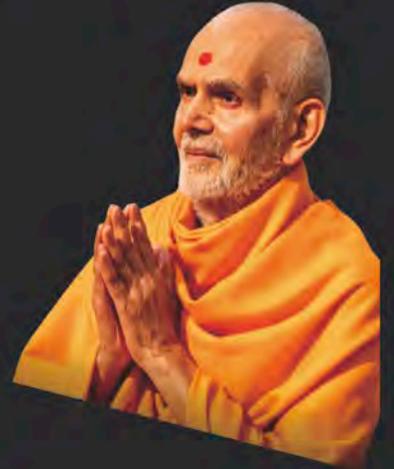
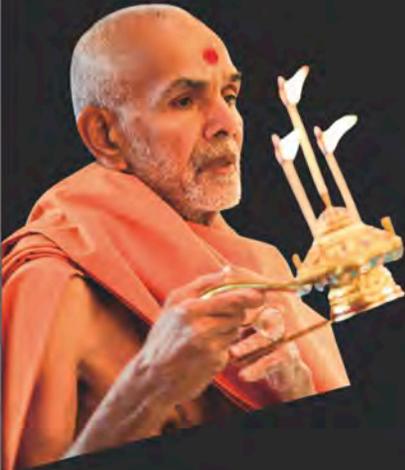
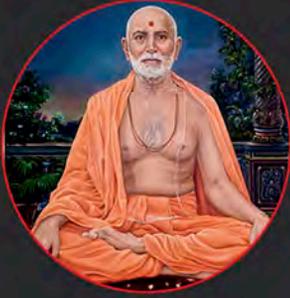




*Mahan Rushi*  
**Mahant Swami Maharaj**  
- Sanatan Dharma



Author  
**Dr. Kirit Shelat, IAS (Rtd.)**



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# Mahan Rushi

**Mahant Swami Maharaj**

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Phone/Fax: (00 91 79) 26421580

Email: drkiritshelat@gmail.com

**Author welcomes comments and sharing of personal experiences from devotees and readers.**

**Address:**

**Dr. Kirit N Shelat**

6, Manikamal Society, Surdhara Circle, Thaltej  
Ahmedabad - 380 054, Gujarat, India.

Email: drkiritshelat@gmail.com

Phone: 0091 79 26421580 /091 9904404393

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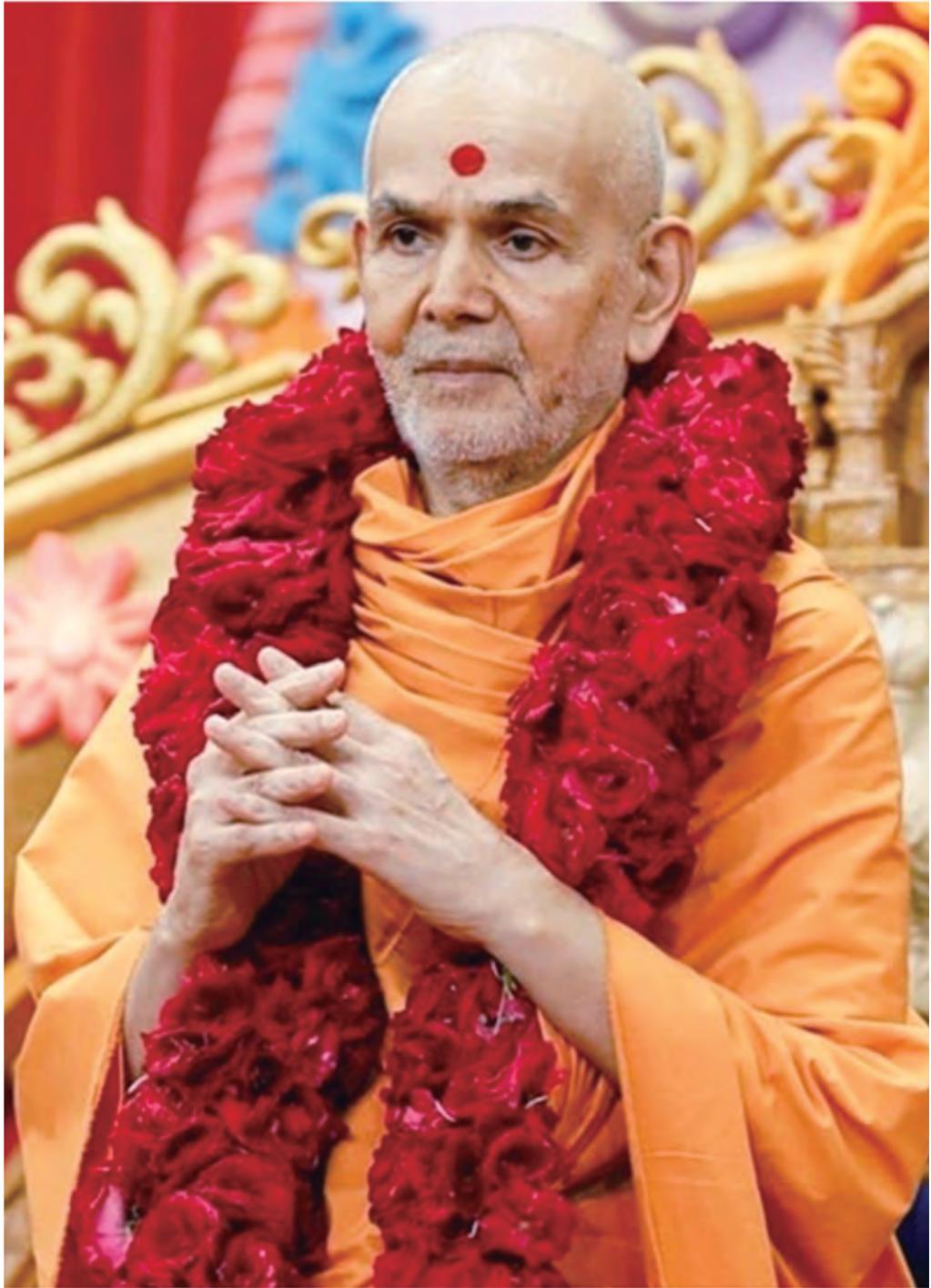
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# *Dedicated*



*Param Pujya Shashtriji Maharaj*



## PREFACE



Prof. R.C. Majumdar a prominent historian and Professor of Indian history calls Swaminarayan Sampraday the greatest of spiritual movements of Gujarat. Prof. Raymond Brady Williams, a distinguished Professor of Humanities and Theology at Wabash College, Indiana USA, describes BAPS as “The Fastest growing Religious Group”. Shri Sahajanand Swami inspired the growth of faith in early 19th century. At the time of his demise in 1830, the Sampradaya had two major centers of growth – Kalupur mandir and Vadtal Mandir. Major expansion and spread took place under the

BAPS–Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha. This was setup by Shastriji Maharaj in 1907.

Shastriji Maharaj followed Guru Parampara – created by Gunatitanand Swami. He expanded the idea of reaching out to the followers at their door-steps. The Gurus exhibited ‘Spandan’ the creative energy – vibration of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Shastriji Maharaj was followed by Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the current Head of BAPS - Shri Mahant Swami Maharaj. The Gurus took Sanatan Dharma across the world and strengthened religious faith with spirituality and helped too thers, irrespective of caste or creed.

Our association with Swaminarayan Sampraday is over a very long period of time. Bhagwan Swaminarayan visited our ancestral home at Balali Poal in Umreth – Anand district. My father late Justice Nanubhai and mother Taralaxmiben were devotees of Sampraday. Our association was enhanced when my father was District and Sessions Judge at Rajkot in 1959. Along with Him—we all would to visit Gondal and pay respect to Yogiji Maharaj. At that time both Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj were young—Mahant Swami Maharaj was always with Yogiji Maharaj taking notes, while Pramukh Swami Maharaj was overseeing all activities. We had the honour of inter-acting with them. Our entire family, my brothers – Rohitbhai, Sureshbhai, Mahendrabhai, and sisters – Urmilaben, Indiraben and Geetaben – all follow the Sampraday. We used to pay respects to Santas—who had blessed us with their visit—both Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited our home and blessed all of us. My late brother – Sureshbhai used to advise BAPS on legal matters and my son Mitul

has continued that. Our children were moulded by Santas, Atmaswarup Swami embeded spiritual values in Vrajesh and his sons-Om and Arjun. Shri Brahmavihari Swami moulded Mitul.

I first wrote about BAPS relief activities-post earth quake relief work in Kutch Gujarat in my book Mapping Development (2003). BAPS did outstanding work under the guidance of Pramukh Swami Maharaj,that led me to write about his way of life-the Life Devoted to Others. I had an opportunity to meet Pramukh Swami Maharaj when we-my wife Ila and I, visited Neasden Temple - London in 2004. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was also visiting it. I asked Atmaswarup Swami - can I write his bio- graphy? He guided me to ask' BAPA' and take his permission-when I did that' BAPA' gave it with a charming smile. I took the challenge inspired by' BAPA' and "YugPurush' Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj. A life dedicated to Others" was released by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, who was then the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

I was following Mahant Swami Maharaj. He has a yogic way of life - getting up very early, do yoga and prathana. He is mit-bhashi-speaks very less and learned. He has profound knowledge of our holy scriptures.

I thought of writing his biography. During our visit to Salangpur in May 2017, I discussed this with Kothari Swami, Gyaneshwar Swami and Atmaswarup Swami. They advised me to take His consent. While paying our respects, I sought it from Pujya Mahant Swami His permission and blessings for taking up this task, which he gave with a smile.

What inspires of this Saint - Mahan Rushi Mahant Swami Maharaj is His humility. His low key - non-dominant - method of reaching out to all followers and non-followers. In fact He represents and heads BAPS - a multinational religious and spiritual organization spread over more than 55 countries with billions of followers. He is a true Yogi. He has concern for making life of the common person simple "Sahaj" and therefore he talks about Akshar Purushottam Darshan. He shows ways to come out from contaminated thoughts that are stored in our mind and that continuously disturbs the mind and our life and many a time our sleep. He talks about building four living walls of our own - our mind set to make our home a palace. He has himself created a modern context for religious scriptures and encouraged other Sadhus in Sampraday to revive values of our culture within the modern context by doing research and writing about it.

He has interest in youth and keeping them par excellence. That is how

he inspired recitation of 300 slokas in “Satsang Dixsha Shastra” authored by Him. He wants to bring out the best in youth so that they perform very well in their life. He advises that laziness is worse than plague – it permanently disables a person from achieving his best. He has identified it as an obstruction in our life and needs to be removed by continuous effort.

He has expanded BAPS – setting up of new temples, worship centres, interactions with scholars of all faith, continuously encouraging devotees and volunteers – karyakar and increased their fold. He silently moves – and moves all around – Pramukh Swami nagar, Harmony Mandir – Abu Dhabi so on and so forth.

He follows not only his predecessors in Sampraday but also our great sages. Mahan Rushi like Vasishta, Vishwamitra, Agastya, Shankaracharya and others.

All these aspects are is brought out in the coming pages. The Gujarati book was jointly authored with Prof. D.R. Patel.

The book also delves into the Guru Parampara, how Sanatan Dharma – spread across in the modern world and how BAPS as an organization evolved – the roles of Sadhus and Volunteers. We have incorporated photos stories.

I indeed find myself privileged to write about the Great Saint Mahan Rushi Mahant Swami Maharaj. I am sure this will be of value to devotees and all who have interest in spirituality, personal development and simple way of life and of course following Sanathan Dharma.

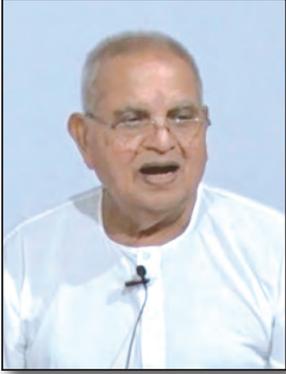
Jai Swaminarayan

Ahemdabad  
Date : 02-10-2025

- *Dr. Kirit N. Shelat*

# FOREWORD

## MAHAN RUSHI MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ - A divine pinnacle of Service and Devotion



The perfect yogi and a great ascetic Bhagwan Swaminarayan (2nd April 1781 - 1st June 1830) founded the Swaminarayan sampraday in the year 1801 and brought a major transformation of central Hindu practices of Dharma, the Sanatan Dharma and inspired followers to engage in humanitarian service activities. The enormous development and mammoth growth of this religion took place under the auspicious umbrella of Shri Bochasanvasi Aksharpurushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (B.A.P.S.) established by Shri Shashtriji Maharaj in 1907.

Puj. Yogiji Maharaj and Puj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj, both spiritual successors of Puj. Shashtriji Maharaj spread this holistic and pure religious sect resulting in the creation of spiritually cultured societies based on the pious way of living in almost 55 countries of the world; more than 1200 temples are built and more than 1100 dedicated Saints are contacting and connecting people for moral and ethical living.

At present, Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj through his extensive communication inspires and provides encouragement and supports pure life style in every household.

The author of this book, Dr.Kirit Shelat has a very long and close association with BAPS movement. Justice Nanubhai Shelat and Taralaxmiben Shelat, parents of Dr. Kirit Shelat were staunch followers of Swaminarayan life principles. Justice Nanubhai Shelat during his tenure as the District and Sessions Judge in Rajkot, and the entire family used to visit Gondal Akshar Mandir regularly. Pujya Yogiji Maharaj was highly pleased with the dedication of the Shelat family. Earlier Dr. Kirit Shelat authored the book, "Yug Purush Pramukh Swami Maharaj" and was blessed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The book is translated in six Indian languages. The Gujarati and English editions have been reprinted.

The BAPS is recognized all over the world, as an ideal service-oriented spiritual organization by their operational characteristics of Noble Thoughts (Parhitchintan), Noble Actions (Paropkar) Noble Relations (Pramodbhav),

Noble Determination (Pratigya) and Noble Peace (Prashanti), woven into their working philosophy.

The spiritual successors of Bhagawan Shri Sahajananda Swami and Akshar Purushottam Sanstha have created and paved the path of happy and contented living by inculcating service and devotion orientation in the masses and worshipping Purushottam. The 'Sant Parampara' of Swaminarayan Sampraday, has through their own holy, life examples of 'walking the talk' has revived the true Sanatan ethical living throughout the globe.

The most befitting successor of Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Shri Mahant Swami Maharaj, by his magnetic charm of love, dedication, modesty and humility has strengthened the Swaminarayan family and the Akshar Purushottam movement around the world. Shri Mahant Swami Maharaj emphasizes harmonious social structure and mutually serving relationship amongst people. His life principle is "Akshar Aham Purushottam Daasom!" Shri Mahant Swami Maharaj is an extraordinary example of 'Servant Leadership' in spreading true morality and spirituality.

Due to his natural inclination of serving humanity, Shri Mahant Swami Maharaj, right at the age of sixteen got associated with the Swaminarayan organisation assisting and serving his predecessor Gurus Shri Yogiji Maharaj, Shri Shashtriji Maharaj and Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj with whole-hearted dedication, discipline, sincerity and selflessness. Today with the same sacred spirit of love and compassion he is guiding and leading the Sampraday and the society.

In the phenomenal series of guiding gurus since the inception of Swaminarayan Sampraday by Bhagwan Swami Sahajanand. Swamishri Gunateetnand, Swamishri Bhagatji Maharaj, Swamishri Shashtriji Maharaj, Pujya Yogiji Maharaj and Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, a large number of initiated 'Santvrund' and whole time 'Haribhaktas' have consolidated the basic Akshar Purushottam philosophy. In the same Guru-Parampara, Shri Mahant Swami Maharaj, by his magical energetic force enhancing and advancing the basic human values in the society. Because of his very long and extensive Dharm-prasaar, services and the qualities of an exemplary devotee, Shri Mahant Swami Maharaj is dear and respectable Guru to all.

As per the Upanishadic definition, Guru is the one who removes darkness; leads from Darkness to Light, from Unreal to Real, from Mortality to Immortality, Mahant Swami Maharaj is such an ideal guru in the spiritual pinnacle of Devotion and Service, possessing all the traits and qualities of

devotee-Bhakta narrated by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita, in Chapter 12, the Bhaktiyoga;

अद्वेष्य सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।  
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ १३ ॥  
संतुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।  
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्त स मे प्रियः ॥ १४ ॥  
यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते व यः ।  
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स व मे प्रियः ॥ १५ ॥

“Those devotees are very dear to me who are free from malice toward all living beings, who are friendly, and compassionate. They are free from attachment to possessions and egotism, equipoised in happiness and distress, and ever-forgiving. They are ever-contented, steadily united with me in devotion, self-controlled, firm in conviction, and dedicated to me in mind and intellect.

Those who are not a source of annoyance to anyone and who in turn are not agitated by anyone, who are equal in pleasure and pain, and free from fear and anxiety, such devotees of mine are very dear to me.”

*(Bhagavad Gita XII - 13,14,15)*

The present Brahmswaroop Shri Mahant Swami Maharaj, even in his eighties provides continuous support and inspiration to the countless followers of the exceptionally fine spiritual organization of Swaminarayan Sanstha, BAPS.

The creation of this book is also a meritorious outcome of such a spirited inspiration. The author of this book, Dr. Kirit N. Shelat has earned divine grace and blessing from Maharshi Mahant Swami Maharaj.

I take this opportunity to convey my “Jay Swaminarayan” to all.

Vadodara

Date : 02 October, 2025

- Narayana

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to the elite Santas and Haribhaktas for their invaluable help in giving a proper shape to the book and making my endeavour a success. The first edition in Gujarati - published in 2018, was jointly authored with Dr.D.R.Patel. This is the fourth edition.

I am indebted to Mahant Swami Maharaj for granting me permission to go ahead in writing and compiling.

I am indeed grateful to all revered Santas namely, Atmaswrup Swami, Kothari Swami, Gyaneshwar Swami of Salangpur for providing encouragement through their valuable guidance. Books and publications by Swaminarayan Aksharpeeth, Shahibaug, "Swaminarayan Prakash" and "BLISS" and "Sadhutanu Shikhar"- were most useful as references, details, narrations and photographs. I am indebted to all of them. I have taken many extracts verbatim from them. I have also taken extracts from "Vibration" and "Pearls of Inspiration" by Vivekjivandas Swami, Verbatim-I am grateful to him.

I am thankful to Ishwarcharan Swami, Viveksagar Swami, Brahmvihari Swami, Aksharvatsal Swami, Adarshjivan Swami, Yogivallabh Swami, Rishimangal Swami and other Santas for rendering me direct and indirect help.

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I am thankful to Shri Deepak Rana and Shri Mohandas Kallingal and Dr. R. Gopichandran, Dr. A. R. Pathak - for their support and efforts in coordinating this work.

The support and encouragement of my wife Ila and my family strengthened my intention and efforts to complete this book of highlighting the life and work of the great sage Mahan Rushi Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj.

With Koti Koti Vandan at the feet of Mahan Rushi Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj...

Jay Swaminarayan

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सत्यमेव जयते

प्रधान मंत्री  
Prime Minister  
**MESSAGE**

It is a pleasure to learn about the publication of a book on the life of Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj.

His compassionate eyes, simple and humble speech and radiance born of penance have always been deeply impactful.

As a representative of a great saintly tradition, he inspires people to engage meaningfully in the service of humanity. Through his extensive travels across the world to spread the ideals of Sanatan Dharma, he has transformed countless lives by embodying the motto: "The sole purpose of life is service of humanity."

Carrying forward the Guru Parampara of Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he has helped nurture an honest, dedicated, and disciplined community of followers and volunteers committed to human welfare.

A spiritual beacon, his efforts in spreading spirituality, culture, and heritage both in India and abroad continue to be a source of pride.

This effort by Dr. Kirit N. Shelat to document the life and message of Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj is truly commendable. I am confident that this biography will inspire many.

Best wishes for this noble endeavour.

(Narendra Modi)

New Delhi  
ज्येष्ठ 23, शक संवत् 1947  
13 June, 2025

**Dr. Kirit N. Shelat**  
6, Manikamal Society  
Surdhara Circle, Thaltej  
Ahmedabad  
Gujarat- 380054



Sahajanand Swami - Bhagwan Swaminarayan





*Bhagwan Swaminarayan*



*Bhagwan Swaminarayan with Aksharbramm Gunatitanand Swami*

# Introduction

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## Hinduism - The Eternal Religion - the Sanatan Dharma

India is an ancient country and home to one of the oldest living civilizations of the world. Hindus form 83% of the 1.3 billion population. Hinduism is the oldest practiced religion in the world. There was a time when Sanatan Dharma, the traditional name for Hinduism, was prevalent in South-East, West Asia and beyond. Buddhism followed later across West Asia, Far East, etc.

Hindus believe in one God but worship several Gods and Goddesses; who are the manifestations of Paramatma - the supreme God. The deities are worshiped in mandirs, the abodes of Gods and in the homes of Hindus.

Sages known as rishis guided people and rulers about right and wrong. These holy men lived in Ashrams which were far removed from towns, cities and were mostly located in forests. Attached to them, were residential schools called Gurukuls. These forest academies trained the future rulers and teachers, alongside the sages. The Guru-Sishya tradition is a unique feature of ancient India. The Gurus showed the path to their disciples to attain the grace of God by leading principles and spiritual lives. But, more than that, these ashrams served as centers for ideal living and building leadership.

Several rishis or sages have contributed to the progress of the land - in religious, economic and political fields. These venerable personalities include Vashishtha, Vishwamitra, Agastya, Shukracharya, Patanjali and Chanakya. India has many such profound thinkers. Their philosophy recorded in the scriptures is valid and is in actual use, even today, in one form or the other regardless of whether it is yoga by Vasishtha, Patanjali or Arthashastra by Chanakya. There is continuity in the history of this ancient land, which cannot be considered in isolation for any given period. There have been several periods of darkness and resurgence. In this resurgence Bhagwan's incarnations like Sahajanand Swami Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781-1830 CE) played a notable role.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were dark periods in Indian history. The Mughal ruler Aurangzeb died in 1707. This was followed by ineffective rule by his successors for 31 years, but the Mughal empire was on the decline. The French and British had arrived on the scene. Apart from this, the nation was plagued by a variety of internal fights. Its social life was disturbed. There were no rulers who could unify the country and there were no noteworthy religious leaders of high stature.

Gujarat did not escape this turmoil. It had Mughal Subas in some areas, while Gaekwad, a ruler from Maharashtra, had certain areas under his control. In the rest of the State, there were more than 300 small kingdoms, perpetually fighting with one another.

The society was orthodox. There were numerous caste groups. There were differences in standards of living between the upper and lower castes, businessmen, rulers and peasants. Polygamy was common. The status of women left much to be desired. Different kinds of intoxicating drugs like opium, ganja, charas and alcoholic drinks were commonly used. The rulers were known for their ruthlessness. This was thus a dark period in the history of Gujarat. The basic moral values of culture were at the lowest level. Religious rituals and temples were under the control of orthodox brahmins. There was a subsisting rural economy. There were recurrent droughts. People underwent great hardships.

‘Vaishnav Dharma’ (The religion that follows Lord Vishnu-Krishna) was popular and was dominated by the orthodox priests. The lower castes, peasants, agricultural labourers, rabis and artisans had limited or no access to temples.

### **Nilkanth Varni’s Arrival in Gujarat : The Guru called him Sahajanand Swami**

When Nilkanth Varni (the future Sahajanand Swami) arrived in Gujarat, this was the condition of the region. He was born in north India, at a place called Chhapaiya near Ayodhya, in modern Uttar Pradesh. He came to Gujarat after the death of his parents. When he left his home, he was only 11 years of age. He was from a Pandey family and was born on April 3, 1781. He moved all over on foot for about seven years. He met Swami Ramanand in 1799 at a place called Loj in Mangrol Taluka of Junagadh District, in Saurashtra. Ramanand was a prominent religious leader, who worshipped Bhagwan Krishna. Muktanand Swami was his prominent disciple.



*Shri Harikrishna Maharaj (Bhagwan Swaminarayan)*

In the year 1800, Nilkanth Varni was given diksha and given two names : Sahajanand and Narayan Muni.

## **Establishment of Swaminarayan Sampradaya**

On November 16, 1801, Ramanand Swami appointed Sahajanand Swami as his spiritual successor. A month later, Ramanand left for his heavenly abode, leaving Sahajanand solely in charge of the sampradaya.

Sahajanand Swami broadened the spiritual base. He gave the 'Swaminarayan Mahamantra' to his followers and charted a moderate path of spiritual sadhana whose aim was to attain ekartik bhakti (dharma, jnan, vairagya and bhakti). He also offered humanitarian services in time of famine, drought and other calamities.

In those days, He introduced certain basic religious and social reforms to bring the 'Swaminarayan' faith to the centre stage in Gujarat. Its main features were :

- (i) Religion for all, including the downtrodden, peasants, agricultural labourers, socially and economically backward people. He sent his sadhus on vicharan (visits) to villages and even to the fields to offer religious guidance. He threw open temples to all, irrespective of caste and social standing so that they could worship God. He had himself built mandirs in Gadhada, Vadtal, Bhuj (Kutch), Dholera, Junagadh and Ahmedabad.
- (ii) He introduced a strict moral code of conduct for sadhus, who had to adhere to celibacy, and had to inspire satsang in five families daily before taking meals. They should be on the move from village to village. They must follow Nishkam (celibacy), Nirlobh (non-avariciousness), Nisswad (non-taste), Nissneh (non-attachment), Nirman (non-ego) as their way of life.
- (iii) He introduced festivals for all religious occasions. He started 'Samaiyas', where people come together, thus getting an opportunity to celebrate, have darshan of Bhagwan and meet other devotees.
- (iv) He delivered religious discourses and initiated discussions between his devotees and sadhus. He created written communication and used literature for this purpose.

- (v) He travelled constantly, visiting one village after another and readily met everybody who wanted to meet him. He revived and further developed the tradition of visiting devotees at their houses.

## **The Religious and Social Reformer**

In his short life span of 49 years, many of his opponents, religious or otherwise, tried to harass, malign or destroy him. He won over all of them and all such people ended up becoming his followers. He, therefore, came to be known as the supreme incarnation of God and become popularly known as Bhagwan Swaminarayan. People accorded him great respect and believed that he is God. The local rulers both Marathas and Muslim Subas, and even the British, who came on the scene in later years, were impressed by him. He wrote a religious-cum-social code of moral conduct known as the 'Shikshapatri', which gives guidance to His followers to lead virtuous lives. His religious discourse came to be known the as the 'Vachnamrut'. He succeeded in making people give up bad habits like consuming alcohol, superstitious practices, etc.

Sahajanand Swami left for His heavenly abode in the year 1830. In the course of 30 years, He brought about revolutionary changes in the religious and social life of countless people, particularly of farmers, agriculture labourers and economically backward classes. His principles attracted innumerable aspirants, their numbers increased and the Sampradaya gradually expanded.

Hindu religion is ancient. Nobody knows when it began, may be 10,000 years ago or even beyond that. As has already been pointed out there are many Gods to whom the people offer worship, but there are three main devas: Brahma - the creator, Vishnu - the protector and Shiva - the destroyer.

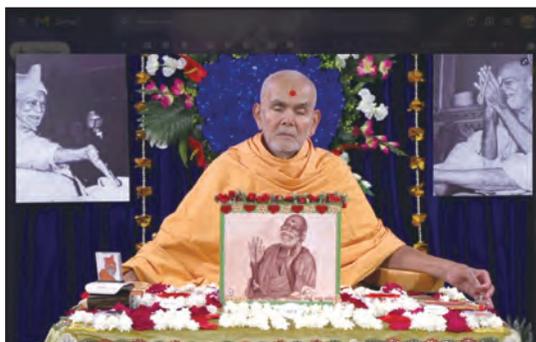
Krishna, an avatar or incarnation of Vishnu is the most popular of Hindu Gods. He is worshipped all over the country and His mandirs are in every nook and corner of this vast land. The devotees believe that whenever there is too much wickedness, Vishnu takes birth on this earth to fight evil. That is the story of Avatars. There have been ten Avatars, including Ram and Krishna.

The story of Sahajanand Swami began in Gujarat, in the last quarter of the 18th Century, when Krishna worship was the privilege of a few and the common people had difficulty in entering the temples. He built temples all

over Gujarat and threw them open to the masses. In his lifetime, Bhagwan Swaminarayan was worshipped as the God by his devotees.

By the time, He passed away at the age of 49, He had earned a reputation as a great socio-religious reformer. It is believed that, through His spiritual presence, Bhagwan Swaminarayan continues to provide energy and spiritual experience through a succession of Gurus, the realised masters. The first Guru in the succession was His choicest devotee, Gunatitanand Swami (1785-1867), the manifestation of Aksharbrahma. He in turn, was followed by Bhagatji Maharaj (1829-1897). After him, Shastriji Maharaj (1865-1951) furthered the religious cause by enshrining the philosophy of Akshar and Purushottam in five glorious mandirs to promote the worship of the supreme God along with his valuable devotee. Consistent with the teachings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Shastriji Maharaj propagated the worship of Bhagwan Swaminarayan as Purushottam and Gunatitanand Swami as Aksharbrahma. He founded the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), a socio-spiritual organisation, in 1907. For more details about BAPS refer to [www.baps.org](http://www.baps.org).

The fourth spiritual master was Yogiji Maharaj (1891-1971), whose work carried the message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan across the oceans to East Africa and England. He passed away after placing the reins of the faith in the safe hands of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1971. He was succeeded by the present guru, Mahant Swami Maharaj.



# Guru Parampara



Bhagatji Maharaj



Bhagwan Swaminarayan



Shastriji Maharaj

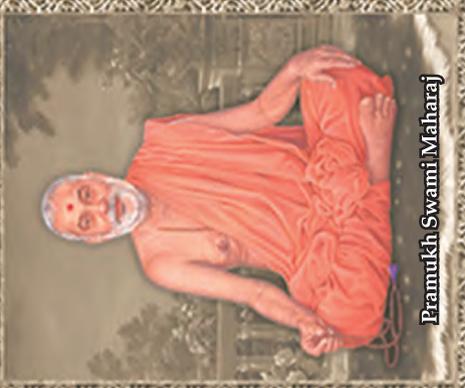


Yogiji Maharaj



Mahant Swami Maharaj

Gunatitanand Swami



Pramukh Swami Maharaj

# GURU PARAMPARA

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*Pramukh Swami Maharaj with Mahant Swami Maharaj*

## **Guru:**

Sanatan Dharma has a crucial role of the spiritual guru. The Guru Gita of the Skand Puran states that 'gu' means darkness and 'ru' means remover of that darkness: "The guru removes darkness and leads one to enlightenment." He is the link to God - whom we do not see with our vision.

It is important to understand the role of the guru since one cannot easily attain spiritual knowledge or enlightenment merely by self-endeavour.

The Katha Upanishad describes the role of a guru, 'Yaha setureejānān-

āmaksharam Brahma yatparam, abhayam titeershatām pāram Nāchiketam shakemahi’ – ‘For a spiritual aspirant who wishes to escape from the vortex and forceful flow of maya, Aksharbrahma serves as a bridge’ (3.2). Just as a bridge helps in crossing one side of the river to the other, Aksharbrahma manifests as the guru and serves as a bridge (setu). He saves us from drowning in maya, helps us to cross the ocean of material pleasures and attain Paramatma.

The guru anchors us to Bhagwan. Thus, we become safe and assured. The guru behaves with humility and so he harbours nothing other than Bhagwan. He endeavours so that we anchor ourselves more and more to Bhagwan. To attain Shriji Maharaj, to offer bhakti to him, we have to doubtlessly anchor ourselves to the guru.

Guru Parampara is built on the principles of :

- According to Mahant Swami Maharaj, “One who removes our ignorance is a guru. ‘Gu’ is darkness and ‘ru’ is light.”
- He emphasizes that the guru’s role is to guide individuals toward spiritual growth and self-realization, helping them understand the nature of God and the self.
- The Guru Parampara is essential in preserving and passing on spiritual traditions and values. Mahant Swami Maharaj’s own spiritual lineage includes Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.
- Mahant Swami Maharaj highlights the importance of maintaining unity, citing Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s emphasis on preserving “samp” (unity) even at personal cost.

Bhagwan (Lord) SWAMINARAYAN is all pervading and his ‘spandans’ – devine vibrations – prevail even today. He left his spiritual legacy through Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami. His divinity continues in the BAPS every moment as ever. Gunatitanand Swami was the the first successor, followed by Bhagatji Maharaj – Pragji Bhagat, succeeded by Shastriji Maharaj who founded BAPS – (Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Sanstha), followed by Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and the current guiding head is Mahant Swami Maharaj. Bhagwan Swaminarayan marifests on earth through the Gunatit Guru Parampara.

## Gunantitanand Swami

Gunantitanand Swami Maharaj was born on 28th of September, 1784 in 'Bhadra' village. His maiden name was Mulaji. His father was Bholanath and mother Sakarba. Bhagwan (Lord) Swaminarayan - Sahajanand Swami gave him diksha - when he was 25 years old - in the year 1809 (Samvat 1866). This was at Dabhan - Nadiad and he was named by Bhagwan Swaminarayan as 'Gunantitanand'.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan had introduced him by saying "He has come along with us from "Akshardham" and he is "Akshar Brahma".

In 1811 (Samvat 1868) when Bhagwan Swaminarayan visited Salangpur he celebrated 'Holi Utsav' (festival) at house of Rathod Dhakhal. While he was explaining - a poetry - pad of Sant Kabir - "Sadguru Khela Vasant", he added "I am Purushottam Narayan and Gunatitanand is Sadguru".

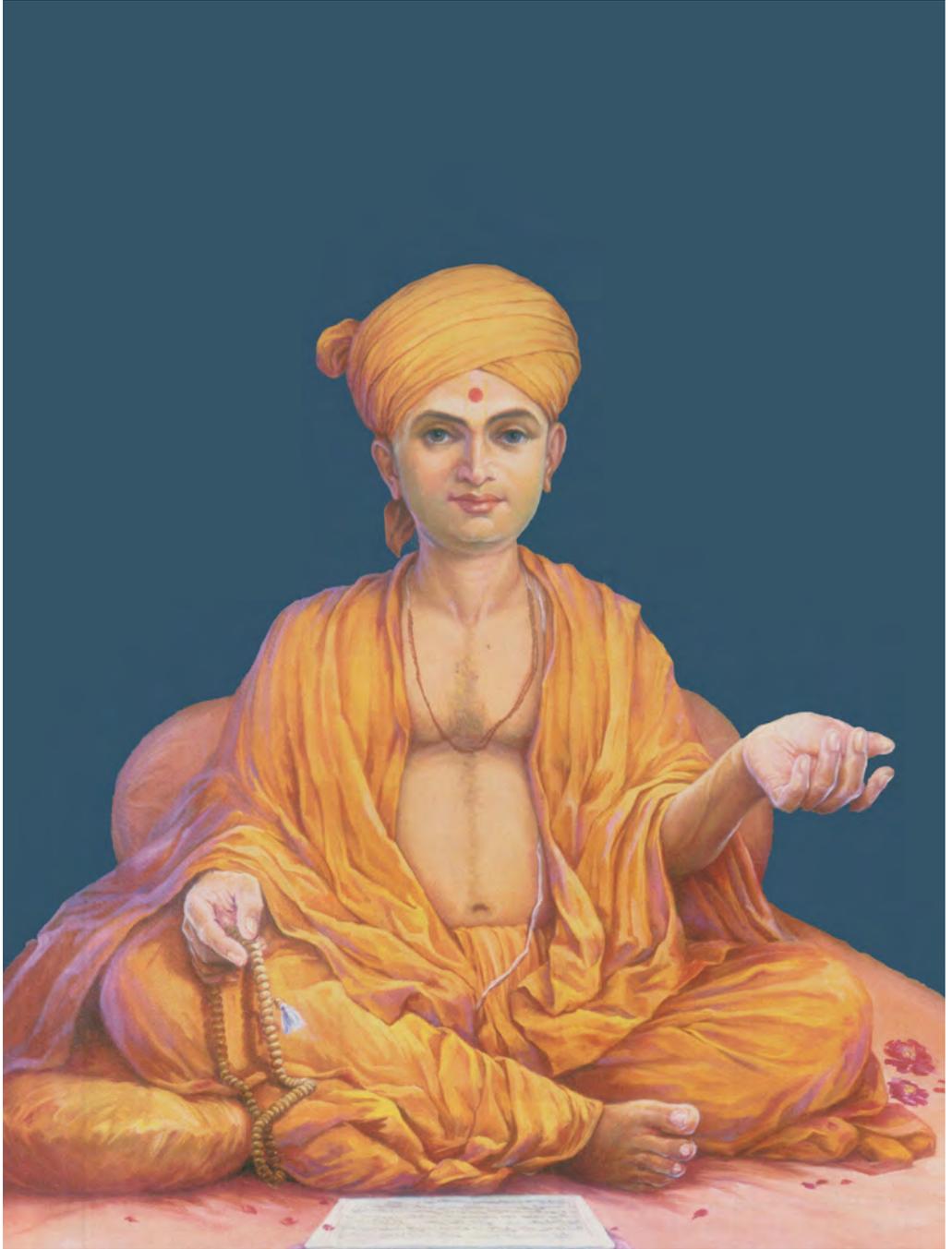
Again in Panchala - he asked to disciples - "do you know who is this sant? He is our home - Akshardham".

Swamishri Gunantitanand expanded 'Satsang Sabha' (Meeting of Devotees) and spread of knowledge of Sanatan Dharma. He stayed in Junagadh as Mahant for more than 40 years."

He has extensively spoken about the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and narrated his discourse with him as 'Swami Sathe Vato'.

Says Swamishri Gunantitanand "once Maharaj asked me to set up a mandal (groups). We can keep maximum - 10 - 100 -200 sadhus - but if we have groups of devotees and give them spiritual knowledge, spread will be faster. We followed what he said and set up groups of devotees. Our spread expanded phenomenally.

Says Sadhu Ishwarcharandas, "Gunatitanand Swami holds a unique place among five hundred paramahamsas of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The life of Gunatitanand Swami is the very embodiment of pure divinity. He is revered as an ideal Sadhu and Guru. He was the first to reveal and spread supremacy of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on this earth. Gunatitanand Swami's life confirms the fact that Bhagwan Swaminarayan is ever manifest on this earth through Aksharbrahma and has kept the door of redemption for 'Jivas' open through a God realized Sadhu. Sadhu Ishwarcharandas further adds "Bhagwan Swaminarayan has revealed in 'Vachanamrut' that



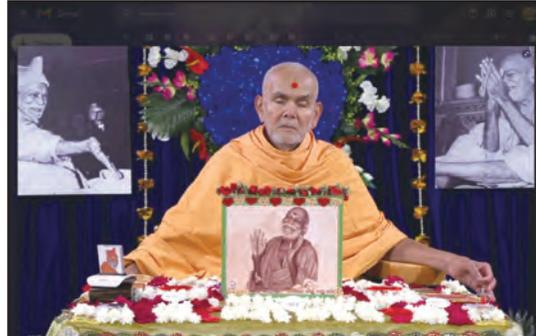
*Aksharbrahman Shri Gunatitand Swami (Bliss - Oct. - 2010)*

he has incarnated on earth for the purpose of granting liberation to the 'jivas' and He has come with his Akshardham, divine muktas and powers According to these words, Bhagwan Swaminarayan brought Gunatitanand Swami as his Akshardham.

Swami Gunantitanand left for his heavenly abode - Akhsargaman on 11th October, 1887 at Gondal. In his memory 'Akshar Deri' was created.

Yogiji Maharaj used to say "Akshar Deri" is "Kalpavrush". Anyone who has Darshan - Mahapuja and Pradakshina - will get all his wishes fulfilled.

Recently BAPS celebrated 150 years of Akshar Deri on 20th January, 2018, - in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj.



## Bhagatji Maharaj

Bhagatji Maharaj was born in Mahuva - Bhavnagar in Samvat 1885 on - 20-03-1829. His maiden name was Pragji. His father - Govindbhai was a tailor - his parents Govindbhai and Maluba were religious and had brought up Pragji accordingly.

Shri Bhagatji Maharaj was a devoted person. He liked to help and serve people. He looked after temple activities almost throughout day and night with little sleep. He was quite popular among devotees who always went to him for advice and support.



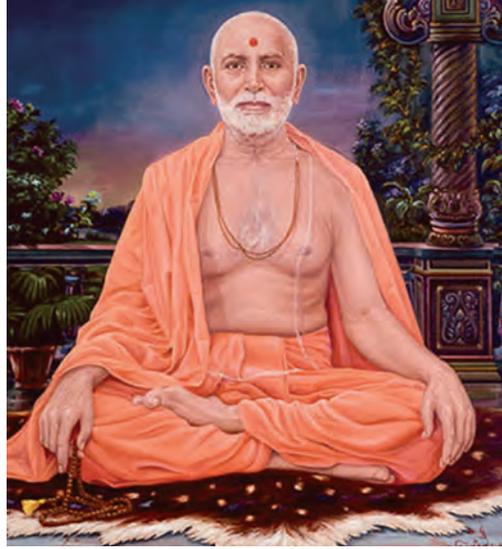
*Bhagatji Maharaj*

Pragji Bhagat has a noteworthy status in spreading the spiritual message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He was entrusted with this mission by Gunatitanand Swami. Shastriji Maharaj worked very closely with him in this task. Once Sadhu Nandkishordas asked Bhagatji, "You are saying that Swaminarayan has seized me (mane valgi gayache). Is Bhagwan, a ghost (bhut), that he will seize / capture you?" Pragji Bhagat smiled and replied, "Ghost by nature try to seize / capture a person but if God - Bhagwan does it - why should we be surprised? God does not seize everybody - but only those are captured -seized by him who love him and have faith in Him."

He left for his heavenly abode on 7th November, 1897 at Mahuva - Bhavnagar. In his memory, a beautiful temple of Bhagwan Swaminarayan has been set up in Mahuva.

## Shastriji Maharaj

Shastriji Maharaj was born in 'Mahelav' of Kheda district on 31/01/1865. His father Dhoribhai and mother Hetaba (a Patidar family) were spiritually oriented and imparted cultural values to him. In his childhood he was known as Dungarbhai. He liked to serve from childhood and was popular among the villagers who used to assign all and sundry task which he used to do willingly. He was popularly called 'Dungar Bhagat'. He studied in the primary school at Mahelav. He was out-spoken and a brilliant student.



*Shastriji Maharaj*

## Renouncing World & Diksha

From childhood Dungarji used to spend daily - a few hours at the temple, to sing devotional songs and recite mantras. He memorized the entire Bhagvat. At Mahelav had one spiritual kathakar who used to say 'Katha' with a maan (copper pot). One day during the course of the Bhagvat Katha he departed for heavenly abode, 'Dungerji' who was very young,



*Shastriji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj*

completed this task and narrated the entire Bhagvat Katha and proficiently played the maan. Everyone was spellbound by his katha.

### **Master Architect**

He had from childhood a flair for art and design. In 1932, a “Haveli” was under construction in Mahelav. He observed the construction process and design of ‘Haveli’ carefully. He finally went to Shri Jethabhai Suthar, who was incharge of the construction, and suggested that the pillars needed to be round-shaped at the entrance with an open space in front. This would make the building elegant. His suggestion was immediately accepted by the amazed Jethabhai Suthar.

This child, in years to come, designed five magnificent temples of Akshar - Purushottam : Bochasan, Salangpur, Gondal, Atladara and Gadhada. These Shikhar baddha temples were examples of traditional art; craft and minute architectural effects.

### **Akshar Purushottam concept development and departure from Vadtal**

Gunatitanand Swamiji started “Dhyan Groups” in villages and Bhagatji Maharaj made it popular. They used to meet regularly during prayers and storytelling - Bhagvat Katha etc. They became popular and Shastriji Maharaj expanded it further. Increasingly devotees started visiting them. Some jealous sadhus did not like his increased popularity among devotees. But due to his devotional activities - The Akshar Purushottam culture expanded - not only in villages - but major urban centres also started setting up such groups. But these jealous - disgraceful sadhus started creating obstructions, while the sincere sadhus who were involved in spiritual knowledge found these troublesome activities unbearable.

Devotees - Haribhaktas were also concerned and disturbed by such malicious propaganda against Shastriji Maharaj. Some started requesting him to leave Vadtal. But Maharajshree was reluctant. One day in Vadodara, Shri Ghanshyambhai Vaidya called a meet of devotees. There was a deliberation on this for hours and finally it was resolved that it is difficult for Shastriji Maharaj to continue to stay at Vadtal. They met Kothari Govardhanbhai and demanded the change. He agreed and stated that “Rudal Temple needs to be completed and Shastriji Maharaj may therefore, be requested to go to Bochasan and complete related task”.

But Shastriji Maharaj was still not agreeable - at that time Shri Krishnaji Ada from Rajkot quoted from 'Shikhashapatri'.

"One should leave the place which is infested with trouble and has threat to life and stay where one can have peace of mind".

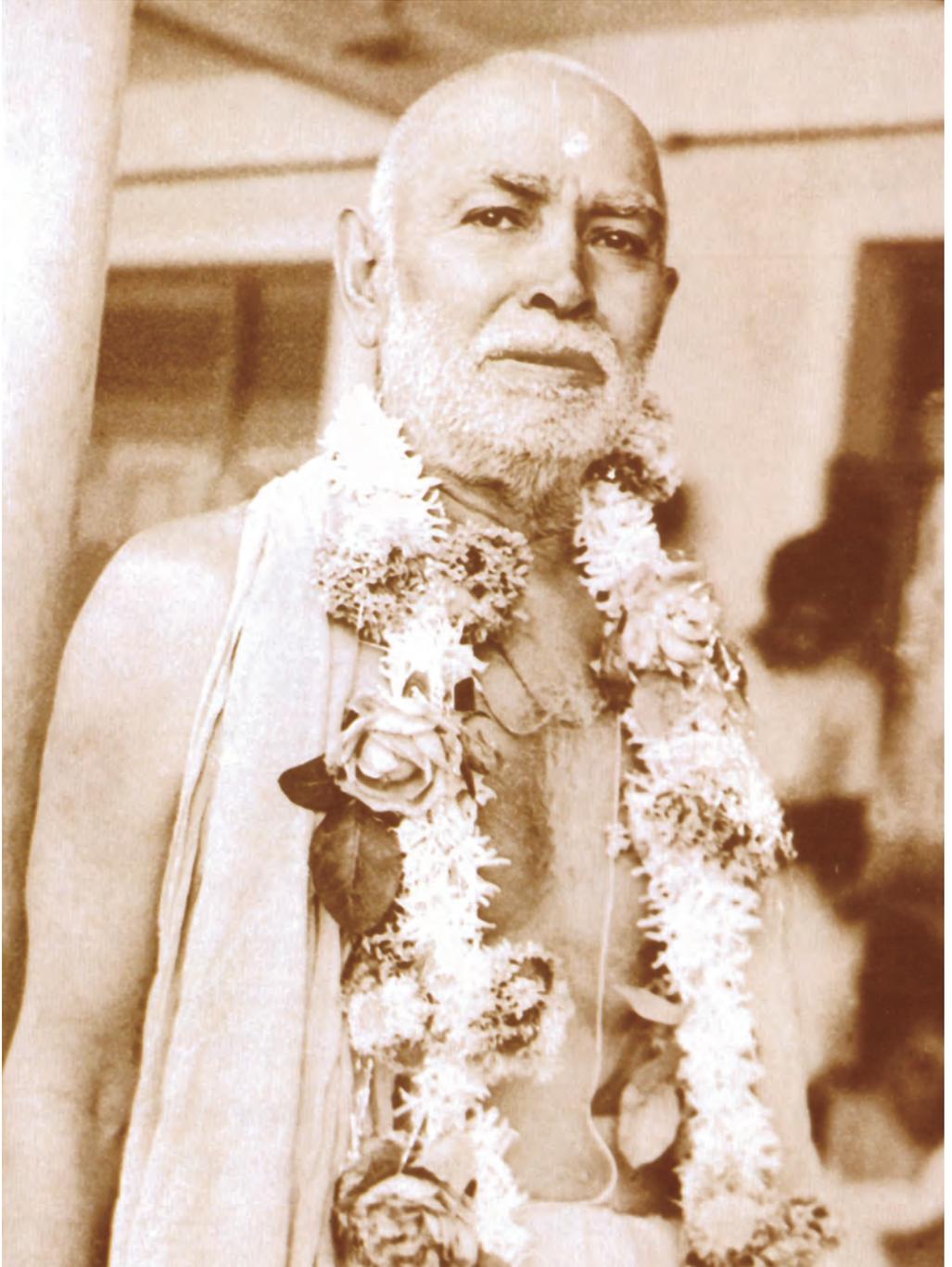
Finally due to persuasion by all, - Shastriji Maharaj along with other six sadhus - Swami Narayancharandas, Niranjandas and others - left Vadtal for Bochasan in 1905 - Samvat year - 1962 Kartik Vad-1.

### **Bochasanvasi Akshar Purushottam Sanstha - BAPS**

Vadtal - the seat of temple had administrators who did not like 'Akshar Purushottam' concept and its sacred status, its popularity and also Shastriji Maharaj who was spreading this spiritual knowledge. After moving out of Vadtal - Shastriji Maharaj developed Bochasan as the Centre of Spirituality and in the year 1907 he created a new organization for its expansion. He named it 'Bochasanvasi Akshar Purushottam Sanstha - BAPS'. His focus was to promote spiritual knowledge and concept of Akshar Purushottam. He had a great following and devotees asked him also to set up more temples so that larger number of people can get benefit. He initiated this with the cooperation of one and all - and most importantly all devotees - Haribhaktas contributed to this endeavor.

- The 1st temple was set up in Bochasan in the year 1907 with a grand 'Murthi Pratishtha' function.
- The 2nd temple was set up in the year 1916 at Salangpur - Ahmedabad district which has become a Centre for Learning - training for Sadhus and youth.
- The 3rd temple was set up at Gondal in 1934.
- The 4th temple was set up on the outskirts of Vadodara at Atladara in the year 1945.
- The 5th temple was set up in 1951 at Gadhada on the bank of the river Ghela.

When the Gadhada temple was under construction, Shastriji Maharaj's health was declining due to his advanced age. Shastriji Maharaj spent the days of his final illness in Salangpur, during which he would attend the daily arti and meet devotees and sadhus. Everyone was praying for his



*Shastriji Maharaj*

recovery but the force of nature – prevailed and he left for the divine abode - Akshardham at Salangpur.

Yogiji Maharaj was in Mumbai and immediately reached Salangpur. Shri Gulzarilal Nanda came from Delhi. The ‘antimvidhi’ (last virtual) was performed with sacred rites.

Shastriji Maharaj had wished that his ill-health or departure should not delay the inauguration of the Gadhada temple. He had already entrusted Yogiji Maharaj this task. Yogiji Maharaj performed this as per his desire and ‘Murthi Pratishtha’ was done by remembering Maharajshree – as if he was present on Vaishakh Sud 10, 1951.

Yagnapurush Shastriji Maharaj was a Siddha Purush. He developed mass communication systems to spread Sanatan Dharma and propagated spiritual and moral principles laid down by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Vachanamrut and in the ‘Shikshapatri’ as a way of life. He did this against adverse circumstances and opposition by jealous Sadhus and persons propagating against him. But he was firm and ‘nirbhay’. He used to call himself as ‘Balad’ – Oxen of Akshar Purushottam. He was willing to sacrifice anything for these principles. As part of his endeavour through mass communication he focused on spiritual discipline and thoughts, he set up a chain of temples across Gujarat and outside.

He created BAPS for setting up community centers, temples and spread of spiritualism through group meetings within Gujarat, in India and abroad. BAPS created infrastructure in a systematic manner as a spiritual spread management system on self-sustaining basis – in which Sadhus and Haribhaktas (devotees) came together for voluntary contribution for temple creation, its maintenance, helping and serving each other and those who needed help irrespective of caste and creed. This was spread as a new wave of Sanatan Dharma.

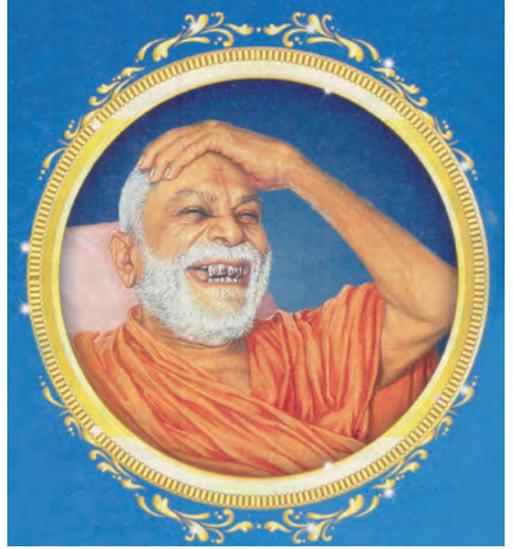
He prepared leadership within BAPS – both Sadhus and Haribhaktas – involved youth and created training centres.

He prepared Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj to take further the path laid by him across the world.

## Yogiji Maharaj

Child Jhinabhai was born in Dhari - Amreli district on 23rd May, 1882. Father Devchandbhai and mother Puriba were followers of Swaminarayan Sampraday.

Sadhus of Swaminarayan from Junagadh used to visit Amreli. In Dhari, there was a temple which was looked after by Haribhakta Mohanbhai. Mohanbhai was not maintaining good health. Sadhu Krishnacharandas Swami who was in charge of this area - started looking for an alternate person - a Haribhakta who could do this work very well. He found Jhinabhai suitable - who used to visit temple



*Yogiji Maharaj*

regularly and involved in 'Seva' and was a devoted simple person. He therefore, requested him to take over all temple work who willingly took over the responsibility.

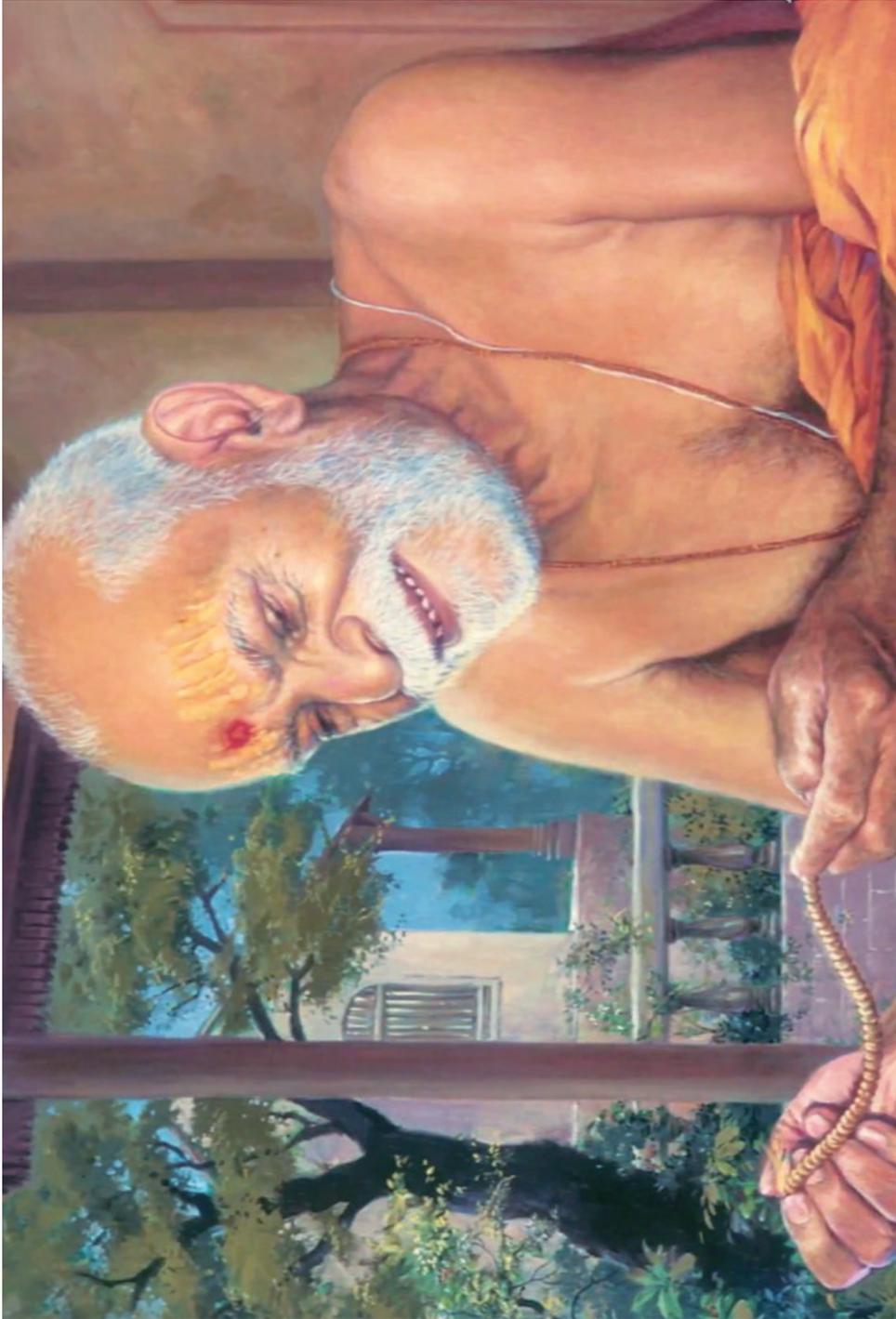
Jhinabhai developed a desire to renounce society and become a sadhu. Sadhu Krishnacharandas first asked him to obtain consent of parents - who gave it, although they found it difficult to do so.

He was given 'diksha' by Sadhu Krishnacharandas and named Jhina Bhagat as Parshad.

In the year 1911 in Junagadh temple he was given Dikshas as 'Sadhu' by Acharya Saripatiprasad and named Sadhu Gyanjivandas. Later on he was called as Yogiji Maharaj.

Soon he became very popular at Junagadh among Sadhus, Sevaks and Haribhaktas. In the meanwhile in 1907 Shastriji Maharaj had set up BAPS. Yogiji Maharaj joined BAPS and moved to Gondal where a new temple had come up. He set up 'Akshar Deri' in memory of Swami Gunatitanand at Gondal. He made Gondal a famous 'Yatradham'.

He developed three divine vows (Sankalpas).



*Yogiji Maharaj*



*Narayanswaroop (Pramukh Swami Maharaj) • Yogiji Maharaj • Shastriji Maharaj • Nirgundas swami*



*THE DIVINE TRINITY OF BRAHMESWARUP GURUS*

*Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj (Centre), Brahmawarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj (L), Pragat Brahmawarup Mahant Swami Maharaj (R) Photo : Colorama Studio, Nairobi, 1970*



*Yogiji Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj*

First is Satsang across the world. By Satsang, he advocated divine relationship between 'Bhagwan' and 'Bhakta'. Second is about reduction or elimination of harmful thoughts or acts / activities. Thirdly this can be promoted by spiritual knowledge of Akshar Purushottam relationship.

He translated his divine vision into spiritual action through various programmes and activities.

- **Festivals** - Organization of religious festivals (utsav - samayas), made it possible for Bhaktas to meet each other and Sadhus. Festival programmes had also religious discourses. Senior Sadhus addressed Bhaktas and narrated Bhagvat Katha, Sikshapatri principles and quotes from Bhagwan Swaminarayan. All these include spread of voluntary services, helping each other and even outsiders, so on and so forth. These were held twice or thrice in a year.
- **Sunday Meets:** These were known as 'Ravi Sabhas'. These were held every Sunday at each centre - included bhajan - kirtan and katha and get together of bhaktas and santas / sadhus and spread of Akshar Purushottam.
- **Satsang Patrika** - News booklet: It is important to have written communication - bhaktas can study and absorb the knowledge - even those who cannot attend can get spiritual knowledge and information about activities of BAPS. Yogiji Maharaj used to write post-cards and acknowledge every letter he received.
- **Youth:** Organizing youth activities and involving them was another important initiative. Yogiji Maharaj's priority was the future generation. He carefully worked out ways of imbibing cultural values, reading of Holy Scriptures, understanding and reciting mantras, learning Sanskrit language and following principles of Sanatan Dharma and Sikshapatri as a way of daily life. He initiated 'training workshops' and debate competition. He promoted educational seminars, created training institutes, educational institutions and hostels for students. "Youth is my Heart" - he always used to say.
- He wanted even Sadhus to be educated. In Mumbai - Vinu Bhagat (Mahant Swami), Ramanbhai (Doctor Swami), Arunbhai Dave (Ishwaracharan Swami) were studying further. Arunbhai once asked him - if we are to be a Sadhu - why do we need to spend two extra

years for finishing education? Yogiji Maharaj replied - "I want you all to be graduated and well educated. I want to see your educational certificates".

- BAPS Spreads Outside India: Shastriji Maharaj wanted to spread - Sanatan Dharma across the world. He had predicted that 'Akshar Purushottam' principle will spread everywhere. This started with Africa in 1955. Yogiji Maharaj visited several African towns. The first temple was set up at 'Mombasa' - Kenya in the year 1955 and a big "Murthi Pratishta Mahotsav" was organized. Yogiji Maharaj spent six months visiting various countries in Africa.

His second visit was in 1960 and temples were set up at Kampala, Jinja and Tatro.

Thereafter he visited England and set up a temple at Islington in an old church. He expanded spread of spiritual message in England and Europe.

Yogiji Maharaj had often introduced Pramukh Swami Maharaj and said "He will look after our work."

Yogiji Maharaj was not keeping good health. He received a heart attack.

At that time he called," Where is Pramukh Swami? Where is Mahant Swami? Call Harshdbhai, with pen and paper".

He said " Write following sankalp - ideas. Time has come to depart."

He called Ishwarcharan Swami and said " We want to set up a college in Gondal.

After half an hour ,he received one more stroke and left for heavenly abode.

From within and outside country, Haribhaaktas reached Gondal.On 24 of January 1972 in afternoon at 4 pm , Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed Agni sparsh.

Yogiji Maharaj departed but his divine energy, Spandan had become all pervasive through Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

## **Pramukh Swami Maharaj**

Chansad is a village on the outskirts of Baroda city in Gujarat state. Sadhus of the Swaminarayan Sampraday used to visit there regularly. This included Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, the spiritual successors of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The villagers became staunch devotees as a result of these visits.

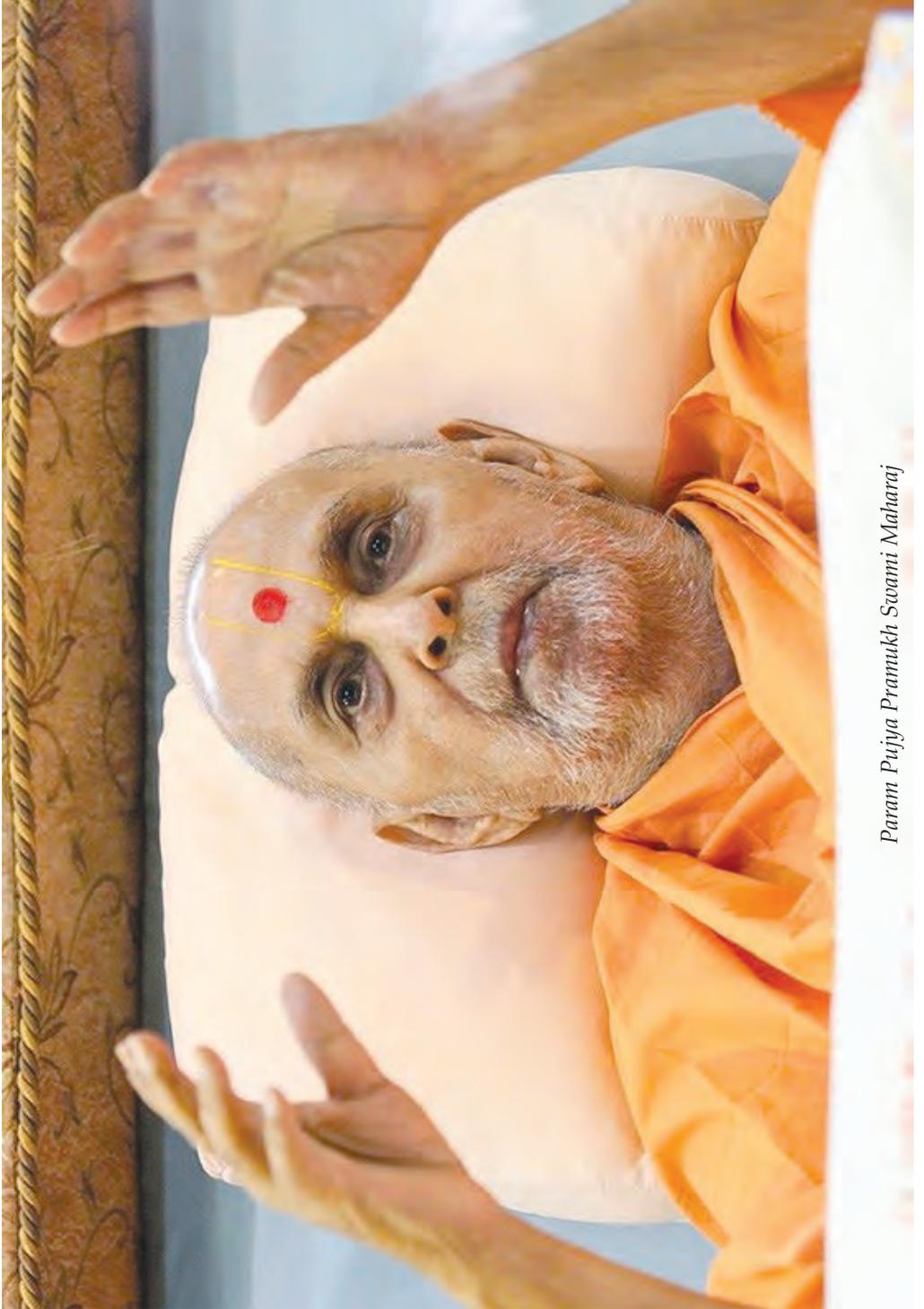
Shri Motibhai Patel, an ordinary farmer, lived in this village. He was a follower of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He and his wife Diwaliben, were simple village folk. Shantilal was their fourth son. He was born at Chansad on December 7, 1921. He was blessed by Shastriji Maharaj in the cradle itself. Shastriji Maharaj claimed the boy in these words. "He is ours. Bestow him to us in future".

It was Ekadashi, on Tuesday, November 7, 1939, Motibhai received a letter from Shastriji Maharaj. Shantilal was about to complete eighteen years. The message said "The time has come for Shantilal to come to Bochasan (the centre of the Swaminarayan Sampraday) to become a sadhu". His parents blessed him.

### **Diksha :**

He underwent his training as a sadhu under the guidance of Ghanshyam Swami. They moved from village to village, mostly on foot. It was as if he was under a test to find out how determined he was to become a sadhu. He finally settled at Bochasan. Shankar Bhagat and Nirguni Swami took him under their care.

In Swaminarayan tradition Bhagat is the transition stage. A person is required to wear a white dhoti and eat from a platter. He has also to observe fasts and celibacy. The training was tough. The transition period involved rigorous training day in and day out. Shanti Bhagat worked hard and learned the scriptures, until Shastriji Maharaj was satisfied. He was taken to Gondal, where he was to meet another great spiritual leader Shri Yogiji Maharaj. Shastriji Maharaj initiated him as a Sadhu on Posh Sud 1, Vikram Samvat 1996, Wednesday, January 10, 1940. He performed Mahapuja at the Akshar Deri. Yogiji Maharaj blessed him and said "He will become great Sadhu". Shastriji Maharaj said "Let us name him Narayanswarup. I want him to study and become a scholar. I want to make him a great and powerful scholar". At that time, he was 19 years of age.



*Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj*



*Pramukh Varni Din celebration at Ahmedabad*

He was the favourite of Shastriji Maharaj, who saw in him the making of a great spiritual leader. He asked him to take over as Pramukh Swami (as President) of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha and said "I wish you to excel in every respect. This way will benefit the entire Satsang. You have to please me and the entire Satsang. This will put my mind at peace".

He was pronounced as Pramukh Swami on Sunday, May 24 1951. He was 40 years old. The installation ceremony which was sombre and simple took place in the small ground floor room at Ambli Vali Pol, Shahpur, Ahmedabad.

After Yogiji Maharaj's departure in January, 1971, Pramukh Swami succeeded him. Pramukh Swami Maharaj moulded himself into a perfect spiritual master. Over 55 years, under his able leadership and guidance, BAPS has grown leaps and bounds. Years ago it was a small institution with a few hundred devotees and a handful of sadhus. It has now become a dynamic worldwide organisation with over 700 mandirs, 9000 Satsang Centres, 900 sadhus and millions of followers spread over five continents.

In a span of 55 years, Swamishri had spread Hinduism and the Swaminarayan Sampraday - all over India and in more than 54 countries of the world. This expansion was a true metamorphosis. He came to be recognized as the Hindu religious leader among the non-Hindu local population. Thanks to his inspiring efforts, India's ancient achievements and contributions in the realm of spirituality and its tolerant philosophy have come to be recognized world-wide. This came about after a very long span of time, after several centuries.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's major contribution lies in inculcating a spirit of voluntary service among his followers. This is not confined to religious purposes to what is normally called Kar Seva. He moulded his devotees into volunteers who not only contributed in cash and kind, but more importantly their free time for social service. He inspired them to participate in helping people affected by disasters - natural or manmade calamity. He enthused them to work for children, women, tribal families and weaker sections of the society.

He constantly engaged in spreading the message of peace, the true spirit of 'Om Shanti-Shanti-Shanti' all over the world. Even in the most provocative and difficult situations like terrorist attack on Akshardham - Gandhinagar



*Pramukh Swami Maharaj with Sadgurus*

on 24th September, 2002, in which 33 people including one sadhu were killed and 77 injured, he remained calm, asked everybody to remain calm and pray for all.

He was aware of the threat posed by western civilization and its impact on children at home and abroad. The Satsang for elders and the children's forum, youth forum and Women's activities are pursued at all centres, to promote the basic values of life. The children's forum, the most important activity inculcates healthy respect for parents and promotes spiritual values in life.

When I visited Salangpur in May 2015, with my sons Vrajesh and Mitul and our grandchildren Om and Arjun to pay our respects to Bapa, the Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, we first took blessings of Pujya Kothari Swami - Gyaneshwar Swami and we were escorted by the young Sadhu Rushimangal. He had read "Yug Purush" the first edition when he was in final year in LD Engineering College and he got inspired to become a Sadhu under BAPS.

He asked me a question "what do you see in Him?"

I was struck. What have I seen in him?

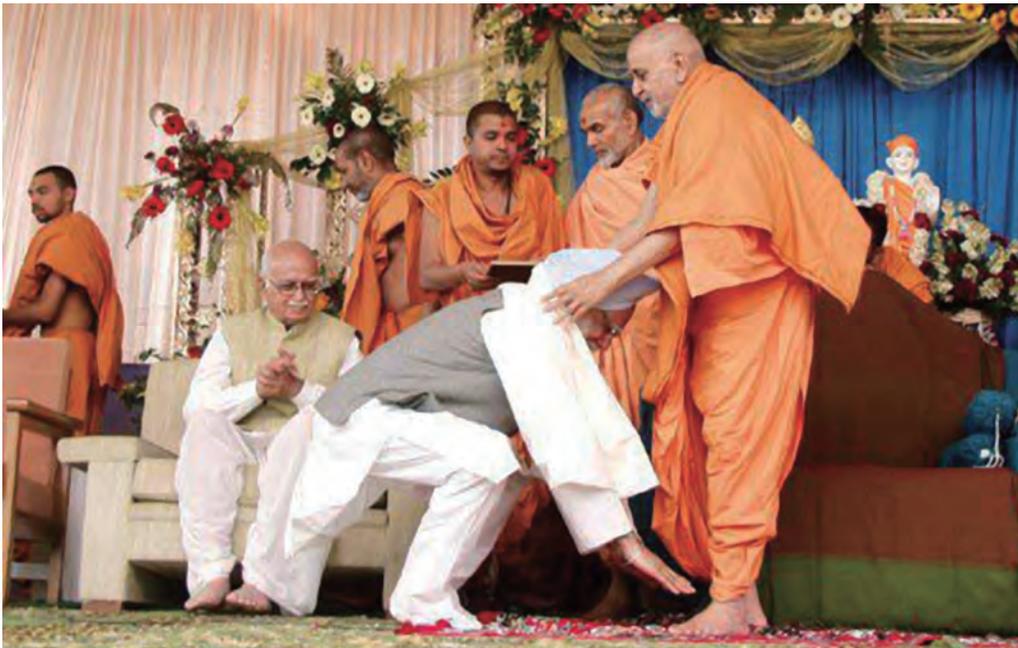
What did they see-the very big ones? - The President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, Prime Ministers - Dr. Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi, industrialist Ambani and Kamath so on and so forth, all high, mighty from India and abroad, like to meet him not once but from time to time. Why the poor farmer from a Kutch village or earthquake shaken student telephones him, when he is under trauma? Why a daughter writes to him about her family problem and seek a solution?. My nephew Dipak Dave who is in USA shares 10 percent of his modest income for Akshardham, USA following BAPA's call for donation and he came down from USA to Salangpur on 16th August - why did he and thousands of others like him do so?

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi paying tribute said, "Many among you have lost a Guru, but I have lost father."

Why some call him 'Bhagwan', others Bapa, some Swamishri? Some view him as a Charismatic Sadhu and others view him as a distinguished Head of Hindu religion. Some feel that he is the Avtar of Lord Krishna who came in this Kalyuga. Some feel he is Antaryami (he understands your inner desire).



*Pramukh Swami Maharaj with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam*



*Pramukh Swami Maharaj blessing Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh*

What do all these persons from different walks in life find in him?

I paused for couple of minutes: what is common in that?:

Each of his followers found something to gain-adding value to his life when he met either personally or listening to him even otherwise or come into contact through Sadhus, Haribhaktas and the temple. The gain may be spiritual, physical or peace of mind, feeling of security, a solution to business or family problem, a completion of an incomplete task or to satisfy curiosity, so on and so forth.

Narayan Guruji calls him Divinity personified and he sees him as a 'Pujaniy Sadhu' who emanates creative energy 'Spandan' and who has transformed religious context to spirituality and has vast transforming effect on modern materialistic society members.

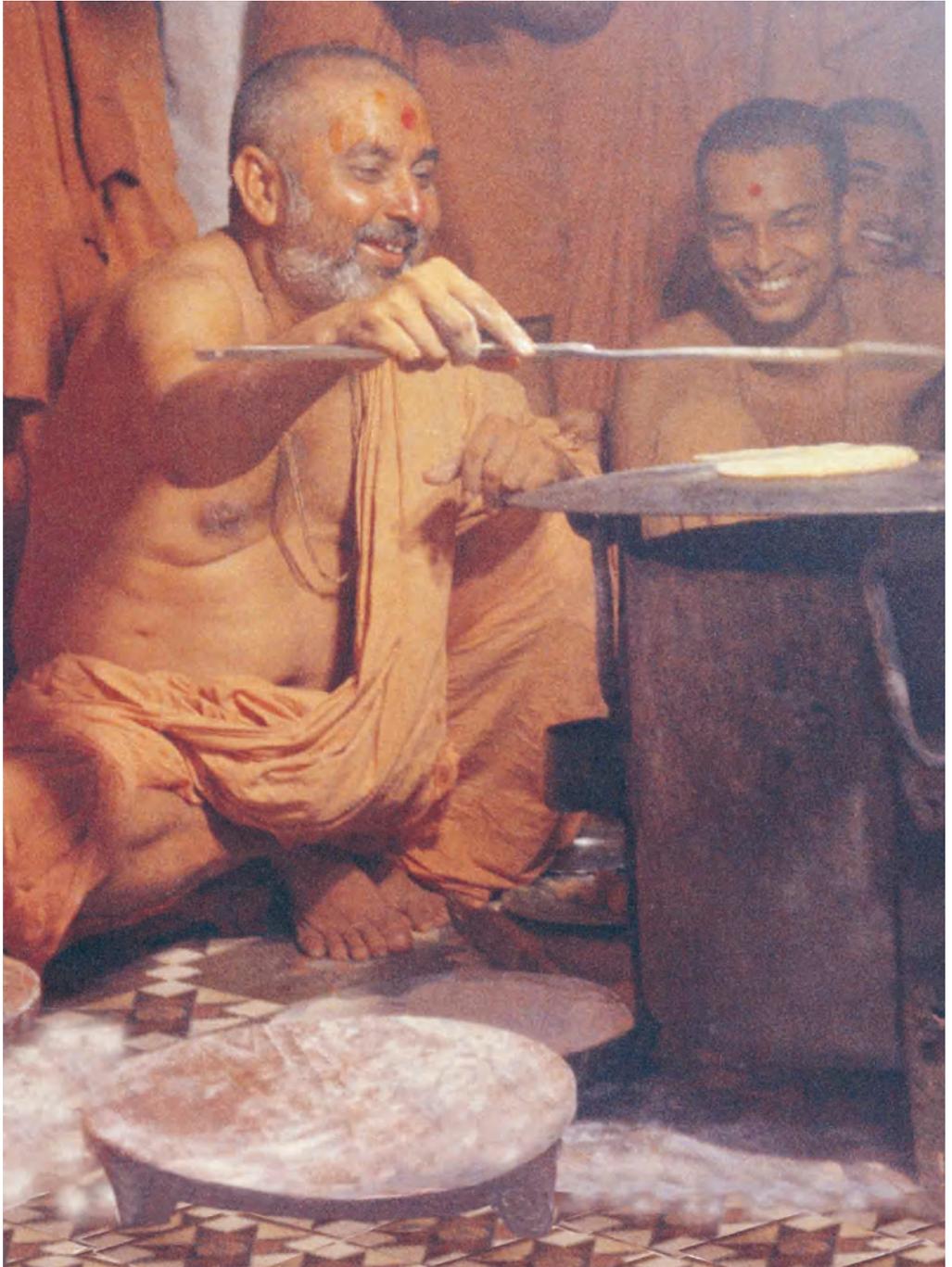
People who came to seek his blessings personally or remember him daily as a "Pratah Smaraniya", feel, that he enchants him because he inspires them to stay in family, live a good happy family life, progress in business, profession, job, studies etc. Further leave all worries, anxiety, enemies, and obstacles to him. He will take care of that because he is always there with them. His vibrations are felt by them wherever they are even away from his physical presence by thousands of miles. His gentle touch - sparsh, a pat in back - the 'dhabba' moved people internally. His simple word strengthens them enormously.

He was a human with compassion and accessible to followers and non followers any time personally / on phone or by letters and he responds to each of them individually. There were no barriers between him and his followers:

He was not merely a distinguished Saint who spread the religion, he changed the entire context of religion and the role of religious leaders and institutions in the modern world. This is the story of a man who believed that for a person to develop, he must grow spiritually; to be spiritual one must serve the faith by serving mankind without concern for caste, creed or race; to build the nation, one must nourish and nurture the youth, the children who are our future, to sustain society, we must protect and encourage religious and cultural diversity. This is a story of a man who has promoted spiritualism. A man who has gone beyond just leading a religious order to become a leader of human faith and culture. The man of the new millennium - The YUG-PURUSH.



*Pramukh Swami Maharaj greeting Mahant Swami Maharaj*



*Pramukh Swami Maharaj as a cooking expert*



*Pramukh Swami Maharaj interacting with Mahant Swami Maharaj*



*Pramukh Swami Maharaj with school children, Mount Abu*

In the later years he was not well (2011-12). He moved to Salangpur. He had foreseen events to come. He nominated Mahant Swami Maharaj for looking after his work in 2011-2013. He advised senior sadhus like Doctor Swami and Atmaswarup Swami to do vicharan in India and abroad. But he was very keen for Akshardham in USA at Robinsville - and visited it despite his delicate health. He performed 'Murti Pratistha' in August - 2014.

Although his health did not permit he gave daily 'Darshan' to sadhus and Haribhaktas at Salangpur. Says sadhu Narayancharan - who was with him since 1977, "BAPA never complained before or after by-pass surgery about physical pain or discomfort".

What happened on 12-13 August, 2016? Continues sadhu Narayancharan, "He gave his daily Darshan - but his BP was going down. Doctor - Sants - Sadhu Yogi Vivek and Sadhu Atbhutanand attended immediately - without success. But BAPA was smiling - even when BP continued to drop. In the evening at 5 PM He said "Jai Swaminarayan". We brought the Murti of Thakorji - which he daily worshiped. We told him "Swami - Thakorji has come. His eyes looked at Thakorji. This was an un-believable sight. His face was lit with divine light, anand and satisfaction. And left us".

17th August 2016  
The Swaminarayan Temple  
Salangpur-India.

I was standing behind the pyre.

Parampujya Mahant Swami Maharaj did Agni Sparsh minutes ago.

The Agni (Fire) Flared and Smoke was rising.

There was silence. But we felt the vibration - the Divine Spandan.

Vibration of Parampujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who had devoted his whole life to others and changed the context of religion.

The divine Spandan was felt by one and all: the Sants Mahantas the 3,00,000 devotees who were witness and billions watching on television in India and across the World, the Haribhaktas and others included.

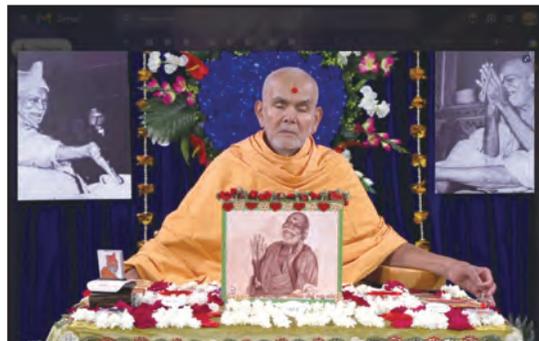
As he left, his legacy... his preachings... his thoughts were in the heart of all witnessing the moment.

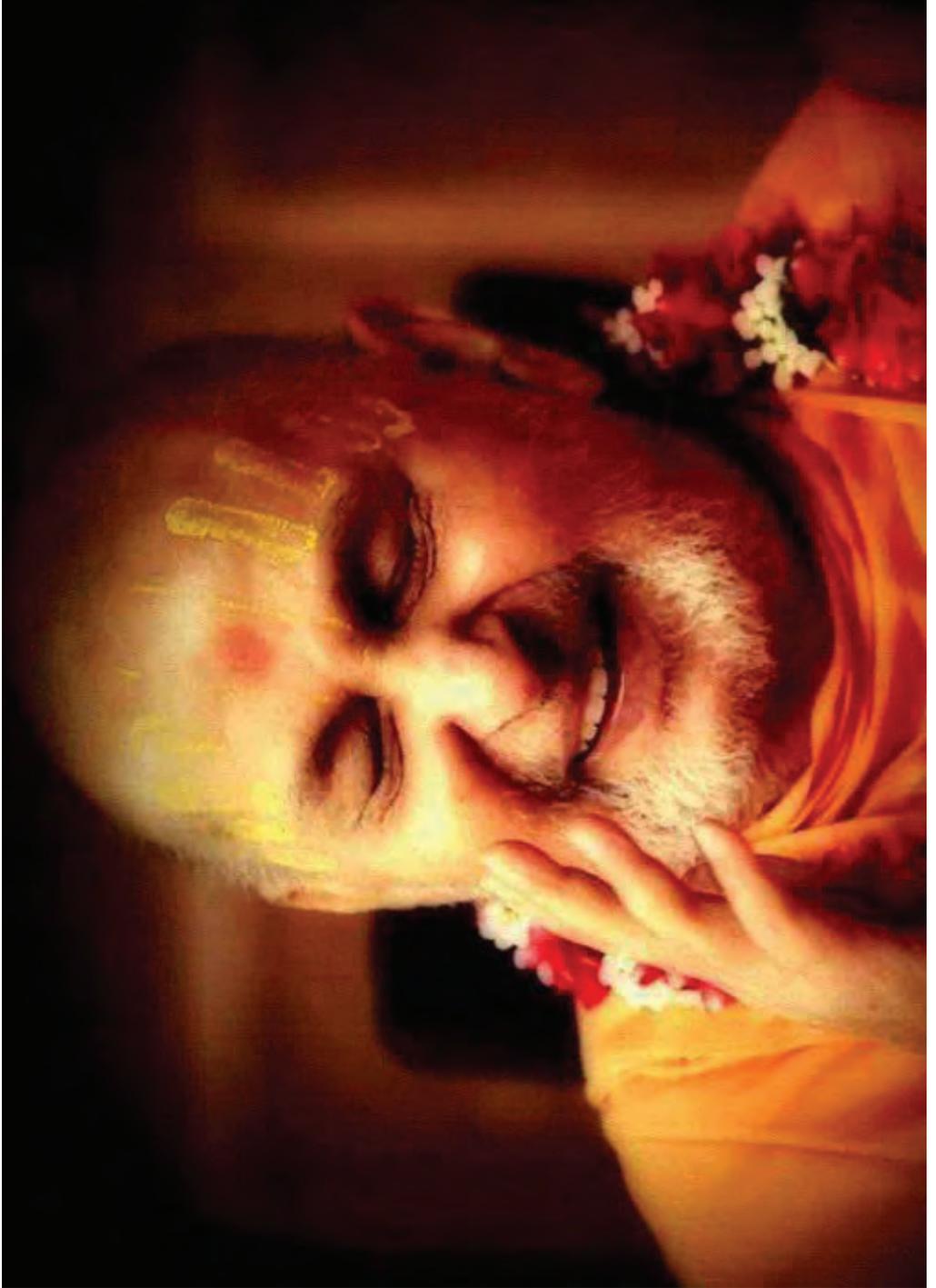
The legacy of a life devoted to the humanity, of a religion enhanced to

help others and the voluntary initiatives by the followers to help without cast or creed, a new generation prepared to meet an - un-predictable future a Triveni Sangam of Science, Technology and Spiritually. The context of Religion was transformed.

## **The Yug Purush**

Shital Ravi Kiran the cool rays of the Sun were descending on us. The Divine Spandan the creative energy become all pervasive through Mahant Swami Maharaj.





*Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj*



*Mahant Swami Maharaj performing Agnisankar of Brahmin Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj*

# 'Vinu'

## Mahant Swami Maharaj

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*Young Mahant Swami Maharaj 'Vinu' with friends*

Vinu (later to be known as Mahant Swami) was born to Dahiben and Manibhai Narayanbhai Patel on 13, September 1933 (Bhadarva vad 9, Samvat 1989) in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India. Six months later Shastriji Maharaj had visited Jabalpur. He blessed the newborn child and named him Keshav. Shastriji Maharaj said to Manibhai, "Your child will grow up to serve the Satsang in a big way." His family lovingly called him Vinu.

Manibhai was from Anand - Gujarat. He was in Jabalpur for business. Vinubhai obtained primary and secondary education in an English-medium

school in Jabalpur. He was exceptionally brilliant and completed his 12th grade at the Jabalpur Christ Church - Boys Senior Secondary School. By that time the family decided to shift to Gujarat. Vinu returned with his parents to Anand. He liked farming and joined College of Agriculture - Anand. Young Vinu had inner desire for deep spirituality. He had sharp intellect. In 1951-52, he came in the contact of Yogiji Maharaj and was attracted to his charisma and selfless love. He started travelling with Yogiji Maharaj during summer vacations. Yogiji Maharaj's love drew the young Vinubhai closer towards him.

In 1956, Vinubhai graduated with a bachelor's degree in Agriculture. Due to his spiritual inclination, he decided to take the path of renunciation. He did not pursue higher education or professional career. On 2, February 1957, Yogiji Maharaj joyously gave him the 'Paarshad Diksha' and renamed him as Vinu Bhagat. Once Yogiji Maharaj, while addressing some youth inclined towards becoming sadhus, said, "Along with Vinubhai 51 youths will take diksha. The punya [of that] will go to all. He will be the first [to take diksha]." Then, Yogiji Maharaj told him to accompany him in his vicharan to look after his daily correspondence and other services. For four years he stayed with Yogiji Maharaj and received spiritual training.

On 11, May 1961, on the occasion of the Kalash Mahotsav of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Gadhada, Yogiji Maharaj gave Bhagwati (saffron) Diksha to 51 educated youths. Among them, Vinu Bhagat was the first to receive diksha and named Swami Keshavjivandas. The name 'Keshav', given by Shastriji Maharaj when he was a child, reappeared when renamed as Keshavjivandas by Yogiji Maharaj.

Thereafter, Yogiji Maharaj instructed the 51 newly initiated sadhus to study Sanskrit in Mumbai. Swami Keshavjivandas was appointed as their head (mahant) at Dadar Mandir. Over the time, he became respectfully known as Mahant Swami. Yogiji Maharaj used to frequently write to the newly initiated sadhus about the greatness of Mahant Swami, "All should remain under the instructions of Mahant Swami. If anyone feels troubled or worried tell Mahant Swami about it. He will solve your problems."

## **Mahant Swami - Early Days**

Mahant Swami was very much loved not only by newly inducted sadhus - but by children - young boys, also who visit temple revered him immensely. He used to help infuse spiritual values of Bhakti, self-less

service, obedience, and respect to elders in all Sadhus and youth. This phenomenal bond multiplied and spread wherever he visited and stayed in Gujarat or outside.

1970 was a landmark year. Yogiji Maharaj visited Africa and England and he spread the sampradaya - that grew leaps and bounds. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had accompanied Mahant Swami Maharaj. Yogiji Maharaj initiated number of new places of worship including setting up of a temple in London.

1971 - the following year was shocking. Yogiji Maharaj - departed for heavenly abode at the age of 79. Mahant Swami Maharaj was deeply missing Yogiji Maharaj.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj shouldered the leadership following the Guru Parampara in 1971. The BAPS and sampradaya expanded. Another landmark year was 1979. Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated the setting up of Akshardham at Gandhinagar. The entire task was entrusted to Mahant Swami Maharaj who worked day and night to make this a wonderful monument.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj always held Mahant Swami Maharaj in great esteem. In important functions where he could not go, he deputed Mahant Swami to represent him.

Under the leadership of Pramukh Swami Maharaj BAPS spread spirituality all over the world. But constant travel and day and night work made Pramukh Swami Maharaj weak. In March 2013 he nominated Mahant Swami Maharaj to oversee BAPS activities and guide all. Pramukh Swami Maharaj shifted to Salangpur. Despite Pramukh Swami Maharaj clear directions Mahant Swami Maharaj requested all santas not to publicize this situation. He completed all the works entrusted to him, continuously maintained a low profile as humble Sant. He said "I am a 'servant' of Maharaj and would like to remain so. Pramukh Swami Maharaj leads all of us to "Moksh" and we are all in his feet."

Pramukh Swami Maharaj stayed at Salangpur. Marathi Edition of Author's work - on "'Yug Purush' Pramukh Swami Maharaj" was released by Mahant Swami Maharaj in his presence at Salangpur on 24th May 2013.

### **With Pramukh Swami Maharaj**

Mahant Swami Maharaj said - remembering his early days of initiation in sampradaya. "We all boys were returning from Atladara (Vadodara district) after participating in Krishna Ashtami festival. Pramukh Swami was also

travelling with us, we were all together in same compartment. After train started, he talked to me. He enquired about my background and education carrier. Then he asked - suddenly - are you wearing 'kanthi' (sacred thread made from tulsi - to be worn around the neck)? I did not. He advised me to wear it and told me, please request Yogibapa get you to wear that. In the meanwhile one attending Sadhu came up with kanthi and Pramukh Swami himself put it in my neck. I was thrilled. Our conversation continued. He suggested, "would you like to become 'Sadhu'." This was just a suggestion - it was not an order or persuasion - a candid suggestion; discussed miseries of life; and role of Guru and Bhagwan Swaminarayan in liberation. A decision to be or not to be sadhu taken by oneself only. This talk gave me a direction and desire to become 'Sadhu' and the thought started growing in me."

"I was with Yogiji Maharaj. Remembering that day", Mahant Swamiji says - "I had an occasion to visit Ahmedabad." We visited our temple in Ambli Pole. This was the place where Shastriji Maharaj had initiated Narayan Swaroop as Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Shri Babubhai Somnath was Kothari. He was very meticulous in use of resources. Pramukh Swami Maharaj appreciated this. In fact he used to cook his own food and serve all. Somehow he had come to know - I do not eat rice but like 'Rotali' (Indian bread). He started to give his portion of Rotalis to me and put 'ghee' (butter oil) in it while he himself used to eat only 'Dalbhat' - Rice-Dal. In those days without our knowledge Pramukh Swami Maharaj used to take care of us.

### **Mahant Swami Maharaj with Yogiji Maharaj**

Says Mahant Swami - I came in contact of Yogiji Maharaj as a student in Anand Agriculture College. This was in 1953 - 1956. During vacation I used to be with him and join him in his 'vicharan' (visits). After I completed graduation, I went to Gondal and got inducted as 'Paarshad'. Yogiji Maharaj had his own style of building Sadhus and Paarshad. It was tough training - which built me and developed my capacity to work round the clock - even without taking any meals - many a times.

Mahant Swami Maharaj - known as Vinu Bhagat at that time was inducted as Sadhu on 11th of May, 1961, Yogiji Maharaj's birthday when he had completed seventy years. 51 young parshads were being given 'Diksha'. Yogiji Maharaj gave him Guru Mantra - Ashirvad and chandan tilak and finally 'Bhagva Vastra' sacred cloth - were given to him and he was given



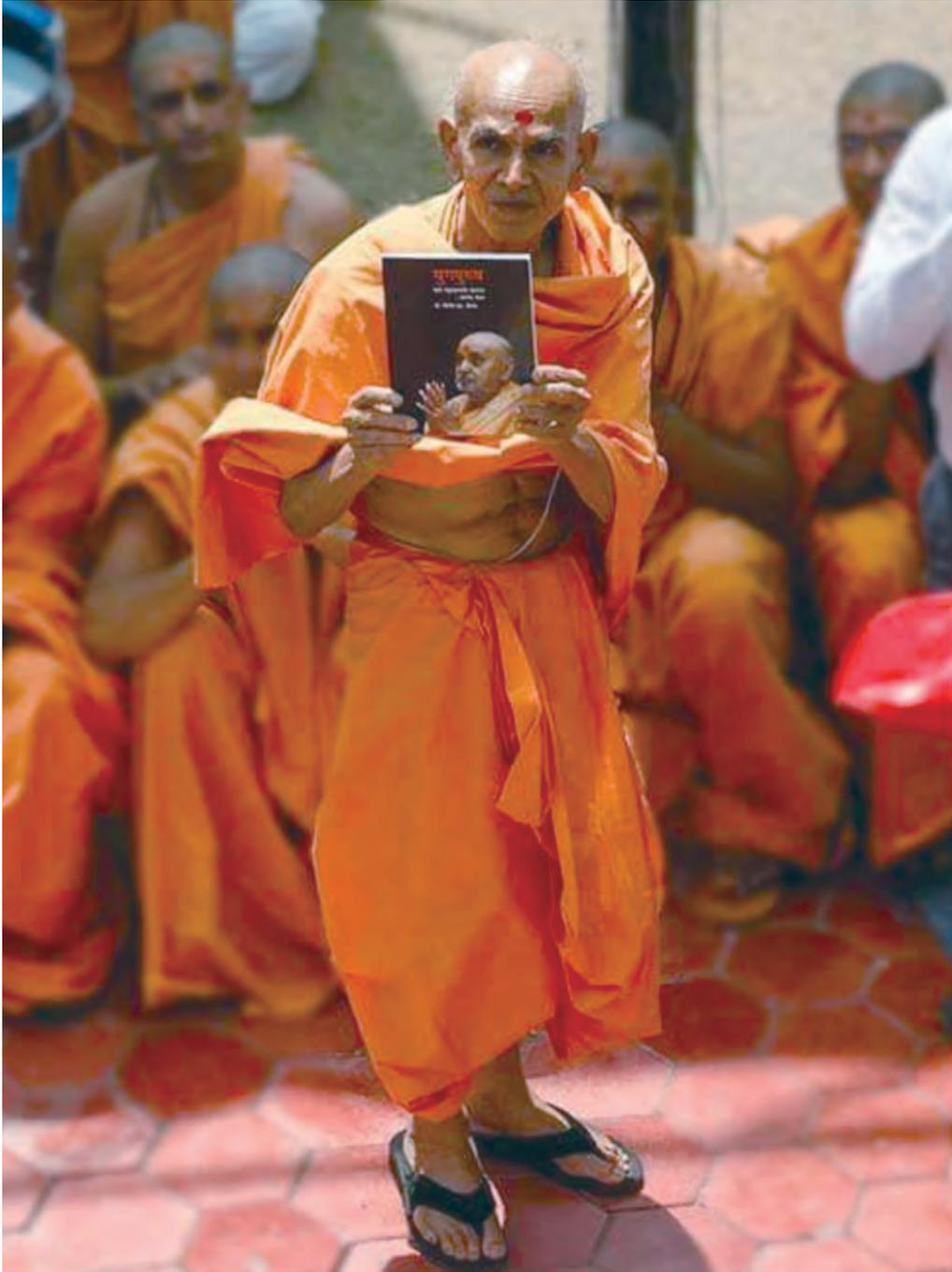
*Pujya Yogiji Maharaj blessing Young Mahant Swami and other new Dixit Young Sadhus*

name of 'Keshavjivandas Swami' - applauded 'Jay Jay' by all present. The child Vinu named as Vinu Bhagat became Sadhu Keshavjivandas.

Yogiji Maharaj had seen the potential of Keshavjivandas. Yogiji Maharaj believed that newly inducted Sadhus need to be well trained in ancient scripts and religious rituals. They need to be 'Pandit' - learned persons who can give guidance to Haribhaktas and infuse spiritual values to younger generation. He selected Mumbai for this purpose. He nominated Keshavjivandas as leader and supervisor for this purpose and called him as "Mahant Swami". Mahant Swami became a respected and popular Sant among all.

In 1962 Yogiji Maharaj set up Harimandir at Dadar and appointed Mahant Swami as Mahant and Bhaktapriydas Swami as its Kothari.

Yogiji Maharaj often said, "Pramukh Swami and Mahant Swami are our important leaders - follow them. Pramukh Swami is in overall charge - we have laid foundation - he will build it further up. He is our Acharya.



*Mahant Swami Maharaj releasing the Marathi edition of "Yug Purush"  
24 May 2013, Saturday*

Follow his instructions and also follow Mahant Swami's guidance - all will be well and God will be pleased. Your continued association with both of them will show you true spiritual path of Akshar Purushottoam.

## **The Spandan**

Pramukh Swami Maharaj left for heavenly abode on 13th August, 2016. This created shock waves. Antyesthi was held on "16th August 2016" at Salangpur. I was there with my brother Sureshbhai at the time of his 'Antim Vidhi':-

"I was standing behind the pyre.

Parampujya Mahant Swami Maharaj performed Agni Sparsh,

The Agni (Fire) flared and smoke was rising.

There was silence. But we felt the vibration - the 'Divine Spandan'.

Vibration of Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj - who had devoted his life for others and changed the context of Religion.

The divine Spandan was felt by one and all; the Sants, Mahantas the 3,00,000 devotees who were witness and billions of Haribhaktas and others were watching on televisions in India and across the world.

Shital Ravi Kiran - the cool rays of the Sun were descending on us. The Divine Spandan - the creative energy has become all pervasive through Mahanta Swami who was standing behind. His Spandan continues to be spread through Mahant Swami. This is the Guru Parampara set by Bhagwan - Lord Swaminarayan".

## **Mahan Rushi Mahant Swami Maharaj**

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had entrusted his tasks to Mahant Swami Maharaj. In the meeting that was later in the day held in Salangpur. Mahant Swami Maharaj was requested by Santas to lead them.

In the meeting held - Doctor Swami stated to all present - "What will happen now when Yug Purush - the divine personality has departed?" But he is with us only through Mahant Swami Maharaj. All of us will continue to be guided by Mahant Swami Maharaj as we did it with Pramukh Swami Maharaj through 'vibrations' (Spandan) in Mahant Swami.

Ishwarcharandas Swami elaborated further: "Our Knowledge - is Eternal, Truth is our Knowledge." Gunantitanand Swami used to say - "I am eternal. I am not departing. It is the body (Deh) which goes or falls down - but



*Mahant Swami Maharaj performing last rites of Pramukh Swami Maharaj*



*Darshan and last rites of Pramukh Swami Maharaj*



*Mahant Swami Maharaj with Bhagawat Dixit Santhorund*

I am going to remain in this world and from time to time seen as part of 'Guru Parampara'."

Added Swami Ishwarcharandas "Time and again Pramukh Swami Maharaj had elaborated that my successor is Mahant Swami - follow him - abide by his guidance.

"We have now more than 1000 santas - sadhus who are well educated. This started with Mahant Swami. At that time it was believed that educated youth does not like to become sadhu. But Mahant Swami - disproved this belief. He followed Yogiji Maharaj and persuaded him to give 'Dikshas' and become a sadhu. Yogiji Maharaj kept him for years together and trained him - in all different facets. He imbibed innumerable 'gun's virtues in Mahant Swami who was always a humble person. Yogiji Maharaj had entrusted education training of new sadhus and appointed him as 'Mahant' in Mumbai.

"Mahant Swami had been always self-reliant - despite so many people - sadhus - bhaktas around him - he used to - wash his clothes and clean all utensils - used to prepare 'haar' garlands for Thakorji - this lifestyle itself is an education to young sadhus - who were amazed to see him to get up at 4 A.M. in the early morning and doing yogas. He speaks few words but his lifestyle - devotion - charisma - spreads divinity - divine light spandans everywhere. He is a Mahan Rushi.

Mahant Swami is now our leader - Guru Parampara started with Gunantitanand Swami now we will follow him. In him we see all gurus - Gunantitanand Swami, Bhagatiji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. By remaining in his constant contact - we will have truthful path, happiness and peace".

"Remember that Pramukh Swami Maharaj has not gone anywhere - these 'spandans' are in Mahant Swami - he is with us through him."

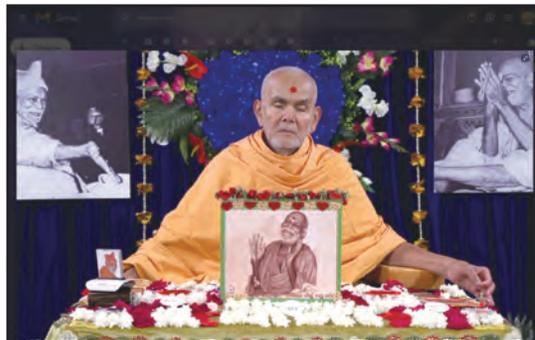
Pramukh Swami was not well. He shifted to Salangpur. He decided to entrust his task and, as his successor - as a Spiritual Guru of BAPS. In 2012-13 in presence of all sadgurus - Doctor Swami, Kothari Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Ishwarcharandas Swami, Vivek Sagar Swami and all other Sadhus. He formally entrusted this task. He also wrote a letter informing entire BAPS community in that regard. He addressed "I hereby inform all Thyagi, Grahi, Bhaktas that Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) created by Yagna Purush Shastriji Maharaj

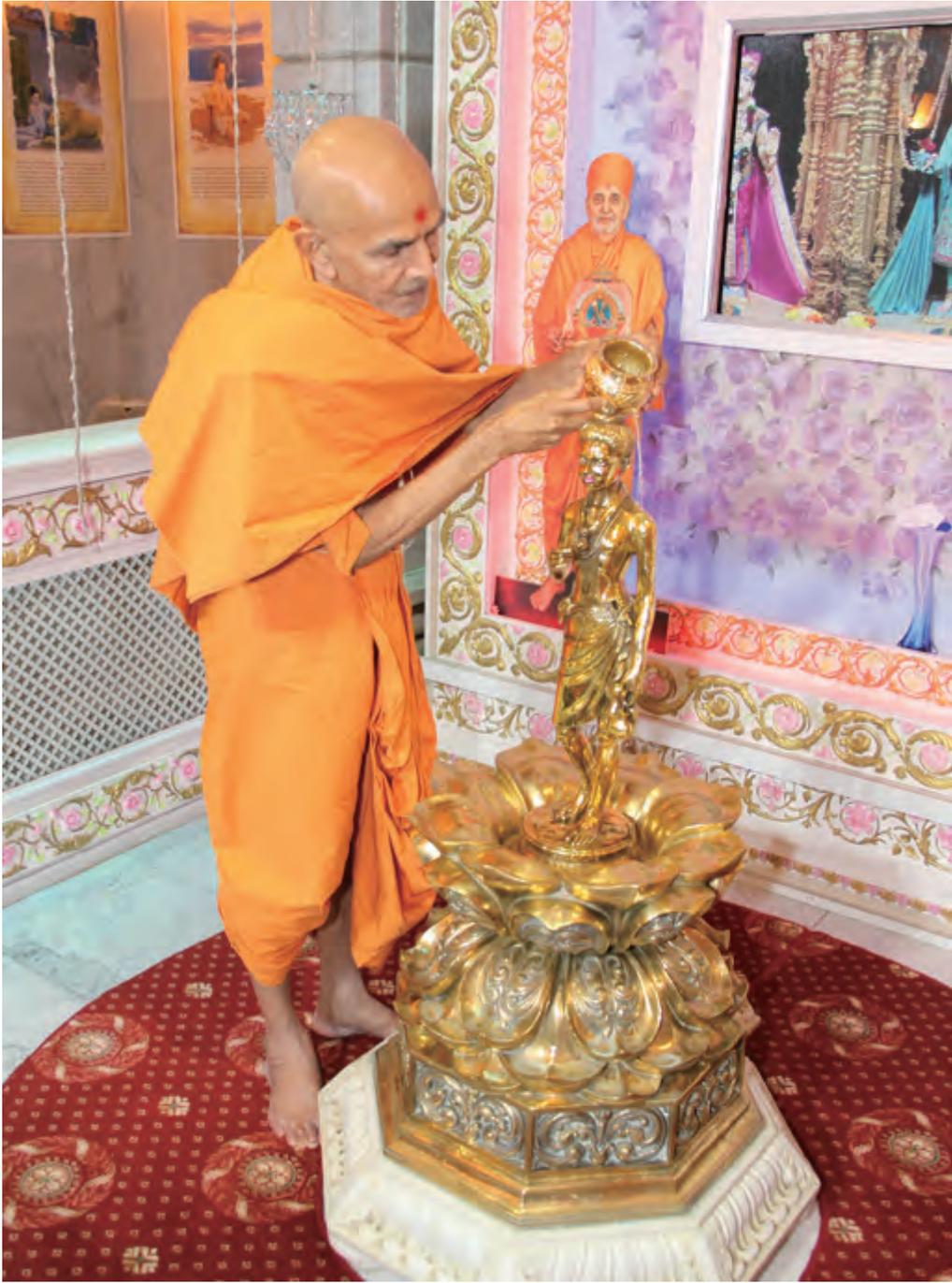
will have leadership of Mahant Swami Maharaj as 'Pramukh' after my departure. He will be Guru. I am doing this appointment of Mahant Swami Sadhu Keshavjivandas."

Despite this declaration and formally handing over the overall work to Mahant Swami, Mahant Swami maintained low profile. He urged Santans please do not declare this openly. I am a servant and would like to remain as servant. Gate to 'Moksh' and Guru of all of us is Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Please accept my request.

On one side Pramukh Swami departed bodily - at that very moment his Spandans started through Mahant Swami Maharaj. Thousands who were present physically and those who were on TV felt assured Pramukh Swami has not passed away at all. He is with us in Mahant Swami. Mahant Swami Maharaj is leading the divine path created by Pramukh Swami Maharaj and he is with us to lead us - guide us through spiritual ways all across the world.

"We are all indeed grateful to Pramukh Swami Maharaj to bestow us such Guniyal Gunantit Guru - the Mahan Rushi Mahant Swami Maharaj".





*'Abhishek' by Mahant Swami Maharaj at London Temple*



*Mahant Swami Maharaj with Chief Justice Tondon during annual celebration of Toronto Temple, Canada*

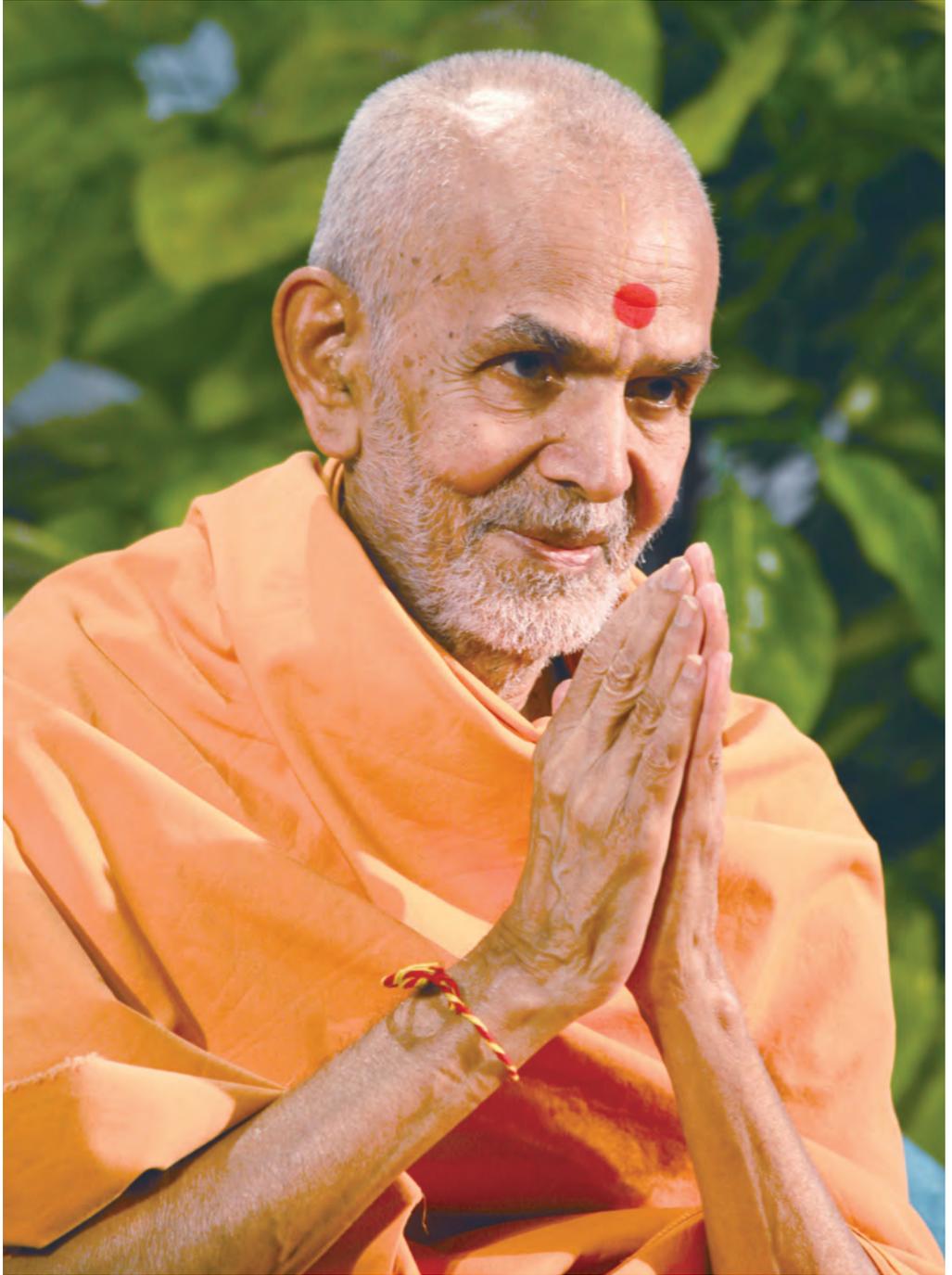




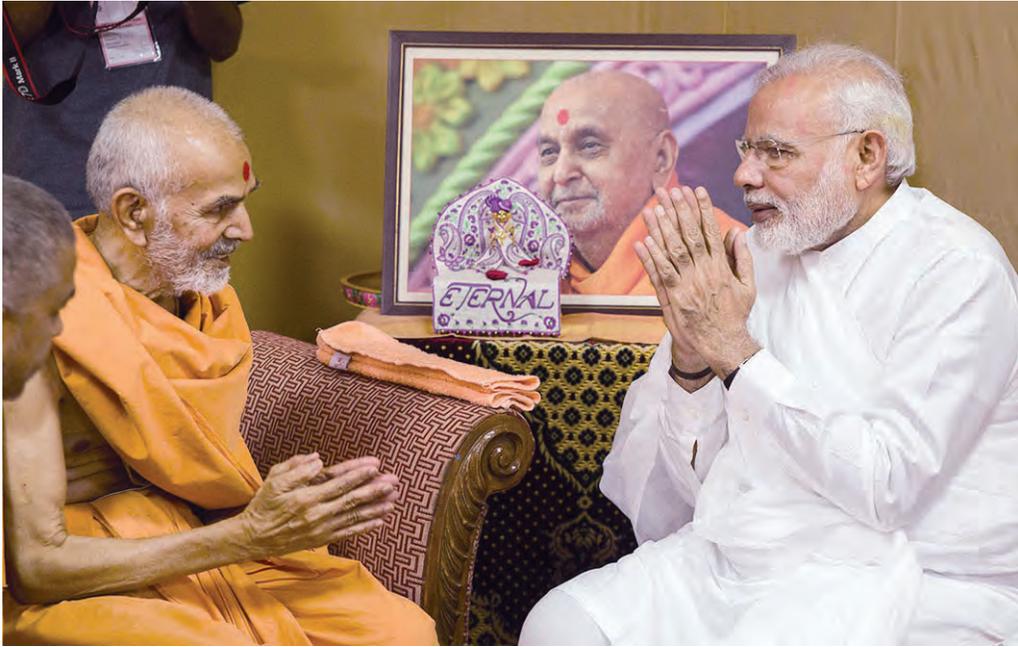
*Mahant Swami Maharaj at Swaminarayan Temple Salangpur*



*Mahant Swami Maharaj at Bochasan Temple*



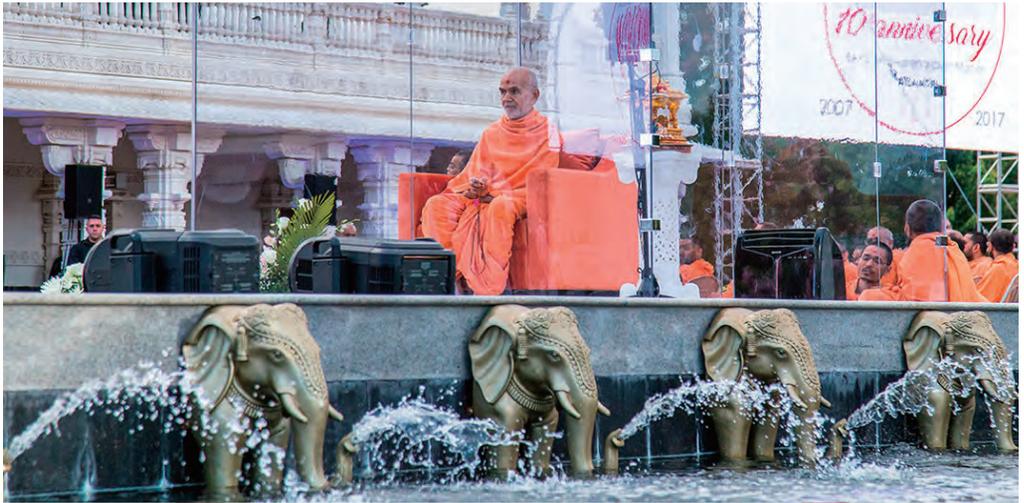
*Mahan Rushi Mahant Swami Maharaj*



*Mahant Swami Maharaj with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi*



*Mahant Swami Maharaj with former U.S. President Barack Obama*



His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj in Atlanta, GA



*Mahant Swami Maharaj during his first Gurupurnima celebration at Chicago, Los Angeles and Atlanta, USA*

# Spread of Spirituality - the Sanatan Dharma

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The spread of Sanatan Dharma - Hinduism outside Gujarat and abroad was initiated by Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj expanded it in a big way and Mahant Swami Maharaj is taking it to greater heights. The objective is to keep Hindu tradition Ekantik Dharma - the way of life - devotion to God, tolerance, family ties - and such virtues alive - not only in Gujarat, but all over India and abroad - where Indians have migrated and have become 'Non-Resident Indians'. This was initiated by 'Gurus' and followed by Vicharan; continues - all over India and world by Sadhus.

They paid special attention to meet the moral and spiritual needs of Gujaratis in particular - and others were initiated to form satsang groups within and outside country and non-residents settled abroad keeping in view their way of life and needs. Indians are settled in Africa, Europe and of course USA - Canada - many other parts of world like Fiji islands and Australia. A systematic initiative was started by Yogiji Maharaj. He visited Africa and UK and other countries outside India and within country wherever there were Gujarati settlements. This led to setting of local satsang groups to start with followed by setting of temples and attracted all Hindus - also non-Hindus who also like Hindu culture and values. Such temples also became place of tourist interest. They became not only places of worship - but centres for spiritual values and message of Ekantik Dharma on which Swaminarayan sampradaya is based. Pramukh Swami Maharaj immensely expanded this. In about more than 55 countries' temples were set up - number of which were 'Shikharbandh temples' with classic traditional architecture mixed with modern technology and needs of the climate and lifestyle of country concerned.

Here is the illustrative story of Neasden Temple at London which recently completed 50 years of existence. It depicts how entire activities can be organized by mobilizing voluntary efforts and partnership involving Sadhus - Haribhaktas, Hindus and even local non-Hindus residents. The other temples too witnessed similar participative and voluntary efforts. This model was followed across the world including Akshardham - Gandhinagar and

in greater detail in Akshardham Delhi. But most interesting part all such holy centres - is that they are self-sustaining - through variety of means - donations, contribution from salary income, voluntary assistance so on and so forth.

## **The Neasden Temple:**

### **A brief history of Satsang in England:**

This is an incredible story of human faith, dedication and divine blessings, a story of spectacular growth from a tiny seed to a huge banyan tree as it were. From a small shrine established by Yogiji Maharaj in 1970, the Satsang has grown into a major Hindu center for worship at Neasden, a London suburb. Under the inspiration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj the sapling grew into a giant tree.

The roots of the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission in London can be traced back to the early 1950's. It was the early post-World War-II years, when London was recovering from the aftermath of the devastating blitz. The small Indian community was scattered. Some of them were followers of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. They were the pioneers of the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission.

In 1950, with the blessings of Shastriji Maharaj, Mahendrabhai Patel (Barrister), Purushottambhai Patel and other devotees started meeting for Satsang in London. As Mahendrabhai writes, " I landed in London in 1950 for further studies. Purushottambhai Patel was a devotee of Shastriji Maharaj, and was residing in the county of Kent. His address was given to me by Yogiji Maharaj".

The Indian community grew in size over time. In London, D. D. Meghani, his brothers and friends had been holding Satsang Sabhas in his office since 1953. Later arrivals from India and East Africa Navinbhai Swaminarayan, Prafulbhai Patel, Chitranjanbhai and others joined. They started the weekly assembly at the house of Prahladbhai in 1958".

The Saturday evening assemblies at Prahladbhai's residence in Seymour Place, near Baker station, attracted many devotees. With the spiritual dhun and kirtan, the assembly used to be concluded after a spiritual discourse by a devotee. The annual Annakut festival used to be celebrated at his house for several years.

The first mandir at Islington was inaugurated by Yogiji Maharaj on Sunday, June 14, 1970. Prabhudas Lalji had brought from Kampala (Uganda), the murtis which were installed, amid acclaim in the new mandir after yagna.

Thousand of devotees participated in the function.

The ground-breaking ceremony for the mandir was performed on July 20, 1980 by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The mandir was declared open in 1982. It was around this time that Pramukh Swami Maharaj first proposed the idea of building a traditional shikharbaddh mandir (a traditional Hindu temple with pinnacles) where arti could be offered five times. In London, a new site at Neasden was selected.

### **The joy of voluntary efforts:**

The Guinness Book acclaims the pinnacled Neasden mandir as “One of the wonders of the 20th Century”. The ‘Readers Digest’ chose the mandir among the 70 wonders of the 20th Century, because it was the sole ‘Marvel of Voluntary Effort’. The most significant fact is the way it came to be built with love and affection by an army of volunteers. They literally sweated it out to bring it into existence in record time:-

- Volunteers gave up pleasure time to participate in the mandir project. Some cut their weekend holidays. A few gave all of their savings and wanted to give more. Children emptied their piggy banks to contribute their mite to the fund. A newly wed couple cancelled their honeymoon trip abroad. They got a refund from the hotel and paid the money for the mandir. Many children polished the marble carvings along with their elders.
- A devotee had given the money as promised. His wife had sold her jewellery. The compulsive donor was not satisfied with this. He approached Swamishri with the query whether he should pay the £ 600 he got from shop as wages. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had to agree.
- Aluminium took the place of gold to provide money for the project. Why aluminium? \$ 35 million worth of aluminium cans are thrown away every year. They are not biodegradable. They pose an ecological threat. Alcan Recycling Company is one of the largest recycling firms in Britain. It was willing to pay for used cans. This was a good opportunity to collect funds. So the cans collection drive was launched. Devotees soon heaped the old mandir yard with cans. This drive was the first of its kind on such a massive scale in that country. Young and old participated in it enthusiastically. Kunal Patel (11), Pranay Patel (13), Tarun Patel (11) and Dhruv Kalan (11) won a British Telecom Environment Award. Their school The Swaminarayan Hindu

Mission Sunday School got a certificate and £100 in prize money for collecting 1,50,000 cans in a week.

- Sukhbhai of Birmingham (74) collected cans for three hours every day. He deposited two bags every week at the mandir, by changing two buses to reach mandir.
- One of the collectors was always armed with a magnet, so that he would not get iron cans even by mistake. He was taken for a scavenger and offered alms. When Chimanbhai of Crawley (74) explained the drive, the gentleman gave a cash donation. Chimanbhai collected 1,25,000 cans single handedly.
- It was not always smooth sailing for the collectors. Once a football fan emptied beer on a collector's head. He got a 'Thank you' from the collector.
- A total of seven million cans and 21 tons of aluminium foil were collected during the course. This was the largest collection by a charity organisation in the U.K.
- The CARE -A Fund Raising Project - was the brainchild of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It was launched in 1994. The colourful brochures conveyed the messages and perennial contribution of the mandir for anti-addiction drives, eco-friendliness, family values and value-based education happened. Brochures containing these values were offered to donors for better living. The devotees went from door to door. Despite the rough weather and rejections, they explained the philosophy behind the brochure to the entire local British community. The result, a huge collection.
- Skilled and unskilled volunteers worked very hard for building the mandir. Rest became a rare commodity for them till the mandir had been completed. After working round the clock, they would snatch a couple of hours' sleep. Then, they would have a bath, perform puja and go back to the mandir for more work. This is how the mandir came into being layer upon layer, over a three-years period.

### **A few example of unique dedication of devotees**

- Holidays and week-ends brought coach loads of volunteers from different parts of the UK to Neasden. So numerous were they, that their centres had to be given fixed time on fixed days. Volunteers came from other parts of the world, too. There were people other

then Indians. The local Britishers also joined in these efforts of many nationalities with Indians.

- Chandrakantbhai Patel (18) and Chandresh Patel (18) joined as volunteers in February, 1993. They did all sorts of work. From 1994, they stayed at the mandir site itself, so that they could render more service. They drilled 25,000 holes. A contractor would have charged £ 1 per hole. Says Chandrakant “Every time I saw the mandir, I realized the reality of Swamishri’s wish and my attachment to it grew. I think it is the most beautiful place on earth, and it is all due to Swamishri”.
- Jayesh Patel (22), a computer technocrat, used to polish the carved marble pieces. Once a brick fell on his knee. An X-ray showed that nothing was broken, but there was an internal bruise. Ever since that day, whenever Swamishri sees him, he enquires about his leg.
- Anupsinh Vakhatsinh Jhala (75) started coming to the work site from May, 1993. He used to polish and clean tiles. “My daughter called me in 1991 and told me a new temple is going to be built in London. I was in Africa and had plans to go to India. But I decided to come here and help”.
- The mandir also presents an exhibition of contribution of India to the world in the spiritual field.

## Understanding Hinduism

A permanent scientific exhibition “Understanding Hinduism” depicts the glory and greatness of Sanatan Dharma. The exhibition - occupies over 2000 sq. ft. on the ground floor of the mandir. The wisdom of the ancient land is presented through visual effects, paintings, tableaux and traditional craft work. The exhibition deals with the origin of Hinduism, its beliefs, glory and its contribution to education and religion. Illustrious heroes and heroines of Indian culture like Nachiketa, Shravan, Rantidev, Sita etc. are presented in colourful 3-D miniature diorama. It reflects the core values of Hindu ethos and culture such as:

- The beginning of Hinduism and how it spread.
- Principal beliefs of the religion as a way of life.
- Dioramas of Sita, Shravan, Nachiketa and others.
- The Glory of Sanskrit, the mother of all languages.
- The Contribution of India in Education, Mathematics, Astronomy, Surgery, etc.



*Understanding Hinduism - Gallery at Neasdon Temple, London*





*Shri Swaminaraya Mandir at Neasden, London*







B.A.P.S. Shree Swaminarayan Mandir Shilananayas Mahotsav Bhuj, 6-4-2023

- Life and Philosophy of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and spiritual succession and,
- Worldwide socio-spiritual activities of BAPS.

The Guinness Book of World Records 2000 Millennium edition hailed this effort. On page 36, under the Architects and Master Builders Category of the Knowledge Section, a colour photograph of the London mandir with brief details of the mandir have been included. The article reveals that the Shri Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden, U.K. is the largest Hindu temple outside India. It was built by His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, a 79-year Indian Sadhu (holy man), and is made of 2,828 tonnes of Bulgarian limestone and 2,000 tonnes of Italian marble. This was first shipped to India to be carved by a team of 1,526 sculptors. The temple was built at last of above £ 12 million.

The London temple exemplifies an illustrative story. At home similar stories beginning with Akshardham, Gandhinagar. Kosamba - Tithal-Bulsar, Zadeshwar Bharuch and so on emerged. Each has stories of dedicated disciples working together under the spiritual guidance of Sadhus. Similar to foreign lands whether it is Nairobi- Kenya, Durban-South Africa, Oakland-New Zealand or New Jersey or Los Angeles in USA. Two more unique centres and temples were created in Chicago and Houston, USA. These are major ones, but there are large number of small centers in each of these countries and within India.

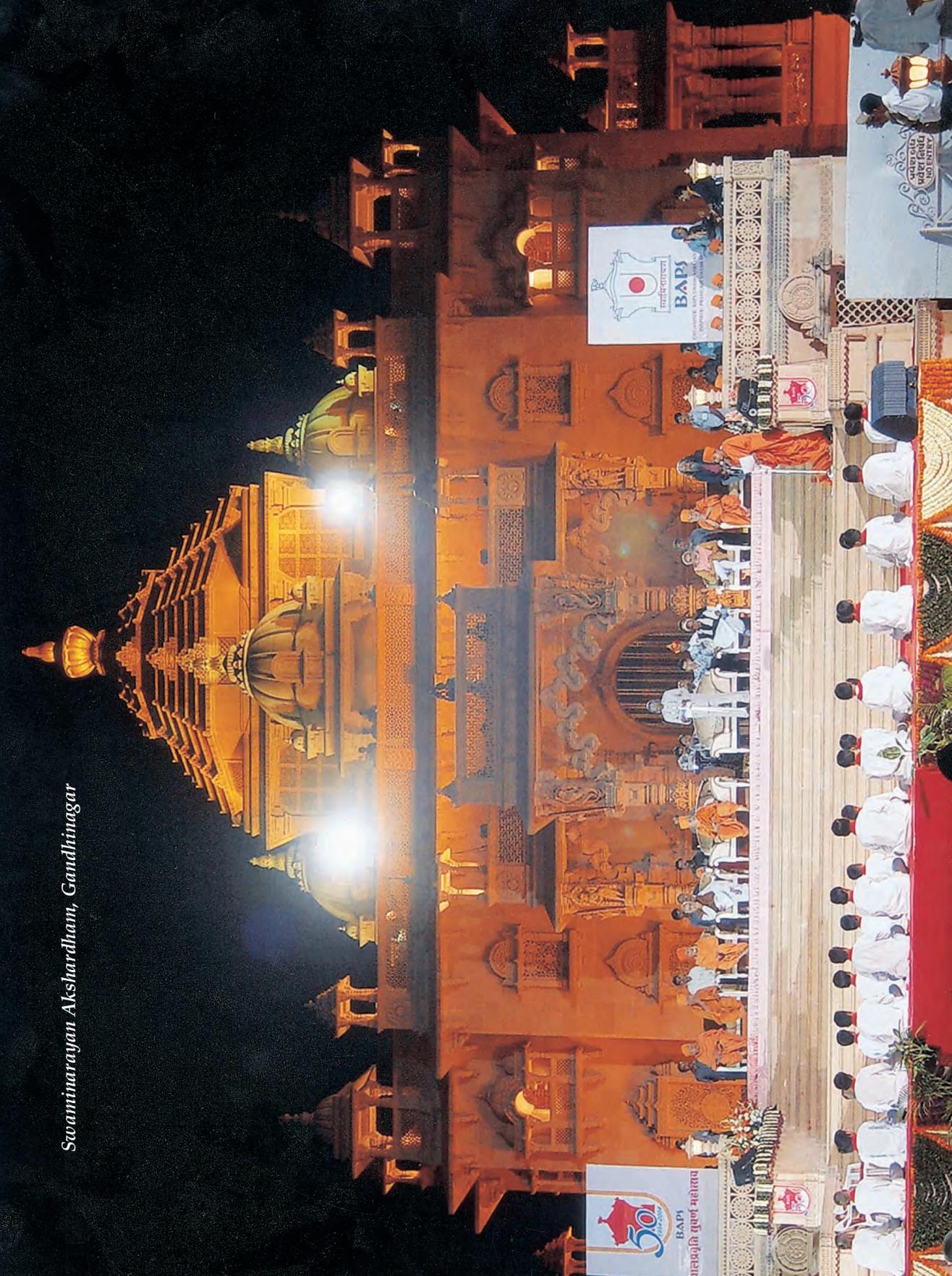
### **Akshardham - Gandhinagar**

Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated this project which is a mega complex - spread in 100000 square meters in Gandhinagar, the capital city of Gujarat and its day to day work was supervised by Mahant Swami Maharaj along with Atmaswaroop Swami.

Akshardham - Gandhinagar is a major centre of attraction for anybody who visits Gujarat. It took more than 5 years to complete its construction. Every year more than two million people visit it.

This unique cultural complex is dedicated to Bhagwan Swaminarayan who inspired peace and harmony. The monument had the help and participation of thousands of devotees in construction. They came from all over from Gujarat and other parts of our country and abroad. This kar seva by both young and old was the most noteworthy feature. My son (author's son) Vrajesh who was studying engineering joined this under the guidance of Atmaswaroop Swami who infused spiritual values of community service

*Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar*



in him and many other young persons who had joined these efforts.

The Rajasthani pink stone as primary building material was selected and the square “Shikhar” was made octagonal. The monument faces north. The vast open space with water bodies enhances beauty of the complex. Its evening light and sound show is most popular. It is about the dialogue between Nichiketa and Yamdev.

## **New Mandirs in USA and Canada**

Two new traditional BAPS Swaminarayan mandirs (temples) in 2007, one in Toronto and the other in Atlanta in North America were established.” The Toronto mandir, was inaugurated on 22nd July. Many newspaper headlines praised the architectural magnificence and the spirit as “Extraordinary Etobicoke Temple and Marvel of Architecture”. The Canadian media praised The Guardian; ‘A Jewel for Toronto’ (Toronto Sun), Canadian Hindu Temple weaves itself into Toronto Tapestry’ (Globe and Mail); ‘Built to stand 1000 years: Toronto’s massive stone Hindu temple is truly a blend of old and new’ (The Record); and ‘Serenity that’s set in stone’ (The Star). The Prime Minister Hon. Stephen Harper of Canada described it as a “Landmark of Canada”. Canada’s distinguished columnist on architecture, Christopher Hume, commented, “The new temple, completed last month, rivals even the most elaborate European cathedrals in its intricacy. It is one of the most extraordinary buildings ever seen in this country.

## **Atlanta temple**

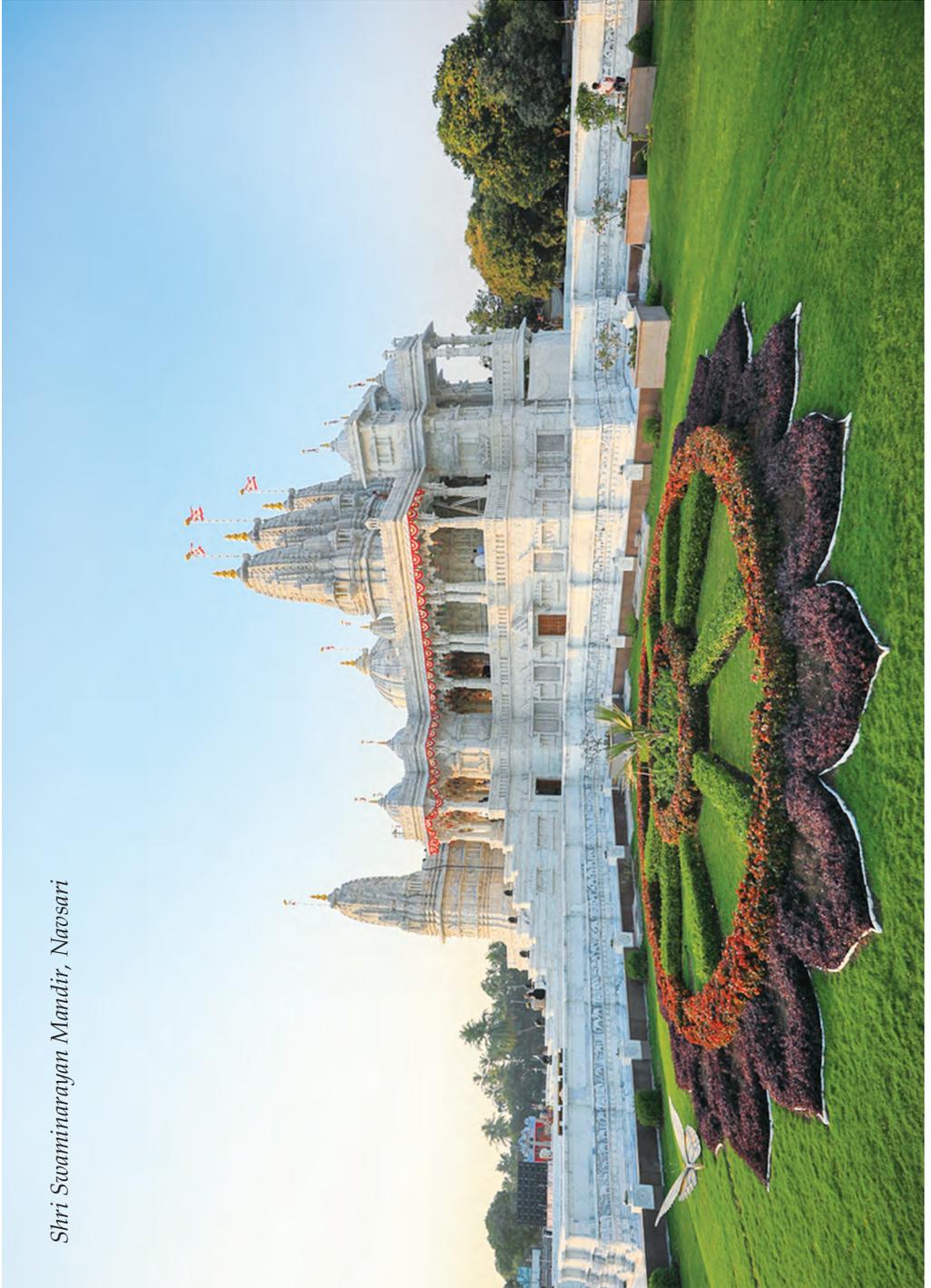
On 26th August, 2007 Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the murti pratishtha of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Atlanta, the third BAPS shikharbaddh mandir in USA and the largest in North America. On that occasion, he said, “This mandir is not just for the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, it is for all. The more one visits the mandir and participates in doing satsang, the more inner peace one will experience. Respect the Gita, Upanishads, Bhagvat, other shastras, deities and mandirs. Remain firm in your faith and never criticize the faith of others.”

Pramukh Swami Maharaj blessed all the 140 craftsmen. “You have all contributed to the work of Satsang and at the same time received spiritual knowledge. All of you served well. We pray to Bhagwan Swaminarayan that you and your families attain peace and continue to serve the organization in this way. You have all served wholeheartedly. So God will protect you”.

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 97<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary Celebration at Rajkot*



*Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Naosari*



*Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi*



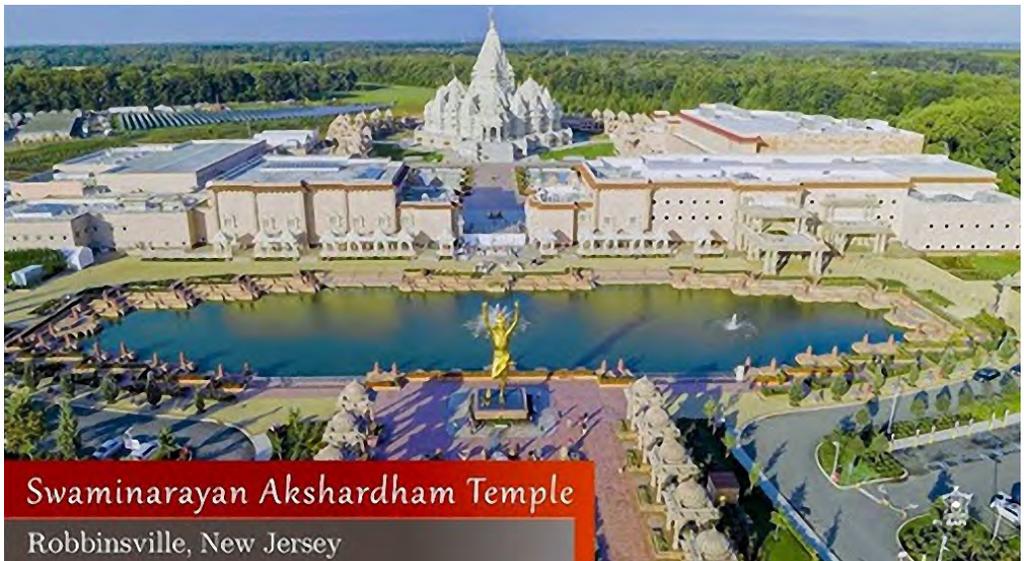
# Akshardham – Robbinsville – USA

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## Largest Hindu temple in the world:

Swaminarayan Akshardham is the world’s largest Hindu temple outside India. It was inaugurated on Sunday, October 8, 2023 in New Jersey, USA. The temple is located in Robbinsville Township, New Jersey. The temple is one of the many temples built by the Bochasanvasi Sri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS).

More than 12,500 volunteers from America and across the world worked day and night for the construction of the temple. It is 191 feet long, 345 feet wide, 191 feet high and spread over 183 acres. Apart from the main temple, there are 12 sub-temples. There are nine peaks (peak-like structures) and nine pyramidal peaks. It took about 12 years to build such a huge and magnificent temple. It has a remarkable collection of over 10,000 idols and intricate carvings depicting Indian musical instruments and dance forms. It is possibly the second largest modern-day Hindu temple after Cambodia’s



*Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple, Robbinsville - New Jersey*



*Murti Pratistha - Akshardham Temple, Robbinsville - New Jersey*



iconic Angkor Wat. The temple houses a traditional Indian water tank called Brahma Kund, which contains water from more than 300 reservoirs around the world.

### **Mahamandir has :**

- A. Tirth Mandapam
  - B. Swagat Mandapam
  - C. Parabrahma Mandapam
  - D. Aksharbrahma Mandapam
  - E. Mukta Mandapam
  - F. Aishwarya Mandapam
  - G. Paramhansa Mandapam
  - H. Mandovar of Akshardham Garbhagruha
  - I. Mahamandir Main Garbhagruha
  - J. Small Garbhagruhas
1. Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj with his parents and friends
  2. Shri Nilkanth Varni absorbed in austerity
  3. Shri Sahajanand Swami offers a unique prayer to Ramanand Swami
  4. Bhagwan Swaminarayan applies a tilak to Gunatitanand Swami
  5. Shri Parvati-Shankar Bhagwan, Ganapatiji and Kartikeyaji
  6. Shri Sita-Ram Bhagwan, Lakshman and Hanumanji
  7. Shri Radha-Krishna Bhagwan
  8. Bhagwan Tirupati Balaji-Padmavatiji
  9. Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj
  10. Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj
  11. Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj
  12. Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj

Swamis and volunteers, who served in the Akshardham project, gave up all comforts, other work and interests. This was possible because of the responsibility and trust placed upon them by Mahant Swami Maharaj. Whoever came here and saw the volunteers doing seva realized that they had paused their professional, academic and domestic lives to totally dedicate themselves in fulfilling Pramukh Swami Maharaj's dream and Mahant Swami Maharaj's agna.

Today, the designs and shapes of modern buildings have relevance for a certain number of years. Thereafter, they are pulled down to be replaced by edifices of new shapes and styles. However, traditional buildings like mandirs and others last for millennia or more. When mandirs are consecrated according to religious tradition, the guru infuses divinity in the murtis. Thereafter, they have a special charm and transformational power. So, the stones come to life through the guru and the devotion and voluntary efforts of his disciples. Akshardham, though an edifice in white stones, it has turned into 'gold' through the guru's blessings and voluntary seva and sacrifice.

Anyone can design a mega-project, but only God and guru can inspire thousands to dedicate themselves for voluntary seva over a span of 15 years.



*Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple, Robbinsville - New Jersey*



*Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple,  
Robbinsville - New Jersey*



*Mahant Swami Maharaj  
Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple,  
Robbinsville - New Jersey*

# The Harmony - New Temple in Abu Dhabi

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Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired the establishment of a temple in Abu Dhabi. Brahma Vihari Swami took care of it. He gave this suggestion to Sheikh of the Arab Emirates-UAE who liked the idea. UAE gave the land in Abu Murikha area of the capital and the work started. Thousands of workers in India and the UAE worked together for the first traditional Shikharband temple in Abu Dhabi. The entire project was coordinated by Brahmvihari Swamishre on day to day basis.

The temple attracts people of all religions towards harmony in the society. This is a unique temple that revives ancient art and architecture. The temple welcomes people of all faiths to understand the Sanatan Hindu Dharma way of life of tolerance, peace and harmony. The temple complex has a vast area. It has a large amphitheater, a gallery, a library, a food court and a community hall that can seat 5,000 people. Apart from this there are gardens, children play area, helipad etc. An important attraction is the Seven Peaks which represents the seven emirates of the UAE.

Swami Brahmvihari says the temple symbolizes the values of inclusion and tolerance of all religions and cultures. Each peak has stories of gods. The front wall and stairs of the temple has cultural and moral stories from different countries of the world. The flora and fauna carved on it represents the gifts of God Nature. It showcases the harmonious coexistence between plants and animals from India, UAE and other countries of the world.

During his visit, Mahant Swami Maharaj 'worshipped' the construction and blessed the engineers who supervised the construction. Swamishri established the 'Nidhi Kumbh' and laid the main foundation stone. Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed everyone and said that this hall is full of peace, love and harmony. A great expression dedicated to tolerance and harmony that all people will benefit from. It will truly be heaven.

The temple was inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on February 14, 2024.

The temple is a Spiritual Oasis for Global Harmony. It is pathway of



*Akshardham Temple - Abu Dhabi*



“Sanatan Dharma”. The Universal Vedic Principle representing of Akshar-Purushottam – and the Divinities of Sanatan Dharma are built friendship of the UAE and India. This Mandir was made possible by the vision and prayers of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who said in 1997: “May a mandir in Abu Dhabi bring countries, cultures, communities and religions closer together.”

To fulfil this vision of harmony, thousands of devotees, volunteers and well-wishers of diverse faiths, nationalities and backgrounds came together, inspired by Mahant Swami Maharaj.

It is a landmark. It represents love, peace and harmony. It is a gift from the present to the future for millennia to come and welcomes all to experience its profound spirituality.

Mirages and oases are distinctive features of deserts. In the vast deserts of Abu Dhabi, the temple is a mirage transformed into an oasis that provides spiritual sustenance and fulfilment to one and all who visit it. They individually and collectively get inspired.

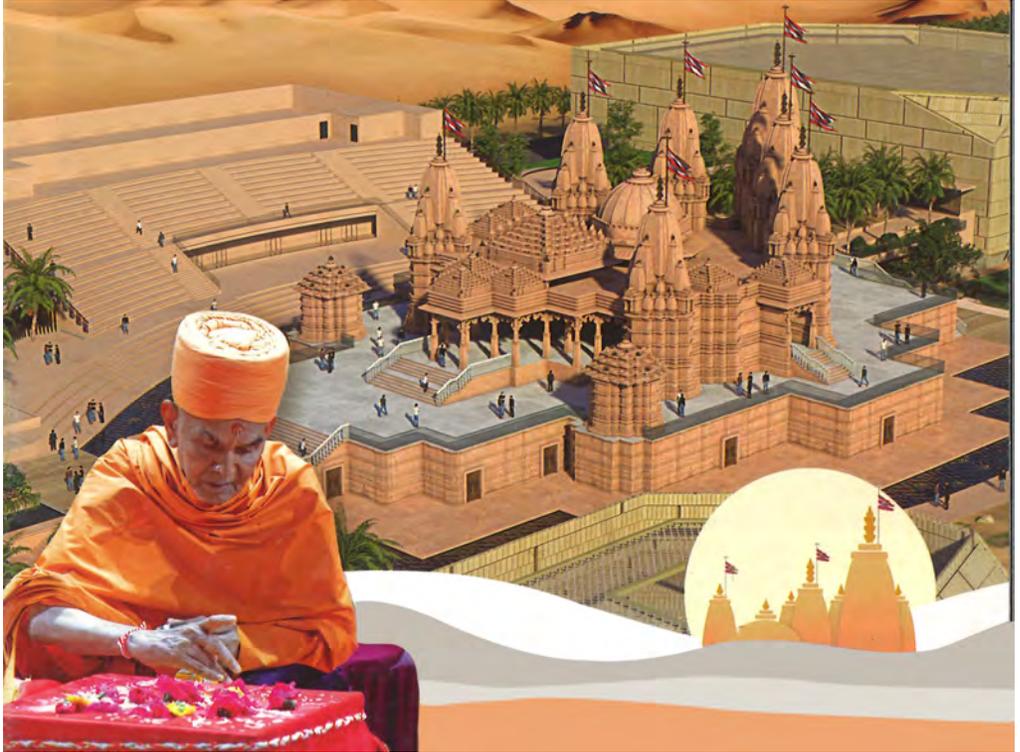
The temple is built on land gifted by the Ruler of Abu Dhabi, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The mandir is a global symbol of spiritual harmony of love and peace. It is a combination of traditional Hindu temple architecture and modern monolithic buildings, the mandir campus is aesthetically designed with breathtaking sights. Beyond the visual, the insightful and inspiring symbolism and sentiments have a meaningful impact on visitors.

## **The Mandir was Dedicated on 14th February 2024**

After the morning Vedic murti-pratishtha ceremony by Mahant Swami Maharaj, the evening Public Dedication Ceremony was held in the presence of the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, and the Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence for the UAE, Sheikh Nahayan Mabararak Al Nahyan, as well as a large number of dignitaries. Millions watched this live on TV broadcast and online webcast.

Prime Minister Shri Modi was received by Anandswarupdas Swami and greeted by representatives of the Indian communities cultural performances by youth follower. The Wall of Harmony is one of its unique features.

Brahmaviharidas Swami, took around Prime Minister Modi who spent considerable time to study inspiring features of the mandir. He also met senior swamis, BAPS trustees from around the world, artisans, children,



*Mahant Swami Maharaj at BAPS Temple, Abu Dhabi*



*H.E. Sheikh Nayan Al Nahyan receiver Swamiji at DWC Airport Dubai*



*H.E. Sheikh Nahyan Al Nahyan with Shri Mahant Swamiji and  
Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Abu Dhabi*

and men and women volunteers who supported the construction of the mandir. In addition, Prime Minister Modi helped to carve 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' into a block of stone.

Swamishri and the prime minister performed the arti. At the same time, artis were performed at all BAPS mandirs throughout the world and at the homes of thousands of devotees.

In the assembly, Prime Minister Modi and Sheikh Nahayan sat on the stage to either side of Swamishri.

Welcome speech was given by Ishwarcharandas Swami. Brahmaviharidas Swami spoke and explained how this temple came up and appreciated the generosity of the UAE leadership and the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahyan spoke - "We are proud to welcome a great friend Shri Narendra Modi. India - a great and friendly country."

He further said, "Today marks the beginning of something special under guidance of Mahant Swami Maharaj. The new mandir will serve as both a place of worship and as a community centre for all and Mahant Swami Maharaj as a powerful advocate for human harmony" and "a renowned global leader whose teachings are a source of spirituality, inspiration, and joy," Sheikh Nahayan added, "Your visit, Your Holiness, is an opportunity for us to marvel at your example in working cooperatively to resolve conflicts between different communities and to build a spirit of tolerance as a gateway to understanding, mutual respect, and peace."

Then, in his keynote address, Prime Minister Modi said, "Today, the UAE has written a golden chapter in the history of humanity through this mandir.

"The BAPS Hindu Mandir is for all of humanity. So, I have full faith that the mandir will usher in a new age of faith and hope, bringing the whole world together in harmony and collaboration.

"The magnificent mandir that we see today in Abu Dhabi is because it was first envisioned years ago [in 1997] by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Today, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's heart will be glowing with joy at its fruition.

"On behalf of all Indians, I thank Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed and the UAE government, because it is their generosity that has made possible a mandir so beautiful and magnificent."



*Akshardham Temple - Abu Dhabi - Foundation Ceremony*



*Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj, Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Brahm Swarup Swami Maharaj Akshardham Temple - Abu Dhabi-2022*

In his blessings, Mahant Swami Maharaj highlighted the importance of the new mandir, calling it “an abode of love, peace and harmony”. He then explained, “Harmony can be achieved when we do not expect harmony from others, but instead when we ourselves live in a way that promotes harmony. For that, we must ask ourselves, ‘What can I do, what can I say, and what can I think to nourish harmony.

BAPS has set up very big and small centers in India and abroad across the world. Mahant Swamishri continues to visit all small and big centers regularly. All these prayer centers spread peace, dialogue and love. This is Swami shri’s message. Here there is no talk of religious fanaticism, hatred or greedy conversion by giving material facilities. In each center, men, women and children all study spiritual lessons. Together, peace-loving groups live a simple life of the Hindu path.

Centuries ago, Hinduism spread beyond the borders of the country. It had a powerful impact on foreign lands. Hindu temples are found in many countries of South-East Asia like Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia etc. In recent times, as a result of the systematic efforts of BAPS, under the leadership of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj, temples and centers have opened in countries around the world. The devotees are mainly Indians who have migrated from other countries. But the local population has also been influenced and they visit. They have become center of attraction.

Another important thing is that as a result of this, the invasion of the culture of Western materialism on our families and the new generation has been able to be mitigated. The ancient spiritual values Sanatan Dharma have been re-established. All these temples, have come up with the contribution of the local population. They have all cooperated whole heartedly and all these places are self-sufficient.

The Abu Dhabi Temple of Harmony is latest landmark – taking forward Sadbhavna of Sanatan Hindu Dharma across the world. Even in the countries – where it was considered that Hindu Temple can not be established – but how that is matter of past. The Harmony Mandir – Abu Dhabi has become a centre for all regions and faith.

### **Swaminarayan Nagar - Rajkot**

Mahant Swami inspired celebration of 97th birthday of Pramukh Swami Maharaj which was held on 4th December 2018 at Rajkot. This was done on a grand scale.

- The exhibition and programme area was – 500 acres – 200 hectares of land with huge welcome gate – with five artistic temples. 6 exhibition areas and a light and sound show which can accommodate 35000 people. There were more than 22000 volunteers who served millions who visited this. More over 8800 students visited. A Maha Yagna was organized – with community participation.
- On this occasion 35 young persons were inducted as Sadhus and Mahant Swami gave them Bhagrati Diksha. Most of them were highly qualified young persons from India and abroad.

### **New Mandir at Navsari**

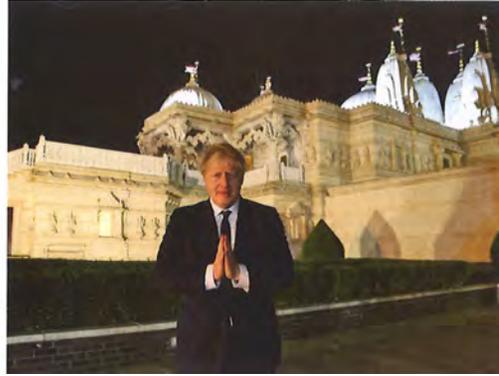
Navsari is one of oldest 'Shikharbaddha' mandir. In January 2020 the new Navsari mandir was inaugurated. It is in 11 acres. Its main features are –

- It is built with Rajasthan marbles
- 3 main and 2 secondary 'Shikhar' (pinnacles)
- 2 main 'ghummats' (domes)
- 17 secondary domes
- 19 golden kalash (water pots)
- Height – 82 ft. Length – 205 ft. Width – 188 ft. Podium size – 40 x 40 ft.
- 222 intricately carved pillars and 150 arches.
- 153 statues of divinities and inspiring devotees.
- 70,000 cubic ft of stones used

Mahant Swami carried out Murti Pratishta on 30, January 2020 in the presence of more than 20,000 devotees.



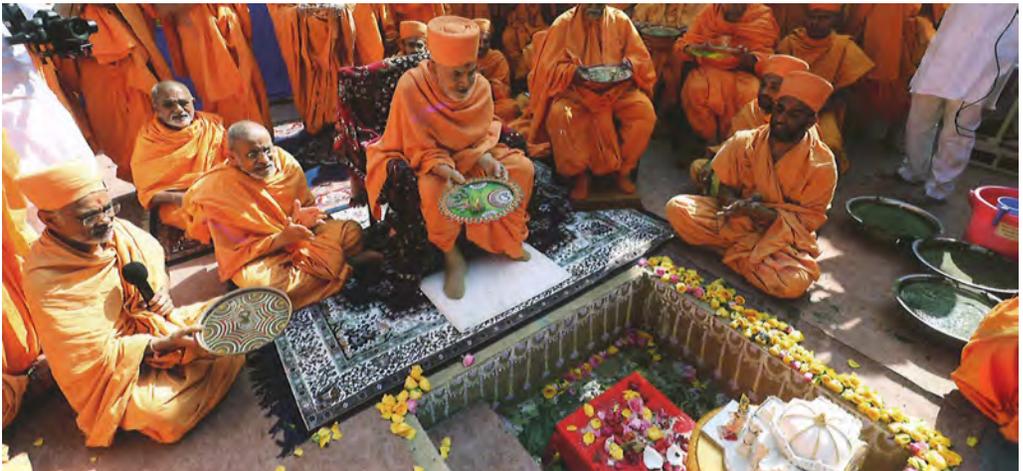
*Mahant Swami Maharaj at Kampala, Uganda with President Yoveri Kaguta Museveni*



*British Prime Minister Boris Johnson at Swaminarayan Temple, Neasden*



*Online ceremony of placing first pillar of the Shikharbaddha BAPS temple at Nasik*



*Murty Pratishtha Vidhi and Shilanyes puja for Pramukh Swami Smruti Mandir, Salangpur*



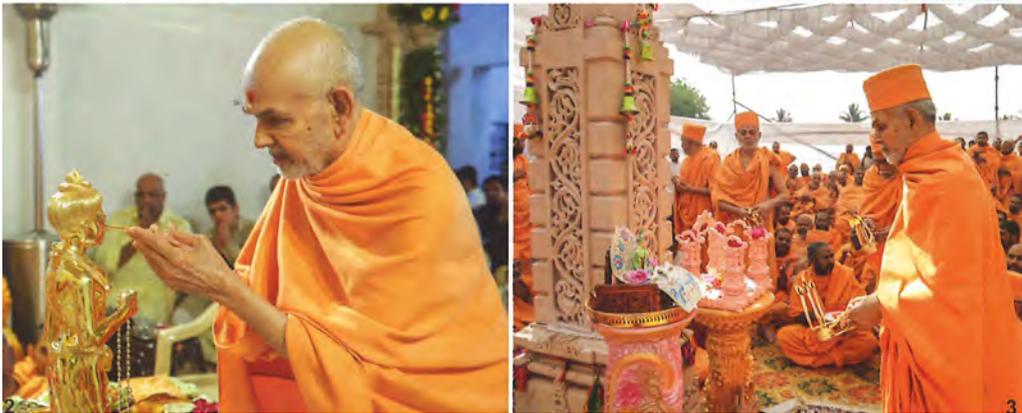
**JANMASHTAMI CELEBRATION IN THE PRESENCE OF  
MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ**

**24 August 2019, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania**

1. In Swamishri's presence, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami (right) addressed the assembly.
2. Swamishri performs *arti* in the BAPS Mandir, Dar-es-Salaam.
3. Swamishri rocks Thakorji on a swing during the Janmashtami assembly.
4. Devotees during the celebration assembly.



*Yogiji Maharaj Birthday anniversary June 2021*



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

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



ભગવાન સ્વામિનારાયણના  
પ્રાકટ્યોત્સવ પર્વે  
ઑસ્ટ્રેલિયા ખાતેથી  
હરિભક્તોને બહાભર્યો પત્ર  
લખીને પરમ પૂજ્ય મહંત  
સ્વામી મહારાજે પાઠવેલાં  
આશીર્વાચનો...



HH MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ  
(Swami Keshavjivandas)

સ્વામી-શ્રીમય  
૫.૪. પ્રમુખ સ્વામી Sydney  
(Australia)  
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મંગલવાર

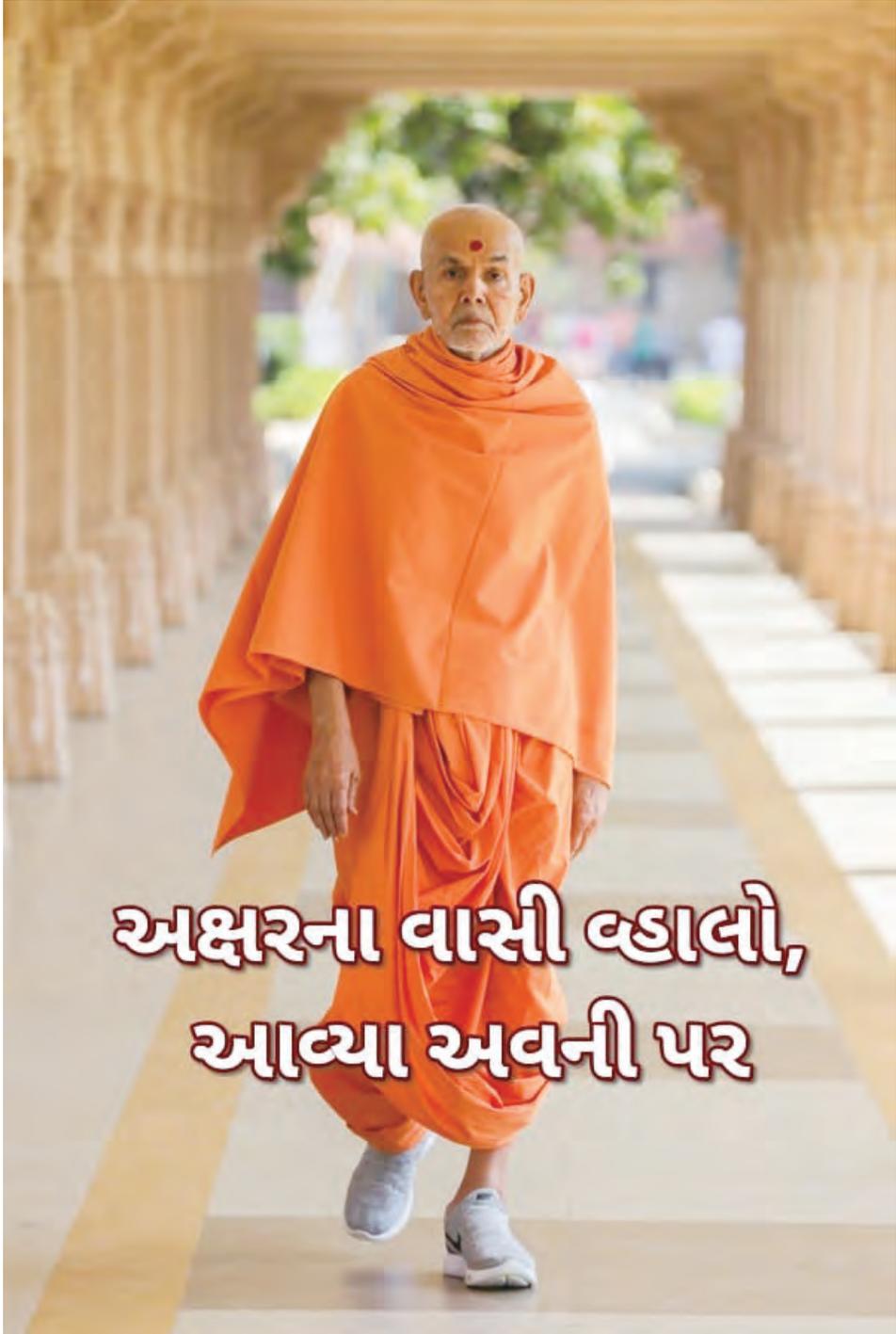
શહેર-જાંતીની ભેટ

આપણી BAPS. સંસ્થામાં બધું  
જોરેથી કંડો વાગી રહ્યો છે. તેમાં પણ  
૪. ભક્તો સ્વામી ના જોરેથી સર્વોપરી  
કંડો વાગી રહ્યો છે. શાસ્ત્રીય મુદ્દાઓ  
કેવળ કે સાચા દેવને ધર વાગે  
તે પ્રત્યક્ષ અનુભવથી છે. ઉદાહરણ  
વાત નથી. આમ તો ખરૂં જોતાં, બધું  
જોરેથી અક્ષર-પુસ્તકોની વાત છે.  
બધા જોરેથી અક્ષર-પુસ્તકોના ના જ છે.  
આપણી વાત સાચી છે, સંસ્થા સાચી  
છે, સારલંગ સાચા મળ્યા છે. તે મુદ્દાઓ  
સ્વામી પણ ૨૦૦ વખત સાચા  
છે. અને હાલજનને!

ધામ, ધામી અને મુકામો  
સાચા છે. આ લોકોમાં એકાંતિક ભક્તો  
સાચા છે. બીજા બધા સાચા થઈ રહ્યા છે  
અને અરોજ કરીને આવા ભવે,  
દિવ્ય સારલંગ મળ્યા છે, સર્વોપરી  
અને સારલંગની વાત છે.

જેને જેને સારલંગ મળ્યા છે  
તેના ભાગ્યનો ખરૂં આમ એમ  
નથી.

જોઈ સારલંગ અતિ દુર  
કરીને રાખવો. મુદ્દાઓ કહ્યું  
છે - જોઈ સારલંગ સાચાવવાનું  
જાતન કરવું. સમગ્ર કેશવજીવનમાં  
ના જરૂરની સ્વામિનારાયણ



# Mahant Swami Maharaj 'Vato'

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## Vibrations

An aspirant asked Mahant Swami Maharaj, "What is the biggest obstacle in the spiritual path?"

"Having a mundane perspective ('laukikbhav') [towards God and the Satpurush]."

"What is it that hinders one in having a divine perspective ('divyabhav')?"

"One's base instincts ('swabhavs')."

"What should one do so that one's swabhavs do not cause obstructions?"

"Have faith (nischay), glory ('mahima') and divine feelings ('divyabhav') for God and his devotees."

Mahant Swami Maharaj lucidly revealed about overcoming laukikbhav - the biggest obstacle in the spiritual path.

## Rajipo Upon a United Family

Divyatany Swami recalled an incident of Mahant Swami Maharaj's inclination and rajipo on a family living unitedly and harmoniously together. He said, "In 2012, Mahant Swami Maharaj visited the satsang mandal in Indore. Here, a devotee named Dilipbhai Rathod lived together with his extended family of 35 members. Since his former house was small, Dilipbhai had bought a bigger home with three floors. So, arrangements were made for Mahant Swamiji's visit there.

"At that time it was decided by the Sanstha that (due to) Mahant Swamiji's [advancing age he] would only visit and sanctify the ground floor of any house. However, if the house had a lift he could visit the other floors.

"In Dilipbhai's case, his house did not have a lift. But he was happy with Mahant Swamiji's visit to the ground floor. However, when Mahant Swamiji heard about the family's unity and harmony, he said, 'Let us go

upstairs'. The sadhus said there was no lift. Swamishri replied that it didn't matter. Again the sadhus informed him that Dilipbhai had not insisted that he sanctify the upper floors. Yet, Swamishri climbed all the three floors, visiting all the rooms and the terrace on top. When he was called 'Why he had taken so much strain?' Swamiji replied, 'Look at their unity. How united they all stay!'

Everyone realized the importance of family unity, which earns the inner blessings and Rajipo of the Satpurush.

## A Candid Dialogue

An extract from an inspiring dialogue between a spiritual aspirant and Swamishri is as follows:

**Swamishri:** Just as there are royal families in some countries, ours is a divine family. One may witness others' swabhavs, which should be ignored. Everyone is divine. One should not react but tolerate. By retorting to others how can one mould oneself!

**Aspirant:** How can I become attached to you?

**Swamishri:** Through interaction and spiritual association.

**Aspirant:** How can I do that, it may not possible to be with you all the time?

**Swamishri:** Through one's mind (mental association).

**Aspirant:** Does this mean that through mental association you hear us and are always with us?

**Swamishri:** Yes.

**Aspirant:** How do you reply when we mentally ask you?

**Swamishri:** Once you start doing it you'll get answers from within.

**Aspirant:** Who are you?

**Swamishri:** Satpurush. Our clear understanding is that we have the association of Maharaj, Swami and the Satpurush.

## Oneness with Swami Bapa

Hitesh Patel and Dipen Patel informed Swamishri, "Today is the 13th, and ten months passed to this very day and time Pramukh Swami Maharaj

departed for Akshardham. Thereafter, we had prayed to you, 'May we bond with you.' And we have bonded with you in such a way that when we meditate on Swami Bapa you naturally appear shortly thereafter in our mind. We experience the same joy now as we did with Swami Bapa. We feel that Bapa has not gone."

Swamishri pointed his finger to his chest and revealed, "Ena ej chhe [He and I are the same]."

### **Atmic Power**

Swamishri had a medical check-up by a specialist doctor. The doctor prescribed a medicine and added, "By taking this medicine you'll be happy".

Swamishri responded, "I am always happy." Then he added, "I only expressed my problem because I was asked to do so. Otherwise it would have stayed on anyway. In fact, I've had the pain from Kolkata [for the past two months]."

Atmaswarup Swami asked the doctor, "If he does not take your prescribed medicine, then what will happen?"

The doctor replied, "Then there is the possibility of him experiencing severe pain."

Swamishri revealed, "My life is going on due to [my] atma's strength."

The doctor praised Swamishri's inner strength, "You are very strong from within. Otherwise anyone else with your kind of ailment would have found it very difficult to tolerate. I've seen people crying due to this illness."

When the renowned doctor was asked about his fee, he replied, "I don't want any fees for my service. All I need is Swamiji's blessings."

The dialogue with the doctor revealed Swamishri's tolerance, atmic strength and the fact that he is always happy.

### **Striking Humility and Glory**

In the morning, Swamishri performed the consecration rituals of Ghanshyam Maharaj's murti abhishek and the worship rituals of the base stone of the first under-construction pillar in the Paramhansa Mandapam at Akshardham, Robbinsville. Thereafter, Swamishri arrived at the satsang assembly to celebrate the occasion. Four pillars made of fiberglass, each having a murti

of a Paramhansa, were arranged as a backdrop on the main stage along with seats of Thakorji's and Swamishri. When Swamishri came to one of the pillars the Paramahansa positioned on it moved a little. On looking up, the Paramhansa smiled. Swamishri was amazed and expressed his joy to see a child dressed as Paramhansa Nishkulanand Swami. The Paramhansa was holding a flower garland. When he stretched his hand to honour Swamishri with the garland Swamishri beckoned for Thakorji to be brought to him so that the garland could be offered to him first. However, someone informed him that it had already been offered to Thakorji. Therefore, Swamishri took a few steps forward and the child - Nishkulanand Swami garlanded him. Then, Swamishri stretched his hands to touch the Paramhansa's feet. While the child kept gesturing 'no' with his facial expressions Swamishri reverently touched his feet. Thereafter, Swamishri went to the second pillar in which Muktanand Swami, another child dressed as a Paramhansa, was positioned. Swamishri also reverently touched his feet.

The whole assembly was overwhelmed by this divine sight. Swamishri's deep appreciation for the children dressed as Shriji Maharaj's Paramhansas was soul-stirring.

At the conclusion of the assembly, Swamishri garlanded both the child-Paramhansas and touched their feet again.

Swamishri, a guru, knew fully well that the Paramhansas were children dressed for the occasion, he humbly touched their feet because of the glory and esteem he has for the senior Paramhansas of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. All the devotees were inspired by Swamishri's humility and the affection he has for God's disciples.

### **Following the Guru's Way**

As part of the 150th Anniversary Celebration of the Akshar Deri in Gondal, a grand mahapuja ritual was held at the festival ground. In the concluding part of the mahapuja, Swamishri stood up to perform the arti. Swamishri's routine of standing up to offer the arti has been observed on many occasions. In spite of Swamishri being requested on all the occasions to remain seated and perform the arti, he has always stood up.

Brahmavatsal Swami asked Swamishri, "Swami, why is it that you stand up to perform the arti? Is it out of respect for Thakorji?"

Swamishri replied in the affirmative nod and added, “Swami Bapa [Pramukh Swami Maharaj] always stood up to perform arti. That’s why I stand up to perform the arti.”

Swamishri follows the devotional tradition practised by his Guru.

### **A Disabled Devotee**

Swamishri was returning by car from his daily puja venue to the BAPS Mandir in Godhra. Many devotees were waiting on the footpath for darshan. While Swamishri was blessing them by looking at them, he saw a disabled devotee with flowers in his hands. Swamishri wished to meet the devotee, but by then the car had reached the mandir gate. Swamishri told the driver to stop, and he gestured to call the disabled devotee. It took (a little) time to find the devotee. So, the attendant sadhus, who were not aware that the devotee was disabled, suggested to Swamishri that they move ahead and wait inside the mandir compound. But Swamishri insisted upon having the car reversed towards the disabled devotee. But that time, the devotee arrived. Swamishri lovingly accepted his flowers and thus fulfilled his devotion. The devotee was overwhelmed with joy because he had not anticipated Swamishri’s close darshan and blessings.

### **Sanctifying a Poor Devotee’s Home**

In the evening, Swamishri travelled to the village of Kothiya, about 12 km from the BAPS Mandir in Bodeli, Gujarat. Here, he visited and sanctified the hut of a poor farmer and devotee, Shri Ramjibhai Rathwa. The hut wall was made of bamboo strips, the roof of aluminium sheets and the floor of dried rice plant stalks. Ramjibhai informed, “We spread such stalks for a guest.” A small cot with a cushion of dried stalks was prepared for Swamishri’s seat. After placing Shri Harikrishna Maharaj on it Swamishri sat down. Then Swamishri applied tilak on the foreheads of Ramjibhai’s nine family members. The members then honoured Swamishri with flower garlands. Thereafter, Harikrishna Maharaj was placed in the ghar mandir and Swamishri performed arti. Prasad of peanuts and sugar crystals were offered to Thakorji, and Swamishri ate a little. Thereafter, Swamishri asked the family members to introduce themselves and he blessed them individually. Then, Swamishri operated the manual grain crusher (ghanti) with his hands and sanctified it. Swamishri bent low because of the low ceiling and sanctified every part of the hut by showering flowers petals.

After coming out of the hut, Swamishri inspired and liberated two aspirants from addictions. Swamishri also sanctified the shed where the milch buffaloes were kept and showered flower petals on an ox tied nearby to a tree. Thereafter, Swamishri sat on an ordinary cot arranged on Ramjibhai's open field and addressed a small gathering of devotees and blessed them by showering flowers on them.

By the time to leave, Swamishri wished to sanctify Ramjibhai's farm. He walked with the support of two attendant Swamis and showered flower petals there. Soon, thereafter, when Swamishri approached his car to leave, someone informed him that Ramjibhai was building a pacca house opposite his hut. Subsequently, Swamishri sent and showered flower petals there. Then only Swamishri departed to return to Bodeli mandir.

The all-knowing Swamishri thus fulfilled the wish of Gulabsinh, the nephew of Ramjibhai, who had desired that Swamishri come to his homes.

At 85 years, Swamishri fulfilled the wish of the poor devotees of Kothiya and took great pains to bless them and sanctify their ordinary huts and farms.

### **Bhagwan Is the All-doer**

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

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

Apurvamuni Swami asked another question, "When such large festivals are organized everyone starts praising you for their success. However, when something goes wrong people start blaming you. During such festivals do you ever think that something might go wrong or bad?"

Again, Swamishri stressed, "No. I have left everything upon Bhagwan as the all-doer."

Apurvamuni Swami added, "Don't you get stressed during such a large undertaking and responsibility."

Swamishri replied calmly, "Nothing of the sort."

## God's Name and Prayers

Swamishri landed in Dar-es-Salaam after an eight-hour flight from India. While he was retiring for the night the attendant swamis requested, "Take a grand sleep after a long, tiring journey."

Swami revealed, "I don't take a grand sleep. I didn't sleep in the plane this afternoon."

A surprised swami enquired, "Then what were you thinking of?" Swamishri replied, "[I was chanting] Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan, Maharaj Swami and praying for solutions for some devotees' problem."

## A Servant

Shri Krushnabhai Pandya, a devotee of Gondal, declared his own achievements in order to elicit an answer from Swamishri about his accomplishments. He said, "I am Shri Krushna Pandya. I was awarded the best national teacher's award. I was the principal of our school in Gondal. For years I had served as a regional head (Sanyojak) of satsang activities. These are my achievements; I would like you to let us know your accomplishments and who you are."

Without a moment's hesitation Swamishri replied, "A sevak."

Shri Krushna Pandya pressed him to elaborate further, but Swamishri gave the same reply, "I am a sevak." Then Swamishri bowed down to him in recognition of his achievements and services.

## Home : A Divine Palace

'Home' - range of its warmth are expressed in all the languages. Each one of us desire to get back to 'Home' from wherever we are - whether travelling or attending daily chores outside.

But in the new millennium the family relations are getting more and more complex - due to variety of activities each one is doing and due to technological revolution of digital world, the joint family culture - parents staying with sons and grand-children is slowly disappearing. Even with single family - there are differences between the members - husband and wife, grown up children and parents. Although 'Home' is a place where person must get peace and happiness - at many a place - this is missing. People live under the same roof but spend more time on mobile phone - TV or laptop - though sitting next to one another.

Mahant Swami Maharaj lays emphasis on restoring its (Home's) serenity. He mentions that Home is also a house of an individual with the same four walls.

He says that it is not enough to pray to God or participate and listen to Santas in Dharmasabha - each one of us has to live a divine life - which consists of four principles - which are four walls that make home a Divine Palace.

- The first wall is to have a goal in life - say I want to become 'Brahmroop' - I would like to be part of God. This principle once adopted will change the way we behave with others - family members and even outsiders and change our attitude and reaction to what they say or behave.
- The second wall is our 'Feelings' - towards others. Mahant Swami says we need to have "Divine Feeling". We must treat others as 'Divine' as if they are representing God. If we take that attitude and understand - we will take care of them without any constraint in our approach. He gives the illustration of the 'Neem tree' of Ghatada and 'Khijada tree' (*Prosopis spicigera*) in Salangpur. We treat them as divine and conduct prayers - because of their being in the place where Shri Maharaj used to be. Similarly we need to feel that our parents, wife - children, relatives, friends and servants - all are divine - that will give us peace, delight and respect in talking to them with one another. Further this has to be understood by all the members.
- The third wall - Mahant Swami explains is 'Nishtha' - 'sincerity'. We must speak what we mean - and not just for the sake of speaking or looking friendly. We must remain sincere to each other in our relations - we should not run down or criticize or malign - one against other but live in harmony and understanding and talk out our views and appreciation, acknowledge each others' strength and weakness - and simultaneously respect each other - even if there is difference of opinion or approach. This will make us feel, though staying in a 'Hut' - it as a 'Palace'. This gives us divine delight and satisfaction.
- The fourth wall - Mahant Swami Maharaj explains as following of the rules - 'Niyams' of life - laid down in Shikshapatri. When we sincerely follow that way of life, conflicts get mitigated and harmony enhances and our living becomes delightful.

The Mahant Swami Maharaj says - have these as four walls of 'Home' and live with peace - happiness - harmony and joy.

### **Akshar Purusottam Darshan**

Mahant Swami has introduced Mantra - AKSHAR AHAM PURUSOTTAM DASOSMI. The Mantra promotes 'peace' in day-to-day life. The mantra is devoted to Guru and God and our merging into them. Mahant Swami says, we may follow our Guru and understand things as he understands and conduct ourselves as he is doing. Most importantly - like him we must devote to Purushottam - the God. This is called oneness with Askshar Brahma.

For ordinary person - or even one who is rich or well placed in life - life poses problems - related to health, income, family relations, achieving goals, obstacles, natural or created by jealous persons - so on and so forth. Each one wants to come out from it - and is making efforts to overcome this. But this takes time - may be a day - a month or even a year or years. In the meanwhile such persons get / tend to remain disturbed and so at time loses his calm - and peace and cheerfulness of life. This makes life difficult. The mantra is the way out.

Mahant Swami Maharaj explains the Mantra - AKSHAR AHAM PURUSOTTAM DASOSMI - "I am who is AKSHAR, is Das - Servant of Purushottam." The Mantra is made of two parts - one 'Akshar Aham' and second 'Purushottamdasosmi'. "Here AKSHAR - means 'GURU' - I am AKSHAR means - I am one with my Guru - I follow him - in every manner."

"Secondly Purushottam dasosmi means, I am a servant of Almighty God. This depicts our relation with God - as His devotee and work as His servant in life - in day to day living".

If this is understood - the way of life infused in the Mantra is understood and followed, life becomes simple - irrespective of problems and the obstructions gets withered away.

Further understanding that I am AKSHAR and DAS of Purushottam helps to clean up the mind - like with a broom, we clean a room. Our mind is stored with collective memory of good and bad events, good and bad thoughts, fulfilled or desires not met with. Things which we wanted to say even to our family but do not open up being a social being. All negative

thoughts are garbage - rubbished in minds which constantly hurt us or make us angry within ourselves. This needs to be cleaned up and calmed by meditation on the mantra. That will give us peace of mind and joy in living.

Mahant Swami Maharaj gives two illustrations.

Suppose we are walking and somebody hits us and then further abuses us (gives galia), we would be naturally angry and at least reply to him or retaliate. In such a situation of 'Anger' or provocation - if we think I am 'Akshar' - what my Guru (Akshar) would have done? When we remember this for a moment, anger will subside and a major confrontation with any body is avoided.

Another illustration he gives is of a student who wants to get good grade and work hard but is not able to concentrate in his studies. In that situation if he remembers Purushottam - God - and look at his capacity and draws from Him - the God - His power, concentration will be bestowed on him automatically. Mere remembering of God and feeling that you are part of Him - will bring the desired strength to concentrate and achieve all that he want.

Practicing this in day to day life will enrich life and resolve difficult situations we are passing through. This is attained through Atmachintan - meditation on one's self, one's action - on Guru and Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

## **The Future Generation**

### **New Dimension**

Youth, the future generation is key to development of society or nation - says Mahant Swami. We do not know the what challenges will come in future - but we can prepare our future generation to meet those challenges. This is the true spirit behind BAPS youth centers - across the world where - from children to graduates imbibe spiritual values and spirit of voluntary help to others and build themselves as proficient young persons.

### **Who can achieve Success?**

Mahant Swami Maharaj says that we are at cross-roads - we have technology revolution -scientific discoveries and we are benefiting - but our youth - at many places is disillusioned. We have youth is busy on 'Cell Phones' by chatting throughout day, neglecting education, eating fatty - junk foods and some even having drink / drug addiction or chewing tobacco and smoking habit. Many feel that our youth are distracted and wonder what

will happen in the future? But we need to build our youth. Find time for them. Talk to them and motivate them and trust them - have confidence that they will make a new bright world.

He further says we need to build strong character with a spiritual base. We need to build the spirit of serving others - irrespective of caste or creed. We need them to be united for common purpose and for nation building - but most importantly have strong ties within family, obedience, respecting parents, serving / helping grandparents and have understanding of unity and harmony among all family members - even where there is difference of opinion or life style.

The youth activities - imbibing spiritual values in youth were initiated by Yogiji Maharaj and expanded by Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj also is constantly interacting with them - all these to prepare them for building the future.

Almost every center has sports activities for young people, in addition to lecture sessions. In countries where fast food is liked by youth, same is also made available. This is to enable entire family to visit and spend time in activities they like.

A central Training Centre is at Salangpur. This is also a center for training of Sadhus - the new entrants. Very carefully curriculum is designed with focus on updating their knowledge of present day and from Holy Scriptures and the values of life.

Training also involves re-skilling and up-skilling them in character building - to face life, up-coming challenges in professional career with knowledge and confidence. This further requires building "Strong Determination" to achieve goals - whether in studies, sports, community services or professional career. Hence, providing this prepares them to become independent. Starting from basic house cleaning to cooking and be self-reliant along with studies or work.

Mahant Swami Maharaj wants youth to remain calm and peaceful - devoted to their own family - concentrate their studies and always be ready to help others. They need to be spontaneously inclined to respect all elders and have peace of mind and happiness in whatever they are doing. He wants them to excel in sports, adventure, serving others - step out and face the world and achieve their own goals.

## Laziness:

Mahant Swami Maharaj is always thinking about how to improve oneself. He is also concerned about what are deterrents to a persons development. He feels that, Laziness is a living persons grave. On the occasion of the Vanchanamrut Bicentenary celebration, he spoke about how to remove laziness.

“Bhagwan Swaminarayan recommends in the Vachanamrut to beware of laziness. He says that one should abstain from the company of any lazy person. Laziness is the biggest obstacle on the spiritual and temporal paths. He narrated two examples:

A teacher in a school held an extempore essay writing competition. The subject was, “Laziness Means...” all the students immediately started writing about laziness. Someone wrote, “Laziness is a great enemy.” Another wrote, “Laziness is a living person’s grave.” All wrote something of this bad (habit) nature. One student handed four pages to the teacher, but they were all blank except for the words, “This is called laziness,” at the bottom of the last page.

Once, a teacher asked his students, “Those who have been affected by laziness raise your hands.” Nearly all the students raised hands, except one. The teacher asked him, “Why haven’t you raised your hand?” The boy replied coolly, “Sir, I feel too lazy to raise my hand.”

These two incidents demonstrate what laziness is. Laziness is a sign of weakness, being irresponsible and careless. Laziness means not feeling like doing anything and remaining inactive. Laziness also means to rest (or sleep) more than required.” But with understanding its evils, and, determination one can defeat laziness.

- **Clarity of Goal:**

Firstly, it is important to have a clear goal. Fix your goal with regards to doing bhajan, bhakti, satsang work or your social duties or your own day to day work. Then, organize your time to achieve your goal. Thereafter, focus on your daily timetable by detailing your schedule from morning to evening. Thereafter, firmly decide to finish that work by evening.

- **Believing One’s Faults as One’s Enemy:**

Bhagwan Swaminarayan said that if one wants to oust any fault in oneself then one must develop a feeling of hatred for it. Make a resolute pledge,

“Laziness is my enemy. It has spoilt a lot of things in my life. I will remove it from my life.”

- **Take Inspiration from those who are good:**

In Vachanamrut Gadhada I 20, Bhagwan Swaminarayan states about giving up laziness: Bhagwan blesses that by participating in satsang it is easy to attain atma darshan or God-realization, however, whatever lapse that a devotee has is due to his laziness. In Vachanamrut Loya 6, Maharaj says, “If he [devotee] is very lazy, sleeps too much and when told by other to bathe, meditate or observe other niyamas, says, ‘I’ll do it later; what’s the hurry. I’ll do them slowly’ – then even he may otherwise be nice, one should avoid his company.”

Give up laziness to become a recipient of Shriji Maharaj’s grace.

### **Volunteers - Karyakars**

In the cadre of ‘Karyakar’ - volunteers come from devotees. They coordinate and conduct the numerous socio-spiritual activities.

Who is a ‘karyakar’? One who is ready to perform dedicated service to develop and nurture local, regional and national satsang activities. He is willing to give his time for social – cum spiritual endeavours.

He serves society in times of calamity and catastrophe and for anti-addiction drives, prayer campaigns in hospitals, parenting seminars and other activities in respective of caste or religion of needy.

### **Karyakar SUVARNA Mahotsav**

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav (1972–2022) celebrated and paid tribute to 50 years of selfless and dedicated satsang was service by thousands of BAPS karyakars, young and old, male and female. Satsang activities for children, teenagers, youths and adults were begun by Yogiji Maharaj in 1950s.

Over the decades, Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj have guided and inspired the karyakars to progress, both in their personal spirituality and their allocated satsang duties.

In Surat, on 28 January 2024, Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated the year-long Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav celebrations, which was concluded with a grand final celebration assembly on 7 December 2024 at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

The Karyakar Suvarna Mahotsav - 2024 focused on enhancing:

1. Asmita - strengthening the sense of belonging and pride in serving as karyakar.
2. Antarvaibhav - Developing inner virtues by consolidating nishtha, and sincerely observing niyams and dharma.
3. Atmiyata - Enhancing harmony and fraternity.
4. Abhivadan - Highlighting the importance of seva and dedication to the wider BAPS satsang community, and felicitating them for their outstanding efforts.

The worldwide BAPS satsang activities are conducted by karyakars and spread message of Sanatan Dharma and Bhagwan Swaminarayan to the doorstep of individuals and families.

## Loneliness

I am with you in the journey of life...'

How to remove loneliness in life? Satsang with Swamishri:

In the peaceful atmosphere of Chainpur, Mahant Swami Maharaj and young saints were conducting spiritual satsang.

The young saints raised their spiritual questions with Swamiji and Swamishri gave simple and clear answers from his own experience.

- Finally, a question was asked:
- "Many times, we go into depression, feel loneliness and many such things happen, so how can any kind of thinking remove it?"
- Swami shri replied:
- "We should always think that we have found God. God is with us, we have to find Him." This is not a matter of religion. We must constantly wrestle with the mind. And we will be able to move forward only if we have firm faith in Sant Yogi Bapa, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and have the resolution that 'I have to do whatever they say'. Saying this, Swamiji narrated a story:

There was a child. Every year during the summer holidays his parents would take him to his grandmother's house. And next day they will return

by the same train. This went on for years. Later, one day the child said, 'Now I'm too big, should I go to grandma's house alone this year?' After some discussion her parents agreed.

Parents came to drop him at the railway station. When the train was getting ready to start, father looked at him from the window and began to teach him one last time, the boy said, I know everything. You have told me this at least 100 times.

When the train started moving, father gently said, 'Look, son, if you suddenly feel bad or panic on the way, this is for you, saying so! He put something in the boy's pocket.

The train started... Now the boy was alone..., sitting in the train, without his parents, an enigma in his life... He felt good for a while. A beautiful natural scene was seen from the window.

By which time strangers started coming around him, making noises, coming and going in the compartment. One of them, who seemed to be the leader, started bullying.

What will happen now? The child began to think. The child began to feel restless. He sat in the corner of the seat with his head down. His eyes filled with tears.

At the same time he remembered that his father kept something in his pocket. He searched his pocket with trembling hands and took out a piece of paper. He opened the paper and found the message : 'Son, I am with you in the last compartment of this train...'

Reading this gave courage to the child and removed his fear and loneliness.

It is the same in life. When God sent us to this earth, He also kept a note in our pocket: Son, I am with you in the last compartment...' God is with you on the train journey of life. So have faith in him, He is always with us. Then you will not feel lonely.

Swamishri filled everyone with courage and faith through this Bodh Katha.

## **HARMONY**

Unity is an essential characteristic that is at the root of collective progress and personal peace of mind. By cooperating and working together, a common goal is readily achieved. Similarly, harmonious relationships

with others in an individual basis fills one with confidence and positivity. Mahant Swami Maharaj emphasizes such unity and harmony, repeatedly teaching it and encouraging its practice.

Harmony, fraternity and unity are related concepts. Harmony emphasizes the idea of togetherness and solidarity. Fraternity emphasizes camaraderie among individuals who share similar values or goals. Unity emphasizes interconnectedness and oneness.

Mahant Swami Maharaj emphasizes the importance and necessity of harmony in all aspects of life. Through his discourses, letters, phone calls, personal counselling, art, eye-contact - he continues to emphasize the nature of harmony.

### **BAPS Chhatralayas and School Complex**

“Chhatralayas are places where youth can be built”, says Mahant Swami Maharaj. In 1954, Yogiji Maharaj was travelling by train near Anand. One student from Vinubhai’s (Mahant Swami) Agriculture College came to meet him. He briefed him about educational facility available and also lack of hostel for out-station students. Yogiji Maharaj felt that there is need for student hostel. He gave a call. The donation started coming... Shri Ambalalbai Patel, donated his land for Hostel (Chhatralay). In 1965, the building Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralay (APC) was completed and on 20 June 1965, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated it. This was the beginning. Over a period of time Chhatralay and schools-colleges came up at a number of centers.

The chhatralays provide a conducive atmosphere for education, and inspire values and personality development in the students. Daily satsang assemblies in the mornings and evenings, inculcate self-control, devotion and values in them. It provides opportunity to develop their personality through debates on current topics, quizzes, question-answer sessions on spirituality, speeches, inspiring dramas and skits, music concerts and traditional dance training, build up personality, Celebration of festivals and study circles organized on a regular basis promote students cooperation and harmony, develop motivation for social services like anti-addiction campaigns, cleanliness drives and relief work at the time of calamity.

Expansion of educational and health services is ongoing. Every year new institutions are coming up – latest were BAPS Nutan Vidya Mandir in Navasari and Kherva Mehsana.



*BAPS Chhatralayas and School Complex*



## Vishwa Shanti Mahapuja

### London Mandir completes 50 years

The global online Vishwa Shanti Mahapuja in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj was organised through virtual mode and involvement of senior swamis. This was a collective prayer for family harmony and world peace. The Neasden Temple in London created by Pramukh Swami Maharaj has touched the lives of people across the world. On its completion of 50 years a puja was organised with the participation of more than 31,000 devotees from 33 countries. They registered to participate in the mahapuja from their own homes, with several thousands more joining even without registering.

The 'Mahapuja' was conducted from London Mandir by Sadhu Dr. Yog Vivekdas Swami along with other sadhus. From Nenuapur in India, Mahant Swami Maharaj presided over the opening of the Mahapuja through a live video link. He offered his blessings and paid tribute to the tireless commitment of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in gifting London with this mandir and gave blessings that satsang activities would continue to flourish in the UK and throughout Europe.

### Mahant Swami Rewrites Arti

Mahant Swami Maharaj is a think tank. He likes to explore new ideas-concepts. He felt that Swaminarayan Arti needs to be strengthened with new words. He asked Bhadresh Swami to work on it.

### Says Sadhu Aksharvatsaldas:

"The word Arti has come from Sanskrit word aratrik which means something that remove darkness. It is the ritual performed since ancient times offering devotion to and honouring God. It is an expression of love, gratitude, prayer and immense faith for God. Its wicks enabled devotees to have the darshan of the murti in mandir before sunrise and after sunset in times before electricity became widespread.

The lyrics sung during the ritual are also known as the Arti. There are many Artis in Hinduism, which sing the praises of and respect to gods deities, gurus devotees and even rivers. Today, as in the past, Artis continue to be written as expression of genuine devotion to God and his devotee and to understand their glory.

In 1802, 11 months after Ramanand Swami's demise, Muktanand Swami

realized the divinity of Sahajanand Swami and composed the Arti..... 'Jay Sadaguru Swami.....' as a gesture of adoration and devotion. This new arti gradually replaced other artis and become popular.

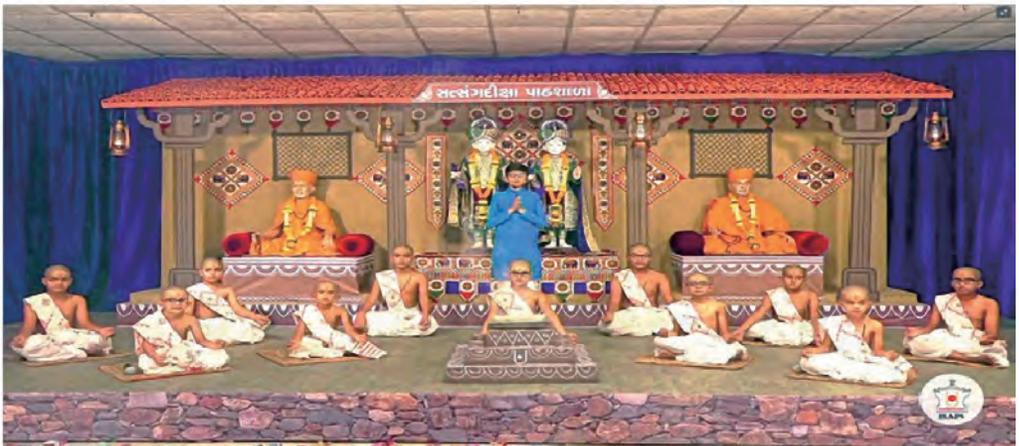
Mahant Swami Maharaj guided Bhadresh Swami to offer devotion by recomposings arti extolling the glory of Akshar and Purushottam.

### **Says Bhadresh Swami:**

“It was Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj’s innermost wish that siddhant established by Bhagavan Swaminarayan be presented in the form of a devotional scripture

In the process of writing this text, our talks turned towards the Mahapuja. Mahant Swami Maharaj said that along with Shriji Maharaj’s Mahima, the glory of his ideal devotee, Gunatitanand Swami, should also be included in it. I worked on this for eight days in Gondal in Mahant Swami Maharaj’s presence.”

Mahant Swami Maharaj explained the way Shastriji Maharaj propagated the glory of Brahma (Akshar) and Parabrahman (Purushottam) – Gunatitanand Swami and Shriji Maharaj – and consecrated their murtis in the central shrines. Swamishri instructed me to compose an arti that include this Mahima and celebrates it. He explained in detail what points should be conveyed: Shriji Maharaj is Parabrahman, Gunatitanand Swami is Akshar. Maharaj always is Sarvopari, Sakar, Karta and Pragat. Also, Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj always taught us to keep Dasbhav, Divyabhav and Suhradbhav; so those teachings should be included as well.



This Arti is the ultimate, divine tribute of Mahant Swami Maharaj to Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj- Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Gunatitanand Swami - and Shastriji Maharaj. It also reflects the joy of the devotees who are dedicated to the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. Furthermore, it offers devotion towards God, Guru and the Akshar-Purushottam principle. It represents the inner voice of the entire BAPS family.

### **Mahant Swami Maharaj says :**

“The Akshar Purushottam Arti is just grand. Whoever sings it with glory and faith will experience supreme peace, and Maharaj and Swami will come to take them[to Akshardham]”

“Each word of Akshar Purushottam Mahapuja is filled with glory; whoever performs or participates with true spirit in the Mahapuja will have all their wishes fulfilled and will become physically,mentally and financially happy. They will experience paramount peace,peace and peace within and will truly progress spiritually.”

The Namavali describes the glory of [Shriji] Maharaj; everything is included in that. Reciting the Namavali will dispel all miseries and one will attain paramount bliss.”



Mahant Swami Maharaj offering Arti

## Shri Swaminarayan Arti

Inspired by

Pragat Brahmaswarup Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj

### Introduction and Explanation

Jay Swaminarayan – jai Akshar Purushottam  
Akshar Purushottam jay, darshan sarvottam...Jai Swaminarayan

O Swaminarayan! Praise to you!

O Akshar Purushottam Praise to you!

O Akshar Purushottam! Praise to you!

Your darshan is supreme...

Mukta anant supujit, sundar sakaram,

Sarvopari karunakar, manav tanudharam... Jay Swaminarayan...1

He [Bhagwan Swaminarayan] is worshiped by countless muktas (liberated souls), possesses a [divine] form and is splendid.

He, who is supreme and bestows compassion [on all],  
Manifested [on earth] with a [divine] human form...1

Purushottam Parabrahma, Shri Hari Sahajanand,  
Aksharbrahma anadi, Gunatitanand...Jay Swaminarayan...2

Purushottam Parabrahma is Shri Hari Sahajanand,  
The eternal Aksharbrahma is Swami Sahajanand...2  
Dharma ekantik sthapak, bhakt paritrata...Jay Swaminarayan...3

[Bhagwan Swaminarayan] is always manifest, the all doer,  
and the bestower of ultimate liberation.

He is the establisher of ekantik dharma and  
the protector of bhakti (devotion)...3

Dasbhav divyata saha, brahmarupe priti,  
Suhradbhav alaukik, sthapat shubh riti... Jay Smarinarayan...4

Servitude with [an understanding of all to be] divine,  
Offering [loving] devotion upon becoming brahmarup,  
and divine amity;  
[these] auspicious means he established...4

Dhanya dhanya mam jivan, tav sharane sufalam,

Yagnapurush pravartit, siddhantam sukhadam...  
Jay Swaminarayan....5

Jay Swaminarayan, Jay Akshar Purushottam,  
O [Akshar-Purushottam] My life is blessed! It has become fruitful at  
your feet

This doctrine [established by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and] propagated  
by Yagnapurush [Shastriji Maharaj],  
bestows ultimate happiness.

O Swaminarayan! Praise to you! O Akshar-Purushottam!  
Praise to you!  
O Swaminarayan! Praise to you!...5

Jay Swaminarayan, Jay Akshar-Purushottam, Jay Swaminarayan.

### Shikshapatri

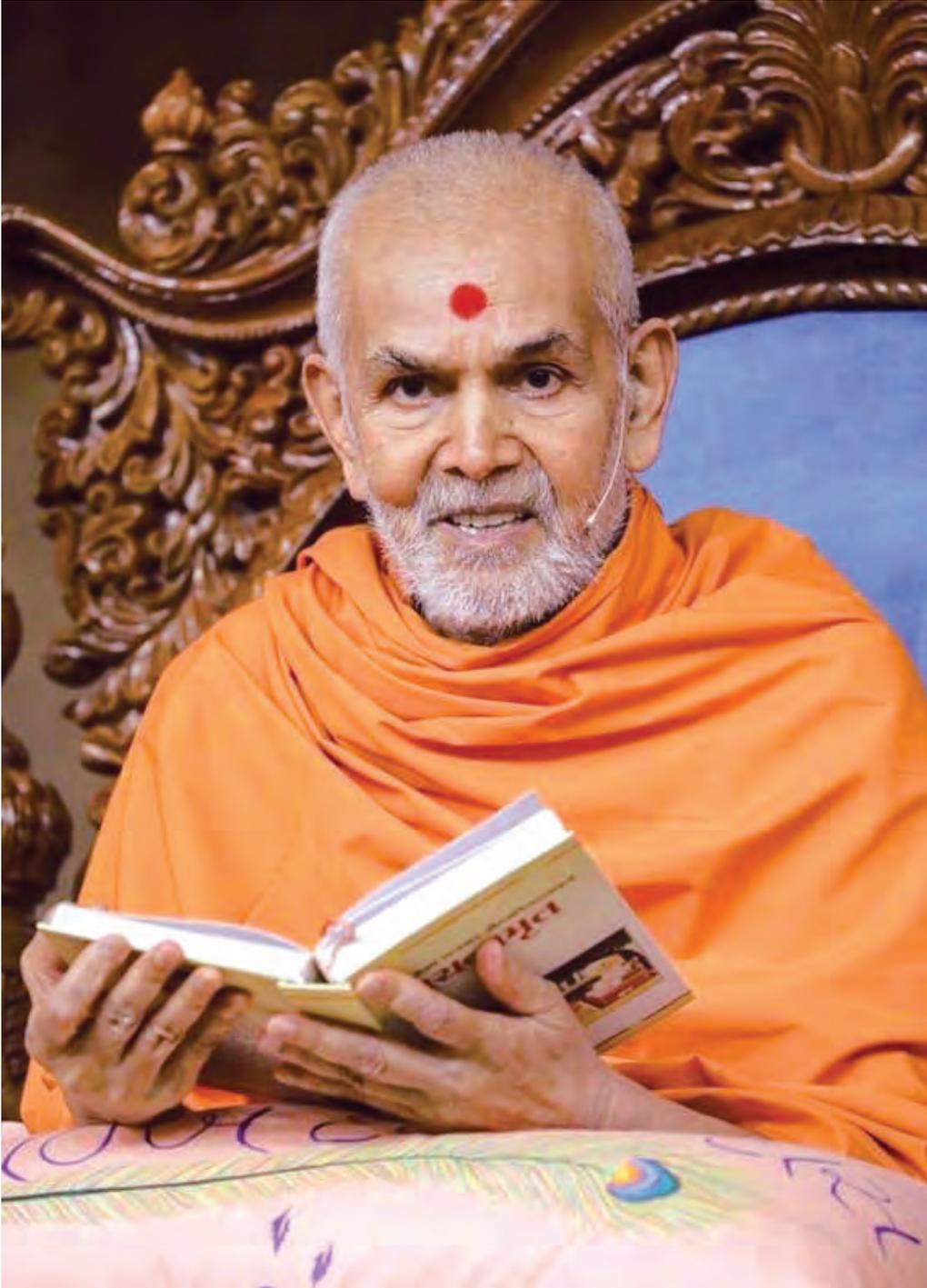
In fact, through Shikshapatri, Bhagwan Swaminarayan revived true Sanathan  
Dharma - in the dark age like the principles of Nishakam Karma, Bhagwan  
devotion to God, Ram Rajya - just and kind Society

Shikshapatri is a comprehensive guide that outlines the principles and  
practices for living a peaceful life with spiritual growth and self-realization.  
It emphasizes the importance of <sup>1</sup>:

- Dharma: Upholding one's duty and righteous conduct
- Bhakti: Cultivating devotion and love for the divine
- Non-violence: Practicing compassion and avoiding harm to all living beings.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan had said that -

- "I have written this Shikshapatri, taking the essence of all hastras. It fulfils the wishes of all my disciples."
- "All my devotees should realise that the purpose of writing this Shikshapatri is for the spiritual welfare of every soul."
- "By following this Shikshapatri, my male and female disciples shall attain the four desires (Dharma, Arth, Kam, and Moksha)"





*Sadhus in Meditation*

## Vachanamrut

The Vachanamrut is a compilation of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's teachings from 273 discourses. The discourses are similar to that of the Upanishads in which dialogues occur between the guru and pupils.

### Gunatitanand Swami says:

- "Maharaj has uttered much about his innermost secrets, wishes and principles (siddhants) in the Vachnamrut. One should focus one's attention on these and imbibe them."
- "The Vachnamruts contain the essence of the four Vedas, six-shastras and eighteen Purans. In these Maharaj has elucidated the principles. Hence one should study them."

### Shri H.T.Dave, the renowned BAPS scholar says:

"The Vachnamrut supremely elucidates true Vedantic understanding, discusses the gist of the four Vedas, expounds on the twelve Vedic Mahavakyas, discusses the interdependence of Samkhya, Yog, Vedant and Panchratra texts, describes the necessity of Samkhyanishtha and Yognishtha to attain atma-realization, and reveals the constant manifestation of God - realized Satpurush who demonstrates bhagwat dharma, is the gateway to moksha and is the spiritual guide for devotees. The shastra also expounds on ekantik dharma comprising dharma, jnan, vairagya and bhakti, the spiritual state of Gunatit, the manifest (pragat) Gunatit Satpurush - who is the medium to attaining the gunatit state, Parabrahman Paramatma and his abode Brahmadham, and principles which aid the aspirant to attain atyantik moksha - ultimate liberation.

The Vachanamrut is the principal scripture of the Swaminarayan Sampraday. It is a compilation of 273 spiritual discourses delivered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan from 1819 to 1829. It is a spiritual text filled with infallible logic, illuminating analogies and metaphors, and divine revelations that provide philosophical and practical answers to the deepest mysteries and questions of life. The Vachanamrut will enlighten all seekers about overcoming anger, understanding the nature of God, eradicating jealousy, knowing the company one keeps, recognizing a true guru or developing faith in God. It is the essence of the Hindu scriptures based on the spiritual knowledge, deep spiritual insights and practical experience of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Supreme Reality Himself.

## Swaminarayan Mahamantra

Mahant Swami guides devotees to make life simple – with ease of living – but achieve success. During his visit to New Zealand, one young Bhakta asked why should we recite Swaminarayan Maha Mantra?

Mahant Swami replied it is useful to recite mantra to obtain spirituality and peace of mind. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had given this. It is divine and spiritual.

- **Spiritual Significance:** The mantra connects devotees with God, facilitating spiritual growth and self-realization. Repeating the mantra brings devotees, closer to Akshardham, the divine abode of God.
- **Divine Connection:** The mantra is the means to experience the presence of God, Purushottam, and attain spiritual liberation. It signifies Swaminarayan’s divine nature and his role as a manifestation of God.
- **Unifying Force:** The Swaminarayan mantra serves as a unifying force for followers, creating a sense of community and shared spiritual purpose.

### 1. Meaning of the Mantra:

- The mantra consists of two words: “Swami” and “Narayan.”
- “Narayan” refers to Purna Purushottam Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself, the Supreme God.
- “Swami” refers to Aksharbrahman, the perfect devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his divine abode (Akshardham).

### 2. Theological Core:

- Chanting the “Swaminarayan” mantra allows devotees to internalize the central theological principle of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s teachings: Akshar-Purushottam Upasana. This involves understanding and experiencing oneself as Akshar (like Aksharbrahman) and then offering devotion to Purushottam (God, Swaminarayan).
- When chanting “Swami,” a devotee is encouraged to contemplate oneself as separate from the physical body and united with Akshar, transcending maya (the illusionary material world) and constantly engrossed in God.
- When chanting “Narayan,” after identifying with Akshar, one focuses on devotion to Narayan (Purushottam) and contemplates His glory and grandeur.

### 3. **Spiritual Benefits and Power:**

- Ultimate Salvation (Akshardham): It means by which soul can attain ultimate salvation and reach Akshardham, the divine abode of God.
- Purification: Chanting the mantra helps purify the soul, cleansing it of sins and negative thoughts.
- Protection: It offers divine protection from various adversities, including physical harm (as seen in stories where it protected saints from snake venom) and evil influences.
- Peace and Happiness: It brings inner peace, confidence, and happiness, helping to overcome worries and distress.
- Conquering Base Instincts: With faith, it helps devotees overcome lust, anger, greed, ego, and other negative qualities.
- Divine Connection: It fosters a closer connection with Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Guru (Aksharbrahman).
- Fulfillment of Desires: It is believed to fulfill desires and bring positive outcomes in life.
- Moksha (Liberation): Hearing or chanting the mantra, especially at the end of life, is said to grant liberation from the cycle of birth and death.
- Awakening Wisdom: It helps awaken spiritual wisdom and understanding.

### 4. **Practice of Chanting:**

- Devotees chant the mantra during formal worship, daily puja, meditation, and even during mundane activities like cooking or traveling.
- It is chanted to offer worship, alleviate distress, pray for others' well-being, and at the time of death.

## **Satsang Diksha Mukhpath**

Satsang Diksha Shastra is in Sanskrit. It consists of 315 Shloks'. It is a shastra of explaining people of Yagna and Agna revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. It is written by Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Mahant Swami suggested that young devotees may like to recite this. The Youth were inspired by Swamishri to introduce this in their life-style by memorising all 315 shloks. In response to this call - more 3100 Yuvak - boys and girls- "yuvak and yuvtis" participated in felicitation ceremony

18-20 February 2021. The entire event was on web-on-air. 300 yuvaks and yuvatis recited this. Mahant Swami Maharaj said, "At present you are 300 but many will follow you and there will be thousands like you." They were from all over India and abroad.

This started with initial on line registration of 5181 boys and 3664 girls 14 to 40 years of age. The programme started on 18 February 2021 - with assembly of all participants. Atmoswarup Swami introduced the concept developed by Mahant Swami Maharaj who wrote Satsang Diksha Shashtra. The selected 300 yuvaks devoutly sang verses of the Satsang Diksha in unison before Swamishri and the atmosphere become divine. .

It is not easy to remember and correctly recite all the shloks in Sanskrit while being occupied with day to day activities throughout. On the other hand, the youth enhanced their working hours and reduced rest and leisure time. It needed concentration, determination and continuing effort to have strong will - as one tends to forget or miss but all did this with great enthusiasm, devotion and powerful force which got generated within them for doing this. Swamishri blessed them all. Trophies, certificates, Prasad and mementoes were given. As for Diksha Swamishri said, "I am a Sadhu. I have God. I give you God. I have prayed for you all to be always blessed and resolute with inner strength."

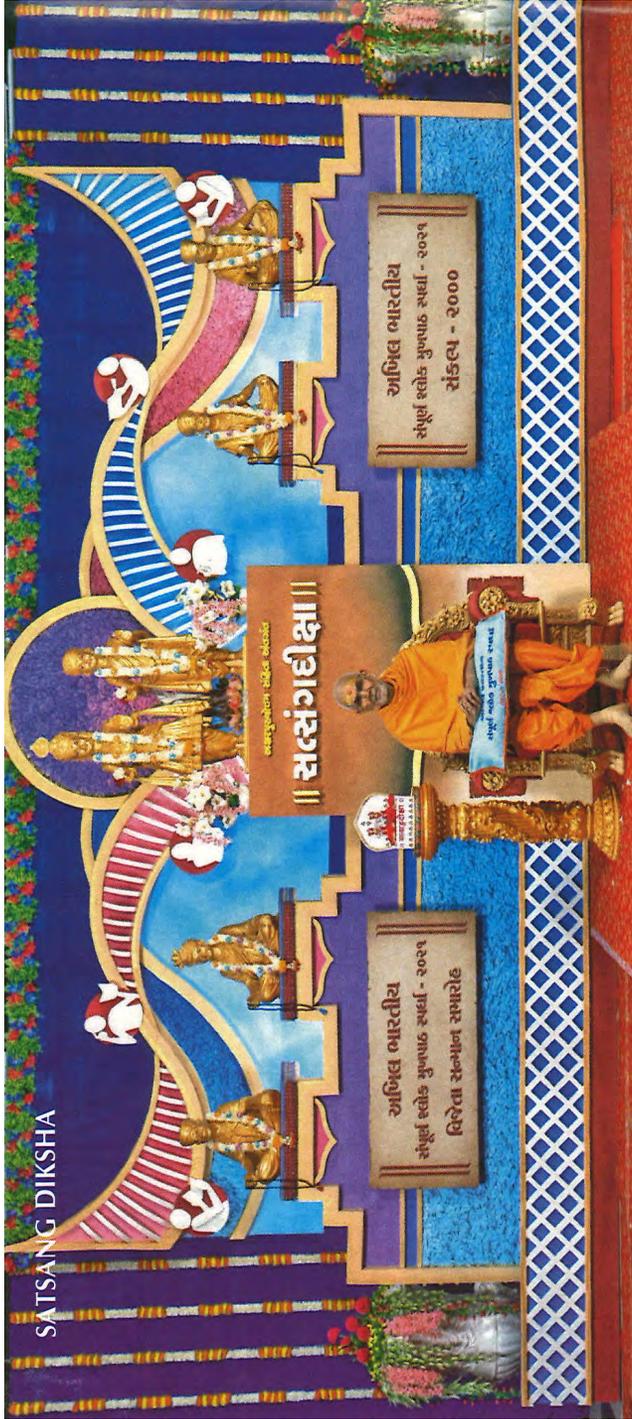
Thereafter, the continuously burning divo (lamp) of Akshar Deri was brought before Swamishri. Using its flame, Swamishri lit the divo to initiate the undertaking that all should use the brahmavidya learnt by memorizing the Satsang Diksha to further reveal the glory of Akshar-Purushottam.

After the arti, as the jai naad echoed everywhere, Swamishri and the sadhus in Nenpur waved large BAPS flags in celebration. Simultaneously, all the youth joined in the celebration by waving small BAPS flags at their homes.

Before departing from the assembly, Swamishri made an impromptu announcement, instructing all sadhus, parshads and sadhaks watching from their respective mandirs to offer dandvats to all the youths as a mark of honour for their outstanding achievement.

Thus, with hearts full of joy and divine memories etched for a lifetime, the youths revelled in the knowledge that Swamishri was truly pleased with their devout efforts.

SA TSANG DIKSHA



अभिल भारतीय  
संपूर्ण श्लोक गुणपाठ रथदा - २०२१  
दिल्लीका सं-मान रथारोह

|| सत्संगदीक्षा ||  
अचार्यरथारोहणरथारोह  
श्रीरथारोह रथारोह रथारोह

अभिल भारतीय  
संपूर्ण श्लोक गुणपाठ रथदा - २०२१  
संकल्प - २०००

## Benefits Experienced

Through their hard work and desire to please Mahant Swami Maharaj, the participants experienced many personal benefits. The following are some of their experiences:

- Developed a habit to introspect in any situation to decide how to act.
- Consolidated the understanding that God is the all-doer.
- Resolved to read the Vachnamrut and Swamini Vato daily
- Realized the great fortune in having the opportunity to serve the satsang.
- Inspired not to miss Ekadashi.
- Gained the inner strength to cope up with challenges in family and other situation.
- Developed the confidence to attempt and achieve difficult tasks.
- Learned how to interact with others in a more mutually beneficial way.
- Developed more patience.
- Reduced expectations of being praised and egoistic feelings.
- Realized the power of Sanskrit to increase memory.
- Developed ability to remain calm in stressful situations.
- Better able to focus during meditation and puja.
- Realized that whatever God does is ultimately for our benefit.
- Experienced the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj in one's life. .
- Feeling of great joy for having fulfilled Swamishri's wish.
- Learnt how to effectively use time to be more productive.
- Developed a clearer and deeper understanding of Satsang principles.

## Reviving Sanatan Dharma

Mahant Swami continuously strives to have studies of our ancient scriptures and presents lessons from that in the modern context. He promotes academic and research activities and encourages Sadhus to study scriptures and have interactions among themselves, with devotees and other scholars within and outside India - across the world.

As a part of these initiatives, some notable activities are:

- BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute in Sydney was set up in the year 2022. In March, 2025 an institute organized for Spiritual Interaction Meet “Timeless Teachings from Hindu Mandir”.
- BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir - Shahibag - Ahmedabad organized in March, 2025. Organized interaction on “Tatva Gyan - tradition Akshar Purshottam Darshan”.
- Manipur - north - east in a National meet was organized in March, 2025 on “Bhakti - the Basic Principles”. Bhadrash Swamshi gave the key note address and was honoured - as “Bhagya Mani Bhaswar”. Bhadrashdas Swami is a Sanskrit scholar and author of ‘Swaminarayan Bhashyam’.
- In January, 2025, at Cambridge University - UK, a Seminar was organized on “Satsang Diksha Granth” written by Mahant Swami Maharaj.
- Brahma Viharidas Swamshi was honoured for his spiritual discourse and contribution by Governor Shri of Maharashtra as “Mahastrian of the Year”. He is spreading messages of BAPS and Sanatan Dharma across the world.
- In August, 2024 at Warwick Conference Park - UK a workshop was organized “Maru Kartavya: The Legacy Continues”.
- In Sarangpur, Gyan Swami - Kothari Swamishri organized an interaction meet in January, 2025 on “Akshar Purshottam Darshan” and “Prakrutik Kheti”.
- On Vijay Dashmi day - September, 2024 - in Akshardham - Delhi “Swaminarayan Vishwa Shanti Mahayagna” was organized.
- Aksharvatsal Swami participated and delivered a discourse at historic spiritual assembly in Moscow - Russia. He contributes to the deeper understanding of the core BAPS philosophy of Akshar - Purushottam Upasana.
- Gyan Vastal Swami was recently honoured in Ohio - U.S.A. - by Governor Mike Dewine - who said “your dedication and passion for making positive change continue to make the world a better place”.

# Pearls of Inspiration

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## *Brief Teaching of Mahant Swami Maharaj*

### **Power of Thinking**

By believing others as good for nothing and foolish, then God makes us like that. We become what we think about others. Therefore, we must perceive all to be divine and God's devotees.

### **Outcome of Fault-Finding**

One who finds faults (abhav) in others definitely bears the outcome. What outcome? His intellect becomes corrupt and he gets bad thoughts.

### **Dissolving Negativity**

The ways to dissolve a negative attitude are to cultivate the spirit 'in the joy of others lies our own' and to have nirdosh buddhi (perceive all as pure and faultless) for all.

### **Harmony First**

By expressing samp (unity) only when others do so, then, there will be no end to conflict. Such an [attitude] results in our ruin. So, [to create or maintain samp] we should think about: what we can do, what type of thoughts we should have and the words we should say. Do not look at what others do or not do. We should express samp (unity) from our side.

### **Total Success**

Q: What is total success?

A: To experience the highest peace within.

### **Benefits of Harmony**

The benefits of working harmoniously are intimate : one progresses immensely, attains colossal [inner] development and the country becomes happier. However, when a person fights, he destroys everything.

## **Solution to Family Woes**

Q: How to resolve family problems and experience peace?

A: Try to understand each other.

## **Message for Kids**

Q: What message do you have for kids?

A: Study intensely.

## **Four Principles**

When someone errs tell him with politeness [vivek], with humility [namrata], by believing him to be yours [potana mani ne] and for the good of his soul [jiva nu rudu thay].

## **Stability of Mind**

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

A: Do satsang. It takes 20 years to become a graduate. Likewise, one has to be patient in this, have faith and associate with sadhus [sant samagam].

## **Divine Mind**

Q: What should we do to make our mind divine?

A: Engage in positive or wholesome thoughts. If a negative thought arises then flush it out instantly, because it will destroy you. However, once the mind becomes divine, problems will not affect you.

## **Types of Mind**

Three Types of Mind:

1. An ordinary mind thinks of may not think. It does everything that comes its way.
2. A divine mind [inspires] good actions.
3. An evil mind never ever thinks of good thoughts; it thinks of spoiling things.

## **One Command**

Q: Which agna [command] of yours should the youth follow so that you are fully pleased with them?

A: Observe niyams [moral rules].

### **Peace or Unease**

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

### **Absolute Peace**

By practising samp, suhrudbhav and ekta one attains Bhagwan's abundant rajipo. One experiences absolute peace. Whereas, finding faults in others [avgun] is like trash: one becomes agitated and causes agitation in others.

### **Bowing to Others**

In satsang, you have to learn to bow down to others and not make others bow down to you. Also, understand others to be greater than you, and believe yourself to be insignificant.

### **Humility Binds All Virtues**

Humility is a binding force. On attaining it, all other virtues remain bound and packed together. However, without humility, all virtues exit one after the other and one becomes empty and barren.

### **Keep Positive Company**

Keep away from the company of one who is critical of others, because he will spoil your intellect [buddhi]. Like a rotten potato that spoils another potato by its association keep away from such a person.

### **ABC of Satsang**

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

### **Fruit of Satsang**

What is the purpose of a mango tree? To produce mangoes. The purpose of a banana plant is to give bananas. Similarly, have you thought about the fruit of doing satsang? To be redeemed of dehabhiman [attachment and ego for one's body] and to believe that one is not the body but the atma.

## **Thakorji's Darshan**

Q: What do you think about while doing Thakorji's darshan?

A: That God has showered his abundant grace upon us. He has given us a great spiritual association. So, I offer my thanks to him. I do darshan of him with the fullest concentration and eye contact.

## **Complete Faith**

Q: How can one know that one has complete faith in Bhagwan and Guru?

A: One experiences inner joy. One remains stable no matter how much turbulence arises externally.

## **Vivek**

To know one's base nature [swabhav] is vivek [spiritual discretion] and to dissolve the base nature is param vivek [highest spiritual discretion].

## **Solutions to Problems**

A devotee of God should enter the domain of soul-power and the power of God's glory. Then, many problems will be solved. Physical power, intellectual power and other powers are of no use [in solving acute issues].

## **Kesar Mango**

Q: How to get happiness from Satsang?

A: Swamishri showed a kesar mango and said, "Yogi Bapa used to say that by perceiving virtues in all, one will experience sweetness in life like the juice of kesar mangoes. By seeing good traits in others, having mahima and divyabhav one will experience intense joy. But when one sees faults in others one's life turns sour."

## **Dreams**

Q: When you close your eyes to sleep what do you see in your dreams?

A: God's murti, devotees and sadhus.

# Triveni Sangam

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## Swaminarayan Akshardham - New Delhi

### A Triveni Sangam of Knowledge, Spirituality and Science

Swaminarayan Akshardham portrays the essence of India's glorious heritage in all its facets: spirituality, wisdom, art, architecture and science. It celebrates the past, addresses the present and shapes the future. It inspires all towards faith in God, peace and happiness, integrity and national pride. It is a testimony of volunteerism, talent and spiritual faith. Three hundred million hours of skilled and voluntary effort were spent into accomplishing the project in five years.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the inspirer, said "Akshardham is a place of faith and peace. It inspires, enriches and provides strength to mankind in its endeavour towards eternal happiness". It is a Triveni Sangam of knowledge, spirituality, science and technology.

The former President, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, expressed that "Swaminarayan Akshardham, a new major centre of worship, has added glory to Indian culture and faith.

"But who is the creator? The creator we saw in the giant film theatre. A child wading through rivers, climbing over the snow-tipped Himalayas, slips and slips and then climbs and climbs, walking across the nation and discovering the cradle of India's civilization. Who is this child? Can you remember the child? Oh! That is the divine child, the child Swaminarayan. The Akshardham has become a place of education, experience and enlightenment. It creatively blends the traditional stone art and architecture, Indian culture and civilization, ancient values and wisdom and the best of modern media and technology. Multiple layers of this complex express the strength of the mind, will power of the human being, indomitable spirit, flowering kindness, fusion of scientific and medical talent, myriad colour of varied cultures and ultimately the power of knowledge. In essence, it is a dynamic complex with lively images.

## **Mandir**

It is built with beautiful pink sandstone and white marble. The monument is 141 ft. high, 316 ft long. It is built without steel. It consists of 234 ornately carved pillars, 9 ornate domes, 20 quadrangle shikhars. It has a spectacular Gajendra Peeth (i.e., plinth of stone elephants) and 20,000 murtis and statues of India's great sadhus, devotees, acharyas and divine incarnations on its outer walls.

## **Swaminarayan Mandapam**

Seated in the inner sanctum Swaminarayan Mandapam is the beautiful 11-foot high, gold-plated murti of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, alongwith the Guru Parampara, namely Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The deities of Sanatan Dharma: Shri Sita-Ram, Shri Radha-Krishna, Shri Lakshmi-Narayan, Shri Shiv-Parvaati, avatars, and the four Chaturvyuh and 24 Keshav murtis of God are very prominent.

## **Paramhansa Mandapam**

The Paramhansa Mandapam is 72 ft high. It is a grand, ornately carved dome. It has the murtis of the paramhansas of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The four-sided and eightsided pillars are called the "Swastik Sthambhas". The pillars are carved with ornate murtis of the 24 different forms of Lord Keshav.

## **Ghanshyam Mandapam**

The Ghanshyam Mandapam rests on eight pillars. It has a 38 ft wide saucer shaped dome that is 32 ft above the ground. The dome has a peacock design with a delicate murti of Ghanshyam Maharaj, the childform of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, at its centre. The pillars have beautiful carvings depicting the childhood incidents of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

## **Lila Mandapam**

The Lila Mandapam is 72 ft. high. On its four-faced pillars are carvings portraying stories from the life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan as a child, teenager and in his later years.

## **Neelkanth Mandapam**

At eleven years of age, Bhagwan Swaminarayan renounced his home and became known as Neelkanth Varni. He undertook a seven-year pilgrimage of India on foot. One finds the fascinating stories of Neelkanth carved on



*Musical Fountain, Akshardham New Delhi*

*Ceremonial worship of water collected from 120 sacred rivers of India*





*Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's visit to Akshardham, New Delhi*

the eight-sided pillars and saucer-shaped ornate dome that is 32 ft. above the ground. At the dome center lies the delicate and beautiful murti of Neelkanth Varni.

### **Smruti Mandapam**

From 1781 to 1830 Bhagwan Swaminarayan inspired new confidence in Sanatan Dharma. To show his life and work on earth, a replica of his footprints are displayed here in the Smruti Mandapam. Other relics displayed are his hair, mala, clothes and other objects, that serve as reminders of his presence on earth more than 200 years ago.

### **Sahajanand Mandapam**

It has eight-sided ornate pillars supporting a saucer-shaped dome, 32 ft high. In its centre lies a beautiful stone murti of Bhagwan Swaminarayan (Sahajanand Swami). He is seated beneath a sprawling neem tree. He became spiritual head at the age of only 21. At the age of 25, he initiated 500 scholarly and pious paramhansas. As a tribute to them, the mandapams and pillars of Akshardham have 500 marble murtis of the paramhansas.

### **Bhakta Mandapam**

Bhagwan Swaminarayan, through his inspiration, elevated countless people, from the downtrodden to the Brahmin classes. Representing some of his thousands of noble devotees 148 murtis are displayed on the pillars of the 72 ft-high Bhakta Mandapam.

### **Purushottam Mandapam**

In the Purushottam Mandapam one finds the beautiful marble murtis of Bhagwan Swaminarayan with Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami and divine devotees (muktas).

### **Mandovar**

The ornate external wall of Swaminarayan Akshardham mandir is known as the mandovar.

The intricately carved mandovar is 611 ft long and 310 ft high. It comprises 200 sculptured stone figures of great rishis, sadhus, devotees, acharyas and divine incarnations. It is made of different levels: gajstar, sinhstar, vyalstar, kumbhstar, kalashstar, gavakshstar, jingha and chhajja. The kumbhstar includes 48 ornately carved murtis of Shri Ganeshji in different poses.

The mandovar at its base level is called jagati. In this layer one finds carvings of living things from our world. First, there is an elephant,

which is a symbol of strength, then the lion that symbolizes bravery and ferocity. Thereafter, one finds the vyal animal (an extinct Pauranic bird) that was renowned for speed. In the subsequent layers one finds carvings of flowers that symbolize beauty and fragrance. In the middle part of the mandovar one finds sculptures of the divine incarnations of God, sages, devas, acharyas and devotees.

### **Narayan Peeth**

The top pradakshina of the mandir is called the Narayan Peeth. Here, beautiful bronze relief panels illustrate divine incidents from the life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The three panels, each 60 ft long, show Bhagwan Swaminarayan discoursing under the neem tree in Gadhadra, celebrating festivals and travelling by various means to reform and elevate people morally and spiritually.

### **Gajendra Peeth**

The Gajendra Peeth, is the lower pradakshina featuring stories and legends of elephants with nature, man and the Divine. It is unique and captivating. It is ornately carved in pink stone stretching for 1,070 ft. The peeth pays tribute to elephants, symbolizing the entire animal kingdom. The displays reflect the messages of social harmony, peace and spiritual faith.

### **Narayan Sarovar**

The Narayan Sarovar is a holy lake that surrounds the main Akshardham mandir. It contains holy waters from 151 rivers and lakes from all around the country, including Mansarovar. Narayan Sarovar has 108 gaumukhs, symbolizing 108 names of God.

### **Parikrama**

The parikrama (circumambulatory path) is considered as pathways to offer reverence and devotion to God. The two-storey Swaminarayan Akshardham Parikrama is made of red stone from Rajasthan, and comprises 1,152 pillars, 145 windows and 154 samvaran shikhars. Every window and gallery in the lower parikrama provides different, breathtaking views of the Akshardham mandir.

### **Exhibition Halls**

Each of the three exhibition halls depict the cultural and spiritual heritage of India in a modern and scientific way:



*Gajendra Pith, Akshardham, New Delhi*



## **1. Hall of Values (Sahajanand Darshan)**

The principal theme of sculpting one's life for happiness, success and peace of mind is portrayed by a statue of a man sculpting himself. The exhibits portray the universal messages of ahimsa, endeavour, prayer, morality, vegetarianism, family harmony, etc., through film shows, 3-D dioramas and audio-animatronics presentations from the life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

## **2. Giant Screen Theatre (Neelkanth Darshan)**

An epic film portrays the exciting and inspiring pilgrimage of the child-yogi, Neelkanth Varni, in late 18th Century India. It was shot in 108 locations, from the icy peaks of the Himalayas in the north to the pristine shores of Kerala in the South. The film depicts India's holy places, festivals and spiritual traditions on a giant screen that is over six storey high.

## **3. Boat Ride (Sanskriti Vihar)**

A spectacular 12 minute boat ride experience takes us through 10,000 years of India's glorious heritage to:

- Witness the world's oldest village life and bazaar in Vedic India.
- Sail through Takshashila - the world's first university.
- Journey through the labyrinth of ancient discoveries and inventions by the great rishi-scientists of India, whose contributions to the world include zero gravitational law, aviation, plastic surgery, ayurveda and many others.

## **Murti of Neelkanth Varni**

A beautiful 27 ft-high bronze murti of Neelkanth Varni stands in a determined and inspiring pose outside the large format film theatre.

## **Musical Fountain (Yagnapurush Kund)**

The Yagnapurush Kund is a combination of a Vedic yagna kund and a musical fountain. It has been so named after the founder of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and the 3rd successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Swami Yagnapurushdasji Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. The large yagna kund measures 300 ft x 300 ft, and has 2,870 steps and 108 shrines. In its centre lies the lotus shaped yagna kund. At night, the centre comes to life with a colourful musical water fountain show that echoes the Vedic sentiments of India. The musical water fountain is entertaining and breathtaking in all its beautiful colours, water patterns and messages.

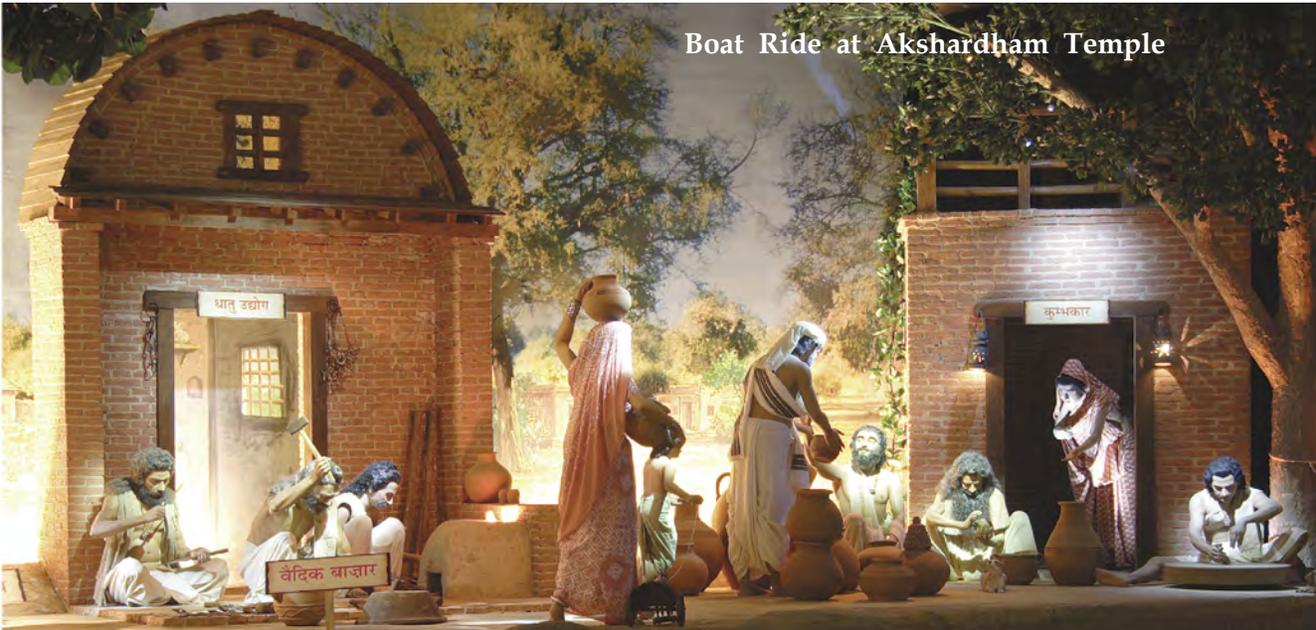
Hall of Values



Giant Screen Theatre



Boat Ride at Akshardham Temple



## **Gardens of India (Bharat Upvan)**

Bharat Upvan is a magnificent garden with a cultural ambience. It has manicured lawns, lush gardens and wonderful bronze statues of great role models of India. India's child gems, valorous warriors, freedom fighters, national figures and great women personalities inspire visitors with values and pride for our great nation.

Swaminarayan Akshardham is thus the Triveni Sangam confluences of spirituality, knowledge and technology.

There is a story about the famous scientist Galileo. Traditionally, it was widely and firmly believed that the Earth was flat and that Sun moved around it. But Galileo did not believe in that. His passionate curiosity provoked him to conduct research on this, which finally revealed that the Earth is round and not flat and that it moves around the Sun. When he made this proclamation the orthodox religious leaders did not like. He was told to retract his statement or face dire consequences. Galileo took back his statement, but history proved him to be right. Such events have led to believe that science and religion did not match. They are two separate ways to view the world and life and even facts. Whenever there was a cry against religious dictates on the grounds of scientific reasons they say, "Do not bring religion into scientific theory and vice versa." This kind of thinking prevails even today in many walks of life.

### **Says Mahant Swami Maharaj -**

"Akshardham has a different vision of religion for the modern world. It inspires people to believe in spirituality based on logic and actual self-realized practice. The use of science, technology and knowledge with spirituality creates a "Triveni Sangam" for the benefit of mankind. Such a Triveni Sangam develops a strong future generation that can face the unknown challenges of the millennia. Akshardham is such Triveni Sangam.

\*This is the contribution of Yug Purush Pramukh Swami Maharaj to mankind."

# The Trust

## The Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha

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### Organisation

The first centre of BAPS was set up at Bochasan in 1907 in Anand District of Gujarat. On June 24, 1947, Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj executed and registered a deed providing for the administration and management of the properties of Shri Akshar Purshottam Swaminarayan Sanstha. The deed was registered with the Sub-Registrar, Kaira on June 28, 1947. The deed provided for the management and administration of the trust. Therefore, it was submitted to the then Advocate General of Bombay Shri C.K. Dafatari for approval and confirmation under Section 92 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908. Ever since the Institution is being managed according to the terms of this deed. When the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950, was enacted, the trust was registered as a Public Trust on November 20, 1954. Thereafter, the head office was shifted to Ahmedabad and the Assistant Charity Commissioner, Ahmedabad registered it as a public trust under the Bombay Public Trust Act on February 2, 1977.

The organisation at that time was small. Its activities were fewer in number and the work was mostly confined to Gujarat. When the activity expanded it became necessary to make certain changes. These changes have been sanctioned by the Charity Commissioner. Similar trusts have been established in foreign countries where BAPS operates.

The main object of the trust is to undertake religious and charitable work and to advance education. Poverty eradication and promotion of social and cultural progress are the other important aims of the trust.

The organisation is democratic in character and has an inbuilt mechanism for addressing the needs of devotees, sadhus or even the trustees. It is the head of the organisation who is to resolve any disputes that may arise. Its decision is final and binding on all.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj became the President of the sanstha in 1951. He was elevated to this status by his Guru, Shastriji Maharaj. Under his

leadership and inspiration, the organisation has expanded. It has become today multi-national and multidimensional. The sanstha not only cares for the spread of spirituality it also caters to the social needs of the community at large. So its work is a blend of spirituality and social service. It has confirmed the principle that “those who wish to sincerely serve society must be spiritually pure” and vice versa. Its current head is Mahant Swami Maharaj.

The aims of the organisation are to :

- i. Propagate and spread true learning and diffuse knowledge.
- ii. Establish and maintain dormitories, Gurukuls (schools), and Bal mandir (Kindergartens).
- iii. Promote general charitable objectives such as education, medical relief, alleviation of poverty and advancement of general public interest.
- iv. Set up youth, children’s, women’s and adult centres, including hostels, educational centers, etc.
- v. Promote environmental, medical, social, cultural and economic activities.
- vi. Eradicate illiteracy and addictions.
- vii. Promote morality, character and value-based life and propagate principles of religion.
- viii. Propagate public religious worship.
- ix. Construct temples and Harimandirs.
- x. Promote peace, harmony and tolerance.
- xi. Promote charitable activities through :
  1. Alleviation of poverty and help for the weaker sections of society.
  2. Education
  3. Medical and health service
  4. Any other activity to help people in general
  5. Publication of literature and propagation through multimedia channels.

Within the organisation a delivery systems exists to achieve these aims :  
These comprise :-

- i. A worldwide volunteer force of more than 55,000, 160 regular activities for social betterment.
- ii. Special Disaster Relief Projects for earthquakes, floods, famines, fire, etc.
- iii. Financial assistance for education and medication.
- iv. Over 9,000 centers and many programmes for the development of youth and children.
- v. Hospitals, healthcare centers and medical camps.
- vi. Cultural programmes, seminars, conventions and conferences for cultural and religious harmony.
- vii. Centers for better educational facilities and development of tribes with hostels.

It has a firm administrative structure to run the organisation on a day to day basis. The decision-making process is decentralized. Every centre is autonomous in its daily activities. But there is a firm uniform chart of certain basic activities to be carried out. It has participative management system.

The following is the basic structure of the organisation :

- i. Board of Trustees
- ii. International body of representatives
- iii. National committees
- iv. Regional committees
- v. Local level committees
- vi. Special committees on need basis

#### **i. Board of Trustees:**

The Board of Trustees consists of twenty-one members. It includes ascetic and householder members. Ascetic member would mean a saint (sadhu) who is a lifetime celibate and totally devoted to achieve the aims and objectives of the organisation. A householder member would mean a married person or unmarried person who is not an ascetic. He serves the institution on a voluntary basis. Mahant Swami Maharaj is the President of the Trust.

## **ii. International Body of Representatives:**

This body guides the organisation at the international level. Decisions are taken at meetings convened at least once a year. This international body consists of BAPS trustees and representatives of major centres from India and overseas.

## **iii. National Committees:**

National Committees of different nations constantly interact and guide the Board of Trustees for international work. These committees are responsible for charitable work in the particular country. The members meet regularly to fine-tune activities according to the geographical, cultural and demographical needs of the people.

## **iv. Regional and Local Committees:**

Regional and Local Management Committees for men and women in different cities and regions oversee the day-to-day activities. They provide feedback to the higher-ups in the committees. All these committees take decisions independently in their day-to-day activities. They however keep in mind the broad objectives of the sanstha and its policy.

## **v. Need basis Special Committees :**

The Board of Trustees form special committees on need basis for special projects like earthquake or famine relief, celebration of festivals or exhibitions. Such committees function till the project is completed as per the directives of the Board of Trustees. The entire Body, working through the above management teams, is cohesive. It functions smoothly to achieve the goals.

The current status of various important activities are as under:

But the numbers are growing everyday.

## **International Centers include :**

- 3,300 centres in India, USA, Uk, Europe, Africa, Pacific, Middle East
- 7,215 weekly assemblies for men and women, youths and teenagers.
- 5,400 weekly assemblies for children's

## **Worldwide volunteers include :**

- 55,000 volunteers
- 12,000,000 annual volunteer-hours in service

## **Moral & Cultural Activities are in the form of :**

- 630,000 annual satsang assemblies
- 34 million visitors to cultural festival in India, UK, USA, Africa.
- 554,790 students have appeared in the international cultural examinations.

## **Medical Activities include :**

- 8 hospitals and healthcare clinics.
- 415,000 patients treated annually
- 76 medico-spiritual conferences have enlightened over 20,000 doctors.

## **Educational Activities cover :**

- 31 permanent educational institutions that serve over 11,000 students.
- Over 5,000 scholarships awarded annually.
- 55 schools built in disaster-hit regions.

## **Environmental Activities**

- Millions of trees and plants planted in thousands of villages.
- Thousands of water conservation project in hundreds of villages.
- Thousands of tonnes of paper collected for recycling annually.

## **Social Activities**

- 33 disaster relief operations managed successfully.
- 50,000 families inspired to hold daily Family Assemblies.
- Over two million people inspired for quitting addictions.

## **Tribal Activities**

- 800 permanent centres for tribal upliftment.
- Thousands of tribal families have given up addictions and superstitions.
- 9 mobile medical clinics treat 250,000 tribal vilalges annually.

## **Spiritual Activities**

- Over 700 BAPS mandirs worldwide.
- Thousands of pilgrims visit BAPS mandirs daily.
- Over 1000 sadhus.

Sadhus meditating with Swamishri



The above number and each activity is multiplying day by day. In order to understand the reasons behind the success of the organisation, it is useful to know how sadhus are trained and volunteers are motivated to work devotedly, without self-interest.

### **The Sadhu Tradition**

Mandirs, scriptures and sadhus are recognised as the pillars of Hindu culture and tradition. BAPS preserves and promotes all three. The Gurus - Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and now Mahant Swami Maharaj have promoted new temples all over India and across the world and made holy scriptures in meaningful way more popular. They have inspired the tradition of pure sadhus and initiated and created a unique cadre of sadhus of BAPS throughout the world.

Very strict but public-oriented code of conduct for the sadhus exists to keep them pure and oriented towards public good. This is as under:

#### **Nishkam:**

8 fold celibacy - absolute brahmacharya.

#### **Nirlobh :**

Total renunciation of wealth and worldly possession, (not to touch money, not to keep money or have others keep them on one's behalf)

#### **Nisswad:**

The idea behind this rule is to keep one's palate in control by mixing food in a wooden bowl and then adding water before eating.

#### **Nissneh:**

To become non-attached to anyone or anything other than God with renunciation of one's native place and near relatives.

#### **Nirman:**

Non-ego, be humble and serve everyone.

In short, all sadhus have to strictly practise the above five rules.

### **How a sadhu is trained**

To guide and train the sadhus, a training centre for sadhus has been established at Salangpur in Ahmedabad District.

Satsangi youths who wish to become sadhus, initially spend 12 to 18 months as sadhaks (novices) at the centre. For this, youths aged 21 or above are given entry every December and March. During this initial period, they wear a 'jhabho' (Kurta) and 'dhotiyu' - the Indian traditional dress for man. Throughout the year, they engage in various services (seva), study Holy Scriptures study the Swamini vato, Vachanamrut, Shikhapatri, (Discourses of Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami), memorise kirtans and study other topics related to modern world and science also. They are given guidance regarding service and austerities. During this time, sadhaks observe the vows of a sadhu, except that in certain circumstances they can meet and visit their family members. During this intense training a sadhak has the opportunity to strengthen his wish to become a sadhu. At the end of this initial training, and with the written consent of his parents, they are initiated into the Parshad order.

On receiving this initiation, the Parshad wears white robes and stitched clothing is renounced. His head is clean shaven, except for a small 'shikha' (tuft of hair) and he is given a 'janoi' (yagno Pavit).

Even in this 'Paarshad' stage, training is continued. During this period the Vachanamrut (discourses of Bhagwan Swaminarayan) and the lives of all Gurus are studied in detail. Besides this, service and austerities also continue. The Vedas, the Puranas, Upanishads, Shrimad Bhagwat, Bhagvad Gita, Mahabharat, and other Hindu scriptures and world religions are studied. English, Hindi, Sanskrit and other languages are also taught. In addition instruction is given in music, art, science, modern technology and other creative subjects. Together with these studies, regular religious service and austerities continue.

After about 12-18 months, the 'Bhagwati Diksha' is given to the parshads. They now wear saffron robes. They are given a new name.

The daily routine of sadhus living in the training centre commences at 4-00 a.m. in the early morning. While remembering God, they bathe and perform personal puja. Then they attend the mangala arti at 5-45 a.m. from 6-00 a.m. various services begin: cleaning the mandir compound, making flower garlands for the deities, cutting vegetables, preparing meals, performing mahapuja, adorning the deities, cleaning the ashram, etc.

At 7-15 a.m. all attend the shangar arti. After the arti bhajans are sung

describing and praising God. Then after breakfast, at 8-00 a.m., the morning discourse is held.

For one hour, experienced senior sadhus deliver discourses based on the Vachanamrut giving guidance and inspiration regarding the life of a sadhu.

Between 9-00 a.m. and 12-00 noon study classes, based on the syllabus, are held in the 'Yagnapurush Sanskrit Vidyalay' in the mandir premises. At 12-00 noon, lunch is served, sadhus eat in a small wooden bowl. While the food is being served, everyone chants the 'Swaminarayan' mahamantra aloud. Then Vedic prayers are recited in unison before eating.

At 12-30 p.m. discourses are held daily in the assembly hall. There after the sadhus engage in personal study. At 4-00 p.m. all gather in the assembly hall for meditation. Scriptures are read. From 4-30 to 6-30, study classes are held. At 7-30 p.m. the sandhya arti is performed. At 8-00 p.m. dinner is served. At 8-45 p.m. the evening assembly commences. For one hour devotional songs are sung by sadhaks, parshads and sadhus.

Then they return to their rooms. After spending an hour in personal study, they retire for the night. Sadhus use a thin mattress for bedding. They sleep in the common dormitories or on the terrace, depending on the weather. Nobody has a separate room.

All these activities strengthen harmony between the sadhus. Despite hailing from different regions, countries and educational backgrounds, they blend with one another in perfect harmony.

The sadhus regularly observe between 5 and 7 waterless fasts every month. Many eat only once a day. They also undertake other difficult austerities, such as, dharnapama, chandrayan, khatras, taptakruchh, etc.

After completing 5 years in the training centre, Mahant Swami Maharaj assigns the sadhus to the various BAPS mandirs to engage in a variety of services. At over 500 mandirs, sadhus actively manage over 160 humanitarian services, including social, educational, moral, cultural, spiritual activities.

There are doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, and post graduates. There are graduates in science, commerce, arts, computers, management, law and other faculties. Some are graduates from prestigious universities such as Harvard and Oxford.

They are from many countries like USA, Canada, England and Africa. The

youths, raised in a Western environment, have willingly accepted the strict vows and disciplines of a sadhu.

This cadre of learned and dedicated sadhus, seek to attain spiritual liberation and serve society. Since the wisdom of these sadhus bring inner peace, their lives exemplify the true ideals of India's noble sadhu tradition. They are responsible for motivating devotees in the Centers and inculcating spiritual values in life. They also work for organising day to day activities and major events and mobilization of resources. They are required to travel from one centre to another periodically. During their stay at the center, they are required to visit villages and meet their devotees by making personal home-visits. They also take an interest in children and youth during the visits and motivate them to visit the temple and teach them spiritual values in life.

### The volunteers

Volunteers are devotees who want to serve the aims of the organisation apart from doing prayer or Darshan. Not all the devotees come out for social service. But there are many who participate. Some temporarily, others on long term basis. There is no compulsion to become a volunteer. It is simply due to personal motivation, a desire to fulfill something in life, which normally Grahasthi life (personal individual family life) does not provide. Shastriji Maharaj had initiated this and Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj expanded the role of volunteers. The Mahant Swami Maharaj made this further broad spectrum. A code of conduct in this regard - is developed and followed at all centers. This is presented as a dialogue between Swamishri and a devotee - aspiring to be a volunteer.

**Question:** After becoming satsangis and serving God day and night, we are still experiencing ups and downs in our worldly life. And often our family and social work is spoilt or comes to a halt. Why does this happen ?

**Swamishri:** Maharaj says that a devotee of God who has sought refuge at the feet of God has no troubles at all. He is free from the influence of kal, karma and maya. Worldly souls experience misery due to their karmas. Devotees of God encounter misery due to lapses in the observance of God's commands. We may not be aware of it but mistakes are made due to our deep-rooted desires and so difficulties are faced. These miseries have to be accepted. Miseries, hardship or problems arise in many ways but God is testing to see if his devotee has staunch faith in Him. Dada

Khachar was a great devotee. He gave everything of his to Maharaj and served Maharaj and his devotees with tremendous mahima. Yet Maharaj tested him and he lost his property. That by which he served Maharaj, the sadhus and devotees, and that by which he earned his livelihood, all that property was lost. His income stopped. Still, Dada Khachar did not feel that the difficulty was due to taking refuge in Maharaj. No such thought, that Maharaj was testing him. In the past, devotees have been tested - Narsinh Mehta, Mirabai, the Pandavas, etc. Those who are really true devotees are tested. Others are not. Even amid the difficulties, if one remains firm, then there will be no problems. This should be with the faith that what Maharaj has asked for is proper and he looks at it in that way. Those who pass the test have no worries.

**Question:** We serve in festivals, etc. to please God and as return we get the grant of Akshardham. Is this for sure?

**Swamishri:** God has come to give Akshardham to everyone. He is sure, but we have doubts.

**Question:** Now what we have to do? For how long do we have to please God ?

**Swamishri:** Until you shed this body you have to please God. When you marry, do you not have to sustain it for life? Do you not have to raise your children? You have to do it as long as you live. Until you become brahmarup you have to do this. Believe yourself to be fulfilled, but awareness has to be maintained so that no problems are encountered. Devotion and service to Maharaj has to be offered till the end.

The work of God should be followed with the same sincerity as one does one's worldly work. Like one does for the body, do for the atma, the soul. If your son earns a lot you are happy. Similarly the more you offer devotion, practice satsang, perform service, the more Maharaj is pleased. So, never feel satisfied. Continue to do as much as you can. The more you do the more one's swabhavs are controlled.

**Question:** This is for both sadhus and devotees - what should we become like ?

**Swamishri:** You have to become devotees of God. 'Nijatmanam brahmarupam' - when this state is achieved there will be no questions. Otherwise there will be disputes with each other. Questions will arise. One who is brahmarup

does not look at others' faults. He is engrossed only in the devotion and service he has to perform.

We want to become ideal. One who is perfect has no faults whatsoever. He desires only to worship God, please Him, understand His commands and act accordingly, karyakars need do nothing else. If you dwell on the faults of others no work is done. If a businessman goes around just looking at others, will his business flourish? If everyone is sincere and efficient in doing his own duty, there will be no problems. So, for sadhus or karyakars, there are no questions, one must resolve to work. One must resolve that one wants to serve. Whatever task is assigned, it must be done responsibly. It is our duty that the work assigned is done perfectly. Bal Mandal, Yuvak Mandal, Kishore Mandal- whatever duty is given, if it is done properly then will there be any questions? What you are doing is not a private or government job, it is service to God. Yogiji Maharaj used to say." This is Thakorji's job." So, this job should be properly performed. What do you understand from that? If karyakars carry out their work properly and responsibly, will any problems arise? Sadhus and karyakars have been assigned the work of Bal Mandal, Kishore Mandal and the Satsang Mandal. If everyone is alert in doing his own duties there will be no problems.

**Question:** In government jobs there is paperwork, the same is so in satsang. We all do the work but is there a need to fill in all these reports and forms ?

**Swamishri:** In your government jobs you do all this, don't you ? You have to inspect all the files, put them in order- isn't that a hassle ? Because you are paid, you do all that. A businessman has to please his customers. So it is your responsibility to complete the paperwork sent to you. But if you do not complete and return the reports how can work proceed further ? You may feel that this job is not yet finished and more have arrived. You tackle questions at home or at work because you have determination. When you have a job, it carries responsibilities. We want to please God, so there can be no cheating in it. So, in each task, whatever paperwork is involved, you should spare time and do it properly and send it. Laziness in this will lead to a pile of work - if daily accounts are not written, there is a backlog. So remain alert, always. If there is constant awareness, then the work is done properly.

**Question:** We have many family and social obligation also. These we do with enthusiasm and without having to be told. However, when it comes

to satsang, we have to be reminded what work to do. Why is this so ?

**Swamishri:** In his talks, Gunatitanand Swami has said that the worldly path is not difficult since it is entrenched in the jiva from the beginning. That is why it is naturally followed. Does anybody have to guide us ? Do children have to be told to watch TV ? Even though they may not be studying in school, they know how to use a TV. This comes from within. Are there any colleges that teaches drinking alcohol ? Once drunk, that's it. It is because we have attachment to the worldly path that we follow it spontaneously. Whether anyone tells you or not, you take it as your responsibility to run your household. One's mind readily engages in such work, etc., but to engage it in devotion to God is difficult. And to understand this Gnan is difficult. Gnan is the knowledge of Atma and Paramatma; to become Aksharup and worship Purushottam - that path of knowledge is difficult. One has to be repeatedly told to read the Vachanamrut, read Swami Vato, memorise them and kirtans. We have to go deep. Right to the base.

**Question:** Bapa, you have continuously served the Sanstha for years together. Never have you asked for facilities, or shown frustration or fatigue. We have never seen you yawn nor take a relaxing stretch. With what thoughts do you carry out this service ?

**Swamishri:** God has assigned this service, so it is done to please Him. All of you also do this, with great attention and care. You should have one aim - to please Him. You should have one aim-to please God. If you want to please other people in this world, you have to do the work they tell you to do. But this is for the bliss of the soul. Whatever gnan (knowledge) has been revealed to you is true. If this becomes engraved in your jiva then this knowledge will reach more people. You should not expect comforts. Do not look to see whether it is day or night. Everyone has understood this a little, so you all do this work. By sitting around, nothing is achieved. This work has to be done. Do not think it to be a burden. If one believes it to be one's great fortune then enthusiasm will be maintained. We do not want to deliver any false messages. If others do not understand, do not worry. But you should not hold back in talking of His glory. The knowledge we have attained, we should explain to others with enthusiasm because we want to please God. Since our birth we have pleased others-mother, father, wife, children, family, relatives, etc. This time we want to please Shriji Maharaj and attain Akshardham. If this aim



*Bhunga – A traditional house in Kutch style Built by BAPS*



*A school and houses for the Kutch Earth Quake Victims Built by BAPS*





*BAPS Tsunami Appeal through special prayer meeting at Neasden Temple, London with envoys of different countries*

is firmly fixed, there will be no problems and you will feel what can be done to achieve it.

### **Resource Mobilisation:**

This is extraordinary. All such temples need huge capital investment and later on there is a cost on maintenance. Similarly, all charitable activities, rehabilitation or relief work need resources. As narrated in the Neasden temple story or in earthquake relief work, this is all mobilised by devotees. There are all kind of donors. It is mass mobilisation of efforts and contribution, either by money or by time. No name plate gets affixed even if a donor has made a huge contribution. Multi-million dollars get mobilised by community efforts for creation of a temple like Neasden or Chicago or Akshardhams. They get funds from the community within India or abroad.

### **Outreach Activities:**

There is a practice in all the centres to contact persons of other faiths and invite them to participate in major functions and festivals, as honoured guests. During the visits of sadhus and Mahant Swami Maharaj, efforts are made to make them available to meet as many devotees as possible - as well as, important persons - persons of eminence from different disciplines of that place. Meetings are also organized with heads of state and heads of other religions and organisation at home, as well as at abroad. It has a separate Multi-media and Publication Division at the headquarters and at every other centre. The Ahmedabad establishment is located at Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Sahibaug.

### **Covid-19 Relief - Initial Batch of Concentrator Received from UAE, to Ahmedabad, India:**

To help India in this time of medical crisis, Oxygen cylinders, tankers and concentrators will be supplied from across the world through BAPS' network and its volunteers.

An initial consignment of concentrators reached Ahmedabad on 30th April. Ishwarcharan Swami and Brahmavihari Swami performed puja at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad, with prayers for these instruments to be as helpful as possible for all patients. Many more such concentrators are on their way and expected to arrive soon, for distribution to different hospitals and healthcare centers in different cities. Similar consignments were received from other centres Mahant Swami Maharaj prayed for the good health of all and for this crisis to tide over

soon, by the blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

### Publications

| Magazines   | Membership |
|---|------------|
| Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) merged with Swaminarayan (Patrik on 2001 after 45 years separate Publication) | 60,000     |
| Swaminarayan Bliss (English)  | 40,000     |
| Swaminarayan Praksash Hindi   | 5,000      |
| Women's Magazine - Premvati (Gujarati)  | 10,000     |
| Bal Prakash (Gujarati) for Children   | 5,000      |
| Bal Prakash (English) for Children  | 3,000      |
| <b>Other Publications:</b>  |            |
| • Over 500 books and booklets are published by Shahibag Aksharpith in several languages as under:             |            |
| • Gujarati  | 300        |
| • English   | 100        |
| • Hindi   | 70         |
| • Marathi   | 15         |
| • Bengali   | 3          |
| • Tamil   | 1          |
| • Telugu  | 1          |
| • Several other languages   | 10         |
| • Audio and video cassettes   | 400        |
| • Audio CDs and Animated videos on the life of Bhagwan Swaminarayan CDROM on Indian Culture                   | 50         |

### BAPS Centers of Spirituality:

These are the centers of worship to spread harmony, peace and love. They are not meant for fomenting hatred or fundamentalism or for conversion by lure of physical facilities. In every centre, men, women and children learn spirituality and the Hindu way of life by living unitedly as a peace - loving people.

Under Swamishri's leadership, the Hindu way of life, its spiritual content, its tolerant and peaceful disposition, the unity within the family, respect for parents and elders and sacrifice for society-all these have spread all over the world.

The Akshardham concept is unique. The first Akshardham temple came

up at Gandhinagar, Gujarat and the Second Akshardham at New Delhi. The Third one is under construction at Robbinsville - New Jersey, USA. These are unique, miraculous and monumental creations of BAPS with the inspiration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. They inspire mankind, instilling the belief in God - the Bhagwan who is endeavoring for the upliftment of mankind for generation to come.

Centuries before the Hindu religion had crossed the frontiers of the country, it had made a great impact in foreign lands. Hindu temples are to be found in several south-east Asian countries like Cambodia, Laos, and Indonesia. In more recent times through a systematic drive BAPS built a number of temples and centres in more than 54 countries outside India. Of course, the devotees are initially Indians who have migrated. But its impact has been felt as seen from the Neasden Temple story; even the local population has acknowledged this. Another important matter is that this drive has been successful in preventing the onslaught of western materialistic culture on our families and the new generation. The ancient spiritual values are revived.

Voluntary service to those who need it - without bias of caste or creed is a key religious message. The Haribhaktas who like to become volunteers are well motivated. They work - offer SEVA within temple - but in time of calamity like cyclone - drought - earthquake etc. they reach out led by Sadhus. This gives religious institutions and religions - a different meaning - message as a way of life - "it means serving people in need, irrespective of whether they are devotees or belong to some other religions or sect or country". The relief does not end with distribution of food packets - it goes up to supporting affected to live normal life - revival of individual and community - social and economic activities. It also includes support - assistance to restore houses / huts which are affected with 'healing touch' of Sadhus who sphere head such activities. The Kutch rehabilitation work is an illustration of the above.

It ignites inner desire we have to help - but most of us do not convert into action - busy in our own affairs. But this spiritual base once ignited - awakens a devotee to take out time from his regular life, be it business or job and join such voluntary efforts.

## Pramukh Swami Maharaj Centenary Celebration Ahmedabad-2022

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### Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar :

This festival was not done for show. There was no thought of competition or making an impression. This festival was to make life meaningful. It was a festival of harmony and unity. It was a festival of serving crores of people. It was a festival of avoiding faults and becoming Brahman. It was a festival of pleasing God and the saints.

Under the guidance of Mahant Swami Maharaj, with his spiritual guidance, the birth centenary festival of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the courtyard

in Ahmedabad, is a humble tribute at the feet of that great saint who made unique contributions in the fields of public service, cultural service and spiritual service. This centenary festival of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who lived the life motto 'Our good in the good of others, our happiness in the happiness of others', was celebrated with devotion for a month in Ahmedabad from December 15, 2022 to January 15, 2023. For the grand international celebration of this festival, an unprecedented and wonderful 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar' was created on a vast land of 600 acres. More than one crore twenty one lakh people from all walks of life and abroad flocked to this Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar to pay heartfelt homage to the revered Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's global life-work-message as well as eternal cultural values, were presented in this city through various media and wonderful works of art, which continued to inspire millions of people with life-building inspirations. More than 1200 well-educated saints of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and a total of more than 80,000 volunteers served day and night and created and managed an unprecedented creation, which overwhelmed everyone.

This Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, built by BAPS and flowing with the nectar of inspiration, is an unparalleled 'Cultural Wonderland'. Come, let's enjoy a memorable journey of this city, which has been lost in the sands of time and in the hearts of millions of people forever, through image darshan...

A magnificent Shatabdi Mahotsav was celebrated in Ahmedabad under the auspices of the great sage Mahant Swami Maharaj to pay homage to the great sage of our era, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the great saint tradition of India. The unprecedented Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, built on 600 acres of land for the month-long festival that began on 14-12-2022, attracted millions of people every day. The many different attractions here have flooded the visitors with new inspirations. From the grand entrance to the



service of more than 80,000 volunteers, everything amazed and impressed everyone. The series of various programs impressed everyone day by day. There were conferences on different topics held in the huge conference hall every day, women's programs and seminars were held in the Nari Utkarsh Mandapam every day, inspirational events were shown in the children's town and exhibition halls. There were speeches by famous dignitaries from across the country and the world in the daily evening programs.

In the presence of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, at the National Saints' Conference held under the Chairmanship of Shrimad Shankaracharya Shri 1008 Sadanand Saraswatiji Maharaj of Dwarika Sharadapith, more than 250 saints, including Mahants - Acharyas - Jagadgurus and Mahamandaleshwars representing various religions and sects from Jammu and Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from East India to West India, came to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's city and offered floral tributes at the feet of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

### **Shri Swaminarayan Vijayate**

Everyone had the same thought in their minds that  
Swami Bapa's centenary should not be celebrated with ghosts or  
predictions, that has been done.

All those who came in the centenary  
felt inner joy here, all those who used to come here  
May all those who came in their lives always have happiness and peace  
I pray for that every day.

I consider all those who came in the centenary as a service.  
They all became divine.

Sadhu Keshavjivandas  
(Mahant Swami Maharaj)  
Date. 14-1-2023, Ahmedabad

The Prime Minister, in an emotional address, described himself as one of the volunteers of this festival and called the festival a unique opportunity in the world.

Guruhar Mahant Swami Maharaj said in his blessing: “Modi Saheb has come here to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He has seen the city. He can imagine everything by just seeing it. He just roared loudly in his speech. But in short, he has come to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

In the final phase of the Shatabdi Mahotsav inauguration ceremony, when thousands of devotees offered Aarti Ardha, the entire ceremony was illuminated by the Aarti Jyot. Numerous devotees captured this scene on their mobile cameras. Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the Prime Minister by gifting him a golden idol of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Everyone was overwhelmed by the grand divine inauguration and departed with divine memories in their hearts. The conch shell of a great occasion echoed throughout the world.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has been hailed as the ‘Master Builder of Temples’ by the Guinness Book of World Records.

He has built more than 1200 temples in the glory of culture, creating an unbreakable world record. One of the world-famous great temples is the Swaminarayan Akshardham he built in Delhi, which has the distinction





of being the largest all-encompassing temple in the world. As a tribute to Swamishri's era, a 60-foot-high replica of that great temple was erected in the city to pay tribute to Swamishri on his centenary.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj is a great saint of this era who carries the great eternal saint tradition of India. That is why the main entrance to Pramukh Swami Maharaj Nagar, the huge venue for his centenary celebrations, is called the Sant Dwar. This artistic entrance, 380 feet long, 152 feet high, and 35 feet wide, was adorned with 28 foot-tall statues of great saints seated on the windows.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a great person of devotion day and night. Despite being constantly engaged in many service activities, he always remained devoted. In memory of his devotion, his lotus hand turning the garland was kept as the main symbol of the Shatabdi Mahotsav. Hence, at the main entrance of the city, a wonderful artwork made of bamboo of his garlanded hand was displayed, which inspired devotion to everyone.

### **Pramukh Swami Maharaj Vandana Sthal**

Pramukh Swami Maharaj Vandana Sthal was a unique center of faith for everyone at the center of the city. The 30 - foot tall magnificent statue of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, seated on a 40 - foot wide pedestal, showered the nectar of blessings on everyone. The inspiring life stories of Pramukh



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Mukhmudra



विधि-विधान मुद्रा



प्रार्थना मुद्रा



अलखदान मुद्रा



बोधमुद्रा

Swami Maharaj, who spent 24 hours for charity, inspired everyone to serve. The beautiful landscaping formed in a circle around it seemed to inspire meditation. In front of the golden statue of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, a five-foot tall statue of his beloved Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was also seated. Thousands of people used to offer devotional prayers here every day and experience a unique sense of happiness and peace.

## Bharatiya Lok Nritya Manch

Following the efforts made by Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the promotion of culture, the Bharatiya Lok Nritya Manch gave a unique experience for the audience at the festival, showcasing our cultural tradition. Along with a total of 14 regional dances of India, Shri Krishna Leela and Bhakta Prahlad, two dances, and dramas were also presented on this stage every day.



The aura of Pramukh Swami Nagar



National Saint Conference held in Pramukh Swami Nagar



Mahant Swamishri with Sadgurus

225 artists delivered an average of more than 30 performances per day and a total of 1,019 performances, bringing the glory of culture to more than 13,45,000 audiences.

### Landscape

- Garden-garden landscape area in the city: Total 8.9 acres
- Soil filling for planting: 1200 dumpers
- Different types of plants and trees used in the city: 125.
- Different plants, tree colors in the city: More than 250 colors
- Plantation of plants and trees in the city: 10,35,108 saplings
- 12,000 pieces of colorful petunia plants in the nursery
- 5000 'Chrysanthemums' grown in the nursery
- Soil pots used in the city: 10,000 pieces
- Pipes for drip system in the city: 134.9 km
- Net house built for the nursery: 82,000 sq. ft.
- Volunteers in service for 8 consecutive months: 40
- Volunteers in service for 4 consecutive months: 200



## Closing Ceremony

In the repose of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, the day of 15-1-2023 was the culmination of the centenary festival of Brahmawarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj for Ahmedabad. The closing ceremony the festival, which was pouring divine inspiration and light, was also grand and divine. A large number of devotees and devotees had gathered to benefit from this ceremony. The main mantra was ready to celebrate the centenary festival by assuming a new form today. Amidst the glittering of colorful lights, Aksharpurushottam Maharaj and Gunatit Guruvaryo were seated on the vast Mayurmanch facing east. They were showering amidrashti the glittering of colorful lights.

- A series of grand programs began in the ceremony. One after another, the presentations of mind-blowing programs captivated the hearts and minds of everyone. The main programs covered three topics.
- The devotees and devotees will never forget the countless benefits of Pramukh Swami Maharaj!
- The society will never forget the countless benefits of Pramukh Swami Maharaj!
- Time will never forget the many benefits of Pramukh Swami Maharaj!

A video titled 'Why can we forget..' was presented, centred on this feeling.



**Pujya Vivek Sagardas Swami**

Vivek Sagardas Swami, who witnessed the wanderings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj for 42 consecutive years, narrated the incidents related to 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj's unparalleled wanderings'. Pujya Satyamitranand Swami used to say that "If anyone has done such a tremendous wandering after Adi Shankaracharya, it has been Pramukh Swami Maharaj." Scriptures will be written about him.



**Pujya Ghanshyamcharandas Swami**

Pujya Ghanshyamcharandas Swami while offering prayers said: O Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the glory of Aksharbrahm has been spoken in the scriptures, the stories of his virtues have been written, but we are fortunate that we have experienced those virtues incarnate. We can realize those virtues. May his centenary celebration be ..... in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj and may Swamishri's health remain sound till we all are present.



**Pujya Tyagvallabhdas Swami**

Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a saint who was an example of devotion to the Guru. Pujya Tyagvallabhdas Swami, who had observed him closely for years, said in a special talk on 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj's devotion' that Thakorji's devotion to Pramukh Swami Maharaj was more important than his own body. That is why Swamishri always kept Thakorji ahead in every occasion. Such devotion is also seen in Param Pujya Mahant Swami today.



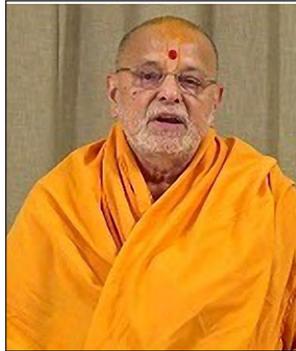
**Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriyadas Swami**

Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriyadas Swami described Swamishri's immaculate saintliness and specifically said, 'The unwavering holder of Lord Swaminarayan, Brahaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a true ideal saint. He was a Bhagavat holder saint. He spent every moment for us. He lived a pure life by living in all these five states of existence, devoid of desire, greed, interest, hatred and attachment, and guided us all on the path of God. Millions of obeisance to his feet.'



**Pujya Dr. Swami**

After the video presentation of the blessings on equality given by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Pujya Dr. Swami gave a special insight into that quality of Swamishri and said: "A great person like Abdul Kalam has written the book 'Paratpar' after being influenced by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His personality itself was divine. Let us also make our lives like that. That is the message of this centenary."



**Pujya Ishwarcharandas Swami**

After a historical video presentation of a brief glimpse of the speech given by Brahmaswaroop Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the UN World Religions Conference in 2000, Pujya Ishwarcharandas Swami extolled the virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and said: "Pramukh Swami Maharaj had egolessness in his life. He constantly behaved as a soul. There was a tremendous pursuit of Akshar Brahman and the work of God in his life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj did great things, propagated Sanatan Hinduism in the world and held big festivals, but in his life, not even a trace of 'we have done it' was seen. He used to say, 'Becoming a slave. Becoming a servant, enduring.' On the occasion of the centenary, it is our prayer that we too please him by performing devotion with humility and innocence."

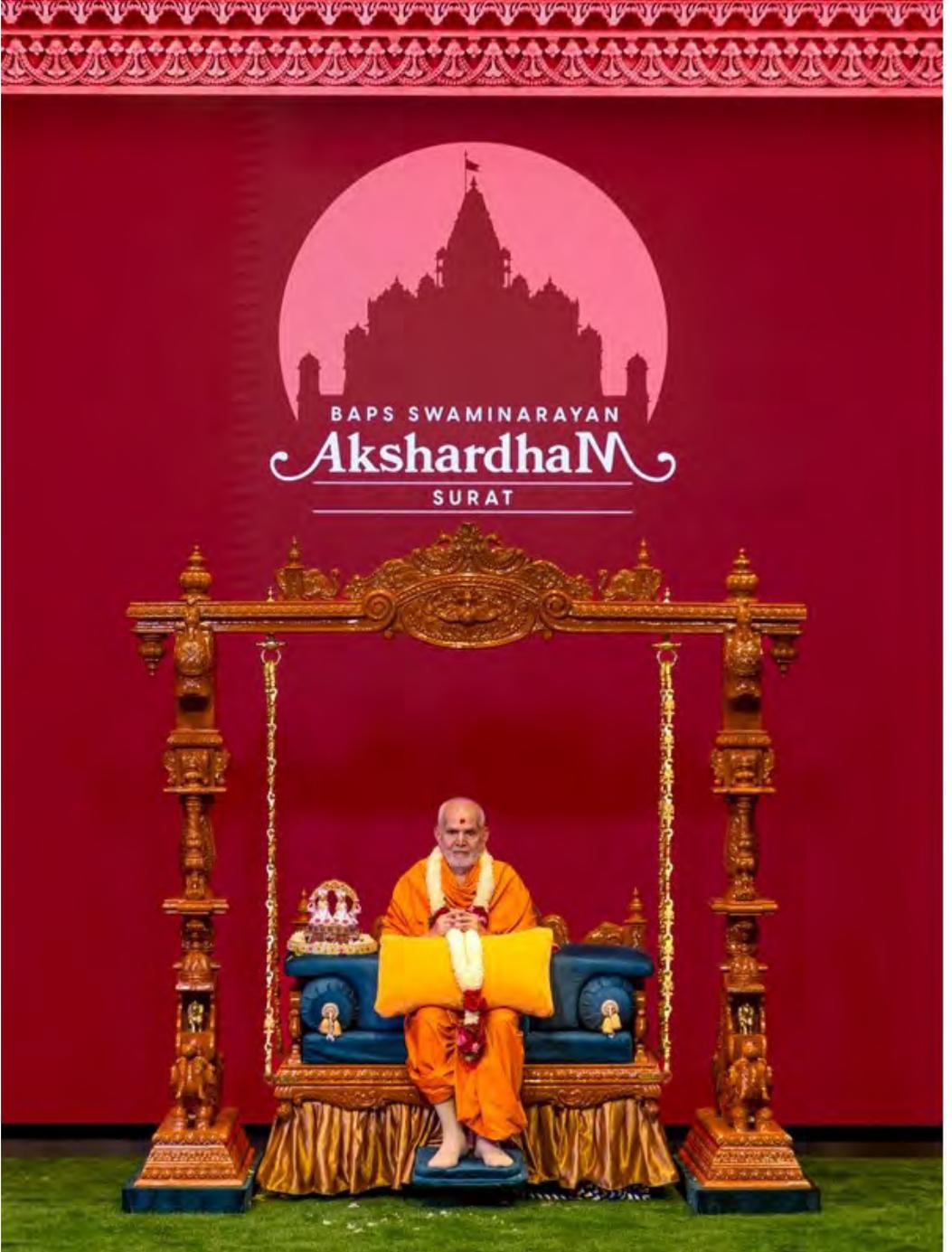
# Vicharan

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Vicharan is spiritual travel for the purpose of transmitting moral and spiritual inspiration. It is the tradition of personally visiting devotees in their villages, towns and cities and was established in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya by Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself. His vicharan throughout the villages of Gujarat spiritually elevated countless people. Over the past two centuries, his succession of Gunatit Gurus has resolutely continued that tradition. Today, Bhagwan Swaminarayan's sixth spiritual successor, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, tirelessly performs vicharan worldwide, from remote underdeveloped villages to modern cities. His vicharan is a unique source of spiritual guidance, enrichment and upliftment, deeply touching the hearts of countless spiritual aspirants.



*Swamishri swings Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and Shri Gunatitanand Swami Maharaj in a hindolo During Bochasan Vicharan July-2025*



*Swamishri during the assembly, Surat, June-2025*



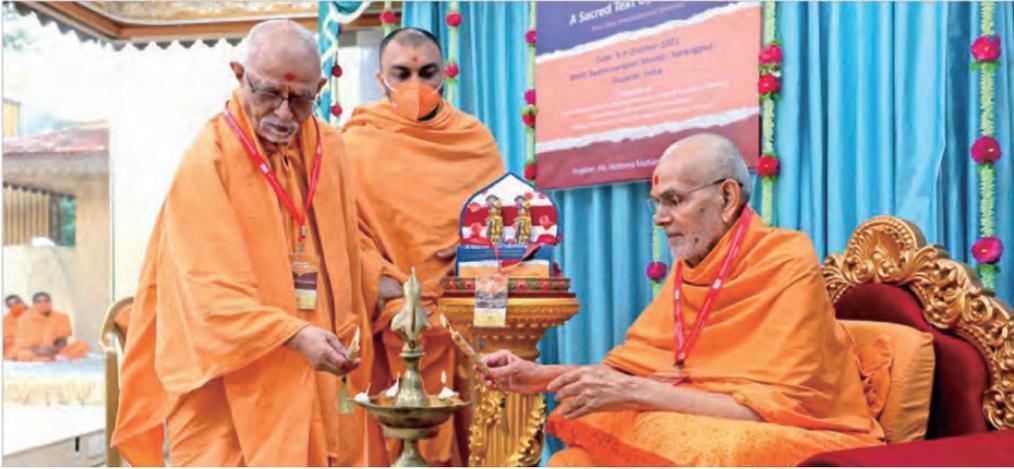
Swamishri performs the murti-pratishtha rituals, Surat-June-2025



*Hon. Richard Marles, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia with Swamishri*



*African youths perform a dance- Nairobi, Kenya*



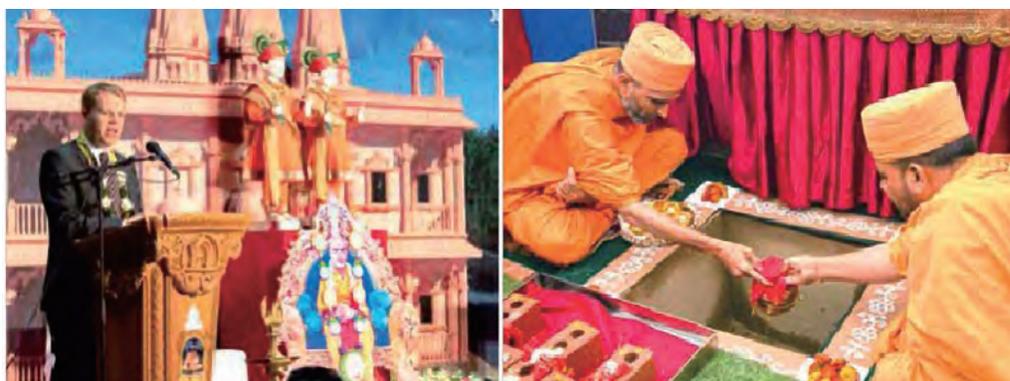
*Satsang Deeksha International Conference Seminar held in Salangpur in the presence of His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj November 2021*



*Ground breaking ceremony of Nutan BAPS Mandir held in Canberra, Australia and Bangkok, Thailand*



*Ground breaking ceremony of Nutan BAPS Mandir held in Canberra, Australia and Bangkok, Thailand*



*The foundation stone of a new BAPS temple in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand*



# Mahan Rushi

## Mahant Swami Maharaj - The Divine Power

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Mahant Swami Maharaj is the Guru who is guiding our life style. We do not have a Guard, while we are driving our day to day Life. He is our Guard. He is regularly guiding us how to live our lives and warns against dangers or possible accidents which can make our Life miserable.

In 2009, Mahant Swami Maharaj was in Nairobi, Kenya. He began his lecture series by saying "Know Thyself" and asked the audience, "How would you introduce yourself?" He went on to say that people would normally mention about his home, status, workplace etc. He elaborated "Our true identity is that we are those who have attained God on earth."

Mahant Swami Maharaj has expanded spiritual activities. He has introduced studies of ancient scriptures and translated its meaning in Modern Life for all - not only confined to devotees; by setting up inter-action meets with scholars of all faith. Most remarkable is "Harmony Mandir Abu Dhabi". New Akshardhams are coming up in Surat and Nadiad in India along with one in Paris - France. In his discourse he has translated how one can live successful and peaceful life by following the lifestyle narrated. He has revived Sanathan Dharma in modern context across the world. Says Sunita Sharma.

### **Mahant Swamiji, The Divine Power**

Lean is the man,  
Faint is his smile,  
But how powerful he is,  
You will know in a while.

Thousands suns in his domain,  
Rotating earth is his game,  
Stars twinkle around him,  
Universe moves with his name.

He showers streams of blessings,  
With one blink of his eye,  
Scripts destiny for all,

With colours of his spiritual dye.

One glimpse of his,  
Gives freedom from misery,  
His shadow alone,  
Makes sorrow a history.

When words pour from his heart,  
Inner soul gets sanctified,  
Gentle touch of the divine,  
Leaves the devotees dignified.

His one little step,  
Shakes the heavens around,  
One slight turn of his,  
Puts to silence the turmoil's sound.

When he bows his head,  
All Gods and Goddesses arrive,  
Raising his head causes,  
All living beings to survive.

His applying chandlo on forehead,  
Binds us in eternal synergy,  
Doing parikramas around his gurus,  
He radiates cosmic energy.

When he folds his hands,  
All our vices depart,  
When he raises his hands,  
Our janma chakras fall apart.

The mightiest force on the planet,  
Practices samp and humility,  
Donates every breath for us,  
Considers praying for us, his duty.

Revered are his virtues,  
Nispruh, Nirlobh, Nissneh,  
Nirman, Nishkam, He and only he,  
Is the door to Akshardham.

– Sunita Sharma

## **Mahanta Swami - Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj**

Mahant Swami Maharaj held that both Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj have moulded him. He talks about them - with great fondness and devotion - "Yogiji Maharaj was a great Saint - but very simple - always accessible to all - whether Sadhus - Haribhaktas and any other visitor. He was very humble and did not allow his 'greatness' to be expressed to anybody else. He used to behave - with each on par - with children, youth or seniors as equal to them. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was almost similar. He was humble. Easily accessible, used to respond by letters, phone or personal meet. He had also capacity to bring people together who had opposite views, inspire the community at large - with his charismatic appeal. Both Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj - used to talk in very simple language with simple words. They were self reliant. Worked at multiple levels from children to Presidents of the countries. Their focus was on well being - happiness of the family - growth in their life and activities and support goals of youth or for that matter any devotee and promoted satsang as well gruh sabhas. They inspired a great confidence in their devotees - who always felt with 'Ashirwad' they will be successful in whatever they are doing or overcome obstacle they are facing.

Mahant Swami is also the same - humble, accessible to all, walks among devotees, speaks less - 'Mitbhashi' , focus on well being of all - innovative and a think tank.

When we see one we forget another as we see them both Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Mahant Swami Maharaj - the Mahan Rushi.

Mahant Swami Maharaj is Rushi, a Mahan Rushi and has all such qualities of the exalted stature as described by Yogiji Maharaj in his Kirtan "Haji Bhala Sadhu".

**'Tanaki Upadhi taje so hi Sadhu'**

**'One who forsakes caring for his body is true Sadhu'**

Mahant Swami never cares for own comforts and lived a very simple life. In his young days as a sadhu, despite being not well with 103 degree fever; he washed dishes and cleaned the dining area using ash which is harsh material and can affect the skin.

**'Man apmane ekta sukh-dukh me sambhav;  
ahi kesukh hai, nahi swarg luchav'**

**'He possesses equanimity in honour and insult and in joy and misery;  
he understands that the pleasures of this world are insignificant and  
even those of paradise cannot entice him'**

Mahant Swami is very humble and lives a simple life - does not expect anything from anybody; whether an attending Sadhu or a devotee host. Once, he travelled to Patana and arrived at the station even as the local host had not. It was midnight and with nowhere to go; Swamishri slept on a bench. Although the local host's behaviour through his absence was not appropriate, Swamishri went to his house and blessed him.

**'Haji Bhala Sadhu, haridi Sadhu'**

**'A true Sadhu is always engrossed in God's devotion.'**

Mahant Swami Maharaj as a young sadhu in Mumbai always asked for the opportunity to prepare garland - in fact, preparation of decorated garland for Thakorji takes a lot of time and concentration . In 1969, he prepared a six foot long garland and sent it to Gondal. Yogiji Maharaj, offered it to Ghanshyam Maharaj and said, " Mahant Swami's Bhakti is remarkable."

**'Lalach lobh haram hai, grahe na ganthe dam....'**

**'He has shunned greed and enticements. He does not harbour wealth.  
And he practises absolute celibacy. Moreover, he continuously chants  
God's name'**

This truly and aptly describes Mahant Swami. BAPS is a multinational spiritual organisation in more than sixty countries with millions of devotees and over 1000 Sadhus. Yet, Mahant Swami always maintains a low profile. He gets up very early, performs yoga and comes for prayer. He is the same for each and everyone, be a sadhu or devotee.

**'Muktanand so santke,sada rahat Haripas'**

**'God forever resides within such a Sant', says Muktananad.**

Indeed, this is the secret behind Mahant Swami Maharaj. Being in his company is like Maharaj's company. His darshan is Maharaj's darshan. His loving words are Maharaj's loving words. His blessings are Maharaj's blessings. He is pure, divine, Aksharbramha - who is manifest of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

This is why I called him Mahan Rushi Mahant Swami Maharaj.

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# GLOSSARY\*

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1. Agna Command/ Instructions.
2. Akshar The internal abode.
3. Akshar Purshottam The two images :-
  - A) Akshar Akshabraham Gunatitanand Swami, the foremost disciple of Lord Swaminarayan.
  - B) Purushottam The supreme divinity, Lord Swaminarayan. They are worshipped together.
4. Akshardham
  - A) Divine abode of Lord Krishna or Lord Swaminarayan/ Heaven.
  - B) Name given to high-tech cultural monument in memory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, at Gandhinagar (Gujarat).
5. Arti The ritual of having lighted wicks before the deity as an act of adoration.
6. Ashram Residential place of holy persons/ Residential school where holy persons stay alongwith children and impart education.
7. Atmanistha Consciousness of one's self (Soul) as Atma.
8. Atmic Related to Atma.
9. Avtar Incarnation of God. In Hindu religion, it is believed that God descends birth on earth as a human being, whenever there is social

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\* Meaning of Sanskrit conventience terms used in the book

- disorder, anarchy, loss of religious values. He conquers the forces of evil and re-establishes spiritual values.
10. Bapa Affectionate term used to address Mahant Swami Maharaj
  11. BAPS Bochasanvasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha.
  12. Bhai Brother.
  13. Bhajan-Kirtan Devotional songs.
  14. Bhakt-Bhagwan. The Devotee and the devoted.
  15. Bhakti Devotion.
  16. Brahman A) Akshar, Eternal abode of Lord Swaminarayan.  
B) Name of the supreme Deity the Creator.
  17. Brahmcharya The practice of celibacy.
  18. Darshan Beholding the Deity or holy person with reverence.
  19. Ekadashi The eleventh day of both dark and dark halves of Hindu Lunar Month. It is considered as a holy day.
  20. Gadhada A village in Bhavnagar District of Gujarat. Lord Swaminarayan used as his base for 29 years. It has a magnificent stone temple.
  21. Ghanshyam Maharaj Lord Swaminarayan.
  22. Gondal It was here that Gunatitanand Swami passed away. A beautiful shrine is created in his memory known as Akshar Devi. Yogiji Maharaj also stayed here for long time.
  23. Grihastha The householder.
  24. Guru. A religious teacher, spiritual master.
  25. Guru Parampara Hierarchy of holy persons, spiritual masters.

- |      |                      |   |
|------|----------------------|---|
| 26.  | Hari Krishna Maharaj | Lord Krishna. Lord Swaminarayan is also called as Hari Krishna Maharaj.   |
| 27.  | Harijan              | A member of low caste.  |
| 28.  | KarSeva              | Voluntary service for spiritual or social work.   |
| 29.  | Kothari              | A Sadhu who is the administrative manager of a temple.  |
| 30.  | Mahotsav             | Festival Celebration.   |
| 31.  | Mandir               | Hindu place of worship, Temple.   |
| 32.  | Mantra               | Revered word holy hymn recited during worship or ceremony meditation.   |
| 33.  | Murti                | Statue of the deity.  |
| 34.  | Murti Pratishtha     | Religious function of installation consecration of the deity in a temple.   |
| 35.  | Nischay              | Firm Unshakable belief.   |
| 36.  | Nirlobh              | Freedom from covetousness, vow of poverty.  |
| 37.  | Nirman               | Freedom from ego.   |
| 38.  | Nirvikalpa Nischay   | Conviction of Lord's glory.   |
| 39.  | Nishkam              | Freedom from passion.   |
| 40.  | Parshad              | First stage of initiation into the sadhu life.  |
| 41 . | Prasad               | Sanctified food item, which is first offered to God and subsequently to be distributed to devotees.                                       |
| 42.  | Pujya                | Reverand.   |
| 43.  | Rushi                | Sage, Saint.  |
| 44.  | Sabha                | Assembly.   |
| 45.  | Sadguru              | Holy man who has renounced the world yet provides guidance to devotees.   |
| 46.  | Sadhu                | A person who has renounced the world and has taken initiation at the hands of a spiritual master to live a life aimed at God realization. |

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|--------------------|---|
| 47. Sampraday      | A religious fellowship, institution.  |
| 48. Sanskrit       | The classical language of ancient India.  |
| 49. Sanstha        | An organisation.  |
| 50. Satsang        | Holy fellowship, associated with spiritual master, sadhus or other devotees.  |
| 51. Seva           | Spiritual service.  |
| 52. Shikshapatri   | Epistle of precepts 212 verses in Sanskrit written by Lord Swaminarayana in 1826. It outlines the basic code of conduct for the guidance of his devotees. |
| 53. Shriji Maharaj | Lord Swaminarayan   |
| 54. Thakorji       | Small metallic image of Shriji Maharaj.   |
| 55. Tilak/Chandlo  | A mark applied to the forehead to signify faith in God.   |
| 56. Upanishad      | Ancient Hindu Scriptures - They are philosophical chronicles of sages expounding the nature of God, soul and cosmos.                                      |
| 57. Upasana        | Worship   |
| 58. Vicharam       | Spiritual travels.  |
| 59. Yagna          | Sacrificial worship where ghee (clarified butter) and grains are offered into a fire with the recitation of a special prayer - Mantras.                   |
| 60. Yogi           | A spiritually realised person.  |

Majority of the meanings are from the book "Pramukh Swami Maharaj" by Sadhu Shantipriyadas.

### **Spandan :**

Spanda-Karikas' translated by Jaidev Singh is a commentary on Siva Sutras published by Motilal Banarsidas Pvt Ltd, New Delhi - 2000

Spandan or Spanda is literally means movement or "throb.". It connotes dynamism or the Creative Energy of the Divine: the Divine creative pulsation.



*Author and his family members with Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj*



*Author and his family members*



*Book release of Marathi Edition of 'Yug Purush', by Mahant Swami Maharaj, Sept. 2013*



*Book release by Bhaktipriya Swami (Kothari Swami), Mumbai  
'Mahan Rushi Mahant Swami Maharaj', at Salangpur. Author with Narayan Guruji - 12 June, 2019*



*Book release by Mahant Swami Maharaj – “Yug Purush”, Author with Narayan Guruji in Ahmedabad - 15 January, 2017*

## About the Author

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Dr. Kirit Shelat is a public administrator. He has been awarded a D.Litt. degree - Doctorate of Science by the Junagadh Agricultural University - India for his outstanding contribution to Climate Smart Agriculture and Building Climate Smart Farmers. He had a long spell of his career in the Indian Administrative Service. He has a hand in introducing the "New Extension Management - Krishi Mahotsav" approach in Gujarat as Principal Secretary - Agriculture - which doubled the income of farmers. He has designed and implemented large-scale projects for poor families, farmers and micro entrepreneurs and for the development of remote rural areas. He has authored more than 20 books related to agricultural and rural development and related to impact of climate change and ways to meet that challenge at local level - village level. He is the Executive Chairman of the National Council for Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Public Leadership (NCCSD).

Dr. Kirit Shelat has written bio-graphy of Puja Pramukh Swami Maharaj - "YUG PURUSH, PUJYA PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ - a life dedicated to Others". This is published in six languages with nine editions. He wrote bio-graphy also of Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj - "Mahan Rushi Mahant Swami Maharaj" - June, 2019 - This is in Gujarati.

**About the Publisher;**  
**National Council for Climate Change Sustainable Development  
and Public Leadership (NCCSD)**

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**Building Self Reliant and ATMANIRBHAR-Climate Smart Farmers**

In the new millennium the world is facing the challenge of climate change with increasingly un-predictable weather events and its intense adverse impact ecosystems. Although global warming impacts are across all latitudes and longitude - its adverse impacts are quite profound at local level. The severely affected are villages-the farm land and the farmers. The increased floods, cyclones, delayed rains, droughts, heavy rains, un-seasonal hot and cold waves and frost - lead to crop-failures, low productivity of livestock and fisheries and mortality.

It was in this context that Dr. Kirit Shelat initiated a dialogue by organizing an International Conference on “Global Warming, Agriculture, Sustainable Development & Public Leadership” at Gujarat Vidhyapith - Ahmedabad in March 2010. The outcome of conference was the thought of setting up a special purpose - NGO with focus on Agriculture - “National Council for Climate Change, Sustainable Development & Public Leadership - NCCSD at Ahmedabad. This idea was discussed at meet held in Delhi in May 2010. Justice B.P. Singh, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, Shri Parshottam Rupala, Dr. Y.S. Rajan & Shri Kantisen Shroff and others participated and welcomed idea. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Delhi at that time. The promoters - led by Justice B.P. Singh, Dr. Kirit Shelat and others visited him and sought his blessing for this endeavour. Pramukh Swami blessed and said “This is a very good initiative. Our major challenge is livelihood of poor families in rural Areas. I am sure all of your efforts will help them to have sustainable livelihood.”

The Organization was rolled in September 2010 with Dr. Kirit Shelat as Executive Chairman and Justice B.P. Singh as its President.

NCCSD initiated its mission by organizing think meets for policy formulation and capacity building training programme for farmers and youth. The focus was to prepare public leadership - both elected and non-elected, and



farmers to meet challenges posed by Climate Change. This was followed by a series of the initiatives:

- NCCSD participated in “Conference of Parties” - UNFCCC and ..... of agriculture as nature’s tool for mitigation - NCCSD participated and organized side events and exhibition and also met senior leaders from across the globe on this matter. NCCSD successfully prioritized agriculture in COP. The Paris Agreement accepted the importance of food security, food productivity, technology transfer & capacity building. FAO also established special purpose organization called GACSA- “Global Alliance For Climate Smart Agriculture”.
- At the National level NICRA - National Institution for Climate Resilient Agriculture was initiated by ICAR. NCCSD took up ‘Capacity Building’ as part of it and developed Guide book for farmers for developing Climate Resilient Agriculture.
- NCCSD organized an International Conference on ‘Climate Justice’ in 2014. The Chief Justice of India inaugurated this conference. The issues related to farmers got focused and out-come was a liberal Crop Insurance Policy to cover even farmers, who have not obtained credit.
- In 2014 NCCSD initiated technology transfer deliberations with Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), USA for Building Climate Smart Farmers. 26 Scientists from USA visited and trained farmers in Gujarat.
- NCCSD brought out a guidebook “Building Climate Smart Farmers - Doubling of Income of Farmers in Arena of Climate Change”. This

book is authored by Dr. Kirit N. Shelat and Dr. Odemari Mbuya, FAMU - USA. NCCSD is regularly conducting think tank seminars, capacity building programmes - for farmers, rural youth, university students, government functionaries, developing new ideas for policies and sharing it with the government.

- In response to a call given by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India - Shri Narendra Modi for ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT "NCCSD worked on Atmanirbhar Krishi and Farmers - Role of Stakeholders" It is organizing - as a follow-up series of seminars on ATMANIRBHAR FARMERS through web-on-air. It worked with Agriculture Department - Govt, of Gujarat for developing Atmanirbhar Farmers - A Roadmap for Gujarat Agriculture -2020-30.
- NCCSD has brought out more than 25 publications and is proud to bring out this book which depicts what goes in making of a "Spiritual Leader".

#### Contact us

National Council for Climate Change Sustainable  
Development and Public Leadership (NCCSD)  
Patel Block, Rajdeep Electronic's Compound,  
Near Stadium Six Road, Navrangpura,  
Ahmedabad-380014

Email: [drkiritshelat@gmail.com](mailto:drkiritshelat@gmail.com), Website: [www.nccsindia.org](http://www.nccsindia.org)





*National Council for Climate Change,  
Sustainable Development and Public Leadership*