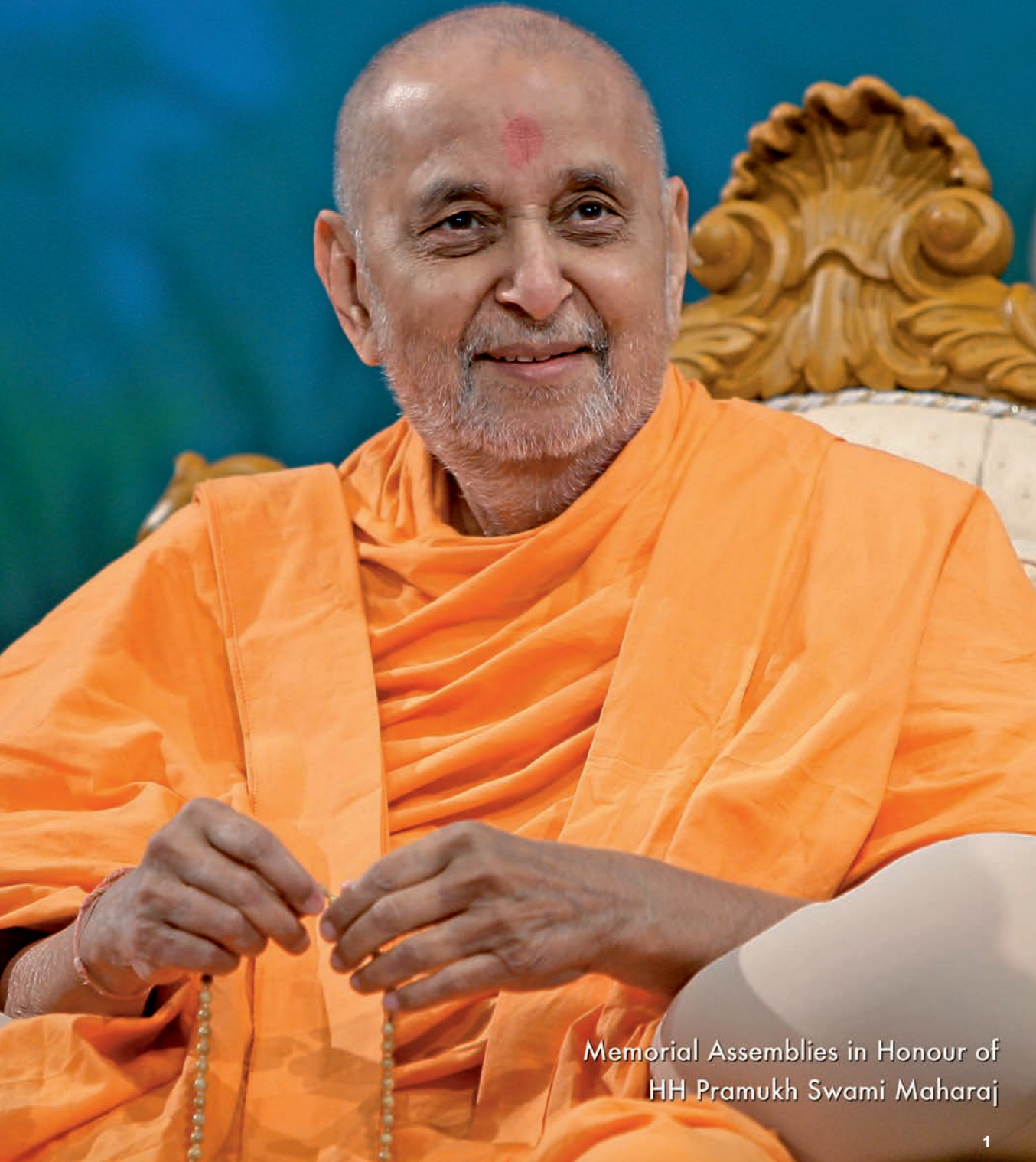


SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

November-December 2016

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Memorial Assemblies in Honour of
HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S ASTHIPUSPHA PUJAN AT AKSHAR GHAT, GONDAL



On 14 October 2016, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj and the *sadguru* sadhus performed the Vedic *puja* rituals of the *asthipushpa* (sacred remains) of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj and Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj at Akshar Ghat, Gondal.

1. The temporary stage in the holy waters of River Gondali (Akshar Ganga) where the rituals were performed.
- 2-3. Mahant Swami Maharaj performs the Vedic *puja* rituals.
4. Mahant Swami Maharaj and the *sadguru* sadhus on the stage.
5. Over 1,500 devotees seated on the banks of the river also participated in the *puja* rituals.

Photos: BAPS Volunteers



Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj



SPECIAL ISSUE: MEMORIAL ASSEMBLIES OF HH PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

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SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

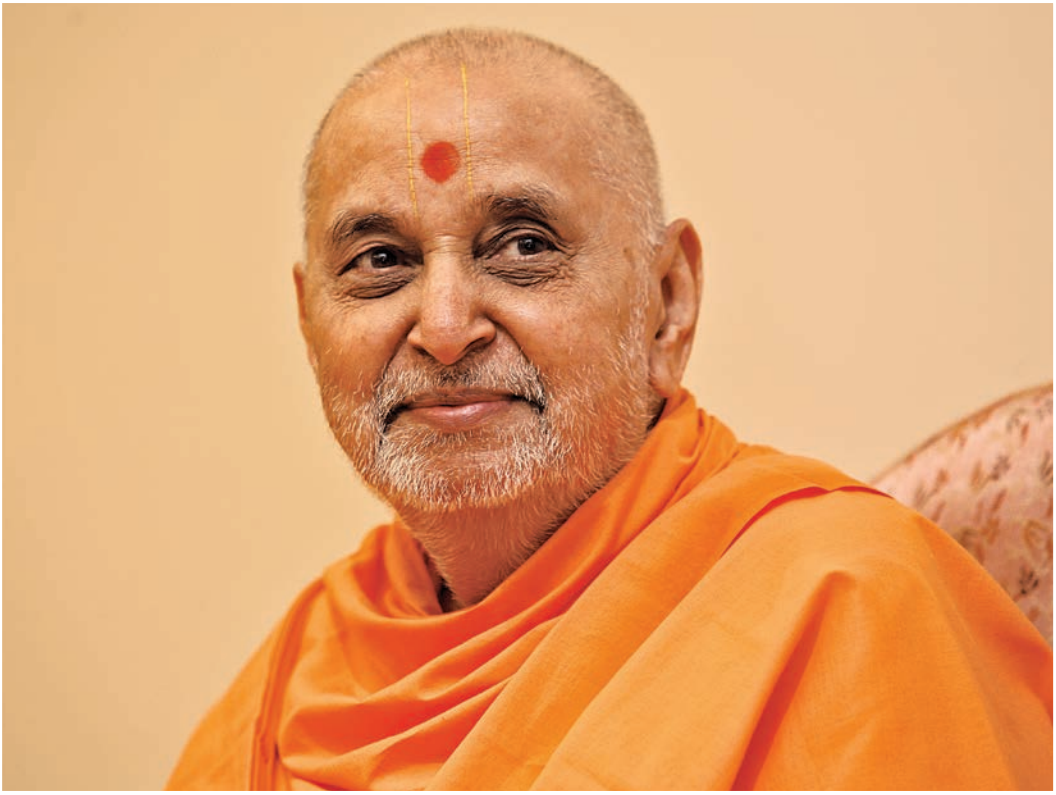
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In April 1978, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired and inaugurated the first issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The bi-monthly magazine serves to enlighten BAPS youths, seniors and well-wishers about the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, 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.

FIRST WORD



Pramukh Swami Maharaj passed away to Akshardham on 13 August 2016. But, who was Pramukh Swami Maharaj? How is it possible to understand and know him? Most fittingly, through the words of his gurus and his own.

When he initiated the young Shantilal into the sadhufold in 1940, Shastriji Maharaj said, “He is the form (*swarup*) of Narayan (God),” and so named him ‘Narayanswarupdas’.

Yogiji Maharaj said, “Pramukh Swami is Shastriji Maharaj’s form. There is not the slightest difference. Respect and obey him like Shastriji Maharaj.”

And, in Nadiad, on 23 March 2002, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, describing himself, said, “I am a sadhu of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and a disciple of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj.”

For almost 95 years, Pramukh Swami Maharaj

graced this earth – generously and continually serving and giving. For that was the tradition established by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and all the Gunatit Gurus before him.

Shastriji Maharaj saw in his saintly, humble and hardworking personality, the perfect leader for BAPS – a worthy replacement for himself. And when Shastriji Maharaj appointed him as Pramukh (President) of the Sanstha, what was Narayanswarup Swami’s first act? It was to serve – by washing the dishes used by the devotees for their meal that evening!

From 1951, for 20 years, Pramukh Swami sincerely served under Yogiji Maharaj, abiding by his every wish. And when Yogiji Maharaj passed away to Akshardham in 1971, Pramukh Swami Maharaj became our guru. And as the guru, he continued to serve, and to give even more.

In Dharmaj, in 1971, while devotees revelled

in celebrating his first birthday as guru, he was busy picking up the used *datan* sticks carelessly discarded by others.

This was just the beginning. Not a moment passed without service in some form – personal counselling, letter writing, administrative meetings, project guidance, mandir construction, festival planning, discourses... the list is endless.

It was always him giving and us receiving. And not just to his own devotees, but to all – regardless of age, gender, race, faith, education, social background or country. Through schools, hospitals, student hostels, cattle camps, medical camps, disaster relief aid and in countless other ways he served and provided for society.

Despite his hectic daily schedule and mounting responsibilities, which frequently played havoc with his meal and rest times, he always remained at ease – never seeking comforts nor complaining about illness or adversities.

The source of his inner peace? His devotion to and faith in *ishtadev* Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and gurus Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. They were the bedrock of his life.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was saintliness personified. He never compromised on his vows. And humility was his hallmark. He was continuously lavished with praise and recognition, yet he always deflected the honours onto his beloved Harikrishna Maharaj and gurus, and the efforts and support of the sadhus and volunteers.

Although Swamishri was a traditionalist, he harnessed technology to portray ancient wisdom and spirituality. The enthralling hi-tech water shows and exhibitions at the Akshardham complexes in Gandhinagar and New Delhi have ignited and reinforced faith and cultural values among all visitors.

But, as Swamishri's health declined, for the last three years, he stayed in Sarangpur. Gone were the fast-paced days of *vicharan*, meetings, counselling, letters and the never-ending schedule of tasks. Though he was less active physically,

his presence was no less effective or productive.

His body now reflected the decades of Herculean efforts and the extreme hardships he had endured. He spoke little, but his mind was still sharp and he was still eager to give. And give he did. In abundance. For, during his 1,200-day stay in Sarangpur, he performed the *murti-pratishtha* of 9 *shikharbaddha* and 178 *hari* mandirs; he gave darshan over 3,800 times – an average of over three times a day! And, among other things, he sanctified over 7,600 *chhadis* – accepting the loving devotion of devotees. Swamishri served till the end – performing the *pratishtha* of the *murtis* for Shimla, Kurukshetra and Jalandhar mandirs on 10 August.

The divine appeal of Swamishri was accurately expressed by Pujya Morari Bapu, “When a *sant* speaks, lakhs gather to listen to him. But when a *sant* stops speaking and still lakhs rush to him, that I have experienced in Pramukh Swami.”

After Swamishri passed away, one dignitary who came to Sarangpur for his final darshan was asked to describe Swamishri in three words. He quite aptly replied, “Person not describable!” Indeed, innumerable volumes can be penned about Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and still we would not be able to fully describe him. Such is his vast and profound divinity. So, we can truly take pride in having witnessed the life of such a great spiritual luminary.

This issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* features the narrations by dignitaries and well-wishers from all walks of life about their experiences with Pramukh Swami Maharaj, revealed by them during the special tribute assemblies that were held throughout India and the world. They provide a stirring insight into how deeply he had touched their lives, and how his life of genuine devotion and selfless service will continue to inspire future generations everywhere.

We humbly pay homage at the holy feet of *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj, seeking his blessings that we can live up to his ideals. ♦



Gadhpur



23 August

Gujarat

GADHPUR

On 23 August 2016, a memorial (*shraddhanjali*) assembly of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held in the holy pilgrim place of Gadhadra in the presence of HH Mahant Swami Maharaj, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pujya Viveksagar Swami and thousands of citizens and guests. The assembly was organized by the Municipal Corporation and citizens of Gadhadra near the banks of the holy River Ghela (Unmat Ganga) and in front of the entrance gate of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir.

The assembly was attended by local government officials, leading social workers, heads of religious organizations and other dignitaries. Pujya Viveksagar Swami and Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami addressed the assembly describing the grace and blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh

Swami Maharaj on the people of Gadhadra. Thereafter 23 representatives of various organizations offered their tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Tributes by selected speakers are as follows:

Bhagwan Shri Hari lived in Gadhpur for 29 years. From the times of Shastriji Maharaj, who established the BAPS, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj there has been a tremendous growth in Satsang. The credit for the spreading and singing of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's glory worldwide goes to these three great sadhus. Today, Mahant Swami Maharaj has arrived here. The past of Gadhpur was grand, its present is best and, with your blessings on the families of Dada Khachar, Jiva Khachar and all the citizens of Gadhadra, there is no doubt that Gadhpur will develop wonderfully.

Shri Bhagubhai Khachar
Descendant of Dada Khachar

Note: Tributes in all the memorial assemblies in India were delivered in Gujarati or Hindi with the exception of the tributes by Pujya Madhupanditdasji, Shri Mohandas Pai, Shri A.S. Kiran Kumar and Shri Y.S. Rajan in Bengaluru, Shri Shantanu Chaudhuri (New Delhi) and Shri Ashish Chauhan (Mumbai). A translation of the tributes are presented in the subsequent pages.

We pray that the grace showered by Pramukh Swami Bapa on Gadhpur and its citizens always remains upon us through Mahant Swami Bapa.

Bapa used to constantly care for the progress of Gadhpur. Sometimes when we told him that we were not getting the money from the government he would say, 'Don't worry about money, think about the development of Gadhada.' And due to his divine grace we have been able to develop the town of Gadhada. That is why this place, where we have arranged today's assembly, was named Pramukh Swami Maharaj Marg well in advance.

Shri Atmaram Parmar
Cabinet Minister, Gujarat

HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an idol of compassion. He was a great humanitarian. He was a river of love. Our Muslim community had bonds with Bapa that go back many years. His departure has created a big loss to the Satsang community and the Muslim community is also experiencing a void. By his departure we have lost a great empathizer.

Shri Arifbhai Lakhni
Muslim Community

In 1971-72 Swami Bapa served food to me in a wooden bowl and other leading lights of this village. Today, Pujya Mahant Swami has come here with that same divine lustre.

Dr G.V. Kalathiya
Renowned Doctor

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's personality was such that even writing books on him would not suffice. Bhagwan Shri Krishna has said in the Bhagavad Gita, '*Suhrudam sarvabhutānam...*' ('He is a friend of all'). Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the embodiment of the above *shloka*. During his 95 years he performed colossal works worldwide, which cannot be achieved in 9,500 years.

Sanjaybhai Thakkar
On behalf of Education Department



26 August

BHAVNAGAR

The Municipal Corporation and citizens of Bhavnagar organized a memorial assembly in honour of Pramukh Swami Maharaj on 26 August 2016. The assembly was held at BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in the presence of Pujya Dr Swami and was also attended by MP Bhartiben, Mayor Nimuben Bambhaniya, Deputy Mayor Manbha Mori, Standing Committee Chairman Sureshbhai Dhandhalya and other officials, spiritual heads and dignitaries. Some tributes of selected guests are as follows:

To speak about Pramukh Swami Maharaj is like holding a lamp before the sun. To know him one has to become like him.

Pujya Swami Tyagvairagyanandji
Divine Life Society, Bhavnagar

I have been blessed with the association of Pujya Swamiji and am satisfied.

What is space? There is nothing equal to space. Only space is equal to space. Likewise, only ocean is equal to ocean. Similarly, what is Pujya Swamiji's life? There is no one whose life is like Swamiji's.

Pujya Mahant Ramchandraji Maharaj

We have experienced Swami Bapa's noble feelings and self-restraint; his sacrifice and deep tolerance of physical and mental pains. Despite being revered globally he was always straightforward and loved all.

In his honour and memory I rename the Municipal Mahadev Nagar School in Fulsar suburb as Pramukh Swami Maharaj School.

Shri Jitubhai Vaghani
President BJP, Gujarat



Bhavnagar

In centuries one divine *atma* comes on earth and then through his guidelines society progresses for centuries. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a divine *atma* who was born during such a century. We may have read about ‘*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*’ (‘The whole world is one family’) on paper, but Pramukh Swami Maharaj had brought those sentiments to life through his own life.

After the Akshardham terrorist attack Swamishri exemplified the words ‘If there was no Sant in society the world would have been burnt’.

Such a divine *atma*’s breath has gone, but his divinity remains eternal. It feels as if his divinity is constantly showering his blessings upon us and is present amidst us.

Shri Shaktisinh Gohil
MLA, National Spokesperson, Congress

I am not a disciple of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, but because of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s divine, loving personality I feel that he and the BAPS Sanstha are mine.

Shri Kutubbbhai
Senior, Vohra Community

HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a true

renunciant. By merely touching Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s feet one cannot be called his disciple, but whoever walks in his footsteps becomes his disciple.

Shri Sanjaybhai Thar
Senior, Jain Community

Pramukh Swami Maharaj made hundreds of mandirs, but more than that he had constructed the lives of thousands. Thirty-five years ago I had an addiction. At that time I came across a booklet on anti-addiction by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. After reading it I gave up tobacco and *gutkha*. I have kept that booklet with me and helped others to give up their addictions. All credit for this goes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Shri Arifbhai Kalva
Senior, Muslim Community

Pramukh Swami Maharaj made humans into civilized persons. It was a great opportunity to receive his warm and loving pat. All got such power from it that they started living their entire life with goodness, piety and honesty.

In 2001, I saw the BAPS relief work after the earthquake in Kutch done by the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. That was why our



Rajkot

organization gave donations to it.

Shri Jitubhai Upadhyaya
Chairman, Nagarik Bank

The effect of mandirs built worldwide by Pramukh Swami Maharaj is unparalleled. One cannot say that Pramukh Swami Maharaj has passed away. He forever throbs in the Sanstha through the lives, actions and thoughts of his sadhus, devotees and also through his works.

Shri Pratapbhai Shah
Former Finance Minister, Gujarat

addressed 7,000 devotees and well-wishers. On 30 August, the third *shraddhanjali sabha* was held at the BAPS Mandir, in which dignitaries and heads of organizations attended. Many doctors and owners of hospitals paid tributes by pledging to offer free services to needy patients. (For details see *Swaminarayan Prakash*, November 2016, p.22.)

Selected tributes by dignitaries and heads of religious, business and government organizations are as follows:

Bhagwan has said in the Bhagavad Gita that he is born again and again to re-establish dharma.

On seeing the life, work and personality of Pramukh Swami Maharaj one becomes convinced that he was doubtlessly a part of God.

Pujya Swami Shri Paramatmanandji
Arsh Vidyamandir



HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj's tribute assemblies were held on three days in Rajkot. On 27 August the tribute assembly was held at Pramukh Swami Auditorium, BAPS Mandir, in the presence of BAPS volunteers. The Mayor of Rajkot Shri Jaimanbhai Upadhyay and Police Commissioner Shri Anupsinh Gehlot addressed the assembly. Pujya Dr Swami blessed the assembly.

On 28 August, a *shraddhanjali sabha* was held at the BAPS Mandir, in which Pujya Dr Swami

The Chief Minister has paid tributes by naming the newly built auditorium in Rajkot as Pramukh Swami Auditorium. Whoever will use the auditorium will be benefitted, and anyone who says the name Pramukh Swami Auditorium will gain divine energy. Thus, we are intensely honoured that the name of Pramukh Swami Maharaj will forever be associated with Rajkot.



Vadodara

If we want to buy a pair of clothes in America we would have to think for a while. However, Pramukh Swami Maharaj built a grand mandir in Los Angeles. During an earthquake the mandir will move a little and return to its original place. To build such a grand building is not the work of an ordinary person. Only a person with divine powers can build such a grand mandir.

Shri Jaiman Upadhyaya
Mayor, Rajkot

A Sant like Pramukh Swami Maharaj comes once in many centuries and gives inspiration to millions of people to live a noble life. He raised Indian culture to great heights, making it globally famous.

Shri Vikrant Pande
Collector, Rajkot

We are greatly indebted to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He had become one with us on many of our occasions and thus participated with us. The people of any religion in the world will never forget Pramukh Swami Maharaj because he had lovingly respected people of all communities in the world.

Shri Yusufbhai
Senior, Vohra Community

Since 1964 I have been profusely associated with Pramukh Swami Maharaj. By establishing many mandirs throughout the world Pramukh Swami Maharaj created an unparalleled golden history. He instilled wonderful values in the lives of children and youths.

Shri Govindbhai Patel
MLA



28 August

VADODARA

A *shraddhanjali sabha* was organized in Vadodara on Saturday, 28 August 2016 in the presence of HH Mahant Swami Maharaj and heads of spiritual organizations, political leaders, businessmen and dignitaries. Some tributes by guests are as follows:

The personal darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj left one with a wonderful experience. His illustrious face and shining eyes inspired inner energy and belief that he was a unique personality. After I became the mayor I went for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan to Sarangpur. It was 4 March 2016 and 12.39 p.m. Bapa blessed me with three divine smiles. There

was not a single exchange of words. Bapa blessed me through his eyes. Yet, I experienced that he was inspiring energy within me.

I can say with joy and pride that I had received his blessings and that I had seen him in person.

Shri Bharatbhai Dangar
Mayor of Vadodara

I offer my heartfelt tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj who resides in Akshardham.

In 1979, the Macchu Dam broke and subsequently Morbi was inundated and devastated. Dead bodies lay buried under water and boggy streets. The homes were choked with mud and mire up to the first floor. At that time I was studying at a college in Karjan. The college had sent 30 students to serve for the Morbi disaster. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had also started relief work there. There, I served under the instructions of Pramukh Swami Maharaj for one month, which I take to be a matter of great pride.

One day I came to know that the festival of Ramzan Eid was to follow in four days time. But (Muslim) people did not have the means to celebrate and eat on that festive day. The mosques were filled with mud and mire. Then Pramukh Swami Maharaj instructed his volunteers to clean all the mosques. And they did it. Thereafter, Pramukh Swami Maharaj personally visited all the mosques to see whether it was done. And additionally, on the day of Eid, Swami Bapa provided food to all the Muslim homes. He had been providing food for the whole of Morbi, but on the day of Eid he had *mithai* prepared and served to all Muslims. Swami Bapa himself stood in the kitchen. Thus, Swami Bapa expressed his sentiments of equality for all religions.

On remembering those days I feel overwhelmed and am thus unable to speak more today. My tributes to him.

Shri Ibrahim Patel
Deputy President, Jhila Panchayat, Vadodara

In the 1990s the only thing I knew about Swaminarayan Bhagwan was that he had established a faith and that Pramukh Swamiji was its head. Swamiji blessed all by giving pats. Once, I was indicted and there was a strong possibility of me being jailed. I was afraid. So, I talked about it to a friend. He took me in a car out of Vadodara to a BAPS Mandir situated between Anand and Vidyanagar. He said that we were going for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan.

I sat before Swamiji not knowing what I was supposed to do. At that time I was thinking in my mind that Swamiji would tell me my times were bad. Then he would tell me to donate money. However Bapa held my hand, so I felt he would see the lines on my palms and tell me that the heavenly bodies and planets like Som, Budh, Shukri and Shani are obstructing me and that I should do something about them. But the moment Bapa held my hand I could not think as to what happened. Then Bapa said, 'Everything will work out to be fine. You will not suffer one bit.'

He spoke only six to seven words. When I came out I felt I had left all my tension, pain and fear before Swamishri. The reason being he had held my hand. Thereafter, all the accusations against me were dropped and I was given a clean chit.

Later, on various occasions, I realized his divinity and understood who Bapa was. Thereafter, I have experienced the effect of those six to seven words of his many more times. Ever since, I have dedicated myself to Bapa merely on his simple words, 'Everything will turn out to be fine, there's no need to worry.' I am highly indebted to Pramukh Swamiji.

Shri Manishbhai Joshi
IT Consultant

My grandfather, the late Bhailalbhai, and my father, the late Nanubhai, were ardent devotees of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. Right from



Anand

the time of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, both I and my father, Nanubhai, had the good fortune of having the darshan and blessings of Pramukh Swamiji – a truly divine soul. Each time we came we left feeling inspired and blessed. During the most difficult times of my life, Pramukh Swami provided spiritual guidance to me.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was responsible for constructing innumerable Swaminarayan temples all over the world and thereby propagating Hinduism and making the world aware in a miraculous way about this great religion. Pramukh Swami's tremendous contribution to humanity is truly remarkable. His spiritual messages and teachings will remain with us forever. I humbly pay my respectful tributes to his divine soul.

Shri Rahul Amin

Executive MD, Jyoti Ltd., Alembic

If I were to use an adjective for Pramukh Swamiji then it would be 'Idol of Compassion' (Karuna Murti). He was not compassionate to some persons only, but his whole life was full of compassion for all. Whoever bathed in his stream of compassion experienced the reality of becoming holy. There was compassion

in Buddha and in Christ. And a part of that compassion I had seen in Mahatma Gandhi and thereafter in revered Shri Bapa. To pay homage to him means to have the compassion that Pramukh Swami Maharaj had exemplified. There was no one with more compassion for the common, poor and so called backward people.

Shri Gunvantbhai Shah

Renowned Gujarati Columnist and Author



28 August

ANAND

HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *shraddhanjali sabha* was organized at Akshar Farm, Anand, by the citizens of Anand and Kheda district in the presence of HH Mahant Swami Maharaj and spiritual heads, government officials, educationists, businessmen and dignitaries.

Shri Pankajbhai Desai, Party Whip, declared that the under-construction ring road in Nadiad will be named 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj Ring Road'. Shri Dipakbhai Sathi (MP) announced that the road from Anand Town Hall to Bhaikaka's statue will be named 'Pramukh Swami Marg'.

More than 12,000 devotees and well-wishers attended the memorial assembly and finally performed *arti* collectively. Some tributes by dignitaries are as follows:

Words would not suffice for Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His services to society are his identity. He was in the truest sense a *yug purush* (epoch-maker).

Pujya Ganeshdasji Maharaj
Mahant, Santram Mandir, Umreth

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a true, beloved person. Once, in my absence, he had come to my home. I rang from Delhi and he told me that he had come to his home. What unique love he had.

Shri Dinsha Patel
Former Central Minister

Our ties with Pujya Swamishri go back four generations. Due to his blessings my father became the Chief Minister of Gujarat four times. He was cured of his illness because of Swamishri's blessings. In future, there is no doubt, Swamishri will be known as God.

Shri Bharatsinh Solanki
President of Congress, Gujarat State



3 September

AHMEDABAD

A special memorial assembly was held by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) and the citizens of Ahmedabad to pay heartfelt tributes to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the Gujarat University Convention Centre auditorium on 3 September 2016. The assembly was held from 7.00 to 9.45 p.m. in the presence of HH Mahant Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and heads of religious organizations, and 2,500 political leaders, business magnates, dignitaries and well-wishers.

On Sunday, 4 September a *shraddhanjali sabha* was held at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Shahibaug, in which 20,000 devotees attended. Selected tributes by dignitaries are as follows:

If the whole of Gujarat were to pay tributes to Param Pujya Pramukh Swamiji the words said would not be enough. He had done so much for Gujarat that today, without him, it is orphaned. After the earthquake in Kutch he went there himself, and with his instructions kitchens were opened in his relief camps. During the Morbi Dam disaster he trudged through the muddy streets and wiped the tears of those afflicted. He had also visited the tribal villages himself and performed the great task of weaning fisherman from addictions.

People have been to the funeral rites of renowned persons, but the scene during Pramukh Swami's final rites was different altogether. People did not come there out of social formality, but they were weeping. Everyone had so much love [for him] that they sat mourning from morning till evening. It was as if people had lost their parents.

To remain as president of any *sanstha* for 65 years without any problems and controversies is not an ordinary thing. A person becomes debateable when he helms a small residential society for two to four years. Whereas Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the president of one organization for 65 years and there was no commotion or debate. This is not an ordinary achievement!

Pramukh Swami's calmness was amazing. He cared for the liberation and happiness of all. That is why he was in the real sense 'Sant Shiromani' (Jewel among Saints). People had a lot of faith for Pramukh Swami. This showed that he was truly the form of God. Only one who is God's form can liberate the *atmas* of countless people.

Swami Vivekanandji spoke about the glory of



Ahmedabad

Hindu dharma and Indian culture at the religious conference in Chicago. After him the second saint to do so was Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

In the Gujarat Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) we do not hold a condolence assembly other than for its members, but we held a *shraddhanjali sabha* there [for Pramukh Swami Maharaj] and the whole of Gujarat offered their condolences. I have full faith that his divine spiritual spirit will always keep showering his blessings upon Gujarat. I, too, on behalf of Gujarat offer my heartfelt tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Another important matter is that after discussions between the Mayor of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, government and all its officials it has been decided to name the riverfront road of the ₹12 billion Sabarmati Riverfront Development Project from Vadaj Chandrabhaga to Vasna as 'Pramukh Swami Marg' in honour of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I declare this with faith that all those who travel or pass on that road will remember Pramukh Swamiji and receive his divine inspirations.

Shri Vijaybhai Rupani
Chief Minister of Gujarat

I offer my heartfelt tributes to Pujya Pramukh

Swami Maharaj on behalf of 6.5 million citizens of Ahmedabad. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had endeavoured immensely, without thinking about the pains he experienced, for the good of all. It is impossible to describe and think about his humanitarian services in the aftermath of the earthquake and other calamities.

In 1985, Gujarat was affected by an outbreak of communal unrest. The government had then appealed to various religious organizations for the reestablishment of peace. However, all religious organizations proposed that if Pramukh Swami headed the meeting then all would become one and peace would be restored. Swamiji's charisma was unique.

Accepted by all religions and globally revered, I got the opportunity of Swamiji's final darshan in Sarangpur. At that time I had an unforgettable experience.

Shri Gautambhai Shah
Mayor of Ahmedabad

Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not perform *seva*, in fact *seva* was done naturally by him. Where there is selfless love there is no question of doing *seva*, but *seva* is done naturally. There was love and compassion in Pramukh Swami Maharaj. That is why Pramukh Swami



Maharaj himself was the embodiment of *seva*. The words he spoke were the words he lived. Good thoughts are like beautiful flowers, but when those thoughts are practised in life they are transformed into fragrance. Then their beauty becomes more pronounced. Pramukh Swami Maharaj practised thoughts and with its resulting fragrance made them into a reality.

108 Shri Vrajeshkumar
Vaishnavacharya, Vadodara

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a great gardener (*mali*). The work of a gardener is to create a garden; effect a transformation. The transformation needs to be brought about in the soil and the atmosphere. Trees can grow in a desert, sea, air and on mountains. [The transformation] makes one's mind happy and bright. There is also a change in one's nature. And one thus becomes compatible with others. This work was done by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He did this by transforming the lives of others.

Shri B.V. Doshi
Padmashri and Renowned Architect

I have met Bapa many times. And every time I met him my experience was as follows:



Chief Minister Vijaybhai Rupani

Who is a true *sant*? By seeing him you feel like bowing down at his feet. A true *sant* is one in whose presence true feelings rise from within oneself. He is straightforward, natural, simple, good, sympathetic, tolerant, active, unbiased, balanced and all encompassing. When one observes Bapa's whole life, work, style of working and his associations with others, one sees the above mentioned virtues in his life only.

His sentences were simple, his talks were straight, without any show. Bapa's sentences were like sentences from the Upanishads and Vedas. His brilliance and halo were such that by looking at him one starts agreeing with his

thoughts. His nature was like fatherly love. Every time we meet him we feel as if we are meeting a friendly person. The most important thing is that on meeting him once, you become his. This was his biggest virtue. His influence on our mind and hearts will remain today, tomorrow and for centuries. One can never forget such a personality.

Shri Harsh Brahmbhatt
IAS, Popular Poet and Writer

In 1995, I had a serious problem with my eyes. I had only 50 percent vision left. Then I consulted doctors in Ahmedabad and abroad. They clearly stated that my vision would slowly become weaker and in ten years I would become blind. I was constantly worried and miserable. At that time I went for Bapa's darshan. Bapa said one sentence, 'Don't worry, you will be able to have God's darshan till you live.' Bapa's blessings still resonate in my heart today. I am healthy and well.

In 1997, a problem with my kidneys started. Soon, my kidneys failed. I started getting a high fever of 107°F. While I was on the verge of being taken to a hospital four sadhus entered my home with Swamishri's blessings. They said that I should not worry and that I would return home in two to three days. And I returned after only three days. Ever since I've not been to hospital. This was possible only through the blessings of Bapa and his sadhus.

When I was in college I used to say in my speeches, 'I am proud to be an Indian.' When I became president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India I used to say, 'I am proud to be a Chartered Accountant.' However, on knowing Swamishri and receiving his blessings I will from now onwards keep saying, 'I am proud to be a Swaminarayan.'

Shri Sunilbhai Talati
Renowned Chartered Accountant

In 1987, I had the darshan of Pramukh Swami Bapa in Gondal for the first time with my senior friend, Ramjibhai Mavani. I am a staunch devotee of Shri Krishna. I was once fortunate in getting the *seva* of replacing the *chhatra* (metal shade) in the Dwarkadhish Mandir. However, I felt hesitant in replacing the one that was already there, because it had been there for years and was installed by Pujya Dongreji Maharaj. So, I was apprehensive and wondered that in so doing would I be doing anything wrong in the name of dharma? I took the new *chhatra* that I had got made to Swamishri. I discussed the matter with him. He replied, 'You should do the good work of replacing the old one.' Then Swamishri did puja of the *chhatra* and gave it to me. That new *chhatra* is still there at the Dwarkadhish Mandir.

I, along with Mukeshbhai Ambani and his family, had been receiving Swamishri's blessings. We remember Shri Krishna and Shri Ram as God, similarly, we saw Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who had a unique personality as a *sant*, but our future generations will see him as God. In this regard I have no doubts about it. Because what he had given to society no one else has given. What tributes can we give to him because he is forever amidst us.

Shri Parimalbhai Nathwani
President, Reliance Group Ltd.

I knew Pramukh Swami Maharaj from my childhood. Since then I had been receiving his pat and blessings. I became more acquainted with him when I got the responsibility of taking care of his heart.

In 2012, it was decided to implant a pacemaker in Swamishri. When we went to check him up we felt that because of his old age it would be too risky to give him general anesthesia for the operation. So, with fear, we told Swamishri, 'The surgery will take about two hours. It will be very painful.' He replied



Surat

fearlessly, ‘Nothing will happen to me, you do your work.’

Our entire doctors’ team was present when we told Swamishri to lie down on the surgery table. During the operation we would ask him, ‘Is it paining anywhere?’ Swamishri replied, ‘There’s no problem.’ I am describing my experience as a doctor. In my 25 years’ career as a cardiologist I have never seen anything like this anywhere. Having read the Gita in my childhood I learnt that one’s *atma* remains untouched by happiness and pain. But I remained unconvinced about it. However, the practical experience I had from Swamishri’s life was that pain simply touched him and left, but it never reached his *atma*.

Whenever we travelled to Sarangpur to treat Swamishri the journey from Ahmedabad would tire us. But our fatigue dissolved on seeing and checking Swamishri’s health. Thereafter, we felt like sitting at his feet forever.

Once, Swamishri had a high fever and I went to check him up [in Sarangpur]. I had also decided to stay there for two or three days so that I could treat him properly. After checking him I sat down close to him. Then he told me, ‘You go back to Ahmedabad because many patients must be waiting for you.’ To think

about others during one’s illness was the type of care and humanitarianism Pramukh Swami Maharaj had.

In spite of his immense saintliness and charisma his innocence was like that of a child. On Swamiji’s darshan peace pervades within ourselves. That is why his divine personality can never be forgotten.

Dr Tejasbhai Patel

Padmashri and Renowned Cardiologist



4 September

SURAT

On Sunday, 4 September 2016, the citizens and dignitaries of Surat city assembled on the banks of River Tapi to offer tributes to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the presence of Pujya Dr Swami. Various metropolitan and government officials, heads of religious organizations and dignitaries paid homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the presence of 25,000 people.

On this occasion the Municipal Corporation of Surat announced that the newly built international cricket stadium in Pal suburb of Surat would be named after Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

A synopsis of selected tributes offered are as follows:

Our culture has been sustained through sadhus like Pujya Pramukh Swamiji, who purified countless minds, intellects and souls. The passing away of Pramukh Swamiji was as if a great era had set. To such an epoch-maker no amount of tributes in words, memories and feelings will suffice.

Shri Purneshbhai Modi
Parliamentary Secretary, Gujarat

In 2002, I got the opportunity of having Swamiji's darshan in Valsad. I have seen many of his satsang works. I have read and heard a lot about him. Subsequently, I have been immensely inspired in my personal life. The government makes efforts in de-addicting people but at Pramukh Swami's single word countless have given up addictions. That is why all say he was 'God in the form a Sant'.

Shri Narsinh Komar
Range Inspector General

God sometimes sends his special messenger on earth, who purifies the hearts of people, shows how to live an unbiased life, and teaches how to worship and remember God. God sends such great souls to earth to give mental peace. Pramukh Swamiji was such a true messenger of God.

Shri Yusufbhai Badri
Daudi Vohra Jamat

Pramukh Swamiji will forever be remembered in giving us the unique introduction of a true *sant*. He was an ambassador of peace for the world. His *atma* is with us today and will always remain so.

Shri Cyrusbhai
Head Dasturji, Shahpor Agiyari

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an extraordinary *atma* that descended on earth. It was a great honour for earth. He dedicated his whole life for the establishment and spread of dharma and culture. He spread the pride of the holy land of India throughout the world. In all his works one can see his wonderful influence.

Shri Sureshji Master
Sar Sanchalak, RSS



6 September

GANDHINAGAR

On 6 September a *shraddhanjali* assembly of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held in the presence of HH Mahant Swami Maharaj, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Pujya Viveksagar Swami and many government ministers, dignitaries, devotees and well-wishers at the Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre in Gandhinagar. Selected tributes offered by guests are as follows:

When I came to Gujarat I wrote a letter to Pramukh Swami Maharaj for his blessings and I got an instant reply. Soon thereafter he departed. I was able to go for darshan of his mortal body to Sarangpur. He was a sadhu. A sadhu has his own divinity and grandness. A sadhu is impeccable, ego-free, Brahman and altruistic. This definition of a sadhu was reflected in Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Along with creating a morally sound society Pramukh Swami Maharaj had done the noble work of de-addicting society. He made efforts to instil values in people through education.

To create a character-based society he personally engaged himself in many types of *seva*. When such a profound spiritual person departs we experience a feeling of poverty.

A sadhu's nature is to travel (*vicharan*). Pramukh Swami Maharaj travelled to countless villages and cities and met people. He gave love and values to all, and spread Indian culture



Gandhinagar

throughout the world. He raised grand mandirs in far off countries. All talk about spirituality but is there a tangible form to it? Pramukh Swami Maharaj showed through his life that the practical form of spirituality is *seva* (service).

Whatever description that has been given about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *seva*-oriented personality, its essence lies in his compassionate personality. He could not bear to see the pain and illness of others.

Today, Pramukh Swami Maharaj is not with us, however his divine form will forever keep guiding us. Such a unique personality of a great person rarely comes [to earth] in many centuries.

HE Shri Omprakash Kohli
Governor of Gujarat

In 1998, I was made the chairman of Sardar Sarovar project. At that time it was difficult to raise the height of the Sardar Sarovar dam. I went to Bapa for his blessings. I informed him about the issue and he said, 'Be patient and things will work out well.' On the next day Swami started doing *dhun* for ten minutes in his puja and instructed that it be done at all the BAPS mandirs. It was done for the success of the Narmada Dam project and for farmers to get drinking water. Subsequently, we won the

court case on the Narmada issue on 20 October 2000. We are all deeply indebted to Swamishri. I offer my humble tributes to an epoch-maker and world renowned guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Shri Bhupendrasinhji Chudasama
Minister for Higher Education and Tax

Though HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj is not amidst us, his blessings are with us. For years he had been showing the right direction to people. And that was why there was a change in the lives of people.

When I was a child I used to go with my father to the Sunday assembly at the Shahibaug Mandir. Sometimes when Pramukh Swamiji happened to be at the Ahmedabad Mandir I used to go for his darshan and get the opportunity to receive his pats.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had also visited my house many times. Because of the sadhus' blessings on my family we have progressed a lot since three generations.

It is a matter of pride for India that a world-renowned personality like Bapa was born in India. I have faith that such a great sadhu's blessings will always remain upon us and we shall all keep progressing.

Shri Saurabhbhai Patel
Former Minister of Energy, Gujarat

Under the helm of Pujya Bapa, the BAPS flourished into a banyan tree and spread a unique message in India and abroad. By merely having his darshan a person experiences love, warmth and a human touch. When he placed his hand on one's head one experienced calmness. One who came crying would leave smiling and one who came with misery and pain would leave feeling happy. Such a unique divinity rarely comes in centuries to earth.

My tributes to Bapa on whose darshan one experienced divine joy, and one felt like always looking at him.

Shri Shankarsinhji Vaghela
Leader of the Opposition

After the attack on Akshardham there was peace in Gujarat because of Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj. In the long period that he offered his services one cannot find one word he spoke that was debatable, evoked criticism, was biased and did not befit a *sant*. Such was his calibre.

There are very few divine souls who have equal feelings for a famous personality, a millionaire and a poor person living in a hut. Such a divine soul was Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He had no distinctions within his heart.

He had another heart which could not be put to an angiography test; it always throbbed with humanitarianism, sympathy, blessings and inspirations. There was no need for a pacemaker in that heart. There was space for people from all parts of the world. Everyone resided in his heart. I offer my deepest homage and prayers to Pramukh Swami Maharaj that his blessings always remain with us and his guidance forever provides us all with strength.

Shri Shaktisinhji Gohil
MLA, National Spokesperson, Congress

My bonds with Bapa from 1980 to 2016, about 36 years, had been that of a dear member

of a family. I had gone to take his blessings whenever small or great, good or bad occasions came my way. On coming out, after his darshan, my problems would be solved. I had many such experiences in my life with Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who was a divine and godly person.

As the president of BAPS he had groomed countless dedicated devotees, established 1,100 mandirs in many countries, gave sadhu *diksha* to about 1,000 youths and steered them onto the spiritual path. Due to his blessings even the only sons of well-to-do parents gave up material enticements and took *diksha* to become sadhus for the sustenance of our culture. Such sadhus are an important capital for society. The tradition of Indian culture that has been sustained in Gujarati youths living with their parents in many countries of the world is due to the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and his sadhus.

Shri Narharibhai Amin
Former Deputy Chief Minister and
Deputy Chairman of Ayojan Panch

I have not worn a *kanthi* at the hands of Pramukh Swamiji and neither have I seen God. But when I close my eyes to imagine what God's form could be like I definitely see Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I have had many experiences in his presence. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a repository of virtues. If I were to talk about his virtues I believe it would be like holding a lamp before the sun.

He endeavoured all his life for the elevation of mankind. He had a unique personality, whose heart was full of compassion. Humility, simplicity, honesty and spirituality were his identity. During his whole life he gave his proximity to countless people. His life was his message.

Shri Ajay Umat
Editor, Nav Gujarat Samay



Nagpur



1 September

Other States

NAGPUR

The *shraddhanjali sabha* of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held in Nagpur, Madhya Pradesh, on 1 September 2016 at the Maharshi Vyas Auditorium located at the RSS office. The assembly was presided over by Pujya Viveksagar Swami, RSS head Shri Mohanji Bhagvat, Governor of Assam HE Banvarilal Purohit and dignitaries and well-wishers. Selected tributes offered by dignitaries are as follows:

I have not read the scriptures, but I have seen the scripture of life in the form of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I had experienced this whenever I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj. His work was of giving inspiration and energy to all, without having any distinctions or partisanship.

Pramukh Swamiji's personality was all-encompassing. In spite of perceiving him from different perspectives no one can fully describe him.

Death is for us ordinary mortals but not for Pramukh Swamiji. He departed from his body

independently and has become all-pervading. He gave up the fetters of his body and resides in all our hearts. But have we prepared ourselves for him to reside within our hearts? To attain this will be the highest tribute to him.

Shri Mohanji Bhagvat

Head, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

The grief and pain at the departure of Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj is substantial. However, such a great *sant* comes by his own wish and finishes his work and leaves of his own wish. O, how pure his life was!

In 1990, I had the fortune of having Swamishri's darshan. His whole life was full of simplicity. After Swami Vivekanand, if there was anyone like him, then it was Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj. There has been none else. He had connected the whole world. He immensely graced Nagpur by gifting it with a grand *shikharbaddha* mandir and blessed the central region of India. He had, without parallel, spread Indian culture. He was truly a great *sant* of this century.

HE Banvarilal Purohit

Governor of Assam

Eighteen years ago I had the darshan of



Jaipur

Pramukh Swami Maharaj during a conference in London. He had a very peaceful and pleasant personality and there was a child-like innocence on his face. Even today I can remember his lustrous face. Then I also had other occasions to meet him.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed unparalleled social service through educating and de-addicting others. His unique thought was *ghar sabha*. He explained that through *ghar sabha* family problems could be solved, and if the house was strong then the nation could become strong.

I had felt that a commentary on the Prasthantrayi according to the Swaminarayan philosophy should be done, and that, too, Pramukh Swami got accomplished.

I strongly believe that God took a human form and came on earth in the form of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and then he returned to his abode. I offer my heartfelt tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Shri Pankaj Chande
Former President, Association of
Indian Universities, New Delhi



4 September

JAIPUR

On 4 September 2016, a *shraddhanjali sabha* in honour of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held at the BAPS Mandir in Jaipur, Rajasthan. The assembly was held in the presence of Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and many dignitaries. Messages from the Chief Minister Shrimati Vasundara Raje and former Chief Minister Shri Ashok Ghelot were read in the assembly. A selection of tributes offered are as follows:

It is not possible to evaluate Pramukh Swami Maharaj's contribution in spreading Indian spirituality and culture throughout the world. His creation of Akshardham is a heritage of Indian culture. Through the marvellous mandirs he built he placed our art and architecture before the world.

Swamiji had spread faith among the new generation. May we offer tributes to him by practising the path he had shown.

Shri Nirmal Nahata
Mayor, Jaipur

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a unique *sant*.

There is a *shloka* which says, 'Ego is like an intoxicant. Fame is like excreta.' Pramukh Swami Maharaj was above ego and fame. He had transformed the lives of countless and accomplished wonderful achievements. Still he lived and worked like a true servant of God. His life was worthy of emulation.

**Pujya Swamishri Avdheshacharyaji
Mahant, Galta Pithadhiswar**

I bow to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *atma*, power, devotion, personality and sadhana. India has the power to enable one to have God's darshan and to realize him. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was of the same rank as Mirabai, Karmabai and Dhana Bhagat.

He was an ambassador of Indian culture, who spread India's culture worldwide. How can one get such an expert person to spread India's culture. I have often been to the Swaminarayan mandirs in Gandhinagar, Delhi, Jaipur and sat at the holy feet of sadhus. There, I met people who served with faith and trust. I also saw Indian culture and etiquette, and India.

One realizes God in one form or other. After the death of someone a doctor cannot revive him back to life. However, our culture, dharma and way of life keeps a person alive for centuries after his death. This was who Pramukh Swami Maharaj was.

I believe that though Pramukh Swami Maharaj is not alive amidst us today, the guidance and the path he showed will for centuries propel future generations and India. I offer my tributes to Swamiji on behalf of myself and the government.

Shri Omkar Lakhavat
Chairman, Protection of Rajasthan Culture

Because of only Pramukh Swami Maharaj's grace I am here breathing before you. Once, I was diagnosed with a brain tumour. I informed the sadhus about it and thereafter I informed

Pramukh Swami Maharaj about it. Swamiji blessed me, saying, 'Do not worry, God is with you. Have the operation done.' I decided to have the operation at AIIMS in Delhi. The doctors told me, 'After the operation there are possibilities of you becoming deaf, paralysed and blind. Your body may stop working.' Amidst all these possibilities I had the operation done with Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings. And today I am standing here healthy before you.

Similarly, my wife also developed a brain tumour. We went to the doctor and also got Swami Bapa's blessings. He said, 'There's no need to worry. You have done service to God, thus all will turn out well.' Today, three years have passed and my wife is healthy and well since the operation.

I do not know where God is. However, for me Pramukh Swami Maharaj is like God. I chant his name like that of God and live life.

Shri Dilipsinh Rathod
Magnate, Jaipur



4 September

INDORE

A *shraddhanjali sabha* in honour of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held at the BAPS Mandir assembly hall in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, on 4 September 2016. Many dignitaries, government officials and businessmen attended the memorial assembly. Selected tributes offered by guests are as follows:

I had the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the first time in Ahmedabad when I got the *Divya Bhaskar* daily inaugurated at his hands. I was touched by his blessings, cordiality and willingness to help. Thereafter, I always sought his blessings prior to the opening of every edition of *Divya Bhaskar*.

Now I believe that I, too, am a part of the



Indore

Swaminarayan Sampradaya. I have been impressed by two special things about Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. Here, no sadhu has a bank account and he does whatever *seva* that is assigned to him. They abide by their moral rules and regulations (*niyam-dharma*). Here, the sadhus are mostly educated. Such sadhus and mandirs are a unique gift by Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

I cannot compare Pramukh Swami Maharaj with anyone. The work he did was unparalleled. Formerly, I believed that this organization belonged only to Gujaratis, but Pramukh Swami Maharaj spread the Sanstha everywhere.

Shri Rameshchandra Agrawal
Chairman, Divya Bhaskar Group

Whenever I visited Gujarat I used to meet only two persons – Narendra Modi and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Everyone knows about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's pure life. My native village is only 40 km from Bhagwan Swaminarayan's birthplace, Chhapaiya.

Why does society need a *sant*. The reason is that the personality of a *sant* is such that without him society is not whole. Today, we keep seeing the miracles of science and technology, yet we have all experienced that a society without a *sant*

is not whole. *Sants* have been taking birth from time to time to save our earth. Such a great *sant* was Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

I have been very fortunate to have had the personal darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj many times. When I was in Gujarat the issue of raising the height of Narmada Dam was going on. I came to know that Pramukh Swamiji was remembering me. Ten days before the permission for the increase in height was granted I went to meet Swamiji. He blessed me and said, 'Why are you worried? I am praying for the Narmada Dam. Do not worry, my prayers are with you because you are doing a humanitarian work.'

On my second visit to him he was sick. By that time the waters of river Narmada were flowing through small channels. So, Swamishri was pleased with me and wrote a letter of blessings in his own handwriting, 'You have done a great service. For that the whole of Gujarat will be indebted to you.'

Today, Swamiji is not with us in person. Still, his *atma* is with me and he will guide me from time to time. Shri Krishna said, '*Sant* is my heart, and I am his heart.' To become such a Sant or Guru is a very difficult matter. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a Sant or Guru. From time to time he made efforts to reform society and

to make it the best. The work he did was historic. That is why the whole world will forever remember him.

Shri Afroz Ahmed

Director, Narmada Control Authority



8-9 September

NEW DELHI

Two memorial assemblies were held in New Delhi in the presence of HH Mahant Swami Maharaj, leading spiritual lights, political leaders, government officials and dignitaries. Dignitaries, and devotees and well-wishers assembled on 8 and 9 September respectively at the BAPS Mandir hall. Extracts from selected tributes are as follows:

The first time I met Pramukh Swamiji I was highly impressed like others. He had a straightforward personality, and his thinking and teachings were very lucid.

I have received his abundant love on the many occasions I met him, and I believe it to be my life's biggest wealth. When reviews will be made in future of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's contributions, people will realize how many new directions he contributed to. He had given a new perspective to India's Sant tradition. The calibre of sadhus in this Sanstha is truly unique in the whole of Hindustan. That is a great contribution of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had also pointed to a new progressive direction in the relations between the Sanstha and our greater society. His love for children and youths and commitment in moulding them was unparalleled. He spoke little. In his straightforward personality there was a great person, which was beyond all measures.

Shri Vijay Kapoor

Former Lieutenant Governor, Delhi

Whenever I am in difficulties I think about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life. He was my source of inspiration. There are three names that appear in the Vishnu Sahasranamavali: Amani (Egoless), Manadaha (Praises all) and Manyaha (Acceptable to all). These are attributes found only in God. But if you wanted to see them you could do so in Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The Bhagavad Gita describes about 135 virtues of a best person or human. I was thinking that to imbibe the virtues of an ideal holy person one has to have the association of an ideal person who has all the virtues. And on thinking about that ideal person the name of Pramukh Swami Maharaj comes to mind.

Shri Chamukrishna Shastriji

Sanskrit Scholar

I had never known Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj. I had heard of him, I had heard of BAPS, and I had heard of Swaminarayan. I had visited Akshardham here and in London.

I got to know him when Harper Collins was chosen as the publisher of Shri Abdul Kalam's book. I was chosen as the editor to take the book to print. That was my first acquaintance with the life and work of Pramukh Swami – the miracle that his life was. It was for the first time that I saw such a miracle in someone. I read about his unbelievable capability in the book and realized that he was an exalted soul. I could only read and through that reading I tried to experience some of it. In all ignorance, people believe that a guru means the one who can perform miracles. I have myself taken *diksha* from my guru and made this mistake. Whenever we encounter a problem, we would go to the guru asking him to fix it with a miracle.

Going through the book I felt that here is a person whose miracles work on a practical level – miracles that are worth something. And again, they are practical.

The extraordinary brotherhood of saints he



New Delhi

has built is mind-boggling. While reading the book I often wondered whether it is possible for one man to do all this. What he had done is a miracle! And this brotherhood among saints is working on so many aspects, not just religious aspects of our life. So many aspects of our life are being covered by people in this brotherhood. His miracle lies in the way he managed the aftermath of the firing at the Akshardham temple. Only an exalted soul like him could have managed it so well. That was a miracle he brought.

I also learnt of the way he brought two villages that had not shared their waters, who were at loggerheads since generations. The way he brought them together for all times now was a miracle for me. And these are the miracles that work in practical ways.

And of course, as I've earlier said, the miracle that the book was. It was beyond me, believe me, it was beyond me, as a person to have brought the book out in one-and-a-half month's time. And I've always felt afterwards that there was some divine grace operating with me while I worked on the book.

I believe that one's sadhana, bhajan or innermost feelings towards God, devotion – is always best hidden. And here was somebody who actually practised that. He never preached anything

overtly. He just did his work. And that is what I learnt from my acquaintance with the book.

I would like to end on a personal note. When the book was ready, my publisher went to Pramukh Swami for the book release. At that time, I felt a little jealous, a little envious that he was going to meet Pramukh Swamiji and I would not get a chance. I told myself it was okay because then, not all of us are so fortunate.

But if you strongly wish and yearn for something, I have experienced, it gets fulfilled. In December, I was invited to attend Swami Pramukh Maharaj's birthday on 19 December when we launched all the six editions. And every time I recall that experience and speak of it, I get goosebumps! In a gathering of three lakh people, Swami Pramukhji came on stage and I got the opportunity to offer obeisance and perform *arti* before him. My wish to see him since six to seven months was fulfilled in this way – that too was a miracle!

So on 13 August when Prof. Arun Tiwari, the co-author of the book, messaged me saying Pramukh Swamiji was no more, I remember at that point of time I was with my son at my home. For a moment I felt a great emptiness, a sadness that I could not describe because I did not know him personally. I had just one glimpse of him but

a great sadness came over me. And I felt that there was a connect that had been established. I feel blessed, my life has been blessed with that connection. On that note I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity of saying these few words. I know no words can ever express what I actually feel, what many of us actually feel.

Thank You!

Shri Shantanu Chaudhuri
Managing Editor, Harper Collins
[Edited English Version]

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had always been my source of inspiration and will always remain so. He specially served the poor, rural people and those afflicted by calamities. For this he is an ideal and a great example for the whole world.

Nepalis believe that to make their birth worthwhile they must perform a pilgrimage of the four Dhams. In addition to the four Dhams one more has been added – it is Akshardham in Delhi. When Nepalis come to Delhi they become impressed by the darshan of Akshardham and its ideas. I have faith that Akshardham, built by Pramukh Swamiji, will forever inspire ideals in society.

Shri Krishnakumar Dakkal
Ambassador, Nepal

To say anything about Pramukh Swami Maharaj would not be enough. When I see the loving image of Maharajshri [Swamishri] my heart is overwhelmed. Pramukh Swami Maharaj came to my house in Aurangabad. At that time he told me if I wished to serve I should build a hospital for the poor. And due to his inspiration we have built a hospital in Aurangabad, where the poor are treated free of cost. I do not have words to express my gratitude for Swamishri's blessings upon us.

Shri Rajkumar Dhoot
Proprietor, Videocon Group



10 September

BENGALURU

Many dignitaries and government officials attended the *shraddhanjali sabha* for HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Bengaluru on 10 September 2016. Selected tributes offered by guests are as follows:

Today we are remembering the glories of one of the greatest personalities who walked on this earth. Personalities like Pramukh Swami Maharaj walk on this earth not on their behalf, they walk on behalf of God and transmit God's compassion and love upon humanity. And in all the work that they do, out of love and compassion for humanity, they work with the power of God and not with the power of human beings.

Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj was such a personality who had erased his sense of doership, who was completely absorbed in his sense of service to the Lord. His life is what we have to learn from and that's what he has left behind for all of us; not just big, big structures, not hundreds of temples – yes they are the catching points for the souls.

But what is really the contribution of Swami Maharaj? If we want to benefit from Swami Maharaj then we have to understand his vibration. The visible has disappeared from our eyes but the invisible never dies. He will live forever and his spirit is seen in every disciple. We can see that Swami Maharaj, just like they say 'A teacher is known by his student', in the same way today we see hundreds of serious sadhus who have dedicated their lives to spread his message of love and compassion to humanity. Their humility reflects his humility, a bit of it, it reflects in all his *shishyas*, all his disciples.

Everyone gets connected to him by working for him, for his message, for his mission. And in the matter of following his mission,



Bengaluru

whoever takes up following his mission, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's invisible divine presence will be behind such people. And that they can experience.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was always grateful to his guru – he was always thinking of his guru, he was taking his blessings, he understood always that he was a servant of his guru – and this is the power of that disciple. That is how a disciple becomes a guru, a disciple becomes an Acharya. As an Acharya he has set an example.

In 1995, I came to invite him when he was here in Bangalore to our Hare Krishna Hill. The temple was half built, and the construction was going on. So I wanted his blessings. He blessed me. Then, in the end, I said, 'You should visit and set your foot on the hill. I want to complete this temple, I want your *krupa* on it.' Then he said, 'It is God's work, I will come.'

Then the next day everybody came to the temple. Our office was in a small shed. Swamiji came there and had darshan of Shri Krishna and Balram. It was really very compassionate on his part to have accepted my invitation and come to my office. The devotees put an *asan* on the seat opposite to my seat behind the table. I told the devotees, 'No, you put this *asan* on this seat

which is the seat where I was sitting. To build this temple I need power. You please sit here and I will sit on the opposite side.' So, he sat there and I sat as a guest. I consider that such pure souls when they come, when we meet them, they pass on God's grace, they pass on Gods' power and strength, the good qualities. This is called *sadhu sanga*. So we're very grateful.

Again I met him after the temple was completed, for Brahmotsav. When I called him again he came to the Hare Krishna Hill. So twice we had the opportunity to have him there. He spent quite some time and my memories are quite fresh of him visiting the Hare Krishna temple. So it is really a privilege for me today to come here to offer a few words of glorification of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

I would like to share and join in the heartfelt pain of separation of Swamiji Maharaj. Physically it is a great loss to this country and to this world. He was not a man of this country, he was not a man of this world; he was a Jagat Guru. Jagat Guru means not guru of some village, not guru of India, not guru of this world, but guru for every living entity. That is a real guru who represents God.

So with these few words, I again thank all the sadhus for having given me a chance to come

here and say a few words in glorification of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj ki Jai!

Pujya Madhupanditdasji

Head, ISKCON, Bengaluru

[Edited English Version]

I'm from Bangalore and I did not know about BAPS. I once visited the Delhi temple. It is an extraordinary place, very beautiful, carved with the best that India could offer and a testimony to the heights that the civilization has reached. And it is a wonder! I have travelled the world and have seen many monuments, but I have not seen any monument like this temple in Delhi. And I wondered who could have created it at a time when Delhi, our civilization, was looked down upon; and the dominant culture in Delhi was not to create temples, not to support our past and not to support our civilization. Despite all these handicaps, somebody had done it. I asked the swamijis and they said it was a dream of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It was a place where I felt God truly resided because what can be more beautiful than a great temple.

I visited the temple at Gandhinagar and was dazzled by its beauty again. It is again an extraordinary place, a wonder in the world. And there they showed to us the technology that they have used. It is okay to showcase our great past, our great culture, our creativity but the technology is something the western world has. And there [in Akshardham] they have brought the best technology and created a dazzling show which showcases our great heritage. And it filled me with great wonder.

Then I was invited to come and meet His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and I was honoured to have his darshan. When I met him he smiled at me, put a garland around me and looked at me and just touched me. In his smile I saw compassion, I saw care, I saw a spiritual

rishi and I felt thoroughly at peace. I felt I was in the presence of a great soul who has a message in the way he smiled and all that he did. Then I learnt from the swamijis through many discussions what he had created and what he had done.

Today, we are all saddened by his passing away, gone on a journey back to his eternal home. But in his legacy he leaves behind something very wonderful. He leaves millions of people who have been touched by him, millions of people who have been touched by spirituality and by his compassion. His care for humanity is so stupendous that all over the world people are coming together and thinking that they lost a great father, a great rishi, a great soul who always thought of them. And in his passing away on his new journey, we must pledge to ourselves that we will spread his message that the whole planet belongs to us. We are one single people in this world without any differences, where nothing can separate us. But we have to be compassionate, treat everybody in this world as our brothers and sisters and make sure that everybody's life is better. Because he left behind a world much, much better for us than the world that he inherited as the pontiff of BAPS.

Mohandas Pai

Distinguished Educationist Bengaluru

[Edited English Version]

Though I spent about 40 years in Ahmedabad, I really did not have the privilege of meeting or having an interaction with Pramukh Swami Maharaj. But still I came to know about him because of one event – when Dr Kalam accepted Swami Pramukh Maharaj as his guru. I also had the opportunity to read through the book which he wrote. The book clearly showed what Swami Pramukh Maharaj had done was a great service to society. Dr Kalam had accepted Swami Pramukh Maharaj as his guru; this in itself is a great tribute to



Mumbai

Swami Pramukh Maharaj. Mohandas Pai clearly pointed out that in a regime where our own culture was not given the due regard and respect that it deserved, but it is the great soul of Swami Pramukh Maharaj which had clearly uplifted the society.

On this occasion when we believe that his soul has left this world, but we definitely know that he is present, he is omnipresent and he will continue to guide our journey in this world. He had brought solace to so many people in this world and he will continue to do so. I pay my homage to him on this occasion.

A.S. Kiran Kumar

Chairman, Indian Space Research Organization
(Edited English Version)

I have been lucky and very fortunate to have had Pramukh Swami's shoulder pats. He was very compassionate. Once, he was doing his morning prayer. I was in a hurry to catch my flight back home. Swamiji called me during his puja and blessed me with a pat and said, 'You may go.' I simply cannot describe his love, compassion and greatness that flowed from him.

I believe Pramukh Swami should not be merely seen as a great *sant*. But he was the great incarnation of the great Upanishadic rishi. He spread

not only the love of religion and service, but he was also a great builder of temples. Furthermore, he built a network of swamijis and devotees all over the world. He also built hospitals and other things, but we need to remember the architectural marvels (temples) he built. Future generations will remember him for this. I pay my homage to a great *sant*.

Shri Y.S. Rajan

Distinguished Scientist, ISRO
[Edited English Version]



11 September

MUMBAI

The *shraddhanjali sabha* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held in Mumbai on 11 September at the Bombay Exhibition and Convention Centre in Goregaon. The memorial assembly was presided over by HH Mahant Swami Maharaj. More than 24,000 devotees, well-wishers and guests attended the assembly. The chief guests on stage were Pujya Chidanand Sarasvatiji of Parmarthniketan, Rishikesh, officials of Mumbai Municipal Corporation, actor Shri Paresh Raval and others. Extracts of selected condolence speeches are as follows:

Sadhus' lives are for the liberation of our world. A true introduction of such a life was Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life and work. If someone were to ask me whether I have seen God, I would reply I had the darshan of God's form in Pramukh Swami Maharaj. If we follow his life motto 'In the good of others lies our own', I believe our world will be changed.

A society or a *sanstha* has to put in a lot of effort to build a single mandir. However, when Pramukh Swami Maharaj merely expressed a wish, a mandir was accomplished. There was divine power in his wish. A tribute to him lies in obeying his instructions and dedicating one's life in the service of such a great Sadhu.

Shri Subhashbhai Desai
Minister of Industry, Maharashtra

In my personal life, whenever I had to do any religious, social or national service I would first go to get Swamishri's blessings. I have experienced that Swamishri's darshan meant the blessings of God incarnate.

His work of instilling values in thousands of individuals and society in India and abroad, and his work of spreading Indian culture and raising the level of religion through mandirs in India and abroad are unparalleled. A true tribute to him means to resolve to understand and live according to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's every word till the end of our lives.

Shri Kirit Somaiya
MP

Bhagwan Shri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that he will not be found as the four-armed Narayan but will be accessible as a yogi. Thus, in accordance to his words, Pramukh Swami Maharaj stayed amidst us in the form of a yogi. Rather than us having accepted him, the fact that he accepted us was a very big thing. We are fortunate that Bapa made us instruments and witnesses of his works.

Everyone who did Swami Bapa's darshan became respected – such was his greatness. As a *yug purush* he lived amidst us in the form of a yogi. For us he was like an awakened security person. He kept us all awakened continuously. He wanted to make all divine like him.

Shri Yogesh Sagar
MLA

I see Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Mahant Swami Maharaj. I am speechless in praising a divine personality's work. There were no ordinary miracles in Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life. He was God-realized. He was not selfish but selfless. His life did not have only bhakti yoga but there was karma yoga also.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj spread the message that in our present age it is not possible to have one religion on earth, but with all religions one can have one earth – this was his message of peace and unity.

Swamishri launched mega anti-addiction programmes and liberated the lives of countless. I pray that we take a drop from his ocean-like life and dedicate ourselves to his work.

Shri Arunbhai Gujarati
Popular leader, Maharashtra

The first time I went to Swami Bapa he asked me, 'Recite a verse from the Koran.' I did so. Swamishri became happy on me and placed his hand on my head and gave me a pat on my back, saying, 'You are a Muslim so read the verses of the Koran, and you will be happy and your life will become good.' I was impressed by the purity of his heart.

There were many sadhus in this world and there still are who do only the work of religion, but Swamishri did religious and social works together. That is why this great soul will always remain memorable in my life.

In the 2000 UN Millennium Peace Summit Swamishri said, 'When a true Muslim reads

the Koran, a Christian reads the Bible, a Hindu reads the Gita and all follow their scripture, then peace will spread in the world. To make our world more beautiful it is necessary to know, understand and practice religion in our lives.' Pramukh Swami Maharaj had done this. When people of all religions follow the path he has shown our world will become more beautiful.

Today, Pramukh Swami Maharaj is amidst us and is blessing us through Mahant Swami Maharaj. I pray that his blessings forever remain upon me.

Shri Muzzafar Hussain
Senior Leader, Maharashtra

I am indeed blessed and fortunate to have had the opportunity of the personal darshan of God's form – HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Through building mandirs he spread Indian culture throughout the world. Mandirs bond us with dharma and dharma teaches us to love all. I felt proud when I had the darshan of the BAPS Mandir in London.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a true ambassador of Indian culture. He performed social services by building schools and hospitals.

India is a land of great sadhus, however, amidst these great sadhus HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was one outstanding sadhu. Our country and the world will never forget him.

Shri Sanjayji Nirupam
President of Congress, Maharashtra

One finds two types of people in life: one before whom one experiences oneself to be lowly or inferior and the other in whose presence one feels how great one is. Swamishri was the second type of person. He used to respect us so much that we would feel blessed and happy. Everyone has experienced this.

After Pramukh Swami Maharaj's departure his glory will increase day by day because of his

unique spiritual greatness. If there was one sadhu, who through mandirs had done the task of spreading Hindu dharma, then he was Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He had done social services by establishing hospitals and educational institutions, and performing relief work during calamities in India and abroad. My heartfelt tributes to him.

Shri Ashishbhai Selar
President of BJP, Maharashtra

I am greatly obliged to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj for all that he had done for me. In 2008, I came into the contact of his Satsang. After reading a book on him, 'Jene Gune Rijhya Girdhari...' I experienced a drastic spiritual change in me. I became convinced that he was not an ordinary guru, but a different entity altogether. Today, whatever I am is all became of his blessings. I believe it is a miracle of his blessings.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj is present today in the form of Mahant Swami Maharaj. I pray that you keep on guiding us in our life.

Shri Dilip Joshi
Popular TV Actor

My relationship and first meeting with Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the young age of 11 was due to providence. It changed my life.

In the winter of 1979, I attended a conference for children in Vallabh Vidyanagar in Gujarat. He presided over the inaugural function and the children were overjoyed to interact with him. It was a life changing event for me and many of us, and the bonds we built lasted a lifetime. He also initiated me into the Swaminarayan community by giving me a *kanthi*. I felt as if I had been adopted by a guru who would hold my hand forever. It is one of the most important memories of my childhood. It changed my life, my lifestyle. I learnt to live a *sattvik* and spiritual life. The bond shaped

me in two different ways – as a friend and as a disciple.

I have received many pats from Swamishri. His unassuming way of life set a model for me to follow. He led by acting and not speaking. He did not preach; he set an example. Watching him eat, speak and interact helped me hold my style. I wanted to follow in his footsteps. He gave me room to follow, but also think. He encouraged us to think and process on our own. He would share a story during his discourses and we were left to make a meaning out of it in our own life. He made time for me and for many of his disciples in spite of his busy schedules and endless engagements. The feeling of proximity allowed me to feel as if Pramukh Swami was mine, he was always with me. Every interaction was meaningful.

His ability to ingrain morality, ethics and spirituality in all of his followers will continue to shape society for generations to come. My heartfelt tributes to a great personality who has left us and is also now reborn in the form of Mahant Swami. I offer my *koti koti vandan* to Mahant Swami.

Shri Ashish Chauhan

MD & CEO, Bombay Stock Exchange

[Edited English Version]

One can offer tributes to someone who has passed away from amidst us, but when my heart cannot accept this how can I offer tributes to him! When I came to know that Pramukh Swami Maharaj had passed away I thought that though he is no longer present in person, he is present and will always remain so.

I always observe everything in a scientific way. I don't believe in miracles. My first contact with Swamiji occurred 22 years ago. I went to check his health like I would for any other patient. But from that first time and then onwards my experience of his divinity grew.

Once, while I was checking Swamishri I

received a phone call from Narendrabhai Modi. He told me, 'Remember, he is not only a gem of India but of the whole world. And the responsibility of taking care of this gem is upon you.' Then, 15-20 minutes later, I got a call from President Abdul Kalam. [He, too, said the same thing.]

After the Akshardham attack I saw Swamishri's unique personality. He exemplified magnanimity. My respects to Swamishri who was an idol of forgiveness and tolerance.

Dr Ashwinbhai Mehta

Renowned Cardiologist

I am a person who does not believe in sadhus and mahatmas. I take that to be a credit, fault, vigilance or my power to think. I had heard a lot about Pramukh Swamiji, but I greatly regret the fact that I was unable to meet him. He built 1,100 mandirs worldwide and spread dharma without the use of violence. He gave the message of love to the whole world. After the terrorist attack on Akshardham Pramukh Swami Maharaj prayed for the peace of the terrorists' souls. He also did not allow any bullet marks to remain in Akshardham, because he believed that anyone who came there should not be aroused with hatred or bitterness on seeing them. Such was Swamiji's compassion.

Whenever I go to meet a sadhu I'm always cautious and aware. I've never allowed anyone to take possession of my heart. However, I declare honestly that while having Pramukh Swamiji's last darshan [in Sarangpur] what I had experienced I've never done so in my life. I felt if I had to walk the path shown by someone then it should be the one shown by Pramukh Swamiji. My true tribute to him is to follow the path shown by him and practise dharma.

Shri Paresh Raval

Renowned Actor



Hyderabad-Secunderabad



11 September

HYDERABAD- SECUNDERABAD

A *shraddhanjali sabha* of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held in the metro city of Hyderabad-Secunderabad, Telangana state, in the presence of leading spiritual heads, government officials, businessmen and other dignitaries. The leading members of Gujarati Seva Mandal in Secunderabad announced the naming of a newly constructed tower as Pramukh Swami Maharaj Tower. Additionally, the *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj would also be installed therein.

Selected tributes by guests are as follows:

It was my great fortune and honour that I got the benefit of meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj through Dr APJ Kalam. While writing *Transcendence* with Dr Kalam I experienced that no matter how much words we would write for Pramukh Swami Maharaj they would always fall short.

Kalam Saheb said that Pramukh Swami Maharaj was his ultimate guru, who had put him into a 'God-synchronous orbit'. But what is this 'God-synchronous orbit'? A satellite is

put into an orbit around earth. Then it moves along with the earth. So relative to the earth the satellite appears strong and still. So, a God-synchronous orbit means that whatever God wishes that will be one's wish too. "No manoeuvres are required any more, as I am placed in my final position in eternity." I believe there is no greater accomplishment than this in human life. One can understand Swamishri's unparalleled greatness from the statement of Dr Kalam.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a great saint who was naturally orbiting around God. He was the form of God. One cannot separate God and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Whatever God wished was the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Prof. Arun Tiwariji
Scientist and Author

I am a very close disciple of Pujya Dongreji Maharaj, who was an exponent of the Shrimad Bhagvat. Once, Dongreji Maharaj personally told me that there is no greater *sant* than Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the whole world. So, you go and take refuge at his feet.

Shri Jivrambhai Patel
Leading Gujarati



Chennai



17 September

CHENNAI

On 17 September 2016, a *shraddhanjali sabha* of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, in the presence of religious leaders, government officials and business magnates. A synopsis of selected tributes offered are as follows:

“In Kaliyug, God blessed us in the form of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. On his divine face we could have God’s darshan. His inherent nature and equal gaze on all was clear evidence of his divine virtues. A leader is one who continues to guide even after he has stopped guiding. Swamiji was such a leader.

Sri Acharya Srinivasan

Managing Director of Sundaram BNP Paribas
Home Finance Ltd.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a great, rare individual. He was a realized soul on the path of spirituality. Swamishri achieved so much by his inner peace. He was the principal person behind all the achievements of BAPS, but he did not show off. He was a great [source of] inspiration

and headed a great institution.

Swamiji preached about doing *ghar sabha*, which is very important in today’s world. He was a unique individual we have lost. His teachings will be active in this world for eternity.

Sri Vardhan

Former Additional Secretary of Information &
Broadcasting, Delhi, and former
Chief Secretary of Sikkim

He was a Vishwa guru with all the 39 virtues explained in our scriptures. Swamiji who was living ‘Brahma’ saw God in all living as well as non-living things.

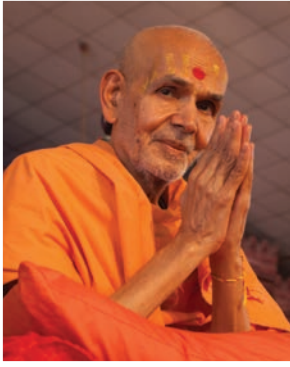
Dr N.R. Dave

Former President of Hindustan Chamber and
Philanthropist

I am struck by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s leadership in two major activities: one in creating temples and second in reaching out to people. By building temples he created *teerth kshetras* across the world, and he shared his time and life with millions of people.

Swami Mahamedhananda

Chief Editor of *Vedanta Kesari*
(Magazine of Ramakrishna Matha) ♦



HH MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ

A Compilation of Blessings During Tribute Assemblies

Pramukh Swami Maharaj possessed infinite virtues. He had the special attribute of nourishing and fostering all. He did not merely give talks. He always felt like serving everyone. Ordinarily, we find people talk and then leave it to that. But Swami Bapa always felt about how others could progress and benefit.

Gadhpur was sanctified by Shriji Maharaj. Yogiji Maharaj was honoured here with grandeur. At that time Yogi Bapa had said, 'You are not honouring me, but honouring Dada Khachar.' Pramukh Swami Maharaj had the same sentiments. He believed Shriji Maharaj was the all-doer and consolidated it in us all through various incidents and occasions.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj had robust faith [in God as the all-doer]. Swami Bapa's humility was Himalayan. Whoever came in contact with him was impressed by it. He had never made any claims. Swami Bapa had infinite virtues. He was at the summit of spiritual virtues, but his egolessness was a great thing.

Everyone here has heartfully sang the innumerable virtues of Swami Bapa. I thank you all for having organized this assembly here in the great pilgrim place of Gadhada.

(23 August 2016, Gadhpur)

Swami Bapa's egolessness was natural and innate. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was not aware of his own presence. He did everything for others. Bapa had done so much for us.

Narendrabhai Modi told me, 'You have been given a big responsibility.' I said, 'Not big, but a very big responsibility.' However, we believe

God to be the all-doer. Shriji Maharaj has said, 'Without my wish not even a piece of straw can be broken.' We believe that Shriji Maharaj is the all-doer. Pramukh Swami Maharaj consolidated in us that nothing is possible without God. Without Him we cannot even break a *papad*. This was his sentiment, yet he made immense efforts. This was how he synthesized them and did a lot of work.

You have all been touched by something in Swami Bapa's life. He had done a lot for us, and now we have to do for him. We should not merely pay lip service. What is a true tribute to Swami Bapa? To follow his teachings and instructions.

Swami Bapa talked a lot about unity. Where there is unity among two people, they are as good as 100,000 persons. We should take up his words and live accordingly – that amounts to giving him true tributes.

Agna includes self-control and following all the *niyams*. We have to imbibe them and strengthen them in our lives.

(27 August 2016, Vadodara)

HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj's mottos were, 'In the joy of others lies our own', 'In the good of others rests our own,' and 'Religion is that which fosters mutual love.' Swamiji lived 24 hours accordingly. He did not say these words only on an occasional basis. The words 'May good be done to all' emerged from his soul for everyone.

Today, we find many dignitaries have gathered here to offer their homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. All have spoken from their heart. Now all should bless us. We will carry forward Pramukh Swami Maharaj's work through your help. And for that there is a need for your blessings.

(11 September 2016, Mumbai) ♦



Atlanta



3 September

ATLANTA

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the Pramukh of not only the Swaminarayan tradition, but he was the Pramukh of the entire spiritual world. The work he did to protect Indian heritage and to nourish the youths is not possible even by any government spending tens of millions of dollars.

Acharya Dr Lokesh Muni
Ahimsa, Vishwa Bharti

True leaders not only say things, they actually do it. And, obviously, Pramukh Swami was one of those great leaders who spoke through action.

Bjay Pak
Georgia State Representative

He's made the lasting effect of the need for everybody to be tolerant and loving no matter who the person is.

Diana Preston
Former Mayor of Lilburn

I'm impressed and intrigued by his messages

of bringing people together. And also how he coordinated various faiths and instilled respect for each others' faith and religion.

Nazeera Dawood
John Creeks City Council Member



10 September

TORONTO

I extend respectful greetings to you, my friends, gathered today at BAPS to mourn the loss of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami was a man of great achievement who held a deep and abiding pride for the beauty and strength of BAPS.

Under his leadership and vision, BAPS became a symbol of tolerance, knowledge and community that serves not only its spiritual congregation and the wider Toronto community, but our great country, Canada, as well.

I had the privilege of visiting your congregation on three occasions during my time as Prime Minister, including the ceremony to open your beautiful mandir in 2007. Over the years, the warmth of your hospitality, the strength of



Toronto

your enduring support and the bonds of our friendship were a great inspiration to me as Prime Minister. I could always count on the BAPS community.

Today, though I am absent from this service, I continue to stand with you, shoulder to shoulder, as you celebrate the life and legacy of Pramukh Swami.

His loss is significant, and there is simply no consoling the loss of such a man. But I am comforted, as I hope you are, in the knowledge that his peace and enduring legacy will live on in the spirit and strength of his congregation and community.

Stephen Harper

Prime Minister of Canada (2006-15)

(Video Message)

I had the occasion to be in the presence of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj once, here, on one of his visits... and when you are in the presence of somebody special like that you can sense it.

What I see in the people that I have met here, which is a reflection of who he was and what he was, is a person who was moral, a person who was selfless, a person who was humble, gentle, decent, caring, warm, and that is what I see in the people who are here in this room and who I

have met over 15 years now in coming to know this community.

Throughout the time this congregation has been here, it has been built on not just faith, but on service to community and on partnership with the community. That is why you are highly respected by me, and more importantly, by this entire community, who share in your sadness on the loss of a great leader.

Anyone who is a great leader, like Pramukh Swami Maharaj, lives on through the work of others.

Just think of the fact that more than a thousand centres like this one have been established around the world and a thousand priests have been inducted into the priesthood to carry on his good work during his time.

Through them and through each of you, his work will continue. It is an extraordinary record of devotion that deserves to be commemorated and celebrated. As I understand it, 45 years as your leader, as the head of this sect, and 75 years as a priest. That is an extraordinary contribution to humanity.

I thank you for allowing me the privilege to be a part of this ceremony and pay tribute to his very rich life that benefitted not just you but has benefitted all of us, and I know that his work

will continue through you, through the Swamis and through his successor because of the strength of his teachings.

John Tory
Mayor of Toronto

We gather to pay tribute to a man of towering intellect, a man who dedicated his life to God and to humanity.

He never forgot that God is in everyone and that we have an obligation to help the less fortunate. Most importantly, to me, he spearheaded the creation of the BAPS Charities – an organization that has helped the less fortunate all across the world, including, most recently your efforts to help our brothers and sisters in Fort McMurray.

Raj Grewal
Member of Parliament

Profound impact. I learned new today that he personally answered 700,000 letters. That was his understanding of humanity. When someone wrote a 14-page letter and he [Swamiji] had an eye problem, others were saying don't read it, but he insisted on reading it. Anyone who writes a 14-page letter is hurt, and it was his profound compassion to understand another's hurt and to make him better.

He was a light for the world. A light for all of us to live our lives by. Look after those around you; those you love, your friends, but also look after others. Life is not always easy; make it easier for others.

When I think of him, I think of him with a smile and the eyes – the eyes that danced, the eyes that laughed. He lit up in the presence of others. How you treat our most vulnerable is how you judge someone. How he treated children; he loved children.

Hon. Dr Kirsty Duncan
Member of Parliament, Minister of Science

All of us walk on this planet, but there are very, very few people who leave their footprints. And Pramukh Swami Maharaj is one of those very rare people.

The beauty is that his footprints will live through all of us. His teachings that we have learnt is how his footprints will live on forever.

Hon. Dipika Damerla
Member of Provincial Parliament,
Minister for Seniors Affairs

[When I met Swamishri for the first time] he told me the value of humanitarian service. I could feel his aura, his persona, his simplicity, but importantly, I felt spirituality, his divinity, his love for humanity, compassion and kindness. When he gave me blessings, I felt as if he has touched my heart, touched and blessed my soul. That was the beginning of my divine journey with Swami Bapa.

Swami Bapa, you leave behind fond memories, inspirations, legacies that will last for generations and be remembered forever.

The building of temples across the globe will allow devotees and others to continue their devotion to God and spirituality.

In the developed world like in Canada, the beautiful Vedic architecture, the cultural centres, the dharma exhibitions and museums showcase and promote the understanding of the history, civilization, diversity and religious cultural heritage of the people of India. This has built tremendous respect for Hinduism and India across the social-political fabrics of the country.

In corporate business jargon, Swamishri you have been a true spiritual brand ambassador of both India, the country and its people, and more importantly the over 10,000-years-old living Vedic Hindu civilization.

Swamishri, you will always be remembered and revered for your spirituality, for your divine leadership, for your selfless service and for your unwavering spiritual guidance to not only

the BAPS Sanstha and devotees, but also to the Hindu community at large, globally.

Suresh Thakrar
Former Commissioner,
Ontario Securities Commission

He was more than just a man; he was very special. I had the pleasure of meeting him on three occasions. I felt at peace being in his presence; I was very happy to have that opportunity to meet him. The happiness is still here. That's why I come here once a week for the *arti* and meditation. Gives me peace to be here.

Bapa has left us physically, but he lives in our hearts, in our minds and in everything we do.

To me, he was not just a man. He was a man above all men. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's devotion to God and mankind, his courage, tolerance, honesty and patience made him unmatched by anyone in life.

Bapa, your good work here will continue with the guidance of Mahant Swami Maharaj. And we will keep you in our hearts forever.

Winton Mapp
Former Toronto Fire Officer

We were honoured to live in his lifetime. The Olympics have just finished and I would like to say that Pramukh Swami Maharaj has won the most gold medals when it comes to dedication to humankind.

What have I learnt from him? I learnt that you should be humble. He was always a humble individual, always smiling, always calm, always serene.

So many good things he did. The lessons we can learn from him are humility, dedication to the upliftment of human suffering and humankind and to always have a good word to say.

Dr B. Doobay
Board Chairman, Vishnu Mandir

The most memorable moment of my life has

been when I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj. At that time I felt that my previous births' blessings had been realized; that I was in the presence and able to touch the feet of a holy being that walked the earth in this modern day and age.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has been a shining light of wisdom and guidance to inspire the world towards peace and tranquility and love for humanity.

Pandit Roopnath Sharma
President, Mississauga Ram Mandir and
Hindu Federation

There are very few moments in life which are life-altering. And touching his feet was a very special moment.

One of the fascinating thoughts he had was that science is incomplete without spirituality. Science is fact-based and spirituality is faith-based, so how do you bring the two together?

The former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, met Pramukh Swami Maharaj and shared his vision. Swamiji said to him that you are missing one point in your plan – and that is of spirituality. How can we in India talk about science and technology without talking about spirituality? And being able to convince a scientist who is the father of the nuclear programme in India is an amazing story. It left a great impact on me.

His understanding of how the community needs to engage with spirituality was reflective of the changing times we live in. Because to connect with the young generation and the generation that I belong to, you need to be able to have reasoning. You need to be able to have rationality.

I see the younger generation of volunteers at BAPS and their sense of *seva*, their sense of giving back is I think a great tribute to him.

Deepak Chopra
President and Chief Executive Officer,
Canada Post

I did not have the privilege of meeting



Robbinsville

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, but his impact is very obvious in his service to humanity, to community. He was humble, and showed gratitude in seeking joy in others.

It's a lifetime of learning to begin to even comprehend it and once we begin to understand even the smallest component of it, life is much simpler and much more joyous. And that is what he has delivered to all.

Michael Mazza
President & CEO,
The Scarborough Hospital Foundation

The greatest legacy is the communities that he is leaving, because I always feel like I'm coming home when I come here. People are so welcoming. That element of service. That element of humility and gratitude.

One single individual and how many lives he has touched and not on a short-term basis. People live their lives based on his teachings and based also on how he lived; and I appreciated that a lot more today. I learned a lot more about him.

Yes, he has the legacy of the mandirs around the world, the hospitals and schools. But, it's actually more I think, the people. To see such a wide variety of people here today clearly

touched at the deepest roots of their hearts by how he lived and what he preached.

Laura Syron
Vice President, Community Programs,
Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation

Three words to describe Pramukh Swami Maharaj – Global Father of Hinduism.

Deepak Ruparella
President, Silver Hotel Group



17 September

ROBBINSVILLE

Our Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a *jivanmukta purush*. He was selfless, egoless and had great tolerance. He believed in unity and sacrifice. He was self-disciplined and self-controlled, and dedicated his whole life for service to humanity. Therefore, he has not gone anywhere; he is here with all of us, in his subtle form giving his blessings to all.

Our gurudev Swami Chinmayanandji Maharaj had great respect and love for Pramukh Swami Maharaj for his dedicated service to humanity.

Swami Shantanand
Chinmaya Mission, NJ

I have to tell you that the BAPS community has really done an incredible amount of things for our community. They have become involved in our community.

The fact that this facility we're standing in here today is built on volunteerism is truly awe-inspiring to this day and is a true testament to your Swami and the relationship he had with all of you, to get so many to do so many incredible things.

Dave Fried
Mayor of Robbinsville

I never had the honour to meet Swami, but there are two things that have struck me in the short time that I have become aware of the things that he has done. One is his credo,

"In the joy of others lies our own,
In the progress of others rests our own,
In the good of others abides our own."

What's important to me is that if the world can incorporate even just 10% of this credo, how much better the world would be today.

The other tenet is that "The whole world is one family."

Ronald Witt
President, Robbinsville Council

The members of BAPS have taken his words to heart – they understand the value of inclusiveness, they understand the value of volunteerism and of openness. It's not just religion; it's living the way that they feel.

Chris Ciaccio
Robbinsville Township Councilwoman

Mother India, especially in the last century, has produced many greats. But of all of them, there are two of them that stand out and who have many things in common. They touched upon not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of people across the cities, across the states, across the countries, across the globe. One showed us the path to

freedom here, while the other showed us the path to an even larger world. "My life is my message," is what Gandhiji said. Let us make the message of Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj our life.

Sunil Naik
President, Association of
Indian Americans of North America

When he became a sadhu, he was named Narayanswarupdas, which means he is a *swarup* (form) of God. Imagine, at that age, his guru realized that he is a *swarup* of God.

After the tragic earthquake in Gujarat, thousands died, many became homeless. From Share & Care we joined with BAPS [to provide aid to the afflicted]. Swamishri's direction was perfect. He was not hoping to get fame; he was directing us to do the right thing at the right time. I met him in Bochasan for 17 minutes. His direction was clear and guidance was perfect.

He always told me about humanity and humility, because he truly believed that peace on this earth will only come when humans are being treated with equity and with dignity. My friends, please join me in giving him a true tribute by bringing peace on this earth.

Sharad Shah
Chairman, Share & Care Foundation

I was not privileged to meet Pramukh Swami Maharaj. But through the lens of BAPS, we see what Guruji has taught the disciples of BAPS. Today I have learnt of Swamishri's contribution to society and that will have an impact on my personal life.

Dr Manoj Mohapatra
Deputy Consul General of India in NY

The first time I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj was during the 1991 festival. My experience with him was that I found him to be an innocent soul. You can see the radiance of love coming out of him. He really taught about Hinduism to



San Jose

the world, while preaching about one world and respect for all religions. He is, in my view, the one who has made sure that our roots and our heritage and our culture stay alive in the next generations to come.

Hiten Patel

Founder and Chairman, Collabera, Inc.

I have never met Pramukh Swami Maharaj. But by the show of affection for Swamishri that we have seen here and also in Lansdale at the temple, I've been impressed by how closely and keenly people feel his presence. That's fairly rare. And it's refreshing to know that people have such devotion and are willing to show that devotion publicly to someone as knowledgeable as Swamishri.

Joe Zlomack

Marketing Director, Polley Associates



17 September

SAN JOSE

The world has lost a *yug purush* – a great personality of this century. In my own personal experience, the first thing I noticed was his ability to connect – individually and, uniquely, with many thousands of people. This is why he is

recognized as great. Everyone that he blessed, from President Abdul Kalam to Prime Minister Modi, to an uneducated person in a small village can come up with their own unique experience in their own memory.

Let us talk about reforms. Lord Shiv, Devi Parvati, Shri Ram, Sita Mata – all are worshipped right here with Lord Swaminarayan. This reform of Pramukh Swami Maharaj is unique even among Swaminarayan temples. This is a great teaching. It unites all Hindus and this is what we have to learn.

He has installed discipline and the process of procedures. A good example is the Sarangpur centre where I had the opportunity to observe and learn from the multiple-year rigorous curriculum for *tyagis*. This results in a very committed, a very learned and an impressive cadre of saints.

HH Pramukh Swami speaks to us today from his teachings, through the swamis he anointed and through his work. In that sense, Pramukh Swami has not left us.

Dhaval Brahmabhatt

Founder, IEEE Nano Council of
San Francisco Bay Area

When you meet Pramukh Swami you experience divinity, the presence of God. There are



Long Island

some moments in life you always cherish that they should last forever, but those few moments they inspire you to do whatever you can do, forever. And those were the moments with him.

Values and *sanskars* are very important; but they are like software. We need hardware to run that software. And the temples he built provide that hardware. They are our foundations. Our next generation feels connected when there is a temple.

Khanderao Kand

National Executive Committee Member, HSS, USA

As a Jewish person, I am so blessed to learn about Pramukh Swami's amazing generosity of spirit. I am so inspired by the affection he bestowed so warmly and authentically on so many people. I will take this inspiration to heart and connect to his legacy by being the best Jewish person I can be.

Dianne Fisher

Director, Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley
Community Relations Council

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the greatest human being I have ever lived to know of and privileged to learn from.

Sanjeev Chitre

Founder, The U-Group and The Tech-SPA

I am in awe of the life and teachings of this holy man. Being with you today has inspired me to share more fervently his message of love.

Pattie Cortese

Wife of Dave Cortese, Supervisor,
Santa Clara County



17 September

LONG ISLAND

In my life I have met some wonderful, wonderful people, but no one like this man. He was in Hempstead, where we went to the Holiday Inn. And when you walked in you noticed a couple of things. One was the passion and enthusiasm of the hundreds and hundreds of followers. People would do anything just to be in his presence. And the other thing you noticed when you walked into the room was the smile on everyone's face. This is a joyous celebration, a joyous interaction. And in our world today we don't have that.

Then I had the opportunity to meet him personally. And there was one compelling, powerful moment when I looked into his eyes. His eyes were everything. They say that the eyes are the window to the soul. Then truly his soul was deep and vast and understanding and good.

This is the first time I've gotten a chance to truly tell you about an impact of just mere moments the first time I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I carry in my heart those moments.

Mr. Bakul Matalia

President, Gujarati Samaj of Long Island

It's a distinct honour to pay a tribute to a very, very special person in my heart. On July 7, 1998, a divine intervention descended upon me as an ordinary heart surgeon. I was given the honour and privilege to hold the heart of our leader, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, to do the bypass surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital. Later, I tell you, I almost felt under anaesthesia when his right hand rose up over my head, blessed me and at the same time reached my heart.

It was a real, divine feeling at that time. It was very important for me, and it touched my heart. That was a moment I will never forget.

Dr V.A. Subramanian

Cardiothoracic Surgeon

Pramukh Swami Maharaj, with his vision, transformed BAPS into a worldwide organization respected for its religious teachings, spiritual values and, most importantly, social activities.

Swamishri built 1,100 mandirs. What do these mandirs stand for. These mandirs stand for cultural values, promoting our spiritual values, and, most importantly, telling our future generations of youths about what we stand for.

Among these mandirs are two shining stars – Akshardham in Delhi and Akshardham in Robbinsville. These monuments will remind us of his teachings, selfless dedicated life of service to humanity, and keeping families and communities together.

Dr Bhupendra Patel

Community Leader, Internal Medicine

As a great institution builder, I don't think there's anybody in recent history – a spiritual

person, a monk in India – who has been responsible for building so much in terms of establishing the visibility of the presence of Indian spirituality in the lives of people around the world. And in that sense, his contribution is, literally, monumental.

But more than that, it is his presence in each one of us. And I have experienced that in the few moments I have had with him that he locates himself individually in each one of us in such a personal way that we remember that.

There are a few concepts he personalized. The concept of peace which we see in his entire personality and face – somebody talked of his eyes. The concept of compassion which is in each of his works. The sense of inclusiveness which he brought to everybody irrespective of his own religious experience. And finally, of course, the concept of service, which he sought to embody in a particular way and bring meaning to it in each of his works.

Mr. Sunil Hali

**President & Publisher, Media,
Marketing and Entertainment**



18 September

CHICAGO

His greatness lay in his ability to relate to the common man.

Vishav Pal

Consul of India to the Midwest

I saw and felt this aura of love, wisdom and understanding. I was thinking of words that could describe him. Words such as empathy, compassion, feelings for other human beings, wisdom, serving mankind, servant leadership.

So, we have a simple man who believed in helping others. His whole life was devoted and dedicated to helping and honouring his fellow human beings.

What does it take to build a mandir. Well, to start with there were 2,700 volunteers who served 2.5 million hours. Think about that for a moment.

But it's not just the building that's really significant, it's what emanates from here. Thousands of devotees volunteer their time. These people give to the charities, give back to their community. They give, they give and they give, but do not take anything in return, because that is Pramukh Swami Maharaj's mission. It's about giving to others. This one man was able to get this done in a humble manner. Pramukh Swami Maharaj is truly a very special man.

John Millner
Former IL State Senator

The first time I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in 2007; when he arrived in Chicago I was able to arrange the Illinois State police escort from O'Hare Airport to the mandir.

I was fortunate enough to enter the plane he was on and was actually the first person in North America to greet Pramukh Swami Maharaj at that time. It was a surreal experience. He had an aura about him. I went up to him and he placed his hands on my head and gave me blessings. Then he placed a garland around my neck which was very special.

What touched me about him was his involvement with the youth of BAPS and the mentoring that he has done in helping many of the college-age kids.

John Lagattuta
Director of Statewide Enforcement

With his charming smile, what always impressed me was his simplicity, his innocence and tranquility. He had great vision and wisdom. He had more wisdom and more vision about society and humanity than many of the so-called think-tank scholars. The thing that touched me most was his work.

He visited over 17,000 villages and 250,000



Chicago

homes, and what did he preach? He made them live better lives.

Dr Bharat Barai
Secretary, Medical Licensing Board, Indiana

Every time I see him, the first impression it gives me is energy. He would just sit for hours, even after travelling for thousands of miles the day before. And to me, the most impressive feature he had was his child-like smile. He had this disarming, innocent smile.

And also, he had this unique ability to make you feel important. Even if you are in a group of a hundred people or a thousand people, and if you just go close to him, he would just make you feel so important. He never talked down to you.

I feel that the world has lost a true man of God. We have lost a great humanitarian. We have lost a great spiritual leader.

To me, his legacy is in the millions of lives touched through his charity work and spiritual guidance, and the thousands of devotees and volunteers he inspired to carry on his work to make humanity better and to serve and help people.

Narendra Sai
Former President,
Indian Pharmacist Association

Meeting with Swami is surreal. It's like a



Los Angeles

presence and you can feel the aura of a higher power. Just with his calming words, the way he speaks resonates in you. It's a surreal feeling.

Been blessed to meet him so many times. He was very down to earth.

Raj Patel

Partner, Medstar Laboratories



18 September

LOS ANGELES

Swami was a godly person, saintly person. He was beyond our human thinking.

I recall most his charisma. He sits on the stage and for a person like me, whose mind travels thousands of miles per minute, my mind slows down, and when I see him my mind stops and I just look at him.

Tulsi Savani

President & Chairman, Sunshine Seniors

I first met Pramukh Swami in Gandhinagar and I really didn't know what to expect. It was my first introduction to Hinduism, to dealing with sadhus. I wasn't sure what to do, what to say. But Pramukh Swami put me at ease right away. Very low key, very warm, very loving individual. He had this sort of a glow about him; an aura about

him of joy. It was very child-like, a little twinkle in his eyes and his smile put me at ease.

When we started this project, it was an incredibly ambitious project. And I really didn't know how we were going to get through it. But the only way we were able to do it was through the dedication, the devotion of the devotees and sadhus who supported this film.

It was unlike any experience I've ever had before and I know it was all done because of Pramukh Swami. I certainly felt that.

I knew immediately that he was a very special soul. I was so impressed and so moved that he was so humble and that he was so gracious. And he always asked about you and always blessed you; he didn't ask anything for himself. It was always about the person he was talking to. I got the sense that he was completely genuine.

My image of him to this day is of a little smile and a little twinkle in his eyes. Just a gentle soul.

Clearly, Pramukh Swami has affected millions of people in a very positive way. The way that he led his life is really something for all of us to think about. He's affected people from small villages to big giant corporations to countries. His selfless devotion to others is really something for us all to look up to.

Keith Melton

Director, 'Mystic India'

I met Swamishri about 15 years ago. I respect Swamishri because he has never talked down about any religion. His objective was only one – to promote humanity. He taught that everyone’s dharma is to become a better human.

I have learnt from him to live simply, give selfless devotion to the community and when you help others do not expect anything in return. He has never asked anything for himself. Such people are very rare.

He was one of the most popular saints, who became popular because of his works, not by commercial promotion.

Mabul Qadri

President, Indian Muslim Association

I had the honour of meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj twice. The amazing thing about Pramukh Swami Maharaj is that he touched me personally. I recall that when I had cancer, I spoke to people here about my situation. The next day, I was told that His Holiness had been informed about my illness and that he would pray for me personally. It was very touching that he considered my life worth including in his prayers. I have since learned how much he has personally and very intimately influenced the lives of BAPS members: what college they go to, what career they choose, who they marry. That’s a very amazing attribute for a spiritual leader and that leads so many people to be personally connected like that. It’s a miracle to have such a connection.

Adam Eliason

Planning Commission, City of Chino Hills

Part of his legacy was to remind everyone the importance of faith. I think faith is something that people have forgotten. When he saw the opposition that this project had, he was able to comfort those who were working on it and give them the insight and the courage to keep moving forward. And it was his faith that inspired the leadership to continue pushing, to have the

courage to go into the community and help change hearts. And his legacy of never quitting, staying on course and having faith that things will turn out for the best will live in the hearts and souls of this community forever.

When you look around here, this is a labour of love. When you look at all the different families that come from across the state to be with each other, to worship, to strengthen friendships, to learn, the love among the people grows because of him.

Bryan Keith Gutierrez

Neurospecialist

I saw that Swamishri had such a simple, but modern way of integrating everybody from the community into *seva*. That there is something which you can do for others, please do it without any ego, with a sense of service. This service we lack in our society so much and which I see in BAPS. It’s such an enormous sense of duty.

Nimi Raghunathan

India Journal (Weekly Newspaper)

I’ve always been struck by the discipline, the organizational ability and passion of BAPS *sat-sangis*. This is due to Pramukh Swami’s ideas of devotion to God and service to community, which I think he has transmitted so beautifully down to every single person. It is why there are programmes and temples like this that strike accord with the community.

Vasant Rath

Past President, Radha-Raman Temple



18 September

JACKSONVILLE

In Jacksonville in 2007, I had the opportunity to serve him for his medical *seva* and that was also my first close encounter with Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



Jacksonville

As I entered the small room and sat near him, there was a feeling of complete calmness, where the brain was very, very quiet and the thoughts had settled down. The mind was completely still.

What impact did Pramukh Swami Maharaj have on my life? What impact does air have on my life? What impact does water have on my life? If you go without air for more than a minute, you understand the impact it has on your life. And, similarly, after these many years of sat-sang, I've realized that Pramukh Swami Maharaj has the same impact on my life as air.

Among his impact on the world are his de-addiction drives that he has led and the millions of people that he has successfully helped to quit addictions.

As a cardiologist, I help people to get rid of their smoking habits, drinking habits, etc. I've perhaps been able to help a few people and when you look at what he has done to millions of people to quit their bad habits and improve their quality of life – it's amazing.

He led a life of total humility in the face of great accomplishments.

Dr Nehu Patel
Cardiologist



25 September

AUSTIN

There are leaders. Some leaders talk, but don't put into action. Here is a leader who doesn't talk much, but you see him in action. And that's why today you see this many temples, this many *sevaks* and if you ask them 'What do you do, sir?' 'O, I'm a heart surgeon, I'm a brain surgeon, I'm a millionaire...', but they come and pick up your plates. You don't see that in any other organization.

Dinesh Vakharia
Vice Chairperson, Hindu Charities for America

In the Chinmaya Mission, we learn about Jnan Yoga, and I have seen here people following exactly what we learn in the scriptures. And they are really following it. That is really eye-opening.

In the Gita we hear about the *sthitapragna purush* who has all the qualities that one person can have, which makes him a great person and that is what Pramukh Swami had.

The fact that he respected people, regardless of their background or caste or religion or whatever, is just phenomenal. The story I heard



Houston

today of the tribal person who needed a pump in his village – it was just astounding that a man of his stature would still pay attention to somebody so small and their needs and make sure that they are met. I think that's unparalleled.

Subhash Vohra
Ex-President, Chinmaya Mission, Austin

I first met Swamishri in person in 1995 in Mumbai, in the Sion area, where the eye medical centre was being inaugurated. I did not know who Pramukh Swami Maharaj was before then. I actually volunteered through a family friend. And he had a 10-minute session with all the volunteers and he blessed us. That day I felt the power that this person had. And that has affected a lot of things I've done after that in the field of *seva*. His number one impact on the world is *seva*, in seeing God in everybody and see that you are serving God and just individuals.

What he has started is a chain reaction of compassionate *seva* to the community. He was a compassionate leader.

Pankil Matalia
President, Jain Samaj, Austin



2 October

HOUSTON

This holiest of men inspired millions of people across the globe to lead a God-centered, morally pure life. He demonstrated a most compelling compassion for humanity and universal wisdom while exhibiting a striking simplicity.

I was afforded the great distinction of having a private audience with His Holiness when this Mandir was dedicated. I shall always remember the visit as I looked into his eyes and saw a clarity of serenity and humility that I'd never before seen. During our conversation I felt a calmness enveloped in exhilaration. It was the clearest illustration of confirming that I was in the presence of a truly remarkable man of God. After a most enlightening engagement, I rose to leave. His departing words to me were, "You are a good man; I will pray for you." That penetrating expression from this most incredible man remains with me to this day, and shall always be genuinely appreciated and cherished by me.

Leonard Scarcella
Mayor of the City of Stafford

To me, he seemed like someone who had gone through all the stages of enlightenment and was seeing the world like Krishna described it

to Arjun: 'Many claim to be messengers of God. Only a few can demonstrate that, and those who can demonstrate don't do so by words alone. They do so by example.'

Pramukh Swami set an example for all of us. If a man can inspire millions to do God's bidding in the service of mankind... then that man is no longer a man. He has been lifted to a higher place.

I am going to be able to say that I met a saint and through him I met God.

George Willy
Attorney

Today the people all over the world are mourning the loss of a great saint. And what a saint he was!

Born as a simple man, he remained simple all his life. And yet, he scaled the heights of unparalleled achievements. Where one has hard time to rule one country he ruled millions of hearts. Where one has hard time to mould one child – he succeeded in moulding the character of millions. Where one has hard time in building one home, he left the legacy of building hundreds of beautiful temples. Where one struggles to get one diploma, this unique and modest saint was honored by kings, prime ministers and presidents.

Not having much formal education, he was the most educated one! He was also a great teacher, manager and inspirer. He taught the values of volunteerism and team work, he inspired millions to give their lives for humanity!

Pramukh Swami Maharaj Shree did bring honor to all Hindus and made them proud of Hinduism. His impact will be felt for hundreds of years.

Sureshbhai S. Patel
Ex-Chairman Vallabh Priti Seva Samaj of Houston

What I want to talk about today was my experience of a remarkable man whom I met that day in 2004 – your Guru. He had come to consecrate this temple and I was forever marked by being in his presence. When we arrived that day,

I, along with my grandfather, was whisked off to meet some of the dignitaries and especially the guru. Wide-eyed, I sat and listened to these men speak of India, of Houston, of their lives. And then the guru asked me about myself. I cannot remember what I said, but the feeling I had, at age 18 of being affirmed by such a great man has stayed with me through my entire adult life. I was asked to accompany my grandfather and the others on stage, where I saw a sea of faces in the audience. I was overwhelmed. I was so proud to be with my grandfather. After my grandfather made some remarks, the Guru turned to me and introduced me by name, John Cooley Plumb, to the audience. After I got over the fear that he was expecting me to speak, I sat back and thought about his generosity.

I was not a great person. I was just a grandson with his grandfather. How had he remembered my name? Such a great man. Someone who attends many functions. Someone who meets so many people. Yet, he remembered my name and thought enough of me to include me by name as one of the men. I will never forget him. Perhaps that was a turning point for me. Perhaps that was the day I became a man.

John Cooley Plumb
Grandson of Cardiologist Dr Denton Cooley

Knowing more and more about Swamiji, I was convinced that he breathed, practiced, and preached about *ahimsa*, meaning kindness, humanity, and sympathy during his entire life towards all. Give you an example, which touched me the most. All of us remember a tragic terrorist attack on BAPS Akshardham Temple in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India on September 24, 2002. At that panic and violent moment, Pramukh Swamiji responded peacefully and even prayed for those terrorists who died. Such a remarkable example of *ahimsa* in the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Dr Sulekh Jain





Leicester



28 August

LEICESTER

I think he was a special guru who came and taught humanity how to live. [He taught] simplicity – how to be simple in your thoughts, in your deeds – his spirituality, divinity and discipline. [He taught] how we should follow our duty and not only to think about us, but to cross over the barriers and build bridges. So that is his legacy for Leicester as well. Commemoration to him is not for a day, it is for the rest of our life because he has inspired generations.

Councillor Manjula Sood MBE

Assistant City Mayor for Communities and Equalities and High Bailiff of the City

His Holiness has made so much impact, particularly in the young people and young society of Leicester. Young people feel very much inspired by his preachings and teachings.

I feel very strongly that His Holiness's preachings had made that difference to bring that youth element into the integral part of our society and this is something we need to

remember and celebrate for years to come.

His charity work and legacy which he has left behind to inspire young people to actually move forward into a new society and to take the challenges in their life.

Councillor Piara Singh Clair MBE

Assistant Mayor for Heritage, Ledger and Sports



18 September

DUBLIN, IRELAND

Meeting Pramukh Swami was the highlight of my visit to India. It was the most memorable and peaceful experience of my life.

Maurice McDonagh

Owner, Hygienic Solutions



22 September

LONDON

My last memory is that I brought my father to visit the temple here. My father was a Christian man. [And so] one of my last memories with



London

him before he passed away was that I brought him to the temple here and he enjoyed his visit.

He was a retired schoolteacher from Glasgow from the Catholic faith tradition. He very much appreciated his trip here. He loved his trip. And then at a certain point, he said he wanted to give a donation to the temple.

I said, “OK” so I took him over [as] he wanted to give a donation.

And then one of the sadhus said, “Would you like to meet Pramukh Swami?”

I thought [that] so many people want to meet Pramukh Swami but they’ve asked my father if he wants to meet him. And my father turned to me and said, “Come on let’s go.”

So we walked fairly quickly into the room where everyone was having the darshan of Pramukh Swami and my father paid his respects. He came out and his heart was beating so fast. And he said, “Today I have met the pope of Hinduism.”

He had that experience and I think that was the experience we all had. When we are before the sun we feel the radiation of the sun, we feel the warmth of the sun, the sun cheers us all up in our hearts. We don’t need to read a book about the sun, we don’t need to go to some other

source to authenticate the sun. We feel in the sun’s presence, warmth and inspiration.

Gauri Das

**Managing Director at Bhaktivedanta Manor
and Executive Secretary,
ISKCON Governing Body Commission**

I first met Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj as a young man in the 70s at the first temple in Islington and then a very memorable visit to Bhaktivedanta Manor, Hare Krishna Temple in 1981 [it actually was 1980] when he visited us. There was a tremendous bond of friendship between us and we always came to meet him here for counsel and to get his blessings right up to the last visit here in London.

The Shrimad Bhagvat describes that there are six qualities of a saint or sadhu. And all six of these, you’ll find in the embodiment of Pramukh Swami.

Titiksava, the first quality that he had – tolerance or patience.

The second quality *karunika* – his kindness and his compassion. Was his kindness just for the Gujaratis or humanity? No, *sarva-dehinam* – for all the creatures in this world. This compassionate nature of Swamiji was the inspiration for

so much of the welfare work that we see in the BAPS Sanstha.

The third quality, *ajatshatru* – someone who was non-inimical. He didn't have an enemy. Why? Because he saw everyone as a friend. This was the great inspiration that Abdul Kalam had, that he said, "I've finally met a person who doesn't see anyone as an enemy, he sees every single one of them as a friend."

Fourth quality that Pramukh Swami had, *shanta* – he was peaceful, despite running an international organization with millions of followers around the world. You can imagine the challenges that come with that. Whenever you saw him, he was always peaceful. Why? Because he was always giving, never taking.

The last two qualities, *sadhava* – he lived his life by the scriptures. He was an embodiment of the Shikshapatri, of the Vachanamrut.

The final quality, *sadhu-bhushanam* – he had all the good qualities of all the *devtas* and specifically in what I saw in his life the quality of *kshama* – forgiveness. Despite the attack, the terrorist attack on Akshardham, when he was asked for his reaction, he said *kshama* – peacefulness, forgiveness.

The founder of the Hare Krishna Sanstha, Swami Prabhupada would often say something which really attributes to Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj. He would often tell us, "Don't try to see God, but serve and work in such a way that God will want to see you." That was Pramukh Swamiji Maharaj.

We all value the master, but now we have to master the values that he's given us.

Grace Sruti Dharma Das

President of ISKCON, Bhaktivedanta Manor

Under his guidance, the BAPS has grown from an organization centred in Gujarat to one spread all around the world. More than 1,100 temples including the Swaminarayan Akshardham temples in New Delhi and Gandhinagar, most

impressive intuitions, were built in this time.

He has spearheaded a large number of charities which have brought assistance to millions all around the world. I have not had the privilege as have the previous speakers of having come into personal contact with His Holiness Pramukh Swamiji, but I have had the privilege of visiting this institution more than once. I have had the privilege of meeting his followers more than once. I can see, I can feel the sense of peace, the sense of tranquility, the sense of acceptance of the other in his teachings and in the practice of his followers.

I think in today's world this is perhaps a most important value – a recognition that all human beings are essentially the same [and] that all human beings are essentially equal. They are equal because they have one creator and once you have one creator, all of us are the same.

Notwithstanding the outward distinctions of religion, sect, race, caste, gender, language, I think this is perhaps – if this simple value was understood all around the world today – you would truly have what we have heard, talked about so much today, peace and tranquility.

This tremendous institution that has been created under the guidance of Pramukh Swamiji is doing wonderful work in London, in the UK. It has become a centre for promotion of Indian values, traditional Indian culture, education and welfare.

I think the best way of getting over the loss, the physical loss of Pramukh Swamiji, is to absorb his teachings and to bring them out in practice in our daily lives.

Navtej Sarna

His Excellency the High Commissioner of
India to the United Kingdom

I met Pramukh Swami on many occasions including when we laid the foundation stone. You had to be a great visionary to believe that this – which is a pretty run down industrial area – could be transformed into this wonderful mandir.

He was a man of great inspiration. [He had]

the ability to inspire great joy and great love in people and above all else, he brought humility to the world and brought his message of peace and love to everyone.

To inspire people of all statures, of all levels in society to come here to actually participate in the running of this mandir and all others across the world clearly demonstrated his great humanity and his gift to the world.

*We all have our own special memories of this great man; his willingness to give up his time for children, for anyone who had a problem. I think of the number of letters I receive and compared to the number of letters he received over his life – it is like a drop in the ocean.

He was a man who had time for everyone, and understood who he was seeing, why he was seeing them and what he could do for them.

Over the years, I got to know him and got to realize his ability to not only inspire people, but to bring people together – to cross religions, to cross the different divides in society and bring people together to talk, to correspond, to be together and love one another. And that has to be the central message that we take forward as we celebrate his life.

Bob Blackman
Member of Parliament

If we think of him we know his was a life of service, constant unending service. And we know too of the joy he brought us all. Everyone in this room and millions and millions and millions more outside it whose life he touched. The memory is one of joy.

I first met him many, many years ago. The first was in parliament. He came into Committee Room 10 and suddenly the whole atmosphere of that place and that room was transformed. It was as if all that ‘stuff’, all that angst, well, all that goes on, had just fallen away and there was this profound sense of peace, of tranquility, and

so it was too on the next occasion at Heathrow.

It was at the ordinary arrivals that you and I come through all the time. You know Heathrow is not a peaceful place – there’s a lot of stuff going on there too – a lot of frantic activity. And then he came through and suddenly what was there? Again peace, tranquility.

This sense of peace and tranquility and that’s what he always gave us – peace, tranquility because he was centred. He was centred on love and service. And we all know the nature of that service, whether it was education, health, social welfare – we’ve seen them, many of you have volunteered in them. You know the way they have transformed lives. You know how he inspired that transformation. But always at the heart was love and the love of God and the life of the spirit.

Race, class, caste, religion meant nothing to him. What mattered was love, love in action. Love not as some soft sentiment but as a strategy [of] change and transformation so that we might all be better. So that we might all be one and our world a better place for our being in it. So, he was a great guru, a great heart, a great soul.

Lord Paul Boateng
House of Lords

When Bapa asked me, “How do you actually conduct yourself in your everyday life going globally?”

When I described it, the advice that he gave me was to go about my daily routine, to live in the modern world that I have, to succeed, to push ahead [and] to strive for the best. These were the messages that he gave me. But he also at the same time said, “Niti niyam thi rehjo.” Make sure you don’t lose your faith, stick to our traditions and you will go far. And ever since that day I have imbibed and taken that to heart.

Dixit Joshi
Managing Director and Head of Equities for
Asia Pacific at Deutsche Bank

*An extract added from tributes offered on 20 October at the Sattavis Gaam Patidar Samaj.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was our inspiration and our leader. As architect and head of the design team for the Mandir and Haveli complex, I had the good fortune and privilege to meet and work with Swamiji on the design of these buildings.

Inspiration seeps in like the tide unnoticed – it is important – not being fully recognised at the time. This was how it was with Swamiji – this was for me, his subtlety.

His inspiration came to us not through grand speeches but through the simple personal connection which he made. He listened to us. He gave his time to us. He was interested in us and what we were doing. This, in addition to everything else he was doing. Swamiji had a vision and he guided us on a journey to learn what we needed to learn to fulfil this vision.

He led us to achieve what, at the outset, seemed daunting if not impossible. He lifted our sights and enabled us to work truly creatively on the design of a mandir to last a thousand years.

It was a unique task. There were immense design and logistical problems to be overcome. His confidence helped us to meet the challenges along the way. Swamiji understood what was needed to build a complex of such significance.

He was a great organizer. He was decisive and encouraging. He inspired immense commitment and enthusiasm to enable a mandir and haveli to be built to the highest standards in a remarkably short time. He was radiant. I am grateful to have worked with him. He was our inspiration.

Nigel Lane

Architect of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London

His greatest achievement was to see how he could keep all the communities together to ensure the Hindu and the Vedic traditions and cultures could be taken forward. He built so many monuments all around the world that they will always transmit our tradition and culture to millions of people.

We were fortunate to have his blessings and

he honoured us by visiting our home in London as well as in Mumbai.

Whenever we had the opportunity of having his darshan and blessings, we used to get positive vibrations. He used to always smile and his blessings and the positive vibrations which came really gave us joy and happiness.

He was sent here for a specific mission. He accomplished his mission.... Besides all this, what you have seen in the presentations and what you have heard, the greatest quality he had was leadership with humbleness.

The team that he has built, the best CEO in the world could have not built. Most of his devotees, his team, are no less than PhD. Now there has to be some power to hold them. Not only was he able to hold them but they all are dedicated. And, the best part he has done is also to select the best successor to be able to carry forward the mission of the principles of Swaminarayan.

These type of saints are very rare and we are fortunate that we were able to get his blessings.

Gopichand Parmanand Hinduja

Co-Chairman, Hinduja Group

I was very fortunate to be invited to Neasden Mandir when Swamiji was present.

After the congregation we were invited to meet him personally in his room. I wasn't expecting that but when we went there, I greeted Swamiji on his feet and Swamiji put both his hands on my shoulders and tapped.

I asked for blessings and when I looked at him, I felt that this is Shivji – Shivji's form in Swamiji, and that's how I have always looked at him.

Swamiji gave me a flower. I took that flower and I kept it. I still have it and I put it in front of our Satguruji. I have the memory of Swamiji touching my shoulder, and I've always looked at him as Shivji's form. I don't know why, but every time I look at Swamiji I think of Shivji for some reason.

Ranjit Singh Flora

Ex-president, Namdhari Sangat



Paris



20 October

**SATTAVIS GAAM
PATIDAR SAMAJ**

When I used to meet him in India and elsewhere, he was very focused on what to do. I would simply summarize some characteristics [about him]. One, he was totally dedicated. Formal education is secondary, but his thinking, his logic, his principles and values were second-to-none. He had vision and was very focused. His willpower, when people created difficulties, was completely confident that ultimately he will prevail.

C.B. Patel
Gujarat Samachar

In Brent Town Hall, I garlanded him and he returned the garland, and that became a centerpiece in our drawing room. And people who visited me asked if they could take one flower away and that shows how much respect and fragrance that he spread.

My last visit to Sarangpur was in March this year. I could feel the electrifying atmosphere when people were rushing to wherever Pramukh Swami gave darshan.

Pravinbhai Patel



18 October

**PARIS,
FRANCE**

We made the first show in Gandhinagar. It was quite an amazing experience since it was my first meeting with the entire organization, and especially with HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

In fact, the first time I had the opportunity to meet Pramukh Swami Maharaj was not in Gandhinagar but 150 km away from Gandhinagar, in Sarangpur. It was a place that I experienced as being at the edge of the world.

Despite being only 150 km from Ahmedabad, for me, who came from Paris, it was a complete change. It was like a change of world and this absolutely idyllic place was kind of a place of peace.

We spent some time there, we slept there. We were in some sort of very special atmosphere.

I had the opportunity for the first time, with two companions who accompanied me, to meet Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It was a very special meeting. At this meeting, and subsequent in Gandhinagar, what had struck me the most is the means of communication. We did not speak the same language, although I think he understood English quite well. The means of communication were far beyond the barriers of language: the look, and the smile.

The smile of Pramukh Swami Maharaj is something that has always illuminated the relationship we had, not only the relationships that he could have with me or my colleagues, but with all those around him. And when we used to come out of the meetings, we went out with the same smile and kept that smile with us for a long time.

Today, for me, it's that smile that still accompanies me when I think about him and see his images. And that smile of course is also a way of life and an attitude towards life. To come and welcome life, to greet others with a smile, meaning kindness, generosity.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj brought childhood innocence back. Everything was an opportunity to smile and to welcome what was happening with happiness. We were a few days from the opening of the show, which was an important show with a rather large stress, so Pramukh Swami Maharaj's arrival relaxed everyone.

And we needed this relaxation because the show was experiencing a number of technical problems. So with that smile and finally with that sort of acceptance of life that he showed us, that he shared with us, finally everything became easier.

And what I have retained much is that with this relationship with Pramukh Swami Maharaj, everything became easier. Yet, as it became easier, ultimately we did things more and more difficult because we were less and less afraid or not afraid.

Because of his smile and the ease with which he approached life, our life and our common destiny at the time, was something that totally carried us.

And at the end of the show he gave me bracelets, and this really touched me. He gave me a number of 'bless bracelets' to give to all the people with whom I had worked. It was a way of transmitting something. Despite our culture being completely different than the culture we were into at that time, we felt being part of the same movement. These are the memories that I care personally.

And we left with this extremely strong feeling that finally between us all, it was an exchange. And this exchange was symbolized by the beautiful smile of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, which I keep in my heart.

Yves Pepin

**Creative Director of Multimedia Shows and
Large Scale Events; Founder of ECA2**

I had the good fortune to have the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in this very place here about 15 years ago. And I could see how powerful a *sadguru* is. There are not so many moons, luminaries in the sky. But Pramukh Swami Maharaj was such a luminary. Over a century he gave so much to inspire so many devotees around the world. I witnessed this personally. I went to Nairobi (Kenya), Akshardham (Delhi), Neasden Temple (London). I've seen the devotion of the practitioners. I've seen how such a spiritual leader can transform society.

When we have the opportunity to meet such luminaries, our existence may change with just a few words coming from his mouth. This is exactly what the *sadguru* is. He never dies. We lament his disappearance, we lament that he is not any more with us, but he can bless us in so many other ways. And he still goes on living by his example. He still goes on showing the way to a godly, saintly life.

It's very astounding to see so many children inspired and so much discipline in the BAPS movement. So, to restore this discipline, especially in *sattvaguna* – the mode of goodness – is something wonderful.

Such rules are so much needed in today's society to reverse the general tendency and to create men and women of good character. This is exactly what BAPS is doing all over the world.

All these actions cannot take place without the inspiration of one person. That's exactly what a *satguru* is showing – the perfect example.

M. Nitai, ISKCON





Nairobi



17 September

**NAIROBI,
KENYA**

What words can be used to pay tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj? Should we call him the best of men, the pinnacle of saintliness, storehouse of virtues or a world dignitary? All of these words fall short. Swamishri's life was full of virtues like simplicity, discipline, self-control, tranquility, friendship, unity, cooperation and others – which today are difficult to find in people.

Nitin Malad

Chairman, Hindu Council of Kenya

To speak about Pramukh Swami Maharaj is like holding a candle to the sun. To speak about Pramukh Swami Maharaj, even our whole lifetime would not be enough. Today, we are unable to cultivate values in our own children. As parents, we are unable to make them quit tobacco and alcohol. But, in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, children are transformed in minutes and they even bring their parents to the mandir.

Narendra Raval

Owner, Devki Group

I never had the opportunity to meet Pramukh Swami personally, but there are some personalities whom you do not have to meet. You can recognize them through their work. Pramukh Swami is one of them. I have seen his work and his volunteers. On that basis, I can see how great he was.

Jonathan Mueke

Deputy Governor of Nairobi

The passing of such a compassionate and holy soul was most shocking, but 'Great' souls never pass away as they live forever in our hearts and are a guiding force in our lives, bringing peace to our busy and wanton lives. However, it is a solace when we realize that Pramukh Swami is still with us in the form of Mahant Swami Maharaj!

In his book Dr Kalam describes Swamishri as his Ultimate Teacher who taught him how to remove I and Myness from his life. This has had a lasting impact in my life and I sincerely hope to imbibe these virtues. I personally treasure this book and recommend it for enhancement of spiritual knowledge.

A true Guru in these modern and challenging



Johannesburg

times is an absolute necessity and I have indeed been honoured to be able to seek Swamishri's blessings with the profound faith that he has and will always guide me!

Hon. Joseph Muturia



24 September

**JOHANNESBURG,
SOUTH AFRICA**

There are so many adjectives that I have had the pleasure of reading in the last few weeks about Pramukh Swami Maharaj. And the words are just unbelievable. One human being and some of the words I was able to pick up were wisdom, devotion, compassionate, faith, a trusted ear, dedication, lifetime commitments, selfless motive, profound wisdom, believed in the worth of people, unparalleled service to humanity, a man of saintly qualities, no self-importance, no self-gratification, a legacy of devotion, a powerful force, an impeccable commitment, a spiritual presence. If you think about all of these attributes I don't know whether anyone of us seated here this evening would qualify for even one of those descriptions. I saw one of the greatest quotes of Pramukh Swami Maharaj himself. It encapsulates what he was all about

– his selflessness – when he said, “In the joy of others lies our own.”

I had the privilege of meeting him many times. The first time I was introduced to him was in Durban when he came down and I recall the experience.

I felt, when I touched his hand, a tingle in my body and that was my body, my self, reacting to some kind of an *aashirvad*. It is an *aashirvad* which I have revered up till today, and it was repeated when I met him in Ahmedabad again and again. I felt the same. This does not come from an ordinary human person. This is not emotion; this is not blind faith that I am talking about. This is not just a feeling or a dream. It is a kind of electricity that special people are bestowed with, a kind of energy they are able to communicate and convey to you.

How will we remember him? There's only one way in which each one of us can remember him. If we just took one of his spiritual values and try to practise it for the rest of our life, then we would be properly remembering what he has taught us. It's the only way that we can give *maan*, credence to a human person who has changed everyone's lives. There are powerful kings in this world. There are powerful rulers in this world. It is not possible for any

one of them to inspire millions of people at one time. It's not possible! But Bapa had that ability. The ability to build over 1,100 temples is just simply, if you think about it in your mind, impossible! We try to build one mandir in our hometown here for instance as a comparison, how difficult it is. Just one. Here one individual has inspired millions of people and not just in a hometown, all over the world, in the entire universe to put structures together which have become monuments themselves, monuments as a legacy of Bapa.

Our karma will decide for us how much of a legacy that he has left in us, the kind of inspiration that he has served in us and let us continue that legacy.

Ashwin Trikamjee

President, South African Hindu Maha Sabha

On meeting him, what resonated was his humbleness, his compassionate nature and his loving aura. He showed warmth and sincere gratitude for our efforts. He then spent some time with us, showing empathy and explaining the hardships that people had endured during the earthquake. I will always remember and cherish this experience of meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj, a pure, generous and loving soul who displayed an aura of calmness and consciousness, who always put the needs of others first.

Navin Lakha

Member, South African Earthquake Fund

I have been very fortunate and honoured and blessed to have received the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj himself, and this was in 1999 when I visited India.

The admirable thing about BAPS and the teachings of Swami is that for him and his devotees, I hope, religion is not about sitting in the temple or mosque or church or an ashram and asking God every day for whatever you want.

But religion must have a practical dimension to it and that is what Swami taught all of us.

Naren Singh

Inkhata Freedom Party Member

Param Puja Pramukh Swami Maharaj is Gunatit, and therefore, he is timeless and eternal. Bapa is truly beyond time... and therefore there is no question about how his legacy and life will be timeless.

Bapa had met with our Swami Sahajananda on many occasions in Durban. Bapa visited our ashram in Reservoir Hills and Lamercy. We treasure those memories of Shri Pramukh Swami's visits to our ashram. Puja Swami Sahajananda would always greet Bapa with *dandavat* pranams.

Puja Swamiji held Bapa in very high esteem, especially when it came to *niyam-dharma*. Pramukh Swami's *ashtanga brahmacharya* was very, very highly praised by our Swamiji. He would always speak about the rules that Pramukh Swami followed, all the strict rules of a sadhu, especially the *panch vartman*. Our Swamiji would always praise and talk about Pramukh Swami as an ideal sadhu, as an ideal renunciate, and his renunciation especially when it came to *ashtanga brahmacharya*.

Bapa's divine virtues, personality, and saintliness have touched the lives of millions in all parts of the world. Swamishri's divine leadership of BAPS has resulted in many spiritual and humanitarian service activities in India and abroad. Through his spiritual leadership, Swamishri has transformed the lives of millions, and helped them to go towards God and lead God-centered lives.

On a more personal note, I had my first darshan of Bapa in 1999, during the opening of the Durban mandir. I was still a teenager then, but I still vividly remember the peace and bliss that emanated from Swamishri when I was in the home where Bapa was staying. The atmosphere



Durban

was divine and very soothing. Bapa had touched me on my head. It was a divine touch that I experienced. I have no doubt that Bapa's blessings helped me to find my spiritual path.

Bapa's life was like an ocean of divine virtues. Swamishri was full of love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness, however there's one thing that strikes me that I recall about Pramukh Swami Maharaj – his humility.

Whenever you see a picture of Bapa, he always has his hands together – that is his *sevabhav*. And for me, that is the most outstanding quality that I remember. He had no airs about himself, although he was a guru of millions and the leader of millions. Whether he was in a palace or a simple hut, whether he was being honoured with a garland or not, his genuine and deep humility came to the fore. He always regarded himself as a *daas na daas*, as a *sevak*, and this was translated into action. He always put others' happiness before his own and acted as a servant of the devotees. Swamishri's famous maxim, 'In the joy of others lies our own,' was practiced by himself in his daily life.

Satyanand Swami
Secretary, Divine Life Society, South Africa



28 September

**DURBAN,
SOUTH AFRICA**

Those of us who came into contact with Pramukh Swamiji were humbled by Pramukh Swami's humility and a generous and warm personality. This is where his greatness lay – his ability to relate to humanity's problems without being immersed in worldly matters. He was like the lotus, though immersed in water he was untouched by it. He also inculcated in his followers a culture of service to humanity and being available to render assistance to humanity whenever there was a need for it, whether the need was occasioned by poverty or natural calamity.

Chimanbhai Patel
Retired Judge & President of KZN

Param Pujya Shri Pramukh Swami's divine virtues, personality and saintliness have touched the lives of millions in all parts of the world. Swamiji's divine leadership of BAPS has resulted in many spiritual and humanitarian activities for the needy in India and abroad. Through his spiritual leadership, he has transformed the lives of millions and helped them to go towards God



Kampala

and lead God centred lives.

Dr Mawalal Chatragun
Trustee, Divine Life Society, South Africa

The world has lost a stalwart, a legend who has served humanity. Pramukh Swami Maharaj lived a life of dedication and self-sacrifice.

He leaves behind a great legacy of teachings that we all should emulate. His messages of compassion, service and peace to others will remain an inspiration for generations to come. We need to celebrate his life and his teachings to mankind.

Omi Singh
Member of Parliament, Co-Chairman of The
Joint Ethics And Members' Interest of South Africa

Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a beacon of divinity. Swami's commitment to the essential oneness of humanity, his belief that service to humanity was service to God.

Swami was a truly selfless being, devoid of ego, unencumbered by materialism.

In visiting 17,000 villages and towns and establishing 1,100 temples, his contribution to preserving culture and performing social services has been towering. A legacy that will continue to be cherished for millennia. It will be a

constant reminder that the values that constitute Godliness can be lived in reality.

Councillor Mrs Fawzia Peer
Deputy Mayor of Ethekwini, representing
the Mayor of Durban



1 October

**KAMPALA,
UGANDA**

I'm a Muslim by birth, but I was extremely touched and will never ever forget the humility, the simplicity and the greatness that was invisible, yet surrounded His Holiness. It was a magical chance for me, one that left me completely frozen in thought of the greatness of His Holiness. I'm sure many people who have been fortunate to have a chance to meet His Holiness experienced the same feelings.

It is extremely difficult to put together the words that His Holiness deserves, but I know that His Holiness's teachings and love will continue to bring comfort and happiness to many.

Abid Alam
Industrialist



Dar es Salaam



19 October

**DAR ES SALAAM,
TANZANIA**

The first time I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj – his face was radiant, he was very humble with a great zeal of serving other people. I saw his true love for his followers, and other people. Everyone loved him for it. His zeal to serve humanity will last forever in our memory. Indeed, we shall miss his love, we shall miss him a lot.

Hon. Dr Emmanuel Nchimbi
Former Minister of Home Affairs

Today we pay tribute to Pramukh Swamiji for his phenomenal life that left permanent marks in the eyes and hearts of the people. He will never be forgotten. His life represented fundamental foundations of the Hindu faith. His true devotion for God and remaining humble captured the hearts of many people notwithstanding geographical boundaries, religious differences – tribal or nationalities. I believe, he is one of the spiritual leaders with spiritual desirability, not only to his followers but a wider community worldwide.

He has passed away, but leaves behind a timeless legacy.

Hon. Dr Muhammed Seif Khatib
Former Minister of Home Affairs and
Information, Culture and Sport

Pramukh Swami Maharaj strengthened the three foundational pillars of Hindu culture – scriptures, mandirs and sadhus. I would say, after Adi Shankaracharya, Pramukh Swami Maharaj is widely acclaimed by spiritual leaders for inspiring youths to live as renunciates for the upliftment of society. His saintly virtues and profound devotion for God earned him the respect and reverence of countless worldwide. In advocating peace and harmony he has helped to inculcate in the minds of so many the spirit of service whilst emphasizing his guiding philosophy ‘In the joy of other lies our own’.

Sir J.K. Chande
Tanzanian Statesman





Muscat



8 September

DUBAI

I'm a non-Indian, I'm an Arab. In 2012, which was a very, very auspicious year for me, I went from Arabia to India.

I was very honoured to meet Swamiji there. I was not expecting to meet him. It was a very, very interesting time because he gazed at me. I was sitting in the audience and I shall never ever forget that gaze. It was the most powerful *agni* entering my eyes. [On meeting him personally] I kneeled at his feet. He put his hand on my head and for the very first time I felt like a little baby who's longing for his mother. I can still feel that feeling. It's still in my head. I've never felt it again. I'm a very independent man and I can do a lot of things with myself. But I never forget that.

Mr Nazem Al Kudsi
CEO, Abu Dhabi Investment Bank

offered Pramukh Swami was their adherence to his message of humanity and service.

His Excellency Indramani Pandey
Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman

It is said in Sanskrit that as trees grow fruits, they bend lower to the ground. Similarly, the greater Swamishri became more humble.

Bakulbhai Mehta
Managing Director, Muscat Pharmacy & Stores

Lord Krishna has stated in the Bhagvat that there is nothing that pleases God more than satsang. Pramukh Swami Maharaj brought countless people closer to God with his satsang.

Sharadbhai Vyas
Spiritual Orator



22 September

**MUSCAT,
OMAN**

The greatest tribute the community had



30 September

KUWAIT

I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1997 and 2001. In 2001, we received him in the airport VIP lounge and I was mesmerized by his gentle personality and radiating divinity. Because of his simplicity, I felt I was sitting in a higher presence.



Kuwait

During his stay, I saw that he cared about everyone, young and old people alike.

I asked him a question, “Swamiji, why is it necessary to be spiritual?”

He humbly replied, “By becoming deeply spiritual, you will never make another unhappy and snatch away another’s property.”

His thoughtful and meaningful words were a distillation of his profound experience.

I noticed his oneness with everyone, which was amazing.

Dr Girish
Gujarati Association Consultative Member



2 October

BAHRAIN

Bahrain has lost a great friend. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was an advocate for high humanitarian values.

Dr Abdulrahman Bu Ali
Former Undersecretary, Ministry of Health

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a world leader of peace.

Hassan Kamal, National Poet



Bahrain



Melbourne



21 August

SINGAPORE

In 1996 and again in 2002, Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj graced Singapore and stayed at my father's home, late Shri Lalitbhai Belawala.

This was a unique experience for me as it gave me and my family a chance to be near him.

What my family and I found so unique about Swami Bapa was that with so many people coming from all backgrounds to receive his blessings, he blessed everyone equally. You could look into his eyes and you could see it and feel it that he was never partial. This is extremely rare because as humans we are partial.

Himanshu Belawala
Businessman, Singapore



11 September

**MELBOURNE,
AUSTRALIA**

HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj spoke wisely and he always spoke of peace. The fact that he

was able to engage with world leaders, that he addressed the United Nations on peace, that he was ranked as one of the most influential people in the world depicts the essence of qualities in him that we need to recognize. He was respected because of the way in which he quietly went about setting an example and helping other people. To reflect on such a great life, 95 years of service to people right around the globe and establishment of BAPS here in Melbourne, the great work that this organization does, it leaves me with the feeling of gratitude."

Colin Brooks
Member of Parliament

I feel both sad and happy today. Sad that we spend tonight saying farewell to such a revered Guruji, such a great leader, such a great inspirer, but I feel happy that his inspiration lives in every one of us today. It's an honour to be with my BAPS family tonight.... When I got the message about the passing away of the Guruji, I wondered what would happen next? I wondered how we would live this inspiration 'In the joy of others lies our own' and I think I know the answer tonight because his inspiration lives in



Adelaide

our heart, lives in my heart, lives in your heart, and lives in the communities that we connect with here. So tonight is not just a sad night, but the sun is shining outside and will every single day because of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Craig Ondarchie

Member of Legislative Council, Victoria



22 September

**ADELAIDE,
AUSTRALIA**

My first and a most memorable meeting with Pramukh Swami Maharaj was on 25th September 2002, fourteen years ago, after the terrorist attack on Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar. I am here to tell you about the incredible wisdom, calm, peace, and serenity displayed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in the aftermath of the attack. After the terrorist attack, in a prayer meeting two days later Pramukh Swami Maharaj asked his saints and devotees to pray for the souls of not only 33 devotees and 3 commandos killed, but even for the souls of both the terrorists to rest in peace. Can there be a bigger and nobler act of forgiveness? I would like to also quote Brigadier Raj Seetapathy, the brave officer in charge of the Akshardham terrorist attack operation and he said after that prayer meeting: "What Pramukh Swami

Maharaj did was unbelievable. He pieced society back together. The Akshardham tragedy instilled the sense of confidence that Gujarat need not burn at every spark that is ignited. Since, after the operation was the calm and peace that was quickly restored. It was one of the most extreme and exemplary acts of restraint and responsibility."

I had the privilege of meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj two more times in my life and all I can say is that I came out of those meetings with a unique calm and peace in my heart.

Major General Vikram Madan (Retired)

Member of South Australian Multicultural and
Ethnic Affairs Commission

Sincerely, I feel so humbled to be speaking about such a great man. I wasn't able to meet him personally, but His Holiness just from the brief video clips that I have seen and the tributes that were paid to him by the leaders around the world make it absolutely clear to me that this was one great man whom the world will surely miss. We need world leaders who can bring some calmness, compassion, and forgiveness to those that perpetrate or to those that suffer from what is happening around the world. It is clear to me from what I have seen tonight that His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj was one such man. It is true now that we have lost a great leader. His presence in body might have left us, but in spirit his presence will be with us through each and every one of the people that he touched or through the words and writings that he passed on to the future generations.

Mr. Tony Zappia

Federal Member for Makin, South Australia



9 October

**BRISBANE,
AUSTRALIA**

Pramukh Swami was a man of love, a man of peace, a man of wisdom, devotion and honour.



Brisbane

A man admired and respected within the BAPS community and well beyond that. He was more than a leader for this community and he is an example for all of us, for all of the communities of faith. One thing really struck me was when President Bill Clinton said about a man [Pramukh Swami] who had not come ahead by clipping others, but he came forward by always placing others before him. His achievements are legendary.

Jim Chalmers
Member of Parliament

His Holiness influenced millions of people. I was inspired by his speech in UN millennium world peace summit 16 years ago. He said unity and diversity are the first lessons of life. He also said true religion is one that inspires love to one another.

Linus Power
Member of Parliament



11 September

**AUCKLAND,
NEW ZEALAND**

I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 2009 at Akshardham in Delhi and received his blessings.

The most inspiring things I find about this organization are the volunteers and the



Auckland

involvement of youths which Pramukh Swami Maharaj greatly emphasized. He always instructed that youths be given opportunities.

Whenever I come here, whatever the event, I see the involvement of youths. I know that such opportunities are not available everywhere. They get the chance to sing bhajans, perform dramas, and deliver presentations and other things in the presence of a large audience. I believe this is a foundation from which future leaders are developed.

Kanwal Singh Bakshi
Member of Parliament

I never had the privilege of meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj. But when I see the warmhearted smiles of the great number of volunteers and sadhus, who have renounced everything for safeguarding culture and nurturing spirituality, I see Pramukh Swamiji in them.

Pramukh Swamiji was a leader, a spiritual guide and philosopher who inspired the current generation by his own personal example of unique thinking and personal commitment to the cause.

The 1,100 temples he built gives a glimpse of our heritage and this will be cherished by the generations to come.

V. Giridharan
Businessman



Hong Kong

After coming today to the Tribute Assembly for HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I was astonished to encounter the magnitude of work that he did over his life.

When I went to India, I visited Akshardham. People say that youths today are not doing anything, but there I was delighted to see youths actively and sincerely serving. They are full of faith and affection; the youths have become real youths. This has been taught to them by their guruji.

Ms Roopa Suchdev

Co-founder, Bharatiya Samaj Charitable Trust



24 September

**JAKARTA,
INDONESIA**

The day I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj, I was a 9 year old boy who had no idea who Swami Bapa was, what he did or where he came from. I was fearful. And yet I came with my *nana*, Harubhai Mahtani, an industrialist from Indonesia.

The room where Swami Bapa sat in Atladra, Baroda, was filled with people. Our names were called and we moved to where Swami Bapa was sitting. My *nana* took his blessings and then it was my turn. My *nana* had told me that I could ask for anything I wanted as Swami Bapa was

God. And so I asked for good grades in my exams, good health for my *nana* and to make me a good person. As I was about to leave, Swami Bapa stopped me and said, "On two conditions!"

He smiled and explained the conditions, "The first condition was that I should chant the *mala* five times everyday. The second condition was that I should become a vegetarian." I asked my *nana* what vegetarian meant and he explained it. This was the hardest condition for me because I have been a non-vegetarian since I could remember. But I made up my mind and said 'Yes'.

That incident took place 8 years ago. I have never broken his wish. I'm a changed person today and live by morals. This is all because of Swami Bapa.

When I heard about Swami Bapa passing away, I was shattered. I never expected it. But I made a resolve that I will always follow the two conditions he had given me.

Avinash Mirpuri



1 October

HONG KONG

The experience of sitting at the feet of a living Master cannot be verbalised. While it has been several years, it seems as if it was only yesterday that a Divine personality blessed our home and our family. Such is the powerful impact of a God-man walking and awakening thousands and thousands of aspiring souls.

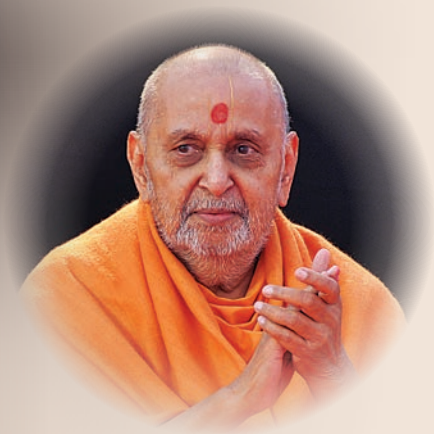
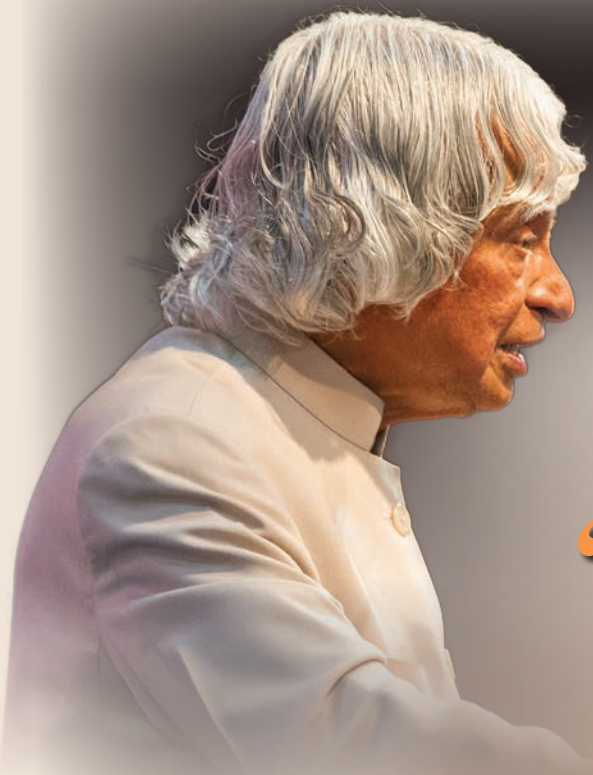
With his departure from this earth, all we can do is to pray that may we continue to feel his presence and dedicate our life to spread his message of love and compassion the world over.

K.P. Daswani

Trustee, Central Chinmaya Mission

(Worldwide)





‘MY ULTIMATE TEACHER...’

- Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

From their very first meeting on 30 June 2001, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and Pramukh Swami Maharaj struck an instant bond of friendship and spiritual rapport. Between 2001 and 2014, Dr Kalam met Pramukh Swami Maharaj seven times in person and spoke to him on numerous occasions by phone. All these interactions with Swamishri left a lasting impression on Dr Kalam. He was touched by Swamishri's profound spirituality and divinity.

Explaining his reason for writing the book, Dr Kalam stated, “On the day I inaugurated Akshardham, Delhi, I found a teacher in Pramukh Swamiji. A great teacher. That day I decided I must write with my friend Arun Tiwari a book. It's not a book. It's a tribute. It's a tribute to a great leader.”

He was so keen to write the book that he told Arun Tiwari, “If I do not hand over my experiences before Pramukh Swamiji then it will be the biggest disappointment of my life.”

In 2015, when Dr Kalam made the journey from Delhi to Sarangpur to present the book, he was 84 years old. The Gujarat government and others repeatedly offered to provide a helicopter for him to go to Sarangpur from Ahmedabad. But Dr Kalam refused all approaches, reasoning, “If given a chance, I will walk. I am going to somebody who is my spiritual better.”

Dr Kalam presented the first copy of *Transcendence* to Swamishri in Sarangpur on 20 June 2015. While presenting the book, Dr Kalam said, “You are a great teacher... I learnt to remove I, remove mine. That's a great lesson I have learnt. I learnt from you.” Swamishri said, “To rise above I and mine is only possible by God's grace. It is the best principle by which to remain happy in life.”

Some excerpts from *Transcendence: My Spiritual Experiences with Pramukh Swamiji*:

xi: I met Pramukh Swamiji, my ultimate teacher, unwittingly. Fate and my curiosity had drawn me to him... What began as a chance introduction became a divine destiny.

xi: Over several years and multiple meetings with Pramukh Swamiji, I realized that a divine life can have no base unless we recognize the eternal spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion.

3: What should be the next vision for India? How do we transform a developing country into a developed country within the next thirty years? We have identified five important areas to transform India: education and health care, agriculture, information and communication, infrastructure and critical technology.

Pramukh Swamiji smiled. The first words I heard from him were, 'Along with your five areas to transform India, add a sixth one—faith in God and developing people through spirituality. This is very important.' I was taken aback by the clarity, precision and force of his words.

4: I felt that I was in the Divine Presence. Within Pramukh Swamiji there is a higher presence.... There was a light radiating through Pramukh Swamiji which illuminated my inner self. I felt that I had acquired a sixth sense.

5: I realized that, here with Pramukh Swamiji, I was within a transformative moment in my life. I felt as if I was crossing into another realm.

14: On 24 September 2002, at 4.45 p.m., two heavily armed terrorists arrived in a white car at the Akshardham Temple in Gandhinagar.... Pramukh Swamiji showed magnanimity by not indulging in any blame game or imputing motives. Akshardham was his most priceless, splendid and wonderful creation. Yet he remained calm. His saintliness was touching. His heart bled for the helpless victims of the barbaric act.

Pramukh Swamiji offered his deepest sympathy and prayers for the unfortunate victims and their grieving relatives.

Swamiji encouraged his followers to pray, not punish. Pramukh Swamiji emerged as a true

embodiment of the principles of tolerance, patience, and forgiveness. I believe that his spiritual calmness and saintliness not only restored peace in Gujarat, but also provided a final seal on the perpetuating cycle of communal violence in the state.

17: Pramukh Swamiji's life is an example of how to love peace, have peace and possess peace.

25: Pramukh Swamiji is a great bridge in the vast archipelago of humanity. An archipelago is an island group. Humanity has divided itself into hundreds of islands. These islands are religions. Each island is a beautiful territory, full of flora, fauna and inhabitants, and yet disconnected from the others. Pramukh Swamiji is connecting these different islands by making bridges of love and compassion.

38: In Pramukh Swamiji, I see simplicity as a core value, on a par with courage, tolerance, honesty and patience.

41: I realized that we have a divine connectivity, and it is really not important that we sit in front of each other and communicate. Thinking of him is like being with him.

43: On 29 August 2000, Pramukh Swamiji had emphasized the need of religious unity and spiritual purity in his inaugural address at the Millennium World Peace Summit at the United Nations before almost 2,000 world religious leaders. His words keep echoing in my mind: 'At this hour in human history, we religious leaders should not dream of only One religion in the world, but dream of a world where all religions are One—United. Unity in Diversity is the lesson of life. Flourishing together is the secret of peace Let us share this legacy and construct a common platform of values for the rest of mankind to stand on Let us teach our followers that religion does not grow by quantity of numbers, but by the quality of spirituality...' Pramukh Swamiji's speech was like the Magna Carta of spiritual unity.

50: We have established a divine bonding,

which is forever. How do I summarize Pramukh Swamiji's effect on me? He has indeed transformed me. He is the ultimate stage of the spiritual ascent in my life, which started with my father, was sustained by Dr Brahma Prakash and Prof. Satish Dhawan; now, finally, Pramukh Swamiji has put me in a God-synchronous orbit. No manoeuvres are required any more, as I am placed in my final position in eternity.

84: Pramukh Swamiji often sits in prayer throughout the night for the problems of common people. I have emulated this habit.

84: Pramukh Swamiji is like the Himalayas of humanitarian activities and the Pacific of peace. He is truly peerless.

88: When I see the majestic Akshardham temples, I see within them Pramukh Swamiji's passionate commitment to transcendental values such as beauty, truth, wisdom, justice, charity, fidelity, joy, courage and honour.

102: Pramukh Swamiji has recognized moral education as a critical need for children.... He takes a special interest, spares personal time and encourages volunteers to help develop children through moral values, personal discipline and spiritual traditions.

207: Pramukh Swamiji is a living example of compassion-directed leadership. He is a leader, who in addition to being highly capable, possesses a paradoxical mix of two important and seemingly conflicting qualities: great inspiration and personal humility. He is highly determined, but the focus of his aspiration is not his own self; instead, it is his vision for the greater good of humanity. Because his attention is focused on the greater good, he feels no need to inflate his own self-image. That makes Pramukh Swamiji highly effective and inspiring.

210: Though he is the head, he functions like the heart. Pramukh Swamiji has generated an environment of love and freedom, where anyone and everyone can approach him and talk to him. He listens, understands and encourages others to

think. He is not opinionated, but open to suggestions. And he appreciates new ideas. No wonder he has created a generation of young leaders, dedicated teams and committed volunteers. Pramukh Swamiji is a leader of leaders, who welcomes change without changing the core of spirituality.

224: I wrote this book to record my experiences with Pramukh Swamiji, my reflections on his work and the transformation that I experienced in his fellowship. I see in Pramukh Swamiji a true embodiment of transcendence.

Throughout the book, Dr Kalam narrates several occasions where he experienced the spiritual presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. For example, referring to his highly acclaimed address to the European Parliament on 25 April 2007, Dr Kalam writes, "I felt as if Pramukh Swamiji was speaking through me." He also describes how Pramukh Swamiji guided him at crucial junctures to enable him to make the right decision. For example, when his term as president was concluding in 2007, Pramukh Swami Maharaj advised, "Kalam Saheb, do not stand for re-election. Let go! Go and serve the people. By serving selflessly, a person transcends any office, however high it may be." And history is a witness to the outstanding achievements of Dr Kalam even after he left office. In this way, Pramukh Swamiji had a profound impact on the life of Dr Kalam.

Thus, in *Transcendence* Dr Kalam has succinctly captured the many spiritual and secular virtues and skills of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. But, most of all, he has recorded his inner spiritual transformation through his association with Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The experiences of Dr Kalam and countless others clearly demonstrates that Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a spiritual luminary who touched the hearts of people from all strata of society. He, in the true sense, had a heart wherein the whole world could live. ♦

Tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj in British Parliament

10 October 2016, London

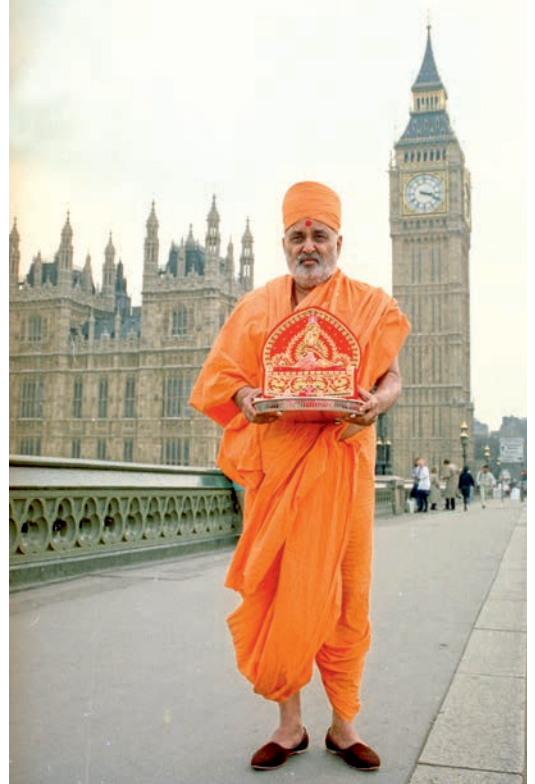
Parliamentarians in the British Houses of Parliament tabled an 'Early Day Motion' as a tribute to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Early Day Motion 494

Condolences on the Passing of

His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj

"That this House sends its condolences to BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha and its worldwide members on the loss of their beloved and revered spiritual leader, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj; recognises that his tireless devotion to promoting peace, harmony, goodwill and cooperation among communities of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds around the world will leave a lasting legacy; notes that his contributions of strengthening families, educating children and youth, and inspiring community service through the selfless spirit of volunteerism have greatly enriched the moral and religious fabric of the country; further notes that he lived by and preached the message, in the joy of others lies our own; and offers its heartfelt gratitude for his gift of the beautiful Neasden Temple that he created as a place of worship, learning, celebration and service for the whole community for generations to come and also notes the inspiration that created the new Swaminarayan Temple in Leicester whose beauty is a tribute to his leadership."



Flag Raised in Honour of Pramukh Swami Maharaj on Capitol Hill

17 August 2016, Washington DC

On the day of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's final rites in Sarangpur, a flag was raised in tribute to him on Capitol Hill in Washington DC.



Tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Indian Parliament

16-17 November 2016, New Delhi



LOK SABHA

On 16 November 2016, the first day of the winter session of parliament, the Lok Sabha – the Lower House of the Parliament of India in New Delhi – paid a glowing tribute to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj at 11.10 a.m. Hon. Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, eulogized the life and legacy of Swamiji with these words, “It is with grief I share with this assembly the sad news of the leader of Swaminarayan Sampradaya HH Pramukh Swami Shastri Narayanswarupdasji. He passed away on 13 August 2016 in Sarangpur at the age of 95. He was a great enlightened saint and a social reformer who served the smallest and the most neglected people of society. His contributions in the fields of spirituality and humanity shall be remembered eternally forever. This assembly expresses deep sorrow at the passing away of HH Shastri Narayanswarupdas. Let this assembly observe a moment of silence in his honour.” Thereafter, the prime minister, cabinet ministers, ministers and all the members of parliament present in the assembly stood up in silence and prayer.

RAJYA SABHA

On 17 November 2016, the Rajya Sabha – The Upper House of the Parliament of India in New Delhi – also paid a glowing tribute to HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj at 11.00 a.m. Hon. Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the Vice President of India, Mohammad Hamid Ansari, eulogized the life and legacy of Swamiji with these words, “I refer



with profound sorrow to the passing away of HH Pramukh Swami Shastri Narayanswarupdas, the president of Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Sanstha on the 13th of August 2016 in Sarangpur at the age of 95 years. Born in December 1921 at Chansad village in Vadodara District of Gujarat into a farmer’s family, Swamiji was inclined to spirituality and austerities right from his childhood. He renounced worldly life at the age of 18 and was initiated into sainthood in 1940 and got renamed as Narayanswarupdas Swami. His striking humility, noble services, saintliness and selfless desire to help all endeared him to everyone and at the age of 28, he was appointed as the President of BAPS whereupon he affectionately became known as Pramukh Swami. During his tenure he catapulted the sect to a global socio-cultural-spiritual movement engaged in running charitable hospitals, gurukuls, schools and shelters in tribal areas, eradication of ill practices in society and spreading modern awareness with a reformist spirit. In the passing away of Pramukh Swami Shastri Narayanswarupdas, the country has lost a towering spiritual personality who was an embodiment of compassion and humility. We deeply mourn the passing away of Pramukh Swami Shastri Narayanswarupdas. I request members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.” Thereafter, all the Members of the Rajya Sabha present in the assembly stood up in silence and prayer. ♦



Vicharan

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

July-August 2016, Sarangpur

From 20 July onwards Swamishri's health was not well due to a chest infection. Treatment by doctors was ongoing with Swamishri resting in his bedroom. Swamishri gave brief darshans on 2, 3, 5, 6, 27 and 30 July. Then Swamishri gave darshan on 1, 6, 8, 10 and 12 August.

On 10 August Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of the marble *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Shimla. He also sanctified the

small *murtis* of Lalji Maharaj for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Shimla, Kurukshetra and Jalandhar.

13 August 2016, Sarangpur

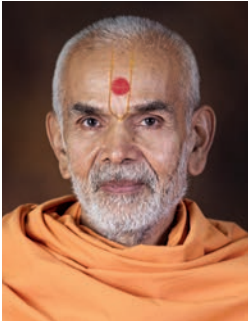
At 6.00 p.m. Swamishri breathed his last in his room. Thereafter, the report, from 13 to 17 August, on the rituals, darshan and final rites of Swamishri's mortal body is provided in the September-October issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss*.



MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN

August 2016

Sarangpur, Gadhada, Bochasan, Atladra, Anand, Ahmedabad



HH Mahant Swami Maharaj wakes up daily between 3.45 a.m. and 4.00 a.m. After doing dhyan-mansi, reading and contemplation, he performs his morning ablutions and attends the mangala arti at 6.00 a.m. in shikhar-baddha mandirs. At 7.30 a.m. he performs shangar arti and then his puja in the mandir assembly hall. Sadhus and devotees engage themselves in puja darshan while bhajans are sung. Thereafter, Mahant Swami Maharaj briefly discourses to the assembly. Around mid-morning he personally meets and counsels devotees.

After his afternoon rest he takes his daily walk around 4.30 p.m. and later attends the evening satsang assembly and blesses the devotees.

SARANGPUR

18, Thursday; Raksha Bandhan

Mahant Swami Maharaj performed his puja in his room. Thereafter, to pay homage to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, a 7-day *parayan* commenced in the Yagnapurush Mandapam. In the morning session Viveksagar Swami expounded

on the Bhaktachintamani, and in the evening Adarshjivan Swami spoke about Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life.

On the first day of the *parayan* Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the assembly, saying, "One will enjoy listening to *katha* if one does not harbour a tinge of *manushyabhav* (human



Morning puja, Bochasan



Inaugurates audio CD, 'Sukhkari Ghanshyam', Sarangpur

feelings) and has *divyabhav* (divine feelings) for God. We have met God in human form, otherwise it is not possible to have his association. It is because of our own failings and discrepancies that we see human traits in God.”

At 8.00 p.m. Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed all from Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s bedroom, “Today is Raksha Bandhan. If we think about it we are indeed very blessed by the great spiritual attainment we have. We need unity and harmony, and for that we have to cultivate tolerance. Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave a credo for unity: tolerate (*khamvu*), make efforts to serve (*ghasavu*), give up one’s mental resolves (*man gamtu mukvu*) and be flexible and helpful (*anukul thavu*). This is a great formula.”

Daily, Mahant Swami Maharaj meets, blesses and counsels about 500 devotees.

After saying *cheshta* Mahant Swami Maharaj (Swamishri) retired for the night at about 11.00 p.m.

19, Friday

From today Swamishri performed his puja at the Yagnapurush Mandapam whereby sadhus and devotees could have his puja darshan.

During his daily puja Mahant Swami Maharaj first does the *tilak-chandlo* and thereafter *mala* for 20 minutes, followed by one *tap ni mala*, six *pradakshinas* and six *dandvats*. After offering

thal to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and the *murtis* in his puja he sanctifies water and then reads the Shikshapatri. Thereafter, he folds his hands and conveys his Jai Swaminarayan to all. Then Mahant Swami Maharaj blesses the assembly. Today he said, “Devotees who worship and remember God are divine. Whether we have divine feelings for them or not they are divine. If we do not have divine feelings then it is our loss.”

Mahant Swami Maharaj inaugurated an audio CD published by Swaminarayan Aksharpath: ‘Sukhkari Ghanshyam’— bhajans sung by children. Thereafter, while departing from the stage, Swamishri bowed to all the *sadguru* sadhus.

20, Saturday

After his morning puja Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed, “Once ego manifests in our life it destroys us. One who has ego in Satsang will not experience joy and happiness. Even though he may be honoured and revered, no matter who he is, there will be no joy in his heart. Whatever amount of ego one reduces in oneself to that extent one is benefitted. In spite of having ego, when one introspects that one does not want it, then one will not have problems.”

In conclusion to the evening assembly, Swamishri blessed, “We should not be inclined towards miracles. Our gurus have performed miracles, but they have not laid emphasis on their



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthplace, Chansad

importance. Our focus should be on *agna* (moral rules) and cultivating *upasana*. Gunatitanand Swami has mentioned four important things in one of his talks: *agna*, *upasana*, love for the *ekantik* Sant and friendship (*suhrudaybhav*) towards the pious. Out of the four, Yogiiji Maharaj highlighted *suhrudaybhav*. Thus one should lean towards cultivating harmony.”

22, Monday

After his morning puja Mahant Swami Maharaj discoursed, “By seeing the faults of others one cannot experience inner peace. Faultfinding is a worldly view (*bahya-drashti*) and seeing virtues in others is a spiritual or self view (*antardrashti*). When one realizes one’s faults know it to be God’s grace. And when one cannot find one’s faults then understand that God has not graced you. Yogi Bapa used to say, ‘When one sees one’s faults then he has seen God.’

“One may have to reproach someone, but say it with the feeling that he is a part of you. Such an attitude will make a lot of difference. I’ve seen a cat jump with her kittens held firmly by its teeth. It caught them with the feeling that they belonged to her, thus they were not pierced

by her teeth. And conversely, a cat catches hold of a rat with the same teeth.

“Finding one fault in someone upsets everything. When one sees someone’s faults one must repent for it. Then one would experience inner peace.”

Swamishri then inaugurated a Gujarati print publication for children by Swaminarayan Aksharpith, ‘Bano Vidyarthi Number 1.’

23, Tuesday, Sarangpur, Gadharpur Sarangpur; Shraddhanjali Sabha

At 4.50 p.m. Mahant Swami Maharaj arrived at the BAPS Mandir in Gadharpur. He was honoured with garlands by Ishwarcharan Swami and Kothari Adhyatmaswarup Swami. At 5.25 p.m. Swamishri arrived at the first *shrad-dhanjali sabha* in honour of HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj held in front of the entrance gate of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir. The assembly was organized by the local municipality and people of Gadhada. Twenty-three guests offered tributes to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. For details see page 6.

After having dinner Mahant Swami Maharaj departed from Gadharpur at 9.00 p.m. and returned to Sarangpur.



Janmashtami festival

BOCHASAN

24, Wednesday, Sarangpur, Bochasan

At 4.40 p.m. Mahant Swami Maharaj departed from Sarangpur and arrived in Bochasan at 7.40 p.m. A warm welcome and showers of flowers petals were accorded to Mahant Swami Maharaj. After Thakorji's darshan Swamishri briefly addressed the assembly, "Shastriji Maharaj used to say, 'My work will continue.' Thus we will all have to make more efforts. All should observe *niyam*-dharma, understand each others glory, abstain from faultfinding and see the virtues of others. Shastriji Maharaj cultivated this Gunatit garden so one must not pluck (destroy) a leaf. One should nourish it. One has to tolerate hardships and discomforts and vent no complaints."

25, Thursday

Bochasan, Atladra; Janmashtami

From today Mahant Swami Maharaj started performing the puja that Pramukh Swami Maharaj performed daily. He added the *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj that he was worshipping in his puja. Thereafter he blessed the assembly, "All should observe a strict fast today. A servant (*das*) means one who understands

others' glory, does *seva* and looks at one's own faults. One who is realized is a servant of servants (*das no das*). God does not like one who speaks and does things out of arrogance. Being straightforward pleases God. One who does not bow and bend will lose all."

Dhun was sung by all for the relief of earthquake victims in Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Bangladesh, Thailand, Vietnam, China and Myanmar.

At 10.22 a.m. Mahant Swami Maharaj departed from Bochasan to head towards Chansad and Atladra. At 11.30 a.m. Swamishri arrived at Pramukh Swami Maharaj's birthplace, Chansad. After darshan and welcome rituals Swamishri went to the BAPS *hari* mandir for darshan. Thereafter, he departed and arrived at Atladra Mandir. After doing Thakorji's darshan Mahant Swami Maharaj was honoured with garlands.

At 8.00 p.m. Swamishri presided over the Janmashtami celebration assembly held on the ground opposite the mandir. The programme was as follows:

- An extract from Krishna Lila dance-cum drama was performed by children and youths of Vadodara.

- Speech by Atmoswarup Swami: Need of a true driver in life's battleground.
- Kirtan.
- Speech by Ghanshyamcharan Swami: God and his Sadhu are our true protectors.
- Drama: Shastriji Maharaj protects Ranchhodbhai of Goriyad.
- Singing of selected Gita *shlokas*.
- Speech by Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami: Karishye vachanam tav.
- Garlanding ceremony of Mahant Swami Maharaj.
- Traditional dance, 'Govind āla re' by children and youths.
- Speech by Pujya Viveksagar Swami: Refuge in the living form of God.
- Video darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Finally, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the festive assembly, "Whatever frustrations and conflicts one faces in life are due to one's lapses in Shriji Maharaj's *agna*. When one has firm faith and refuge in God there will be no problems. Yogiji Maharaj used to say that he experienced unbroken happiness because he had obeyed whatever Shastriji Maharaj willed."

At 11.10 p.m. Swamishri, sadhus and devotees performed Thakorji's *arti* and rocked him in a decorated cradle.

Today, while observing a fast, Mahant Swami Maharaj had performed a total of 71 *dandvats* during the whole day, while he was in Bochasan, Chansad and Atladra.

ATLADRA

27, Saturday

During the morning and afternoon counseling sessions Mahant Swami Maharaj met 696 devotees and well-wishers.

In the evening a memorial assembly of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was held in the mandir assembly hall.

ANAND

28, Sunday, Atladra, Anand

In the evening, Swamishri attended the memorial assembly of Pramukh Swami Maharaj at Akshar Farm, Anand-Vidyanagar Road. For details see page 12.

29, Monday, Anand, Ahmedabad

At 11.15 a.m. Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the *puja* rituals of the newly renovated *sinhasans* of Thakorji in Anand. Thereafter he blessed the gathering, "One who learns spiritual knowledge and does *seva* progresses. We often do *seva* but we are poor in spiritual knowledge. One should do whatever *seva* one gets."

Mahant Swami Maharaj departed from Anand around 4.25 p.m. and visited the BAPS hostel in Vidyanagar. Thereafter, he departed towards Ahmedabad. He arrived at the BAPS Mandir in Ahmedabad at 6.40 p.m. After a festive welcome, darshan of Thakorji and offering of a garland by Ishwarcharan Swami, Swamishri retired to his living quarters.

AHMEDABAD

31, Monday

In memory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj a 7-day *parayan* was arranged during the evening satsang assembly in the mandir hall. After the first day's discourse Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the assembly, "We face obstacles in satsang because of lack of glory (*mahima*). One who takes the track of *mahima* will have no problems. If one has *mahima* one will always experience inner joy. And if one has bitterness for others one will have constant conflicts. So, introspect and dissolve one's bitterness and increase one's *mahima* for others." ♦

(Translation of excerpts from Swamishri's daily report in Gujarati)

Living With Swamishri

Inspiring Incidents of Mahant Swami Maharaj



THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE

20 August 2016, Sarangpur

An aspirant asked Mahant Swami Maharaj, “What is the biggest obstacle on the spiritual path?”

“Having a mundane perspective (*laukikbhav*) [in God and the Satpurush].”

“What is it that hinders one in having a divine perspective (*divyabhav*)?”

“The base instincts (*swabhavs*).”

“What should one do so that the *swabhavs* do not cause obstructions?”

“By having faith (*nischay*), glory (*mahima*) and divine feelings (*divyabhav*) one’s *swabhavs* cannot cause obstructions.”

Mahant Swami Maharaj threw light on how to overcome the biggest obstacle on the spiritual path.

HOW TO BECOME A LION

30, Tuesday, Ahmedabad

An aspirant asked Mahant Swami Maharaj,

“One becomes weak like a goat when confronted by material enticements and one’s base instincts. How can one become strong like a lion on the spiritual path?”

Swamishri replied, “One must defeat one’s senses and mind.”

“But how?”

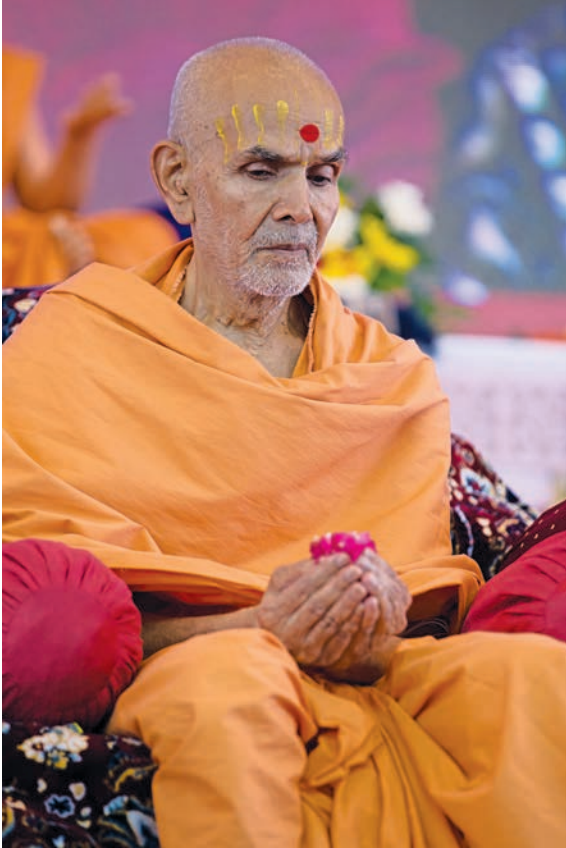
“Whenever the mind goes astray, pull it back. Then don’t allow it to go again. To achieve this one requires *sankhya* (knowledge that everything is temporary and miserable). We do have yoga [of God and his Sadhu]. How many births have we taken? Maharaj has said that a person will never feel satisfied after enjoying the material objects. So, one must turn back.”

Mahant Swami Maharaj lucidly revealed the path of self-restraint and *sankhya jnan* for becoming strong and brave like a lion in the face of material enticements. ♦

(Translation of excerpts from Swamishri’s daily report in Gujarati)

MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ'S 83rd BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

24 September 2016, Bochasan



Mantra pushpanjali ritual

When senior sadhus expressed their wish to celebrate his 83rd birthday, Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj refused. However, due to everyone's intense wish and persistence, he relented, on the condition that the occasion be used only to praise the virtues of Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He firmly insisted that in his morning puja and the celebration assembly only bhajans and speeches highlighting the glory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj be presented. This was a clear reflection of his

loving guru bhakti.

As this was Mahant Swami Maharaj's first birthday after becoming guru, thousands of devotees from all over India and abroad flocked to Bochasan.

In the morning, the many sadhus who were present eagerly sought his blessings. But when Mahant Swami Maharaj saw them all, he spontaneously requested, "Give me your blessings...."

The entire mandir precincts were full of sadhus and devotees eager for his darshan. As Swamishri went to the mandir for Thakorji's darshan they all offered their respects and prayers.

After performing *abhishek* of Shri Nilkanth Varni, Swamishri performed the *shangar arti*. Then at 7.30 a.m., he travelled by car to the nearby 'Swaminarayan Baug', where today's celebration assembly was to take place. Throngs of devotees lined the route from the mandir.

At Swaminarayan Baug, Swamishri performed his morning puja. In the backdrop were *murtis* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Behind the *murtis* was a large LED screen relaying the stage programme.

At the start of his puja, after Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj had applied the *tilak-chandlo*, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami applied *archa* of sandalwood paste to Swamishri's forehead and paid respects to him.

During puja, sadhus sang bhajans describing the glory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

After puja, the birthday celebration assembly commenced. The central theme of the assembly was 'Guru Smruti' – 'Remembering the Guru' – in



Birthday celebration assembly

which Pramukh Swami Maharaj's virtues were highlighted. Three topics – firm faith in God's doership, his affection for all and the hardships he tolerated – were presented through videos of Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj narrating his experiences with Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

After each video, a senior sadhu further elaborated on the topic.

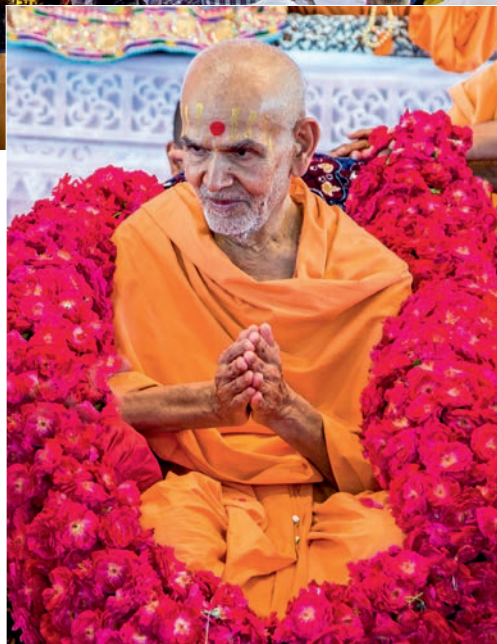
Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami said, "The manifest memory of Pramukh Swami Maharaj is Mahant Swami Maharaj."

Pujya Dr Swami gave inspiring and practical guidance on how to please the Satpurush.

Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj then inaugurated the following Swaminarayan Aksharpath publications: audio of the Vachanamrut, Swamini Vato and Purushottam Bolya Prite (on USB) and the English editions of *Sucharitam*, Parts 1 and 2.

Then, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed 42 youths of the BAPS Chhatralayas in Nadiad and Atladra who had observed 84-hour fasts.

Finally, blessing the assembly Swamishri recalled the virtues of Pramukh Swami Maharaj




Honoured with a garland of roses

and added, "God is the only doer. He does everything. We never heard Swami Bapa even casually say 'I did this'. We have to follow him in this way."

Thereafter, prayers were offered for the brave soldier's recently killed in a terrorist attack on India's borders.

After *mantra pushpanjali*, sadhus honoured Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj with a variety of garlands lovingly prepared by devotees from BAPS centres throughout the world. ♦



Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Asthipushpa Puja, Visarjan and Kund Inauguration

14-15 October 2016, Gondal

Mahant Swami Maharaj performs ritual of dispersing Pramukh Swami Maharaj's sacred ashes into the River Gondali

ASTHIPUSHPA PALKHI YATRA

14 October 2016

In the morning, the *asthipushpa* (sacred remains) of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj and Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj were ceremonially taken on a *palkhi yatra*, circum-ambulating the Akshar Mandir five times. The sadhus took turns to lift the *palkhi* in which pots of the *asthipushpa* were placed.

ASTHIPUSHPA PUJAN

In the afternoon, at 4.30 p.m. the *asthipushpa* were lifted by *palkhi* to the Akshar Ghat on the banks of the River Gondali. From there, they were transported in a small boat to the decorated temporary stage set up in the water for the two-day rituals. Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj and the *sadguru* sadhus were seated on this stage from where they performed the Vedic Mahapuja of the *asthipushpa*. Around 1,500 *yajmans* seated on the banks of the river also participated in the *mahapuja*.

DIKSHA, ASTHIPUSHPA VISARJAN AND KUND INAUGURATION

15 October 2016

At 6.00 a.m. the *diksha mahapuja* ceremony began in the presence of Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami on the temporary stage. The two *sadhaks* who were to be given *diksha* and their parents also participated in the *mahapuja* rituals.

From 6.30 to 7.15 a.m., Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj performed his morning puja, while the *mahapuja* rituals continued.

Thereafter, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj went to the main mandir to perform the *shangar arti*.

At 8.00 a.m., he returned to the stage and initiated the two *sadhaks* into the *parshad*-fold.

Then, the ritual dispersal of Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj's sacred ashes into the River Gondali took place from the temporary stage.

In each of the four cardinal directions, a pot containing some of the sacred ashes had been placed. Beginning in the north-facing direction,



Mahant Swami Maharaj and *sadguru* sadhus ritually placed a pot containing the sacred ashes of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the centre of Akshar and Brahma Kunds

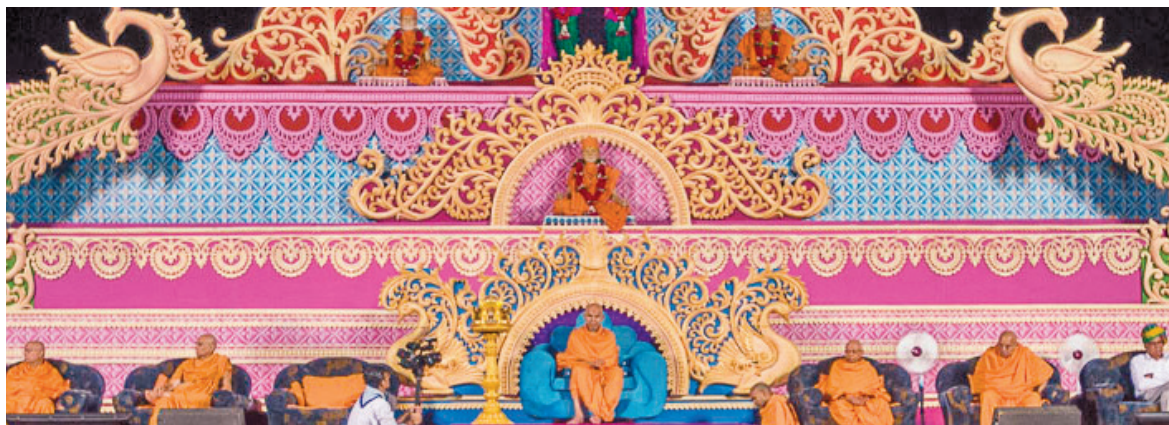
Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj joined Puja Dr Swami and Puja Viveksagar Swami in dispersing the ashes into the river. Then, moving clockwise, he accompanied the sadhus at each location in dispersing the sacred ashes into the water – east: Puja Tyagvallabh Swami and Narayancharan Swami, south: Puja Ishwarcharan Swami and Dharmacharan Swami, and west: Puja Ghanshyamcharan Swami and Krishnavallabh Swami.

Afterwards, Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj and the *sadguru* sadhus went to the banks of the river to inaugurate the Akshar and Brahma Kunds. These two separate bathing areas – Akshar for men and Brahma for women – have been built for relatives to take the ritual bath after dispersing the ashes of their kin.

First, Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj placed a pot containing the sacred ashes of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the base of a small memorial spot in the centre of the Brahma Kund and sealed the memorial spot by covering it with the carved



Taking a dip in the holy waters of Akshar Kund and sprinkling the water on *sadguru* sadhus



Main stage of Sharad Purnima festival

marble footprints of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. After performing *pujan* and *pradakshina* of the memorial spot, Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj took a ritual dip in the waters of the Brahma Kund and then went to the Akshar Kund.

Here also, Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj placed a pot containing the sacred ashes of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the base of a small memorial spot in the centre of the *kund* and sealed the memorial spot by covering it with the carved marble footprints of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Again, after performing *pujan* and *pradakshina* of the memorial spot, Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj took a ritual dip in the waters of Akshar Kund. Then, he blessed the *sadguru* sadhus, as well as other sadhus and devotees by sprinkling the *kund* water onto their heads.

After all the rituals were complete, the sadhus

and devotees who had come for this occasion also took a ritual bath in the *kunds*.

SHARAD PUNAM CELEBRATION

In the evening, the Sharad Punam birthday celebration assembly of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami was held based on the theme “Amar Varso Gunatitno...” – “Eternal Gunatit Succession...”

The principle that the Gunatit Satpurush is forever present on this earth was conveyed through skits by youths and speeches by senior sadhus. The assembly was interspersed with the four *artis*, as per the tradition of this celebration.

Then, after Param Puja Mahant Swami Maharaj’s blessings, the fifth and final *arti* was performed, with the entire audience of 20,000 devotees also joining in the *samuh arti*. ♦



Sadhus and devotees perform mass arti

ASTHIPUSHPA VISARJAN AND KUND INAUGURATION 15 October 2016, Gondal



1. On the day of Sharad Purnima, the birthday of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj scatters the *asthipushpa* of Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj into the holy waters of River Gondali.

2. Mahant Swami Maharaj performs *pujan* of the Amrut Kumbh, where the ashes of departed devotees can be scattered by their kin.

3-5. In the Akshar and Brahma Kunds on the banks of River Gondali, Mahant Swami Maharaj and *sadguru* sadhus place the *asthipushpa* of Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the base of the memorial shrines and cover them with the holy footprints of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

ઝોંડલીમાં શ્રીકૃષ્ણહારાજ અને
પાંચસો પરમહંસો નાહ્યા છે,
તે પ્રગટ તીર્થભૂમિકા છે. અહીં તીર્થમાત્ર આવી ગયાં.
ઝોંડલીમાં ગંગા નદી આવી ગઈ.
તેમાં સ્નાન કરીએ તે
શ્રીકૃષ્ણહારાજના સ્વરૂપમાં સ્નાન કરવું સમજવું.

- બ્રહ્મસ્વરૂપ શ્રીગીત્ત મહારાજ



**PRAGAT BRAHMASWARUP MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ WITH
SHRI HARIKRISHNA MAHARAJ AT THE MEMORIAL SHRINE IN BRAHMA KUND**
Here, devotees, after ritually immersing the ashes of their deceased relatives in the
Amrut Kumbh outside, will take the ritual bath

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