals.

Present in today’s assembly were Queensland Police Commissioner Ian Stewart and the Consul General of India at Brisbane Shrimati Archana Singh.

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, “We should engage in introspection. 99% of satsang is based on introspection. The external is perishable, temporary and causes conflict. Introspection reveals one’s inner wealth and will bring joy.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a true saint. He had no faults. He beheld God fully and was at peace 24-hours-a-day. His motto was, ‘In the good of others, lies our own; in the joy of others lies our own.’ If everyone understands this, then earth would become like heaven. But this is difficult, since everyone is searching externally. But, only by introspection will one attain peace.”



Youths perform a traditional dance during the evening assembly at the Sleeman Sports Complex, Brisbane

25, Brisbane; Yuva Din

In the Yuva Din assembly, a drama titled ‘Way to Akshardham’ was presented. Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, “Yogi Bapa used to say, ‘Youths are my heart.’ If one has a healthy heart, even despite other illnesses, one survives. But if the heart is diseased, then what? The heart nourishes the body. It has many responsibilities. Since he had equated youths with the heart, they have many responsibilities. In fact, this applies to us all – we are all youths. First, develop firm *nishtha* and sincerely observe *niyams* and *dharma*. Maharaj-Swami has held our hand, so we will succeed.”

26, Brisbane

Swamishri blessed the Satsang Shibir titled ‘*Bhāgya Jāgyā Re...*’. In the evening a *kirtan aradhana* was presented.

27, Brisbane, Sydney

Sydney is the capital of New South Wales state and the most famous city in Australia. In 1996, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had consecrated the BAPS Mandir in Sydney. In 2014, the mandir was renovated and re-consecrated.

Mahant Swami Maharaj arrived at the mandir in the Rosehill suburb to a joyous welcome from the devotees, young and old. After darshan and



Swamishri sprays devotees with sanctified saffron-scented water during the colourful Pushpadolotsav celebration, Sydney

arti, Swamishri blessed everyone who had observed austerities in honour of his visit.

During Swamishri's stay all morning and evening assemblies were held at Rosehill Racecourse Hall.

In today's evening welcome assembly, the *kishore* band greeted Swamishri. Mayor of Parramatta, Andrew Wilson, and other dignitaries also welcomed Swamishri with garlands. Then, the *balaks* and *kishores* presented a programme on the theme '*Chalo Chale Hum Akshardham...*'.

Thereafter, Swamishri blessed, "Shriji Maharaj has made things simple. He has not left any confusion. No matter how many endeavours one performs, but without true *nishtha*, Akshardham is not attained. For that, one must have firm *nishtha* and trust in Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan. If one has full trust in God, Maharaj will eradicate all other faults and Akshardham is guaranteed."

28, Sydney

In the morning, Swamishri unveiled the model of the new *shikharbaddha* mandir to be built in Sydney and sanctified it by showering flower petals on it.

In the evening assembly, Swamishri blessed, "By the grace of the Sant, one attains a divine outlook. In one with a worldly outlook, there are

disputes, confrontations and quarrels. Those with a divine outlook experience peace and happiness within. We have attained such a Sant and are endeavouring on that path. Only by attaching to a true Sant does *divyabhav* develop. Keep *nirdosh buddhi* towards him and then towards all."

MARCH

1, Sydney; Bhagatji Maharaj's Birthday Celebration

In Swamishri's morning puja, bhajans in honour of Bhagatji Maharaj were sung.

In the evening assembly, Swamishri sanctified the *ghar* mandirs of 21 devotees. After a drama and dance presentations by children and youths, representatives of many spiritual organizations honoured Swamishri.

Then, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "In Vachanamrut Gadhada II 62, Shriji Maharaj has instructed, 'Do not perceive *manushyabhav* in devotees.' If one keeps such *manushyabhav*, the doors of *moksha* are closed and the doors to darkness are opened. For Bhagatji Maharaj, many not only attributed *manushyabhav* in him, but maligned him.

"Perceive everyone as divine. Believe God, devotees, saints to be divine. God is believed as divine, but not the devotees or saints.

"If others are deterred from satsang by one's

behaviour then one is not a true *satsangi*. By one's pure actions, a positive impression is made and others accept satsang. This is the noble way of devotees."

2, Sydney; Pushpadolotsav

To participate in today's historic Pushpadolotsav celebration, devotees had gathered from throughout the Asia-Pacific region, as well as from USA, Canada, UK, Africa and Gulf countries.

In commemoration of today's festivities, the *murtis* in the BAPS Mandir had been adorned with colourful garments. Swamishri sprayed saffron-scented water on Thakorji to commence the day's celebrations.

At 4 p.m., the Pushpadolotsav celebration assembly began at Parramatta Park in the presence of about 9,000 devotees and well-wishers.

A decorative entrance gate had been erected to welcome all to the celebration site.

Swamishri arrived carrying Shri Harikrishna Maharaj in his hands, as youths performed a welcome dance to the lyrics, '*Swapnu chhe ke shu? Haiyu hāth nathi rahetu...*'.

At the centre of the colourfully decorated stage, behind Shri Harikrishna Maharaj's and Swamishri's seats, were two decorative peacocks. Behind and above were the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj on a swing and below them were the *murtis* of the guru *parampara*.

Through speeches, skits and audiovisual presentations the celebration assembly depicted how to imbibe the colours of *swadharma*, *seva*, *samp*, *samjan* and other qualities in one's life.

On this occasion, Chris Bowen MP and Luke Foley, Leader of the Opposition in New South Wales, honoured Swamishri.

Swamishri inaugurated three new e-books by Swaminarayan Aksharpath: *Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami: Life and Work*, Parts 1 & 2, *Gunatitanand Swami: His Life and Message* and *Hindu Funeral Rites: Antyeshti Sanskars*.

Also, a Pushpadolotsav commemorative

postal stamp of Swamishri spraying colours on all was released.

Blessing the celebration assembly, Swamishri said, "Maharaj-Swami are waiting to spray us with the colour of divinity. The colour of divinity has no anger, greed, attachment, desires, envy, deceit, lust, hypocrisy or other drawbacks. We receive the colour externally, but we must become free of these faults.

"*Mahābalavant māyā tamāri...*' is a beautiful, divine prayer which includes everything. To believe God as the all-doer is the basis of *moksha*. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had a firm belief in God as the all-doer. He was the manifest form of Aksharbrahman, yet he endeavoured tirelessly. He has shown us how to practice this belief in one's life."

Then, Swamishri performed *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and sprayed him with saffron-scented water. At the same time, a small spray was placed in the hands of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj with which he sprayed Swamishri. Everyone was delighted at the divine sight of Brahman and Parabrahman spraying each other. Then, Swamishri performed *arti* of Thakorji.

Thereafter, Swamishri took his seat at the front of the stage, from where he would spray the devotees with sanctified saffron-scented water.

First, he switched on the spray which showered water into the distance. Then, using the remote control levers, Swamishri directed the sprays onto the devotees as they joyously passed by, dancing and celebrating. The atmosphere was filled with the tunes of festive bhajans and music.

In this way, Swamishri gave much divine joy to all the devotees on this historic celebration.

3, Sydney

Mahant Swami Maharaj launched the project to build a five-*shikhar shikharbaddha* mandir in Sydney by performing the *bhumipujan* (site sanctification) of the mandir site.

At the 25-acre new mandir site in the Kemps



Swamishri digs the soil and showers flower petals during the *bhumipujan* ceremony on the new mandir site, Sydney

Creek suburb, an open marquee was set up for the *bhumipujan* rituals.

In the morning, in the presence of other swamis and senior devotees, Swamishri performed the Vedic rituals. Then, with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Swamishri went to the spot where the central shrine of the mandir will be built, and showered sanctified flower petals and rice and performed *abhishek* of the land. Next, Swamishri tied a *nadachhadi* and applied *chandlo* to a pickaxe and then used it to dig some soil from the worshipped area. Other swamis and devotees also dug some soil. Swamishri then showered sanctified flowers in the resulting pit. Then, everyone chanted the Swaminarayan mantra to pray for the speedy and successful completion of the mandir.

In the evening, at the Racecourse Hall, Swamishri initiated a *parshad* into the sadhu fold and a *sadhak* into the *parshad* fold.

Senior representatives of the Hindu Council of Australia honoured Swamishri with a shawl and certificate. Representatives of other religious organizations also honoured Swamishri.

Then, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “The [newly initiated] sadhus are pious and well-educated. Out in the world, they could have earned a lot. But they have dedicated themselves to a greater cause. Now they will guide thousands onto the path of noble living. These sadhus will be true

to their duty. We have a 1,000 such guaranteed sadhus. Yogi Bapa used to say, ‘One can give anything, but not one’s son.’ But, the saintliness of Yogi Bapa and Pramukh Swami Maharaj is such that parents willingly permit their sons to become sadhus. So, congratulations to the parents as well.”

Swamishri also gave *vartman* to 60 new devotees and initiated them into satsang.

4, Sydney

In the Rosehill Racecourse Hall, around 2,200 *yajmans* participated in a special Vedic *mahapuja* for the mandir *bhumipujan* in the presence of Swamishri.

As part of the Vedic rituals Swamishri performed *pujan* of the five main *shilas* that will be placed in the foundations and of soil from the mandir site.

Then, Swamishri showered sanctified rice grains on the devotees as blessings. Everyone hailed ‘Sydney Mandir Mahotsavni Jai’. Then Swamishri blessed the assembly, “The divine gaze of Maharaj-Swami and Pramukh Swami Maharaj is upon us. We merely have to receive it. The more alert we are, the more we will receive. Everyone is enthusiastic about the mandir – and so it will be completed quickly – but everyone will have to work hard.

“Shriji Maharaj has said, ‘Whoever comes



Swamishri blesses the Yuva Din assembly, Adelaide;

into satsang is freed from the cycle of births and deaths. Be sincere in observing *agnas*. By following his wishes, you may be anywhere, but God is with you. However, even if you are sitting in his lap, if you do not follow his commands, then you are thousands of miles distant. So, observe *niyams* sincerely, develop true *nishtha* and trust in Shriji Maharaj and the guru *parampara*. Then Akshardham is guaranteed.”

7, Sydney, Adelaide

Swamishri arrived in Adelaide and in the evening welcome assembly, devotees and local dignitaries honoured Swamishri.

Then, *balaks* and *kishores* presented a drama titled ‘Satpurush: Key to Akshardham’. Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, “To go to Akshardham one must refrain from engaging in *abhav-avgun*. By indulging in the mud of *abhav-avgun*, Akshardham is forfeited. Visa is cancelled. Shriji Maharaj urges us with folded hands, ‘Do not indulge in *abhav-avgun*.’ Why do we ignore other good qualities and dive into the mud of *abhav-avgun*? Only by avoiding *abhav-avgun* does one become victorious in satsang. But, due to ego, one falls knowingly, head-first into it. From ego, jealousy and other drawbacks arise. One who engages in all this cannot be called a *satsangi*. Why not see the good? God is immensely pleased



Swamishri consecrates the marble *charanarvind* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Adelaide

by that. At present, the divine outlook is giving everyone joy. So, earn the blessings of Maharaj-Swami. By bowing to the Satpurush and doing as per his wishes, Akshardham is guaranteed.

8, Adelaide; Yuva Din

The theme of the Yuva Din assembly ‘*Chaitanya Mandiro Karvā Chhe*’ conveyed how each person can become a living mandir. Through a drama, the youths highlighted the need for unity, service, humility and the Satpurush in moulding oneself as a living mandir.

At the end, Swamishri blessed, “Shriji Maharaj has urged that satsang should be practiced with genuine sincerity. No hypocrisy is permitted, only then does one become a living mandir. In short, do not indulge in *abhav-avgun* and do not associate with those who do indulge in it. Pray constantly to God that one does not fall into the trap of *abhav-avgun*. It is poison. Shriji Maharaj does not approve of it. Those who see faults cannot be called *satsangis*. For millions of births, *abhav-avgun* has been the norm. But, now that satsang has been attained, if one still remains unchanged, that is not appropriate. So, engage sincerely in satsang, bhakti and *seva*.”

9, Adelaide; Consecration of Charanarvind

In the morning, Swamishri consecrated the

To welcome Swamishri in Adelaide:

- Darshan Chauhan observed *ektana* for 4 months, *dharna-parna* for 5 months and the Bhagatji *vrata* for 1 month.
- 14 *kishores* and 5 *balaks* observed *dharna-parna*. Among them, Manan (age 14) and Sanskar (age 16) observed for 9 months; Deep (age 16) and Yashraj (age 12) observed for 6 months.
- 13 devotees observed liquid *vrata*.
- In addition, over a period of 165 days, devotees did 109,230 *malas*, 58,410 *dandvats* and 57,915 *pradakshinas*.

marble footprints of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the shallow fountain at the front of the BAPS Mandir. Swamishri also performed the *pujan* of 35 *ghar* mandirs for devotees' homes.

Then Swamishri blessed, "We have Swami Bapa's blessings. And I pray that all who have darshan of these *charanarvind* attain *kalyan*."

10, Adelaide

The evening public satsang assembly was held at the Adelaide Convention Centre on the banks of the River Torrens.

Following a drama titled '*Sanskrti: Ek Khoj*', children and youths presented a traditional dance.

Present for today's assembly was the Premier of South Australia, Jay Weatherill. He welcomed Swamishri and then addressed the assembly, "I am delighted to welcome Mahant Swami Maharaj on his first visit to South Australia as the guru. You are a source of wisdom and inspiration. As the leader of BAPS, you have spread the values of equality, justice, family harmony and progress for all. Your devotees in South Australia are among the most thoughtful, understanding and generous citizens of South Australia."

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, "Our traditions guide us that to achieve success one must introspect. For peace one must introspect. Many external discoveries have been made, but

problems have continued to increase. But, in fact, inner discoveries are needed. Only when there is control over the mind is this possible. No matter how much one endeavours, but external conveniences will not bring peace.

"We are made of three things: body, mind and *atma*. We've have left nothing undone for the body. But have not done enough to strengthen the mind and *atma*. People are troubled by lust, anger, ego, envy, deceit, hypocrisy, and other such natures. Even a single thorn can cause much pain. And these are all thorns in the mind. So, how will they allow us to be happy? But, if one focuses on the *atma*, happiness can be attained. Napoleon was regarded very highly, but even he did not have inner peace. He said, 'I have not seen six happy days in my life.'

"Those who engage in introspection attain success and peace. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's motto, 'In the joy of others, lies our own' is a universal statement. If this is adopted, everything can be achieved. Based on this, he brought happiness into the lives of countless people. The Sant engages us in introspection."

11, Adelaide; Satsang Shibir

After puja, Swamishri lit the inaugural lamp for the one-day satsang *shibir* titled '*Bhāgya Jāgyā Re...*'. Then, Swamishri blessed the *shibir* delegates, "It is difficult to maintain firm *nishtha* due to one's fluctuation between *manushyabhav* and *divyabhav*. But, if one has developed *atmabhav* this fluctuation does not happen.

"Shastriji Maharaj endeavoured fearlessly to reveal to us the forms of Shriji Maharaj and Gunatitanand Swami. Those who understood, experienced great joy. Whatever we are doing is to attain the state of *gunatit*. And then, we can offer true *upasana* to Maharaj. To become *akshar-rup*, one must become *das na das* and understand everyone's *mahima* (glory)."

In the evening farewell assembly, devotees honoured Swamishri with garlands. Then Swamishri

blessed, “Just as without soil and water, seeds do not sprout, similarly without manifest God and the Sant, *nischay* in God does not develop and dharma is also not followed.

“The true Sant is straightforward – inwardly and outwardly his actions are the same. He treats all with equal love. He has no enemies. Bhagatiji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj all lived like this. Shriji Maharaj is true. His method is true. He is requesting us that we become sincere, and avoid deceit and hypocrisy. That is true satsang.”

12, Adelaide, Gold Coast

Swamishri flew from Adelaide to the Gold Coast to preside over the *shibirs* for teenagers, youths and *karyakars*.

Swamishri stay was at the RACV Royal Pines Resort.

From 12 to 15 March, the Kishore-Kishori Shibir took place on the theme ‘Paramanand: Learn, Live and Experience.’ And from 16 to 18 March, the Yuvak-Yuvati Shibir was held on the theme ‘*Jivishu Swāmine Māte...*’

In both *shibirs*, speeches by swamis, skits, discussions, interactive sessions, workshops, question-answer sessions, audiovisual presentations and other activities guided the delegates on the *shibir* themes. Swamishri also blessed each session of the *shibirs* and inspired all to introspect and apply the principles presented in the *shibir* in their daily lives.

From 19 to 21 March, the leadership seminar for *karyakars* was organized, based on the theme ‘*Lyo Rājipo...*’. The *karyakars* were guided on strengthening their personal satsang practices, and on effectively fulfilling their duties as *karyakars*. Swamishri presided over the *shibir* sessions and inspired the *karyakars* with his blessings.

Swamishri’s Blessings in the Kishore-Kishori and Yuvak-Yuvati Shibirs

■ Shriji Maharaj has said, “If one performs

pilgrimages, observes *vrats* and undertakes other *sadhanas*, but does not observe dharma, then the benefits are not attained.” Shriji Maharaj has firmly and repeatedly insisted on all to observe *niyams*. By not observing *niyams*, even the resolute-minded Narad, Brahma and others faced difficulties. So, sincerely observe *niyams* and dharma and practise satsang genuinely. To attach with God, one must observe *niyams*. There is no worth in worldly pleasures. Do not yearn for them. Endeavour in attaining God. Focus on satsang, since to attain satsang is rare. Engage in satsang wholeheartedly.

■ Keep firm faith in satsang and do what Shriji Maharaj says. Those who have trust in Bhagwan and the Sant are victorious. They will attain *moksha*. So, do what they say and reject the whims of the mind. By siding with Bhagwan and the Sant, one is protected. God and the Sant have been attained after countless lives, so now live for them. If you focus on the *atma*, you will attain the darshan of God.

■ The *shibir* theme is very good – Paramanand. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was immersed in the bliss of God. 24-hours-a-day, every day. He was beyond the attachments of the body. He always lived as the *atma* and so was always joyous. Paramanand is to become *atmarup* and offer *upasana* to Shriji Maharaj. There is so much bliss in that.

■ You are all warriors of Akshar-Purushottam. Now you have to fight against *maya*. Having attained Maharaj-Swami, victory over *maya* is guaranteed. Live to further the work of Shastriji Maharaj. We have come to live for the *upasana*. Shastriji Maharaj faced many challenges to spread the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. But, due to his perseverance, the gateway to *moksha* has been opened for all. Even offering him tens of millions of *dandvats* is not sufficient to repay our debt to him.

■ Dedication is an investment. It results in the reward of *moksha*. Such virtues are acquired



Kishore-Kishori Shibir, Gold Coast

that supreme peace is experienced. If done with dedication, then supreme inner peace is attained. And one develops the belief that nothing remains to be attained.

Having *divyabhav* for all is *brahmavidya*. Without *mahima*, satsang cannot be understood. With *mahima*, faith and divinity are sustained; each action results in manifold merits; and one experiences continuous bliss. Just as in society, money accomplishes work, in satsang *mahima* ensures everything is completed. So, understand everyone's glory and see the virtues of all. Became *das na das*. Revere and apply the dust of everyone's feet to one's head. This is what Bhagwan, the Sant and Pramukh Swami Maharaj like.

22, Gold Coast, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Asthipushpa Visarjan

On the island of McLaren's Landing, off the Gold Coast, Swamishri performed the *mahapuja* rituals and *arti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *asthipushpa*. Then, with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and the other swamis, Swamishri boarded the 'Sun Goddess' boat to reach the designated spot in the Pacific Ocean for the dispersal ceremony of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *asthipushpa*. At 5.36 p.m., to the accompaniment of Vedic verses, prayers and memories of Pramukh Swami



Swamishri performs Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Asthipushpa Visarjan ceremony, Gold Coast

Maharaj, Swamishri dispersed the sacred ashes. Thereafter, other swamis and senior devotees also ritually dispersed Pramukh Swami Maharaj's sacred ashes.

23, Gold Coast, Sydney

Swamishri returned to Sydney, where the daily morning puja darshan and evening assemblies were held in Parramatta Park.

24, Sydney

The evening assembly was arranged at the Darling Harbour Theatre of the International Convention Centre.

In the presence of 2,200 devotees and well-wishers, children and youths presented a special cultural programme titled 'Antarkhoj'.

Then Swamishri blessed, "Parents have forgotten to teach noble values to their children and are chasing after wealth, fame and power. Children can be guided – either in a good way to make them noble or in a bad way to make them evil. The internet has the potential to spoil, so without a resolute mind one can get trapped and neglect introspection. So, be alert.

"The more time you give for your children, the more they will give for you. In a survey, children in America said, 'We don't want fancy houses or cars; we want love.' Pramukh Swami



Swamishri performs the *arti* during the Shri Swaminarayan Jayanti celebration, Sydney

Maharaj highlighted this many times. Countless people have benefited by his guidance.”

25, Sydney; Shri Swaminarayan Jayanti

The mandir had been beautifully decorated to commemorate the birthday of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. During Swamishri’s morning puja, swamis melodiously sang festive songs for today’s celebrations. The evening celebration assembly featured speeches by Atmaswarup Swami and Jnaneshwar Swami, traditional dances by children and youths and other festive presentations.

At the end, Swamishri blessed, “Maharaj-Swami are our parents. They keep us alive and they do everything. We have to humbly serve them.

“The main reason Shriji Maharaj and Gunatitanand Swami came on this earth was to destroy our *karan* (causal) body. Shriji Maharaj made it simple, like bending a 10,000 ton metal girder by merely showering of roses.

“The BAPS is one family. So, view Maharaj, the swamis, devotees and all as divine. See everyone as divine.

“This satsang is different; it is pure and like the sun.”

26, Sydney; Satsang Shibir

Swamishri lit the inaugural light for the *shibir*

titled ‘*Bhāgya Jāgya Re...*’. The benefits of the weekly Sunday satsang assembly and a *ghar sabha* (family assembly) were highlighted. In his blessings Swamishri emphasized the need for faith, conviction, dedication and sacrifice.

27, Sydney; Swayamsevak Din

Today marked Swamishri’s last day in Sydney. In the evening Swayamsevak Din assembly, *karyakars* narrated touching incidents which had occurred in their departments.

Felicitating all the *karyakars*, Swamishri said, “Truly, I do not have words to describe your dedication and service. You all have tremendous enthusiasm, just like *karyakars* in America, England and elsewhere. Here, many have just migrated recently, so are still struggling to get ‘set’. All this is achieved through unity. Maharaj-Swami will give you the fruits of this *seva*. I have sincerely prayed for you all that ‘May all your difficulties be resolved; may you find good jobs or businesses; and may you prosper in body, mind and wealth.’” ◆

Translated by Sadhu Amrutvijaydas from
Swaminarayan Prakash, April & May 2018



HH MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ
(Swami Keshavjivandas)

સ્વામી-મહા
પૂજ્ય સ્વામી Sydney
સહિર-જયંતી ની ભેટ ૨૭.૩.૧૮
સંગલવાર

આપણી BAPS સંસ્થાના બધા
જોરથી સંકો વાગી રહ્યા છે. તેમાં પણ
પૂ. ભદ્રેશ સ્વામી ના જોરથી સર્વોપરી
સંકો વાગી રહ્યા છે. શાસ્ત્રીય મહારાજ
કેફાલ કે સાચે દેવો પૂર વાગશે
તે પ્રયત્ન અનુભવાય છે. ઉદ્યાનાની
વાત નથી. આમ તો ખરૂ જોતા, બધા
જોરથી અક્ષર-પુરુષોત્તમ ની વાત છે.
બધા જોરથી અક્ષર-પુરુષોત્તમ ના જ છે.
આપણી વાત સાચી છે, સંસ્થા સાચી
છે, સારંગી સાચા મળ્યા છે. તે મહારાજ
સ્વામી પણ ૧૦૦ વખત સાચા
છે. અને હૃદયને!
ધામ, ધામી અને મુક્તાન
સાચા છે. આ લોકોને એકાંતિક ભક્તો
સાચા છે. બીજા બધા સાચા જાહેર રહ્યા છે
અને અરોજ કાંઈના સાચા ભવ્ય,
દિવ્ય સારંગી મળ્યા છે, સર્વોપરી
આ સારંગીની વાત છે.
જેને જેને સારંગી મળ્યા છે
તેના ભાગ્યનો ખરે સાચે એમ
નથી.
માટે સારંગી અતિ દુર
કશીને રાખવો. મહારાજ કહ્યું
છે - જોરે સારંગી સ્વાયંભૂત
જાતન કરવું. સમુદાયના મુખ્ય
ના જાહેર સ્વામિનારાયણ

Letter of Blessings by HH Mahant Swami Maharaj on Shri Swaminarayan Jayanti

27 March 2018 , Sydney, Australia

To All BAPS Devotees,
Gift on Shri Hari Jayanti

In our BAPS Sanstha, success is ringing from all sides. In particular, supreme success has been achieved by Pujya Bhadresh Swami[’s work]. Shastriji Maharaj used to say that the bells will chime at the true place of worship and this is being experienced at present; [however,] it is not something pending.

In fact, looking realistically, one finds the Akshar-Purushottam doctrine in all the aspects [of BAPS]. All its aspects are of Akshar-Purushottam. Our principle is true, the Sanstha is true and genuine satsang has been attained. So, Maharaj-Swami are true a hundred times over. And they definitely are! Only the Dham, Dhama and *muktas* are eternal. The *ekantik* devotees in this world are eternal. All other devotees are becoming eternal and will become so, because they have attained this noble, divine satsang. This is the principle of this supreme satsang.

Whoever has attained this satsang is immeasurably fortunate.

So, intensely strengthen satsang [in your lives]. Maharaj has said this – hence, take care of and foster satsang [in your lives].

Jai Shri Swaminarayan from
Sadhu Keshavjivandas

YOGIJI MAHARAJ

AN ICON OF MOTHERLY LOVE

*To commemorate Yogiiji Maharaj's
126th birthday on 12 May 2018 we
present incidents of his selfless, motherly
love he showered upon the young
and old alike...*

After Shastriji Maharaj's earthly sojourn in 1951, his mantle as guru fell on Yogiiji Maharaj. Despite his advancing years and several ailments, Yogiiji Maharaj began to shoulder the responsibilities of the Sanstha with great enthusiasm and ability.

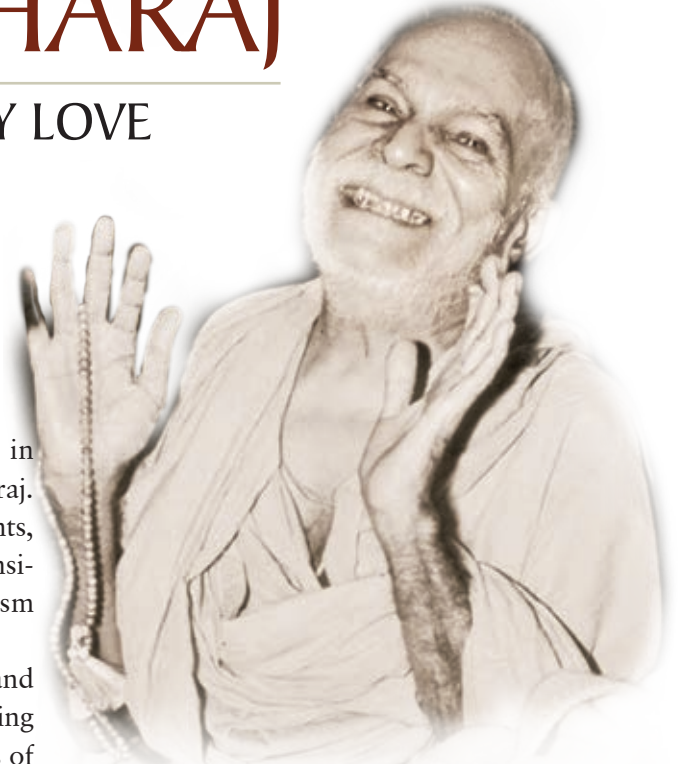
Motherly care pervaded his entire being and those in distress were comforted by his soothing touch and words. As they narrated their tales of woes, Yogiiji Maharaj listened to them with rapt attention. This was then followed by a kindly look and a pat on the back with open hands as a mark of blessing. It was indeed a rare, heavenly experience to be with Yogiiji Maharaj.

* * *

One day, Suresh Jivrajani, a youth from Ghatkopar in Mumbai, came at 11.30 a.m. to see Swamishri and requested, "Bapa, you will have to come to my place." Swamishri at once said, "Let's go." He put on his *pagh* and went downstairs with a sadhu. There was no car. So, Suresh tried to get a taxi and it took him twenty minutes. Meanwhile, Swami waited. Then Suresh came with the taxi and they left for his place. Suresh felt overjoyed. Swami returned late in the afternoon from the visit.

* * *

This event dates back to November 1967. After visiting Shapur, Swamishri was going to Gondal via Jetpur. When they reached Jetpur,



Swamishri declared, "We have to visit the village." The sadhus and devotees thought that Swami wanted to visit the mandir. On entering the village, Swami asked Kusumbhai Diwan, the driver, "Do you know the way to Khodparu?"

Kusumbhai said, "Yes, I do."

Swami said, "Take me there."

They reached Khodparu. There were several narrow lanes but Swami's sharp memory served him well. When they reached a certain residential building, Swami pointed to a lane and told the driver to go that way. It led to the main road. There, Swami said, "Enquire about Rajabhai Rathod's house." Kusumbhai got down to enquire. Someone replied, "It's Rajabhai Mochi, not Rajabhai Rathod." Swami laughed on hearing this and said, "We want to see the same Rajabhai."

Rajabhai was overjoyed that Swamishri had come to see him. Swamishri, Balmukund Swami and the devotees entered the house. The poverty

of the family was conspicuous. Swamishri sat on a gunny bag spread on the floor and asked Rajabhai to sit close to him and enquired about his welfare. He also remembered other devotees of the village. Then, Swamishri told Balmukund Swami, “Bring the bundle of *annakut prasad*.” Swami first gave a packet of *prasad* to Rajabhai and then gave twenty packets for the other devotees. Swami enquired, “Rajabhai, I send you *annakut prasad* every year. Do you receive it?” Rajabhai said, “Bapa, I am getting the *prasad* for the first time today.”

Swamishri told Balmukund Swami lovingly, “Now onwards, you shall look after Rajabhai. When we had no place to stay in Jetpur, Rajabhai had accommodated us for eight days. He is such an old and dedicated devotee.”

* * *

Jethabhai’s story is also worth knowing. Popularly known as Jetho Parabwalo, he used to live in a hut near a massive banyan tree, about a mile away from Bhadran. Jetho belonged to a low caste. The Patels of the village had given him a small field to grow crops for his sustenance.

Jetho used to serve cool water to students, passers-by and the farmers around. Once, Jetho happened to have the darshan of Yogiji Maharaj. Jetho was simple and artless. He prayed to Swamishri to come to his hut. Swami promised, “Jethabhai, I assure you that I shall visit your hut.”

Two years rolled by. Swami left Jharola to go to Bhadran by bullock-cart. The roads then were not tarred. The cart kicked up dust. Travelling by cart did not suit Yogiji Maharaj. Yet, he travelled by cart since no other vehicle was readily available. On the way he asked the cart driver to stop and said, “This is a lovely place. There is a lake nearby.” Swamishri was thus whiling away time. The sadhus, youths and Ramanbhai of Jharola were getting impatient to reach Bhadran.

Meanwhile Jetha heard about the arrival of sadhus and he came rushing. On seeing Swamishri, he leapt with joy. He welcomed Swami in his own

simple and indistinct words. It was dark inside the hut. So, he lit a lantern. Despite the dimness Swamishri was enjoying himself as if he were in a well-lit palace.

Jethabhai offered a coconut, a packet of sugar crystals and two *annas* in donation to Swamishri and prayed, “Please accept these gifts of mine and kindly take me to your heavenly abode when I die.”

Swami in turn promised, “Jethabhai, your wish has been fulfilled today. Now, Shriji Maharaj himself will come to take you to Akshardham. God always favours the simple. So, Maharaj will take you to Akshardham two years from now.”

And exactly two years later, Swamishri himself came and took him to Akshardham.

* * *

Swamishri was in Saring village in March 1952. When he arrived at his accommodation after sanctifying almost all the houses of the devotees, it was time for lunch. Even as Swamishri was sitting down for lunch, a devotee came and requested him, “Bapa, I have to leave for Ahmedabad and you have not visited my house. It’s almost time for me to catch my train. So, will you kindly...”

Not the one to disappoint a devotee, Swamishri said, “Okay, we are coming. Go and make the preparations.” Other sadhus, especially Mota Swami, were annoyed. Mota Swami said, “Don’t go, Jogi. He doesn’t understand. Where was he until now? We shouldn’t go when it’s so hot.”

Then Mota Swami asked the devotee, “Where is your house?” The devotee replied with trepidation, “At the other end of the village.” So, Mota Swami was annoyed again and rejected his request, “Then, be gone. We can’t come now.”

But, Swamishri was all for the devotee. He took a sadhu with him and even asked Vinubhai to accompany him. Then he told the devotee, “Let’s go to your place.” He told Mota Swami, “You have your meal. I will be back after some time.” Thus, Swamishri visited the

house of the devotee, who felt overwhelmed by Swamishri's generosity.

* * *

The Maharaja of Bhavnagar was travelling by a special train with an entourage on the occasion of his son's wedding. The Maharaja had sent a telegram to Swami requesting him to come to Botad station to bless his son. Swamishri did as requested by the Maharaja. He thanked Swami after greeting him.

After the train left, the lineman of the railway touched the feet of Swami and said, "Bapa, please come to my place."

Mota Swami said, "It's half past twelve. It is very hot and we can only have lunch after reaching Sarangpur. We can't come now."

Swamishri, however, thought otherwise. He told Mota Swami, "Mota Swami, think of his feelings and affection. Let us please him." Saying this, Swamishri walked on. All others followed him. Mota Swami also could not argue. The lineman's joy knew no bounds when he led Swami to his hut. He was bewildered, not knowing what to do. He welcomed Swami by performing *pujan* and *arti*. Swamishri blessed him and asked him to visit Sarangpur.

A few minutes earlier the Maharaja of Bhavnagar had bowed at Swami's feet and the same Swami, out of compassion and grace, visited the hut of a poor railway lineman. For Swami, all were equal.

Meanwhile, the stationmaster, a Brahmin, came and invited Swami for a meal. He informed, "Swami, the meal is ready." Mota Swami said, "The sadhus must be waiting for us in Sarangpur. We must return now." Swamishri, however, thought otherwise and said, "Let us fulfil the wish of the stationmaster. Let us have our meal here today and send a message to Sarangpur mandir."

Thus, Swami cared both for the haves and the have-nots, as he was keen on their *moksha*.

* * *

Once, Swamishri went to Ghoghavadar. His stay was at the house of Haribhai, a devotee and a farmer by profession. It was a crammed place and Swami had to put up near the cowshed. The place was stinking and extremely uncomfortable.

The next day Swami was leaving for Bandhiya after having his meal. Haribhai prayed to Swami, "Bapa, bless me so that my standard of living improves. So that, at least, I can accommodate you and the sadhus comfortably whenever you come. The mosquitoes must have bitten you. I sincerely apologize for the discomfort."

Swami said smilingly, "I had a sound sleep which I could not have had even in a bungalow. You really made good arrangements. You did not put us to any discomfort. Now, you will have a proper one-storey house."

* * *

Whenever Swami visited Ahmedabad, he would make it a point to go to the Nar-Narayan Mandir at Kalupur for darshan and meet the sadhus and *parshads* known to him since his days in Junagadh.

Once, he went to see Atmaram Bhagat who was known for his *seva*. He had been bedridden for quite some time. Two *parshads* were attending to him. It was hot inside the room. So, Swami began to fan him with his *gatariyu* to keep him cool.

Bhagat said, "You are a great sadhu. It will be sinful of me to let you do my *seva*. So, please don't do it."

Swami then asked Dr Madhubhai and Ramesh Dalal to bring a portable fan for him. Then, Swami also made arrangements for some fruits for him.

Dr Madhubhai later sent an old fan for the Bhagat. When Swami visited Ahmedabad after a month and went to see Atmaram Bhagat, he saw the old fan and was displeased. He at once asked another devotee to buy a new fan for him. Swami also arranged for fruits to be brought to him every second or third day.

* * *

Once, Swami went to Amlivali Pol (in Ahmedabad) for darshan. There, he received the news that Khodabhai Brahmabhatt, a devotee, was seriously ill and had been admitted to the V.S. Hospital.

Swami said, “Let us go to the hospital to see him.” But a sadhu flatly refused to go and said there was no need for it.

Swami turned emotional and said, “Why do you refuse to come? I should personally look after a devotee like Khodabhai assiduously, and you refuse even to come to see him?”

Then that sadhu agreed and Swami went to the hospital with Ramesh Dalal, a devotee. A few days after the visit, Khodabhai died in Khambhat.

Swamishri never gave a thought about his own health or inconvenience in his earnestness to see devotees who fell ill.

Once, Swami went to see an ailing Dr Indravadan Mehta with Dr Ramanbhai. On the way, Dr Ramanbhai informed Swamishri, “Bapa, there are two flights of stairs to climb in the hospital. There is no lift.”

Swami at once said, “Only two? I would go even if there were five storeys.”

* * *

Swamishri was to leave for a satsang *vicharan* tour to Africa. Everyone felt that he should have a sadhu in his personal service who could take care of him. Since, only by keeping good health in a foreign land would he be able to travel the long distances and visit the many places arranged by the devotees. For this, Balmukund Swami was chosen to accompany him. But Balmukund Swami was then sincerely attending on Akshar Swami, who was ill and bedridden.

Swami wanted to know the wish of Balmukund Swami also. So, he asked him, “You have to go to Africa. What do you think of it?”

“I will obey you. You have the last word.”

“I would feel pleased if you will look after Akshar Swami,” replied Yogiji Maharaj.

Initially, Akshar Swami felt worried when

he learnt that Balmukund Swami was going to Africa. However, when Akshar Swami came to know the will of Swamishri, tears rolled down his cheeks. When Swami came to see Akshar Swami, the latter began to weep as Swami held his hand. He said, “Jogi, you personify Shastriji Maharaj. Both of you are the same in every way. You are a Gunatit *murti*.”

It was Swami’s wish to take Balmukund Swami with him to Africa, but not at the cost of depriving an ailing Akshar Swami of his service. By leaving Balmukund Swami to care for Akshar Swami, he did not pay heed to his own needs.

* * *

Once, Vinu Bhagat was ill with a fever in Ahmedabad. An evening satsang assembly was in progress in the mandir hall. He was sleeping upstairs. Swamishri went to see him as he was worried about his health. He began to massage his feet. Vinu Bhagat felt some relief, though he did not know that it was Swamishri himself who was massaging his feet.

Meanwhile, Champaklal Sheth came to inform Swami that the devotees were waiting for him in the assembly. Hearing this, Vinu Bhagat woke up, and on seeing Swami, felt embarrassed. With folded hands, he apologized profusely.

Swami said, “Have rest. You have a fever.” Then, turning to Champakbhai Sheth, he said, “If you remain here to massage his feet, I shall go to the assembly.”

Vinu Bhagat would not let Champakbhai Sheth, a respectable elderly devotee, to attend him, but Swami told the Sheth, “Massage his feet even if he refuses. I am going to send another Bhagat.” Then, Swamishri went to the assembly. Vinu Bhagat stood up, feeling embarrassed to let an elderly man to attend on him. After a few minutes, some youths came and relieved Champakbhai Sheth, who then went to the assembly.

In this way Swami seized every opportunity to serve the ill.



IMPRESSIONS OF YOGIJI MAHARAJ

Distinguished religious leaders and social reformers shared their personal experiences of Yogi Ji Maharaj. Their impressions reflect the saintliness, tranquility and simplicity of Yogi Ji Maharaj. Let us savour some of those outstanding impressions.



Puja Swami Chinmayanand
*Founder and President of
Chinmaya Mission, Mumbai*

Having met Yogi Ji Maharaj twice Swami Chinmayanandji had a deep and long-lasting impression of Yogi Ji Maharaj's saintliness. In 1983 he wrote,

"The experience I had in the presence of Yogi Ji Maharaj cannot be expressed in language. He was a living mass of what is to be experienced in the Upanishads. The bliss of the self-supreme exploding out of that aged body, wafting a steady fragrance of pure love, gushed into those who came near him, to fill up the hearts of others – even when they were not pure enough to receive and retain it. Hence,

none wanted to leave him and his presence. To such a master we can only prostrate, but not write about."

* * *



Shri Dada Pandurang Athwale
*Head of Swadhyaya Parivar,
Mumbai*

Shri Dada Pandurang Athwale had met Yogi Ji Maharaj several times. He often embraced Yogi Ji Maharaj out of love, similar to the love a son has for his father. He used to say,

"By going to Yogi Ji Maharaj his strong inclination for faith, mind absorbed in godly devotion, and similarly, his detachment, humility and other virtues come to sight."

* * *



Shri Sant Ranchhoddasji
Distinguished Social Worker

Sant Ranchhoddasji met Yogi Ji Maharaj on several occasions in Gondal. He often opined,

"There are many yogis in India, but Yogi Ji is Yogiraj. He is one of his kind and unparalleled."

* * *



Puja Muktanand Baba
*Head of Premपुरi Ashram,
Mumbai*

During his first meeting with Yogi Ji Maharaj in

Gondal Pujya Muktanand Baba expressed,

“You are a person ripe with love. The amount of love I have for my guru, that much I have for you. Place your hands on my head and bless me.”



Shri Dongreji Maharaj
*Renowned Exponent on the
Shrimad Bhagvat*

Once, Yogiji Maharaj told Shri Dongreji Maharaj that he would like to listen to his discourse on the Shrimad Bhagvat. In response, Shri Dongreji Maharaj bowed to Yogiji Maharaj and humbly said,

“How can I discourse to you about the Bhagvat when you are the [embodiment of] Bhagvat.”



Shri Krishnashankar Shastri
*Erudite Exponent of the
Shrimad Bhagvat, Ahmedabad*

Shri Krishnashankar Shastri of Bhagwat Vidyapith, Sola (Ahmedabad) had great love and admiration for Yogiji Maharaj. He often praised,

“Humility is his God-given nature. To be available and accessible to all is ingrained in his personality. When a child or an intellectual come to him they attain something from him.

“Those who come close to him will take away faith with them, and receive without any efforts the priceless gifts of solutions, contentment, a pledge for good action and benedictions.

“When a devotee leaves him he does so with the experience that he has embraced God.”



Pujya Swami Kashikanandji
*Great Sanskrit Scholar,
Mumbai*

The scholarly sannyasi Pujya Swami Kashikanandji of Mumbai did not understand what Yogiji Maharaj spoke, but he was deeply touched on seeing Yogiji Maharaj sway while he spoke in his divine ecstasy. He opined,

“Our scriptures describe the glory of *shabda* Brahm [words of the Divine], but I experienced it in person on listening to Yogiji Maharaj. I cannot understand much about what he says, but there is a wonderful light in his speech.”



Shri Ravishankar Maharaj
*Renowned Social Reformer,
Gujarat*

Shri Ravishankar Maharaj, a social reformer of Gujarat, explained his experience about Yogiji Maharaj in simple words,

“His life is pure and virtuous. As a great [spiritual] person he lived for the sake of society in mind, meaning, he lived as a guiding light. He has experienced immense spiritual joy, which we can know by having his darshan.”

Shri Gopalacharyaji
Scholar of Madhva Sampradaya

Shri Gopalacharyaji, a renowned scholar of the Madhva Sampradaya, often came for Yogiji Maharaj’s darshan in Mumbai. He said,

“By having a casual and momentary darshan of Yogiji Maharaj we become convinced that this Sant always moves and lives absorbed in God. He is always laughing and joyful. His one loving glance and the ecstatic swaying of his head fills the heart with noble thoughts and abundant bhakti, purifies the mind and makes it divine. His shining eyes, smiling lips and radiant face surely bestows spiritual joy upon us.”

Burnout: Causes, Consequences and Coping

In today's fast-paced world driven by technology, immediate gratification and materialism, many endeavour to sustain a work rate that eventually results in physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. It is known as 'Burnout'. What are its causes and effects, and how can we overcome it?



WHAT IS BURNOUT?

The term 'burnout' was first introduced in 1974 by psychologist Herbert J. Freudenberger, who observed behavioural, emotional and cognitive debilitations among overcommitted community workers. He described it as a negative work-related psychological state with symptoms of physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion and de-motivation. In 1976, Christina Maslach, an American social psychologist and professor emerita of psychology at the University of Berkeley, California, defined 'burnout' as 'Consisting of mental/emotional exhaustion, negative perceptions and feelings about clients or patients (depersonalization/cynicism), and a crisis in professional competence (reduced personal accomplishment)'.

Burnout is a consequence of prolonged work-related stress characterized by:

1. Emotional exhaustion; most widely reported in research literature and the most significant component.
2. Cynicism towards the value of one's work leading to detachment and withdrawal from the job.



3. Negativity towards oneself due to work inefficiency or lack of accomplishment and efficacy.

Symptoms of burnout are job-related and situation-specific, whereas, notably, depressive symptoms are typically generalized to all other situations and spheres of life. Burnout generally results from stress that comes about through the social relationship between a helper and a help recipient, usually found in asymmetrical professional relationships, whereby the victim is the 'giver'. Burnout has also been referred to as 'compassion fatigue', and this definition may be more appropriate for care providers.

PREVALENCE

Burnout can manifest in any person in any profession and the number of individuals suffering burnout is continuously on the rise given the demands of the modern work environment. The estimated prevalence of severe burnout varies between 2% and 7% in working populations. Most studies on burnout have focused on the health profession, though there is a growing prevalence of burnout in



the general working environment as technology results in 24 hours-a-day availability and access.

An estimated 22% of physicians in the USA, 27% of physicians in Great Britain and 20% of physicians in Germany suffer burnout. Similarly, about 30% of teachers are affected and some studies report up to 40%.

Another survey suggests that 46% of US physicians report at least one sign of burnout.

The growing demands from a workspace driven by financial targets pushes us beyond our ability to cope. As much as we may have progressed technologically we don't have the understanding that spirituality provides to cope.

On 30 April 2006, Dr Prashant Chhaya, an orthopaedic surgeon, asked Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Junagadh, "I cannot properly manage five staff members in my clinic, yet how do you manage such a large organization?" "God is the all-doer," Swamishri replied succinctly.

"That is true, but you are the instrument. How do you manage everything?" Prashantbhai persisted.

"By believing God to be the all-doer everyone is inspired to make an effort. Because God resides in everyone, he is the inspirer. One should do one's work by understanding the glory of everyone, by pleasing God and understanding him to be the all-doer. One should also pray to God for one's intentions to be pure and to give everyone the strength to work."

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's profound answer



to the question reflects his absolute faith in God and his message to work with the purest of intentions.

CAUSES OF BURNOUT

Work Environment and Burnout

The work environment leads to the development of burnout due to mismatches between individuals and their job assignment in terms of:

1. Workload

It usually results from an excessive quantity of work, although it can also be due to a mismatch between the job requirements and the skill set of the worker.

2. Lack of Control (or Autonomy)

Refers to not having the necessary resources and authority to complete any assigned task in an efficient manner.

3. Effort-Reward Imbalance

Usually refers to financial compensation; also, recognition for a job well done or a personal sense of accomplishment.

4. Community, Camaraderie and Affinity

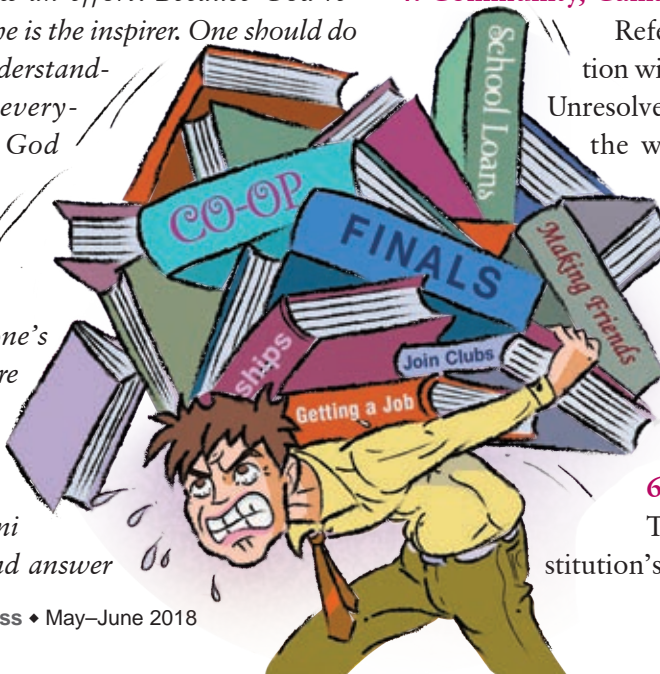
Refers to the sense of connection with others in the workplace. Unresolved personal conflicts within the work environment can be particularly destructive.

5. Fairness

A perceived lack of fairness is emotionally upsetting and can lead to cynicism.

6. Values

The individual and the institution's values must be consistent.



An individual's job expectations and assigned task must be consistent with his or her own personal value system. Furthermore, the institutional practice must be consistent with its overall mission.

CHARACTER AND BURNOUT

Higher rates of burnout result from certain individual and personality traits, including perfectionism, indecisiveness, self-criticism, inflexibility, idealism, type A personality and empathy. Younger individuals seem to be more prone to burnout, although age may be a confounder for work experience. Individuals who are single seem more prone to burnout. Individuals who are meek, have low self-esteem, and who attribute outcomes to events outside of their control are prone to burnout. Also, individuals with high job expectations are more prone to burnout because their expectations often lead to working harder. Thus burnout facilitates interesting paradoxes.

Paradox 1: The current behaviours that we identify, encourage, and reward are the most likely to result in burnout.

Paradox 2: The personality traits that suggest a lifetime of success lead to burnout.

INDIVIDUAL CYCLE LEADING TO BURNOUT

- Compulsion to prove oneself
- Working harder.
- Neglecting personal needs.
- Displacement of conflict.
- Revision of values.
- Deny emerging problems.
- Withdrawal.
- Obvious behavioural changes.
- Depersonalization.
- Inner emptiness.
- Depression.
- Burnout.

This is not necessarily a



linear process, and individuals may demonstrate features consistent with many steps simultaneously. There is an initial compulsion to prove oneself that leads individuals to work harder, endeavouring to demonstrate intellectual capability, thus neglecting personal and family needs. During this process, individuals begin to realize that something isn't quite right in terms of their personal/professional life, but can't recognize the conflict. As they continue to focus on career, they revise their value system such that work is of paramount importance to the exclusion of other outside activities and the source of their self-esteem. They become intolerant and cynical towards their colleagues who don't share their work commitment and can become socially withdrawn.

This leads to further behavioural changes and an internal sense of worthlessness. As the process deteriorates, individuals fail to see themselves or others as valuable, leading to a further sense of emptiness that can lead to exaggerated maladaptive behaviours, e.g. substance abuse. This ultimately leads to depression and burnout.



WORK ENVIRONMENT CONSEQUENCES

Burnout has costs for organizations, as well as for society at large because it is

related to employer/employee conflict, poorer job performance, higher absenteeism, poor morale, chronic work disability, physical health impediments, increased hospital admissions due to mental and medical disorders. Burnout is associated with a substantial excess risk of medically certified sickness absence among both men and women.

Results from a 2004/2005 survey showed that absenteeism caused by stress is estimated to cost the UK economy £ 3.7 billion per year. Poor work related mental health is associated with enormous economic costs. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work estimated that the annual economic cost of work-related stress disorders in the EU was about € 20 billion (about USD 25 billion) in 2002. Similar losses have been estimated for other western countries

PSYCHIATRIC, MEDICAL AND SOCIAL SEQUELAE

Burnout may lead to anger issues, substance abuse, depression or even suicide. Although defined as a psychological syndrome, it can also have physical manifestations. For example, individuals who experience burnout generally report headaches, gastrointestinal disorders and sleep disturbance. Poor work-life balance and sedentary lifestyle leads to poor diet and weight issues. The subsequent poor health maintenance may lead to diabetes, cardiac illnesses, etc.

There are definite personal, family and social consequences. Placing work aspirations over and above family may lead to work-home conflicts, and failed relationships with spouse and children.

All these create a series of negative feedbacks or a 'vicious circle', creating a seemingly endless downhill spiral.

SOLUTIONS TO BURNOUT

Work Engagement

Work engagement is defined as "a positive, fulfilling state of mind characterized by vigour,



dedication, energy, involvement, efficacy in opposition to exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of efficacy – the three constituting elements of burnout.” Engaged employees have an effective connection with their work activities.

Work engagement may reduce frequency of sickness absences, increase organizational commitment and work-family enrichment, and decrease the possibility of depression and anxiety. Thus, work engagement may have positive organizational, individual as well as family-related consequences.

Perhaps the most important component of job engagement is to accept the tenet that personal wellbeing, both physical and emotional, is as important as work-related success.

It is important to honestly define your own personal and professional values and goals, and then select a career path and work environment based on priorities.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, on accepting the role of Pramukh (President) of the BAPS Sanstha, pledged to guru Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and others that he would dedicate his body in the service of the Sanstha. He said, “Today, before you, Guruhari, and before this assembly I take an oath that I will fully carry out my duties to this Sanstha of yours, without caring for my body. I will remain sincere, and be fulfilled. You have cultivated this garden of the knowledge of Akshar-Purushottam; I will serve, daily persevere and take care that it flowers in every way.

I wish for the blessings of the entire Fellowship; may you all grant me this. In all my duties for Satsang, Pujya Yogiji Maharaj, sadgurus, senior sadhus, parshads and all devotees I appeal with a pure heart that you all give me your full cooperation so that I may be strengthened to perform this tremendous service.”

With such commitment to duty throughout his entire life, Swamishri never suffered from burnout. He remained absolutely engaged all day, seven days a week, all the year round and throughout the year.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence (EI) is an individual's ability to perceive, process and regulate one's own emotions and the emotions of others. It informs how an individual internally manages emotional and environmental stressors, as well as how one navigates relationships with others. Emotional intelligence has been associated with less mood deterioration and emotional reactivity following stressors. Those with higher EI are better equipped to handle the stressors associated with work. Individuals with higher EI are thought to perceive, process and regulate emotions more effectively, which can lead to enhanced well-being and less emotional disturbance. Interventions designed to increase EI can help lessen the prevalence and degree of burnout and depression.

Whereas EI describes five core personality traits, the Shrimad Bhagavat enumerates the 39 virtues of God and his holy Sadhu. These 39 qualities were exemplified in the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and demonstrate the skills with which Swamishri dealt with life's trial and tribulations.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance has been defined as being not only about families and children. Nor is it about working less. It's about working smartly and being fresh enough to give whatever is necessary to both work and home, without jeopardizing one



for the other. Personal strategies for the work-life balance:

- Define personal and professional values
- Select the appropriate job and specialty
- Define limits
- Develop strategies to respond to stress
- Maintain supportive relationships
- Take care of personal needs: sleep, nutrition, exercise, health
- Accept personal limitations
- Be positive and thankful
- Express gratitude and appreciation.

There are numerous strategies that help to reduce stress, including exercise, volunteer work, spirituality, social service, and others. Research suggests that spending more than 90 minutes a day with your spouse is a predictor of a happy relationship. In addition, it is important to remain positive and be thankful for whatever we have in life.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj read and replied to over 700,000 letters, devoting an average of two hours a day to counsel and console through his pen. And this he accomplished in the midst of constant travelling, attending assemblies, meeting devotees, attending administrative meetings and all his other activities.

IN THE JOY OF OTHERS

In 1977, Swamishri wrote a letter from abroad during his hectic Satsang tour which sums up the situation nicely: “There is no end to our travelling and no end to the mail I have to deal with at

all times in the car, when sitting or even in bed. Only then am I able to manage. But with (Yogi) Bapa's strength, I am able to cope."

Once, C.M. Patel of London gave a friendly comment to Swamishri in Bhadra, "Bapa! You keep writing letters all day. These sadhus don't let you stay free for even one minute!" Swamishri spoke, "This is our service to Maharaj."

Swamishri remained actively engaged throughout his life. There was never a moment where he demonstrated emotional fatigue, detachment or deficiency. Swamishri's mindset remained permanently positive and divine in spite of the challenges

of running a global socio-spiritual organization. Burnout remained foreign to Swamishri. As much as Western medicine is endeavouring to understand and come to grips with burnout, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life provides an insight into how to avoid burnout.

Today, Mahant Swami Maharaj remains poised and absorbed in divinity in all his daily activities. He gives his fullest attention to whatever he does: morning puja, Thakorji's darshan, meeting the devotees and attending to letters. Thus, by having his darshan one becomes distressed and experiences inner tranquility.

REFERENCES

- Ahola, K. et al. Occupational burnout and medically certified sickness absence: A population-based study of Finnish employees. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 2008, 64 (184–193).
- Awa, W. et al. Burnout prevention: A review of intervention programs. *Patient Education and Counselling*, 2010, 78 (184–190).
- Brotman, D. et al. The Cardiovascular toll of stress. *Lancet*, 2007, 370 (1080–1100).
- Garcia-Campayo, J. et al. Burnout Syndrome and Demotivation Among Health Care Personnel. Managing Stressful Situations: The Importance of Teamwork. *Actas Dermosifiliogr*, 2016, 107 (400–406).
- Gerber, M. et al. Cardiorespiratory fitness protects against stress-related symptoms of burnout and depression. *Patient Education and Counselling*, 2013, 93 (146–152).
- Gunderman, R. et al. Burnout's upside. *Journal of the American College of Radiology*, 2016, (1–3).
- Hakanen, J. et al. Do burnout and work engagement predict depressive symptoms and life satisfaction? A three-wave seven-year prospective study. *Elsevier Journal of Affective Disorders*, 2012, 141 (415–424).
- Hawksley, B. Work-related Stress, Work/Life Balance and Personal Life Coaching. *British Journal of Community Nursing*, 12 (1).
- Madsen, I. et al. Burnout as a risk factor for antidepressant treatment: a repeated measures time-to-event analysis of 2936 Danish human service workers. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 2015, 65 (47–52).
- Merchand, A et al. Burnout symptom sub-types and cortisol profiles: What's burning most? *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 2013, 40 (27–36).
- Oosterholt, B. et al. Burnout and cortisol: Evidence for a lower cortisol awakening response in both clinical and non-clinical burnout. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 2015, 78 (445–451). ♦

Vicharan

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

November–December 2017

Gandhinagar, Bochasan, Nasik, Mumbai, Anand, Jaipur,
Dholka, Sarangpur, Surendranagar, Mehsana, Himmatnagar

NOVEMBER

GANDHINAGAR: 1–3

1, Wednesday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti*, *pujan* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Mansa (Koba region).

2, Thursday; Silver Jubilee Celebration of Akshardham

The evening celebration assembly was held in the Akshardham precincts in the presence of HH Mahant Swami Maharaj, Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi, *sadguru* sadhus, devotees and guests. (For details refer to special issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss*, November–December 2017.)

BOCHASAN: 3–9

3, Friday

At 10 a.m., Swamishri departed by car from Gandhinagar and arrived in Bochasan at 11.45 a.m. He was given a festive welcome by sadhus and devotees. After Thakorji's darshan he briefly blessed all in the assembly hall.

5, Sunday

After performing the morning *arti* in the mandir sanctum, Swamishri took the *Swaminarayan-siddhanta-sudha*, a *vada-grantha* written by Bhadreshdas Swami, while Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and Bhaktavatsal Swami followed him holding the five volumes of Bhadreshdas Swami's *Prasthantrayi Swaminarayan-bhashya* in a procession. The procession (*pothi yatra*) was carried

out in the mandir with the auspicious beating of drums, waving of the BAPS flags and singing of the Swaminarayan *dhun*. Overnight, the scriptures were placed before Thakorji in the mandir *garbha-gruh*. The procession proceeded to the shrines of the Gunatit gurus in the mandir *pradakshina*, where the scriptures were sanctified again. After descending the mandir steps, Swamishri and the senior sadhus entered the *abhishek mandapam*. Swamishri offered *abhishek* to Shri Nilkanth Varni and installed the *Swaminarayan Bhashya* and *Swaminarayan-siddhanta-sudha* in a display cupboard inside the *abhishek mandap*. The scriptures were thus ritually installed so that all could have darshan.

6, Monday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti*, *pujan* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for five BAPS *hari* mandirs in the Bochasan region, namely, Rajpura, Sayla, Sundarana, Joshikuva and Jantral.



Swamishri prays after placing the *bhashyas* and *vada-grantha* for darshan



Performs the *shilanyas* rituals for *shikharbaddha* mandir in Nasik



Swamishri blesses the Pushpadolotsav assembly, Mumbai

NASIK: 9–11

9, Thursday

At 4.20 p.m., Swamishri departed from Bochasan and reached the airport in Vadodara at 5.30 p.m. Thereafter, Swamishri and his entourage flew to Nasik and landed there at 6.10 p.m. Swamishri was welcomed and honoured in the evening assembly.

11, Saturday

The *shilanyas* rituals for the BAPS *shikharbaddha* mandir in Nasik commenced at 9.15 a.m. in the presence of Swamishri, Dr Swami, Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami, Viveksagar Swami, Ghanshyamcharan Swami, sadhus, guests and devotees. Swamishri placed the *nidhikumbh* and the first *shila* in the foundation pit. The *sadguru* sadhus and devotees also ritually placed the other *shilas*. Thereafter, an assembly was held.

MUMBAI: 11–19

During Swamishri's stay, the daily evening sat-sang assemblies were themed as children's day, youth day, senior's day, volunteers' day, bhakti day – Pushpadolotsav and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's symbolic 97th Birthday Celebration.

During the celebration of the various days questions were asked by children, youths, seniors and sadhus to Swamishri after his morning puja. In the evening assembly, traditional dances, skits, recitations and narrations of inspiring incidents were presented before Swamishri.

ANAND: 19–29

19, Wednesday

At 10.15 a.m., Swamishri flew from Mumbai airport, and arrived at the BAPS Mandir in Anand at 11.50 a.m. Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri were festively welcomed with fire-crackers, a flower pathway and garlands by Dr Swami. In the evening, a welcome assembly was held at Akshar Farm.

During Swamishri's stay a children-youth day, annual day of the BAPS Vidyamandir, Bakrol, kirtan concert, 'Charotar na Chowkma' ballet, felicitation of farmers who had offered their land for the celebration site, 17th Patotsav of Anand Mandir, *yagnas* and *bhagwati diksha* to 37 *parshads* were held.

On the 27th evening, the 97th birthday celebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held at the 200-acre festival site.

21, Tuesday

After his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti*, *pujan* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Sejakuva (Atladra region) and Danda (Atladra region).

24, Friday

In the evening assembly, Swamishri inaugurated three publications by Swaminarayan Aksharpath: 1. Audio CD of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's discourses – *Amrut Vani*, Part 17, 2.



Swamishri inaugurates 'Pramukh Swami Marg', Jaipur



Swamishri blesses the Youth Day assembly, Jaipur

Audio CD – *Sant Pravachanmala*, Part 16 and 3. A game produced by the London *bal mandal* – 'Destination Akshardham'.

27, Monday

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 97th birthday celebration was held in Anand in the presence of 175,000 devotees and well-wishers. (For details refer to *Swaminarayan Bliss*, January–February 2018.)

JAIPUR: 29 November to 6 December 29, Wednesday, Anand, Jaipur

Swamishri departed from Anand by flight at 5.00 p.m. and arrived in Jaipur at 6.18 p.m. At 7.00 p.m., Swamishri inaugurated Pramukh Swami Marg, a 2-km road from Ajmer Road to Bharat Apartment, in the presence of the President of BJP in Rajasthan Shri Ashok Parnami and Mayor of Jaipur Shri Ashok Lahoti. Thereafter, the road leading to the BAPS Mandir was ritually declared as Mahant Swami Marg by Pujya Viveksagar Swami.

On entering the mandir precincts Mahant Swami Maharaj was accorded a traditional welcome and honour. Thereafter, in the welcome assembly, Mahant Swami Maharaj spoke in Hindi, saying, "When one imbibes satsang discourses in one's life one attains inner stability. Shriji Maharaj has shown two paths, bhakti to Akshar-Purushottam and the path of *jnan*."

DECEMBER

During Swamishri's stay in Jaipur the daily evening satsang assemblies were celebrated as children's day, rural day, Fuldol, youth day and satsang day. During these assemblies skits, games, and question and answer sessions were held before Swamishri. In conclusion, Swamishri discoursed and blessed the assembly in Hindi.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's symbolic 97th birthday celebration was held on 2 December. On that day a grand *annakut* was offered to Thakorji in the mandir sanctums.

3, Sunday

Prior to his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishta* rituals of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Dausa.

In the evening, Swamishri blessed the Fuldol celebration assembly, "It is a great thing to remain equipoised in tumultuous times. When one does bhajan in the state of *debhav* one will experience happiness and misery. However, when one does bhajan by believing oneself to be *atma* one will remain stable. And much higher than this is the belief that God is the all-doer – this will enable one to remain attached to him. One's mind will remain attached to God when one becomes liberated from worldly desires. During each festival, one becomes more attached to God and liberated from the sense pleasures."

Thereafter, the Fuldol festival commenced during which the devotees showered flower



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 97th Birthday Celebration, Dholka

petals towards Swamishri and the sadhus showered sanctified petals on the devotees.

DHOLKA: 6-11

During Swamishri's stay in Dholka each day was celebrated on different themes: *nishtha din*, *bal-yuva din* and Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 97th birthday.

7, Thursday

Today, as per the Gregorian calendar, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 97th birthday celebration was celebrated. A grand *annakut* was arranged before Thakorji in the mandir sanctums.

In the evening celebration assembly, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami spoke about Swamishri's divine glory. Then, while a traditional dance was being performed by youths from Ahmedabad, Swamishri was honoured with garlands.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "We are indeed fortunate and blessed that Shriji Maharaj himself came on earth. In addition, we have had the association of the guru *parampara* and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. By pondering upon their grace we will experience inner peace and joy. Thus, we must take care of and sustain satsang in our lives."

9, Saturday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti*, *pujan* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Vataman, Nava

Vanjar, Chaloda and Kavitha (Dholka region).

SARANGPUR: 11-15

13, Wednesday; 216th anniversary celebration of the Swaminarayan Mantra

Bhajans on the glory of the Swaminarayan mantra were sung in Swamishri's puja. In his blessings, Swamishri discoursed about the importance and glory of the Swaminarayan mantra.

15, Friday

Swamishri gave the *bhagwati diksha* to Virag Bhagat and named him Anandmanandas Swami and the *parshad diksha* to Tejasbhai *sadhak* and named him Uttam Bhagat.

SURENDRANAGAR: 15-20

During Swamishri's stay various days were celebrated: *bal din*, symbolic *jholi* day, *yuva din* and *gramya din*. In the evening assemblies, devotees and well-wishers came in large numbers for Swamishri's darshan and blessings.

17, Sunday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti*, *pujan* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Bakarthali and Kholadiyad.

In the evening assembly, Swamishri hailed the *jholi* mantra, 'Narayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho.' Thereafter, devotees filed past in two rows during Swamishri's *samip* darshan.



Swamishri hails the *jholi mantra*, Surendranagar

MEHSANA: 20–26

20, Wednesday

At 4.35 p.m., Swamishri departed from Surendranagar and headed towards Mehsana. At 6.00 p.m., Swamishri arrived in Patdi village and sanctified the land for the proposed *hari* mandir. Here, on behalf of Swamishri, Atmaswarup Swami inaugurated Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg.

At 7.40 p.m., Swamishri arrived at the BAPS Mandir in Mehsana to a festive welcome.

During Swamishri's stay in Mehsana the themes of the evening assemblies were *bal din*, *prapti din* and *chhatralaya din*. Devotees and well-wishers attended Swamishri's morning puja and evening assemblies in large numbers.

22, Friday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti*, *pujan* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Moti Daau (Patan region).

23, Saturday

Swamishri ritually performed the *murti-pratishtha* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Vadnagar.

26, Tuesday, Mehsana, Himmatnagar

Swamishri ritually performed the *murti-pratishtha* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Shobhasan.

At 5.15 p.m., Swamishri departed from Mehsana and arrived at the BAPS Mandir in Himmatnagar at 7.45 p.m. He was welcomed with a traditional dance performed by tribal devotees.

HIMMATNAGAR: 26–31

During Swamishri's stay in Himmatnagar devotees attended the morning pujas and evening satsang assemblies in large numbers. The evening assembly programmes included *upasana din*, *gun-grahan din*, *mahila din* (afternoon), *tapa din*, *prapti din*, *bal din*, *shishu din*, *mahima din* and *jholi din*.

27, Wednesday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for eight BAPS *hari* mandirs: Chitrodi, Davad, Chorivad, Vadali, Gundel, Gambhoi, Prantij and Lunavada (Mahisagar region). ◆

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



An evening satsang assembly, Mehsana



LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

November–December 2017

*Inspiring incidents from the life of
Mahant Swami Maharaj*

NOVEMBER

LOVE FOR READING MAHARAJ'S DISCOURSES

15, Mumbai

Today, Swamishri woke up at 2.30 a.m. He completed his morning ablutions and exercises and came out of his room at 5.00 a.m. Everyone was surprised by his early appearance. But everyone was overwhelmed when they came to know that Swamishri had got ready by 4 a.m. and he had been reading and contemplating upon his favourite spiritual text, *Purushottam Bolya Prite*, from 4.00 to 5.00 a.m.

Swamishri's inclination and love for reading and pondering upon Shriji Maharaj's discourses is truly inspiring for all.

DECEMBER

PLEASING THE DEVOTEES

2, Jaipur

After his morning puja, Swamishri performed *arti* of 45 newly made home mandirs (*ghar mandirs*) that belonged to the devotees from the rural region. Then, Swamishri went close to all the small-sized *ghar mandirs* and offered his respects by touching the *murtis* inside each of them. In this way, Swamishri offered bhakti and the devotees were pleased because their mandirs were personally sanctified by Swamishri.

VIRTUE OF NON-TASTE

26, Himmatnagar

Swamishri was eating a slice of boiled *parval* during his dinner. The attendant sadhu serving him felt that the *parval* was bitter. When another attendant sadhu tasted the *parval* he found it to be bitter. The attendant sadhu serving Swamishri asked, "Why didn't you say anything after eating three bitter slices of *parval*?" Swamishri replied, "After eating one slice I thought the second one and the third one would not be bitter."

Any ordinary person would have immediately rejected the boiled vegetable after finding the first piece to be bitter. But Swamishri did not utter a single word of complaint or show signs of rejection on his face. Swamishri's virtues of *vairagya* and non-taste became apparent to all.

* * *

While travelling from Sarangpur to Surendranagar on 15 December Swamishri was given some pecans (a dry fruit similar to walnuts) to eat. Later, when the attendant sadhu ate one he found it to be terribly rancid, yet Swamishri had not uttered a single word of complaint and neither had he expressed discontent on his face. ♦

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

Answers and Revelations

November–December 2017

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



NOVEMBER

■ By practicing *samp*, *suhrudbhav* and *ekta* one attains Bhagwan's immense *rajipo*. One experiences absolute peace. Whereas, finding faults in others (*avgun*) is like trash; and one becomes agitated and causes agitation to others.

(7, Bochasan)

■ One who sees his own faults [and makes efforts to remove them] will attain peace. But one who sees others' faults is a sinner and experiences uneasiness.

(9, Bochasan)

■ *Das* is one who sees his own faults and the virtues of others.

(12, Mumbai)

Q. A child asked Swamishri, "When the times for our *bal sabha* and tuition coincide what should we do?

A. Swamishri replied, "One has to study intensely. Both studying and doing satsang are necessary. Study to sustain your body and do satsang for the sake of your soul. So, adjust your times to do both.

(13, Mumbai)

Q. We never get bored in reading messages from WhatsApp and Facebook, however, we get bored while reading the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato. What should we do?

A. That is *maya*. The reason why you get bored in listening to *katha* is that you do not understand its glory [*mahima*]. *Katha* liberates you from the ocean of *maya* whereas a mobile will drown you in *maya*.

Q. Friends tease us when we go to college with a *tilak-chandlo* on our foreheads. What should we do about that?

A. Do you want to please Swami Bapa or your friends!

Q. Atulbhai Ajmera asked, "How would I know that you are pleased with me?"

A. When you experience inner peace.

Q. One wants to abide by all the *niyams* but one fails to do so due to enticements. Can you say a sentence for all the youths here so that they remain steadfast in *niyam-dharma*.

A. One who abides by *niyam-dharma* is an honest person, whereas one who doesn't is a thief.

(14, Mumbai)

Q. Which one virtue should we cultivate in our lives so that Pramukh Swami Maharaj will be immensely pleased?

A. *Divyabhav*. Yogiji Maharaj said, "To sing others' virtues is *seva*." This means one must have *divyabhav* for all sadhus and devotees.

(18, Mumbai)

Q. Kothari Bhagvatcharan Swami of Anand asked Swamishri, "Are you from Anand?"

A. From Akshardham. Everyone has taken infinite births, so who is one's mother and father? They are all perishable. One will have to understand this.

(20, Anand)

■ When one has firm faith (*nishtha*) and *dharma-niyam* in one's life, no one can stop you from reaching Akshardham.

(20, Anand)

Q. While we are in the *sabha* our minds do not remain attentive for more than ten to fifteen minutes. How can we improve our attention span?

A. Do satsang with mindfulness. We often fail to pay attention to anything we do. We may remember something by fluke, without making an attempt to do things mindfully. Higher than this is introspection. Our minds are restless, but if we like *katha* we will be able to focus our minds on it.

Q. What is the essence of the Vachanamrut?

A. To have *divyabhav* in all.

Q. A child asked, “There is a custom to give a gift on someone’s birthday. What gift can we children give to Pramukh Swami Maharaj on his birthday celebration?”

A. Swamishri replied, “Give what you wish to give, but add faith and bhakti to that. Do not add *abhav-avgun* to it. You should only have Bapa as your focus while giving the birthday card and gift. And secondly, what else does Maharaj like? That you study with your mind and soul.”

Q. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is ever-present on earth. What is he doing right now?

A. Swamishri hesitated for a while and then answered with a smile, “He is sitting before you.”
(28, Anand)

Q. What should we remember so that we can always remember you and stay connected with you?

A. Have *divyabhav* towards all.
(30, Jaipur)

DECEMBER

Q. A youth asked Swamishri, “How can we observe celibacy?”

A. Swamishri replied, “Do satsang with great intensity. The second means is to do *ghar sabha* in which all your questions will be resolved and you will also be bolstered in observing the *niyams*.”

Q. Our minds are wavering. What should we do to attain stability of mind?

A. It will become stable as you do satsang. It takes 20 years to become a graduate. Likewise,

one has to be patient in this, have faith and associate with sadhus (*sant samagam*).

Q. There are many means to please God and his Sadhu, however show us a simple one.

A. Swamishri replied, “Follow *niyams*, have supreme and impeccable faith in Bhagwan and perceive *divyabhav* in all sadhus and devotees.”
(5, Jaipur)

Q. What is it that obstructs one from keeping *samp* with others?

A. *Dehabhav* (body-consciousness).
(15, Sarangpur)

Q. Which *agna* of yours should the youths follow so that you are fully pleased with them.

A. Observe *niyams*.
(18, Surendranagar)

Q. A parent asked, “In today’s times parents feel that their children do not obey them and likewise children feel that their parents do not listen to and understand them. Subsequently, the atmosphere at home is tense and not peaceful. What should be done to resolve this?”

A. Swamishri replied briefly, “By doing satsang with mindfulness all problems will be solved.”
(19, Surendranagar)

■ “Having a [spiritual] understanding bestows one with peace. Because, one who has such an understanding can dissolve all types of personal pain and misery. He also understands Bhagwan to be genuine and satsang to be bona fide.”
(19, Surendranagar)

■ One who is affected by praise and insult is extremely raw. However, one who is humble is a ripe *satsangi*.

(21, Mehsana)

■ One who talks humbly possesses power, because humility is God’s power.

(22, Mehsana)

VICHARAN IN GULF COUNTRIES

PUJYA DOCTOR SWAMI AND SANT MANDAL

9 March–14 April 2018

Pujya Swayamprakash Swami (Doctor Swami) and a group of 11 sadhus visited the Gulf to nurture the Satsang in the United Arab Emirates (9–23 March), Bahrain (23 March to 3 April), Kuwait (3–7 April) and Oman (7–14 April).

During this satsang tour, Pujya Doctor Swami and the sadhus conducted daily morning discourses, and evening satsang and public assemblies. During the day, they performed *padhramanis* to the homes of devotees, guiding and inspiring them to conduct regular family assemblies, perform daily puja and attend the weekly satsang assembly. They also conducted satsang *shibirs* in which the devotees were enlightened on the core principles and practices of satsang and how to strengthen them in their daily lives.

At each place, Pujya Doctor Swami and the sadhus were warmly welcomed by prominent leaders and representatives of the local Indian communities.

In the United Arab Emirates, Consul General of India at Dubai, His Excellency Mr. Vipul and others welcomed the sadhus. Also, special assemblies were organized by the Sindhi, Jain and other communities in which Pujya Doctor Swami and the sadhus emphasized the need for safeguarding and fostering spirituality, values and traditions among the Indian diaspora.

During the various evening assemblies, leaders of the Indian community, distinguished professionals, businessmen and government officials shared their enthusiasm for the recently launched mandir project in Abu Dhabi, and



Welcome assembly at the Iranian Club Auditorium, Dubai



Pujya Doctor Swami blesses a *shibir* session, Dubai



Pujya Doctor Swami, Brahmavihari Swami and dignitaries on the stage during an assembly, Bahrain



Sadhus and well-wishers during an assembly, Bahrain



Puja Doctor Swami greets all with 'Jai Swaminarayan', Kuwait



Puja Doctor Swami, sadhus, devotees and well-wishers during an assembly, Muscat, Oman



Puja Doctor Swami and Brahmavihari Swami with community leaders, Muscat

narrated experiences of how their interactions with BAPS sadhus and devotees had positively impacted their lives.

Satsang assemblies were also held in Sharjah, Ajman and Abu Dhabi.

During this visit, Puja Doctor Swami blessed the land generously gifted by His Highness the Crown Prince for the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi. He showered sanctified flower petals on the land and prayed for the peace and prosperity of the UAE, and the successful and timely completion of the mandir.

In Bahrain, Puja Doctor Swami and the sadhus celebrated Shri Swaminarayan Jayanti and Ram Navmi. Also, in the public assemblies organized by local well-wishers and attended by distinguished government officials, academics, professionals and other guests, Puja Doctor Swami and the sadhus highlighted the need for love, peace, tolerance and harmony to help unite families and communities.

In Kuwait the Ambassador of India, Shri K. Jeeva Sagar, warmly welcomed Puja Doctor Swami and the sadhus.

In Muscat, Oman, Shri Indramani Pandey, the Ambassador of India to Oman, Shri Kanakbhai and Shri Anilbhai Khimji, Shri Ashwinbhai Dharamsey, Shri Bakulbhai and Shri Dilipbhai Mehta, Shri Kiranbhai Asher and others welcomed Puja Doctor Swami and the sadhus.

Also, public assemblies were held in Al Turki and Sohar in which the sadhus highlighted the need for piety and purity in life.

This 37-day satsang tour by Puja Doctor Swami and the sadhus inspired many devotees and well-wishers, young and old, to make spirituality a central part of their lives. ♦



Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami performs the *mahapuja* and consecration rituals, Tokyo

MURTI-PRATISHTHA MAHOTSAV

31 March 2018, Tokyo, Japan

Background

Between 1952 and 1970, His Holiness Yogiji Maharaj often said, “The whole world will chant the name of Swaminarayan. Satsang will spread to America, Japan, Germany, Russia....” Today, these prophetic words can be seen to be coming true.

In 1984, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited Japan for the very first time with a group of sadhus. Shri Popatbhai Chokshi, a devotee residing in Kobe, hosted Swamishri.

Then, in 1986, Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and a few sadhus visited Japan.

Thereafter, in 1992, Pujya Viveksagar Swami and, in 1994, Pujya Swayamprakash Swami (Doctor Swami) visited Japan with some sadhus, and conducted many satsang assemblies and visited the homes of devotees and well-wishers.

Since then, BAPS sadhus have visited Japan on a few occasions to nurture the satsang.

In 2015, during a visit to Tokyo by BAPS sadhus, Kuldeepbhai Mehta and his family were inspired to join the Satsang. In December 2015, at Sarangpur in Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s presence, Kuldeepbhai proposed that a mandir be inaugurated in Tokyo. Then, he procured a property

and dedicated the ground floor for the mandir.

On 16 April 2017, in Ahmedabad, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Radha-Krishna Dev and the Guru Parampara for the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Tokyo, Japan.

Murti-Pratishtha Mahotsav

To commemorate this auspicious occasion, the devotees of Tokyo had devotedly decorated the mandir with flowers.

On the morning of 31 March 2018, Pujya



Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Shri Kuldeepbhai perform the *murti-pratishtha arti*



Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami blesses the *pratishtha* assembly



Munivatsal Swami addresses the assembly



Murtis of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Tokyo

Ishwarcharan Swami performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the *murtis* which had earlier been consecrated by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj in 2017. Over 120 devotees from Tokyo, Kobe, Kofu, Kyoto, Osaka and Yokohama participated in the Vedic rituals.

After the rituals, Ishwarcharan Swami addressed the assembly, “Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami manifested on this earth to liberate *jivas* from the darkness of *maya*. That work was carried forward by Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj and is being continued today by Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj.

“Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj had said on many occasions that mandirs will come up in

America, Japan, Germany and Russia. At that time, no one could imagine that there would be a mandir in Japan because there were no devotees here. But Yogiji Maharaj was no ordinary person and his words were not ordinary. Today, we are all witness to this mandir here in Tokyo. And Yogiji Maharaj will be extremely happy.

“Today, with the grace of Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj and the dedication of Shri Kuldeepji, this beautiful mandir has come up. The *murtis* are divine. God is totally present here in these *murtis*, and all who come here, do darshan, do *dandvats*, do *seva*, do satsang, will be blessed. Japan is blessed. Kuldeepbhai Mehta and his family have earned the blessings of Maharaj and Swami through their *seva* and devotion.”

After his address, Ishwarcharan Swami presented an Amrut Kalash to Kuldeepbhai.

A Mandir Mahotsav Assembly had been organized at the nearby TKP Hall. Munivatsal Swami spoke about Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the work of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. He also explained the importance and need for mandirs in today’s society.

Thereafter, Ishwarcharan Swami concluded the assembly with his address explaining the importance of daily mandir darshan and daily satsang in one’s life. Over 230 people attended the assembly.



INDIA

SATSANG ACTIVITIES KARYAKAR SHIBIRS 8 December 2017–11 February 2018



Around 16,000 men and women volunteers who coordinate the youth and satsang activities in Gujarat attended the 21 Annual Karyakar Shibirs held at Sarangpur, Gondal, Bochasan, Ahmedabad, Atladra, Sankari and Tithal.

Organized and conducted by the Satsang Activities Central Office, this year's *shibirs* were based on the theme '*Smaran ane Sangath*', in which the volunteers enjoyed the divine memories of Pramukh Swami Maharaj with the understanding that such joy is presently available in the company of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The *shibir* theme was presented through speeches by the *sadguru* sadhus and other learned swamis, video shows, workshops, involvement activities and the video blessings of *guruhari* Mahant Swami Maharaj.

AKSHAR-PURUSHOTTAM DARSHAN MAHOTSAV

24–25 February 2018, Bhavnagar

A two-day celebration was held in Bhavnagar in the presence of Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami to honour the Swaminarayan Bhashyas



and Vadagrantha written by Bhadrash Swami, explaining the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

On 24 February, a colourful *nagar-yatra* of Thakorji and the texts was carried out on the streets of Bhavnagar. The procession featured 10 beautifully decorated floats, troupes of dancing youths and women devotees reverently carrying the texts in traditional style. Onlookers greeted the procession with devotion as it passed through the city. Among the dignitaries who honoured Thakorji and the texts along the 18 km route were Mayor Shrimati Nimuben Bambhaniya, Vice-President of the Indian Medical Association Dr Kanani, and many local community leaders. The procession concluded at the BAPS Mandir with *maha arti*.

On 25 February, around 4,000 devotees attended the day-long Akshar-Purushottam Chhavani in which Bhadrash Swami systematically explained the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. At the end, devotees performed *pujan* of and honoured the texts.

AKSHAR-PURUSHOTTAM DARSHAN MAHOTSAV

10–11 March 2018, Junagadh

A two-day celebration was held to honour the Swaminarayan Bhashyas and Vadagrantha written by Bhadrash Swami.



On 10 March, a colourful *nagar-yatra* of Thakorji and the texts was carried out through ten suburbs of Junagadh. The procession stretched for 1.5 km and featured 35 decorated floats, youths on motorbikes, groups of dancing youths and over 500 devotees. Onlookers greeted the procession with devotion as it passed through the city. The procession concluded at the BAPS Mandir with *samuh arti* and a fireworks display.

On 11 March, around 3,000 devotees attended the day-long Akshar-Purushottam Chhavani in which Bhadrash Swami systematically explained the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan. At the end, devotees performed *pujan* of and honoured the texts.

YUVAK ANTAR JAGRUTI PARVA

28 March–5 April 2018



As part of the six-month course at the Yuva Talim Kendra, the current batch of 95 *yuvaks* conducted satsang *vicharan* in selected villages of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The 23 groups of *yuvaks* visited a total of 97 villages. During the *vicharan* they conducted a total of 97 satsang assemblies, which were attended by over 15,600 people, as well as 110 *bal* assemblies and

62 school assemblies, which were attended by more than 15,660 children. They also encouraged many people to quit their addictions to tobacco, alcohol, gambling and other harmful habits.

In the early evenings, the *yuvaks* also organized a Bhakti Feri in each village, in which over 3,600 devotees took part. They personally visited 2,722 homes, inspiring many young and old devotees to perform daily puja, conduct *ghar sabha*, attend the weekly satsang assemblies, visit the mandir for darshan, daily read from the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vatu, observe a fast on *ekadashi*, bow down to their parents, give Satsang exams and engage in other spiritual activities.

By meeting the devotees personally, the *yuvaks* were also inspired by how sincerely devotees observe their *niyams*, and their dedication, devotion, faith and loyalty to God and guru.

UK

‘TIMELESS HINDUISM’ SEMINARS

24 March–7 April 2018, London

Over 200 Hindu youths attended the two-part ‘Timeless Hinduism’ seminar exploring the continued relevance of Hinduism in today’s modern world.

Before the first seminar, on 24 March, the participants received a guided tour of the Mandir complex before performing the *abhishek* ceremony and participating in the *arti*.

The main seminar sessions then explored fundamental principles of Hinduism and the integral role that they play in today’s society, especially in the context of student life in the UK.

Swamis spoke on the relevance of spirituality in daily life and used ancient scriptural teachings to offer practical solutions to contemporary issues facing youths, such as peer pressure, self-consciousness, and the need for external validation.

The concepts were consolidated through interactive workshops which allowed delegates to discuss in groups, participate in practical exercises, and read literature to further their understanding of scriptures, mandirs and themselves.

The second seminar, on 7 April, focused specifically on the Mahabharat, exploring ancient teachings to address personal, modern-day challenges. The swamis' insightful talks covered the underlying reasons for conflict and how to move towards lasting resolution.

'FAITHS IN TUNE' INTERFAITH MUSIC FESTIVAL **25 March 2018, London**



Children from BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, were invited to participate in the 'Faiths In Tune' music festival at The British Museum.

'Faiths In Tune' is an all-day interfaith music festival that promotes interfaith dialogue and co-existence through music. Specifically, the festival brings together hundreds of people of different cultures and faiths to share and experience music from their respective backgrounds.

BAPS children contributed to a memorable musical festival by singing bhajans accompanied by the melodious sounds of traditional Indian musical instruments, including the *tabla* and harmonium. They also performed classical Indian dances.

Anja Fahlenkamp, Director of the Festival, said, "It was lovely to see and hear the dance and musical performance from the children of BAPS. They performed very well."

HEALTH SCREENING WITH THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL

24 March 2018, London

BAPS Charities, in conjunction with the Royal Free Hospital – a major teaching hospital in Hampstead, London, held a cardiovascular health



screening session.

BAPS Charities has developed a longstanding partnership with the Hospital, which has fostered a series of health screening events for the local community over the past ten years.

In total, 33 participants aged between 30 to 60 years benefited from the event. Participants were given an opportunity to personally discuss their health findings with experienced doctors, who provided appropriate guidance and follow-up plans for each attendee.

AFRICA

KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

23 March–14 April 2018



Based on the theme '*Guruji nahi bhulu tamane...*', three Karyakar Shibirs were held for BAPS volunteers throughout Africa in the presence of Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami (Kothari Swami): in Lenasia, from 23–25 March 2018, 260 *karyakars* from South Africa, Botswana and Zambia attended; in Nairobi, from 30 March–1 April 2018, 618 *karyakars* from Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania were present; and in Lilongwe, on 14 April 2018, 160 *karyakars* attended.

The *shibirs* were focused on the life and work of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. Speeches by swamis elaborated on Pramukh Swami Maharaj's impact on the world, his divine virtues, and his selfless love, and other topics.

Through interactive activities with Kothari Swami, the *karyakars* also learnt about his regularity in daily worship rituals, tolerance, sincerity to duties, humility, attachment with the *satpurush* and other saintly virtues.

These *shibirs* guided and inspired the volunteers on strengthening their personal satsang and dedication to their satsang duties.

North America and England, as well as Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi, joined more than 3,100 iconic landmarks and monuments from more than 180 countries by switching off its non-essential lights to observe Earth Hour. Participants from around the world included the Eiffel Tower, the Empire State Building, the Sydney Opera House and the Acropolis, as well as notable buildings in London, including the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, Tower Bridge, the Shard, and Piccadilly Circus.

Earth Hour – the world's largest environmental event – is a global movement involving millions of people “to shine a light on the need for climate action” and raise awareness about protecting the future of our planet.

BAPS Charities

EARTH HOUR 2018

24 March 2018

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandirs in

Somnath Sanskrit University Honours Pujya Viveksagar Swami

23 March 2018, Somnath



In recognition of Pujya Viveksagar Swami's achievements and contributions to Hindu philosophy and culture worldwide over five decades, the Somnath Sanskrit University conferred on him the D.Litt (Doctor Litterarum or Doctor of Letters) degree during a special ceremony at the university in Somnath.

Regarded as a higher doctorate, the degree

was awarded by the Governor of Gujarat, His Excellency Shri O.P. Kohli, in the presence of the university vice-chancellor Shri Arknath Chaudhary, the vice-chancellor of Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Shri P.N. Shastri and other distinguished scholars.

A graduate in textile engineering from the renowned Veermata Jijabai Technological Institute (VJTI) in Mumbai, Viveksagar Swami began Sanskrit studies in 1960 as per the wish of Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj. He earned a PhD for his thesis titled 'Aksharbrahman – Parabrahman Darshan'. From 1974 till 2016, he constantly accompanied Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj in his satsang travels, elucidating the history, traditions and doctrine of Sanatan Dharma and the Swaminarayan Sampradaya in particular.

Even today, he continues to enlighten devotees through his lively discourses and books.



TRIBUTE

Mahendrabhai Mithabhai Patel (1928–2018)

On 26 April 2018, the passing away of our stalwart devotee Shri Mahendrabhai Mithabhai Patel (fondly known as Mahendrabhai Barrister) in Nairobi caused deep grief to the entire BAPS satsang community.

Shri Mahendrabhai was born in Nairobi in 1928. He was introduced to satsang through the company of Nirgundas Swami and at the age of 11 he received *vartman* from Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, who he served in his early years. A staunch and dedicated devotee, he went to London in 1950, where he studied Law at the London School of Economics and trained as a barrister at Lincoln's Inn Chambers. Despite the lack of facilities in those days, he sincerely abided by the *niyams* of satsang. He was keen on a career as a criminal and civil barrister, but on the command of Yogiji Maharaj, he set up a rolmil steel plant and became a successful entrepreneur in Nairobi.

He was one of the pioneers of Satsang in London in the 1950s. With the blessings and guidance of Yogiji Maharaj, he organized *sabhas* in Kent, Finchley, Belsize Park, Hyde Park and other places. He was also instrumental in formulating the Sanstha's constitution in the UK and served as the Vice-Chairman.

Later settling in Nairobi, he was a leading devotee of the Africa Satsang Mandal. He served for many years in many capacities, including as a trustee of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha globally, and as Chairman of the Kenya Satsang Mandal and East Africa Satsang Mandal. He was also one of the brave devotees who risked his life to bring the *murtis* out of the BAPS mandirs in

Uganda after Idi Amin had expelled all Indians. A few years after Kenya's independence, he was selected by Queen Elizabeth to receive the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) award, but he respectfully declined the honour to enable him to continue his *seva* for the Sanstha without hindrance.

He was well respected by all for his faith in and devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Gunatit gurus, discipline in observing *niyams*, dedicated *seva* for Satsang and insightful discourses. He was actively involved in managing many events over the years, including the birth celebrations of Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Nairobi in 1974 and 1988, the Sagar Yatra in 1995, and the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Nairobi in 1999.

Throughout his life, he always gave priority to satsang and travelled to BAPS centres in Africa to discourse on and explain the principles of the Sanstha. He was able to discourse on all 262 Vachanamruts and convey even the subtle philosophical points in an appealing way.

Shri Mahendrabhai also helped in preparing the Sanstha's constitution in America and served in setting up the first mandir in New York.

Shri Mahendrabhai led an exemplary life of a devout and dedicated householder devotee and earned the innermost blessings of gurus Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. His passing has left a big void in the Satsang.

Our sincere prayers to Maharaj and Swami to bless his soul with the eternal bliss of Akshardham and to provide inner strength to his family and the satsang community to bear the deep loss.

More than 45 eBooks Published by Swaminarayan Aksharpith



The Vachanamrut



Swamini Vato



200 Swamini Vato



Gems from Shikshapatri



Essence of the Upanishads



Bhagwan Swaminarayan



Bhagwan Swaminarayan
The Story of His Life



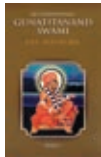
Nilkanth Varni
An Epic Pilgrimage
of a Child-Yogi



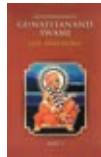
Impressions
Part-2



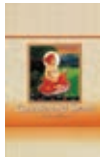
Impressions
Part-3



Aksharbrahman
Gunatitanand
Swami: Life and
Work, Part 1



Aksharbrahman
Gunatitanand
Swami: Life and
Work, Part 2



Gunatitanand
Swami: His Life
and Message



Brahmaswarup
Shri Pragji Bhakta
Life and Work



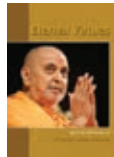
Shasriji Maharaj:
Life & Work



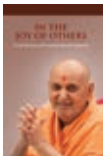
Images of
Eternal Joy
Moments with
Yoggi Maharaj



Yogi Gita:
Divine Words of
Yoggi Maharaj



Eternal
Virtues



In the Joy of
Others



Divinity



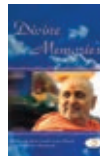
Pramukh Swami
Maharaj
Life & Work in Brief



Divine
Memories-1



Divine
Memories-2



Divine
Memories-3



Divine
Memories-4



Pure
Devotion



Immortal
River



A Friend of
Youth



Vibrations
Part 1



Vibrations
Part 2



Prasangam
2009



Portrait of
Inspiration
Pramukh Swami
Maharaj



Truth from
Under
a Tree



Basic Concepts of
Swaminarayan
Satsang



Footprints



Turning Point
Part 1



Turning Point
Part 2



Hinduism:
Festivals, Rituals
& Symbols



Hinduism:
Sacred Texts



Hinduism:
Sacred Places
and Holy Rivers



Hinduism:
Beliefs &
Impressions



Hindu
Funeral Rites:
Antyeshti Sanskar



Invaluable
Scriptures of
Brahmadevya:
Vachanamrut &
Swamini Vato



Royal Path of
Brahmadevya:
Swaminarayan
Sadhana



Realization of
Brahmadevya:
Swaminarayan
Theology



Perspectives:
Inspiring Essays
on Life

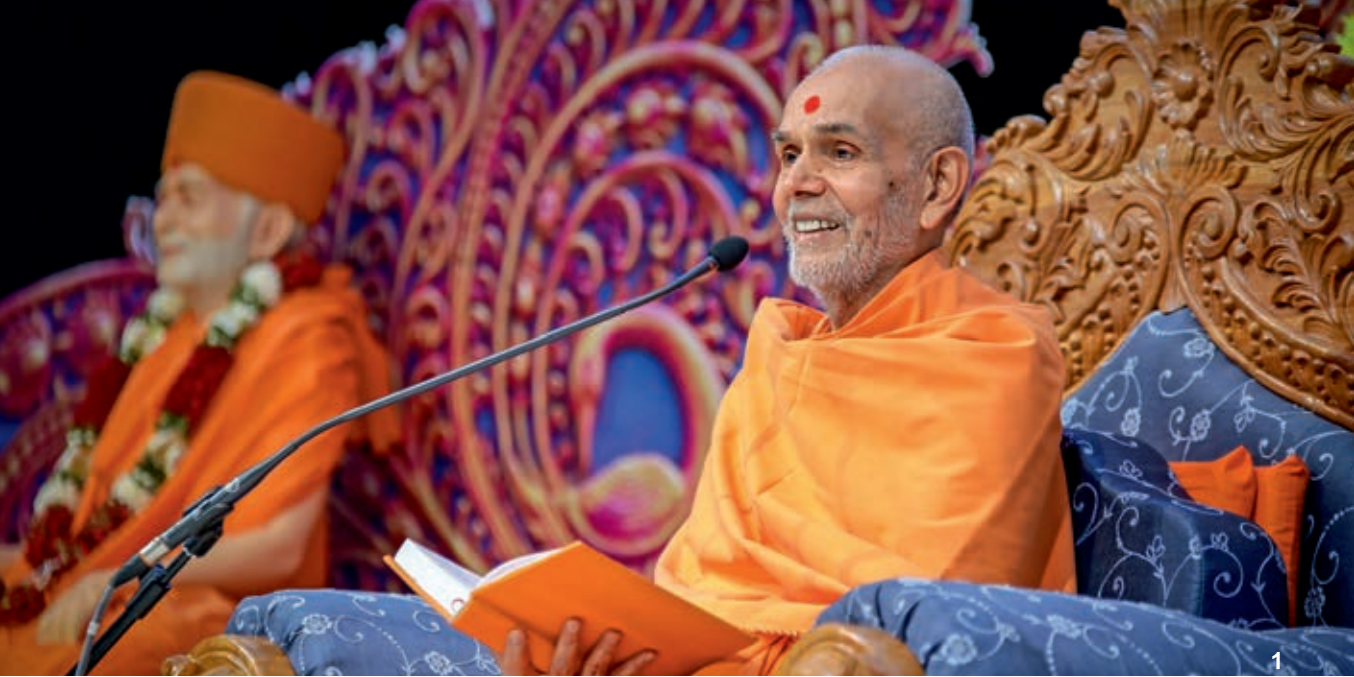


Renunciation,
Reform and
Women in
Swaminarayan
Hinduism



101 Tales of
Wisdom
as told by
Yoggi Maharaj

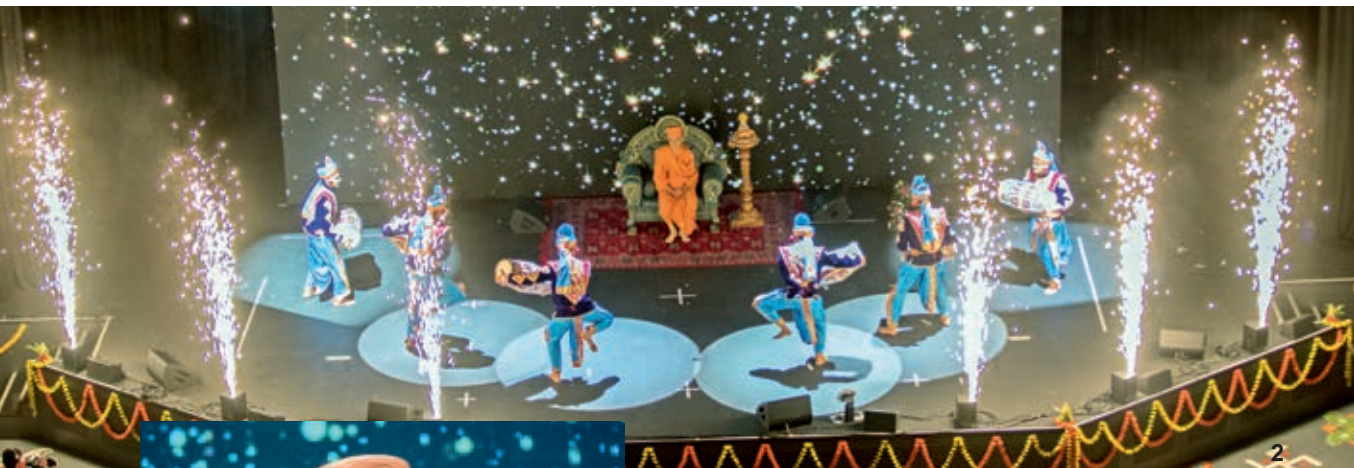
These eBooks can easily be read on any smartphone, tablet, computer, or Kindle device, anywhere, anytime!
Visit the Amazon website and enter the search term "Aksharpith Kindle" to see all Swaminarayan Aksharpith eBooks available for purchase and download for Kindle and other devices.



MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ BLESSES SHIBIRS, GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA

March 2018

1. Swamishri blesses a *shibir* session with an insightful discourse, 17 March.
2. Youths join hands in a gesture of unity during a *shibir* session, 17 March.
3. Karyakar Shibir, 19 March
4. Karyakar Shibir, 20 March



EVENING CULTURAL PROGRAMME, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

24 March 2018

1. Devotees and well-wishers during the evening public assembly at the International Convention Centre.
2. Youths present a traditional dance during the ‘Antarkhoj’ cultural programme.
3. Mahant Swami Maharaj greets the audience.