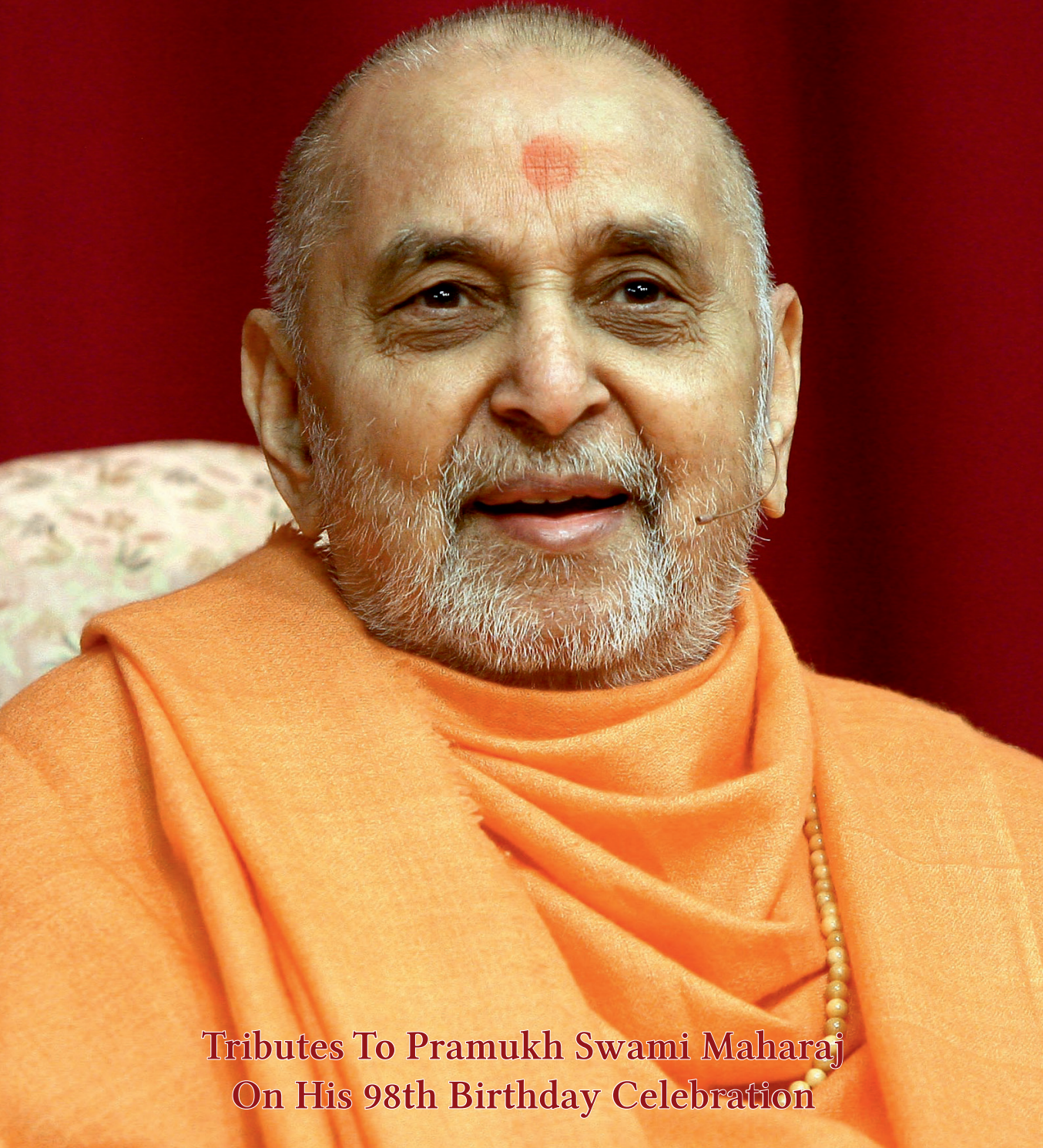


SWAMINARAYAN **BLISS**

November–December 2019 Annual Subscription ₹ 80/-



Tributes To Pramukh Swami Maharaj
On His 98th Birthday Celebration



NATIONAL LEADERS AND DIGNITARIES WELCOME SWAMISHRI IN AFRICA

1. Swamishri with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj at the residence of Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of Uganda.
2. Swamishri meets Prime Minister of South Africa, Hon. David Makhura, Johannesburg.
3. Swamishri greets South African Minister Zweli Mkhize, Johannesburg.
4. Swamishri meets Mayor of Johannesburg, Herman Mashaba.
5. Swamishri greets and blesses local African well-wishers.



HH MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ

(Swami Keshavjivandas)

Maharaj Swami
P.P. Pramukh Swami

Nairobi
4-10-19
Friday



Maharaj and Swamis most
beloved Muktos,

Heartiest Tai Shree Swaminarayan.

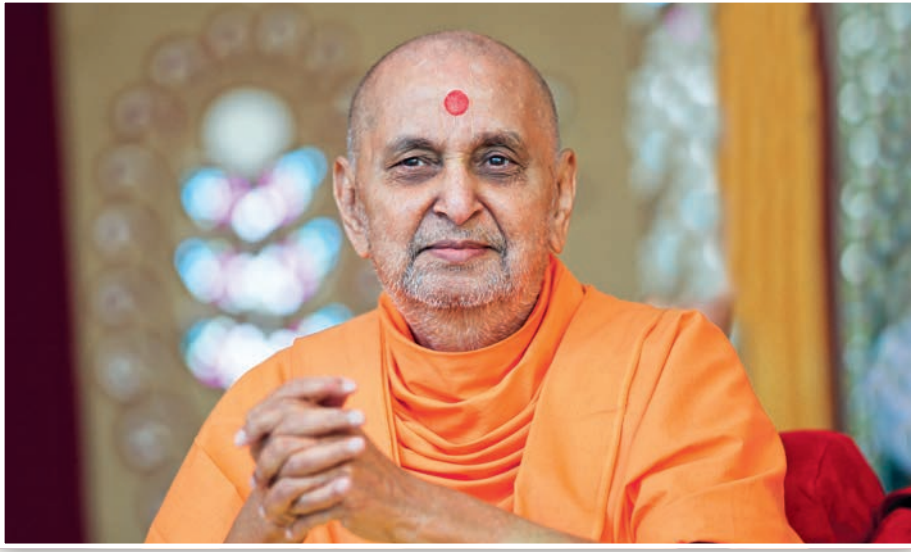
Diwali brings the light of wisdom
over ignorance. For countless lives, we have
been drowned in ignorance. However, in
this life we have attained Maharaj
and Swami, and that without effort.
So, why waste time now?

We have offered our prayers
that you and your family are granted
with peace, prosperity and happiness.
May you develop firm conviction and
faith in Maharaj, Swami, and Pramukh
Swami, may you become humble servants,
and may you believe everyone to be
divine.

Best wishes and prayers for the
New Year.
Sadhu Keshavjivandas.

B.A.P.S. Swaminarayan Mandir, Shahibaug Road, Ahmedabad - 380 004, Gujarat, India
Email: kjd@in.baps.org www.baps.org





SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

November–December 2019, Vol. 42, No. 6



Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj

Founder: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

Editor: Sadhu Swayamprakashdas

Contributors: Sadhu Vivekjiandas, Sadhu Amrutvijaydas

Designer: Sadhu Shrijiswarupdas

Published & Printed by: Swaminarayan Aksharprakash, 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

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

CONTENTS

- 5 Murti-Pratishtha in Vartal
- 9 Tenfold Growth of Satsang
- 10 Peace at the Lotus Feet of Narayan
- 14 Humility
- 15 Swamishri's Divinity
- 17 Swamishri's Heartfelt Love
- 20 Proficiency in All Work Is Yoga
- 24 River of Saintly Compassion
- 29 Mahant Swami Maharaj's Vicharan, Africa
- 49 Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Novel Contributions to Concepts of the Shastras in the Vachanamrut, Part 5
- 53 Mahant Swami Maharaj's Vicharan
- 55 Living with Swamishri
- 58 Dignitaries Visit Swaminarayan Akshardham, Delhi
- 60 BAPS News

MURTI-PRATISHTHA IN VARTAL

In Vartal, Kashidas was overjoyed when Shri Hari told him that the murtis of himself and his ideal devotee (Aksharbrahman) would be installed in his village, Bochasan. Thousands of devotees had arrived to witness Shri Hari install his own murti in the newly built mandir in Vartal...

THE SANT WHO IS MY FORM SHALL DO IT

Kashidas was happy with Shri Hari's words. He expressed his joy, "Maharaj, your abundant grace overwhelms me. But when will this happen?"

Shri Hari replied earnestly, "I am above all limitations of time. It will be done."

"But Maharaj, will the *murtis* be installed with your hands?" Kashidas asked excitedly.

Shri Hari looked up to the skies. Then he uttered softly, "Kashidas, I am the all-doer. When my true glory becomes known I will accomplish this task through the Sant who is my form. Then, true victory of the Sampradaya will be celebrated. You are most blessed because this task will start from your village."¹

While Shri Hari spoke Brahmanand Swami, Aksharanand Swami, Anandanand Swami and Gunatitanand Swami were listening. At that time, Brahmanand Swami felt that though he



had completed the enormous task of building a mandir in Vartal it seemed to be incomplete in Maharaj's view.

Shri Hari told Kashidas, "Leave for Bochasan now and bring the *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan."

Kashidas agreed, "Very well Maharaj. I repose my trust in your words and leave for Bochasan." Shri Hari smiled. Kashidas read Maharaj's gesture as a sign of his pleasure upon him.

Shri Hari proceeded towards Vasan Suthar's home where his stay had been arranged. Here, he took a bath. Then he sat down for his meal. Thereafter, Maharaj called Brahmanand Swami

1. According to Shri Hari's wish, Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj consecrated the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj in the central shrine of a grand *shikharbaddha* mandir in Bochasan in 1907 CE (Samvat 1963). He thus established the pathway of true *upasana*.

and told him to make a list of Brahmins who would be conducting the *murti-pratishtha yagna*. Brahmanand showed the list, from which Maharaj selected the names of Brahmins who would perform the rituals at the main *yagna* pits.

MY ASSOCIATION WILL LIBERATE ALL

Shri Hari told Brahmanand Swami, “By tomorrow the *murtis* of Lakshmi-Narayan will have arrived from Bochasan. Also, the *murtis* of Dharmadev, Bhaktimata, Vasudev-Narayan, Krishna and Radha will be present.”

Brahmanand Swami replied, “Maharaj, all the *murtis* have already arrived and are ready for the consecration ceremonies. Your *murti* is also ready to be consecrated in the first shrine.” Then Brahmanand Swami informed, “Maharaj, debates about you consecrating your own *murti* are going on in public. Some are happy and some are discontented about it.”

Shri Hari spoke in a solemn tone, “Swami, a person’s intellect is such that in spite of doing satsang he cannot give up the resolves of his mind. As a result, he perceives human traits (*manushyabhav*) in Bhagwan’s human form. However, by meditating on my *murti*, believing it to be Bhagwan and singing my glories, one will attain spiritual liberation.”

Aksharanand Swami, Nityanand Swami and other senior swamis were also seated before Shri Hari and listening to him. Shri Hari had decided to install his own *murti* because by worshipping him the devotees and aspirants would gain ultimate *moksha*. He had no aspirations that others should worship him, but without doing so aspirants would not attain *moksha*. The senior swamis fully accepted his words and assured, “Maharaj, your words will be fulfilled.”

After a little while Shri Hari said, “Tomorrow, install the *murtis* in the *yagnashala*. After the *yagna* is over carry out a procession of the *murtis*. Thereafter, install them in the mandir

sanctums and then the *murti-pratishtha* rituals will commence.”

Brahmanand Swami agreed, “Yes, Maharaj.”

Then, Maharaj asked, “Have you decided which devotees will install the golden pots and flags on which *shikhars*?”

Brahmanand Swami showed the list of names to Shri Hari. Then, Brahmanand Swami revealed, “Maharaj, there is a quarrel between the devotees of Vadodara and Surat about hoisting the flag on the first shrine.” Shri Hari said, “If you think it right then explain to both the groups of devotees that the *murti* of Vasudev-Narayan is my form and the *murti* of Harikrishna is also my form. They should not understand them to be different.” Brahmanand Swami understood and agreed with Maharaj’s words.

MURTI-PRATISHTHA IN VARTAL

The next morning, Shri Hari went to the *yagnashala*. The main *murtis* to be installed in the sanctum sanctorum along with the other *murtis* of Hanumanji, Ganapatiji, Suryanarayan, Nrusinghji, Sheshnarayan, Varah and Matsya were installed in the *yagnashala*. The main *yagna* priest applied *chandlo* and rice grains on Shri Hari’s forehead and worshipped him. Shri Hari also did *pujan* of the main priest and tied a *nadachhadi* on his wrist. Then, the principal priest started chanting mantras while Shri Hari performed *pujan* of all the *murtis*. The other Brahmin priests began chanting Vedic mantras to commence the *yagna* rituals. The women devotees were singing auspicious bhajans. The tunes of the *shehnais* and the sound of drums augmented the spiritual ambience. By Shri Hari’s grace divinity permeated in the entire *yagnashala*. The devotees present did darshan of the *murtis*.

Shri Hari ritually worshipped all the deities by doing *pujan*. Maharaj’s divine touch infused divinity in the *murtis*. Then the devotees witnessed the divine manifestations of all the deities merging into Shri Hari’s human form. All felt that

Shri Hari was indeed the cause of all the deities and the supreme Bhagwan, and by worshipping him they would attain ultimate *moksha*.

On the day of *ekadashi* the Brahmin priests engaged Shri Hari in performing puja of the *murtis*, mandir and the small stone pedestals on which the *murtis* would be installed in the mandir sanctums. Thereafter, Shri Hari stated, “After having done puja of the mandir, pedestals and *shikhars* the mandir will exist for hundreds of years and will dissolve the sins of all people who come for darshan. Such is the glory of mandirs.”

In response, Nityanand Swami said, “Since the *murti* of the supreme Bhagwan will be installed how great the glory of the mandir will be!”

On the twelfth (as per the Indian calendar) Shri Hari came to the *yagnashala*. Today, the *murtis* were going to be carried in a procession. Maharaj said, “Circumambulating the *murtis* around the mandir would be equivalent to having carried out a procession. The hundreds of devotees who have arrived will have darshan of the *murtis*. The *murtis*, too, will cast their divine gaze in all the directions, so that the protectors of all the directions (*dikpals*) will be pleased and there will be no obstacles in this event.”

All the *murtis* were placed and carried around in palanquins. The Brahmin priests chanted Vedic mantras. They were followed by swamis chanting mantras from the Gita and Upanishads. Following behind them were the male devotees and, lastly, the women devotees were singing auspicious songs. The procession moved ahead with the auspicious sounds of *dhhol* and *shehnais* permeating the festive air. Shri Hari added, “On this auspicious occasion the chanting of mantras from the Vedas, Gita and Upanishads and the reading of the Purush Sukta should be carried out. When the *pratishtha* rituals begin let the band play a tune.”

After the procession circumambulated the mandir five times the *murtis* were then installed on the pedestals of the mandir sanctums. Then,

the Brahmin priests chanted mantras while Shri Hari performed the *nyas* rituals (ritual infusion of the divinities into the *murtis*). The devotees watching the rituals were astonished to see Shri Hari take as many forms as the number of *murtis* to perform the *nyas vidhi* at the same time.

He invoked the particular deity in each of the *murtis*. Shri Hari’s display of divinity, by taking multiple forms, consolidated the faith of the devotees in him.

Thereafter, Shri Hari took lunch and returned to the *yagnashala*.

INDIAN CULTURE’S SEEDS LIE IN BHAGWAT DHARMA

The foundations of Indian culture lie in dharma. And dharma depends on one who embodies it. At that time, the *murti* of one who embodied dharma was consecrated by himself (Shri Hari). This epoch-making event was forever etched in the history of spirituality. Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan himself installed his own *murti* (or form) on earth, which would remain for ages to come. In doing so, he alluded to the importance of offering *upasana* to Purushottam Narayan, which destroys *adharma* within oneself and also without. In addition, to consolidate pure *upasana*, Shri Hari decided to continue his presence on earth through his *param bhagwat* Sant and thus keep the doorway to Akshardham open forever for countless spiritual aspirants. ♦

(Contd. in next issue)

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

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ AND SADGURU SWAMIS



Divine Reflections of Sadguru Swamis on Pramukh Swami Maharaj



Swaminarayan Bliss commemorates the 98th Birthday Celebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj organized in Mumbai on 4 December 2019 with the translations of *sadguru* swamis' testimonials on Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The testimonials (in Gujarati) were published in the *Brahmopanishad* by Swaminarayan Aksharpith in 1990.

Nearly three decades ago, Pujya Sant Swami, Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Dr Swami, Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami shared their enlightening thoughts and experiences about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine personality.

On reading and pondering upon each testimonial the reader will be spiritually enriched about the glory and work of the Gunatit Guru.

All the articles (translated into past tense) provide wonderful insights on Pramukh Swami Maharaj. May we be blessed with the same understanding and divinity the *sadguru* swamis have for Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Sant Swami

TENFOLD GROWTH OF SATSANG

If Shastriji Maharaj and Nirgun Swami were alive today, they would have been overjoyed with the work done by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Shastriji Maharaj was very pleased with Pramukh Swami. When the administration of the Sanstha was entrusted to him, Pramukh Swami was young and had a delicate and slim physical frame. Shastriji Maharaj said, “Such a body does not befit this *gadi*. So, develop your body.” With his blessings, Pramukh Swami’s physical strength improved a lot.

Even today, Shastriji Maharaj is present. Through his omniscient powers he sees and knows everything. He sees us from his point of view. So, seeing all this today, he would be extremely delighted and exclaim, “How well Pramukh Swami has adorned and enhanced my work!”

Had Nirgun Swami been alive, he would have been ecstatic on seeing such work. Though not visible to us, Shastriji Maharaj is here in his divine form and moves around continuously. So also are Gunatitanand Swami and Maharaj. They would be happy at the work accomplished so far. We

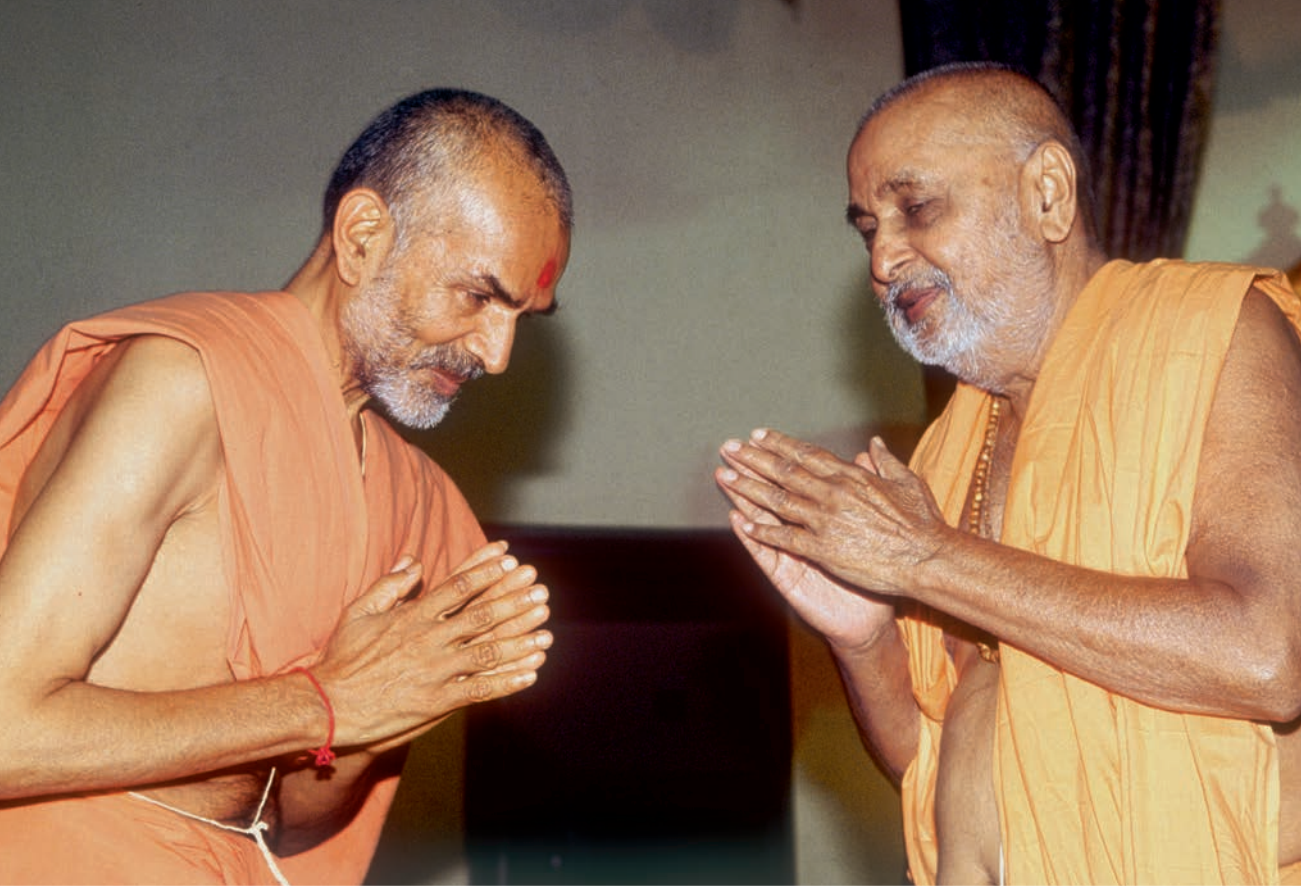
cannot see them because they have divine forms.

Shastriji Maharaj had his eyes on Pramukh Swami and entrusted him with work. When Shastriji Maharaj was appointing him as the president, Maganbhai, Chhaganbhai and some others had doubts. They said, “He is very young. How will he be able to shoulder the responsibility? Will he be able to manage the Sampradaya? The Sampradaya will break up. So, he should not be entrusted with this task.” But Shastriji Maharaj said, “I know his *jiva*; you will not understand that.” So saying, Swami assigned him the responsibility.

With the grace of Shastriji Maharaj and the presence of Shriji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj carried on the work in such a peaceful way that the sadhus, devotees and youths were satisfied. He cared for all of them. Shastriji Maharaj had said to him, “Serve Yogiji Maharaj and obey his wishes.” He told Yogiji Maharaj, “Bless him with your virtues and saintliness.”

Shastriji Maharaj told him in the beginning

(Cont. on p. 16)



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami

PEACE AT THE LOTUS FEET OF NARAYAN



Hearth!

Yes, heart.

All hearts (souls) ran away and were absorbed in the heart of Param Pujya Guruhari Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj. There, the warmth was such that none wanted to leave his refuge. Controlling the mind means controlling the soul. There was no effort put in by the devotees and sadhus who had achieved ‘ashtanga yoga’ without practising any sadhanas.

Guruhari had won the hearts of sadhus and devotees to such an extent that they all never hesitated to sacrifice wealth, family and belongings for him. They did not experience any conflict (of interests) in their minds. On the other hand, they considered such sacrifices as their good fortune and with inner satisfaction. Even in the form of a human being, Swamishri enjoyed the happiness of ‘Akshardham’ – divine abode of the supreme God – and was always replete with bhakti and *jnan*. And in spite of (sadhus and devotees) doing so much, the feeling of indebtedness towards Swamishri never ebbed from

their minds. This sweet burden was always felt by them. Then, what was it that Guruhari had conferred on them?

He had graced them with upright conduct. But how could one impart conduct, which meant action? He had given discourses, love, bhakti and the power to do good things with faith, zeal and patience. It should be remembered that he had given all this not through his discourses alone, which were not aimless and fanciful, but through his conduct and actions.

It was certain that the form of God is manifest on the earth, but not in the form of miracles or magic. Indeed, I say the truth that Swamishri had not merely preached but had offered and sacrificed his life for the satsang community. He had sacrificed himself like an incense stick and a piece of sandalwood. He had not cared for day or night. He had no personal life of his own. Even his personal actions were aimed for the welfare of all. Every second of his life was utilized in the maintenance and progress of sadhus, devotees and society. He used his own life was meant for the sake of others. The distinctions of ignorant and educated, rich and poor, great and small, men and women did not exist for him. However, he showed those distinctions naturally which were quite necessary for their spiritual benefit, in helping human beings transcend their body-consciousness (*dehbbhav*) and for elevating them to his own height.

People believe that they can teach lessons of morality and justice by writing articles and giving lectures. Nobody reads these articles nor listens to the advice or lectures. And if anyone does, then he does not remember or understand them. Moreover, where can you get the inspiration to live accordingly? It is impossible to do so without having an association with a person who practises these ideals.

Swamishri's life and actions allowed all this to be achieved. Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj corroborated this with their affirmations. We

have faith in their words and in Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His association gave me immense joy and I bow my head to him with utter respect. I say in my mind, "Swami how great and wonderful you were ! You were really our life and soul." I did not know what I wanted from Swamishri, and I did not realize that I had got that thing. In my heart, I felt full satisfaction and peace.

Today, all sadhus and devotees have full faith in crossing the ocean of earthly existence. The inspiration of observing dharma (morality) and offering *upasana* coupled with the nine forms of bhakti was derived from Swamishri's association and his life. It is true and an experienced fact that no matter how much effort one makes on the spiritual path one fails to be inspired from a person who himself has not imbibed the spiritual ideals. A moulded life makes formulae, however formulae does not mould life. Lectures and books are not necessary; only true behaviour is needed. Then the rest follows.

A mistake often made by many is that they behave or act (*vartan*) in such a manner so as to make others act in a similar way. Only when one lives or acts for one's own self will it yield total results, otherwise, others will simply copy you to no effect. If one behaves merely to show others then it is of no use; in fact one will miss out on the essence of doing bhakti to experience Bhagwan's joy. There is a very minute difference between behaving for one's own sake and for others, however, a vast difference arises with regards to its fruits. This, I have understood through Swamishri's simple , straightforward and yet profound life. And I have been inspired to live accordingly.

Swamishri remained relaxed and light in so many of his divine actions, in the most difficult of situations, and amidst all challenging problems and spiritual dilemmas. I am simply awed by Guruhari. He had no burdens; was always light as a feather. One who has such a high spiritual state of being Brahmaswarup would make

the atmosphere serious and too dry for others to remain nearby. Swamishri's *vairagya* (detachment) did not scorch anyone. Neither did he allow bhakti offered by others to become overwhelmingly emotional and without limits. His strict observance of



the *panchvartmans* (five ascetic vows) was itself his message. He never relaxed in his vows of renunciation regarding women and wealth. In such instances he was strict and firm.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj believed *jnan* should not be hollow or empty words, but translated into a unique life full of joy and wedded to morality. If someone boasted about knowledge, then Swamishri would say a few words to restrain him. For him, right action was *jnan*. However, no matter what a person may be like, he never disliked him. One felt his warmth and welcome on meeting him. Once, Swamishri, Hakabhai Khachar and I were returning to Gujarat from Delhi by train. The journey took 24 hours, but we hardly exchanged a word. Swamishri was not reading or writing anything. But without exchanging a word I got a message, immense encouragement and felt happy. His life and work started unfolding in my mind like a film. Inspirations filled my heart. I felt an inner enthusiasm to do so many things for satsang. An honest and true feeling to please Yogi Bapa emanated clearly.

During the journey Swamishri was turning the *mala*, which suggested many things to me: do bhajan while doing your work, but not the other way round. Normally, one is unable to do bhajan even while sitting idly. However, Swamishri was turning the beads in a relaxed and happy frame of mind. His inner self was calm in

an ocean of divinity. It was anchored to something firm and still. He had a robust refuge (*ashro*) in Shriji Maharaj and a great attachment to him. I could see he was unruffled.

Once, I had Swamishri's darshan at the Surendranagar railway station. I was

on a tour from our college. I saw people running here and there to board their train. Some were standing, but their minds were roaming all over the place. However, I felt Swamishri to be stable in spite of him walking. Swamishri was always engaged in some activity, but he was so much at ease during his activities, similar to someone in deep slumber. His equanimity was different from the ease experienced by other people. His ease was not idleness, irresponsibility, inattentiveness or the feeling that he had nothing to do because others were working for him. (He wished to do even the smallest activity or duty, which he did.) Some people sit idly, but that was not the case for him. Swamishri joked with others, but it had a purpose. So his ease was not mundane.

In 1974, Swamishri and his sadhus were given a grand farewell in Mumbai before they departed by flight to Nairobi. However, on landing at the airport in Nairobi they were ordered to return to Mumbai. The sadhus asked Swamishri, "Why has this happened?" He replied, "We have done no wrong. We do things to please Maharaj. So, his wish prevails." It is clear from his answer how much at ease he was. A similar incident happened: the planning permission for a mandir in Harrow, London, was refused. The youths and devotees had tried very hard. The youths were confidently saying that they would get permission to construct the mandir, but they lost the

case. Subsequently, everyone was disappointed. But that night Swamishri slept soundly. It was evident from this that he had no desire other than to please Maharaj and Swami. No pillow is as soft as a clear conscience. He had a pure heart.

Swamishri was at perfect ease while writing or reading letters. Sometimes, the writer's handwriting was illegible, the content of the letter would be trifle or rubbish, the devotee may have written the same problem ten times over; still he would read the letter, treating it as a service to dissolve the devotee's pain or problem. Once a sadhu, on seeing a big pile of letters, said to Swamishri, "Stop it now. How long will you go on! Don't you feel tired? Don't you get exhausted?" Swamishri replied, "This is a service which cannot be treated with disrespect." The reason behind Swamishri's outer ease and inner joy was his belief that serving the devotees was devotion to God.

Whenever he had to convey anything related to a task or situation to a sadhu or a devotee, he would invariably do so when he met them. He had no diary or pen (to note such things) and neither did have to memorize it. It was all natural for him. He had abundant affection for them.

After Swamishri's Suvarna Tula (in 1985, London) was over, he behaved as if it had not occurred. The next day, a devotee insulted him, but he was completely at ease and took it in his stride.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had never allowed any blame or insult to fall upon Yogi Bapa. In fact, he took it upon himself. Swamishri believed that no one was his enemy and so he always showered his love and divinity upon all. Divinity glowed in his entire personality. His straightforwardness, frankness and purity touched our hearts; same was the case with his power of endurance. He never forgot Thakorji for a moment; even when he was honoured. How pure were his feelings! His life was an open book. The nearer one got to him, the more one understood his noble

character. He never felt like dazzling or overawing anyone. Because he was genuine others were impressed.

He always looked fresh. Once, he had several private meetings with devotees that lasted for over three hours. After they left, Swamishri looked fresh as ever, like he had rested for a long time.

While on home visits, Swamishri walked briskly, and his inner tranquillity was apparent from without. When he was walking he seemed at ease, like he was sitting on a sofa. He remained calm and at ease when devotees were doing his darshan or not, and when anyone arrived or left. Once, Swamishri, Narayancharan Swami and I alighted from a plane and came to the VIP lounge at the London airport. Some officers were with us. Swamishri started his daily rounds of walking in the lounge, unruffled by the bustle of people. He walked with blissful abandon, as if he was walking in Sarangpur. I had experienced his aloofness from this mundane world without him snapping his relations with us. Out of both, only one is possible. But in his case, he had achieved both. He had no inferiority or superiority complex. He was always calm and amicable with everyone. He was always at ease with everyone. Once, Swamishri was in Kolkata in an ashram. The head saint of the ashram was averse to Swamishri. But Swamishri did not mind it at all and left quietly.

Swamishri was very social. He always appreciated and praised others and selflessly offered respect and honour to others. This was a rare achievement. He was calm while performing his daily puja. He was at ease in all his activities. This clearly showed that he was above his physical existence and Paramatma always resided in him. Those who came to meet him were surrounded by joy and peace. Ultimate peace is at the feet of Narayan!



Gujarati text: Puja Mahant Swami

HUMILITY



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Dr Swami

After Swamishri returned from his 1977 overseas *vicharan*, there was an assembly in Atladra. Swamishri himself was reading the Swamini Vato and discoursing. Many eminent persons were seated in front of Swamishri. At that time an ordinary looking devotee, who was probably uneducated and seemed confused, came and stood directly in front of him with folded hands. Swamishri did not get angry with him for the interruption, but talked to him calmly and humbly. This incident touched my heart, because, in such circumstances, others would have got angry and forced the man to sit down and perhaps looked at him with contempt. But no such untoward conduct was seen in Swamishri. It reflected his equanimity and equal feelings for all.

Humility was evident in Swamishri's life. Ego was never seen in his life. Though so many people obeyed him and he was honoured and praised in many places, he was always humble. That is why Muktanand Swami had rightly said, "When I-ness is overcome, God is near." So, according to the words of Muktanand Swami, one is convinced that Swamishri was God-realized.

One got life's inspiration from Swamishri, who was wedded to selfless service, found in very few people. The majority of people work with a selfish motive. But, in Swamishri's case, all his works were totally unselfish and for altruistic purposes.

By associating with Swamishri one was inspired with strength to do selfless service, and got the power to live according to these ideals. ♦

Gujarati text: Puiya Dr Swami

SWAMISHRI'S DIVINITY



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Kothari Swami

When I was associated with Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj I had the firm belief that only he could attract the attention of youths by befriending them and inspiring them to follow the path of moral conduct and bhakti. This was a role which no one else in the entire world could play.

Before Yogiji Maharaj returned to Akshardham he had declared that Pramukh Swami was the form of Shastriji Maharaj and that he (Pramukh Swami) was also everything to him. So (after Yogiji Maharaj's earthly departure) I gradually bonded with him. In the beginning, the feeling persisted that Yogiji Maharaj was unique and that Pramukh Swami Maharaj would not be able to attract youths like he did. But, within a short span of time Pramukh Swami Maharaj (Swamishri) cleared this misconception of mine.

Swamishri took deep interest in the youths, expressed his love, graced them and greatly attracted all those who came into his contact. Because of this, some enthusiastically joined in the satsang activities, some even joined in doing lifetime *seva* in mandirs, and some took *diksha* as sadhus and engrossed themselves in satsang *seva*. Then, I understood firmly that there was only a change in the outer form, but not in the spiritual substance. Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who was working in the form of Yogiji Maharaj, was now working through Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

During Swamishri's satsang tour of South India in 1989–90, I experienced the jam-packed public assemblies in centres which had only a few devotees. Many well-wishers joined satsang because they were impressed by Swamishri's divine glory. Some realized that the form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself had come. Many people became pure by giving up addictions, many more had their wishes fulfilled, hundreds became yolked

to selfless service and worship, and thousands got guidance for a better, higher life.

Once, an assembly of devotional songs with music was arranged at the Deshpande Hall in Nagpur. The large hall was situated at the far end of the city. So, all felt it would not be fully occupied. But to everyone's surprise, the hall was overcrowded from the beginning. When Banwarilal Purohit, the chief guest of the event, was contacted on phone to remind him to come, he inquired whether there were any people in the hall. He was told to come and see for himself. When he arrived he was amazed to find the hall overcrowded. He experienced Swamishri's divine attraction. Like a mountain of magnet which pulls all the iron in a region, Swamishri attracted hundreds of spiritual aspirants seeking *moksha*.

Once, Swamishri was standing at the entrance of a train compartment on a railway station. While he was meeting the devotees, a boy came and requested Swamishri to give his autograph on a piece of paper. The attendant sadhu told the boy that as the train was about to depart Swamishri would sign it later. But Swamishri did not want to disappoint the boy. He signed the paper while standing, which pleased the boy immensely. All those who were present learnt not to disappoint a small boy.

Once, Swamishri reached Akola station at 12.30 a.m. to catch a train. But the train arrived

one hour and fifteen minutes late. Till then he waited in the VIP room. After boarding the train, he lay down to rest at 2.30 a.m. At 5.45 a.m., the train arrived at Amalner station. Swamishri came to the door to give darshan to the devotees, then blessed them and accepted their salutations. His chief aim was to please the devotees and so he silently tolerated the hardship and discomfort. He had sacrificed his life for the devotees.

In 1973 (Vaishakh *vad* 12, VS 2029), the birthday of Yogiji Maharaj was celebrated in Gondal. At that time, I went to Gondal with regards to my PhD thesis. After Swamishri completed his morning puja, he came to Shastriji Maharaj's room to have darshan. I requested him, "Yogiji Maharaj had promised me that he would bless me to attain *ekantik* dharma, but shortly thereafter he went to Dham. Now, how will I attain it?" Swamishri took a rose from the sanctified cot and gave it to me, saying, "Whatever Yogiji Maharaj had promised, I will fulfil it. There's no need to worry." Because of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's compassion and blessings, I am able to observe religious vows to perform bhakti, service and satsang, and am peaceful at heart.

It was a common experience that Swamishri possessed the power to transform the lives of people totally. ♦

*Gujarati text: Pujya Kothari Swami
(Sadhu Bhaktipriyadas)*

(Cont. from p. 9)

when he draped him with a shawl and gave him the responsibility as president of BAPS, "Yogiji Maharaj is a great saint and he will initiate sadhus when he is alive. But, after him, you have to take care of these things. You have to give *diksha* to sadhus and look after the Sanstha as the guru." Then, Shastriji Maharaj took Pramukh Swami's hand and placed it in Yogiji Maharaj's hand.

Now the entire world sees and knows what wonderful work Pramukh Swami Maharaj has done. Shastriji Maharaj used to say, "After me, when the work continues in this way for ten

years, satsang will be doubled." But Pramukh Swami, instead of doubling the satsang has increased it tenfold. And Shriji Maharaj, Swami [Shastriji Maharaj] and Gunatit Swami are greatly pleased with him. It is the wish of Maharaj and Swami that the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* should spread throughout the world under the leadership of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. And in all the countries he will build mandirs. Maharaj and Swami has given him and will continue to give him the strength to carry on the work. ♦

Gujarati text: Pujya Sant Swami



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Tyagvallabh Swami

SWAMISHRI'S HEARTFELT LOVE



In 1952, I joined the Satsang with understanding when I came from East Africa to India. In the first two years, I toured with Yogiji Maharaj during my college vacations. I had rarely interacted with Pramukh Swami (Swamishri). In 1960, Yogiji Maharaj initiated me as a sadhu and posted me in Mumbai. Swamishri used to come for a few days when Yogiji Maharaj was in Mumbai. As such, I did not come in close contact with Swamishri till 1970.

In 1970, Swamishri was with us when I went to East Africa and England with Yogiji Maharaj. On many occasions I accompanied Pramukh Swami to *padhramanis* and *sabhas*. But there was no deep attachment with him. At that time, nothing was more important for me than Yogiji Maharaj. However, I was drawn towards Swamishri in London due to two incidents.

In one incident, Yogi Bapa and the sadhus arrived at a devotee's home to have lunch. Due to lack of time, I was not able to prepare the seating arrangements for dinner by spreading paper on the carpet. Furthermore, I was preparing the food, which was not ready. So, I was dashing in and out of the kitchen to take care of both the arrangements. Swamishri saw this frantic movement of mine. He realized the situation and started making the seating arrangements and told me to finish the cooking. He could have asked other junior sadhus to do that service, but he did not do so,

and started doing it himself. On seeing this, I was drawn towards him.

In 1974, Swamishri posted me at Atladra as the *ko-thari*. Whenever Swamishri visited Atladra, I had to arrange all the programmes; especially the *padhramanis*

to the devotees' residences. Once, Swamishri was to come to Vadodara in the evening directly to the home of the devotee where dinner had been arranged. Then, he was scheduled to go to Atladra for his stay. When the devotees living nearby came to know of Swamishri's visit they requested me that Swamishri also sanctify their homes. So, I arranged Swamishri's *padhramanis* to their homes. But, as was common at that time, Swamishri's arrival was delayed due to additions in his schedule.

Swamishri was seated after taking dinner, but I could not muster the courage to tell him that some *padhramanis* had been arranged. I was under tension as the devotees had made the arrangements. Then, while departing, Swamishri asked me, "What is the programme?" I replied, "We have a few *padhramanis* and then we will go to Atladra for rest." Without showing any unwillingness or exhaustion, he enthusiastically said, "Let us go." I was touched by this incident and came closer to him.

Another memorable incident took place when I was with Swamishri on our way from Bochasan to Atladra for the Vasant Panchami celebration. Ishwarbhai, a dedicated devotee in Jitodia, was about to breathe his last. Swamishri had decided to see him first and then proceed further. We all went to Jitodia. Ishwarbhai was lying awake on a bed in the veranda of his house. A seat



was arranged on a nearby wooden cot for Swamishri. A *murti* was placed in a chair nearby and a *divo* was ignited before it. Swamishri took his seat on the wooden cot, while Viveksagar Swami and I sat on either side of him.

Swamishri stroked Ishwarbhai's body and talked to him encouragingly. His sons performed *pujan* and *arti* of Thakorji. Then, Swamishri told me to offer the *prasad* to Thakorji and then give it to someone to distribute it to the devotees. After offering the *thal* to Thakorji, I was about to give the *prasad* to someone when Swamishri took the dish from me to pass it on himself. However, a part of the dish of *prasad* had become hot because of a *divo* lying underneath it. I was unaware of this and as Swamishri took the dish from the side that was hot, his right hand finger got scorched. Still, Swamishri did not let go off the dish and tolerated the burning sensation. Any other person would have dropped the hot dish. But Swamishri held on to the dish and cautioned a youth standing in front of him not to hold the dish from that side.

Thus, he saved the youth from getting his fingers hurt. After getting into the car, Swamishri asked Narayancharan Swami to bring some ointment to apply on his fingers, which had developed a large blister. The severity of the burns was apparent from this.

After the celebration in Atladra, I approached Swamishri for permission to return to Bochasan. Then, I begged for forgiveness, "Swami, forgive me. I am pained to see your blistered finger." He dismissed my words smilingly. But I feel sorry whenever I remember this

incident, and when I remember that blister on his finger, I feel pain.

However, I still recall that painful incident because the experience of his enduring and pardoning nature is refreshed. By this incident, Swamishri drew me more towards him.

Another incident of Swamishri also touched me. As per Swamishri's wish, we eight sadhus went on a satsang tour of America in 1989. The tour was for four-and-a-half months. During the tour, my health deteriorated, and I lost my appetite and felt thirsty. I attributed this to a stomach ailment. I thought that once we returned to India, I would recover and be all right. I completed the satsang tour schedule and did not consult a doctor.

But, after the tour, when we returned to Mumbai, I was very weak and called Dr Kiranbhai Doshi. From my physical symptoms and the blood and urine report, it was diagnosed that I had severe diabetes. I was admitted to Dr Kiranbhai's hospital. Swamishri was in Ahmedabad at that time. Some of sadhus who had travelled with me went to Ahmedabad and gave the details to Swamishri. Swamishri then went to Mehsana from Ahmedabad and blessed me by telephone at the hospital. He said that I would get well soon and instructed me to take rest and not to come to Bharuch for the birthday celebration. In fact, we had hurried at the end of the America satsang tour in order to attend Swamishri's 69th birthday celebration. But unfortunately, I had to pass that day in hospital.

After one week, my health improved a lot by the timely and effective treatment of Dr Kiranbhai Doshi. From the hospital I went to the Dadar mandir for rest. After some days, Swamishri came to Mumbai for the mandir *patotsav*.

Swamishri came at 12 noon for darshan and saw me near the *murtis* of Dham, Dhami and Mukta and he embraced me. He inquired about my health and blessed me.

At night, when Dr Kiranbhai went into

Swamishri's room for darshan, Swamishri told him to treat me in such a way that I would never require any insulin injections. (At that time, I was taking insulin injections thrice a day.) Dr Kiranbhai said, "Bapa, he has acute diabetes and will therefore have to take lifetime injections." But Swamishri said emphatically, "I do not wish that he continues injections." He said this so firmly that Dr Kiranbhai Doshi could not argue further. And indeed, my health started improving from that day. As a result, the injections and medicines were gradually reduced.

After a five-day stay in Mumbai, Swamishri was about to depart on a satsang tour of South India. When he was departing, I sought his permission to proceed to Bochasan. He said, "Do not be in a hurry. Go when you have completely recovered." I got much relief by his blessings. I informed him, "I am taking half-a-tablet every day and the injections have been stopped."

He blessed me and said, "You will not require to take the tablet also."

Dr Kiranbhai and other doctors wondered about how such a severe case of diabetes was controlled so quickly. But this had happened by Swamishri's blessings. Then, the half-tablet dose was also discontinued and I returned to Bochasan.

I consider my diabetes as a blessing, since I got other benefits in life. But the greatest benefit was that I learnt about Swamishri's feelings for me. He remembered me more than I remembered him, and he had much more love for me than I had for him.

Being convinced of all this, I feel much pleasure in my heart. I am satisfied so much that Swamishri gave me much more than I had deserved and for the *seva* I had done. ♦

Gujarati text: Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Ishwarcharan Swami

PROFICIENCY IN ALL WORK IS YOGA

Saints and great men achieve many things through the synchronization of their speech, thought and behaviour. The resultant good actions spread like an aroma all around. What may appear difficult for many people, the saints can achieve. Their lives, woven like the threads of worship and service to God, show proficiency in planning and management. The saints, who are above the three *gunas*, are modest and offer their selfless services to God with joy. God alone spreads the glory of their divine works.

In Yogiji Maharaj's times, though Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the recipient of Shastriji Maharaj's divine love and constant care, he always remained unseen and served under the guru's wings. He never made a show of his devotion and successes. He always avoided fame by merely doing his duties and in abiding by the highest tradition of asceticism. It was difficult to understand him. Even after becoming the guru it was very difficult to grasp the divine spark in him because of his simplicity. There was no pretence, not an iota of conceit, nor a hint of his peaceful personality. Hence, it was more difficult to know his greatness. But, after being with him, when we realized his true personality, we were transported to the heights of his grandeur

of unfathomable, transparent asceticism and generosity which dwarfed even the highest peak of the Himalayas. Though Swamishri was engrossed in various activities all the time, through his humility he continuously spread his divine warmth everywhere. Swamishri remained totally absorbed in God, yet he believed himself to be a servant. He performed wonderful and relentless selfless services without detaching himself from Paramatma for even a moment.

In 1985, after visiting the exhibition halls at Swaminarayan Nagar in Ahmedabad, Swami Chinmayanandji came to the visitors' room. Here, on meeting Swamishri, he asked, "Who has organized all this?"

Swamishri replied in his usual tranquil and patient manner, "God has done all this." Swami Chinmayanandji accepted the answer, but felt that the inexhaustible divine power of Vasudev was working through Swamishri; otherwise such planning would not have been possible. Swamishri's radiant saintliness was reflected through his big and small humble activities. Thus, all were convinced that someone (God) performed all the activities through Swamishri. He had merged his existence in Shriji Maharaj and his preceptors – Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. He always said that all things happened by their wishes and blessings.

Swamishri organized, served and took rounds during big or small occasions and festivals. During the Suvarna Kalash Mahotsav of the Gadhpur Mandir in 1961, the strong summer winds of Vaishakh (June) were playing havoc. In spite of the shortage of water, dearth in lodgings and the strong winds knocking down the *mandap*, Swamishri solved these issues and completed each task with equanimity. On seeing all this, many got the inspiration to serve. On all occasions, big and small, Swamishri would be seen serving steadfastly in all the departments.

In 1965, Swamishri was overseeing all the arrangements during the Centenary Celebration of



Amrut Mahotsav, 1967

Shastriji Maharaj in Atladra. He did not care for food, water, rest or sleep. Yogiji Maharaj used to enquire, "Has Pramukh Swami taken food?" But Swamishri would be engaged in *seva* in the hot sun at the festival site. Mota Swami requested Swamishri to come and have lunch with him, and he waited anxiously for him till he came. This way, Mota Swami ensured that Swamishri would have lunch with him.

Swamishri's humble enthusiasm for devotion and service was very much evident whenever he was supervising the festival work all through the night prior to the inaugural day. Once, while the assembly stage was under-construction, many devotees explained to him that they would finish off the work while he could go and rest. But Swamishri left only after the brick wall behind the stage was constructed and painted. Thereafter, he completed his ablutions and attended the morning *sabha*.

During the Amrut Mahotsav in 1967, Gondal, Swamishri did his best in making the water arrangements as per Yogiji Maharaj's order. He had all the other responsibilities of the festival on his shoulders, so he worked relentlessly. However difficult the problem, he would solve it. Others could not even dream of such solutions!

Many problems cropped up while providing lodgings (during the Amrut Mahotsav), as it was impossible to allocate premises that were



Bicentenary Celebrations of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, 1981



Bicentenary Celebrations of Gunatitanand Swami, 1985

satisfactory to all. In that case too, he tried to please all. His power to take decisions was amazing. He was firm in his decisions. Initially, he would ask all and take everyone's advice. However, when all were perplexed, he would give a decision by remembering Maharaj. He would say, "Maharaj will make things work out well." With these magical words, everyone experienced ease, and no doubt or worry would remain thereafter.

In 1969, during the *murti-pratishtha* festival of the mandir in Bhadra, there were great difficulties in acquiring water. But with the blessings of Yogiji Maharaj, water was discovered in a well on the opposite bank of the River Und. A pipeline was quickly laid from the well across the dry riverbed and up to the mandir and dharmashala; a distance of more than 5,000 feet. Swamishri got the work done by continuously standing with the workers from noon till late at night in the torrid Vaishakh heat. He did not relax for a moment or feel tired. His total dedication to *seva* was evident to one and all. Along with that, there was no burden of work, worries and distress on his demeanour. He was always busy, patient and sincere with no uneasiness and pretences. That was why so many people derived inspiration from him.

In 1981, prior to Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Bicentenary Celebrations in Ahmedabad,

an anti-reservation agitation had erupted in Ahmedabad. The movement became increasingly violent day by day, which affected the Sabarmati Ashram area close to the celebration venue. A question arose as to whether to hold the festival in such circumstances. Preparations had begun months before, but it was feared that the agitation might escalate further. Numerous leading lights met Swamishri and expressed their views that the festival should be postponed.

In such circumstances, Swamishri never took unilateral decisions. He would consult all and asked for their views. All had suggested to postpone the festival. But Swamishri said in a calm and confident tone, "We should hold the festival as decided. Maharaj would set everything right and resolve the agitation." And truly, due to Swamishri's blessings the agitation was resolved before the celebrations commenced. The entire celebrations were carried out without a hitch. As such, Swamishri's faith in Shri Hari and his strong will assured all that he was an extraordinary saint with a very strong bond with Shriji Maharaj.

In 1985, before the Bicentenary Celebrations of Gunatitanand Swami in Ahmedabad, there was an acute water shortage and a students' agitation. Some social leaders opined that the celebrations should not be held. But Swamishri was firm in his decision. He said Maharaj-Swami would help



Feeding cows during the drought, 1987



Swamishri greets HE Giani Zail Singh, President of India, 1985

us. Shortly thereafter, by his blessings, there were heavy rains and the water crisis was solved.

In the same way, Swamishri engaged his sadhus and youths in the service of mute animals during the drought and famine in 1987. He inspired and organized cattle camps and said, “This is service to God.” He planned the cattle camps in such a way that his sadhus and volunteers took utmost care of the cattle so that they could be useful for farming the following year.

The youths were always amazed at the efficiency and ability of Swamishri’s planning and management. In one such instance, a youth from Canada, Nareshbhai, enquired from Swamishri about the secret of his success. Swamishri replied, “From the beginning, I was engaged in the mandir activities, and secondly, I was inclined towards welcoming and taking care of the devotees. I was engaged in managing the boarding and lodging facilities, and in providing other facilities to the devotees. Shastriji Maharaj was much pleased with this. Such types of *seva* increased during the time of Yogiji Maharaj. From the beginning I was inclined towards the planning of festivals and solving various issues that arose. I had the habit of completing whatever task I undertook. Because of Shastriji Maharaj’s and Yogiji Maharaj’s grace the work goes on.”

In 1985, HE Giani Zail Singh, President of

India, was sitting in the visitors’ room after visiting the Swaminarayan Nagar in Ahmedabad. On meeting Swamishri, he exclaimed, “Wonderful planning!”

Swamishri humbly replied, “Our sadhus and youths have unitedly done all this.” Swamishri gave all credit to his disciples. Then Zail Singh, a student of spiritualism and a discernor of saintly power, replied, “This work might have been done by anybody, but you are the motivating power and current behind all, otherwise this is impossible.”

Thus, anyone, after having the slightest acquaintance with Swamishri, could perceive the secret behind such success.

Swamishri found bliss in pleasing Purushottam-Narayan, the supreme being. This was his only aim and source of fulfilment.

No worldly storms ruffled him. He was never affected by the dualities of love and hatred and praise and insult. Because of Swamishri’s innate qualities, his body and soul were radiant with divine lustre. Those who viewed and followed him with divinity could visualize further and further the path of *Yogaha karmasu kaushalam* – proficiency in work is yoga. ◆

Gujarati text: Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami



Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Viveksagar Swami

RIVER OF SAINTLY COMPASSION



CHALLENGING VICHARAN

In 1950, after his appointment by Shastriji Maharaj as the president of BAPS at the age of 28, Pramukh Swami travelled from village to village, managing the administration of the Sanstha and spreading satsang. He often travelled by bullock cart, tractor, rickshaw or on foot in the rain, heat and cold. He traversed longer distances by third class train journeys, and sometimes by car. As the president of the Sanstha he never demanded any facilities. He would sleep in the general assembly halls of mandirs and take his meals in the common kitchen for sadhus.

After 1971, during his *vicharan* as the guru, he was never deterred or frustrated by hardships and challenges. In Jetpur and Bavla he helped to push-start the stalled car. On the road to Bhoyka, when the tractor he was travelling in became stuck in the mud, two tractors were brought to pull it out, but they also got stuck. Then a fourth tractor was deployed to pull it out. Swamishri patiently waited and assisted. Once, while going to Junagadh from Tulsishyam, his car got stranded at night in the Gir forest. Swamishri had to stay the whole night in his car with lions roaming outside.



Once, while coming to Ahmedabad from Mumbai by train, he stayed awake all night to meet the devotees eagerly waiting at every station to greet him.

In 1976, he visited 728 villages and cities, averaging more than two a day, visiting homes and attending satsang assemblies till well past midnight. His eating and rest schedules were always disrupted, but he never complained or tired. He remained fresh and joyous, no matter the difficulties he had to face. And even on the days of fasts, his hectic schedule of home visits, village processions, assemblies, personal counselling, letter correspondence, festivals, *murti-pratishthas*, Sanstha admin work and other duties continued with no respite. Thus, he travelled and did *seva* continuously, unmindful of the discomfort.

During the hot summer of 1977 his *vicharan* was arranged in Sabarkantha. Others said, “Swami, Mumbai is better in summer as it is not so hot.” Swamishri said, “But it is better for the villagers in the summer, as there are boggy roads in the rainy season.” So, in 27 days in Sabarkantha he visited 87 villages. And in the Surat district, he visited 90 villages in 20 days.

Wherever he went, he got up at 6.00 a.m., finished his daily worship and breakfast by 8.30 a.m. and started his daily visits to the devotees’ homes. Sometimes, the home visits stretched

on till 2.30 p.m. Then, he would have lunch and take a brief rest. Thereafter, more home visits, meetings and satsang assemblies. Sometimes, he would have dinner at 11.30 p.m., then sing the *chestha* and sleep late at night.

During home visits he performed the *arti*, offered *vartman* to aspirants and their children and strengthened their faith in God. He would liberate them from addictions, encourage them to perform daily puja and bless them.

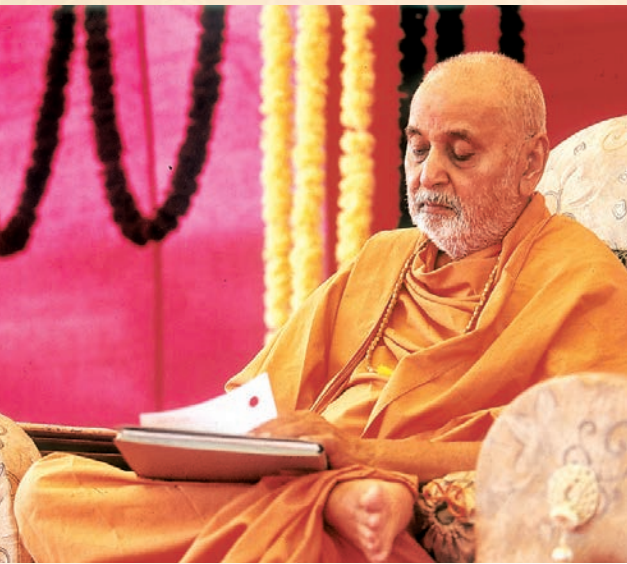
VICHARAN TO PURIFY OTHERS

The BAPS mandirs are ornate and big, but Swamishri hardly stayed in them for long.

In a city like Mumbai, he had to often climb four floors during home visits. He travelled and stayed in the tribal areas for months where no facilities were available. Tolerating many difficulties himself, Swamishri undertook *vicharan* to purify thousands of lives.

Swamishri never forgot Shriji Maharaj even for a moment during his *vicharan*. He staunchly observed his moral rules, never desiring to inspire satsang in others at the cost of his spiritual vows. Once he said, “I go on *vicharan* in India and other countries, but my mind is at the holy feet of Bhagwan.”

Everyone at some point in their lives needs to drink the water of such a pure saintly river.



Thus, people of all backgrounds were cleansed of bad habits and vices by this saintly river. Just as doctors, teachers, businessmen, labourers and others are all required in society, so also, sadhus are an indispensable part of society. Sadhus are not a burden on society. They inspire moral values and uplift and strengthen the fabric of society.

Like an incense stick, Swamishri endured difficulties and gave his saintly fragrance to all.

DISREGARDING ILLNESSES

Cataracts in the eyes, gall bladder removal, an operation for a benign thigh swelling, leg rheumatism and a heart attack – all these, instead of stopping him, inspired him to travel more.

Dipchandbhai Gardi, a great philanthropist of Mumbai, invited Swamishri to Mandvi in Kutch to inaugurate the Gujarat State Panjrapol Federation. It was arranged in January 1986, immediately after the hectic 59-day bicentenary celebrations of Gunatitanand Swami in 1985 in Ahmedabad. Swamishri was not well. He had a fever on reaching Bhuj, but did not tell anyone. Then, in spite of falling ill in Gandhidham, he performed the inauguration.

In 1983, Swamishri had a heart attack. The following year, in 1984, he toured five

continents, blessing satsang assemblies, performing *murti-pratishthas*, making home visits and attending a slew of other satsang programmes. Thereafter, he visited many states all over India.

In 1985, he had a fever when he visited 95 villages in 20 days in the Kanam area (Vadodara district). Daily, he visited 30 to 40 houses of devotees. In Vasad, Swamishri visited 101 homes on the day of a waterless *ekadashi* fast, despite having a fever of 102°F. When asked why he did not reveal his illness earlier, Swamishri replied, “In spite of such illnesses I want to please the devotees.”

Swamishri had pledged when appointed as the president of BAPS, “I take a vow, in the presence of guru Shastriji Maharaj and the assembly, that I shall do my best in discharging my duties and will be faithful even at the cost of my health in fulfilling my duties.”

Swamishri observed this vow till his last breath.

PERSONAL CARE AND GUIDANCE

Correspondence was also an important part of the bond between Swamishri and his devotees and sadhus. Outwardly, it appeared that Swamishri was writing letters, but actually he was responding to their hearts. Devotees wrote to Swamishri



expressing their problems, and Swamishri gave them solutions.

Similarly, Swamishri also gave guidance, peace and comfort to devotees by telephone. Whether in India or abroad, he was often engrossed in dialogue with devotees on the telephone, whether travelling, in the bathroom, taking food, lying in bed, walking and at all times of the day. Even at times when he was ill, his phone conversations continued. Thus he gave the joy of a personal meeting by phone.

Swamishri's capacity to remember people and matters was phenomenal, even though he did not keep any notes or a diary. He would spot and identify devotees in the midst of crowds and would remember to convey messages to them by letter or telephone or through a third party. He never postponed any of his work.

Swamishri considered devotees as his family. If someone was ill or in hospital, he would visit or telephone him to give blessings. Such care brought great relief to the devotees, as if the illness had already been cured!

The elderly Chimanbhai Patel was a devoted disciple of Shastriji Maharaj in Bhavnagar. He was unable to come to the mandir as he was seriously ill. Swamishri was eager to visit him at his home. Somebody said, "The car will not reach there as

the road is in a bad condition." Swamishri replied, "I will walk to reach his home." Swamishri went and also climbed the stairs of his home to bless him.

In 1983, Swamishri had a heart attack in Sundalpura. As he was being taken to a hospital in Vadodara, his car suddenly stopped near the village of Od. Everybody was concerned about Swamishri's health. Swamishri said, "I asked the driver to stop the car. Today, we have fixed a Shikshapatri *parayan* at Dahyabhai Gajjar's house in Anand and I will not be able to attend. He will have invited relatives and made preparations. So, arrange for Acharya Swami and two sadhus to go straight to Anand for the *parayan*." In spite of his critical health, Swamishri thought about and took care of a devotee's programme.

SOLVING DEVOTEES' PROBLEMS

He patiently spent time to resolve disputes between father and son and between friends that arose due to misunderstanding in the homes or over distribution of property or business problems. At times, the differences were so acute that the parties were not on talking terms. When separation was the only alternative, Swamishri's mediation cooled tempers and led to amicable solutions.

Often, such mediation continued till late in the night, and when he had to mediate in the afternoon he sacrificed his rest. Still Swamishri did not tire. He considered the problems of the devotees his own and tried to solve them.

Swamishri gave them proper guidance and worked out a compromise. As Swamishri was totally selfless, untouched by worldly desires devotees accepted his practical and fair mediation with love.

“Just as rivers do not drink their own water, saints live for others.” These lines of the famous poet Dula Kaag are perfectly true in the case of Swamishri. Saints are therefore like rivers that flow for the benefit of others.

IN THE JOY OF OTHERS...

Swamishri genuinely respected the dignity of devotees. Harshadbhai Dave, a senior devotee, by mistake proceeded to bathe in Swamishri's bathroom at Atladra mandir but he was stopped by somebody. At that time, Swamishri was passing by and said to that person, “Recognize and respect the devotees! Let him bathe there.” On another occasion, Tribhakaka, a stalwart devotee, fell ill in Bochasan. So, Swamishri came to see him and started fanning him.

On the occasion of the Yogi Jayanti celebration in Gondal it was very hot and an assembly had been arranged in the compound. One air cooler had been arranged for Swamishri. At that time, Dr Somani arrived and sat in the assembly. Swamishri changed the direction of his air cooler towards him without his knowledge. Swamishri was always happy in the joy and comfort of others.

Swamishri's river of love made many devotees not only bloom with love, but submerged them in it.

HIS LOVE AND APPRECIATION

When an affectionate devotee met him or someone had obeyed his words, this river of saintliness overflowed with appreciation. Then,

he would place his hands on the devotee's head to bless him or he embraced him. The devotee would be filled with joy.

How much Swamishri remembered the devotees?

Swamishri visited Radhu for a *parayan* with the *kotharis* of various mandirs and other sadhus. Swamishri personally introduced to them the entire extended family of Mota Swami (Ashabhai) and his brother Ishwarbhai Daji, who had sacrificed everything for satsang.

Swamishri remembered the names of many generations of the family members.

Swamishri was like a holy river that cleansed the inner being of anyone who came in contact with him.

Why were the sadhus and devotees ready to sacrifice everything for Swamishri? What had Swamishri done for them?

Swamishri had sacrificed so much for others, that people were attracted to him in the same way as glow-worms are attracted to a lamp.

Once, in the village of Karcheliya in South Gujarat, water was seen oozing from a photo of Swamishri. Swamishri visited that house at noon on that day. The devotee said, “Swami! Water oozes from your *murti* here.”

Due to the heat and his physical exertions during the *padhramanis*, Swamishri was perspiring. His upper garment was wet with sweat. Swamishri looked at the devotee, swiped his right forefinger across his forehead and said, “That water is of no use. This is the true water.”

All his life Pramukh Swami Maharaj strived enormously for the elevation, happiness and progress of others. ♦

Gujarati text: Pujya Viveksagar Swami

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN

Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; Kampala,
Uganda; Johannesburg, South Africa

August–September 2019

The African continent is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty. The continent's connections with India are centuries old. And around 100 years ago, the first Swaminarayan devotees settled there. In particular, in 1920, a few devotees, with the blessings of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, made East Africa their home and sowed the seeds of satsang. Thereafter, their understanding of the Akshar-Purushottam doctrine was clarified and strengthened by their regular correspondence with Shastriji Maharaj and by the inspiring and detailed book-length letters of Sadguru Nirgundas Swami. In 1945, the devotees established the first Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Mandir, by consecrating the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam, which Shastriji Maharaj had sanctified, in a small mandir in Nairobi, Kenya.

In 1955, 1965 and 1970 Yogiji Maharaj, accompanied by Pramukh Swami visited East Africa and added impetus to the satsang activities. He also consecrated BAPS mandirs.

Since then, the satsang has continued to flourish and now an organized structure of men and women volunteers dedicate their time and resources to regularly and devoutly conduct the wide variety of spiritual activities for children, youths and seniors.

In 1999, Pramukh Swami Maharaj consecrated a grand *shikharbaddha* mandir in Nairobi and since then, BAPS sadhus have resided in and travelled extensively throughout the continent to consolidate satsang.

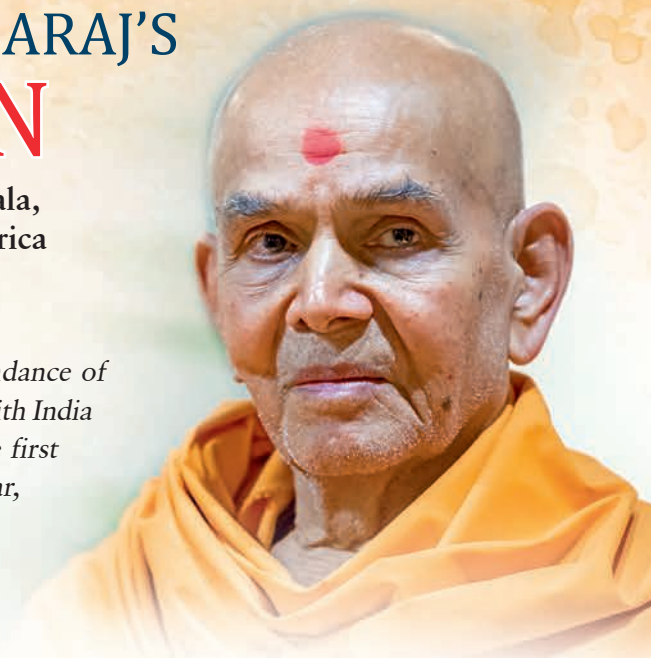
After Mahant Swami Maharaj became the guru of BAPS in 2016, his first overseas satsang *vicharan* was to Africa in March–April 2017. And again from August to October 2019, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the African continent by visiting there again.

This latest *vicharan* was titled by Swamishri as 'Aksharna Ajvade' – 'In the Light of Akshar'.

Over the past three years, Mahant Swami Maharaj has visited scores of BAPS centres throughout the world, nurturing the satsang of all devotees. In his presence, all have felt the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

In this overseas *vicharan* to Africa, Swamishri was accompanied by 14 sadhus, including Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Atmaswarup Swami, Premprakash Swami, Divyaswarup Swami and others.

Swamishri departed from Ahmedabad on the morning of 8 August 2019 and arrived in Dar-es-Salaam at the Julius Nyrere International Airport for the first stage of his *vicharan*.





Devotees and *karyakars* during a 'Divyam' *shibir* session, Dar-es-Salaam

AUGUST

DAR-ES-SALAAM, TANZANIA: 8–29

8, Thursday: Arrival

The devotees were overjoyed with the darshan of Swamishri. On behalf of all, *kothari* Priyavrat Swami, together with senior devotees Shri Kumarbhai Pujara, Shri Pravinbhai Shah and Shri Maheshbhai Patel welcomed Swamishri with garlands. From here, Swamishri went to the BAPS Mandir, which had been consecrated in 1977 by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. After darshan of Thakorji and *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni, Swamishri was requested to take his seat on a decorated *hindolo*. However, Swamishri indicated that Shri Harikrishna Maharaj be seated first to sanctify the *hindolo*. Then, when Swamishri sat down, the devotees devoutly sang *hindolo*-related bhajans. Thereafter, resident sadhus of Africa and senior devotees garlanded Swamishri.

Before departing from the mandir, Swamishri blessed all the devotees who had offered their devotion by observing fasts in the days and months prior to his arrival.

Then, Swamishri left for the White Sands Resort on the shores of the Indian Ocean located in Dar-es-Salaam. This venue, owned by senior devotee Shri Subhashbhai Patel, would be hosting

the three special 'Divyam' *shibirs* for *karyakars* in the presence of Swamishri.

10, Saturday: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Smruti Parva

Today, Shravan *sud* 10, marked the third anniversary of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's return to Akshardham.

In the special assembly held to pay tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, devotees narrated their personal experiences of how Pramukh Swami Maharaj had inspired their lives.

Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami said, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj has given us the gift of Mahant Swami Maharaj and made us blissful and freed us of all worries. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had said, 'I will always be with you.' He has fulfilled his promise and through Mahant Swami Maharaj he continues to give us bliss."

Then, Swamishri blessed, "Today is Swami Bapa's memorial day. Everyone narrated their experiences. It was so enjoyable. Having talked with such *mahima*, all are seated in Dham. But our joy and Bhagwan's joy are different. We are preoccupied with our body. But, if the *pragat* is understood, then there is so much joy. If the manifest is understood, then there will be abundant



Swamishri during the *shibir*

bliss and delight. And those who do not understand have a lot left to do. But we have understood this principle.

“Shastriji Maharaj had said, ‘The Satpurush never departs from this world.’ We have to focus our attention on the Satpurush. And everything else is secondary. The essence of the Vachanamrut is the Satpurush, and we have attained him. So we are fulfilled.”

Continuing the legacy of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, in the past three years, Mahant Swami Maharaj has initiated 98 youths into the sadhu-fold, and consecrated two *shikharbaddha* and 210 *hari* mandirs.

Through such recollections, everyone experienced that Pramukh Swami Maharaj is present today through Mahant Swami Maharaj and that he is our spiritual and worldly guide.

11–19 August: Divyam Shibirs

The multitude of satsang and social activities performed by the BAPS has stimulated the growth and spread of satsang to many countries throughout the continent. Many *karyakars* and devotees, men and women, are engaged on a daily basis in carrying out these activities. Thus, to enable these *karyakars* and the teenagers and youths of Africa

to experience the divine association of Mahant Swami Maharaj, firsthand, three 3-day *shibirs*, themed ‘Divyam’ were organized – two for *karyakars* and devotees of the various regions and one for the teenagers (*kishores-kishoris*) and youths (*yuvaks-yuvatis*) between 11 and 19 August at the White Sands Resort.

Each *shibir* was designed to enable all to experience the bliss of Mahant Swami Maharaj’s darshan, *vatu* (discourses), *prasad* (sanctified food) and *malvu* (personal meeting).

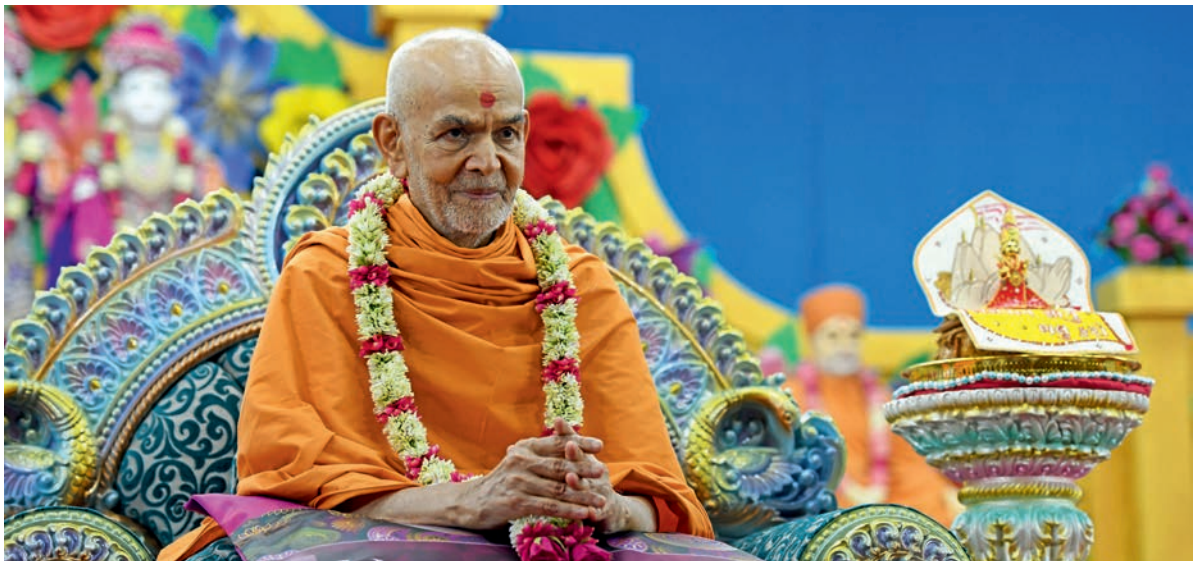
On the evening of 11 August, the first *shibir* for *karyakars* began. When Swamishri with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj entered the *shibir*, children showered flowers and performed *dandvats* and *panchang pranams* to welcome them.

Senior devotees of six African countries honoured Swamishri with a garland. They also garlanded and bowed to each other with the sentiments that Bhagwan Swaminarayan resides in all. And with this sentiment, they honoured everyone in the *shibir* by showering sanctified flowers and rice grains. This display of mutual respect and unity pleased Swamishri. Then, Swamishri lit the inaugural lamp and blessed the assembly.

On 12 August, the *karyakars* had darshan of Swamishri’s puja in the early morning. In the morning session, the male *karyakars* had their personal photo taken with Mahant Swami Maharaj, while sadhus sang devotional bhajans, adding to the divine atmosphere.

After the darshan of Swamishri taking lunch, the inspiring stories of some of the *karyakars* were narrated to Swamishri.

The main topic of the evening session was ‘Mahant Swamina Sange, Divyatana Range’ – ‘In the company of Mahant Swami, enriched with Divinity’, in which Swamishri’s attendant sadhus narrated incidents depicting his tolerance, devotion, *atmabuddhi*, commitment to daily devotional rituals and other virtues. On each topic, Swamishri was asked a question to which he gave candid answers.



Swamishri greets all with 'Jai Swaminarayan'

On 13 August, Swamishri sat with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj on a *hindolo* at the centre of the stage. The sadhus sang the bhajan '*Vadtāl gām fulvādie re hindolo āmbāni dāl...*' in memory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, recreating the atmosphere and joy of that incident.

Swamishri, together with Tyagvallabh Swami, prepared 'Zanzibar Mix', a special local delicacy, which was then served as *prasad* to all the delegates. Also, in addition to the darshan everyone had, Swamishri blessed the *karyakars*. Then, on behalf of all, Swamishri embraced five of the resident sadhus. Thereafter, everyone held and raised their neighbours' hands as the sentiments of unity echoed throughout the assembly.

The final session of the first *shibir* was titled 'Divine Mind', in which a drama was presented that creatively conveyed the message to shun observing *avguns* (faults) of others and observe only the virtues.

At the end, Swamishri blessed, "Our mind is like a dump yard and we have to make it divine. That we are not able to enjoy the bliss of Shriji Maharaj, who is the master of the infinite *brahmands*, is due to our junk-filled mind. Our mind is filled with worldly desires, anger, greed, attachment, ego, envy, jealousy, ambitions, lust and so

on. How then can joy be experienced?

"A divine mind is priceless. Here, all of you are devotees of God. Each one is fully dedicated. If one cannot see the good all around, then it is a waste. If one has affection for someone, even if they are full of faults, one does not see the faults. Here, in each of the devotees there are piles of virtues, but if one ignores them and picks only the waste, then what is there to say? Remember Shriji Maharaj's words, 'Engage in good thoughts and shun negative thoughts.' This is what a divine mind is. One who sees the virtues and engages in good thoughts experiences joy.

"A divine mind is one that accepts the good. To serve others, understand their glory and be humble to them is a divine mind. If such a habit is developed, then there will be no limit to your joy. Thousands of devotees in Shriji Maharaj's time achieved this. If such an outlook is developed, great joy is experienced."

Then, Swamishri sanctified *rakhadis* for distribution to all the devotees of Africa for the upcoming Rakshabandhan festival.

At the end of the *shibir*, the delegates had darshan of Swamishri and received a memento from Tyagvallabh Swami.

As they departed, the delegates' hearts were

filled with the light of Akshar and the divine memories of their association with him.

This morning, Swamishri had also performed the *bhumi puja* for the new BAPS *hari* mandirs in Lilongwe, Limbe and Mzuzu – all in Malawi.

The remaining two ‘Divyam’ *shibirs* (14–16 August for youths and teenagers and 17–19 for the remaining *karyakars* and devotees) followed the same schedule and each delegate enjoyed and experienced the divine association of manifest Akshar, Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Throughout all the *shibirs*, Tyagvallabh Swami also inspired the delegates by participating in every session.

Some of the delegates had travelled by road for up to 32 hours to reach the venue. And all, experienced Swamishri’s divinity firsthand.

After the conclusion of the *shibirs*, Swamishri departed from the White Sands Resort and went to the BAPS Mandir in Dar-es-Salaam.

At the mandir, *balaks* devoutly sang welcome bhajans. Thereafter, Swamishri retired for rest.

During Swamishri’s stay in Dar-es-Salaam, every morning, after darshan in the mandir, he would go to the nearby Sanatan Hindu Mandir to perform his daily puja. The evening assemblies were also held there.

During puja, *balaks* recited scriptural passages. Pleased by their efforts, Swamishri would call them near and bless them.

20, Tuesday: Welcome Assembly

Swamishri and Shri Harikrishna Maharaj were first welcomed with Vedic rituals. Then, children and youths performed a welcome dance.

Prior to Swamishri’s arrival in Africa, 2,238 children, teenagers, youths and elders had observed various fasts as an offering of their devotion. They all dedicated the merits of their observances at the feet of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri, praying, “Please forever give us your association.”

Today, HE Sanjiv Kohliji, the Indian High

Commissioner to Tanzania, had also come to welcome Swamishri on behalf of all members of the Indian community in Tanzania. He garlanded Swamishri and Swamishri presented him a decorative *kalash* as a memento. Senior representatives of other local Indian communities also garlanded and welcomed Swamishri.

Then, a drama was presented depicting that Swamishri’s arrival in Africa had evoked a divine, joyous and pious atmosphere. At the end, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Yogi Bapa was in Gadhada. He was profusely honoured and welcomed by all, and said, ‘This is not my welcome, but that of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Dada Khachar.’ So, this welcome also is for Bhagwan Swaminarayan, I am just a medium.

“Out of great compassion, Shriji Maharaj manifested in this *brahmand*. If he had not come, we would have remained stuck in the cycle of births and deaths. We are all fulfilled and this *brahmand* is also fulfilled.

“Bhagwan Swaminarayan has given us *niyams* and dharma, which we should follow. Live your life with *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta* and become *dasna das*.”

Thereafter, the assembly concluded.

21, Wednesday: Vachanamrut Bicentenary Day

In the evening assembly, *balaks* presented a thematic drama depicting the glory of the Satpurush as revealed in the Vachanamrut. The underlying message was: “The essence of the Vachanamrut is the manifest Satpurush.”

After this excellent presentation, Swamishri was asked, “Is the essence of the Vachanamrut we have presented true or false?” Swamishri replied in his blessings, “Shriji Maharaj is true, Gunatitanand Swami is true and Pramukh Swami Maharaj is true. We firmly believe that Shriji Maharaj revealed the truth. So, whatever Maharaj has said in the Vachanamrut and in other texts is definitely true.”

African Dignitaries Meet Swamishri



Swamishri greets former Tanzanian President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete



Swamishri greets Mr Hamad Masauni, Deputy Home Minister of Tanzania

During Swamishri's stay in Dar-es-Salaam, several eminent dignitaries came to meet and honour Swamishri.

On 21 August, former President of Tanzania, Shri Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete came to meet Swamishri and said, "Thank you very much for coming here. Please bless us by repeatedly coming to Tanzania. Your visit has brought joy throughout the country. Please bless our country that there always be peace and prosperity. We will be grateful to you if you come here every year. I wish you well for your travels."

The former president's meeting with Pramukh Swami Maharaj was recalled. Then, Swamishri presented him a *mala*, an Amrut Kalash and a copy of *Transcendence: My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swami* (by Dr Abdul Kalam). After a photo session, the former president departed.

On 28 August, representing the current President of Tanzania, Hon. John Magufuli, Tanzania's Home Minister Hon. Hamad Masauni came to meet Swamishri. Shri Hamad said, "We are delighted that you have come here. If you frequently come here and stay longer, then we will be more delighted."

Swamishri gave his blessings for the peace, progress and prosperity of the nation and presented mementos.

Many other eminent dignitaries also came to meet Swamishri.

To celebrate the current Vachanamrut Bicentenary year, devotees throughout Africa have themselves prepared handwritten manuscripts of the Vachanamrut. In Tanzania, 22 such manuscripts were prepared. These manuscripts were carried into the assembly and honoured in a grand parade, featuring children dancing, fireworks and other celebratory acts.

On stage, a pair of large scales had been set

up. On one side, Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was placed. And as each handwritten manuscript was brought on stage, Tyagvallabh Swami performed its *pujan*. Then, the sadhus placed each manuscript on the other scale. Finally, Swamishri placed the last manuscript on the scales. In this way, Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was weighed against his own divine words in a devotional Vachanamrut Tula ceremony. The



Swamishri doing darshan of Vachanamrut Tula of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Dar-es-Salaam



Swamishri performs *bhumi puja* rituals

joyous celebratory atmosphere gave everyone memories to cherish forever.

22, Thursday: Samp Din

Today's Samp Din was based on the four maxims given by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, '*Khamvu, ghasavu, mangamtu mukvu ane anukul thavu*' – 'Tolerate, Sacrifice, Let go and Adjust.'

Priyavrat Swami gave a thoughtful speech on '*Khamvu* and *Ghasavu*'. Then a dance was presented to portray '*Mangamtu Mukvu*' through the story of the birds who managed to escape from the bird catcher's net by letting go of their own ways and following the directions of a knowledgeable senior bird. The forth principle, '*Anukul Thavu*' was presented through an amusing activity. Two teams of six people were given two crates each. Both teams had to use the two crates to reach the finish line, with all six standing on one crate and then the next crate to advance towards the finish.

In the end, Swamishri blessed, "In these four principles, Pramukh Swami Maharaj outlined all the requirements of *samp*. These principles are difficult, but for one who has firmly resolved in one's mind to maintain *samp* then everything is possible. But, if one is unsure, mentally weak, wavering then it is not possible. Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave us these principles based on his

many years of experience. He practised them in his life. So, we should follow in his footsteps.

"The four principles are powerful. They seem simple, but they can achieve great results and outcomes. All who have maintained *samp* in the way have benefited and have been victorious."

23, Friday: Upasana Din

In the evening assembly, the *shishus* (young boys) presented a detailed discussion on *upasana* in a simple language. Swamishri was delighted with their excellent performance.

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, "Shastriji Maharaj was himself Akshardham; he was Aksharbrahman. Due to his blessings, we are happy and able to enjoy everything. He had said, 'My work will continue.'

"That work is of *upasana*. We must join in. And this is the main work that is to be done. We have been doing everything else for countless births, yet have not been able to escape from the cycle of births and deaths. Now the time has come.

"Even offering our infinite gratitude to Shastriji Maharaj is not enough. He has done so much for us. Everything else can be obtained, but not *moksha*. And Shastriji Maharaj has given that to us. Now this talk must be understood. Believe oneself to be blessed in this birth. We



Patotsav annakut offered to Thakorji



Devotees during the Bal Din assembly

have attained God and attained the Satpurush. So, there is nobody more blessed than us. We have attained the highest status – that of *moksha*. So, there nobody is more blessed. Understand this principle and be forever joyous in the attainment of this *nishtha* and *upasana*.”

In the morning, after his puja, Swamishri performed the ground-breaking rituals of the site to where the BAPS mandir will be temporarily located while the present mandir is demolished and rebuilt.

On the temporary site, a temporary mandir, in which the present *murtis* will be consecrated, and an assembly hall will be erected. Swamishri performed the rituals and *pujan* of the bricks to be used.

24, Saturday: Janmashtami

In the evening Janmashtami celebration assembly, speeches and skits on Janmashtami-related topics were presented. Also, Tyagvallabh Swami spoke on the topic of refuge (*ashro*) in God.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed, “Shri Krishna Bhagwan won the war without lifting a weapon. God is so powerful. So, develop a firm refuge in God, such that nobody can shake it loose. Those who have developed firm refuge

in God are honoured. It is difficult to attain refuge in God. Duryodhan opted for Shri Krishna Bhagwan’s army, but Arjun was wise. He chose God. Like Arjun, we must also develop firm refuge in God. Everything is included in that.

Then, Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was placed in a decorated *parnu* (small swinging cradle) and offered a *thal* of various sweet delicacies. Then, Swamishri and Tyagvallabh Swami performed the Janmashtami celebration *arti*. Thereafter, Swamishri devoutly rocked the cradle, while celebratory bhajans were song. Over 3,000 devotees had attended the celebration.

25, Sunday: Patotsav

Today the 42nd *patotsav* (anniversary) of the BAPS Mandir in Dar-es-Salaam was celebrated. The actual *patotsav tithi* and date were on a later date, but it was decided to celebrate this occasion in Swamishri’s presence.

After performing the *patotsav* rituals, Swamishri performed *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni. An *annakut* of 273 delicacies (representing the 273 Vachanamruts) had been offered to Thakorji. Swamishri performed the *patotsav arti* and the concluding rituals.

Today also marked the 20th *patotsav* of the



A child presents a story in the Bal Din *sabha*

BAPS Mandir in Nairobi, so via a video link, Swamishri performed the *arti* of the *murtis* there.

A special assembly for *balaks* and *balikas* was held in which Swamishri narrated one of Yogiji Maharaj's *bodh kathas* (moral stories) and delighted the children.

26, Monday: Bal Din

The evening Bal Din assembly featured a drama titled 'Divine Safari', in which some jungle animals made fun of other animals' physical aspects, thus causing them to become shy about their embarrassing features. When all the animals were given divine spectacles the animals that were criticized realized the importance of their body features, and the animals that critized others were able to see their virtues.

After this excellent presentation, Swamishri blessed, "You are the children of Shriji Maharaj, so do not indulge in addictions or *kusang*. Be bold and continue to strengthen your *nishtha*. That is the main principle. Do not harbour ego, anger, greed, jealousy and other such faults. See everyone as divine and beyond *maya*. Firmly observe the *niyams* and dharma given by Shriji Maharaj. If your *nischay* and *niyams* are firm, then Akshardham is guaranteed."

27, Tuesday: Kirtan Bhakti

The sadhus presented a melodious programme of devotional bhajans in Swamishri's presence in the evening assembly at the Sanatan Mandir. Charged by the divine, devotional atmosphere, children, youths and elders spontaneously joined in the joyous impromptu dancing.

28, Wednesday: Smurti Sabha

The evening assembly recollected the divine memories Swamishri had given to all during his 21-day stay in Dar-es-Salaam. A drama titled 'Samarti Sukhkari' (Memories Bring Joy) was performed by *karyakars* in which they weaved together the events of Swamishri's stay. Together with the live performance, videos were also shown. Steven and Abdul, two native African *satsangis*, narrated their experiences with Swamishri.

Steven said, "Many, many thanks to you for improving my life. Jai Swaminarayan."

Abdul said, "You have taught uncultured people like me to lead a disciplined life. Thank you."

Steven sells coconuts for his livelihood on his old, broken bicycle. He came daily to the *shibir* venue. Swamishri saw his bicycle and indicated to the *karyakars* to provide him a new one. Steven

would daily offer a coconut to Swamishri, who would take a few sips and return it.

Abdul is a security guard at the Sanatan Mandir. Once, he saluted Swamishri using his left hand, but Swamishri taught him to salute all with his right hand and blessed him.

Swamishri's love had touched both these natives and many others.

Then, everyone sang the prayer '*Mahābalvant māyā tamāri...*' in chorus.

Finally, Swamishri blessed, "That we have attained Bhagwan Shriji Maharaj is the main thing. So, keep *divyabhav* towards all, understand everyone's glory, serve all with humility. These are our core values. They will bring great benefit and earn Shriji Maharaj's blessings. So, resolve never to engage in *abhav-avgun*. *Abhav-avgun* is poison. It cannot be seen, but it corrupts your *jiva* and those who listen.

"Shriji Maharaj has said, 'Even if a person does not serve me, if he sees the good in devotees then I will believe that as service to me.' By doing this repeatedly, Shriji Maharaj is pleased and *moksha* is attained. So, strive to please Shriji Maharaj and shun everything else. Adopt these noble values and the ultimate goal will be attained."

As this was the last assembly of Swamishri's visit, the devotees garlanded Swamishri.

From Dar-es-Salaam, Swamishri went to Kampala, Uganda, on 29 August.

KAMPALA, UGANDA

29 August to 6 September

Uganda has been a haven for Swaminarayan satsang for many decades. In 1955, Yogiji Maharaj first visited the country. During his second visit in 1959–60, he consecrated BAPS mandirs in Kampala, Jinja and Tororo. Subsequently, political unrest forced all Indians to flee the country in 1972, leaving everything behind. At this time the brave devotees managed to leave the country with the *murtis* of the mandirs.

Then, in 1992, the government returned



Swamishri observes a flower rangoli on his arrival, Kampala

the mandirs to the BAPS, leading to a revival of satsang.

In 1994, Pramukh Swami Maharaj re-consecrated the painted *murtis* in the refurbished Kampala mandir. Thereafter, on 19 May 2007, he consecrated new marble *murtis* in the mandir.

After becoming the spiritual guru of BAPS, Mahant Swami Maharaj visited Uganda as part of his *vicharan* in Africa in 2017. Again, on 29 August 2019, Mahant Swami Maharaj arrived in Kampala to nourish the satsang of all.

AUGUST

29, Thursday: Arrival

In celebration of Swamishri's arrival at the BAPS Mandir, colourful, decorative flower *rangolis* had been devoutly laid out on his pathway. Swamishri walked with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj along the decorated path.

At the rear of the mandir was the newly completed six-floor 'Pramukh Sadan' building. There, in the presence of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Swamishri untied the *nadachhadi* to inaugurate the building as 'jais' echoed all around.

After darshan in the mandir, Swamishri performed *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni. Then, Swamishri was garlanded by senior devotees of Uganda, Shri Ghanshyambhai Patel and Shri



Children perform during the Bal Din programme, Kampala

Nareshbhai Patel. Swamishri also blessed all the devotees who had undertaken special observances in the months prior to his arrival. During Swamishri's stay in Kampala, his residence was on the sixth floor of Pramukh Sadan. Swamishri's daily puja and evening assemblies were held in the Yogi Sabha Mandap on the third floor.

31, Saturday: Welcome Assembly

In the formal welcome assembly, sadhus and devotees honoured Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri with *pujan* and a variety of decorative garlands. Children and youths performed a joyous welcome dance.

From the day of Yogi Jayanti (31 May 2019) till Swamishri's arrival in Kampala, 1,409 male and female devotees of all ages had observed a variety of fasts and *niyams* as their special welcome for Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri.

Blessing the assembly, Swamishri said, "All the swamis and devotees have the blessings of Swami Bapa [Pramkh Swami Maharaj]. This grand welcome is for Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

"Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj manifested on this earth; they met all, but who recognized them? We have attained the Akshar-Purushottam principle.

It is the core treasure.

"Shriji Maharaj has held our hand and will not let it go. If you let go, that is different. Engaging in talks of *abhav-avgun* is letting go. Then, God cannot do anything. So, do not do such damaging actions. We are very fortunate to have attained this opportunity, so strengthen *nishtha* in Maharaj-Swami! In that, our welcome and everything is included."

SEPTEMBER

1, Sunday: Bal Din

Today was Sam-Shravani (Bhadarva *sud* 3). So, in the morning Swamishri and all the sadhus ritually changed their *janois*.

In Swamishri's *puja*, as part of the Bal Din, 18 *balaks* collectively recited the new Swaminarayan *mahapuja*. Swamishri was very pleased and blessed them all.

In the evening Bal Din assembly, the *balaks* assumed the roles of the senior *karyakars* of satsang in Africa and presented the state of satsang in their countries and in Africa as a whole. They resolved to consolidate, strengthen and spread the satsang more before Swamishri's next visit. The children then presented an energetic and entertaining traditional dance.

Swamishri then blessed the assembly, "You are



Devotees doing Swamishri's puja darshan in the newly built Yogi Sabha Mandap, Kampala

young, but talk with great commitment. If everyone becomes like this, then nothing will remain unaccomplished. The prediction that 'A *lakh* devotees will follow each sadhu' will be easily accomplished. All this will become true. Bhagwan Swaminarayan said, 'I want to fill 100 crore vessels.' It will become a reality in the future. But believe it to be true now and everything will be accomplished. We are so fortunate to have attained this satsang."

Finally, the children garlanded Swamishri and received his blessings.

2, Monday: Vachanamrut Din

In the evening assembly, a drama titled 'Essence of Vachanamrut: Satpurush' was presented.

Then, Swamishri blessed, "Shriji Maharaj manifested on this earth and identified Gunatitanand Swami as the gateway to *moksha*. Then the *parampara* has continued: Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. These *satpurushes* are the real essence of the Vachanamrut. We have attained them and have received the secret of attaining *kalyan*. But, to please God, one must sincerely observe dharma and *niyams*. Develop faith in them and live by them."

Thereafter, Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was honoured by weighing him against the 64 handwritten

manuscripts of the Vachanamruts prepared by the devotees of Uganda. Tyagvallabh Swami and the sadhus placed the manuscripts on the scales. Swamishri then performed *pujan* of a complete manuscript comprising one page written by each devotee and placed it on the scales to complete the Vachanamrut Tula of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj.

3, Tuesday: Samp Din

The evening assembly featured a drama titled 'Satyug in Kaliyug', which depicted the chaos and disturbance caused in families due to ego and disunity and the harmony resulting from unity. The importance of *ghar sabha* was also demonstrated. The concluding message of the drama was that all this is possible due to the power of satsang and the Satpurush. And that if there is *samp*, *satyug* will dawn, and inner peace and liberation will be attained.

Explaining *samp*, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj described *samp*: *khamvu*, *ghasavu*, *mangamtu mukvu* and *anukul thavu*. This one sentence includes everything. In the drama it was said that one should listen to elders. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is a *satpurush*. By accepting his words, nothing remains to be done. But behaving wilfully spoils everything.

"One must resolve 'I want to maintain *samp*.'"

The four principles given by Pramukh Swami Maharaj for *samp* include everything. Now, if you do not understand, it is your loss.”

5, Wednesday: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Day

In the evening assembly, prior to Swamishri’s arrival, presentations focused everyone’s minds on Pramukh Swami Maharaj. When Swamishri arrived in the assembly, youths performed a wonderful traditional dance.

Then, the *kishores* and *yuvaks* presented a drama titled ‘True Sant’ in which they played the

roles of well-known devotees of the Sanstha and praised the virtues and works of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, while relevant visuals were displayed on the screens.

After the drama, sadhus and devotees honoured Swamishri with the devoutly made shawls and garlands.

Then, the *balaks* presented a skit expressing their wishes through which they requested Swamishri to forever remain in their hearts. Swamishri responded to them and promised to do so.

Then, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “If we

National Leaders and Dignitaries Meet Swamishri



Swamishri, Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda and devotees, Kampala

On 4 September 2019, Swamishri was warmly received and honoured by the Prime Minister of Uganda, Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda at the Prime Minister’s Office. The prime minister said, “We welcome you to Uganda.”

The prime minister was deeply impressed on hearing about the wide-ranging socio-spiritual activities of BAPS.

The prime minister had, in the past, visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi.

Learning of the core messages for life of Mahant Swami Maharaj, the prime minister said, “These are all powerful messages. Accept Uganda as your country.”

He conveyed his deep appreciation for Swamishri’s visit. Swamishri prayed for the people, and the progress and prosperity of Uganda.

On 5 September, Uganda’s Finance Minister, Hon. Matia Kasaija, and the Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Uganda Hon. Alfonse Owiny-Dollo came to meet Swamishri and receive blessings.



Swamishri presents a memento to Mr David Makhura, Premier of Gauteng Province, North Riding (mandir site)



Devotees welcome Swamishri in a chariot to the evening satsang assembly

live as the *balaks* have described, then we are already in Akshardham. For infinite births, we have been wandering about aimlessly, but now use this birth for Maharaj-Swami. By keeping them at the forefront, all your works will become *nirgun*. Remember Maharaj and Swami in whatever you do. This is the core message. So do not forget it.

“Keep the Akshar-Purushottam principle that Shastriji Maharaj has explained firm in your hearts and observe *niyams* and dharma, strengthen *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta*, and keep *divya-bhav* towards all.”

This was the final assembly of Swamishri’s stay in Kampala.

* * *

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA: 6–19

Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired the spread of BAPS Satsang in many African countries.

On 22 September 1991, he consecrated a *hari* mandir in the Mayfair suburb of Johannesburg. Since then, the satsang has grown and on 25 March 2017, Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *shilanyas* ceremony for a traditional mandir on a 17-acre site on the Johannesburg-Lenasia highway.

On his recent 14-day visit, all the programmes were held on this site.

SEPTEMBER

6, Friday: Arrival

From the airport, Swamishri went to the new mandir site in North Riding, where all the devotees had gathered to welcome Swamishri. While *balaks* sang the mantras of the new Swaminarayan *mahapuja*, sadhus and devotees honoured Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri with shawls, garlands and other devotional offerings. Then all performed *arti* and offered *mantra-pushpanjali*.

Swamishri blessed the devotees who had undertaken fasts and other observances in commemoration of his visit.

Daily, in Swamishri’s morning puja, the *balaks*, *kishores* and *yuvaks* creatively presented an incident from the lives of Shastriji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj as well as recited passages from the shastras.

8, Sunday: Welcome Assembly

The evening assembly commenced with *dhun* and *prarthana*. Seated on a peacock chariot, Swamishri entered holding Shri Harikrishna Maharaj.

Shri David Makhura, Premier of Gauteng Province, was present to welcome Swamishri. He said, “I welcome Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj to South Africa. I am privileged to be



Swamishri showers flower petals on Shri Harikrishna Maharaj during the Jal-Jhilani celebration

present here, where the BAPS will be building a mandir and cultural centre. I congratulate the BAPS for taking this important decision to build this necessary complex to nourish our spiritual and cultural needs.

“This mandir is extremely important to Gauteng Province. I thank you and salute the BAPS and its followers for their contributions and their support in making our country better. I eagerly look forward to coming here to this mandir as a volunteer.”

Then, the *balaks* presented a drama depicting the history of BAPS in South Africa. This included the scene and dialogues of Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Vinu Bhagat (Mahant Swami Maharaj) visiting Beit Bridge on the boarder of Zimbabwe and South Africa in 1970.

After the drama, prayers were offered for the peace, progress and prosperity of South Africa. Then, Swamishri blessed the assembly.

9, Monday: Jal-Jhilani Celebration

As Swamishri was not in the best of health, the morning Jal-Jhilani celebration was held by setting up a small water pool in Swamishri’s room, in which Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was seated in a small boat. After *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Swamishri and Tyagvallabh Swami

performed the celebration *arti*, offered *thal* and honoured Thakorji with *mantra-pushpanjali*. Thereafter, celebratory bhajans, – ‘*Āvyā Hari Undne tire...*’, ‘*Dariyāmā chālī holi...*’ and others – were sung by the sadhus.

Over 1,500 devotees attended the evening programme of devotional bhajans by the sadhus and youths.

10, Tuesday: Vachanamrut Din

In the morning, after puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the BAPS Mandir in Laudium (Pretoria).

In the evening assembly, Thakorji and the handwritten manuscripts of the Vachanamrut were honoured in a parade through the audience onto the stage. The parade participants were dressed as sadhus and devotees from the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Swamishri, the manifest form of Shriji Maharaj, blessed, “Dada Khachar’s name is pervasive throughout the Vachanamrut. That is the type of devotee one must become. Such a devotee enjoys the bliss of God. One who has developed understanding constantly enjoys the bliss of God.

“This satsang is divine. Wherever you go, talk about this divinity. All the sadhus and devotees are divine. If this principle is understood, the goal



Swamishri places a manuscript of the Vachanamrut in the *tula* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj

[of attaining *moksha*] is attained. So, one must understand this divine principle and explain it to others.”

Thereafter, the Vachanamrut Tula of the handwritten manuscripts of the Vachanamrut prepared by the devotees took place. One of the manuscripts was prepared by devotees who memorized the Vachanamrut they had written. In this way the 273 Vachanamruts of that manuscript had been complied. Swamishri was delighted by this devotional effort.

Swamishri showered flower petals on all the handwritten manuscripts. Then, while *balaks* sang verses about the glory of the Vachanamrut, sadhus placed the manuscripts in the scale opposite Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Swamishri placed the final manuscript on the scale, completing the honour accorded to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Then, Swamishri performed *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and the Vachanamrut manuscripts.

11, Wednesday: Vadil Din

In the evening assembly, the seniors presented a quiz based on the detailed biography of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and other activities.

Also, there was a creative presentation by volunteers of the parking, security, housekeeping, kitchen and other departments to the tune of the

bhajan ‘*Māri hundi swikāro Mahārāj re...*’ After this, the mandir trustees approached Swamishri with a promissory note requesting that he remains with everyone during all mandir activities and all the way to Akshardham. Swamishri signed the note to give everyone such an assurance.

Then, Swamishri narrated in detail the story of Sevakram and blessed, “Through such *seva*, Bhagwan Swaminarayan demonstrated the ideal way to serve. The Shikshapatri instructs that one should serve parents till the end. Our Sampradaya places great emphasis on *seva*.”

“A mandir is to be built here. So, all should join in the *seva* in whatever way you can. You can contribute even by serving water. One who really wants to serve is never idle. He is constantly thinking of how to do *seva*. If one is unable to serve physically, then serve with one’s mind.

“While Delhi Akshardham was being built, several other mandirs were also being constructed. But Pramukh Swami Maharaj managed it all. He served day and night through mind, speech and deed. In short, a grand mandir is to be built here, so serve accordingly.”

12, Thursday: Yuva Din

In the evening assembly, the *yuvaks* presented several interesting performances, which



Swamishri performs the morning *arti* of Thakorji on the day of his 86th birthday celebration

Swamishri saw via a live video link to his room. Despite feeling unwell, Swamishri still attended the latter part of the assembly and gave darshan to all.

The youths presented a wonderful drama portraying the *seva* performed by Mahant Swami Maharaj and Tyagvallabh Swami when they were in Mumbai in their early days as sadhus. They showed the circumstances and manner in which their services were performed.

Addressing the assembly, Tyagvallabh Swami praised Swamishri, saying, “Due to Yogiji Maharaj’s guidance and Mahant Swami Maharaj’s leadership we progressed on the path of saintliness.”

While leaving the assembly, Swamishri saw the cart of vegetables used during the drama presented by the youths. He picked up some of the vegetables and gave special darshan to all.

13, Friday: Mahant Swami Maharaj’s 86th Birthday Celebration

Today marked Swamishri’s 86th birthday. The devotees were delighted with the opportunity to celebrate this auspicious occasion in Swamishri’s presence.

Devotees arrived early. Swamishri performed his puja surrounded by lighted *divas* placed on the



stage. Sadhus and youths sang devotional bhajans during Swamishri’s puja.

To commemorate Swamishri’s visit here, 15 youths had performed a total of 56,000 *dandvats* to offer their devotion.

The theme of the evening birthday celebration assembly was ‘*Evā Santne Nāmu hu Shish...*’ – ‘I Bow My Head to Such a Sant...’. Of the virtues of a true saint described by Nishkulanand Swami in the *Bhaktachintamani*, six were presented. For each virtue, a video depicted how Pramukh Swami Maharaj exemplified that virtue and then a sadhu would narrate how that virtue is also present in Mahant Swami Maharaj’s life.

Present in the assembly was Dr Zweli Mkhize, South Africa’s Minister of Health. He said, “I extend a warm welcome to His Holiness Swami

and we want to express our appreciation for Swami's visit to our country, because as a leader in the Hindu movement, he is a leader not just of a group of South Africans, but he is a leader whom we revere and get inspirations from as South Africans in general.

"We also express our appreciation for the huge temple development that is going to be done in this particular site. It is special to us because these teachings that Swami is a proponent of are messages which, not just the Hindu community but South Africans really need: message of peace, message of unity, message of humility, message of tolerance, the message of serving others even if you are elected to a high position. And I've learnt something today, a lesson that if you are a leader you must be the lowest of the least. Also, another message that it is nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice. The messages from Swami teach us humility, but more than that, they are very helpful for the community to heal itself from all sorts of various challenges that we face as a country and as a community. We cherish the message and the values that come from Swami because they are not just messages for one community, but they are for the whole community.

"I have met some of the volunteers who have been doing work here free of charge, but these are very important people in their own positions: graduates, business people, professionals, lawyers, accountants, pharmacists, doctors and others. All united with the spirit of volunteerism, serving our people.

"It is very humbling and very inspiring to have a leader of his stature visit our country.

"And, in closing, Happy Birthday Swamiji! May you enjoy many more years of good leadership, of inspiration, of being a role model and a symbol of light that will lead us to be able to model ourselves and our nation to be a better country, to be better people and to create a better society."

Addressing the assembly, Tyagvallabh Swami

said, "Mahant Swami Maharaj speaks little, but what he speaks is the core of all principles. If we imbibe the qualities he likes, then his birthday can be regarded as properly celebrated. Prayers that we can live our life as per his wishes."

Then, the *yuvaks* performed a traditional celebratory dance.

Thereafter, Swamishri placed all the honours at the feet of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, and blessed, "These honours are not for me. Maharaj and Swami are the all-doers. By keeping them at the forefront, there are no worries. Keeping Harikrishna Maharaj at the forefront continually advances our work.

"This divine satsang we have attained should be properly understood. Do not be lax in practising satsang. If satsang pervades your *jiva* and surroundings then there is unimagined joy. Shriji Maharaj is very pleased on those with such qualities. So, we should narrate the glory of devotees. The most important factor to know is that *abhav-avgun* destroys everything – you may be at the top and it makes you a pauper. Shriji Maharaj and all the gurus have condemned *abhav-avgun*. It prevents one from experiencing joy. So, remove them from your lives. And if you do engage unintentionally in *abhav-avgun*, then atone for it. By doing this, you will always be happy."

Then, in conclusion, while Swamishri held Thakorji in his hands, everyone offered *mantra-pushpanjali* and *arti*.

15, Sunday: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Day

In the evening assembly, youths presented a discussion in which four groups discussed the question, "Of all the works accomplished by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, which is the best?"

Afterwards, Swamishri was asked to share his thoughts. He said, "All of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's works are great. He understood the glory of God, sadhus, all devotees and even the most junior of people. That is why he was able



Mr Paul Mashatile, former Minister of Arts and Culture, addresses the assembly

to do all these works. So, when we feel down in life, remember Pramukh Swami Maharaj and you will be energized.”

Mr Paul Mashatile, former Minister of Arts and Culture in the Cabinet of South Africa, then addressed the assembly, “We will always remember His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the rich legacy he has left us. From him, we have learned the values and importance of putting the needs of others before ours. These are the values which we call in our country the values of ‘Ubuntu’. That means, ‘I am because you are’ and ‘I am complete because of you’.

“Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived a simple, humble life and a life of compassion. He chose not to pursue personal fame and glory. He related well with the common man on the ground. He lent a sympathetic ear to millions across the world. He shared their sorrow and in them ignited their hope. May we all draw inspiration from the life of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. May we keep his legacy alive, may we strive to be like him. His spirit must continue to live long in each and every one of us.

“We wish to express our profound appreciation for the work BAPS is doing to encourage spirituality in our communities, contributing to character-building and promoting human welfare.

We are also encouraged by the work you continue to do in support of humanitarian and charitable causes through your extensive network of volunteers who, on an on-going basis, lend a helping hand to their neighbours and the community at large. Your work is touching our lives. You are making a difference in our communities.”

Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Truly, Pramukh Swami Maharaj sacrificed his life for others. He did not waste even a second. He spent every moment thinking about the devotees, sadhus and Sanstha. He used every second for our joy, progress and liberation. He pleased everyone.

“So, no matter what difficulties or struggles you face, remember Maharaj, Swami and Pramukh Swami Maharaj and you will instantly gain inner strength.

“Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj are all genuine. Their integrity is the base. If you realize that they are absolutely genuine, then you will gain unimaginable inner strength.”

Finally, Swamishri performed the *pujan* and *arti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *asthikumbh* that will be scattered in the Vaal River.

On 16 September, Tyagvallabh Swami and sadhus went to the nearby Vaal River, and to the accompaniment of Vedic verses, scattered Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s ashes into the river.

17, Tuesday: Kishore Din

In the evening assembly, *kishores* presented a programme titled ‘Ap Rijho Em Raji’. As part of the presentation, they performed a drama titled ‘Who Should One Please’, during which Swamishri was asked to write a message. He wrote a message in Gujarati, meaning: “There is joy, progress and *moksha* only in observing the commands of Maharaj-Swami.”

The presentation concluded with the *kishores* singing ‘*Mahābalavant māyā tamāri...*’ prayer in unison.



Swamishri blesses the Kishore Din assembly



Swamishri presents a memento to Mr Herman Mashaba, Mayor of Johannesburg

Then Swamishri blessed, “All the Gunatit gurus have sincerely observed the commands. So, we must also sincerely observe the commands. Do not lapse in this. We have all come here for *moksha* – that is the ultimate goal. For that, one needs to please God and his Sadhu. One needs *mahima*, servitude, unity, fraternity. If one has all these qualities, one advances on the path of *moksha*. By observing the commands of Maharaj-Swami, one progresses on the path of *moksha*.”

18, Wednesday: Shastriji Maharaj Smruti Parva

During Swamishri’s puja, the sadhus and youths sang bhajans in memory of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. In his morning blessings, Swamishri narrated Shastriji Maharaj’s glory and the Vedic Akshar-Purushottam doctrine of Bhagwan Swaminarayan that he propagated.

In the evening assembly, children and youths gave short speeches describing the glory of Shastriji Maharaj.

The Mayor of Johannesburg, Hon. Herman Mashaba, was present in the evening assembly. He was deeply touched on having Swamishri’s darshan and delighted by the presentations in the assembly. He said, “I request you to be a guide to Johannesburg and South Africa. I am ready to

pass on your messages to our people.”

Then, the youths of Majanji Youth Choir sang songs in their traditional style.

Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “If Shastriji Maharaj had not manifested, we would have had a great loss. But he manifested and his work will have an impact forever. We are very fortunate and should further the work of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. We should work together with unity. May this country prosper and its people be happy.”

As this was the last assembly of Swamishri’s visit here, the sadhus and devotees honoured him with devoutly prepared decorative shawls and garlands.

In particular, the women devotees of Africa had collectively prepared a garland of 130,000 *mamras* (puffed rice grains). On each grain they had reverently written the Swaminarayan mantra. After Swamishri was honoured with this garland, he immediately garlanded the mayor with it.

In appreciation for the divine joy and blessings Swamishri had given over the past 14 days all the devotees gave Swamishri a rapturous standing ovation as he departed from the assembly. ♦

Translated from Swaminarayan Prakash



BHAGWAN SWAMINARAYAN'S NOVEL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTS OF THE SHASTRAS IN THE VACHANAMRUT

Part 5

In 1786, at the age of five, Bhagwan Swaminarayan began studying Sanskrit and Vedic texts from his father Dharmdev. By the age of ten he had studied them in such depth that he debated with pundits in Kashi successfully. During his *kalyan yatra* in India from 1792 to 1799, he may have gained more knowledge during his year-long stay with Gopal Yogi to master ashtanga yoga in Nepal.

These two occasions seem to be the only period during which he gained knowledge from texts. After his appointment as head of the *sampradaya* in 1801, he began travelling in Kachchh, Saurashtra and Gujarat. During this period, until 1819, when the first Vachanamrut was written, he listened to *kathas* of texts such as the Bhagwatam and Mahabharat

from his *paramhansas* such as Nityanand Swami, Muktanand Swami and others. On many occasions, he personally revealed the gist of the Vedas to the *paramhansas* about the five vows (*vartmans*) of a sadhu. This became known as *Vedras* – short for *Veda rahasya* – essence of the Vedas. Some of his other teachings, besides the Vachanamrut, were incorporated much later in the mid-19th century in the *Haricharitraamrut Sagar*, a monumental text of some 80,000 Hindi *chopais* by Adharanand Swami.

By his personal experience as a *darshanik* (seer), he gave many innovative insights into the philosophical concepts in the shastras. In this final article of the series, we discuss these novel meanings gifted in the Vachanamrut, in chronological order.

FATE AT DEATH

In Gadhada I 14, Muktanand Swami quotes the Hiranyakeshiya Shruti's *shlok* "*Ante yā matihi sā gatihi...*" which means that one's fate at death depends on the state of one's mind then. Then he poses a question about the fate of a person who has performed bhakti all his life, but at the time of death may not have his mind focused on Bhagwan. Shriji Maharaj gives his interpretation as, "The outcome at the time of death is determined by the present state of mind." This means that the bhakti a person does throughout his life gives him liberation even though his thoughts may not be on Bhagwan at the time of death. Bhagwan protects the *bhakta*, whether or not he remembers Bhagwan at the time of death, and so he does not fall from the path of *moksha*.

SHARP INTELLECT (KUSHAGRA BUDDHI)

In Gadhada I 50, Shriji Maharaj poses a question about the definition of *kushagra buddhi* (sharp intellect), because one who has such an intellect attains Parabrahman. Whose intellect is sharp? One who is an expert in worldly affairs or one who knows the meanings of the shastras? He then quotes the Gita's *shlok* (2.69), "*Yā nishā sarvabhūtānām...*" In simple terms, this means that *bhaktas* who worship Bhagwan are 'awake' and truly see and are 'blind' towards the *panchvishays*. The worldly who do not worship him are shrouded in darkness like the night. From this he gives the novel meaning of sharp intellect as "One who remains alert regarding his own *moksha*." Conversely those who are not alert or aware about *moksha* and indulge in the *panchvishays* do not have a sharp intellect.

SANT AS MURTI

In Gadhada I 68, he says that Bhagwan enters the eight types of *murtis*: of stone, wood, metal, clay or *chandan* paste, drawn or painted, sand, gems and visualized mentally. This is cited in the Bhagwatam (11.27.12). Then he adds, "In the

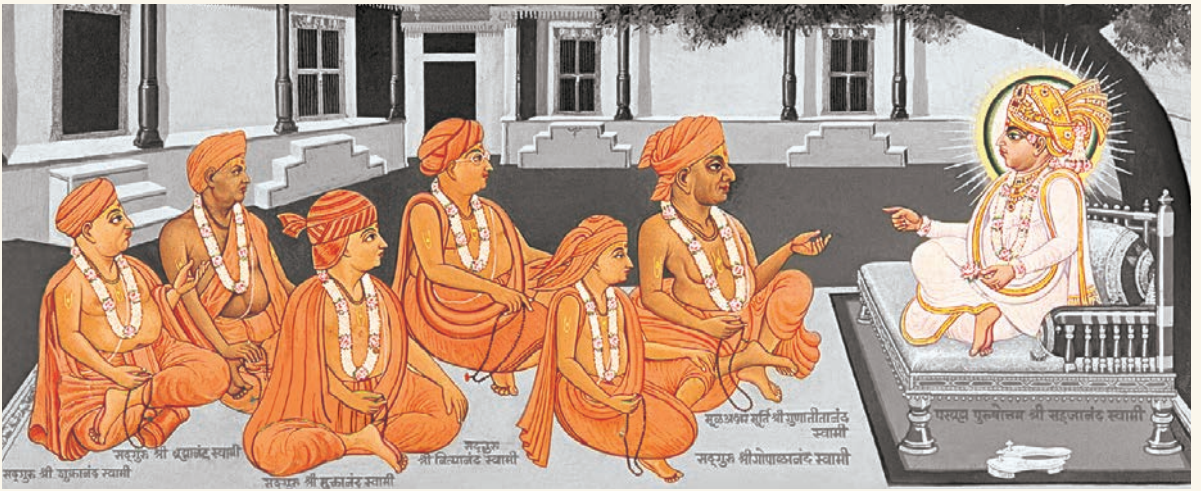
same way, Bhagwan also resides in the heart of the Sant. Therefore, the Sant should also be venerated." From another reference in the Vachanamrut, this 'Sant' is the *Param Ekantik Sadhu* (Vartal 3).

BHAKTA'S DIVINE FORM

In Karyani 1, two *paramhansas* quote the shastras whose meanings seem to contradict each other. The Taittiriya Upanishad's (Anandvalli 4 & 9) *shlok*, "*Yato vācho...*" says that Paramatma is not attainable by mind or speech. Yet the Mundak Upanishad (3.3.1) says, "*Niranjanah paramam...*" and the Gita (4.10) says, "*Bahavo jnāna...*" meaning that a *jiva* is able to attain Paramatma. Shriji Maharaj then clarifies with a novel meaning, "What I just mentioned is regarding the mind and the *indriyas* of non-devotees. The mind and *indriyas* of Bhagwan's *bhaktas*, however do attain Paramatma... The bodies, *indriyas* and *antahkarans* of devotees become like Bhagwan's *indriyas*, *antahkaran* and body," because Bhagwan's form is itself divine.

BHAGWAN'S FORM DEVOID OF MAYA

In Panchala 7, Shriji Maharaj expounds on the first *shlok* of the Bhagwatam (1.11), "*Janmādyasya yatah...*" Compared to other commentators, he explains "*Yatra trisargo mrushā...*" and gives a better clarity. He says, "One should realize that the entities evolved out of the three *gunas* of *maya*, namely the five *bhuts*, the *indriyas*, the *antahkaran* and their presiding devas are never present in Bhagwan at any time – past, present or future." Then he clarifies the final part of the *shlok*, "*Dhāmnā svena sadā...*" as, "Bhagwan, via his own form – *dham* (meaning divine *tej*) – destroyed the deception in the form of the products of *maya*; such is the supremely truthful form of Bhagwan." Simply, he then says that one should regard the manifest form of Bhagwan in human forms as divine with infinite divine powers, but should not regard him as human. Just as water in a mirage is non-existent, Bhagwan may seem like



Bhagwan Swaminarayan discourses to the senior *paramhansas* in Dada Khachar's *darbar*, Gadhada

a human, but in reality he has no *manushyabhav* – human attributes. It is due to the *maya* attached to the *jiva* that one falsely perceives *manushyabhav* in him.

‘ANSH’

In Gadhada II 8, Shriji Maharaj quotes the Gita (15.7), “*Mamaivānsho jivaloke...*” which is usually interpreted as, “*Jivas* who are *anshas* – parts of Bhagwan – withdraw their mind and five *jnan indriyas* away from the *panchvishays* and keep them controlled... Those who are not *anshas*, are swayed by their *indriyas*.” The crucial dilemma is, “How can *jiva* be a part or component of Bhagwan who is himself *achyut* – whole?” He then clarifies that ‘*anshas*’ mean Bhagwan’s devotees who are not led astray by their *indriyas*.

DHARMA

In Gadhada II 9, Shriji Maharaj cites the Gita’s *shlok* (2.40), “*Svalpam apyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*” and gives a novel meaning to the word ‘*dharma*’: “If one has the slightest strength based on the conviction of Bhagwan, it will protect one from great calamities.” In other words, here he interprets ‘*dharma*’ as Bhagwan’s *nishtha*, *sharanagati*, *ashro*. Hitherto, all the past *acharyas* and commentators have interpreted ‘*dharma*’ in this *shlok* to mean ‘*swadharma* of

karma yoga.’ However, in life’s extreme circumstances even such *swadharma* does not survive. Then, how can it protect us?

NIRVIKALP SAMADHI

This concept occurs in Advait Vedanta. In the *Vivekchudamani*, Shankaracharya gives the meaning of *nirvikalp samadhi* as ‘realization of Brahman.’ The Garuda Puran gives the same meaning. In Gadhada II 14, Shriji Maharaj says that an absolute conviction in Bhagwan’s form without being wavered by one’s mind, company or shastras is itself *nirvikalp samadhi* just as a person who has known that ‘this is a neem tree’, he never harbours any doubt about it. Similarly, he has a firm *nischay* – conviction of Bhagwan.

STHITAPRAGNA

This word as cited in the Gita (2.55–58) is generally interpreted as, ‘One with a stable mind or intellect.’ But in Gadhada II 17 Shriji Maharaj gives a much greater meaning. He says that a devotee who realizes that, “Bhagwan is Bhagwan”, and has a firm conviction about his form, has no doubts about Bhagwan’s nature – “One with such a stable conviction should be known as *sthitapragna*.” Hence, one who has an immutable, unflinching *nischay* of Bhagwan is a *sthitapragna*, a far higher definition than a stable mind or intellect,

since the latter definition lacks the vital concept of Paramatma's *nischay*.

THE HAPPY JIVA

In the Bhagwatam (3.7.17), the *shlok*, “*Yashcha moodhatamo loke...*” means, “One who is ignorant and one who is above the intellect are both happy.” But here, a dilemma arises. How can an ignorant *jiva* be happy? Consider a few people who contrive to laugh in a laughing club, those who are rich and famous and those who indulge in the *panchvishays*. Are they truly happy (*sukhi*)? In Vachanamrut Gadhada II 51, Shriji Maharaj firmly declares that a *jiva* who is bound by the three *gunas* can never be happy. Hence, in Loya 10, he gives a better interpretation of “*Yashcha moodhatamo...*” as the *bhakta* who has *jnan* of his own self and Bhagwan and believes, “Whatever such a great *Sant* and Bhagwan say is the truth; there is no doubt in it and with such a belief he does as Bhagwan and the *Sant* instruct him to do, then such a person remains happy.”

TO PLEASE BHAGWAN

The famous *shlok* of the Gita (2.39), “*Karmanyevā...*” advocates *nishkam* karma yoga – that after doing one's karmas, one should not entertain the wish for any fruits. However in Gadhada III 25, Shriji Maharaj declares that, “*Bhakti, upasana, seva, shraddha*, firmness in observing dharma and other spiritual endeavours related to Bhagwan should all be performed without desires for any fruits... but one should certainly have the following desire: ‘May Bhagwan become pleased with me through these endeavours.’ That desire should be kept.”

ENGROSSED IN THE HOLY FEET OF NARAYAN

In Loya 13, Shriji Maharaj cites the Bhagwatam's *shlok* (3.31.37), “*Tatshrushta-shrushta...*” which simply means that all progeny of Brahma, including humans and devas, can

be allured by the charms of women except only Narayan Rishi. If this is an absolute truth, then a dilemma arises for *brahmacharis* who will not be able to overcome such *maya* and so will forsake such sadhana. But Shriji Maharaj reveals a window of hope that, “Those who remain engrossed in the holy feet of Bhagwan are not overcome. This is a universal principle that I have firmly established within myself.” Then, he quotes a supportive verse from the Gita (7.14), “*Daivi hyeshā...*” which also advocates Bhagwan's *sharanagati* to transcend *maya* and adds, “One who has realized Bhagwan through the *nirvikalp* state is also not overcome by *maya*.”

CONCLUSION

From the few examples discussed in this article, we get just an inkling about the phenomenal sharpness of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's intellect, his depth of knowledge of the shastras, his fast-paced thoughts interlinking abstruse concepts that had hitherto remained hidden and then introducing novel concepts from his personal experience, which collectively seem as simple to him as rolling marbles in his palms. Moreover, he delivered all such novel concepts extemporarily in *katha*, like riverine water flowing smoothly and silently from a Himalayan lake. Hence on the occasion of the bicentenary of the Vachanamrut, we remain indebted to him for providing novel concepts which are practical and simplify a modern aspirant's sadhana for *moksha* which is attained easily compared to nearly impossible endeavours such as ashtanga yoga and *samadhi*. ♦

Source references

1. ‘Vachanamrut ki Darshanik Visheshta’ by Sadhu Bhaktisagaradas in *Shri Swaminarayan Darshan Ek Chintan*, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2004.
2. ‘Vilakshan Shastra Nirupan’ by Sadhu Jnanantruptadas in *Swaminarayan Prakash*, April 2013.
3. *Vachanamrut Handbook*: Sadhu Mukundcharandas, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 3rd ed., 2007.

Vicharan

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

July 2019

Ahmedabad, Bharuch, Bochasan, Atladra



Swamishri performs his daily puja, Bharuch

AHMEDABAD: 1-4

During Swamishri's stay special assemblies were organized to celebrate various days: Bal Pravrutti Din (1), Vachanamrut Din: Atma Vichar and Sankhya Vichar (2) and Rath Yatra (4).

4, Thursday; Rath Yatra Festival

After Swamishri concluded his morning puja a beautifully decorated *rath* with the *utsav murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was brought onto the main stage. Swamishri was to remain seated while senior swamis would pull the *rath*. However, Swamishri joined in pulling Thakorji's *rath* on the stage.

Thereafter, a colourful *rath* yatra was held in the mandir precincts while Swamishri stood on a small podium blessing the entire festive procession of swamis, dancing troupes of children and youths, senior devotees and bhajan groups.

At 10.00 a.m., Shri Amitbhai Shah, the newly appointed Home Minister of India, came to the BAPS mandir for Thakorji's darshan and to seek Swamishri's blessings. Shri Amitbhai performed *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri. The *shanti path* was sung and Swamishri honoured Amitbhai with a garland and tied a *nadachhadi*.

At 4.30 p.m., Swamishri departed from Ahmedabad by road and headed towards Bharuch. After arriving in Bharuch Swamishri did Thakorji's darshan. Thereafter, Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri sat in a decorated *rath*. While swamis pulled the *rath* in the mandir precincts children and youths festively danced ahead and thousands of devotees rejoiced at the divine darshan. Then, Swamishri was honoured with beautiful garlands. Finally, Swamishri sanctified lemon water for over 300 male and female devotees who had performed various austerities to please him.

Bharuch: 4-11

During Swamishri's stay a beautiful *annakut* of fruits was offered to Thakorji and *samip darshan* was arranged in the evening assembly (6). Holi of flowers (7) and Upasana Din (10) were held. An *annakut* of dry fruits and sweet items were offered to Thakorji (9).

8, Monday

After his morning puja, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for BAPS hari mandirs in the Bharuch region: Mangaleshwar vilage, Shaktinath Society, Chakla area and Ghata



In Bharuch, Swamishri performs the *pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandirs in Shaktinath, Ghata, Vyara, Mangaleshwar



Swamishri performs the evening *arti* in the Yuva Din assembly, Atladra

village (Sarkari region). Thereafter, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha arti* and *pujan* of the *murtis* and blessed the devotees who had helped and contributed for the *pratishtha* rituals.

9, Tuesday

To please Swamishri 32 youths arrived in his morning puja by performing a total of 17,350 *dandvats* from the various suburbs of Bharuch city.

BOCHASAN: 11-19

During Swamishri's stay special assemblies on various themes and festivals were held: Dev Podhi Ekadashi (12), Samip Darshan (13), Guru Purnima (16) and Lunar Eclipse (17).

16, Tuesday; Guru Purnima Celebration and Lunar Eclipse Assembly (17)

The celebration of Guru Purnima was held in Mahant Swami Maharaj's presence at Swaminarayan Baug in Bochasan from 8.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. It was attended by 50,000 devotees. At night, the lunar eclipse assembly was held. (For details refer to *Swaminarayan Bliss*, July–August 2019, pp. 53–54.)

ATLADRA: 19-31

During Swamishri's stay special assemblies and celebrations were held: Guru Purnima Din (21), Samip Darshan (22 & 25) Gungrahak Din (23),

Gathering of Special Guests (24), Prapti Din (26), Yuva Din (27), Bal Din (30) and Annakut Din (31).

27, Saturday; Yuva Din (Youth Day)

The evening Youth Day assembly was held in Swamishri's presence. The theme of the assembly 'Earnings of Billions' was based on the recently held Youth Adhiveshan (3–8 June 2019). First, the youths performed a traditional dance. Thereafter, they performed skits and gave audio-visual presentations about how the youths had prepared for the *adhiveshan*, the difficulties they had faced and how Swamishri had inspired them. A drama, 'Suraj Eclipse', was performed, showing how a bright student, Suraj, spoilt his academic career due to his addiction to a mobile phone. Then, a youth delivered a speech about an introduction to Bhagwan Swaminarayan on the basis of the *Vachanamrut*. Thereafter, a video presentation outlined the fruits of the youth *adhiveshan*.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "We saw the youth addicted to a mobile and his acts of aggression and then we saw the miracles the *adhiveshan* had effected among the youths. The youths strived immensely to please Shriji Maharaj. Our worldly efforts are trifle, whereas, whatever we do for Bhagwan is worth billions. Bhagwan, out of his abundant grace, incarnated on earth. Glory and infinite gratitude to Shastriji Maharaj for gifting us this *upasana*." ♦

LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

July 2019

Inspiring incidents from the life of Mahant Swami Maharaj



BHAGWAN'S WISH

6, Bharuch

Swamishri was at the BAPS mandir in Bharuch. The heavy downpour of rain in the evening had drenched all the devotees who came for the evening satsang assembly. The evening assembly for the next day was announced as a celebration of Holi of Flowers which was to take place in the open. The weather forecast for the following day was heavy rains again.

Bhaktavatsal Swami asked Swamishri, "Now, what arrangements are to be made for tomorrow's Holi of Flowers celebration? Whatever you wish will be done."

Swamishri replied ambiguously, "Holi of flowers or Holi of water!"

All were perplexed by Swamishri's puzzling answer. So, Bhaktavatsal Swami asked explicitly,

"But out of the two which is your wish? One or the other or both?"

Swamishri replied, "Bhagwan will decide."

The confusion of the organizers doubled all the more.

Thus, Bhaktavatsal Swami queried further, "Isn't Bhagwan greatly inclined towards the Gunatit Sant! Just as the king's rule prevails in his kingdom, the queen exercises the same amount of power in the kingdom!"

Swamishri replied clearly, "By Bhagwan's wish, who is the all-doer, it will not rain!"

Swamishri's confident answer revealed that the next day's celebration would take place without any obstacles and also reflected his absolute servitude to Bhagwan Swaminarayan as the all-doer.

FOR THE SAKE OF PLEASING THE DEVOTEES 10, Bharuch

During Swamishri's visit many devotees at all satsang centres deposit new *kanthis*, *murtis*, *ghar* mandirs, *malas* and other puja articles at a desk for sanctification. Formerly, Swamishri used to personally shower flower petals on all the articles to sanctify them. This obviously consumed a lot of time. So, to save time, it was decided that Swamishri would sanctify the flowers and a senior swami would shower the petals while Swamishri walked past, seeing all the articles.

Today, there were fourteen tables full of various puja articles and *ghar* mandirs. According to the routine plan Swamishri touched the flowers to sanctify them. Then, to everyone's surprise, he started touching all the articles. When he came across a *ghar* mandir or *murtis* he touched them reverently. Then a volunteer requested Swamishri, "Swami, shower your blessings by looking at them."

Swamishri stopped and lovingly replied, "It will only take one minute more, but the devotees [to whom the articles belong] will be satisfied and pleased."

Swamishri, continued with his extra effort and exertion to please the devotees.

NO RETALIATION BUT TOLERANCE 28, Atladra

Viveksagar Swami narrated an incident in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj at the old dining facility in Atladra mandir, "Mahant Swamiji was a householder youth [Vinubhai] at that time. Several boys had sat down for breakfast in the dining hall. Each youth was served a snack on a piece of paper and tea in a plastic glass. Vinubhai was serving tea in one row. By the time he reached half way the tea ran out. So, he went to refill the pot. On returning, instead of continuing from where he had left he started serving the youths seated on the opposite side. This made the youths who were left out livid

and exclaiming, 'Why had he started serving in the opposite row!'

"So, a boy from Maretha village [near Makarpara] got up in a fit of anger and snatched the pot from Vinubhai and poured the steaming hot tea on Vinubhai's feet. But Vinubhai remained calm and quiet. Without saying a word he went away to clean his feet. Then, the other youths spanked the unruly boy."

Then Swamishri added, "As a result, two to three large boils developed."

Though Swamishri had not intentionally left out the boys sitting in the first row, the incident highlights his tolerance and calmness.

SWAMISHRI EXPRESSES HIS JOY AND REVERENCE 30, Atladra

Swamishri was reading the Shikshapatri in his morning puja at the assembly hall in Atladra. At that time, eight children of three to four years of age started reciting the Sahajanand Namavali (108 names of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Sanskrit). All of them were reciting the names off confidently and simultaneously. Among them, the youngest boy (Neel Padhiyar of Tithor village) was reciting the loudest. Swamishri looked at them with joy and after the recitation was over he gestured them to come to him. The youngest boy, Neel, came first. Swamishri was extremely pleased with him and, to everyone's surprise, bowed and touched his feet with reverence. Then, Swamishri also embraced him and expressed his joy and blessings.

Everyone in the audience were wonderstruck by the joy Swamishri showed on Neel. He was a kindergarten student and still learning how to read and write. The parents of all the children had made great efforts in helping them memorize the Sahajanand Namavali. ♦

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

SHARAD PUNAM FESTIVAL

13 October 2019, Gondal



The Sharad Punam festival, celebrating the birth of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, was held in Mahant Swami Maharaj's presence at Akshar Mandir, Gondal. The celebration assembly commenced with *dhun* and kirtan at 6.00 p.m. and was themed on how Gunatitanand Swami consolidated satsang through his discourses on the Vachanamrut.

The celebration assembly included speeches by swamis, traditional dances and short dramas:

- A short drama on Gunatitanand Swami's glory as Akshar.
- Gunatitanand Swami as Shriji Maharaj's Akshardham: Speech by Viveksagar Swami.
- Satpurush as the gateway to *moksha* (Vach. Gadhada 1 54): Speech by Anandswarup Swami.
- Prizes awarded to devotees for their outstanding performances in the annual Satsang Exams.
- Downfall in satsang due to ego (Vach. Loya

17): Speech by Ishwarcharan Swami.

- Vachanamrut: Contains the essence of all the Hindu shastras: Speech by Dr Swami. He emphasized on the importance of *upasana*, weekly satsang assembly and daily home discourses (*ghar sabha*).
- Swamishri inaugurated the Kannada edition of the Vachanamrut and an audio MP3 of *Sant Pravachan Mala*, part 18.

- Swamishri blessed 1,200 devotees of Rajkot who had pilgrimaged by foot from Rajkot.

Finally, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the Sharad Punam celebration, speaking about the glory of Gunatitanand Swami as Akshar. He also praised Shastriji Maharaj's historic contribution in consecrating the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj in Bochasan. Thereafter, 22,000 devotees were served *prasad* of *dudh-pauva*. ♦

DIGNITARIES VISIT SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM, DELHI

CHIEF MINISTER OF CAPITAL TERRITORY 1 September 2019, Australia

Chief Minister of the Capital Territory in Australia, Hon. Andrew Barr, visited along with a delegation of Australian government and university officials. The delegation was traditionally greeted by senior swamis. During the Chief Minister's visit, he offered respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir and performed *abhishek* of Shri Neelkanth Varni. The group also toured the educational Sanskruti Vihar and saw the Neelkanth Darshan giant screen film. Finally, they witnessed the evening Sahaj Anand Water Show. At the conclusion of his visit, the chief minister said that Akshardham was a "tour to remember."

GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY, USA 15 September 2019

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in Delhi as part of the first official trip that a sitting governor of the state has ever taken to India.

Governor Murphy was accompanied by a high-ranking 40-member delegation, including

New Jersey's First Lady Tammy Murphy; State Assemblyman Raj Mukherji; State Senators Vin Gopal and Sam Thompson; Tim Sullivan, CEO of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority; Jose Lozano, President and CEO of Choose New Jersey; as well as economic advisors, and healthcare and technology officials. The delegation also included education officials Coleen Burrus of Princeton University; Tamara Cunningham of New Jersey City University; Pavita Howe of Rutgers University; Simon Nynens of NJIT; and Beena Sukumaran and Steve Weinstein of Rowan University.

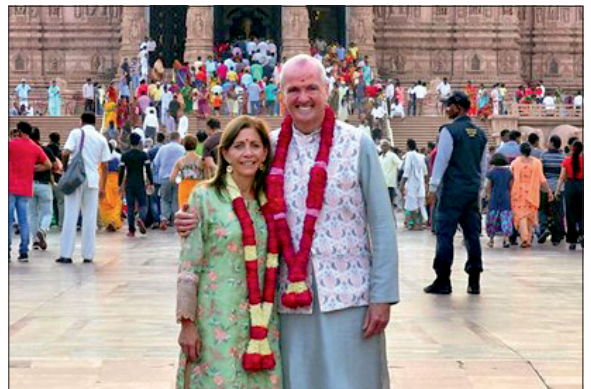
After the traditional welcome, the delegation offered respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir, performed *abhishek* of Shri Neelkanth Varni and visited the Sanskruti Vihar boat ride exhibition.

Then, they attended the weekly assembly of devotees, where the governor spoke to those in attendance, emphasizing the rich history of friendship and cooperation between New Jersey and India.

He added, "New Jersey has set itself apart as a place of opportunity for all. We are equally



Chief Minister of Capital Territory, Australia



Governor of New Jersey, USA

committed to ensuring our religious institutions of worship are protected throughout the state and that temples, such as the mandir in Robbinsville, are able to grow with confidence and safety.”

Mahant Swami Maharaj sent his prayers for the governor that he continues to lead “with honesty, truth, virtues, morals and righteousness.” and thanked the delegation for taking the time to visit Swaminarayan Akshardham. Mahant Swami Maharaj concluded his blessings to the governor by saying, “Keep God at the centre of all that you do with selfless service, and success will definitely be yours.”

PRESIDENT OF MONGOLIA 19 September 2019

His Excellency Khaltmaagiin Battulga, President of Mongolia, visited Swaminarayan Akshardham with a distinguished delegation.

Senior swamis welcomed President Battulga with a garland of flowers and by tying the *na-dachhadi* on his wrist.

President Battulga and his delegation offered respects at the inner sanctum of Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir and admired the Mandir’s intricate art and beautiful architecture.

They then offered prayers for world peace and harmony, and for Mongolia and its people by offering *abhishek* on the sacred *murti* of Shri Neelkanth Varni Maharaj.



President of Mongolia

The President and his delegation also experienced the Cultural Boat Ride (Sanskriti Darshan) and the Sahaj Anand Water Show.

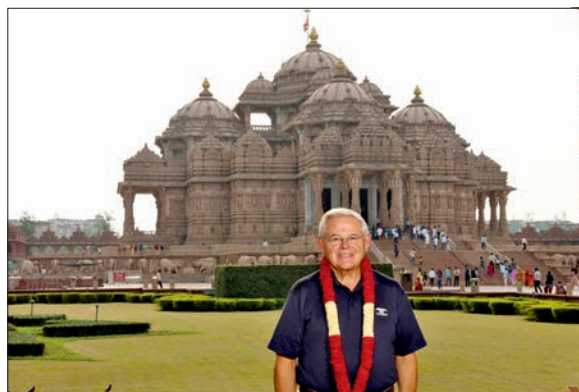
Commenting of his experience, President Battulga wrote, “I am pleased to get acquainted with the wonderful Akshardham, which symbolized the ancient, rich, cultural and spiritual heritage of the Indian people. Taking this moment, I extend to the volunteers, institution and individuals, those (who) built and run this magnificent complex, my best wishes for happiness.”

USA SENATOR BOB MENENDEZ 1 October 2019

United States Senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey visited Swaminarayan Akshardham as part of his official visit to India.

Senator Menendez was traditionally greeted by senior swamis. Thereafter, he offered respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir, performed *abhishek* on the *murti* of Shri Neelkanth Varni Maharaj and also experienced the Sanskriti Vihar boat ride exhibition.

Senator Menendez said Akshardham is “An extraordinary celebration of faith, service and sacrifice”, adding that he was “deeply moved by all that I have seen, heard and felt”. ♦



USA Senator Bob Menendez

INDIA

BAL-BALIKA PARAYANS: JAY JAY VACHANAMRUTAM 1–31 August 2019, Gujarat



The annual Shravan month Bal Parayans were arranged in around 2,000 *bal mandals*, attended by about 50,000 *balaks*. Separate Balika Parayans were arranged in around 1,500 *balika mandals* in which around 35,000 *balikas* participated. The content for these three-day *parayans* themed ‘Jay Jay Vachanamrutam’ was provided by the Bal Pravrutti Madhyastha Karyalaya.

The topics for the three days included: ‘Vachanamrut, the quintessence of all the scriptures’, ‘Glory of Bhagwan in the Vachanamrut’ and ‘Glory of the Pragat Gunatit Sant described in the Vachanamrut’.

At each centre, children presented the topics through short stories, mono-acting, dances, workshops, etc. Specially prepared videos related to *parayan* topics were also shown.

On the first day, a *pothi yatra* in honour of the Vachanamrut was arranged in which *balaks* in traditional costumes joyfully and devoutly took part. On the final day, an *annakut* of around 80 to 100 delicacies was offered to Thakorji. Competitions

for *hindola* and *arti* designs and drawing were also held.

YUVAK ANTAR JAGRUTI PARVA 6–15 September 2019



Divided into 44 groups, a total of 180 youths of the current Yuva Talim Kendra batch from Sarangpur undertook *vicharan* to 394 selected villages and towns in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

In each, they met devotees and well-wishers in their homes (making a total of 5,095 home visits) encouraging them to strengthen their practice of satsang by attending their local weekly satsang assembly, performing daily personal puja, visiting their local mandir regularly for darshan, daily reading the Vachanamrut and Swamini Vato, observing a fast on every *ekadashi*, conducting a brief daily family assembly and other spiritual endeavours.

The youths also conducted a total of 394 public assemblies attended by over 20,360 people; 147 children and 152 school assemblies, attended by over 29,270 children; and evening bhakti *feris* (devotional parades) in which thousands of devotees and well-wishers, young and old, participated. In addition, they inspired over 2,400

people to shun addictions.

Overall, the visits provided the youths with a profound experience that also strengthened their own satsang.

YUVA CONVENTION

8 September 2019, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Gondal



Over 6,000 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from 26 different schools and hostels throughout Gondal and surrounding areas attended a youth convention titled 'The Secret of Success'. The students were guided through a motivational speech by Apurvamuni Swami and an interview session with Junagadh Municipal Commissioner Shri Tushar Sumera and Shri Chandubhai Khanpara.

MEDICO-SPIRITUAL CONFERENCE FOR STUDENTS

20–22 September 2019, Sarangpur



Around 900 male and female students studying in medicine, dentistry, ayurveda, homeopathy, physiotherapy and other health-related courses attended the annual Medico-Spiritual Conference for Students. This year's theme was 'The Vachanamrut:

Eternal Solutions to Everyday Problems'.

The three-day conference was held in the esteemed presence of Pujya Doctor Swami, Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami (Kothari Swami) and Pujya Viveksagar Swami. They provided practical guidance from the principles revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Vachanamrut on how to tackle the variety of problems that students often encounter.

In addition, the student delegates were guided by learned and experienced sadhus on several life-enhancing topics through speeches, discussions, question-answer sessions, workshops, skits and audio-visual presentations.

GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT OF CHANSAD VILLAGE LAKE

5 October 2019, Chansad



The sacred village of Chansad, near Vadodara, is the birthplace of Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj and is visited for darshan by thousands of pilgrims from throughout the world every year. In particular, the village lake was where young Shantilal regularly bathed and played with his friends.

As part of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations (1921–2021), the Government of Gujarat's Tourism Ministry has undertaken to develop the sanctified lake and surrounding area.

The ground-breaking ceremony for this project was performed by the Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Vijaybhai Rupani, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Tourism Minister Shri

Jawahar Chavda, in the presence of other saints, government ministers, local leaders and dignitaries, as well as around 4,000 devotees.

On arriving in Chansad for this ceremony, the Chief Minister first visited the birthplace of Pramukh Swami Maharaj for darshan. There, he was welcomed with a garland by Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami. Thereafter, the Chief Minister honoured the *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj with a garland.

In the public assembly after the Vedic groundbreaking rituals, Brahnavihari Swami spoke about the impact of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life and work on society. Then, Tourism Minister Shri Jawahar Chavda recalled Pramukh Swami Maharaj's tireless endeavours to inspire people to shun their harmful addictions. Thereafter, the Chief Minister pledged to develop Chansad into a revered tourism destination in Gujarat. Finally, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami blessed the assembly.

SHIBIRS FOR CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

SENIOR KARYAKARS

6–8 October 2019, BAPS Swaminarayan Vidyamandir, Bakrol



Around 800 senior men and women volunteers overseeing the BAPS Children's Activities at centres throughout India attended the two *shibirs* for city-based (on 6 October) and village-based (8 October) volunteers.

The theme of the *shibir* was 'Sankalp Karie Sakar' – 'Let Us Fulfill Their Visions', in which the volunteers were guided by learned and experienced sadhus and expert professionals on how

to effectively and efficiently execute their duties.

In addition to speeches, the *shibir* theme was presented through audiovisual presentations, discussions, skits, interviews and other participatory activities. The delegates were also inspired by video messages from *sadguru* sadhus and a special video blessing from Mahant Swami Maharaj.

YAGNAPURUSH GAUSHALA WINS LIVESTOCK AWARDS



At the prestigious 300-year-old Chetak Festival held annually in Sarangkhedha village in the district of Nandurbar in Maharashtra on the shores of the River Tapi, horses from throughout India are assessed on the basis of speed, gait, agility, pedigree and various other parameters. In this national competition, Kanaiya, a horse from the Yagnapurush Gaushala at BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Sarangpur, was declared as the 2018–19 winner by the expert judges.

Also, at the famous annual Tarnetar fair in Gujarat, held from 1 to 4 September 2019, Rajnath, a 750-kg male buffalo from Yagnapurush Gaushala, was declared 'Champion of the Show' on the basis of milk production, beauty, health and other criteria. And a female buffalo named Kanak Sati won second place.

In 2018 also, cattle of the Yagnapurush Gaushala had won awards at the Tarnetar Fair: Pruthvinath, a male buffalo, won first prize; Anju Sati, a female buffalo, won third prize; and Bhagyashri, a female heifer, won first prize.

UK & EUROPE

UK BAL-BALIKA INDIA TRIP

20 July to 14 August 2019



A selected group of 38 *balaks* and *balikas* from the UK visited India to gain a deeper understanding of its rich culture and profound spirituality.

The children and their mentors travelled more than 3,000 miles around India to explore the elegant fabric of its Hindu heritage by visiting major mandirs and centres as well as important places of pilgrimage associated with the Swaminarayan Sampradaya.

The highlight of their trip was a seven-day programme with Mahant Swami Maharaj during which they received his personal guidance and blessings. Members of the group also performed short skits, speeches and kirtans in his presence.

In Surat, the children presented a cultural programme to an assembly of over 3,000 people and an interactive seminar was organized for them in Sarangpur with sessions led by senior and learned swamis who shared their profound spiritual knowledge and experiences.

The trip fostered values of unity and teamwork and gave a deeper insight into Hindu philosophy and traditions. In particular, the children strengthened their understanding of and bond with Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Mahant Swami Maharaj.

SUMMER SHIBIRS

16 August to 22 September 2019, Warwick Conference Park



More than 3,400 delegates attended the *shibirs* held in the presence of Pujya Doctor Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Jnaneshwar Swami and other senior and visiting swamis from India and swamis from the UK. Themed ‘The Vachanamrut: Jivandori’, the *shibirs* helped the delegates to deepen their knowledge of the Vachanamrut, imbibe its timeless principles, and appreciate its value as a *jivandori* (lifeline) in their daily living. The key messages were delivered through a variety of speeches, multimedia presentations, panel discussions, classroom sessions, interviews, news debates and theatre productions, tailored specifically for the diverse age groups.

A musical tribute to the Vachanamrut provided a rapturous and uplifting atmosphere that brought the audience to its feet.

The Kishore-Kishori Shibir (for 14- to 23-year-olds) was held from 16 to 18 August.

The Sanyukta Shibir (for the over-40s) was held in parallel to the Kishore-Kishori Shibir.

The Bal-Balika Shibir (for 8- to 14-year-olds) was held from 24 to 26 August.

The Yuvak-Yuvati Shibir (for 24- to 40-year-olds) was also held during this weekend (24 to 26 August).

In addition to the *shibirs* in the UK, more than 175 *satsangis* of all ages from Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland attended a similar *shibir* in Germany from 20 to 22 September for delegates from around Europe.

All the *shibirs* concluded by illustrating how the Satpurush is the living embodiment of the Vachanamrut, and therefore our present-day personal *jivandori* – forever guiding, inspiring and supporting us on our spiritual journey.

NORTH AMERICA

NORTH AMERICA KISHORE-KISHORI INDIA TRIP

2 July to 3 August 2019



During their vacation, 57 *kishores* and 57 *kishoris* travelled 5,000 miles around India to experience the elegant fabric of Hindu culture and philosophy.

They visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi, and also Ayodhya and Chhapaiya.

In Gujarat, they attended the inspiring ‘Brahmavidyani College’ *Shibir* in Sarangpur, which gave the delegates a better understanding of their spiritual journey. They pilgrimaged to various mandirs across Gujarat and spent 10 days in the divine company of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Finally, the delegates went to South India, visiting some of the places sanctified by Nilkanth Varni and other sacred Hindu sites.

The trip nurtured the youths’ understanding of and faith in satsang and the Satpurush, and inspired them to strengthen the practice of satsang in their daily lives.

NEW BAPS MANDIR INAUGURATION, 10 August 2019, Beaumont, TX

Satsang in the Beaumont, TX, area began



through the inspiration of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1995. With the growth of satsang, the need for a mandir became evident.

Devotees and members of the local Hindu community participated in the Vedic *murti-pratishtha mahapuja*. Thereafter, Yagnavallabh Swami and other sadhus consecrated the *murtis* in the new mandir.

Previously, in Houston, on 17 August 2017, Mahant Swami Maharaj had performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis*.

In the afternoon, a kirtan *aradhana* was performed by sadhus and devotees.

CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER VISITS BAPS MANDIR

13 October 2019, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan
Mandir, Toronto, Canada



The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, visited the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Toronto for the third time.

Children greeted the Prime Minister and dignitaries in traditional Hindu manner by applying auspicious marks of welcome, offering flowers and

reciting prayers for peace in Canada and the world.

They also prayed for the continued progress and happiness of all Canadians.

After darshan of the *murtis* in the mandir, the Prime Minister briefly attended and addressed the Sharad Purnima assembly, “I was here for the 10th anniversary of this Mandir with His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, an extraordinary moment not just for this community, but for Hindus across the country. Whether it is walkathons or charity galas, this congregation makes Canada and Toronto stronger. In India, I had the honour to visit the Swaminarayan Akshardham and celebrate the ties between our two countries. Thank you again for welcoming me today.”

Other dignitaries and guests included Hon. Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science and Sport; Hon. John McKay, Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Guildwood; Mr. Ramesh Sangha, Member of Parliament for Brampton Centre and Ms. Sonia Sidhu, Member of Parliament for Brampton South. The Prime Minister departed after meeting children and devotees and appreciating their spirit of volunteerism.

and the BAPS Hindu Mandir. The churches included some which have existed since 1965 and the early 70s. It is the first time a Hindu place of worship has been officially recognised in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Brahnavihari Swami and Dr B. R. Shetty, on behalf of the Board of Directors, accepted the license TH001 at a graceful formal ceremony titled ‘A Call for Harmony’ at the Emirates Palace. Members of the Executive Council of Abu Dhabi and ministers of Community Development, Health and Energy were present.

The ceremony was prefaced by Informative exhibitions on the timeline and history of religious institutions in Abu Dhabi. The Department of Community Development had created and showcased a model Multifaith Prayer Room with religious literature for public places in the Emirate. His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj’s visit to the UAE earlier this year in April 2019 for the Shilanyas of the BAPS Hindu Mandir featured prominently in the exhibitions while the Vachanamrut, Swamini Vato and other BAPS publications on Hinduism, the Ramayan and the Mahabharat were placed in the Multifaith Prayer Room.

Mr Sultan al Daher, Executive Director of the Abu Dhabi Department of Community Development (DCD), expressed the purpose of the historic decision to license religious buildings, “The aim of licensing the places of worship is to provide an official unified channel for religious bodies to go to for special services and to assist their day-to-day running.”

On behalf of BAPS, Brahnavihari Swami shared, “This special effort taken by the UAE government to officially license and register religious places is a remarkable step and reflects the sincerity and integrity of the nation and the leadership.”

MIDDLE EAST

HISTORIC LICENSING CEREMONY OF BAPS HINDU MANDIR

22 September 2019, Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi, UAE



History was made in Abu Dhabi as the government granted and presented official licenses to 18 religious institutions in the Emirates – 17 churches

ASIA-PACIFIC

YUVA ADHIVESHANS

22 September 2019

A total of 225 *yuvaks* and 251 *yuvatis* took



part in the *adhiveshans* held in Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Darwin in Australia, and in Auckland and Wellington in New Zealand to commemorate the bicentenary of the Vachanamrut (1819–2019).

The youths had spent the past several months preparing for the various competitions based on the Vachanamrut: *mukhpath* (memorization), written exam reconciling real-life scenarios with principles from the Vachanamrut, and others.

The youths experienced that by participating in the *adhiveshans* their understanding of the principles revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Vachanamrut had been deepened and their daily practice of spirituality had been strengthened.

Throughout the Australia and New Zealand region, dedicated volunteers had tirelessly endeavoured for over six months to encourage, assist and guide the participating youths in their preparations.

ASIA PACIFIC VICHARAN

August to October 2019

Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadrash Swami visited BAPS centres in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji during which he conducted evening *parayans* titled ‘Siddhantam Sukhadam’, elaborating on how to implement the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana* in one’s daily life. He also guided youths on the importance of having a guru during the Youth Seminars.

Through the one-day Akshar-Purushottam Darshan Chhavis held at various centres Bhadrash Swami explained all the different Vedic

Darshans, what the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan is, how it is revealed in the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Brahmasutras and how Shastriji Maharaj endured great hardships to propagate the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. *Balaks* and *kishores* memorized and recited scriptural verses in Vedic style adding to the auspicious atmosphere. Also, Tulsi Tulas were held in which devotees honoured the *bhashyas* and *vadgranth*.

During this *vicharan*, Bhadrash Swami was felicitated by the Australian National University (15 August) in Canberra, the Parliament of Victoria (30 August) as well as numerous community groups for his contributions to the study of Sanskrit and Vedanta in Hindu philosophy.

‘SANATAN DHARMA JYOTIRDHAR’ HONOUR BESTOWED ON PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

5 October 2019, Perth, Australia



In recognition of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s contributions to the advancement of scriptural studies, the Indian Society of Western Australia (ISWA) in Perth held a special felicitation assembly at Perth Modern School.

Representatives of 72 spiritual and social organizations were present. President of ISWA, Shri Surya Ambati, and other notable speakers paid homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj by describing his foresight and encouragement in the study of shastras.

Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadrash Swami accepted the ‘Sanatan Dharma Jyotirdhar’ felicitation on Swamishri’s behalf. ♦



MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN IN AFRICA

Top: Thousands of devotees from throughout the African continent and other countries gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, to offer their prayers and devotion on Swamishri's 86th birthday. The celebration highlighted how the lives of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj exemplify the virtues of an ideal sadhu described in the shastras (23 September 2019).

Bottom: Swamishri performs the Vedic rituals to inaugurate the newly built 'Pramukh Sadan' at the BAPS Mandir in Kampala, Uganda (29 August).



DIWALI & ANNAKUT CELEBRATIONS WORLDWIDE

28 October 2019



Gondal



Atladra



London



Robbinsville



Nairobi

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