

# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

March-April 2016

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*Golden Anniversary Celebrations of  
BAPS Chhatralayas and Educational Activities*







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## **BAPS CHHATRALAYA GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

December 2015, Vidyanagar

1. Youths present a skit in Sarangpur, prior to Swamishri's launching of the grand finale of the BAPS Chhatralaya Golden Anniversary Celebrations to be held in Vidyanagar (13 December).
2. *Annakut* offered to Thakorji at the BAPS Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar as part of the celebrations (27 December).
3. Reunion assembly of former students of BAPS *chhatralayas*, Vidyanagar (27 December).
4. Youths present a spectacular traditional dance during the Golden Anniversary Celebrations, Vidyanagar (27 December)
5. Over 12,000 past and present students gathered for the grand finale event of the Golden Anniversary Celebrations, Vidyanagar (27 December).

**Cover Title:** *Yogiji Maharaj established the first BAPS Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar, and it was later expanded and modernized by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. BAPS Chhatralaya youths view the grand finale Golden Anniversary Celebrations in Vidyanagar.*



BAPS Swaminarayan Vidyamandir, Sarangpur



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Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj

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

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In this special issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss*, pages 13 to 53 have been translated from *Swaminarayan Prakash*, March-April 2016, by Sadhu Vivekjiandas and Sadhu Amrutvijaydas.



# FIRST WORD

An organized society is based on systems. It has systems for education, health, agriculture, work, sports, individuals, families; more or less for everything and everyone. Systems mean rules and regulations, proper materials, technology and people. Nature, too, runs on well defined systems.

Systems allow for smooth running, efficiency, achieving goals, joy and peace. Where there is a dearth of systems or there are wrong systems, chaos, conundrums and conflicts result. And, at the root of all systems lie individuals – people with knowledge, skills and values.

Social scientists believe that without values, a society would disintegrate. Religious leaders believe that without values and proper faith, human life becomes meaningless. The root cause of all ills is an overriding materialistic approach to life. Corruption, crime, promiscuity, disease and conflicts are the phenomena of a wholly materialistic attitude. We need to inculcate in our children, youths and society moral, cultural and spiritual values through a sound educational system, enlightened families and bona fide religious organizations.

Mahatma Gandhi writes, “The end of all knowledge must be building up of character.”<sup>1</sup> Education should not only make a student into an intellectual, but also help him become whole – meaning, one who practises truth (*satya*), compassion (*daya*), nonviolence (*ahimsa*), continence (*brahmacharya*), non-stealing (*asteya*) and non-possession (*aparigraha*). Education without values leads the individual towards immoral and nefarious activities. Such a person cannot differentiate between right and wrong or appreciate the importance of values. In addition to teaching analytical and critical skills, education should also equip students to cope adequately with the challenges and pitfalls of life. Thus, education is not only about academic excellence, but also about character-building, emotional growth and spiritual growth.

In 2010, India had 300 universities, 20,000 colleges, 260 central laboratories, and three million scientists<sup>2</sup> – the third largest scientific pool in the world. India also possesses a rich spiritual and cultural heritage that dates back 10,000 years. It is high time that our educational institutions teach India’s glorious heritage to produce morally robust and spiritually proud citizens. Mahatma Gandhi emphasizes the importance of spiritual faith in life, “If the education you get turns you away from God, I do not know how it is going to help you and how you are going to help the world.”<sup>3</sup>

Pramukh Swami Maharaj often says, “The heart of education is the education of the heart.” The BAPS students’ hostels in India and the satsang assemblies in BAPS mandirs worldwide are bastions of character-building, service to society and spiritual faith. The first BAPS students’ hostel was built and inaugurated by Yogiji Maharaj in 1965, in Vidyanagar. Ever since, through the efforts of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his sadhus, the students at the BAPS *chhatralayas* have been nurtured holistically. Today, thousands of *chhatralaya* alumni spread throughout the world live morally upright lives and offer their services to Satsang and the countries they live in.

This issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* provides a detailed report about the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar and the perennial BAPS educational activities in India.

The more we abide by value systems the better and happier our lives and our world becomes. ♦

1. Gandhi, M.K. *Issues for Students*. Delhi: Farsight Publishers & Distributors, 2009, p. 37.

2. *Times of India* (Ahmedabad edition). ‘When Science Goes Boink’ by Arun Ram, 25 January 2012.

3. Gandhi, M.K. *Issues for Students*. Delhi: Farsight Publishers & Distributors, 2009, p. 14.



# Purpose of Reading the Shastras

*Shri Hari resides in Gadhada and holds daily reading sessions of various Hindu shastras...*

## WHY SHRI HARI INCARNATED ON EARTH?

Shri Hari took a bath by the Ganga Jaliya well and returned to his room, Akshar Ordi. At that time Laduba and Jivuba had sent milk garnished with almonds, pistachios, cardamom and saffron for Maharaj. They had also sent *penda* and *barfi* to eat. Shri Hari had his breakfast and went to Lakshmi Vadi.

Sachchidanand Swami had sent fresh brinjals for Maharaj. They were fried and spiced at Maharaj's behest and he ate them with *rotla*, *makhan* and milk for lunch. Then Maharaj served the fried brinjals to his sadhus, while others served generous helpings of *rotla*, *makhan*, and milk or buttermilk. Thereafter, Maharaj sat beneath an *asopalav* tree before an assembly of sadhus and devotees.

Shortly thereafter, Nath Bhakta of Vadodara arrived with a large group of devotees. Shri Hari expressed his pleasure and stood up to embrace Nath Bhakta. Maharaj asked him, "Have you got your accommodation for the night?" Nath Bhakta

replied, "Yes Maharaj, we have it in the *darbar*. On learning about your presence here, I have come for your darshan."

Shri Hari told the sadhus, "Make the dining arrangements for all of them." After having their meal, Nath Bhakta came to Maharaj and requested, "Maharaj we wish to perform *pujan* and offer clothes and ornaments as gifts."

Maharaj asked, "Is there any other wish you have?"

Nath Bhakta smiled with joy and revealed, "Yes Maharaj. After you don these clothes we wish to rock you on a swing." Maharaj responded happily, "I, too, wish to fulfil all the good wishes of my devotees. It is with this purpose that I have come from Akshardham to earth."

Nishkulanand Swami assured Nath Bhakta, "By the time you perform Maharaj's *pujan* and offer him gifts I'll make a *hindolo*." And Nishkulanand Swami set up a *hindolo* between the two tamarind trees in Lakshmi Vadi."

Nath Bhakta and the devotees from Vadodara performed Maharaj's *pujan* and offered him expensive clothes and ornaments. In response to their devotion, Shri Hari donned the clothes and sat on the *hindolo*. The devotees of Vadodara rocked Maharaj with exuberant devotion. The sadhus and other devotees also participated in the devotions. Shri Hari blessed all with the bliss of Akshardham.

## GOD MAKES HIMSELF EASILY AVAILABLE

The next day, a spiritual assembly was in progress in Gadhada. Shri Hari was intently listening to a discourse on *Moksha Dharma* from the Mahabharat. Someone then intervened to inform him that Brahmanand Swami and his group of sadhus were not far from the outskirts of Gadhada. Immediately Shri Hari declared, “We should go and receive Swami and his group. Stop the *katha* and everyone get ready.” Maharaj told Naja Jogiya to saddle his mare, Manki. Shri Hari and the Kathi Darbars mounted on their horses. All the sadhus got ready and started walking ahead.

Brahmanand Swami and his sadhus were coming from the road to Khopala. On seeing Shri Hari approaching to receive him, Brahmanand Swami felt a tide of emotion. He thought how loving Maharaj was and how easily accessible he had made himself. Swami knew that Maharaj showered all with his divine love and presence to foster their devotion and consolidate their satsang. Overwhelmed by Maharaj’s love, tears trickled from Brahmanand Swami’s eyes. By that time Maharaj had arrived before him.

Brahmanand Swami threw himself prostrate before Maharaj. Shri Hari raised him and embraced him. Then Maharaj embraced each of his sadhus and asked them about their well-being. The entourage returned to Dada’s *darbar*. Shri Hari entered his room, Akshar Ordi, along with Brahmanand Swami, Muktanand Swami and Nityanand Swami.

Lunch was served to Maharaj. Thereafter, Shri Hari gave the entire dish of consecrated food to Brahmanand Swami and expressed his pleasure.

## SHRI HARI HOLDS READINGS OF VARIOUS SHASTRAS

The Indian New Year in 1823 (A.S. 1879) had already set. Maharaj decided to listen to the readings of various shastras by Pragji Purani. Once the discourse on *Moksha Dharma* was over,

Maharaj told him to read the *Pancham Skand* (5<sup>th</sup> Canto) and *Dasham Skand* (10<sup>th</sup> Canto) of the Shrimad Bhagvat. Then, Maharaj listened to the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita and its commentary by Ramanujacharya. During the discourses Shri Hari sometimes explained the subtle meanings of the shastras and highlighted its essence.

Maharaj made Pragji Purani read the *Vasudev Mahatmya* from the Skand Puran, the Sama Veda, the *Mitakshara* commentary on *Yagnavalkya Smruti* by Vignaneshwar and the *Vidur Niti*.

In conclusion, Shri Hari advised, “The reason for reading the various shastras was to highlight the purpose of attaining liberation in this human birth. This essence, incorporated in all the shastras, can only be culled out and explained fully by God or his realized Sadhu. Other than that by merely listening to the shastras one’s intellect becomes confused. Thus, by understanding this essence and imbibing it in one’s life you will attain ultimate *moksha* through my association. If, however, someone fails to understand the scriptural essence, but has faith in my form and words, he will still attain *moksha*.”

\* \* \*

Shri Hari celebrated the festivals of Janmashtami, Jal Jhilani, Sharad Punam, Annakut and Prabodhini Ekadashi at Gadhada. On Makar Sankranti day, Hirjibhai, a leading devotee of Bhuj, arrived. Maharaj asked him, “How far has the mandir construction work reached in Bhuj?” Hirjibhai replied, “In the next three to four months, the mandir will be ready enough to perform the *pratishtha* rituals. The devotees of Bhuj wish that the *pratishtha* be done soon so that they can have your darshan.”

Shri Hari assured, “Once you reach back, let me know about it and I will schedule the *pratishtha* for the month of Vaishakh (April-May).” With Shri Hari’s blessings Hirjibhai felt a surge of confidence that the mandir in Bhuj would be ready by Vaishakh.

## FESTIVAL OF VASANT IN VARTAL

Shri Hari arrived in Vartal and celebrated the Vasant festival. He sprayed coloured water on the sadhus and devotees and blessed them. Thereafter, everyone joined in the mandir construction *seva*. Shri Hari was happy to see all engaged in the mandir *seva* for the perpetuation of *upasana*. He felt that the true fulfilment of a human birth was to engage one self in such *seva*.

At that time Takha Pagi of Bamnoli asked Shri Hari to sanctify his village. Shri Hari travelled from Vartal to Bamnoli. There, too, he sprayed coloured water on all. Then Takha Pagi took the water in which Maharaj had bathed and added it to the village well. Shri Hari smiled and added, “Pagi, from today your well has become holy like the Ganga.” Shri Hari then travelled to the nearby village of Mahudiya and later returned to Vartal. After staying there for a few days he returned to Gadhada.

## GIVES THE MURTIS OF RADHA-KRISHNA TO THE DEVOTEES OF MULI

Two devotees from Muli, Amabhai Parmar and Jethabhai, arrived in Gadhada. After having Maharaj’s darshan and listening to his discourses they requested Shri Hari, “Give us the *murtis* of Radha-Krishna which you worship and offer *thal* daily. Then, whenever you come to Muli, you can ritually install the *murtis* for the growth of satsang there.”

Shri Hari accepted their request and gave them the two *murtis*. Then he assured, “When I go to Panchala I shall come to Muli to perform the *pratishtha*.”

Shri Hari wished to celebrate the Fuldol festival in Panchala. So, he left Gadhada one early morning with a large retinue of sadhus, *parshads* and devotees.

## BE BRAVE IN ABIDING BY NIYAMS

Shri Hari passed through Pipardi and stayed the night at Hathasani. He left in the evening and

travelled all night to reach Jasdan in the morning. The Darbar of Jasdan, Chela Khachar, welcomed Maharaj and humbly requested, “Maharaj, you are my father’s guru. I’m indeed blessed by your arrival. I request that you and everyone accompanying you take lunch here before you depart.”

Shri Hari explained, “It is past early morning and to stay back till lunchtime will delay our travel schedule. I wish to leave right now.” On hearing this Chela Khachar became disappointed. Maharaj told him, “Bapu, there is no need to be saddened. Give us whatever food you have ready. We will have it during the journey.” Thus, Chela Khachar brought *barfi* and *penda* in profusion. Then Maharaj asked him, “Do you follow the moral disciplines properly?” On hearing this Chela Khachar turned silent. His dull countenance belied his paltry allegiance to satsang *niyams*. He mustered some strength and confessed, “Maharaj, I follow only two *niyams* – abstinence from drinking liquor and stealing. The other *niyams* of not eating meat and committing adultery I don’t follow.” Then he passionately added, “I believe my *moksha* lies in having your association. I ask you to never forsake me.”

Shri Hari clarified, “You seek *moksha* merely through divine association, regardless of observing *niyams*. Yet, if you truly understand the glory of association you would not relax in observing *niyams*. You are a Rajput by class and just as you would never retreat in war, braving all assaults, similarly you should be headstrong in following all the *niyams*.”

Chela Khachar simply listened, feeling deficient in measuring up to the high moral standards Maharaj expected. Shri Hari continued, “Bapu, by having supreme faith in me and my Sadhu you will be liberated, but you’ll have to start following the other two *niyams*.”

Chela Khachar eventually nodded with commitment, “Okay Maharaj. I shall do as per your bidding.”

(Contd. on pg. 12)



## ADHYĀY 3

# Karmayoga – The Art of Karma

### Part 18

*(Recap: We previously looked at the first and second adhyāyas of the Gitā. The first adhyāy extensively describes the grief of Arjuna. In the second adhyāy, Shri Krishna first gives Arjuna words of courage, followed by the knowledge of sāṅkhya and thereafter commenced the precepts on yoga. During the exposition of yoga, Arjuna enquired about the qualities of a sthitapragna person, which Shri Krishna then explained. In this article we will begin to look at the third adhyāy.)*

To learn to live, is to learn to do. When education or training is added to those actions, they become a skill or art. We certainly do things, but the question is of skill. For example, if someone who does not know how to swim jumps into water and frantically waves his hands and feet, he still begins to drown, tire, get fed up and become miserable. He then says that he never wants to try swimming again. When that same person learns the art of swimming, he does not drown, tire, get fed up or become miserable. On the contrary, he enjoys swimming, and says that he wants to swim again. What at first caused misery, becomes a pleasure. This is the miracle of adding skill to actions. Shri Krishna has used the word *kaushal* for skill. With the words, ‘योग: कर्मसु कौशलम्’ – ‘Yogaha karmasu kaushalam’ – he has given karmas done with skill the calibre of yoga.

In the third *adhyāy*, Shri Krishna has given precepts on karmayoga. If we do karmas, we indeed become bound, but our shastras also teach us that if karmas attain the status of yoga, they

no longer bind; on the contrary, they liberate and give peace. The third *adhyāy* of the Gitā contains the secret of elevating karmas to the status of yoga. Let us imbibe that.

#### THE DOMINION OF KARMA

“न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् । कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥”

“Na hi kashchit kshanamapi jātu tishthatya-karmakrut, kāryate hyavashaha karma sarvaha prakrutijairgunaihi.” “No one can pass even a moment without doing some sort of karma. Bound by their nature, everyone is compelled to do karmas” (Gitā 3.5).

This is an introduction to the domain of karma. We will notice the spread of this domain when we look around. All living things are continuously doing something or other: walking, sitting, looking, pondering, reading, eating and so on. Look at the circle of life too: a child is born, grows up, gets old, dies – then gets one life after the other. Thus, the stream of karmas continues ceaselessly. This



is not only amongst humans, this realm is seen to be spread across birds and animals alike; they are all constantly doing something. Karmas can be seen even in plants: buds develop on a stem, blossom into flowers and wither; fruits grow on trees, ripen and fall.

In the entire universe there is always some kind of process taking place. New occurrences are continuously taking place. Stars are born and die. Galaxies form and dissolve. The Sun constantly emits solar flares. The Earth constantly rotates. The cycle of high and low tides continues ceaselessly in the oceans. The seasons continually come and go.

The cycle of creation, sustenance and destruction can be seen to be spread everywhere. It is as if life is an ocean of karmas. Shri Krishna intends to explain here that life can never be found without karmas.

The words ‘कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म’ – ‘*Kāryate hyavashaha karma*’ – show the dominance of karma. There is no living person who is doing nothing. Sometimes we may think that when we feel lazy we are doing nothing, but that is not completely true, we are always doing something. The wise define laziness as not doing what is meant to be done and doing what is not meant to be done. There is a big question in the world today regarding those without work. Those not working think they are doing nothing, but is that really true? The saying ‘an idle mind is the devil’s workshop’ seems to be more true, and there are certainly a lot of things going on in the devil’s workshop. Many a time, we are not lazy or free, but we are in some sort of thoughtless state; thoughtlessness regarding what to do. In this state, we lack the discrimination of what to do and what not to do. For example, when we are overcome by anger, if things do not happen the way we want, we then become thoughtless, and due to a lack of discrimination, we do the inappropriate. These are all karmas that occur under the influence of our innate nature.

The influence of karmas extends to well-read

scholars too. Shri Krishna says, “सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि। प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति॥” – “*Sadrusham cheshtate svasyāhā prakruter gnānavānapi, prakrutim yānti bhootāni nigrahaha kim karishyati.*” – “Even a person possessing *jnān* behaves according to his nature. All living things follow their nature, thus how can they abide by the restraints laid down by the shastras” (Gitā 3.33).

In this manner, Shri Krishna has clarified that the influence of karmas spreads over the whole world. Bhagwan Sawminarayan also references this *shloka* in the Vachanamrut explaining that even the *jnāni* are compelled by karmas (Vachanāmṛut Gadhadā I 37).

Moreover, by pronouncing this extensive realm of karmas, Shri Krishna is hinting something to Arjuna. The story is as follows: In the previous *adhyāy*, Shri Krishna had belittled karmas, and Arjuna had kept the statement in mind, for it was exactly what he wanted. Arjuna was determined not to fight, and here he had found an appropriate excuse. Therefore, he told Shri Krishna, “O Krishna, if you consider karmas to be inferior, why are you telling me to take part in this terrible karma of battle? Are you trying to confuse me, or what?” (Gitā 3.1-2). Shri Krishna understood what was going on in Arjuna’s mind. In reality, Shri Krishna’s statement that Arjuna was using to argue his point of not going to war, had never been said in that way at all. Shri Krishna had called karmas not associated with Paramātmā inferior. Nevertheless, rather than discussing that, Shri Krishna explains the extent of the reach of karmas saying, “No one can spend even a moment without doing some karma or other”, and thus does not promote Arjuna’s inclination to escape. To defend his decision not to do one particular karma, Arjuna has taken the extreme stance that no karmas should be done at all, and that too, trying to use the words of Shri Krishna! But Shri Krishna very clearly presents the above truth regarding karmas in a way that Arjuna understands it. Hearing this, Arjuna does indeed realize his



mistake, and we will see this later in Arjuna's own words. If one is compelled to do karmas by one's innate nature, then it would of course be better to do karmas according the command of Bhagwan and attain peace and happiness – this is the principle that is being explained here.

### DO AS HAS BEEN ASSIGNED

With regards to karma, Shri Krishna explains another point: “नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः । शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥” – “*Niyatam kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hyakarmanaha, shareerayātrā'pi cha te na prasiddhyedakarmanaha.*” – “O Arjuna! Do what you have been assigned to do, it is better to do than not to do. Moreover, if you completely forsake karmas, you will not be able to sustain life” (Gitā 3.8).

Let us understand this *shloka* in three parts. The first topic is that of diligence, presented with the words, ‘कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः’ – ‘*Karma jyāyo hyakarmanaha*’ – ‘It is better to do than not to do’. Do not remain free, continue to work. This was a command to shake off idleness, and an inspiration to wed effort. Indeed, if care is not taken, karmas can be harmful, but to completely forsake them for that reason is not acceptable to Shri Krishna by any means. Doing nothing has been shunned as much as doing bad things. Nothing can be achieved by lying around. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has also shown dislike to idleness saying, “If he is very lazy, sleeps too much and when told by others to bathe, meditate or observe other *niyams*, says, ‘I’ll do it later; what’s the hurry? I’ll do them slowly’ – then even though he may appear to be good, one should avoid his company” (Vachanāmṛut Loyā 6). In the Mahābhārat, such laziness has been called negligence. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has pointed it out to be a great enemy on the spiritual path (Vachanāmṛut Sārangpur 14).

The second point is that of sustaining life. One who forsakes karmas, dies. If one wants to live, karmas have to be done. God has made our bodies such that we have to do karmas to sustain

them. This principle applies to humans, animals and birds alike. The only difference is that birds and animals never have to be told to do karmas. You will never find a bird asleep at sunrise. In fact, it is worth learning the virtue of hard work from them. Where there is laziness, illness finds a home; then to merely live is distressing. Brahmaśwarup Yogiji Maharaj used to narrate the following parable: There was once a mendicant. He lived in the jungle. On the auspicious day of *akhātrij*, a merchant desired to take him to his house for a meal. The merchant approached the mendicant and requested him to come to his home. “As God wishes,” was the mendicant’s reply. The merchant brought a horse-carriage to chauffeur the mendicant back to his house and said, “Please take a seat in this vehicle and come to my house to eat.”

“As God wishes.” Was all that the mendicant replied again. The merchant realized that the mendicant said nothing else but this, but would come for the meal. He then lifted the mendicant and sat him in the carriage. Soon, his home came, the merchant said, “My house has come, you may now alight from the carriage.”

“As God wishes,” came the reply again.

The merchant lifted the mendicant from the carriage and put him on the ground and said, “You may have a bath.”

“As God wishes,” said the mendicant.

The merchant bathed him and said, “Wear your clothes.”

“As God wishes,” continued the mendicant.

The merchant dressed him and after offering the thirty-two types of delicacies to God, he prepared a seat for the mendicant and requested him to take his place.

“As God wishes,” came the reply.

The merchant sat him on his seat and said, “You may eat now.”

“As God wishes.”

The merchant put a morsel of food in the mendicant’s mouth and said, “Now you may chew.”

“As God wishes.”



The merchant then brought a stick and said, “I have done this much. I cannot shove the morsel into your stomach with a rod; you will have to chew it yourself.”

Only the indolent use principles such as ‘As God wishes’ in such an inferior manner. It is compulsory for someone who wants to live to do karmas. The Gitā advises us to refrain from such indolence.

The third point is of doing that which has been assigned. This is of more importance. Although there has been stress on doing karmas rather than not doing karmas, there is also clarification that those karmas should be as assigned. It is better to do something rather than nothing, but this does not mean doing useless or unfitting karmas, thinking, ‘Do anything you wish, just do not remain idle.’ The emphasis is on doing what has been assigned, i.e. do karmas according to rules, responsibilities and duties. Everyone in this world has a responsibility, everyone has a duty. This is what is meant by ‘*niyat karma*’. Our shastras give us a clear and comprehensive description on these, and for this reason they also serve the role of being dharma-shastras. If we truly fulfil the duties imparted to us in the shastras, then both we and the world at large will become happy; and the whole world would be a place of peace and harmony. We should remember the fact that our every deed affects us, our family and the entire human race. We are a part of creation, each action is a component of creation. The greater the quality of our actions, the greater the progress of all; and the poorer the quality, the further the diminishment of all. Therefore, for the betterment of society, Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj often says to the sadhus, devotees and volunteers, “Each person should do whatever has been assigned to them properly, then you and all will attain happiness. Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Yogiji Maharaj and Shastriji Maharaj will be pleased on you; everyone will be pleased.” Assigned work implies responsibility; responsibility means ‘*niyat karma*’. These deeds can please us, our guru, Bhagwan and all – this is the message Pramukh

Swami gives to establish the karmayoga of the Gitā in our day-to-day lives.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan uses the word ‘*āgnā*’ for these ‘*niyat karma*’; doing them is our duty. He says, “Only one who follows the commands of the Satpurush can be said to be under the influence of favourable circumstances. To deviate from those commands is the very definition of adverse circumstances” (Vachanāmrut Gadhadā II 51). He has also described *āgnā* as being of two types – do’s and don’t’s. He says, “The prescribed moral do’s and don’t’s are indeed true, not false. Whosoever falsifies them will be consigned to *narak*” (Vachanāmrut Gadhadā I 42). Informing us that abstaining from our responsibilities is a grave sin, Bhagwan Swaminarayan inspires us to do what has been assigned to us. Only if we refrain from doing what we are not meant to do, can we properly do what we are meant to do; thus, following both do’s and don’t’s is our responsibility.

There are many energetic people, but only actions in the above manner give true and good outcomes. Some say, “I don’t like to sit around doing nothing,” and they spend their time exercising excessively, or aimlessly wandering around the shops, or watching and listening to unnecessary things, and they believe this to be their liveliness. But the Gitā does not promote this anywhere. Directing us to ‘*niyat karma*’ the Gitā, in a way, shuns the possibility of free time. Many things such as thinking good thoughts, serving, helping others, devotion, etc. are our duty, our responsibility, our ‘*niyat karma*’; but when we do such things we do not feel as if we have done something, therefore some people incorrectly think that such things are done by those who are free.

In this manner, rather than doing useless things, things that are harmful to oneself or others, or things that we have decided for ourselves, the emphasis is on the ‘*niyat*’ actions that we must all do.

Thus, in this *shloka*, the Gitā diverts us from inactivity and directs us on to the path of ‘*niyat karma*’.



## EMANCIPATION AND WELFARE BY KARMA

Giving the example of established people in society, Shri Krishna explains the necessity of doing karmas, saying, “कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः । लोकसंग्रहमेवाऽपि संपश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि ॥” – “*Karmanaiva hi sansiddhimāsthitā janakādayaha, lokasangrahamevā’pi sampashyan kartumarhasi.*” – “O Arjuna! Even kings like Janak attained fulfilment by abiding by karmayoga. Moreover, keeping the welfare of society in mind too, you should do karmas” (Gitā 3.20).

The welfare of society means to promote a sense of duty. If everyone in society properly fulfilled their duty, then the world would benefit. Even great kings, like Janak, properly abided by their duties and bettered society. They had made arrangements for the people. Not only that, they were skilled in the art of fulfilling the responsibilities of a king, therefore they attained the ultimate goal. Furthermore, he tells Arjuna, “You, too, are such a great king, and you, too, should do what has been assigned to you and protect society and attain that ultimate goal.”

Shri Krishna also substantiates the reason for insisting that Arjuna do his duty, saying, “यद् यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः । स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥” – “*Yad yadācharati shreshthastattadevetaro janaha, sa yatpramānam kurute lokastadanuvartate.*” – “O Arjuna, whatever the great do, the rest follow. That which the great authenticate (by doing), the rest accordingly do” (Gitā 3.21).

Here ‘great’ refers to the icons of society, the ideal. Everyone has an idol in their minds,

whether consciously or subconsciously. Each of our actions is influenced by something seen, heard or believed. When we see, hear or come into contact with someone in any way, their actions begin to influence us. If that person becomes the idol of our lives, the influence occurs quicker and to a greater extent. As a result, our actions begin to imitate those of our idols. The influence of the actions of political leaders, actors, singers, musicians, and other talented people that people have accepted as their idols can be seen on those very people.

Our idols should be ideal, i.e. only the best should be idols. Many learn from them. Arjuna was also one of the best, he was the idol of many and, here, Shri Krishna is reminding him of that. If Arjuna’s ideas were faulty, then believing those faulty ideas to be ideal, people would follow them. If this happens, society, too, would become faulty. If a watch breaks, an individual is troubled, if a clock on the wall in a home breaks then a family is troubled, but if the clock tower of the town breaks then the whole town is misled. Everyone’s eyes were on Arjuna. If there was some fault in his understanding, then this would cause trouble to many. With this vision in mind, Shri Krishna understandingly inspires Arjuna to do the karmas that he must.

Thus, in the third *adhyāy*, Shri Krishna reveals the art of doing karmas. We have contemplated a little on this in this article. In the next article, we will consider matters such as what is karmayoga in its true sense? What are the means of karma-yoga? And more... ◆

(Contd. from pg. 7)

Shri Hari proceeded from Chela Khachar’s home. On reaching the sweetmart in town, Chela Khachar saw that the cook was preparing fresh *jalebis* and *motaiya* laddus. Chela Khachar bought the entire lot and gave them to Maharaj. “Maharaj, serve them to the sadhus and devotees.” The group then travelled to Atkot and stayed the night at Bandhiya. The next day, Maharaj travelled to Gondal.

The king of Gondal, Motiji, sent food provisions and a cook to prepare a meal for the entire group. Shri Hari accepted his hospitality and stayed overnight. The next day, Maharaj travelled to Kandorda, Jhanjmer and then to Hirabhai’s residence in Jaliya. After taking lunch there, everyone left for Ganod, Manavadar and finally arrived in Panchala.

(Contd. in next issue)

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



# Yogiji Maharaj and Youths

## Setting the Template



In the early 1960s, when Yogiji Maharaj visited Vallabh Vidyanagar, its founder, Bhailalbhai Dyabhai Patel, told him, “Swami, we have set up big complexes to educate youths, but arrangements to instil good values and character in them are lacking.”

For many years, wherever he travelled, Yogiji Maharaj had been inspiring children and youths to lead a morally upright, spiritual life. He had established the *bal* and *yuvak mandals* to ensure that these ideals were transmitted to as many youths as possible.

Furthering the scope of this endeavour, Yogiji Maharaj realized the need to focus also on the youths studying in college and ensure that they, too, were taught *brahmavidya* – spiritual knowledge.

Yogiji Maharaj envisioned that BAPS *chhatralayas* would enable this.

Shri Ambalal Karsandas Patel, grandson of Keshavlal Pragji Patel – a leading



1. Founder of Vallabh Vidyanagar, Shri Bhaikaka Patel, discusses with Yogiji Maharaj the need for students hostels that provide value-based guidance and instruction 2. Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and others during the *shilanyas* ceremony for the BAPS Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar, 1964 3. Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Manibhai Jivabhai Patel at the *chhatralaya* inauguration 4. BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar, opened on 20 June 1965

devotee of Shastriji Maharaj, had donated a prime plot of land (1½ *vighas*) on the Anand-Vidyanagar Road to the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. It was there that Yogiji Maharaj wished to build a *chhatralaya*. Yogiji Maharaj often referred to the *chhatralaya* as a ‘boarding house’.

So, on 27 April 1964, Yogiji Maharaj joyfully performed the groundbreaking ceremony there, in the presence of Shri Bhailalbhai Patel, Shri Ishwarbhai Patel (university vice-chancellor) and other leading educationists.

To prepare for this occasion, 500 *yuvaks* from 16 *yuvak mandals* served day and night for a week to dig the *chhatralaya* foundations. Together with their *seva*, they also benefitted from Yogiji Maharaj’s discourses and earned his blessings. Yogiji Maharaj himself joined in the strenuous *seva* by lifting around 300 *tagaras* (tubs) of soil.

He encouraged the youths by guaranteeing, “Each *tagaro* lifted will earn the merit of one *yagna*. If you lift even one, you will attain Akshardham.”

Within one year the *chhatralaya* was built. Yogiji Maharaj named it the ‘Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya’, and the inauguration event was held on 20 June 1965 in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Manibhai Jivabhai Patel.

The opening of this *chhatralaya* marked the beginning of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha’s educational activities.

In the first year, 50 students were admitted to the *chhatralaya*. Some of them were so mischievous that the rector became extremely frustrated and pondered whether it would be better to close it down and rent out the rooms instead. He presented the proposal to Yogiji Maharaj



on 25 January 1966, during his visit to Vallabh Vidyanagar. However, Yogiji Maharaj encouraged him, “There is no need to be frustrated about this. I will explain to them all.”

Later that day, Yogiji Maharaj held an assembly of all the *chhatralaya* youths and then met each of them individually. Such was Yogiji Maharaj’s affection for them that the youths agreed to give up their rowdy ways and bad habits.

Yogiji Maharaj knew that, directed properly, the youths would channel their energy and talent into positive, productive activities. Yogiji Maharaj’s love for the youths had won them over.

Yogiji Maharaj’s vision was clear: it was absolutely essential that to teach good values to the youths, faith in God was necessary. So, to nourish their faith, Yogiji Maharaj inaugurated a prayer hall on 7 August 1967, and established a daily routine of prayers which all the youths attended.

Yogiji Maharaj also nurtured the self-confidence latent in the youths.

Once, Yogiji Maharaj was in Bochasan for the Guru Purnima festival. At around midnight, about 60 youths from the *chhatralaya* arrived there. Yogiji Maharaj was delighted to see them and greeted them warmly and affectionately. Then, out of the blue, he instructed them all, “Everyone must observe a fast tomorrow. It is Guru Purnima. There is great merit in observing a *nirjala* fast!”

And the youths enthusiastically accepted his wish. Thereafter, Yogiji Maharaj repeatedly encouraged youths to fast to develop self-control and mental discipline.

Later that year, on 7 November 1968, Yogiji Maharaj was in the small village of Gana, near Bochasan. At about 8.00 p.m., youths from Vidyanagar came for his darshan. Yogiji Maharaj was overjoyed to see them and asked, “Which of you will observe a fast tomorrow? Eleven of you must volunteer.” Then, he himself noted the names of the 11 youths and blessed each of them with his characteristic pat on the back, “Here, I give you two kilos of strength!”

Yogiji Maharaj added, “I have given you this fast out of love and to express my pleasure. But, whether I am near or far, you must all observe a fast on *ekadashi*.”

The students readily accepted Swamishri’s wish.

By and by, through observing austerities and doing *seva*, the discipline and self-confidence of the youths continued to increase.

Yogiji Maharaj also encouraged them to read and speak in English.

On 20 September 1967, Yogiji Maharaj was at the *chhatralaya* in Vallabh Vidyanagar. The youths had prepared a handwritten magazine titled ‘Jnandeep’. Yogiji Maharaj was immensely pleased by their efforts and blessed them. Then, during the conversation, the English book, *Life and Philosophy of Shri Swaminarayan*, written by Harshadbhai Dave, was mentioned. To this, Yogiji Maharaj said, “All collegians should read this book.” He then autographed each of the 30 books bought by the students.

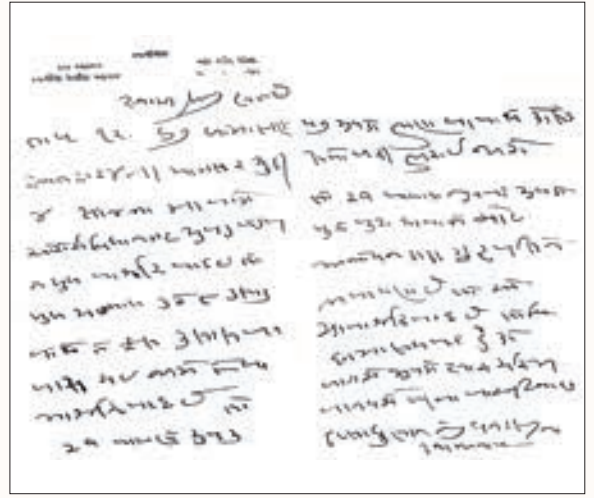
Yogiji Maharaj also frequently reinforced higher spiritual messages and principles among the youths. He explained, “When one accepts God as one’s only saviour, then one is said to have firm conviction. So, engage in satsang for one’s *kalyan*. In Loya 12, Maharaj talks about the highest level of conviction. If this is attained, then one is liberated. I want to make you all like that. I want to grant you all the state of *aksharrup*.”

Sometimes, when Yogiji Maharaj was at the *chhatralaya*, he would pay a surprise visit to the youths’ rooms.

On 17 November 1967, Kiritbhai (presently Akshaymuni Swami) and Baldevsinh (presently Yagnapriya Swami) and other youths arranged Yogiji Maharaj’s *padhramanis* to each room. As the occupant of the first room was not yet ready, Yogiji Maharaj began in reverse order, from room 30. Rajendra, who was not a *satsangi*, lived in that room. When Yogiji Maharaj entered, he was performing his usual daily puja – using the *murtis* of many devas and devis. He was worried



1. Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami inspect the open land in Vidyanagar to plan for the *chhatralaya*



2. Yogiji Maharaj's letter envisioning the great success of the *chhatralaya*

about what Yogiji Maharaj would say to him on seeing the large number of *murtis*. To his surprise, Yogiji Maharaj remarked, “Oh! You have given us the darshan of many devas,” and then devoutly bowed down to them. Rajendra (presently Narendraprasad Swami) was deeply moved by Yogiji Maharaj’s purity and love.

The youths continually felt Yogiji Maharaj’s motherly love. He would instruct them to fast, but would also personally arrange for and serve them food for *parna*. He frequently sent sweet delicacies and other items for the youths to eat.

In July 1969, Yogiji Maharaj was in Bochasan for the Guru Purnima celebration. Thakorji had been offered a meal of *dudhpak* and *malpuva*. Seeing this, Yogiji Maharaj remembered the youths of Vidyanagar *chhatralaya*. He had stacks of fresh *malpuva* and containers of *dudhpak* packed for them and sent the food with Motibhai. The youths were overwhelmed by such motherly affection.

Yogiji Maharaj had a special way of engaging the *chhatralaya* youths in *seva*. On one occasion, he told the youths that in his dream he had cleaned the garbage bins in the mandir and Shastriji Maharaj was delighted.

They asked him, “Bapa, today should we clear the garbage.” Yogiji Maharaj expressed his utmost

delight. And so, these intelligent, educated youngsters got to work.

Many were amazed to see the love the youths had for an aging sadhu. This is, indeed, the special feature of the ‘Brahmavidya College’ established by Yogiji Maharaj.

The lives of these youths had become enriched with many virtues. This was the outcome of Yogiji Maharaj’s vision.

On 12 May 1967, Yogiji Maharaj wrote to the rector, Shri Tribhovanbhai Patel, “Many blessings... the [*brahmavidya*] college will become full. The *chhatralaya* will become renowned. Blessings that the youths develop good character.”

Today, the BAPS manages many *chhatralayas*, each furthering the selfless vision of Yogiji Maharaj.

Elaborating on the words of Yogiji Maharaj that “Many ‘living’ mandirs will be prepared here”, Pramukh Swami Maharaj says, “This *chhatralaya* is not merely made of walls and ceilings, but it is a source of ‘living’ mandirs.”

Continuing the work of Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj has enthusiastically and admirably expanded upon Yogiji Maharaj’s vision to provide value-based education to youths. ♦

Gujarati text by Sadhu Aksharvatsaldas





# Milestones of 50 Years of BAPS Chhatralayas and Schools



Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar

In 1954, Yogiji Maharaj was travelling by train near Anand. On seeing Vinubhai's (Pujya Mahant Swami) Agriculture College, Yogiji declared that he would like to establish a College of Brahmaavidya opposite it.

Soon thereafter, a stalwart devotee of Anand, Shri Ambalalbai Patel (popularly known as Kalyan Yojna), donated his land for the construction of the students hostel (*chhatralaya*). In 1964, Yogiji Maharaj performed the foundation-stone laying ceremony for the *chhatralaya*. Then with the efforts of youths, a building for the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya (APC) was completed in one year. On 20 June 1965, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated the APC.

The *chhatralaya* would provide a conducive environment to students for their academic studies and in also inspiring moral and spiritual values in their lives. The APC became the starting point of BAPS education services to society. At that time no one had thought that the APC would become the cradle of many more *chhatralayas*.

Through the Herculean efforts of Pramukh Swami Maharaj the seed of BAPS educational

activities flourished into a giant banyan tree.

At the inception of the APC in Vallabh Vidyanagar there were only 20 rooms. However in 1971, with the growing number of students wanting to stay at the *chhatralaya*, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired the construction of another floor on the existing building and added 40 more rooms. In spite of this the *chhatralaya* was still not big enough to accommodate the burgeoning number of students. Thus, in 1984, two more building blocks were built on the *chhatralaya* grounds. In 1993, a large prayer and assembly hall was constructed and Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* of the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and the Guru Parampara. By then the *chhatralaya* in Vidyanagar provided accommodations for 500 students.

The need for more *chhatralayas* in different towns and cities was observed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Thus, Swamishri decided to build more *chhatralayas* to provide a conducive atmosphere for education, and inspire values and personality development in the students. In the mornings and evenings, daily satsang assemblies inculcate

self-control, devotion and values in them. To develop their personality debates on current topics, quizzes, question-answer sessions on spirituality, speeches, inspiring dramas and skits, music concerts and traditional dance training, celebration of festivals and study circles are organized on a regular basis.

Swamishri has also inspired students to perform social and moral services in society, like anti-addiction campaigns, cleanliness drives and relief work in times of calamity. The youth's fervently participate in these programmes to please Swamishri.

During his visits to the *chhatralayas* Swamishri has always made personal efforts in maintaining the quality of accommodations, food and cleanliness. He has also taken special care in making all

the *chhatralayas* clean and homely.

Furthermore, through the donations by BAPS, several institutes have been established in Gujarat: Pramukh Swami Medical College, Karamsad; Pramukh Swami Institute of Electronics (Vidyanagar); School of Architecture (Vidyanagar); Pramukh Swami Science College (Kadi) and Pramukh Swami Planetarium (Rajkot) and several Secondary and Higher Secondary schools. For the underprivileged the BAPS has sponsored 15 new schools in Maharashtra, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Tripura.

During the 50 years (1965-2015) of BAPS's educational activities Swamishri has made giant efforts for its flourishing and prestige. The milestone events of that astonishing journey is covered in this article. ♦

#### VALLABH VIDYANAGAR

In 1965, the BAPS educational activities was auspiciously launched in Vallabh Vidyanagar by Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Thereafter, through the intense efforts of Pramukh Swami Maharaj the APC has grown to accommodate 500 students today. Here, students studying in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> standards, engineering, architecture, arts and commerce are motivated to study well and inspired with values. The fascinating saga of BAPS educational activities begins from the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar...







1967

#### GONDAL

Yogiji Maharaj established the Gurukul as a residential school for boys. It comprises of Primary (1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> standards), Secondary (9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>) and Higher Secondary (11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>) sections. Thereafter, Pramukh Swami Maharaj developed it into a modern educational complex.

- **Type of School:** Residential and Day School
- **Students:** 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> standards (Including Science stream)
- **Medium:** Gujarati & English
- **No. of Students:** 1,160
- **Results:** 100 percent pass rate for 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> standards



1984

#### BHADRA

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a Secondary School for rural children in Bhadra village, Jamnagar district.

- **Students:** 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> standards
- **Medium:** Gujarati



1983

#### VADODARA

Pramukh Swami Maharaj launched the second BAPS Chhatralaya in Vadodara and after additional construction it was transformed into a modern hostel in 1989.

- **Students:** Students of 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> standards, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying architecture, engineering, medical science, science, commerce, management and arts reside at the chhatralaya
- **No. of Students:** 200



1985

#### UKAI

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a students hostel (chhatralaya) for the uplift of

tribal children in Ukai, South Gujarat

- **Students:** 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> standards
- **No. of Students:** 150



1988

#### BHAVNAGAR

Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated the *chhatralaya* in 1988. In 2013, a new hostel was built to accommodate the growing number of students.

- **Students:** 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> standards, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying architecture, engineering, medical science, commerce, management and arts stay at the *chhatralaya*
- **No. of Students:** 240



1991

#### NADIAD

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a *mandir* and a students hostel in Nadiad. The majority of the hostel students study in engineering colleges.

- **Students:** Graduate and postgraduate students studying architecture, engineering, medical science, commerce and management reside at the *chhatralaya*
- **No. of Students:** 310



1991

#### SURAT

Pramukh Swami Maharaj launched the BAPS *Chhatralaya* in Surat in 1991. With the increasing number of students a new hostel building was opened in 2013.

- **Students:** Diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students of engineering, medical science and commerce
- **No. of Students:** 130



1991

#### CHANSAD

BAPS Swaminarayan Vidyamandir was established in memory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj by the devotees of Chansad. The school has earned credit for its quality education and extra-curricular activities.

- **Type of School:** Day School established by BAPS and run on government grant.
- **Students:** 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> standards
- **Medium:** Gujarati
- **No. of Students:** 70





1992

#### LONDON

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj fulfilled the wish of Yogiji Maharaj by establishing the first Independent Hindu School in UK. It is called 'The Swaminarayan*

*School', which is one of the leading schools in UK.*

- **Type of School:** Day School
- **Students:** Nursery to A levels
- **Medium:** English
- **No. of Students:** 450

The school has received many awards: 'Excellent Independent School in All Areas', 'Eco-school Award', 'National Primary Quality Science Award', 'Healthy School Award', and 'Thinking School Award'.



1993

#### Mt. ABU

*In 1993, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated a students hostel. In 2001, Swamishri established a primary school.*

- **Type of School:** Residential and Day School
- **Students:** Nursery to 8<sup>th</sup> standard
- **Medium:** English
- **No. of Students:** 300
- **No. of Hostel Students:** 105
- **Results:** 100 percent pass rate



1994

#### MAHESANA

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated the Chhatralaya in Mahesana, the main city of northern Gujarat.*

- **Students:** Diploma, undergraduate students of engineering, science, commerce, management, pharmacy and medical science.
- **No. of Students:** 135



## 1997

### NAGPUR

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a school in 1997 in Nagpur. In 2004, Swamishri inaugurated a new BAPS school and students hostel. It is considered to be one of the best schools in the city.

- **Type of School:** Residential and Day School
- **Students:** Nursery to 12<sup>th</sup> standard
- **Medium:** English (CBSE)
- **No. of Students:** 1,620
- **Result:** 12<sup>th</sup>: 99 percent pass rate



## 1998

### DHULIYA

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a beautiful students hostel in Dhuliya, Khandesh region, Maharashtra, to foster values and education in students.

- **Students:** 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying engineering, science, pharmacy, medical science and commerce reside in the *chhatralaya*.
- **No. of Students:** 205



## 2000

### KARAMSAD

Pramukh Swami Maharaj launched the first BAPS residential girls school, 'Swaminarayan Vidyapith'

- **Type of School:** Residential Girls School
- **Students:** 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> standards
- **Medium:** English (CBSE)
- **No. of Students:** 475



## 2001

### SARANGPUR

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a residential school in the pilgrim place of Sarangpur. The rural students are taught in Gujarati or English medium.

- **Type of School:** Residential School
- **Students:** 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> standards
- **No. of Students:** 1,785
- **Medium:** Gujarati & English
- **Results:** 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>: 100 percent pass rate







2003

### KUTCH & SAURASHTRA

Pramukh Swami Maharaj re-constructed 49 schools damaged or destroyed during the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat.

*The newly built schools provide education to thousands of schoolchildren. The BAPS sponsored many poor students.*

### The schools rebuilt by BAPS in Kutch and Saurashtra:

#### KUTCH DISTRICT

- Primary School (Nani Bhadaï, *taluka (ta.)* Mandvi)
- Boys School (Moti Khedoi, *ta.* Anjar)
- Girls School (Moti Khedoi, *ta.* Anjar)
- Primary School (Khavda, *ta.* Bhuj)
- Primary School (Gandhigram, *ta.* Mandvi)
- Primary School (Mothala, *ta.* Abdasa)
- Primary School (Nani Dhufi, *ta.* Abdasa)
- Primary School (Ravapar, *ta.* Lakhpat)
- Primary School (Moti Bhadaï, *ta.* Mandvi)
- Ibrahmin Primary Girls School (Mandvi, *ta.* Mandvi)
- K.G. Manek Primary School (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)
- Primary School No. 1 (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)
- Primary School No. 2 (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)
- Primary School No. 7 (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)
- Primary School No. 9 (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)
- Primary School No. 11 (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)
- Primary Girls School No. 1 (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)
- Primary School (Ukhamdora, *ta.* Bhuj)
- Primary School (Gunatitpur, *ta.* Bhachau)
- Primary School (Nani Mau, *ta.* Mandvi)
- Vivekanand Higher Secondary School (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)
- Ratadiya High School (Ratadiya, *ta.* Mundra)
- Rabari Ashram School (Anjar, *ta.* Anjar)

- Primary School (Soyla, *ta.* Bhuj)
- Primary School (Pragpur)
- Primary School (Morjar, *ta.* Nakhatrana)
- Primary School (Mankuva, Bhuj)
- Primary School (Darbargadh, Bhuj)

### SURENDRANAGAR, RAJKOT & AHMEDABAD DISTRICTS

- Primary School (Pandri, *ta.* Limbdi)
- Primary School (Mansar, Halvad)
- Primary School (Ganad, Lakhtar)
- Primary School (Bhadreshi, Vadhwan)
- Primary School (Vana, Lakhtar)
- Primary School (Bhadiyad, Vadhwan)
- Primary School (Ticker Pay Centre, Halvad)
- Primary School (Chalada, Chuda)
- Primary School (Acharda, Chuda)
- Primary School (Malad, *ta.* Vadhwan)
- Primary Girls School (Mojidad, *ta.* Chuda)
- Ganjela High School (Ganjela, *ta.* Dhrangadhra)
- Shri Khodu Secondary School (Khodu, *ta.* Vadhwan)
- Dedadra High School (Dedadra, *ta.* Vadhwan)
- Primary School (Limli, *ta.* Vadhwan)
- Primary School (Bakarthal, *ta.* Vadhwan)
- Primary School (Sejakpar, *ta.* Chuda)
- Primary School (Gariya, *ta.* Vankaner-Raj)
- Primary School (Modpar, *ta.* Morbi-Raj)
- Primary School (Jivapar, Padadhri-Raj)
- Primary School (Bhangadh, *ta.* Dhandhuka)
- C.U. Shah Fine Arts College (refurbished), Vadhwan
- S.C.U. Shah Women's Hostel (refurbished), Vadhwan
- Occupational Training Centre (refurbished), Surendranagar



## 2004

### SELVAS

Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated the BAPS Secondary School in Selvas, Dadra Nagar Haveli, in 2004. The English medium School is a boon for the local children.

- **Type of School:** Day School
- **Students:** K.G. to 12<sup>th</sup> standard
- **Medium:** English (CBSE)
- **No. of Students:** 970
- **Results:** 10<sup>th</sup>: 100 percent, 12<sup>th</sup>: 100 percent pass rate



## 2005

### BENGALURU

Pramukh Swami Maharaj opened a small chhatralaya in the premises of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Bengaluru, Karnataka, for students studying there.

- **Students:** 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> standards, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in engineering, science, commerce, pharmacy and medical science.
- **No. of Students:** 65



## 2005

### VADODARA

Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated a school near the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Atladara.

- **Type of School:** Residential and Day School
- **Medium:** English: Nursery to 12<sup>th</sup> Gujarati: Nursery to 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standards
- **No. of Students:** 630
- **No. of Hostel Students:** 225
- **Result:** 12<sup>th</sup>: 100 percent pass rate



## 2006

### BAKROL

Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated a modern school in Bakrol, on the outskirts of Vallabh Vidyannagar, in 2006

- **Type of School:** Day School
- **Students:** 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standards
- **Medium:** Gujarati
- **No. of Students:** 690
- **Results:** 10<sup>th</sup>: 95.55 percent, 12<sup>th</sup> (Science): 99 percent pass rate





2006

#### VALSAD

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a large school complex on the shores of south Gujarat in Valsad.*

- **Type of School:** Residential and Day School
- **Students:** Nursery to 12<sup>th</sup> standard
- **Medium:** Gujarati. Maths and Science are also taught in English
- **No. of Students:** 1,940
- **No. of Hostel Students:** 610
- **Result:** 12<sup>th</sup>: 98 percent pass rate



2006

#### RAISAN

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated a school and hostel on the*

*Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar highway. The school is situated in rural surroundings.*

- **Type of School:** Residential and Day School
- **Students:** Nursery to 12<sup>th</sup> standard
- **Medium:** English
- **No. of Students:** 840
- **Hostel Students:** 215
- **Results:** 10<sup>th</sup>: 100 percent  
12<sup>th</sup>: 95 percent



2008

#### JUNAGADH

*In the Sorath region of Gujarat, Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a chhatralaya in 2008.*

- **Students:** 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> standards, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in engineering, science, commerce and medical science.
- **Hostel Capacity:** 110 students



2008

#### **BARDOLI**

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated a BAPS Chhatralaya in Bardoli, South Gujarat.*

- **Students:** 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> standards, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in engineering, pharmacy and other streams.
- **Hostel Capacity:** 215



2008

#### **BHANGADH**

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a school and hostel for students in the underdeveloped village of Bhangadh, Bhal region.*

- **Type of School:** Residential and Day School
- **Students:** 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standards
- **Medium:** Gujarati
- **No. of Students:** 210
- **Hostel Capacity:** 70 (Run by local Shela Pragati Trust)



2008

#### **RANPUR**

*A students hostel built by a local education trust in Ranpur, Jhalavad region, and run by BAPS.*

- **Students:** Diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in engineering, science, commerce, management, pharmacy and medical science.
- **Hostel Capacity:** 250



2009

#### **RAJKOT**

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a modern students hostel behind the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Rajkot.*

- **Students:** Diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in engineering, science, commerce, management, pharmacy and homeopathy.
- **Hostel Capacity:** 100





2009

#### KHERVA

In 2009, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated a modern chhatralaya in Kherva near Mahesana, north Gujarat.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students of all engineering streams reside at the BAPS Chhatralaya in Kherva.

- No. of Students: 175



2009

#### ADIPUR

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established a BAPS Chhatralaya for students studying at educational

institutions in Adipur, Kutch.

- Hostel Capacity: 150



2011

#### RAMBHAS

Nestled in the lap of the mountain ranges of Saputara, the BAPS School in Rambhas provides education to tribal children.

- No. of Students: 220
- Students: 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standards
- Medium: Gujarati
- Hostel Students: 140



2016

#### RANDESAN

Pramukh Swami Maharaj established the BAPS residential school for girls in Randesan, in 2016. The English medium school teaches and provides hostel facilities to 800 girls studying from standards 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> and later on it will include 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>.

# BAPS

## Swaminarayan Chhatralayas

### Unique Centres for Spiritual Enrichment



BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar

“We want to build a college of *brahmavidya* here... Living mandirs will be nurtured here.” With such a vision, Yogiji Maharaj inaugurated the first BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya in Vallabh Vidyanagar in 1965. He was committed to developing excellent centres of education that would enable the all-round development of students.

This vision of Yogiji Maharaj has been furthered by the enormous efforts of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Today, under the auspices of the BAPS’ educational services, many educational centres provide thousands of students the opportunity of attaining academic excellence and developing a virtuous life.

From early morning to late night, all these centres are abuzz with student-centric activities. Through a planned daily schedule and a variety of creative



programmes, moral, cultural, spiritual and professional values are nurtured in the youths.

The following is a brief overview.

### A CHHATRALAYA MORNING

From early morning, BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralayas pulsate with a variety of activities.

Daily, after rising and washing, students join in the morning prayers. They collectively sing profound prayers composed by the great sadhus of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The resonance of these prayers creates a vibrant spiritual ambience. Then, after the students have sung the *arti* and *ashtaks*, experienced sadhus deliver a short discourse. Thereafter, groups of students, as per the weekly rota, perform their personal daily puja together in the prayer hall.

Then, on Sundays or holidays, students enthusiastically engage in physical *seva* in various parts of the *chhatralaya*.

After completing other personal tasks, students take lunch by 10.30 a.m. and then go to college.

On returning in the late afternoon, students play sports and participate in other physical activities. They also relax by engaging in light discussions with the sadhus.

After evening prayers and meditation in the mandir, the students attend the *arti*. This is followed by a short discourse by experienced sadhus that provides spiritual and moral inspiration.

After dinner, students are required to study from 8 to 10 p.m. Thereafter, some students join the sadhus in the nightly singing of the *cheshta*. After 10.30, they again engage in further studies.

The special feature of the *chhatralaya* is that the students themselves organize and manage the various daily activities. For this there is a working committee of 35 to 40 students, who are assigned responsibilities for these activities. These activities include assembly arrangements, audio cabin, dining arrangements, maintenance, library and others.

In addition, students also organize and participate in special events.

### BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Throughout the year, the birthdays of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the guru *parampara* are celebrated with great devotion and special assemblies. From three to seven days preceding the birthday, a series of activities and events are held to pay tribute to these great personalities. These

Youths engage in discussion with a resident sadhu, BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar





Youths perform personal daily puja



Daily reading and study time

include dramas, skits, dances, mimes, speeches, singing kirtans and others. Through such participation, youths develop in a multitude of ways. Sometimes the celebrations incorporate pilgrimages by foot and while doing *dandvats*, and *pradakshinas*. Youths also undertake observances such as fasting, not gossiping about or slandering others, contemplating on incidents from the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, etc.

Students post quotations and short incidents from the lives of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the guru *parampara*.

The sadhus support their efforts and contribute by delivering speeches.

Thus, during these celebration periods, the *chhatralaya* is abuzz with great devotion.

## JNANSATRA

Every year a two-day *jnansatra* is held in

which learned and experienced sadhus discourse and guide on various topics. The students also benefit through question-answer sessions and discussions.

## AUSTERITIES

Austerities help to discipline the mind and body. So, most students observe a fast on every *ekadashi*. On *ekadashis*, students sing bhajans in the evening before the *murtis* in the mandir.

During the holy month of Shravan, while regularly attending college, students observe various forms of fasting, as per their choice: *dharna-parna*, drinking only liquids, *ektana*, *chandrayan* and others. For years Pramukh Swami Maharaj has expressed his delight at the students' austerities by blessing and serving them when their fasts ended. Now, the students conclude their fasts at the hands of senior sadhus.



Daily personal study



Youths collectively perform personal puja





Youths in the daily assembly



A sadhu discourses and guides the youths

### RATH YATRA

Students prepare a beautifully decorated *rath* (chariot), place the *murtis* in it and devoutly pull the *rath* around the *chhatralaya* campus.

### HINDOLAS

During Shravan, under the guidance of sadhus, students creatively design and prepare *hindolas* (swings) on which they place Thakorji, affectionately rock him and offer devotion by singing bhajans.

### JAL JHILANI

In the mandir hall, a temporary artificial pond is set up to celebrate Jal Jhilani. Shri Harikrishna Maharaj's *murti* is placed on a small motorized boat and is taken for a ride around the pond. Students sing bhajans related to the festival.

Swamishri sanctifies *prasad* for the youths



### NAVRATRI

The nine-day festival period of Navratri is dedicated to the goddess Shakti. By the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, students celebrate this popular festival through devotion. A variety of devotional activities are organized in which the students participate. Sports events are also arranged.

### DIWALI-ANNAKUT

Some students stay behind at the *chhatralaya* during their Diwali holidays from college. They help in cleaning the campus, designing *rangolis*, arranging the *annakut* before *murtis* and in many other ways.

### SATSANG EXAMINATIONS

Students diligently prepare for and sit in the annual Satsang Examinations, which help to

Youths engrossed in darshan of Swamishri





A youth conducting a *bal sabha* in a village



Youths present a drama during a cultural programme

deepen their knowledge and understanding of Satsang. Through their participation, students have won national and international awards.

### YOUTH PARAYANS

During the four holy months of Chaturmas, students arrange three- to five-day *parayans* – series of discourses – in which the youths themselves prepare and deliver discourses.

### LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

Students from many BAPS *chhatralayas* regularly visit the city suburbs, and nearby villages and towns to conduct satsang assemblies. The students themselves deliver speeches and sing bhajans.

### SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS

Also, eclipses are celebrated as stated in the shastras.

The sadhus, through their daily discourses to and discussions with the students guide them on academic and personal progress.

### EXPERIENCES

Many professionals and dignitaries have been impressed by their visits to the BAPS *chhatralayas*. Some selected opinions are as follows:

Delighted to visit the kitchen and dining room of the hostel. It is not only clean and in fact spotless, but extremely modern. One day, I hope I will

be able to dine here with the students.

- Dr V. Kurien  
(Chairman, NDDDB)

Your programme for young men sets a wonderful example and standard for the youth of your nation. May God Bless you all.

- George Spadoro  
(Mayor of Edison, NJ, USA)

Your efforts in educating the youth of Gujarat to be leaders of tomorrow is commendable. Keep up the great work. India needs more campuses like this.

- Sam Pitroda

I was lucky to see the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya. I must say that it is unique and I have never seen a *chhatralaya* with such facilities. If more and more *chhatralayas* of this type come into existence, I believe that the face of India will be totally different.

- Deepchand Gardi  
(Eminent Industrialist)

This *chhatralaya* represents the values of life that youths crave for. This *chhatralaya* cultivates such values. Truly, this strength that students develop will give India great pride.

- Kantilal Vora  
(Magician K. Lal)





Youths perform social service



Youths help a villager to shun addictions

These *chhatralayas* supervised by sadhus will present to the world committed, principled and wise youths.

- **Shri Krishnashankar Shastri**  
- Renowned Spiritual Speaker

If all students received such an enlightened atmosphere and attention then how much would our nation progress.

- **Yashvant Shukla**  
(Eminent Author)

Seeing this neat, clean and cultured *chhatralaya* has given me great joy. The sadhus have created an atmosphere that nurtures values in the youths.

- **Gunvant Shah**  
(Eminent Author)

The Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya is reviving dharma and doing great service. This is worth adopting by all.

- **Manubhai Pancholi, 'Darshak'**  
(Eminent Author)

The facilities here provide students with the best training: their body, mind and heart are all nurtured, leading to all-round development.

- **Babubhai Jashbhai Patel**  
(Former Chief Minister, Gujarat)

Students here will certainly acquire a special vision on life, which will enable them to lead a quality life. The dining hall is hygienic and with modern facilities. The design of the student rooms is exemplary.

- **Bholabhai Patel**  
(Retired Professor, Gujarat University)

This *chhatralaya* is a centre that nurtures our traditions, develops talents and enhances learning. Together with the caring support of the sadhus, it is a great privilege for youths to study here.

- **Dr J.J.Raval**  
(Scientist, Nehru Planetarium)

Seeing the facilities here has been a great delight. The students are constantly encouraged by the clean and thoughtful atmosphere. And as a result these values enter their lives.

- **Madhavsinh Solanki**  
(Chief Minister, Gujarat)

The discipline and commitment of the youths here is plainly evident. The impact of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings on them is apparent.

- **Harindra Dave**  
(Eminent Author)



# Inspiring Stories of BAPS Chhatralaya Students



*During their stay at the BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralayas, students learn to excel in academics, become more organized and disciplined, and are inspired with values and faith in God. They also gain self-confidence and learn to serve others through various activities in the chhatralaya and services to society. The following are stories of a few students reflecting the benefits they attained through their stay at the BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralayas.*

## **INSPIRED IN STUDIES AND SATSANG** **Mahendra Bharatbhai Patel** **BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat**

I, Mahendra Bharatbhai Patel, was born and raised in Sadgavan village in the district of Tapi. It is a remote village on the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra, untouched by modernity.

The entire vicinity was known as a tribal and underdeveloped area.

I was one of the many ignorant teenagers in the village.

On 10 July 1991, a man from my village brought me to Surat. He lived near Olpad, working in a local factory. He had brought me so that I could work



and study.

For me, Surat was a different world. It was the first time I had sat in a train, and seen so many people and so much traffic. The big houses and wide roads were also a new experience for me. I was overawed by it all and desperate to return to my peaceful village. Further, I am handicapped in my right leg and that added to my inferiority complex.

Due to my disability, the person who had brought me thought about placing me in a mandir where I would be treated with sympathy. Around that time, we learnt that the BAPS mandir in Adajan was being built. There was a small *hari* mandir at the time.

On meeting the sadhus, they agreed to let me stay and do *seva*. The word 'seva' was itself new to me. I had never even heard the name of 'Swaminarayan' before.

Somebody instructed me to mop the floor. Our homes were made of mud, so I didn't even know what a mop was. Yet, the sadhus arranged for me to stay and study in the BAPS *chhatralaya*. Due to my lack of finances, they provided for my admission fees, clothes, books, footwear, brush and even the smallest of things. I did not even know how to brush my teeth. But they lovingly taught me.

Gradually, I learnt about satsang. I wore a *kanthi* and began doing daily puja. After about ten months I returned to my village. Seeing the *tilak-chandlo* on my forehead, all my family members and the other villagers were astonished. Everyone especially came to see me at home, since my attire and appearance had changed dramatically.

At that time, we all ate meat. Addiction to *bidis* and tobacco was commonplace. In our community men also kept mistresses. Around 80% of the men in my village, had one, including my father. She had three children. They lived in a small hut on our premises. My mother was married to my father according to our village tradition, but he was steeped in addictions and other vices. All

our ancestors in my village and surrounding areas were like that. It was accepted as the norm.

After I became a *satsangi*, during my 1992 summer vacation, I started a *bal mandal* in my village. The children used to come, but my father and other parents would come in drunk and stop the assembly. So, I frequently changed the venue. Everyone viewed me as an enemy.

Whenever I returned home during vacations, I applied what I had learnt in Surat in my village. Slowly, some understanding villagers began to support my efforts to promote an addiction-free life. By Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings, in 1994, a satsang *sabha* was commenced in my village.

My area was regarded as educationally and financially underdeveloped, and the people were steeped in superstitions and vile habits. However, as my satsang strengthened, I took my friends and the youngsters of my family to Surat, where they engaged in *seva* and received guidance from the sadhus.

Over time, the local leaders began to trust us and cooperate and satsang spread to other villages.

Due to my staying in the *chhatralaya*, I progressed in my studies also. So, other youths also wished to stay there. Along with their studies, they would also do satsang and help to strengthen satsang in the villages.

In our district, there were no basic amenities and no awareness to create them. This was due to a lack of education and finance. However, as the education standards rose due to the BAPS satsang *mandals*, the new generation developed, not only individually, but also worked to develop their villages: new schools were built, a regular bus service was established, drinking water was supplied. Through government loans, farmers became more productive.

There are over a hundred youths from my village and the surrounding villages who have stayed in the Surat *chhatralaya*. Of these, around 30 now have homes in Surat.

As satsang and education increased, families

became more financially secure. Now, instead of mud huts, over 80% of families have concrete homes. Every home has a motorbike, many have tractors for farming and some even have cars. Everyone has benefitted and many facilities are now available in the villages, including tar or concrete roads and health clinics.

Previously, in our area, girls did not study. But after the BAPS *balika* and *yuvati mandals* were started, they too embraced studies and many now hold good jobs. Thus, through the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the *chhatralaya*, a whirlwind of transformation has enveloped this area.

In Sadgavan there is now a beautiful BAPS *hari* mandir set in one acre of land. The satsang activities in the Sadgavan sector is coordinated by *nirdeshak* Shri Lakshmanbhai Patel. He, too, is a product of the *chhatralaya*. In Sadgavan, the weekly satsang *sabhas* for the elders, women, youths and children are held regularly. Throughout the sector, a total of 8 *sanyukta*, 4 *mahila*, 2 *yuvak* and 2 *bal mandals* have been established. In 18 surrounding villages, there are BAPS devotees who lead a devout, addiction-free life. Over 70% of villagers in Sadgavan have accepted satsang.

My father has also given up all his addictions and vices and now serves as the pujari in the mandir.

Whenever Swamishri visited Surat, he proactively enquired about our village, and gave guidance and blessings. He also instructed the sadhus to continually support us. While staying in the *chhatralaya*, I graduated with MA and LLB degrees. Presently, I serve as the assistant manager of the BAPS Pramukh Swami Hospital in Surat. I am also studying healthcare management.

I feel immensely satisfied with life and pray that I may serve according to the wishes of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and earn his innermost blessings.

## THE FRUITS OF PERSISTENCE

Hitesh Hindocha

BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar

“Where should I go?”

This was the question with which Hitesh Hindocha, then a Class I officer in the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, approached Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Swamishri analyzed the options he had presented and instructed, “Ireland.”

So, Hitesh went to Dublin in Ireland and began work as a consultant for the Royal Bank of Scotland. His stay in Dublin marked the start of a greater spiritual journey.

Hitesh had earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration while staying at the BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya in Vallabh Vidyanagar. His faith in the BAPS satsang drove him to start a satsang *mandal* in Dublin. However, the first *sabha* was attended by only three people: Hitesh, his wife and a well-wisher.

Still, Hitesh was not disheartened. Every week, he phoned up to 50 people, inviting them to the *sabha*. He arranged special festival celebrations throughout the year. Soon, 50 families began attending the *sabha*. In 2004, they all combined to offer 327 vegetarian delicacies to Thakorji in the Annakut celebration.

The weekly *sabha* was held on Saturday evenings. From Friday to Saturday afternoon, Hitesh and his wife would prepare the food for all who came. They would then transport the food, utensils, PA system, *murtis* and other requirements for the *sabha* in two cars to the *sabha* venue. Through their efforts, today, around 150 families regularly engage in satsang.

His job required him to move from Dublin to Belfast. He started a satsang *mandal* there also. Hitesh recalls, “While I was at the BAPS Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar, I was greatly inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj and developed a liking for networking with care and affection. This is what we did in Dublin. First, we contacted





everyone. Then we gave great care and affection to all who came. We cared for them and their families. We arranged for their transport, if required. For those living alone, we packed extra food for them to take home.”

Appreciating Hitesh’s efforts, an Irish TV channel also broadcast a 5-minute account of his spiritual efforts. The devotees in Dublin still fondly remember Hitesh and his wife. One of them, Harishbhai, says, “Hiteshbhai frequently phoned me to invite me to satsang. But I would give some excuse and avoid attending. Yet, he lovingly continued to invite me. And one day, my inner voice told me that I should attend satsang.”

Another devotee, Mahesh Shah, comments, “Before I started attending satsang, I smoked 20 cigarettes daily and drank alcohol heavily. Also, at the office I ate meat. So, I was hesitant to go to the *sabha*. I would tell him how bad I was. Hiteshbhai would encourage and tell me, ‘Do not think negatively like that. Just come to the *sabha* regularly. Your addictions will go.’ I remembered my late father continually telling me to stop my addictions. But I didn’t listen to him. I even had many arguments with my wife about this. But, just by the darshan of Swamishri and Hiteshbhai’s efforts, I stopped everything and began to observe the *niyams* of satsang. I regularly attend the *sabha* and am free of addictions.”

When starting the BAPS *chhatralaya* activities, Yogiji Maharaj said, “This *chhatralaya* has started. It will prepare youths to be ‘living’ mandirs.

Here, Kaliyug will be transformed into Satyug. From here, countless will benefit from Shastriji Maharaj’s efforts for the *moksha* of all.”

Through youths like Hitesh Hindocha, these visionary words of Yogiji Maharaj are being realized today.

## FROM WILD TO CULTURED

**Liril Silvi**

**BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya, Mahesana**

Liril Silvi was widely regarded as a wild and insolent youth. He was habituated to drugs, alcohol and other intoxicants. He enjoyed partying and roaming with his like-minded friends. As a result, everyone was frustrated with him. To him, studying was equivalent to death. That is why he had failed in seven subjects in the first three semesters of his mechanical engineering course.

Once, he was caught taking drugs red-handed by the police. The college principal reprimanded him severely. His parents pleaded with him to stop his harmful habits. But he ignored everyone, threatening to commit suicide. So, even his parents were at a loss about what to do.

Irritated by the daily admonishments of his professors, Liril left the college hostel to stay with friends in a rented room. This only added to Liril’s personal independence. Daily, he indulged in alcohol and eating meat.

Among his friends, one, who did not have any such habits, daily told him to stop his indulgence. But Liril paid no attention to him.

One day, out of the blue, Liril had a thought that he wanted to give up his bad habits. But his bad company prevented him from giving them up. So, he thought that if he could get admission to a respectable *chhatralaya* he could change. His search led him to the BAPS *chhatralaya* in Mahesana.

Coincidentally, one of Liril's friends stayed in the *chhatralaya*. Liril requested him to ask the management to give him admission. This *satsangi* friend told him bluntly that only if he stopped all his addictions and bad habits will he be enrolled in the *chhatralaya*. Liril reluctantly agreed to the conditions and began to stay in the *chhatralaya*.

The divine, peaceful atmosphere of the *chhatralaya* immediately touched Liril from within. Initially, however, he found the communal life a little tough and the rules restrictive. So, he would occasionally visit his other friends to smoke and drink. Soon, however, he began to regularly attend the *arti* and *sabha* in the *chhatralaya* and participated in the various cultural activities. He frequently had darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and listened to his discourses. This divine atmosphere brought about a total transformation in his life. He severed all ties with his bad friends, and stopped his addictions and bad habits. He excelled in his studies and secured a place for higher studies at NIT Warangal in Hyderabad.

Whenever Liril is asked about his transformation and achievements, he is overcome with emotion and replies, "It is all due to Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the BAPS *chhatralaya*. If I had not been accepted in the *chhatralaya*, my life would have been like hell and wasted."

## THE REWARDS OF VIRTUES

Mit Sutariya

BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar

Full of youthful enthusiasm, Mit Sutariya graduated with BSc and MSc degrees while staying at the BAPS Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar.

During his stay, he daily attended the *sabhas* and *arti*, and performed puja daily. He also

eagerly participated in the various activities of the *chhatralaya* as well as his college. He had also attained a high rank in the National Cadet Corps.

While staying in the *chhatralaya*, Mit developed a deep desire to serve India. On completing his studies, he got an opportunity to join the Indian Army.

After passing the initial tests, Mit was stationed in Bikaner as a lieutenant. Here, the values and skills of hard work, politeness and leadership helped him progress to the rank of captain.

Impressed by his performance in Bikaner, Mit was promoted to Acting Major and transferred to Kashmir. He had achieved in just a few years what would normally take more than ten.

Even while fulfilling his responsibilities in protecting India's borders as a respected major, Mit performs daily puja, and only then does he take breakfast. Seeing his steadfast adherence to such values has earned him widespread respect among his colleagues.

Fulfilling his duties as a major, he has resolved many issues related to the 250 soldiers under his command. He has ensured they receive nutritious and tasty food, clean water to drink and that their living quarters are clean. Above all, his humble and polite conduct has touched everyone. His ability to unite everyone and accomplish tasks has established him as a leader with great respect. But, when even his superiors praise him, Major Mit humbly says, "I give all the credit for my work to my guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the BAPS *chhatralaya*."

## HELPING AN ORDINARY RURAL BOY

Shri Yogesh Vandra

BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar

I was born to a poor family in the village of Khamba, Amreli district. My father was fortunate to have had Yogiji Maharaj's spiritual association. So, satsang was an intrinsic part of our family. But, because of our poor financial status I was worried about my future. I studied till the 10<sup>th</sup>



standard in Khamba. At that time I was absolutely ignorant about what to do further. During that time I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I asked for his blessings. Swamishri perceived my anxiety, and he asked me whether I wished to study further. I remained speechless because of my naivety. Swamishri talked to Yagnapriya Swami about admitting me to our hostel in Vidyanagar, despite getting average marks of 49 per cent in the 10<sup>th</sup> standard. I knew it was not possible to get admission in the *chhatralaya*, but Swamishri personally made all the arrangements.

In the years that followed I attained a bachelor's degree in electronics engineering. During my stay there Swamishri often came to our *chhatralaya*. His presence infused joy and celebration among the students. Most of the students presented some activity to please Swamishri. However, as I did not have any special skills or talents I felt inferior. But then, with time, due to Yagnapriya Swami's and other sadhus' care, my inferiority complex disappeared. They gave me different roles to play in dramas performed before Swamishri from 1991 to 1995. Swamishri would be pleased with my acting and he would bless me. He thus took care of me and never made me feel small.

Quite often we students used to make Swamishri laugh while he walked back to his residence after completing his puja at the *chhatralaya* grounds. Once, I was walking funnily besides him and I told Swamishri to bless me so that my height would increase. The fact was that I was physically slim, short and dark. To this, Swamishri replied, "Who says your height has not increased! Tell me where were you staying before? What type of village were you living in? Where are your parents? How did you come here? Yesterday, nearly 10,000 people saw you perform on stage. Now tell me haven't we increased your height [popularity]?" On hearing this I was dumbfounded. What Swamishri had said was true. Through his grace I had become popular – in fact he had increased my prestige.

Till 1995, I stayed at the *chhatralaya* and

completed my college education due to Swamishri's generosity. Thereafter, I was puzzled about how to get a job or to what to do next. At that time I went to Mumbai to serve for Swamishri's Amrut Mahotsav. When I entered the mandir in Dadar with my baggage Swamishri arrived for Thakorji's darshan. There was a throng of devotees for Swamishri's darshan. Swamishri saw me amongst the crowd and lovingly asked, "You've arrived!" I replied, "Yes. I've completed my bachelor's degree in electronics. But now I don't know what to do." Swamishri replied, "I'll take care of that." And he told me to stay to do *seva* at the Dadar mandir. I stayed and did *seva* till the end of Amrut Mahotsav. During the Mahotsav there was a special assembly to celebrate 30 years of the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya (APC) in Vidyanagar. Swamishri presided over that assembly and I also got an opportunity to meet him one-on-one. Swamishri told me to sit down before him, and he asked, "Have you got a job?" Before I could answer, Swamishri called Bhagvatcharan Swami and told him, "Make arrangements for his further studies and a job in Mumbai. Also, find a marriage partner for him and, in future, his children should stay and study at the *chhatralaya* in Vidyanagar." Thus, Swamishri shouldered all my responsibilities.

I was an ordinary youth, but Swamishri supported me immensely. I am not a stray case, but he has blessed innumerable youths with his selfless generosity and love.

## SELFLESS AND ABUNDANT LOVE

**Sandeep Dheer**

On the morning of 7 December 1993, Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals at the new assembly hall of APC, Vidyanagar. That evening a special assembly was held. The programme included a presentation by two groups of students before Swamishri. Each team had to make stage presentations to prove that Swamishri belonged to them. A sadhu told me that since I was a Punjabi, I should don a Punjabi dress and

participate in the programme. Swamishri was scheduled to arrive on the stage at 5.00 p.m. So, five minutes before his arrival, I came and stood by the entrance to the stage dressed in a traditional Punjabi attire. At that time Yagnapriya Swami was also standing there. He asked me why I had come there. I told him I was going to perform before Swamishri and say that he was mine. Then he asked me, “Have you practised for it?” I said no. So, he stopped me and explained, “All the youths who are going to perform on stage have practised. You cannot perform without practising.” I realized later that he was right, but at that time I became depressed. I left without saying a word, crestfallen, towards an empty room in the old block and cried profusely. A few minutes later, I heard that Swamishri had arrived on stage. So, I hurriedly changed my clothes and sat in the last line of the assembly. My fellow students performed commendably. Swamishri then addressed the assembly, and thereafter everyone came to him one by one to touch his feet. I was last, and as I advanced after touching his feet, Swamishri pulled my T-shirt to my surprise. He lovingly said, “Dheer, today everyone said that Swami is mine but why didn’t you say anything?” Then Swamishri put his finger on my chest and said in Hindi, “Let others say so, but I am yours.” Then he said, “I want to keep you in my heart.” On hearing this, I was simply stupefied.

My years at the *chhatralaya* in Vidyanagar are replete with wonderful memories of Swamishri’s selfless and abundant love. Whenever I remember them in difficult and testing times I find myself rejuvenated and happy. I am forever indebted to Swamishri and the *chhatralaya*.

## SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

### Viveknidhi Swami

Hundreds of students who had lived at the BAPS Chhatralayas have settled abroad after their graduation. They have lucrative jobs, yet they live frugally, abide by satsang *niyams* and spend their free time in doing *seva* at the local mandir. I

would like to share a couple of incidents of their selfless services and sacrifice.

Dinesh, a *satsangi* youth, had recently arrived from India. On *ekadashi* he observed a waterless fast. Since he was new in America he did not know how to prepare *khichdi* for *parna*. He was bewildered about what to have for *parna*. Then he remembered a *chhatralaya* student named Rathin Raval. Dinesh rang him up and said, “I have observed a waterless fast on *ekadashi* today. If it is convenient for you I’d like you to help me for my *parna*.” Now the rider to Dinesh’s request was that he wanted to do *parna* after midnight. So, Rathin jotted down Dinesh’s address and told him that he would make the arrangements. Rathin lived a one-and-a-half hour’s drive from Dinesh. At 1.30 a.m., Dinesh’s doorbell chimed. On opening the door, Dinesh saw Rathin with a pressure cooker in his hands. Dinesh was surprised. Then Rathin served hot *khichdi* and drove back home soon after. Dinesh appreciated Rathin’s spirit of *seva* – an outcome of the values he had learnt in the *chhatralaya*.

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Another *chhatralaya* student, Manish, had migrated to USA. Initially, he found it difficult to get used to the new environment and culture. Soon, he came to know of another *chhatralaya* student named Diptesh. The latter reassured Manish, “Don’t worry. Come and stay at my home. Things will work out well.” Diptesh hosted Manish at his house in New Jersey for nearly one year. Such hospitality is quite rare to find in our hectic and personalized era. Thereafter, Manish got a good job and he is now well settled.

There are countless such *chhatralaya* youths in North America and other parts of the world who perform selfless *seva* with a spirit of harmony, brotherhood and unity. One feels humbled and awed on seeing their dedicated voluntary services and sacrifices at the various BAPS mandirs. One then realizes the fruits of having stayed at the *chhatralayas* and received Swamishri’s abundant care and grace. ◆



# Pramukh Swami Maharaj

## A Sculptor of Youths



### INTRODUCTION

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has a unique aptitude to understand youths, and also to help them understand others. He has discoursed to them, but his talks have never weighed them down. He has transformed them, but they have not felt the convulsions of change.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has liberated countless youths from the harrowing issues of life. A renowned educationist, the late Shri Ramlal Parikh, who was the vice-chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith in Ahmedabad, echoes his experience about how Pramukh Swami Maharaj fosters the youths, “In my 35 years of experience in education, I feel that we teachers are unable to inspire students. But by coming to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I have found that the youths sacrifice their time, energy, talent and expertise at his call. Students who refuse to touch litter and dirt in schools are ready to endeavour, sweat and sacrifice themselves before Swamishri. This proves that the capacity to transform them

lies in the path shown by Swamishri. I am fully convinced about this. We guide students in doing PhDs on 'Morality in Action', but we cannot help them live or experience it. Whereas, here, before Pramukh Swami Maharaj, we can see it being practised."

What is the elixir that Pramukh Swami Maharaj possesses in transforming the lives of youths? The answer is, selfless love for others. Many dissertations can be written about his selfless love for students and others and the impact it has on them. Whenever Pramukh Swami Maharaj arrives at a BAPS *chhatralaya*, school or a satsang assembly full of children or youths, they all celebrate with joy. The vibrant scene absorbs anyone and everyone. It is amazing how Swamishri has cared by meeting innumerable students and youths personally, by talking to them on the phone or through writing letters. The resulting mutual bonds created reflect a unique spiritual experience.

Some of the incidents of Swamishri's love and care for students are as follows.

### CARES FOR ALL

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." The point to be made here is that two persons enter each other's hearts through the channel of mutual care. Volumes can be written about how Pramukh Swami Maharaj has cared for students.

On 14 July 2007, about 2,000 youths were attending a *shibir* in USA. Several questions were asked to the audience in one of the sessions:

"If Swamishri has named you or your son, please stand up." Many youths stood up.

"If Swamishri has advised or given guidance to any youth, please stand up." Again many youths got up from their seats.

"Youths who have had a telephone conversation with Swamishri may stand up." A lot more youths stood up.

"Youths who were inspired by Swamishri

during their academic years stand up." Once again there were many youths who responded.

In conclusion, it was observed that all the youths in the assembly had stood up by the time the questions were over.

Over the decades, Swamishri has remembered and communicated with countless youths in India and abroad. It is because of his spiritual nourishment and support that countless youths have remained steadfast in practising the satsang *niyams* despite facing enticements and obstacles.

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Once a disabled youth came up to Swamishri and expressed his woes: "I come from Pune. I lost my parents way back, so I was raised by my grandfather. But recently, my uncle wants to claim my share of the property. Now what should I do and where should I go? I'm in a dilemma. I've got an admission for B.E. Electronics in a college in remote Simla, but I'm penniless."

The hapless youth then broke down. Swamishri was moved by his situation. He patted the youth and reassured him, "Don't worry!" Immediately, Swamishri made the financial and other arrangements for his college studies. The youth beamed with joy and hope. He thanked Swamishri.

On another occasion a bright but financially poor youth came to Swamishri in Atladara. He revealed that he was asked by an official to give him a bribe of Rs 500,000 to pass a government exam. The youth gave up appearing for the exam and decided to give the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) exam. Swamishri made all the arrangements to help him, saying, "Give the exams. Whenever you need any help come and see me. There's no need for you to worry anymore."

Once, Swamishri was engaged in Thakorji's darshan in Mumbai. Rasikbhai Ajmera was standing nearby. On seeing him, Swamishri asked a sadhu for a rose placed at the feet of Thakorji. Then, he gave it to Rasikbhai and said, "Here, take this and give it to Pintu (Rasikbhai's son) because he is appearing for his 10th standard



exams.” Swamishri’s blessings not only touched Rasikbhai but his gesture also infused confidence and joy in Pintu when he received the rose.

A brilliant youth was studying in a prestigious college in Ahmedabad. But because of his parents’ conflict the youth was disturbed and unable to perform well at college. He had written the details of his predicament in a letter to Swamishri. In his reply, Swamishri advised, “Give up all your worries and progress in your studies. I am instructing you to study. You may be thinking about how to bear the cost of your education, but do not fret. You will get financial help as per your needs. Thus, do not worry about excelling in your education.”

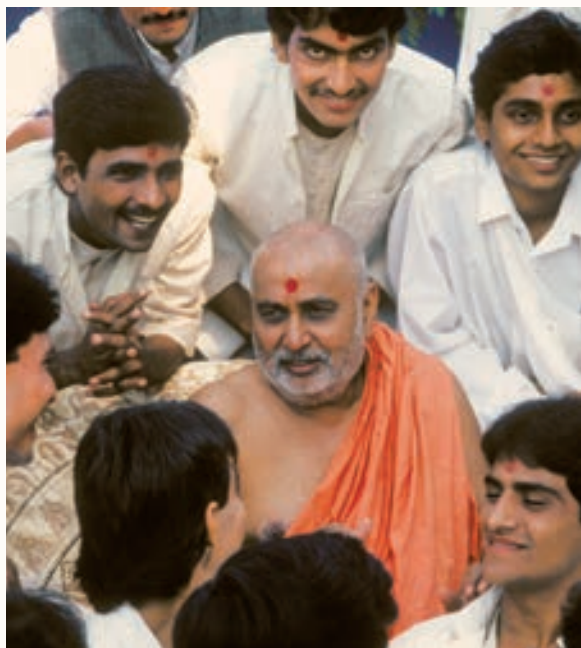
Swamishri assured the youth of getting monetary help and relieved him of his anxiety. Thereafter, Swamishri also encouraged him regularly through letters to study properly. Today, the youth is a graduate and has a lucrative job.

Swamishri is a custodian of youth welfare and their all-round development. Just as he emphasizes upon the youths to practise integrity, he also equally lays stress on them to attain good academic results.

On 21 June 2002, Swamishri advised the sadhus handling the *kishore mandal* in Mumbai, “Pay attention to the students’ academic performance. Just as they are active in satsang activities they should also work hard for their studies. They should not fail and miss out a year.” Swamishri earnestly expressed his concern about nurturing the youths academically.

Once, Swamishri cautioned the administrators of the BAPS Chhatralaya in Atladara, “Take care that students receive proper education, facilities and values. You should not be overly inclined towards decorating their residential buildings. Make efforts in grooming the students culturally. Also, endeavour and spend money for them to attain good results in their studies.”

Thus, Swamishri has always made efforts for the holistic development of students. He provides



grants and scholarships for the needy and has established schools, colleges, *chhatralayas* and *gurukuls* for the students.

### ABUNDANT APPRECIATIONS

Swamishri has always been generous in appreciating children and youths. This is one aspect of his abundant love for youths.

Once, someone asked Swamishri, “Do you ever despair when we we fail to live up to your wishes and benchmarks of good behaviour?” Swamishri replied, “How can a soul match with God’s standards. A soul is after all a soul – enwrapped by worldly desires. The essential thing is that it has come onto the path of God. Shriji Maharaj, too, had a broad mind. The fact that a person has come into the association of God is a great thing. He will thus gradually understand and attain liberation.”

Swamishri’s words exude compassion and magnanimity. Despite a person’s failings he does not harbour an iota of aversion for him. Swamishri has never made a hue and cry about a rose plant having thorns. He only sees the rose bud that blossoms forth amidst the thorns. Likewise, he focuses on the growth of youths regardless of



their faults.

When parents cry, “Youths have become spoiled”; teachers vehemently declare, “Youths have become delinquent”; spiritual masters opine, “The youths have turned into atheists”; Swamishri perceives the goodness of God in them.

Once, Swamishri spoke to an assembly of youths, “You are all the children of God.” With such an exalted vision how could Swamishri harp upon their faults? In fact, all his life he has focused on their virtues, encouraged them and offered his love.

When the youths are appreciated and honoured for their good works and actions they feel positively inspired, which subsequently brings out their true potential. Thus, recognitions motivate the youths towards good behaviour. Swamishri perceives the youths in this manner.

In 1990, an International Youth Convention was held in Vidyanagar. More than 21,000 male and female students had participated in several competitions: recitations of the Vachanamrut, Swamini Vato and kirtans; elocution; singing and others. On the final day of the five-day convention, Swamishri blessed all in the morning session.

He said, “The convention has turned out to be unparalleled. I congratulate you all for staying here for five days. You have tolerated the heat, exercised patience and made this event a success. You have all put in remarkable efforts. The *mukhpath* you have done is greater than having attained ashtanga yoga. Maharaj and Swami will forever be with you in your life. To offer countless prostrations to you would not be enough. It is not possible for today’s youths to put in such [intense] effort and do such works. It is no small matter that some of you have memorized the entire Vachanamrut. I am humbled by this and bow to you. My appreciations to you all.” Swamishri spoke with vigour and passion while he was standing before the assembly. When he finished, it seemed that he was not satisfied with paying tributes to the youths. So, he called the volunteers responsible for the assembly arrangements and instructed them, “I would like to meet all the youths one by one.” When the announcement was made that Swamishri would like to bless all the youths personally, a rapturous applause rent the air. Despite the scorching summer heat and dust Swamishri blessed every youth by placing his hand on their head from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30



p.m. By the time Swamishri had blessed the last youth his eyebrows were laced with dust and his clothes had become wet due to sweat. Someone uttered, “Look at the terrible heat!” Swamishri interjected, “Instead of saying that look at the efforts of the youths!”

In 2009, during the annual students celebration at the *chhatralaya* in Vidyanagar, a drama was performed on how Shreyans Dholakiya, a former hostel student, remained staunch in following the satsang *niyams*. Shreyans was not present on that day, but he came to the *chhatralaya* the next morning. When Swamishri was informed about it, he called Shreyans onto the stage after performing his morning puja, and honoured him with a garland of flowers. Swamishri praised him, “Congratulations! You live the values that your father has taught you. You have tolerated many things. I bless you for a happier life.” Then Swamishri took out his own *mala* from his neck and placed it on Shreyans’ neck to express his appreciation and *rajipo*.

Once the students of Vidyanagar *chhatralaya* had observed austerities, namely, *dhara-parna* and *chandrayan*. They all wished to conclude their austerities before Swamishri and receive his blessings. So, they all went to Bochasan, and stood in a line to meet Swamishri. Someone informed Swamishri that once the boys have received his blessings, they would go out and receive *prasad* of *mesub* from Tyagvallabh Swami. But Swamishri told the volunteer to bring the *prasad* to him because he wanted to give it to them personally. In this way Swamishri personally gave *mesub* to each one of the youths for *parna*. Though the youths had not desired to receive *prasad* from Swamishri’s hands, Swamishri, however, celebrated their austerities in a memorable and appreciative way. The youths departed with elation and an everlasting memory.

Very often youths succumb to depression because of the pressures and tensions of life. During such times, Swamishri has always encouraged and

appreciated them and thus rejuvenated their enthusiasm and efforts.

Once, a student sighed before Swamishri, “Will I pass in my exams or not? After graduating, will I get a job or not?” Swamishri read his mindset and said, “Look, you are going to pass. Believe it, and work hard. Otherwise, you will simply end up achieving nothing. What benefit is there in worrying unnecessarily? So, work hard. By doing nothing, will you accomplish anything?” Swamishri’s crisp words infused inner strength and confidence in the youth.

Once a youth in Vidyanagar brought his friend before Swamishri and described his mental state, “Swami, he is in the 12<sup>th</sup> standard. He is depressed.” Swamishri looked at him and called him near and patted him on his shoulders. Then Swamishri advised, “You have entered the 12th standard. Never ever think about failing. Live in the present and don’t think too much about the future. By studying and worshipping God now your future will be good. So, entertain such thoughts daily and be strong.”

The period of youth has been compared to the breaking of dawn – when the sun is crimson and beautiful. However, no one would like the sun to set instantly without ascending to its illustrious noon-state. Likewise, how could Swamishri allow a youth who is in his prime to simply crumple without achieving or contributing anything. Swamishri appreciates and instils encouragement and hope in crestfallen youths to make them vibrant and productive.

A youth was plagued with negative thoughts, “I am of no use to anyone. I am not worthy of living in this world.” Because of such thoughts he became depressed. He also perceived others to be worthless. Swamishri encouraged him, saying, “God and his Sadhu have compassion for you. So, you will progress. Give up your flimsy beliefs and rely on God’s divine strength. He will give you the fruits of your karmas. Why do you think negatively? No one is bad in this world.

When others can do work, why can't you? You do not know your own strength. A person can achieve whatever he wills; but it obviously takes some time. So, you must not allow weak thoughts to enter your mind. You have the potential to look after everyone [in your family]. You have the capacity to inspire thousands to worship God. So, be happy. You have not spoiled anyone's life. Neither have you been born to cry and be miserable. Live with camaraderie with all your family members. Whenever you err, there is no need to wallow in misery! Rectify your mistakes. Don't dump weak and wrong thoughts in your mind; give them up and forget them."

Swamishri's discourse to the youth can be called the 'Pramukh Gita'. His discourses have revived countless youths from depression and despair.

## HEALS BY LISTENING

Dr Hari H. Bhatt of New York once narrated how he had reconciled with himself after a near fatal accident had left him with paraplegia. He says, "We are all here – those of us on the stage, in front of the stage and behind the stage – because somehow our lives have been touched by Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Let me tell you my story. While growing up I was an outgoing athletic kid. But it all came to a crashing halt in my first year of college. I had a car accident that left me unable to walk.

"My life and the lives of the people closest to me were shaken. From being an academic and athletic wonder boy, I now had to struggle to even move a toe or bear the pain of the simplest movement. I felt my present, and worse, my future had been cruelly snatched away – left in the ruin of a smashed up Mercedes. I was confused and depressed. Hope was slipping, but even more painfully, I could sense the anguish of my friends and family.

"But one of the great saviours at that time in my life, for me and for my parents, was the

magnificent fortune we had in the form of Bapa. We had in our lives a guru who is an undisguised form of all that is good in humanity – and when I opened my heart, to pour out my grief, my dreams, my insecurities, he listened.

"At that moment in my life, he was there for me, with his hand on the shoulder of a boy in a wheelchair becoming a man. I won't get into the specifics of that conversation with a sadhu who has millennial wisdom.

"It was a private moment that has had its lasting effects in the way I see the world and my role in it. But I will tell you that it was a great man listening to a confused child. And more than just the guidance of his words, there was the peace and healing from having him listen to me. And whether it is between friends, family, enemies or sadhus and *haribhaktas* – listening is the greatest form of love.

"I want to thank you Bapa for listening to me, and helping me and giving faith-affirming strength to my parents. Your love has been an unending source of peace lighting my spirit – showing me that true miracles are within us. This is a credo that has enabled me to not only accomplish what I have, but more importantly, to continue to strive for greater things.

"Thank you Bapa for your blessings."

Swamishri values the youths, which is evident from his unflagging efforts in dissolving their woes, and in providing support and instilling confidence and courage in times of difficulty and challenges.

## VALUES THE YOUTHS

Once, Swamishri was not keeping well, so he had decided to rest in Bochasan. During that time the youths from Vidyanagar *chhatralaya* came and urged Swamishri, "Give us your illness." Swamishri replied, "I don't want to give it to you. Through you I would like to inspire satsang in others. Today, there is turmoil in society. May you all prepare yourself to serve our society, nation



and Satsang. It is important that our society becomes truly religious, and that you inspire others to tread the path of dharma.”

Swamishri’s words echo how he values and trusts the youths.

Once, Swamishri was at the *chhatralaya* in Vidyanagar. A student asked Swamishri while he was having his meal, “You should be awarded the Noble Peace Prize.” Instantly Swamishri replied, “For me, you, the youths and sadhus are the Nobel Prize. When you all grow up you’ll do noble works. You’ll do satsang and inspire satsang in countless people.” Swamishri’s perception of youths is amazing. How much he values and believes in them!

Swamishri’s love for youths has often been reflected by his physical exertions and tolerating hardships for them.

On 3 May 1985, Swamishri was on a hectic round of home visits (*padhramanis*) in a village. The summer sun was scorching. With his last *padhramani* over at around 12 noon, Swamishri was returning to a devotee’s home for lunch. Midway a mentally unstable boy asked Swamishri to come to his home. Everyone accompanying Swamishri became agitated. But Swamishri calmly asked, “Where’s your home? You walk ahead, I’ll follow you.” Swamishri visited his home and pleased him.

There are countless such instances in which Swamishri has tolerated physical discomforts and hardships to please youths and devotees.

On another occasion a youth studying at the medical college in Jamnagar invited Swamishri to sanctify his apartment. When Swamishri reached his home, the roof was leaking. Swamishri did not utter a single word of complaint. The youth then regretted and apologized, “Swami, I’m sorry for not being able to make proper arrangements for you.” Instantly, Swamishri defused his remorse, “I am comfortable and happy. There is no need for you to say sorry and feel sad.”

## CONCLUSION

When we contemplate about the incidents of Swamishri’s profound love for youths it becomes difficult to gauge whether Swamishri is a mother or father of youths or their friend or guru. In fact, all mundane descriptions about his infinite love for them are inadequate.

Because of Swamishri’s love, the youths sacrifice everything to obey his single command. They have shown the alacrity to serve in the aftermath of tsunamis, destructive earthquakes, flood disasters and epidemics, and during famines or devastating land storms.

On 17 December 2005, Air Marshal of India Shri Jain opined before Swamishri in Gandhinagar, “For years I’ve been witnessing that whenever our country has faced catastrophes, be it a tsunami or an earthquake, two organizations have always come to help first. One is the Indian Air Force and the second is your service-oriented organization. I have seen this personally from 1982 when there was a devastating storm between Jamnagar and Junagadh. I saw your volunteers and sadhus engaged in relief work in Mangrol, where I was appointed as the officer-in-charge. The employees of the local management arrived three days later!”

These incidents and testimonials reflect how Swamishri has groomed countless youths. As a sculptor of thousands of students and youths through his selfless efforts and love Swamishri has inspired character, education and personality development. The vision and efforts of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj in establishing *chhatralayas*, schools and weekly youth assemblies (*yuvak-yuvati mandals*) have worked wonders in the lives of innumerable youths. They are indebted to Swamishri for his selfless love and efforts in grooming them for a better and happier life. ♦

*Gujarati text by Sadhu Adarshjivandas*

# Golden Jubilee Celebrations

1965-2015

BAPS Swaminarayan Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar

27 December 2015



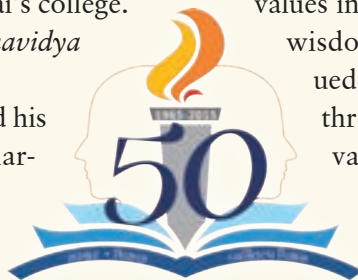
Youths perform a welcome dance

On 31 January 1954, the auspicious day of Vasant Panchami, Yogiji Maharaj was travelling by train from Anand to Atladara with some youths. The train was chugging through the countryside, passing by one farm after another. Suddenly, Dr Ramanbhai Patel (now Pujya Dr Swami) pointed at the Agriculture College in Anand and said, “Look Bapa, that is the Agriculture College where Vinubhai (now Pujya Mahant Swami) studies.” Yogiji Maharaj looked at the college and uttered with folded palms, “Jai to Vinubhai’s college. We shall build a college of *brahmavidya* opposite it.”

In 1965, Yogiji Maharaj fulfilled his dream by inaugurating the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya (APC) in Vidyanagar. Ambalalbhai Karsandas Patel, a staunch

devotee, donated his invaluable land for the construction of the APC. After Yogiji Maharaj performed the foundation-stone laying ceremony, the construction work began with the efforts of sadhus and devotees. On 20 June 1965, Yogiji Maharaj inaugurated the spacious students’ hostel complex in Vidyanagar. It was a historical moment, which subsequently launched the saga of the college of *brahmavidya*.

Yogiji Maharaj often visited the APC and inspired the students. He inculcated faith and values in them through his selfless love and wisdom. His efforts have been continued by Pramukh Swami Maharaj who, through his regular visits, has fostered values and spiritual faith in the students. As a result the *chhatralaya* has produced sterling youths. Furthermore, after graduating,



these youths have spread values and worked for the betterment of society and growth of Satsang.

On Sunday, 27 December 2015, the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya of Vidyanagar celebrated its 50th anniversary. The year-long celebrations from 2014-2015 engaged present and past students of all the BAPS *chhatralayas* in several programmes and activities. Two grand assemblies for launching the Golden Jubilee Celebrations were held at the *chhatralayas* in Bhavnagar and Vidyanagar. Pilgrimage walks were organized at Vidyanagar, Gondal and other *chhatralayas*. An *adhiveshan* (competition) involving students from all *chhatralayas* was held at Atladara. A spiritual *shibir* was organized by the BAPS Chhatralaya in Nadiad at the Sankari mandir.

On 13 December 2015, Pramukh Swami Maharaj lit the inaugural lamp at Sarangpur for the grand finale Golden Jubilee Celebrations to be held in Vidyanagar. Thereafter, the *chhatralaya* students presented a traditional dance and invited Swamishri to grace the occasion.

On 26 December 2015, a convention of 220 sadhus, who had formerly resided at the BAPS

*chhatralayas* during their academic years, was held in Vidyanagar. They recollected their experiences during their student years at the *chhatralayas* and also reminisced about Swamishri's divine incidents and personal inspirations.

On the morning of 27 December an assembly of all the BAPS Chhatralaya alumni was held at the APC in Vidyanagar. The former students shared their experiences and inspirations. The assembly also honoured all the devotees who presently offer services at all BAPS *chhatralayas*.

On the evening of 27 December 2015 an *annakut* was offered to Thakorji at the *chhatralaya*. Thereafter, the grand finale of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations was held at Akshar Farm in Vidyanagar. The celebration programme was themed on "Educational Values and Personality Development". It was attended by 12,000 past and present students and invited guests, along with more than 300 BAPS sadhus.

Among the prominent invited guests who attended were: Shri C.L. Patel (Chairman of Charutar Vidya Mandal), Shri B.G. Patel (vice-chancellor of Changa Charusat University), Shri

Swamishri lights the inaugural lamp for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations in Sarangpur







Former students relive the memories of their time at BAPS *chhatralayas* during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Vidyanagar

Sodhi (MD of GCMUF), Shri Ratnam (MD Amul Dairy), Shri B.M. Vyas (Technical Director of NDDDB), and many principals, professors and teachers of prominent schools and colleges.

The celebration programme commenced at 5.50 p.m. in the presence of Swamishri's Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and senior sadhus: Pujya Dr Swami, Pujya Kothari Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami. A welcome dance by youths greeted Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Then the master of ceremonies, Adarshjivan Swami, gave a preamble to the celebrations and welcomed all for the event.

Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke about the milestone events in the making of the *chhatralaya* in Vidyanagar. This was followed by a video featuring the *chhatralaya* activities during the last 50 years.

A drama was performed by youths based on the celebration theme: "Educational Values and Personality Development." The entire programme comprised of skits, speeches and videos revealing the elements of education, personality development and values taught at the *chhatralayas*.

The first part portrayed the *chhatralayas*' contributions in the educational progress of students. This was presented through a traditional dance based on the lyrics: "*Ame chhātralaya nā khode khelyā... ame runi Yogiraj nā, ame runi Pramukh Swami nā.*"

Yogiji Maharaj had blessed that the *chhatralaya* would produce doctors and engineers. The number of students who have since studied from all the BAPS Chhatralayas and graduated in various academic fields was projected on a screen: 566 doctors, 6,685 engineers, 451 pharmacists, 378 postgraduates, 1,054 science graduates, 1,209 graduates in other faculties, one pilot, one IAS, 89 chartered accountants, 25 company secretaries and 36 lawyers.

The second part of the celebration programme portrayed how the *chhatralayas* have helped students develop their personality. Atmatrupt Swami conducted the presentations. The theme was introduced with a bhakti dance, performed by youths, based on the lyrics "*Lākho jano ni dotmā...*". Then, a drama titled 'Aflatun Officer' showed how youths at the *chhatralayas* develop

a holistic personality. The drama featured the success story of Mit Sutariya, a former student of Vidyangar Chhatralaya and presently a soldier in the Indian army. The drama showed how Mit, after being groomed at the *chhatralaya*, was able to discharge his duties diligently in the army. Subsequently, he was promoted as an acting major. The inspiring drama was performed by the students of Nadiad and Atladara *chhatralayas*.

The final part of the celebration programme presented how the *chhatralayas* have been pivotal in instilling spiritual values in students. As a preamble, the youths performed a traditional dance. Then a video was screened to show how students are moulded spiritually through their daily routine at the *chhatralayas*.

Thereafter, the effects of Swamishri's visits on the students and the influence of sadhus at the *chhatralayas* were presented through a video. Even those who were morally errant were transformed during their stay. The true story of Liril Silvi's transformation, who stayed at the BAPS Chhatralaya in Mahesana, was enacted by youths.

The BAPS hostel students were also inspired to serve society selflessly through Swamishri's life, work and teachings. A video was screened on how the *chhatralaya* students serve society, providing rescue and relief during natural calamities, and participating in anti-addiction campaigns and self-awareness programmes.

Pujya Yagnapriya Swami spoke about incidents of Swamishri's divine charisma in inspiring hundreds of *chhatralaya* students to renounce and become sadhus. Thereafter, a video was shown about Swamishri's love and sacrifice for the *chhatralaya* students.

To pay tributes to Swamishri's divine works a 'Torch Dance' was performed by the students of Vidyangar Chhatralaya. The youths marched onto the stage and danced to the beats of the lyric "*Mashāl, mashāl, divya mashāl...*".

Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami engaged the audience of *chhatralaya* students to take a pledge



Honouring Shri Harikrishna Maharaj



Sadguru sadhus on stage



Youths present a drama about Liril Silvi's transformation



Affectionate reunions of former students





Over 12,000 past and present students of BAPS *chhatralayas* attended the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Vidyanagar

in remaining steadfast in satsang *niyams* and also in serving Swamishri and the BAPS with body, mind and means. Thereafter, the senior sadhus felicitated students who had excelled in academics, personality and satsang *niyams*. Then, graduate students from various *chhatralayas*, who have earned high positions and prestige through their contributions to society, were also recognized by senior sadhus: Shri Ranjitsinh Barad (Deputy Municipal Commissioner, Ahmedabad), Shri Hasmukhbhai Patel (Deputy Collector, Surat rural), Shri Kamal Sojitra (Joint District Judge, Kutch), Shri Gaurav Barot (Novarth Technologies Pvt. Ltd), Shri Kishoresinh Jhala (CEO, MMFG), Shri Chunilal Nadpara (Secretary, Narmada Water Resources), Shri Jagmal Pithiya (Industrialist) and Shri Dhananjay Nakrani (Google Co.).

An inspiring video was shown about how Shri Hiteshbhai Hindocha, a former *chhatralaya* student of Vidyanagar, developed Satsang in Dublin, Ireland. His faith in Swamishri and the efforts he and his wife made in celebrating Hindu festivals and conducting satsang assemblies were also portrayed in the video. The entire audience was left

in awe at Hiteshbhai's satsang and dedication.

Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami inaugurated an audio CD on the lyrics and theme song of the celebrations, "*Sankalp thayā sakār.*"

Pujya Dr Swami spoke about imbibing satsang values in life and appreciated all sadhus, students and devotees in making the celebrations a success.

In conclusion, Swamishri's video blessings were shown and a group photo of 220 sadhus, who had formerly resided as students at various BAPS *chhatralayas*, was taken with senior sadhus.

The three-hour grand finale event left the entire audience elated and proud. Everyone also felt the divine presence of H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

## PLANNING OF THE CELEBRATIONS

The entire planning of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations and its execution was done by sadhus together with present and past students of Vidyanagar, Atladara and Nadiad *chhatralayas*. Initially, discussions and brainstorming sessions were held, and suggestions from students were also invited. Thereafter, the planning of the main





The audience intently watches the excellent presentations during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Vidyanagar

event was done by selected ex-students and sadhus at Vidyanagar. Then a final discussion about the celebrations programme was held in Sarangpur in the presence of Yagnapriya Swami and other sadhus. During that meeting it was decided to also have an assembly of sadhus who were former students at the *chhatralayas*, an ex-students' assembly, and the inaugural ceremony at Swamishri's hands. Various duties for the preparations of the celebrations were also delegated to sadhus. At the conclusion of the meeting the grand finale programme was declared to be held on Sunday, 27 December 2015 at Akshar Farm, Vidyanagar. Pujya Mahant Swami blessed the meeting, saying that the celebrations should be held in a grand festive way.

Initially, the preparations for the celebrations commenced at a snail's pace because of the college exams. From 16 December, after the exams were over, youths and sadhus worked untiringly for the preparations in various departments: kitchen, decorations, accommodations, transport, cultural programmes, electrical, water supply and others.

To make the celebrations successful

Yagnapriya Swami gave guidance to Jnanratna Swami, Bhagvatchintan Swami, Adarshjivan Swami, Atmatrupt Swami, Apurvamuni Swami, Jnanvatsal Swami, Paramprem Swami, Haritilak Swami, Vivekshil Swami, Shvetmangal Swami, Bhaktikirtan Swami, Vedchintan Swami and others. In addition, *satsangi* youths, namely, Pareshbhai Hingu, Yoginbhai Gajjar, Parthbhai Ghaswala, Ambrishbhai Barot, Ankitbhai Prajapati, Yatinbhai Mavani, Hirenbhai Patel, Harshbhai Bhatt, Vipulbhai Panchal and others performed various *sevas*.

The design for the celebration stage was done by Narayanmuni Swami, and constructed by sadhus from Sarangpur and students from Atladara Chhatralaya.

Thus, with Swamishri's blessings and the monumental efforts of sadhus and *chhatralaya* students the event was celebrated with gusto and success. The celebrations left indelible memories on all those who were present and many more who saw the webcast on the BAPS website. ♦



# Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

## Brief Report of Worldwide Visitors, 2015

Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi, is a 100-acre cultural complex inaugurated in 2005 by H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj to fulfil the wish of his guru, H.H. Yogiji Maharaj. Since the last ten years the main *maha*-mandir, elephant plinth, Neelkanth Varni *abhishek mandapam*, Sahajanand Darshan (exhibition of values), Neelkanth Yatra (large format film) and Sanskriti Vihar (boat ride) have attracted and inspired countless people from all parts of India and the world. A growing number of visitors from all parts of India, students from schools and colleges in New Delhi and people from abroad visit Akshardham to gain an educational experience and better understanding of Indian culture and Hinduism.

In 2015, 118,923 people from 198 countries visited Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi. The visitors came from Africa, Asia, Europe, North Africa, South Africa and Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, etc.). The names of the continents and countries from where the visitors came are as follows:





## AFRICA

1. Algeria 2. Angola 3. Benin 4. Botswana  
5. Burkina Faso 6. Burundi 7. Cameroon  
8. Canary Islands 9. Chad 10. Congo-Brazzaville  
11. Congo DRC 12. Cote d'Ivoire 13. Djibouti  
14. Egypt 15. Eritrea 16. Ethiopia 17. Gambia,  
The 18. Ghana 19. Kenya, 20. Lesotho 21. Liberia  
22. Libya 23. Madagascar 24. Malawi 25. Mali  
26. Morocco 27. Mozambique 28. Namibia  
29. Niger 30. Nigeria 31. Reunion 32. Rwanda  
33. Sao Tome & Principe 34. Senegal  
35. Seychelles 36. Sierra Leone 37. Somalia  
38. South Africa 39. South Sudan 40. Sudan  
41. Suriname 42. Swaziland 43. Tanzania 44.  
Togo 45. Tunisia 46. Uganda 47. Zambia 48.  
Zanzibar (Tanzania) 49. Zimbabwe.

## ASIA

1. Afghanistan 2. Bahrain 3. Bangladesh 4. Bhutan  
5. Brunei 6. Cambodia 7. China 8. Hong Kong  
9. Indonesia 10. Iran 11. Iraq 12. Israel 13. Japan  
14. Jordan 15. Kazakhstan 16. Korea, North  
17. Korea, South 18. Kuwait 19. Kyrgyzstan  
20. Laos 21. Lebanon 22. Macau 23. Malaysia  
24. Maldives 25. Mauritius 26. Mongolia  
27. Myanmar 28. Nepal 29. Oman 30. Pakistan  
31. Palestine 32. Philippines 33. Qatar 34. Russia  
35. Saudi Arabia 36. Singapore 37. Sri Lanka  
38. Syria 39. Taiwan 40. Tajikistan 41. Thailand  
42. Tibet 43. Timor Leste 44. Turkmenistan  
45. United Arab Emirates 46. Uzbekistan  
47. Vietnam 48. Yemen.

## EUROPE

1. Albania 2. Armenia 3. Austria 4. Azerbaijan  
5. Belarus 6. Belgium 7. Bosnia & Herzegovina  
8. Bulgaria 9. Croatia 10. Cyprus 11. Czech  
Republic 12. Denmark 13. Estonia 14. Faroe  
Islands 15. Finland 16. France 17. Georgia  
18. Germany 19. Greece 20. Hungary 21. Iceland  
22. Ireland 23. Isle of Man 24. Italy 25. Jersey  
Island 26. Kosovo 27. Latvia 28. Liechtenstein  
29. Lithuania 30. Luxembourg 31. Macedonia  
32. Malta 33. Moldova 34. Monaco  
35. Montenegro 36. Netherlands 37. Norway  
38. Poland 39. Portugal 40. Romania 41. San  
Marino 42. Serbia 43. Slovakia 44. Slovenia  
45. Spain 46. Sweden 47. Switzerland 48. Turkey  
49. United Kingdom 50. Ukraine 51. Vatican City.

## NORTH AMERICA

1. Aruba 2. Bahamas 3. Barbados 4. Belize  
5. Canada 6. Costa Rica 7. Cuba 8. Dominica  
9. Dominican Republic 10. El Salvador  
11. Greenland 12. Grenada 13. Guadeloupe  
14. Guatemala 15. Haiti 16. Honduras  
17. Jamaica 18. Martinique 19. Mexico  
20. Nicaragua 21. Panama 22. Puerto Rico  
23. St Kitts and Nevis 24. St Lucia 25. Trinidad &  
Tobago 26. United States of America.





Replica of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's footprints



Elephant plinth

## SOUTH AMERICA

1. Argentina 2. Bolivia 3. Brazil 4. Chile  
5. Colombia 6. Ecuador 7. Guyana 8. Paraguay  
9. Peru 10. Uruguay 11. Venezuela.

## OCEANIA

1. Australia 2. Fiji 3. Guam 4. Kiribati 5. Nauru  
6. New Caledonia 7. New Zealand 8. Papua New  
Guinea 9. Samoa 10. Tahiti 11. Tonga 12. Tuvalu  
13. Wallis & Futuna.

## SUMMARY

Continents	Countries	Visitors
Africa	49	2,607
Asia	48	53,380
Europe	51	35,654
N. America	26	18,902
S. America	11	4,746
Oceania	13	3,634
<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>118,923</b>

Total number of countries and territories from  
where visitors have come since 2005:

**Countries** 191  
**Territories** 37  
**Total** 228

## SCHOOL & COLLEGE VISITS FROM NEW DELHI

2015: 2,660  
2014: 2,700  
2013: 2,586

## Total Students Visited

2015: 405,403  
2014: 332,980  
2013: 369,237

## Total Teachers Visited

2015: 28,181  
2014: 26,909  
2013: 26,721

## AKSHARDHAM EXPERIENCES 2015

It always gives an incredible inspiration to us. Every time a new experience, new lessons, new parameter of divinity we experience. This time we saw the Abhisekha Mandapam, Kenopanishad water show are elevating, spiritual ecstasy not only to the common man but for every devotee of all backgrounds.

- HH Sri Tridandi Srimannarayana Ramanuja  
Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji

Head & Acharya, Srimad Ubhaya Vedanta  
Acharya Peetham, Nadigaddapalem  
26 April 2015

I am immensely happy to see the revered Sahaj Anand Water Show. We cannot describe it by words. One has to see it. The show inspires everyone who sees it. The entire show has one moral – that is how to curb one's ego. Ego is a great obstacle for progress. An egoistic man can never make any progress on the spiritual path.



Visitors at the Neelkanth Abhishek Mandapam

Sahaj Anand laser show is such a show, it will eternally inspire people.

- **HH Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj**  
President, The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh  
28 April 2015

An extraordinary experience. Out of the world realization. A feeling that I never have experienced before. Showcasing the glorious past along with the modern present strength of Bharat, this Akshardham Mandir is indeed an unparalleled creation.

- **Sushma Swaraj**  
Minister for External Affairs,  
Government of India  
14 January 2015

Really proud to be an Indian – Akshardham reinforces my pride – Nothing to match India.

- **Justice Kurian Joseph**  
Judge, Supreme Court of India  
23 January 2015

The joy I feel cannot be expressed in words.

- **Taarak Mehta**  
Columnist, Humourist, Writer & Playwright  
Author, Taarak Mehta Ka  
Oolta Chashma  
31 March 2015

We had the most educational and enjoyable visit.

- **A. M. Naik**  
Executive Chairman, Larsen & Toubro Ltd., India  
10 June 2015

Realization of the entire place is so wonderful and it gives a very good exposure to the visitors of the rich heritage of our culture. The laser show is brilliantly conceived and the efforts behind the entire work is beyond imagination.

- **A.S. Kiran Kumar**  
Chairman, Indian Space Research  
Organisation (ISRO)  
2 July 2015

I had lost faith in God. I thought that modern science is the creation of mankind and all achievements of science are going to save the civilization. However, my opinion stands totally reversed today after seeing Akshardham. My faith in God stands revived and reached a 100% level. We are a tiny dot in this universe. The Lord is supreme, the source of power, love and compassion. These basic values, as taught by Guru Neelkanth and later known as Bhagwan Swaminarayan needs to be respected by mankind all over the world.

- **Dr. S.C. Kapoor**  
Professor & HOD, Dept. of Electrical and  
Electronics Engineering  
Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Technology,  
New Delhi, 5 August 2015

The values we experienced in two hours cannot be imbibed by many years of *tapasya*. The dedication and devotion by which the volunteers are giving an unimaginable service. Whoever visits this Akshardham will definitely be transformed and purified.

- **Justice V. Eshwaraiah**  
Chairman, National Commission for  
Backward Classes (NCBC), India  
10 October 2015

Akshardham is a *setu* (bridge) – a symbol of human beings' attempt to reach the high level of holiness and goodness.

- **Roman Tesfaye**  
Spouse of Prime Minister Hailemariam  
Desalegn Boshe, Ethiopia  
29 October 2015

It was a very interesting, eye-opening and inspiring experience that has drawn me closer to my God.

- **Lordina Dramani Mahama**  
Spouse of President John Dramani Mahama,  
Ghana  
29 October 2015

Akshardham has become one of the best spiritual experiences in my life today. I feel blessed by the peace that is present here.

- **Rodrigo Viemann**  
Vice Minister, Foreign Affairs, Guatemala  
10 October 2015

It is beyond one's comprehension that lessons learnt from way back are so applicable in modern day life, as long as you listen with your 'soul'. Grateful for having been given the opportunity to look into our 'inner self'.

- **Mathato Mosisili**  
Spouse of Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili,  
Lesotho  
29 October 2015

It is a place of peace, humanity and wisdom. Simply magnificent and a beautiful monument. May we keep inspiring from the past values to make our life more beautiful. Well done to Indian people for their ingenuity.

- **Keita Aminata Maiga**  
Spouse of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta,  
Mali  
29 October 2015

It was a spiritually uplifting experience. I feel so blessed. Everything in the temple is enlightening.

- **Inkhosikati Lafogiyane**  
The Queen of Swaziland  
29 October 2015

The temple's magnificent beauty is something to behold. The Indian culture tour was also enlightening. India has a rich history that the world can benefit from.

- **Princess Ncengcenge**  
Princess of Swaziland  
29 October 2015

I am short of words to express my feelings! I am simply, very impressed with the work that has gone into creating this temple.

- **Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete**  
President of Tanzania  
18 June 2015

It makes me understand the power of spiritual values as the main foundation of development of a nation. It taught me where comes the economic and social power of today's India and its strong democracy.

- **Edith Kutesa**  
Spouse of Sam Kutesa, President of the  
United Nations General Assembly (2014-15)  
and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uganda  
(2005-14)  
29 October 2015







Yog-Yagna Niyams:

Pramukh Swami Maharaj

SHATABDI MAHOTSAV



Senior sadhus inaugurate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Birth Centenary Celebrations by lighting the lamp

On 19 December 2015, 200,000 devotees attended the celebration to mark the completion of Swamishri's 94<sup>th</sup> year and entry into his 95<sup>th</sup>.

On this occasion, Puja Ishwarcharan Swami declared the launch of Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shatabdi Mahotsav – Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Centenary Celebrations. Puja Mahant Swami, Puja Dr Swami, Puja Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami, Puja Tyagvallabh Swami, Puja Ishwarcharan Swami and Puja Viveksagar Swami lit the lamp to inaugurate the Centenary Celebrations.

The coming years of this celebration are an opportunity for all devotees to:

- Fully understand the true glory of the Gunatit Satpurush as revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.
- Please Bhagwan Swaminarayan by developing profound attachment and affection towards such a Gunatit Satpurush – Pramukh Swami Maharaj.
- Fully understand the Vedic doctrine of Akshar-Purushottam as revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

- Imbibe in one's life the eternal spiritual principles taught by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.
- Offer selfless service, like Pramukh Swami Maharaj has done throughout his life.
- Serve *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj through mind, words and deeds, and reflect upon our obligations towards him.

In short, the Centenary Celebrations are an opportunity for all to follow in the footsteps of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Hence, as directed by the *sadguru* sadhus, devotees are requested to undertake *yog-yagna niyams* from the list below.

### 1. Guru Vanchan Yagna – Year 1

- Read the three books: *Transcendence* (Eng) / *Paratpar* (Guj), *Eternal Virtues/Jena Gune Rijhya Girdhari* and *Pure Devotion/Para Bhakti*.

It is estimated that by reading five minutes daily, these three books can be read twice in one year.

Next year, other books will be prescribed for reading.



## 2. Guru Lekhan Yagna – All Years

The pre-printed Amrutvachan Pothi will have quotations describing the glory and inclination of a true guru at the top of each page. Daily writing of these divine words of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj will strengthen one's understanding and resolve.

Each book has 96 pages. By writing one page daily (approx. 10 minutes), four books can be completed in one year.

## 3. Guru Shravan Yagna – Year 1

Listen for 7-10 minutes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's audio blessings every day.

A selection of 60 mp3 files of Swamishri's blessings have been released. So, daily listening will enable one to listen to each six times in one year.

The mp3 files are available from [www.baps.org](http://www.baps.org) for listening online or download. Also, a CD will be available from each satsang centre.

## 4. Guru Darshan Yagna – Year 1

Daily, have the video darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj for 7-10 minutes.

A total of 90 videos have been selected for viewing. A DVD of these is available from BAPS bookstores.

Daily viewing will enable one to view each video four times in one year.

## 5. Guru Bhakti Yagna – All Years

- Turn five extra *malas* daily for Swamishri's health.
- Observe a fast on the *sud* 8 of every month.

One can undertake to observe 3, 6, 9 or 12 fasts throughout the year. (Those who observe a fast on *sud* 9 should not take this *niyam*.)

- Daily contemplate for five minutes on the glory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj – his virtues, work and divine form.

## 6. Guru Katha Yagna

Every week, narrate a new incident about Pramukh Swami Maharaj to as many friends and relatives as possible. This can be done in person, by phone, by letter, or through email or social media.

Select an incident from *Eternal Virtues/Jena Gune Rijhya Girdhari*.

## 7. Collective Niyams for Mandals – All Years

- On a Sunday before or after the *sud* 8, arrange a *prabhat* (morning) or *sandhya* (evening) *feri* (small procession) and chant the *dhun*.
- Sequential Fasting: In each *mandal*, one different person should observe a fast every day. If more than 30 enrol, assign each a fixed date every month. Thus, on some dates, more than one person may be fasting. [Note: Do not involve young children in this *niyam*.]

## 8. Family Niyams

- Ghar Sabha: The individual *niyams* 1, 3 and 4 can be done in a daily family assembly.
- Once every month, invite different families to your *ghar sabha* and encourage them to conduct a daily *ghar sabha*. ♦

# Vicharan

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

October to December 2015 & January 2016, Sarangpur

## OCTOBER 2015

### 1, Thursday; Shastriji Maharaj's Smruti Parva

At 10.55 a.m. Swamishri went for darshan at Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir to pay homage to guru Shastriji Maharaj on the occasion of the Smruti Parva.

The Smruti Parva assembly had commenced at 8.15 a.m. in Pramukh Darshan Vatika. Senior sadhus, Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami, Pujya Viveksagar Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami eulogized on Shastriji Maharaj.

At 11.40 a.m. Swamishri, wearing a *pagh* similar to what Shastriji Maharaj used to wear, gave darshan from his cabin, Pramukh Mandiram. Everyone joined in the mass prayer offered to Thakorji and Swamishri. Thereafter, Swamishri offered *dudhpak* garnished with *kesar*, almonds and other condiments to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Then Swamishri was offered seven teaspoonfuls of *dudhpak*, which he drank to everyone's joy.

In the evening, Swamishri served *dudhpak* to the sadhus, *parshads* and *sadhaks*. At 9.00 p.m. Swamishri gave darshan to the devotees from Pramukh Mandiram and youths performed skits and traditional dances to commemorate Shastriji Maharaj's Smruti Parva.

### 13, Tuesday

On behalf of Swamishri, Pujya Viveksagar Swami honoured Adarshjivan Swami for attaining a second PhD in Sanskrit on Pramukh Swami Maharaj as an ideal guru of management.

### 22, Thursday

Swamishri performed the *shilanyas* rituals of the principal *shila* of the central *shikhar* for the BAPS *shikharbaddh* mandir in Nadiad. Amidst Vedic chantings Swamishri placed flower petals, rice grains on the main *shila* and in the *nidhi-kumbh*. Finally, Swamishri performed *arti* and sanctified the mandir plans. About 500 devotees from Nadiad had come to witness the occasion.

Youths perform a skit on the occasion of Shastriji Maharaj's Smruti Parva





## 26, Monday; Sharad Punam Festival

The birthday celebration assembly of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami commenced with *dhun* and prayer at 6.15 p.m. Sadhus delivered speeches about various aspects of Gunatitanand Swami's great spiritual life. The speeches were interspersed with the performance of the customary five *artis*.

Swamishri arrived in his cabin, Pramukh Mandiram, at about 8.00 p.m. Then youths enacted incidents from the life of Gunatitanand Swami: birth, renunciation of home, *diksha*, *ras* in Sarangpur and finally the legacy of the Gunatit Parampara. Swamishri then showered flower petals in the bowl of *dudh-pauva prasad* to be give to all.

## 30, Friday

Swamishri inaugurated new publications by Swaminarayan Aksharpith: *Jivan Mangalya*, *Sant Vykhyanmala*, Part 10 (audio CD), *Sarvang Bal Vikas* (video DVD), and Shastriji Maharaj's 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations (video DVD).

## NOVEMBER 2015

### 2, Monday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, canvas *murtis* of Guru Parampara, Shri Hanumanji and Shri Ganapatiji

for the BAPS *hari* mandirs at Sayan and Isanpor in the Surat rural region. Swamishri touched the gold-tipped ritual rod on the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and invoked the divinities. Thereafter, he performed *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali*.

Prior to Swamishri's arrival the entire *mahapuja* rituals were performed by senior sadhus.

### 7, Saturday

Today marked the momentous day of Swamishri's renunciation of his home. Seventy-six years ago he had left Chansad to become a renunciate at the hands of Shastriji Maharaj.

Sadhus and youths delivered speeches and performed skits to portray Swamishri's childhood incidents and his great works.

Swamishri inaugurated an audio CD publication by Swaminarayan Aksharpith – *Sant Samagam*, Part 9.

### 11, Wednesday; Diwali

In the morning, Swamishri gave darshan to all at Pramukh Darshan Vatika.

At 4.30 p.m. senior sadhus started the *mahapuja* rituals for Chopda Pujan at the Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir. Hundreds of devotees participated in the Chopda Pujan rituals. Swamishri arrived at 6.00 p.m. and paid homage to Shastriji

Youths enact the incident of Gunatitanand Swami's *diksha*



# Swaminarayan Yagna for World Peace

14 & 15 November 2015, Sarangpur



As part of the year-long Centenary Celebrations of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Sarangpur, a mammoth *yagna* for world peace was held for two days on the Fuldol Festival grounds, behind Swaminarayan Vidyamandir, Sarangpur.

A grand *yagnashala* was erected with 363 *yagna kunds* and a main stage in the centre with nine main *yagna kunds*. The *yagna* commenced at 8.00 a.m. in the presence of Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Viveksagar Swami and other senior sadhus. The *yagna* was organized under the guidance of Shrutiprakash Swami and Bhadresh Swami and conducted by Shri Mukeshbhai Shastri, Vasudevbbhai Shastri and 130 assistant Brahmins.

Swamishri arrived on the *yagna* stage in a decorated vehicle at 11.50 a.m. Amidst Vedic chantings Swamishri performed the main *sankalp* of the *yagna*, then performed *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and offered oblations of ghee, fuel wood, and grains into the *yagna kund*. Thereafter, Swamishri performed *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali*. Then Swamishri showered rice grains towards the devotees. Finally, while Swamishri was departing all the *yajmans* got darshan at close hand. On the first day 3,314 couples and on the next day 3,249 couples participated in the *yagna*. In all, 6,563 couples participated in the *yagna*.

The one-month preparations for the *yagna* were made by 10 sadhus and 475 volunteers.

Maharaj. Thereafter, Swamishri showered flowers on the accounts books of Sarangpur Mandir. Then, Swamishri's wheelchair was taken to the Smruti Mandir podium where he performed the main *sankalp* of the *mahapuja* for the welfare of all. Thereafter, Swamishri performed *arti* and finally showered rice grains and flower petals on all the accounts books of devotees.

## 12, Thursday; Annakutotsav

Pramukh Darshan Vatika was decked for the festive New Year's Day celebration. A beautiful

*rangoli* had been prepared on stage, and the assembly hall was decorated with electric lamps and buntings.

At 10.20 a.m. everyone present had darshan of Swamishri performing his morning puja. Thereafter, Swamishri went for Thakorji's darshan in the main mandir. An exquisite *annakut* had been arranged before Thakorji from the sanctum sanctorum to the end of the mandir dome. Swamishri showered flower petals on the *annakut* items, performed Govardhan puja and *arti* of Thakorji. Then Swamishri performed the *annakut*



Celebration of Shakotsav on Prabodhini Ekadashi

*arti* at the Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir.

More than 12,000 devotees took *mahaprasad* in the afternoon.

At 8.53 p.m. Swamishri arrived in Pramukh Mandiram (cabin) to give darshan to all. A grand *annakut* had been arranged on the main stage of Pramukh Darshan Vatika. Thereafter, all the sadhus and devotees performed *arti* and sang *thal*. (For photos and brief report see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, January-February 2016, page 53.)

### 13, Friday

Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of the new marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and canvas *murtis* of Guru Parampara that would replace the old *murtis* at the BAPS *hari* mandir in Pati.

### 19, Thursday

Swamishri inaugurated an English publication by Swaminarayan Aksharpith, *Hinduism: Hindu Perceptions, Way of Life...*

### 22, Sunday; Prabodhini Ekadashi

At about 6.00 p.m. Swamishri went for Thakorji's darshan in the main mandir. An array of fresh vegetables were arranged before Thakorji, outside the sanctum and beneath the mandir dome. Swamishri performed *arti* and sanctified

different vegetables by taking them in his hand.

Thereafter, at about 7.00 p.m. Swamishri gave darshan to all from Pramukh Mandiram (cabin). A variety of vegetables had been arranged inside and outside Swamishri's cabin.

## DECEMBER 2015

### 7, Monday

According to the English calendar the day marked Swamishri's 94<sup>th</sup> birthday and entry into his 95<sup>th</sup> year.

At 10.30 a.m. Swamishri gave darshan to all from Pramukh Mandiram. He was greeted with the singing of "Abhivandan..." by sadhus and devotees.

Swamishri also sanctified helmets ordered by devotees using motorcycles.

During late afternoon a cultural programme, including skits and a traditional dance, was performed by youths. Various incidents were enacted from Swamishri's childhood: birth, doing bhajan at the Hanuman Madhi Mandir, studying at Padra High School and other childhood incidents. The celebration was capped with mass *arti* by all.

### 13, Sunday

The BAPS Youth Hostel (Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar), launched by Yogiji Maharaj, was celebrating its Golden Anniversary year. To inaugurate its grand finale programme,





Swamishri celebrates Uttaran-Jholi

which was scheduled to be held a few weeks later, Swamishri lighted a lamp. Several youths from various BAPS *chhatralayas* presented some highlights of how the *chhatralayas* have contributed to the development of students. Pujya Sadhujivan Swami offered an invitation card to Swamishri for the grand finale celebration. In conclusion, youths performed a brilliant traditional dance.

### 14, Monday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Hanumanji and Shri Ganapatiji and the canvas *murtis* of Guru Parampara for the new BAPS *hari* mandir in Dabhau.

### 19, Saturday;

#### Swamishri's 95th Birthday Celebration

For a detailed report refer to *Swaminarayan Bliss*, January-February 2016.

### 28, Wednesday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in the Atladara region: Mirsapura, Karmad and Nandesari, and in Mangaluru (Mangalore).

### 30, Wednesday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in the Navsari region: Unai, Meenkachch and Gandeva.

### JANUARY 2016

#### 1 & 2, Friday & Saturday

Due to Swamishri's ill health he gave darshan only once during the day from his bedroom. He mainly took rest and medication under the supervision of doctors.

### 6, Wednesday

Swamishri inaugurated a Swaminarayan Aksharpith DVD publication, *Guruhari Darshan*.

### 14, Thursday; Uttaran-Jholi Festival

At 9.12 a.m. Swamishri gave darshan from his cabin, Pramukh Mandiram. The stage of Pramukh Darshan Vatika had the *utsav murti* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, and sacks of grains and food materials to celebrate the Uttaran festival.

Swamishri uttered the *jholi* call, 'Swaminarayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho'. Then leading devotees placed their donations in the *jholi* kept outside Swamishri's cabin. Finally a reel of thread attached to a kite inside the cabin was given to Swamishri to celebrate the occasion.



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

### 23, Saturday; Gunatit Diksha Day

On this day, 206 years ago, Bhagwan Swaminarayan had given the *bhagwati diksha* to Mulji Sharma in Dabhan and named him Gunatitanand Swami. Ever since, the day is celebrated as Gunatit Diksha day. Prior to Swamishri's morning darshan several sadhus spoke about the virtues and glory of Gunatitanand Swami in the satsang assembly.

In the evening, at 8.20 p.m., youths enacted the incident of Gunatitanand Swami's *diksha*. Thereafter, Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke about Yogiji Maharaj's works and his earthly departure 45 years ago.

### 24, Sunday

Swamishri released a Swaminarayan Akshar-pith audio CD publication of the dance lyrics for Swamishri's 95th Birthday Celebration – *Namo Namaha: Hey Pramukh Swami*.

### 25, Monday

At 11.35 a.m. Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and the canvas *murtis* of Guru Parampara for BAPS *hari* mandirs in the Himmatnagar region: Idar, Poglu, Kubodharol and Kathvavdi. Swamishri touched the ritual rod on the *murtis*

and invoked the divinities.

At 7.00 p.m. Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* for two BAPS *hari* mandirs in Junagadh: Madhuram and Joshipura suburbs.

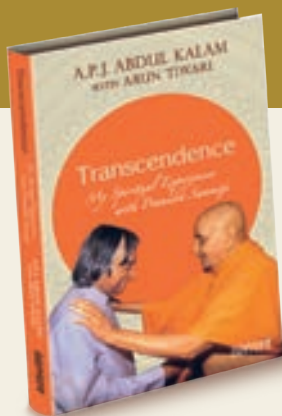
During Swamishri's three-year stay in Sarangpur he had performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of 150 BAPS *shikharbaddh* and *hari* mandirs.

### 27, Wednesday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *murtis* that would replace the existing *murtis* installed at the BAPS *hari* mandirs in the Anand region: Sarsa, Lingda and Fulnagar (Saiyadpura). Swamishri also performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for the new BAPS *hari* mandir in Vasad. The *pratishtha* rituals of the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj and Shri Radha-Krishna Dev were performed in the Pramukh Mandiram. The rituals for the *murtis* of Shri Hanumanji, Shri Ganapati and the canvas *murtis* of the Guru Parampara were performed on the main stage of Pramukh Darshan Vatika.

### 29, Friday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in the Gondal region: Santhali and Bodeli region: Tejgad and Moti Amrol. ◆



# CELEBRATING Transcendence

Africa & India, January 2016

## INTRODUCTION

In January 2016, celebration assemblies of *Transcendence* were held in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa. Brahmavihari Swami and Amrutvijay Swami travelled from India to address these assemblies. Kothari Priyavrat Swami, Amrutseva Swami, Tapovatsal Swami, Vishwakirti Swami and other sadhus residing in Nairobi organized the celebration programmes with the help of local volunteers. In the assemblies three videos were shown: 'A Tale of Two Boys', which portrays the lives of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, the interactions between them and Dr Kalam presenting the first published copy of the book to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Thereafter, Brahmavihari Swami would address the audience, followed by the book launch and finally the guests speakers would share their reflections on the book. In all, seven book launches were held in East Africa and South Africa. A brief report of these events is as follows.



Kisumu (L to R): Gabriel Ochieng (Speaker of Kisumu County Assembly), George Arunga, Priyavrat Swami, Brahmavihari Swami, Ramesh Maheta, Dr Firoz Aliboy

## KISUMU, KENYA

3 January 2016

Over 800 invited guests and devotees were inspired by Brahmavihari Swami's speech, describing the special friendship between Dr APJ

Abdul Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and how the spiritual messages Dr Kalam learnt from Pramukh Swami Maharaj can also help anyone achieve a balance in their life and experience inner peace.





Kampala (L to R): Mugema Peter Panadol (MP Iganga), H.E. V Kananathan (High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Uganda), Sam Engola (Urban & Housing Development Minister), Hon. Kirunda Kivejinja (Deputy Prime Minister), Brahmavihari Swami, Priyavrat Swami, H.E. Dr AVS Ramesh Chandra (High Commissioner of India to Uganda), Advocate Muzamiru Kibeedi, Hon. Rajnibhai Tailor (President, Hindu Council of Africa)

Invited guests also recounted their personal experiences with Pramukh Swami Maharaj and their opinions on this unique book.

## KAMPALA, UGANDA

8 January 2016

Over 550 invited guests and devotees attended the special evening celebration at the prestigious Speke Resort on the banks of Lake Victoria.

Brahmavihari Swami narrated in detail his first-hand accounts of some of the meetings and conversations between Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Guests included Hon. Kirunda Kivejinja, Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Dr AVS Ramesh Chandra, High Commissioner of India to Uganda, H.E. V Kannanathan, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Uganda, Hon. Sam Egola, Minister for Urban and Housing Development, Muzamiru Kibeedi, CEO, Kibeedi Advocates & Company, Hon. Rajnibhai Tailor, President, Hindu Council of Africa, as well as central and local government officials, representatives of banks, NGOs, schools, colleges, universities, and local Hindu, Jain, Muslim and Sikh communities, and

other professionals.

Deputy Prime Minister Kirunda Kivejinja, Indian High Commissioner Dr AVS Ramesh Chandra and Advocate Muzamiru Kibeedi also shared their views on the book, Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Advocate Kibeedi said, “This book, ‘Transcendence’, by Abdul Kalam is very addictive. When you start reading, you don’t want to stop. And when you take time off to read, you are not spending that time; it is a worthwhile investment of your time.”

The *Transcendence* book was inaugurated by the guests on the dais to the accompaniment of Vedic mantras.

## JINJA, UGANDA

9 January 2016

Around 650 guests and devotees were present.

Among the guests were Hon. Kirunda Kivejinja, Deputy Prime Minister of Uganda, representatives of local Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities and others.

Deputy Prime Minister Kivejinja also addressed the gathering.



Jinja (L to R): Martin Kirube (Leah Church), Hon. Kirunda Kivijinja (Third Deputy Prime Minister), Brahnavihari Swami, Priyavrat Swami, Hon. Daudi Migereko (Cabinet Minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development), Richard Balyaino (Resident District Commissioner, Buvuma Islands), Sheikh Juma Katega (Chief Khadi, Jinja District), Reverend Charles Wamika (Catholic Church representative).

## ARUSHA, TANZANIA

18 January 2016

Over 500 guests and devotees attended the evening assembly which featured a speech by Brahnavihari Swami describing the special unique friendship between Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Thereafter, videos of Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj were shown.

At the conclusion of the assembly, dignitaries

participated in the launch of the book.

## MWANZA, TANZANIA

21 January 2016

Over 700 local dignitaries, well-wishers and devotees gathered for the evening assembly despite the torrential rains.

The highlight of the assembly was an enlightening speech by Brahnavihari Swami and videos

Arusha (L to R): Karim Rehmtula (Chairman, Khoja Shia Ishnashia), Manjit Singh (Chairman, Siri Guru Singh Sabha), Altaf Hirani (President, Ismailia), Brahnavihari Swami, Vishvakirti Swami, Mohan Mistry (Vice Chairman, Hindu Union), Gurmail Singh (Chairman, Ram Ghadhia)







Mwanza (L to R): Gurmail Singh (Chairman, Ram Ghadhia), Mohan Mistry (Vice Chairman, Hindu Union), Vishwakirti Swami, Brahmvihari Swami, Altaf Hirani (President, Ismailia), Manjit Singh (Chairman, Guru Singh Sabha), Karim Rehmtula (Chairman, Khoja Shia Ishnashia)

on Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

At the end, local leaders participated in the book launch.

## **DAR-ES-SALAAM, TANZANIA**

**23 January 2016**

Over 650 invited dignitaries graced the special evening celebration of ‘Transcendence’. The guests included two former presidents of the

Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

Republic of Tanzania – H.E. Benjamin Mpaka and H.E. Ali Hassan Mwinyi – as well as the Indian High Commissioner, government officials, advocates, doctors, businessmen and other distinguished professionals. Reputed leaders of the Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities were also present.

The highlight of the evening included uplifting speeches by Prof. Arun Tiwari, co-author of







Dar-es-Salaam (L to R): Deusededith Duncan (Advocate, F.K. Law Chamber), Dr Emmanuel Nchimbi (Former Home Minister, Tanzania), Dr Mpoki Ulisubisa (Principal Secretary, Ministry of Health), Subhash Patel (Chairman, BAPS Tanzania), H.E. Alsi Hassan Mwinyi (Former President, Tanzania), Priyavrat Swami, Brahnavihari Swami, H.E. Benjamin Mkapa (Former President, Tanzania), H.E. Sandip Arya (High Commissioner of India to Tanzania), Prof. Arun Tiwari, Prof. Palamagamba Kabudi (University of Dar-es-Salaam), Sir J.K. Chande

‘Transcendence’, and Brahnavihari Swami, who narrated his firsthand observations of the numerous meetings between Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the spiritual messages Dr Kalam learnt from Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Thereafter, the chief guests participated in the book launch to the accompaniment of Vedic verses.

H.E. Benjamin Mkapa, Former President of the Republic of Tanzania said, “[These messages] are important reminders that we can have diversity as human beings, but also have unity of human beings.... Value lessons cannot start at schools and colleges. They must begin in the home, in the family and the community.... The stronger the spiritual wealth the stronger will become the other forms of wealth.”

H.E. Sandeep Arya, High Commissioner of India to Tanzania, commented, “This lesson of love, kindness, inner self-enrichment and self-realization is important for us to carry back with us and try to translate them in our life; that will be the real tribute to the book itself.”

Professor Palamagamba Kabudi, Dean of the

University of Dar-es-Salaam, expressed, “This is an extraordinary book on an extraordinary person and written by an extraordinary personality.... Why is this book relevant to Tanzania today? Because of our religious diversity. This book enriches us on how to understand other faiths, tolerance and the co-existence of different religions.... It’s also a very important book to read now because it talks and deals with issues of integrity, ethical behaviour and morality.”

Reputed advocate, Mr Deusededith Duncan said, “*Transcendence* is not a book that can be written by an ordinary man. It is the work of a truly awakened soul who has lived and served selflessly for science and humanity for his entire life. While sharing his experiences with various people in his life and mainly his final guru, Dr Kalam has gifted us with the modern day equivalent of the great books like Gita, Koran and the Holy Bible. What has come out in the end is a great fusion of science, spirituality and leadership which is the rarest of the rare combination to find in the modern world. The theme of this book is not only fusion, but also unity.



Auditorium, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

It is about eradicating the ego in us which will positively impact the ones around us. Dr Kalam said that it is by learning this lesson from his great teacher Pramukh Swami, that he has been able to rule India. That is why he is known as the people's president.... Kalam may be gone but he is still living with us today, in this country and in this world. This book will remain in our hearts just like the Gita, Koran and the Holy Bible." The assembly concluded with the national anthems of Tanzania and India.

### **JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA** **30 January 2016**

Around 1500 guests and devotees attended this special event, which began with the captivating video: 'A Tale of Two Boys' and the video of Dr Kalam lovingly reading an excerpt from 'Transcendence' to Swamishri.

The first speech was by Professor Arun Tiwari, who said, "We must work together to realize the dream of Dr Kalam in the land of Mandela through the guidance of Pramukh Swami Maharaj."

Then, Pujya Brahnavihari Swami enthralled the audience with his humour-filled speech.

After the videos on Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the saints and the main guests were introduced and ushered onto the stage. The dignitaries were: Professor Arun Tiwari – co-author of 'Transcendence'; Professor Firoz Cachalia – Professor at Law (representing Pravin Gordhan – South Africa's Minister of Finance); Tshediso Matona – Super Director General in the Ministry of the Presidency; Omie Singh – Member of Parliament of South Africa; Ismail Vadi – MEC for Roads and Transport in Gauteng; Randhir Kumar Jaiswal – Consul General of India in Johannesburg, South Africa; Isu Chiba – a hero of the Apartheid era; Xolani Mkhwanazi – Chairman of B.H.P. Billiton; Srinivasan Venkatakrishnan – CEO of Anglo-Gold Ashanti and Mr. Ramachandran Ottapathu – CEO of Choppies Group.

Following this, the book launch took place. The ceremony, led by children, was moving as it was humble, yet grand and symbolic.

The guest speakers then addressed the assembly.



Johannesburg, South Africa (L to R): Mr. Ramachandran Ottapathu – CEO of Choppies Group; Mr. Tshediso Matona – Super Director General in the Ministry of the Presidency; Mr. Omie Singh – Member of Parliament of South Africa; Mr. Xolani Mkhwanazi – Chairman of BHP Billiton; Mr. Isu Chiba – hero of the Apartheid era; Tapovatsal Swami; Brahnavihari Swami; Prof. Arun Tiwari; Professor Firoz Cachalia – Professor at Law (representing Mr. Pravin Gordhan – South Africa’s Minister of Finance); Mr. Ismail Vadi – MEC for Roads and Transport in Gauteng; Mr. Randhir Kumar Jaiswal – Consul General of India in Johannesburg, South Africa; Mr. Srinivasan Venkatakrishnan – CEO of Anglo-Gold Ashanti

Mr. Ramachandran Ottapathu focused on the importance of spirituality – the “sixth principle” which Swamishri gently instructed Dr Kalam to implement in his plan to take India forward. Mr. Ismail Vadi spoke about the importance of the “two most enlightened souls of our time”, and how important the values and conduct shown through ‘Transcendence’ is for today’s leaders.

Consul Randhir Kumar Jaiswal shared his thoughts about how the book unites supposedly different worlds: science meets spirituality; humanity meets God – regardless of religion. Professor Cachalia spoke of how Dr Kalam was a “man who deeply embodied the values of religion and intellectual tolerance”.

The programme concluded with singing of the South African and Indian national anthems with pride.

## Experiences

Isu Chiba, African National Congress stalwart

and fellow prisoner with Nelson Mandela on Robben Island for 18 years, said, “The launch of the book is particularly timely. A time when it seems the leaders in many parts of the world are actually failing their people. This book, I think brings back hope. It inspires people to see things differently and instils a value-based leadership programme. The book is spot on.” And later, in a personal conversation, he mentioned, “After 18 years in jail, fighting for freedom... tonight I really felt liberated. The evening was truly uplifting and elevating.”

Mr. Ismail Cajee (nephew of the famous anti-apartheid activist, Ahmed Timol) said, “I was rather reluctant to sit through the evening, but a divine intervention occurred this evening. This programme helped me find peace and fore-closure after 45 years of strife, struggle, stress and setbacks to find justice for my late uncle, Ahmed Timol.”





(L to R): Prof. Arun Tiwari, Puja Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami and Shri Vajubhai Vala (Governor of Karnataka), Bengaluru, India

## BENGALURU, INDIA 10 January 2016

Over 1,200 people attended the public dedication of *Transcendence* and its Hindi (*Arohan*) and Gujarati (*Paratpar*) versions in the esteemed presence of Puja Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami.

Also present on this special occasion were co-author Prof. Arun Tiwari, Shri Vajubhai Vala (Governor, Karnataka), Shri Suresh Kumar (MLA), Shri Priya Krishnaji (MLA), Shri Basva

Raju (Principal Secretary, Revenue Department), Shri Rajnish Gohil (Secretary, Child and Welfare Department), and leading members of the Brahma Samaj, Halari Visa Oswal Samaj and Marvadi Samaj.

The programme featured enlightening speeches by Prof. Arun Tiwari, Shri Vajubhai Vala and Puja Bhaktipriya Swami, as well as a series of videos showing the spiritual friendship between Dr Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. ♦

## SWAMINARAYAN BLISS INFORMATION STATEMENT

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5. **Editor's Name:** Swami Swayamprakashdas

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

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

(Signed) Swami Swayamprakashdas. Date: 5-3-2016

# Dignitaries Visit SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM

New Delhi, January-February 2016



Mayor Bonnie Crombie, Mississauga, ON (Canada)



Mayor Frank Scarpitti of Markham, ON (Canada)

## MAYOR BONNIE CROMBIE, MISSISSAUGA, ON, CANADA

29 January 2016

Mayor Crombie was welcomed in a traditional Indian manner by trustees and senior volunteers.

After admiring the Mayur Dwar, Mayor Crombie offered respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir, and viewed the mandir's architecture and sculptures on the Gajendra Pithika.

She offered prayers for world peace and harmony by offering *abhishek* on the sacred image of Shri Neelkanth Varni

Thereafter, the Mayor went to the Sanskruti Vihar exhibition.

Sharing her experience, Mayor Crombie wrote, "The temple is a wondrous and magnificent creation and a symbol of peace, serenity, nature and the divine. Thank you for the inspiration & enriching experience. I will always treasure this memory."

## MAYOR FRANK SCARPITTI OF MARKHAM, ON, CANADA

31 January 2016

Mayor Frank Scarpitti of Markham, Ontario

in Canada and his six-member delegation were traditionally welcomed by senior sadhus, trustees and senior volunteers.

After admiring the Mayur Dwar, they offered respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir, and viewed the mandir's architecture and sculptures on the Gajendra Pithika. Mayor Scarpitti offered prayers for world peace and harmony by offering *abhishek* on the *murti* of Shri Neelkanth Varni.

The mayor and his delegation also visited the Sahajanand Darshan, Neelkanth Darshan and Sanskruti Vihar exhibitions. Mayor Scarpitti shared his experience, "Thank you for the wonderful tour. The temple is truly inspiring and continues to symbolize the beauty of life and what is key to happiness in all our lives."

## HON. PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE OF ONTARIO, CANADA

29 January 2016

Hon. Premier Kathleen Wynne of Ontario, Canada, visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi to experience India's ageless beauty,



Hon. Premier Kathleen Wynne of Ontario, Canada



Rotary International President K.R. Ravindran

borderless culture and timeless values.

Premier Wynne was welcomed in a traditional Indian manner with a garland of flowers, a *chandlo* and tying of the sacred *kalva* (sacred thread) by trustees and senior volunteers of Swaminarayan Akshardham.

Premier Wynne's 30-member delegation included Minister Michael Chan (MPP), Minister Brad Duguid (MPP), Associate Minister Dipika Damerla (MPP), Minister Vic Dhillon (MPP), Minister Harinder Takhar (MPP), Minister Amrit Mangat (MPP), Deputy High Commissioner Jess Dutton from the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi and Jane Rounthwaite serving as the President and Managing Partner at the Osborne Group. The group first visited the Mayur Dwar (Peacock Gate), the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir and the Gajendra Pithika (Elephant Plinth).

Then Premier Wynne and the delegation offered prayers for world peace and harmony by offering *abhishek* on the sacred *murti* of Shri Neelkanth Varni.

Sharing her experience at Akshardham, Premier Wynne wrote, "Thank you so much for the wonderful visit. The temple is a miracle of human skill, faith and imagination. A true inspiration."

## ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT K.R. RAVINDRAN

10 February 2016

Rotary International President K.R. Ravindran, Rotary International Director Dr Manoj Desai and their 12-member Rotarian delegation were traditionally welcomed by senior sadhus and volunteers.

After admiring the Mayur Dwar, the delegation offered their respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir, and viewed the mandir's architecture and the Gajendra Pithika.

The delegation then prayed for world peace and harmony by offering *abhishek* on the sacred image of Shri Neelkanth Varni. The Rotarian delegation also visited the Sahajanand Darshan, Neelkanth Darshan and Sanskruti Vihar exhibitions, and attended the Sahaj Anand Water Show.

Sharing his experience at Akshardham, President K.R. Ravindran from Evanston, IL, USA wrote, "We came here for an hour. We stayed for 3½ hours. We go back with our hearts and minds replenished with spirituality, peace and love. It was a great investment in time. We have the same values in our respective organizations. We will strive to reach your heights."



## BOB BLACKMAN, BRITISH MP

13 February 2016

British MP Robert John Blackman, from Harrow East, and his spouse, Mrs. Nicola Blackman, were given a warm traditional welcome.

After admiring the Mayur Dwar, the Blackmans paid respects at the Swaminarayan Akshardham Mandir and viewed the mandir's architecture and the Gajendra Pithika.

The Blackmans offered prayers for world peace and harmony by offering *abhishek* on the sacred *murti* of Shri Neelkanth Varni. They also visited the Sahajanand Darshan, Neelkanth Darshan and Sanskruti Vihar exhibitions. Finally, they witnessed the Sahaj Anand Water Show.

Sharing his experience at Akshardham, Bob Blackman MP wrote, "Thank you for a wonderful experience. This is truly one of the wonders of the world, combining the lessons of history



Bob Blackman, British MP

with modern technology. I have been privileged to be involved in the development of the Neasden Temple in the UK. This experience surpasses even the wonders of the Neasden Temple. I am proud to be an Honorary Hindu and this is truly an amazing dedication of voluntary effort to create this magnificent mandir." ♦

## India's Air Chief Marshal Shri Arup Raha Visits Swaminarayan Akshardham

21 January 2016, Gandhinagar, Gujarat



India's Air Chief Marshal Shri Arup Raha visited Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar, to experience India's ageless beauty, borderless culture and timeless values. Shri Arup Raha was welcomed with a garland by Pujya Swayamprakash Swami (Pujya Doctor

Swami). After seeing the model room, Shri Raha offered prayers for peace and harmony by offering *abhishek* upon the *murti* of Shri Neelkanth Varni. He also saw the unique water show 'Sat-Chit-Anand', a creative presentation of the ancient Upanishadic story of the young boy, Nachiketa, depicted with the aid of modern technology – fountains, fire effects, lasers and projections.

Sharing his experience about Akshardham, Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha wrote, "It was a great pleasure to visit the Akshardham Temple. The laser show on Nachiketa was very educative and I felt deeply influenced by the strength of his character and divine knowledge. Our best wishes to the authorities of the famous temple." ♦

# Launching of Akshar Deri Sardh Shatabdi Mahotsav

12 February 2016, Gondal



BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir and Akshar Deri, Gondal



(Top) Puja Mahant Swami and Puja Viveksagar Swami light the lamp to launch the celebrations.  
(Below) Devotees perform mass arti

**A**kshar Deri is the sacred place in Gondal where Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami was cremated. Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj often prayed in the Deri and sang its praises as a wish-fulfilling mandir. Devotees pilgrimage to the Akshar Deri to devoutly offer prayers and *pradakshinas* (circumambulation). A great history and legacy is associated with this sacred shrine, which will complete 150 years in 2018.

In Sarangpur, on 30 January 2016, Pramukh Swami Maharaj lit the inaugural lamp to launch the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

On 12 February 2016 (Vasant Panchami), the 'Akshar Deri Sardh Shatabdi' was launched in the esteemed presence of Puja Mahant Swami and Puja Viveksagar Swami in Gondal. After the *mangala arti*, over 600 devotees participated in the Vedic *mahapuja* ceremony in the open grounds of Akshar Mandir. Then, after the *shangar arti*, an *annakut* was offered to Thakorji

in the Akshar Deri.

Thereafter, the special launch assembly was held, featuring bhajans describing the glory of Akshar Deri, historic videos of past celebrations in Akshar Deri, colourful dances and skits by children and youths. Also, sadhus spoke on the history, glory and power of Akshar Deri, how Bhagwan Swaminarayan remains manifest through Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami and the guru *parampara*, the profound peace experienced in the Akshar Deri and the matchless glory of Akshar Deri. The various activities and events planned to celebrate the 150th anniversary were announced by Kothari Divyapurush Swami. Finally, Puja Mahant Swami elucidated on how each individual *satsangi* can celebrate the Sardh Shatabdi so that everyone learns of the greatness of Akshar Deri and Puja Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The assembly concluded with mass *arti* performed by 15,000 devotees. ◆



## India

### ANNUAL BAL-BALIKA KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

30 December 2015 to 17 January 2016, Gujarat



More than 8,000 *bal-balika karyakars* attended the 12 Bal-Balika Karyakar Shibirs organized by the BAPS Children's Central Activities Cell (Bal Madhyastha Karyalay) in Ahmedabad. The *shibirs* were held at six BAPS mandirs in Gujarat: Bochasan, Atladara, Ahmedabad, Tithal, Sankari and Gondal.

The central theme of the two-day *shibirs* was 'Sadhana' – spiritual endeavours to anchor oneself with *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The topics on 'Sadhana' included daily rituals, *niyam-dharma*, *seva*, *mahima* and *samarpan*. Pujya Doctor Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and other learned and experienced sadhus inspired the *karyakars* through their speeches. The *shibirs* also included video interviews of senior sadhus, workshops, audio-video presentations and a drama, 'Muktina Mandan', scripted by Jayendra Vinchi.

Through the 'Sadhana' *shibirs*, the *bal-balika karyakars* were inspired to continue their dedicated services to please Swamishri.

### 'PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ DWARAM' SHILANYAS, SOMNATH SANSKRIT UNIVERSITY

7 February 2016, Veraval



As a part of the Pramukh Swami Maharaj Birth Centenary Celebrations, the *shilanyas* ceremony for 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj Dwaram' took place in the presence of the Governor of Gujarat, His Excellency Shri O.P. Kohli, Gujarat's Minister for Education Shri Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, Gujarat's Minister for Agriculture Shri Jashbhai Barad, Vice-Chancellor of Ambedkar Open University Shri Pankaj Jani, renowned scholar and poet Shri Ramkaran Sharma and Vice-Chancellor of Shri Somnath Sanskrit University Professor Ark Nath Chaudhary.

Together with the *shilanyas* ceremony, an international seminar on 'Shivatatva in Sanskrit Literature' was held in which various scholars presented their views. On this occasion a PhD degree was conferred on Adarshjivan Swami. The event was attended by more than 700 scholars, including professors and university vice-chancellors.



## 'ANANT UPKAR' NATIONAL KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

1 December 2015 to 31 January 2016



Over 13,000 men and women satsang activities *karyakars* from across India attended the 21 Satsang Pravrutti Karyakar Shibirs based on the theme 'Anant Upkar'. The *shibirs* were organized by the Satsang Pravrutti Madhyastha Karyalay in Ahmedabad and were held at seven different BAPS mandirs: Ahmedabad, Atladara, Bochasan, Gadhada, Gondal, Sankari and Tithal.

Through inspirational discourses, workshops and multimedia presentations, *sadguru* sadhus and other experienced sadhus described what Swamishri has done for devotees, society and the betterment of the world, the life transformations he has effected by inspiring thousands of people to lead an addiction-free and God-centered life, the peace he has spread throughout society, the selfless love he has showered upon thousands, the immeasurable amount of faith he has instilled in the hearts of the devotees and the strong conviction of *moksha* he has established within the minds of even young children. The *shibirs* provided tremendous motivation and valuable spiritual guidance to all the *karyakars*.

### NEW BAPS MANDIRS

**BHAYLI, DISTRICT: VADODARA**

**12-14 December 2015**

During Shastriji Maharaj's time, sadhus from Atladara Mandir would go to Bhayli for satsang and to beg for alms. At the request of



Chhotabhai Vrajbhai Patel, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj had arranged a seven-day *parayan* during which Pujya Pramukh Swami discoursed on the Satsangjivan scripture.

Due to the efforts of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and the constant *vicharan* by sadhus, in the year 1993 a mandir was made at the house of a devotee for regular satsang *sabhas*.

As satsang increased, the need for a larger mandir arose. Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami performed the *shilanyas* rituals and soon the construction work began.

A three-day celebration was held to mark the opening of the new mandir. The festivities began with a Women's Convention on the afternoon of 12 December. In the evening, sadhus presented an excellent kirtan *aradhana*.

Over 250 *yajman* couples participated in a Yagna for World Peace. In the afternoon, thousands of devotees and well-wishers participated and viewed the colourful *nagar-yatra* of the *murtis* to be installed in the *hari* mandir.

On the morning of 14 December, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami performed the pre-installation *mahapuja* ceremony, after which the *murtis* were ritually installed in the shrines. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had earlier performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* in Sarangpur on 7 July 2014.

**VASNA (RAS), DISTRICT: BORSAD**

**13-14 December 2015**

On 13 December, around 400 *yajman* couples



participated in the Yagna for World Peace, which was followed by a *nagar-yatra* in which hundreds of devotees took part.

The Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* had previously been performed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Sarangpur. These *murtis* were consecrated in their respective shrines by Pujya Doctor Swami to the chanting of Vedic verses.

#### NAVA VAGHPURA (JEETPURA), DISTRICT: NARMADA 29-30 December 2015



Satsang was established in this tribal village eight years ago. The villagers contributed wholeheartedly in the mandir construction, which was completed in a mere ten months.

On 29 December, over 200 *yajmans* participated in the Vedic Yagna for World Peace. In the afternoon the *murtis* were taken in decorative floats in a *nagar-yatra* through the village.

On the morning of 30 December, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami ritually installed the *murtis* in the new *hari* mandir.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had previously

performed the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* on 29 December 2015 in Sarangpur.

In the assembly, leading local dignitaries were present, and devotees and well-wishers who had contributed to the mandir were felicitated.

#### JUNAGADH

After the inauguration of the *shikharbaddh* mandir in Junagadh by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 2006, satsang has continued to flourish. New *hari* mandirs (*sanskardhams*) in the Joshipur and Madhuram suburbs were inaugurated.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* for both mandirs on 25 January 2016 in Sarangpur.

#### Joshipur 28-29 January 2016



On the morning of 28 January, the *murtis* were paraded in a grand *nagar-yatra* featuring 16 decorated floats.

During the evening cultural programme, youths presented dramas entitled 'Meeting of Rama and Bharat' and 'Tirad' (Split). Devotees and well-wishers who had contributed to building the mandir were felicitated.

On 29<sup>th</sup> morning, 125 *yajmans* participated in the Vedic Yagna for World Peace. Thereafter, Pujya Doctor Swami ritually installed the *murtis* in the new *hari* mandir.

In the ensuing assembly, Doctor Swami eloquently described the importance of the need for and contributions of mandirs in society.

## Madhuram

30-31 January 2016



On 20<sup>th</sup> morning, the *murtis* were taken on a grand procession featuring a variety of decorative floats.

In the evening cultural presentation, youths and children performed a drama depicting how mandirs help to forge unity within families.

On 31<sup>st</sup> morning, 120 *yajmans* participated in the Vedic Yagna for World Peace. Then, Pujya Doctor Swami ritually installed the *murtis* in the new mandir.

The celebration assembly was graced by the presence of Mahamandeleshwar Pujya Vishwambhar Bhartibapu, a renowned *mahatma* of Junagadh. Also, devotees and well-wishers who had contributed to building the mandir were felicitated.

## PIPLAGBHAN, DISTRICT: CHIKHLI

30-31 January 2016



For many years, sadhus conducted satsang *sabhas* at the homes of Prabhubhai Patel and Makanbhai Patel. With the growth of satsang, Lallubhai Makanbhai Patel donated land for a

mandir. Doctor Swami performed the ground-breaking ceremony on 28 April 2012.

With the mandir ready, on the morning of 30 January 2016 354 *yajmans* participated in the Vedic Yagna for World Peace. In the afternoon, over 1,200 devotees joined in the grand *nagar-yatra* of the *murtis* through the town.

On 31 January, Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami ritually consecrated the *murtis* in the new mandir.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had previously performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals on 3 January 2015, in Sarangpur.

## UK & Europe

### BAPS SWAMINARAYAN SCHOOL WINS BRITISH ACADEMY AWARD FOR GUJARATI TEACHING

15 December 2015, London



The BAPS Swaminarayan School was presented with the 'British Academy Schools Language Award' for its provision of Gujarati teaching.

The supplementary school, operated by BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, was one of only 14 winners from more than 150 applicants across the UK.

The award is given to mainstream schools and colleges as well as secondary teaching institutions for "innovative projects aimed at increasing the numbers of students learning languages



at higher levels”. A panel of judges assessed the originality, credibility and potential replicability of the proposals.

The School was one of the winners in the Supplementary Category and was the only school to receive an award for Gujarati language development.

The formal presentation of the award was made by the British Academy in a ceremony held at its offices in London on 15 December 2015.

Alun Evans, Chief Executive and Secretary of the British Academy, said, “Our awards aim to find innovative and inspiring ways of encouraging more students to study languages at higher levels of education. We’re delighted that schools across the UK have responded passionately with such high quality applications, understanding the importance of language skills. We aim to inspire and challenge our pupils with learning initiatives and help to ensure the next generation are thoroughly equipped with the language skills they need. ”

## Middle East

### YUVAK SHIBIR

**Kabd, Kuwait, 11-12 February 2016**



A total of 74 *yuvaks* attended this *shibir* on the theme ‘Paratpar’. The youths were enlightened on the theme through speeches by sadhus in India, some pre-recorded and some relayed live via Skype. Atmatrupta Swami, who described the qualities of a true guru, and Bhaktisagar Swami, who also conducted a question-answer session

with the youths, addressed the *shibir* live. The pre-recorded speeches of Viveksagar Swami and Brahmadarshan Swami on how to find a true guru, and Narayancharan Swami and Acharya Swami were also shown.

In addition, the *shibir* featured discussions, interactive activities and audiovisual shows and skits. Everyone also participated in singing the *chesta* at night and performing *samuh puja* in the morning.

## Asia Pacific

### SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

**VISITS BAPS SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR**

**Adelaide, Australia, 18 January 2016**



Hundreds of devotees and members from leading Indian communities welcomed Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, spiritual head of Kauai’s Hindu Monastery (based in Hawaii) and the publisher of *Hinduism Today* magazine, together with Sannyasin Shanmuganathaswami, leader of the Pillaiyar Kulam, the monastic team responsible for the administrative, IT and business activities.

Satguru Bodhinatha Swami gave an inspiring speech on the history of his relationship with BAPS and the importance of a guru in one’s life. He quoted from the Vachanamrut, Shikshapatri and other Hindu scriptures to exemplify the role of a guru in today’s society and emphasized the importance of following the principles taught by one’s guru.

YUVA SAMMELAN, BAPS CULTURAL CENTRE  
Wangara, Perth, Australia, 24 January 2016



Organized in the presence of sadhus and based on the theme “Maa-Baap ne Bhulso Nahi”, the day-long *shibir* featured speeches, audio-visual shows and other presentations. *Yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from Perth learnt about the importance of their parents in their life, how they should be appreciated and respected and how to continue learning from them.

## BAPS Charities

FOOD DRIVE AT NUNGWI LEPROSY  
Camp, Kigamboni, Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania,  
21 February 2016



Nungwi Leprosy Camp was established in 1964 and currently houses over 400 people.

BAPS Charities volunteers gave gift packets to the children, visited the houses of patients and donated two weeks of food rations for each family. ♦

## Summary of BAPS Charities North America Activities 2015

### WALKATHONS

Over 17,127 well-wishers and devotees walked over 52,500 miles in the Walkathons organized in 54 cities in the United States and Canada in support of their local communities. Individuals of all ages and from all backgrounds helped to raise support and awareness for a wide range of community, health and humanitarian organizations. Thus helping to build a better community, one step at a time.



### HEALTH FAIRS

Over 9,420 (since 2006: 96,583) people in 46 North American cities benefitted from the Annual Health Fairs. Over 1,500 doctors and other medical professionals (since 2006: 14,862) volunteered their time and insights to provide medical care and counsel to people who often lack access to such resources.





## HEALTH LECTURES

Over 23,000 people attended the 148 health lectures organized in 62 cities throughout North America on dozens of relevant topics. These lectures are a valuable resource that help improve health and preventive care.

## BLOOD DRIVES

A total of 1,032 pints of blood was collected (since 2006: 9,073 pints) from the Blood Drives held in 27 cities throughout North America. BAPS Charities has long been actively answering this urgent and continuing need by organizing blood donation drives for the benefit of communities throughout the world.

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY DAYS

Conducted by 474 volunteer doctors and medical service professionals, over 1,934 children, and 724 parents and caretakers in 18 cities participated in the Children's Health and Safety Days. The sessions encouraged dialogue between children and their families about healthy living, while providing participants with the tools and resources to make better lifestyle choices.

## BONE MARROW DRIVES

Since 2006, 90 Bone Marrow Drives have been organized, resulting in 6,040 donors joining the national registry to make themselves available to help patients hoping to find a bone marrow donor match. An estimated 750,000 Americans



live with leukemia, lymphoma, or myeloma, and a new patient is diagnosed with one of these cancers every five minutes. BAPS Charities regularly organizes Bone Marrow Drives to increase the chances of connecting a donor to a patient in need.

## NEPAL EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

On 25 April 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Nepal, while a 6.7-magnitude tremor was felt less than 50 miles from the capital, Kathmandu, causing widespread devastation. Strong aftershocks continued to hit the region on 26 April. BAPS Charities responded to an urgent call for disaster relief aid by working with recognized organizations actively leading recovery efforts on the ground. BAPS Charities donated \$30,000 to Unicef, \$30,000 to World Food Program, \$25,000 to One Heart Worldwide, \$25,000 to Embassy of Nepal, and \$25,000 to Direct Relief. ♦





## NEW DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS

Ebooks for Amazon Kindle

19 December 2015

Swaminarayan Aksharpith has launched some of the English books about Swamishri and his teachings as ebooks on Amazon. These ebooks can easily be read on any smartphone, tablet, computer, or Kindle device. The initial titles available for purchase from each country's Amazon Website are:

1. Bhagwan Swaminarayan: An Introduction
2. In the Joy of Others: A Life Sketch of Pramukh Swami Maharaj
3. Pramukh Swami Maharaj: Life and Work in Brief
4. Divinity: A Journey into the Divine World of Pramukh Swami Maharaj
5. Divine Memories – Part 1
6. Divine Memories – Part 2
7. Divine Memories – Part 4
8. Immortal River: A Moving Experience of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Travels
9. Pure Devotion: Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Devotion
10. Pramukh Swami Maharaj: A Friend of Youth
11. Eternal Virtues
12. The Vachanamrut
13. Swamini Vato

Visit the Amazon website and enter the search term "Aksharpith Kindle" to see the ebooks available for purchase and download for Kindle and other devices.



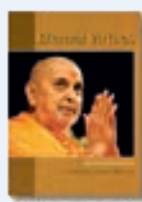
The Vachanamrut



Swamini Vato



Bhagwan Swaminarayan



Eternal Virtues



In the Joy of Others



Pure Devotion



Divine Memories-1



Divine Memories-2



Divine Memories-4



Divinity



Immortal River



A Friend of Youth



Pramukh Swami Maharaj Life & Work in Brief



1/2



3/4



5/6



## BAPS CHARITIES

1. Blood Drive in New York collected 89 pints of blood (13 December 2015).
2. Blood Drive in Robbinsville, New Jersey, collected over 20 pints of blood (19 December 2015).
3. Health lecture on thyroid disease, Chicago, IL (22 November 2015).
4. Awareness and Enrolment Drive for the Affordable Care Act, Chicago, IL (3 January 2016).
5. Food and other supplies donated to the Al Furqan Islamic Centre, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania (22 November 2015).
6. Medical Camp conducted by BAPS Charities volunteers at the Salvation Army, Matumaini, Tanzania (11 October 2015).





**LAUNCHING OF 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF AKSHAR DERI**  
**12 February 2016, Gondal**

1. Sadguru sadhus on stage during the assembly to launch the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations of the Akshar Deri in Gondal.
2. Sadguru sadhus release a large balloon cluster tied to an Akshar Deri cut-out to mark the launch of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations.
3. Devotees seated in the mandir courtyard during the launch assembly.
4. Sadhus and guests on stage launch the book 'Transcendence' in Kampala, Uganda (8 January 2016).
5. Invited guests seated during the launching of 'Transcendence' at Speke Resort, Kampala, Uganda (8 January 2016).

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