



(Time: 9.00 to 11.15 a.m.)

SATSANG PRAVESH : PAPER - 1

Note: A few of the questions in this Pre-Test Paper will be asked in the Final Examination to be held on Sunday, 6 March 2022. In the Final Examination answers written on extra pages will not be considered valid. Without the prior permission of the Pariksha Karyalay in Ahmedabad, answer papers written by substitute writers in place of the original candidate will not be accepted. Answer papers with more than one type of handwriting will not be accepted. Answers crossed out will not be considered valid. Answers will not be considered valid if they are not written in legible handwriting. Use the latest editions of the exam books. Candidates will not be allowed to keep any electronic items, such as, mobile phones, tablets, laptops, etc. in the examination room.

SECTION 1: NILKANTH CHARITRA - 6th Edition, July 2019

Total Marks: 75

Q.1 In the sentences below, state who is speaking to whom and when. [9]

1. "Even my daughter and others have taken vows inspired by your presence."
2. "Having renounced with faith in God, then God will provide as necessary."
3. "I shall not allow you to proceed any further."

Q.2 From the given options, place a tick (✓) in the box next to the correct options. [4]

Note: One or more of the options may be correct. Full marks will be awarded only if all the correct options are chosen, otherwise no marks will be awarded.

1. The Police Chief Experiences Samadhi
 - (1) ☐ The preceptor sits on a lower seat.
 - (2) ☐ Samadhi because of Ramanand Swami's grace.
 - (3) ☐ Sage Vashishtha used to sit on a high seat.
 - (4) ☐ Bhagwan Ramchandra sat down beside him.
2. Which sacred foot marks on the sole of Nilkanth Varni's left foot?
 - (1) ☐ Jambu
 - (2) ☐ Kalash
 - (3) ☐ Meen
 - (4) ☐ Ketu

Q.3 Fill in the blanks [4]

1. In Junagadh Nilkanth gave the bawas darshan in the form of Bhagwan at Ganga.
2. Everyday Jairam would bring for the young
3. From, Kurji Dave came to Loj with the message from
4. Maharaja was greatly impressed by meeting in Badrinath.

Q.4 Write short notes on any ONE of the following. (In 15 lines.) [5]

1. The Story of Ramanand Swami
2. Significance of Nilkanth's Travels
3. Destruction of Asuras in Manasपुर

Q.5. Answer ALL of the following, using one sentence (not just one word) for each answer. [5]

1. Who performed austerities at Sripur? Why?
2. Whose disciple was Lakhubai?
3. Which names were given by Ramanand Swami to Nilkanth Varni when giving him diksha?
4. What did Nilkanth Varni say after coming to Premji Thakkar's shop?
5. How did the ascetics feel about Nilkanth Varni?

Q.6 Give reasons for the following (two to three lines each). [6]

1. Nilkanth Varni asked a question to Jeer Swami in Totadri.
2. The householder-bawa brought Nilkanth Varni at his Krishna Mandir.
3. All the ghosts ran away, terrified.

SECTION 2: SATSANG READER 1 - 6th Edition, March 2019

Q.7 In the sentences below, state who is speaking to whom and when. [9]

1. "Lal means atma. Become atmarup and worship God."
2. "You are Purushottam Narayan. If you pass away without having left something behind."
3. "Yet he has taken on a human form and walks the earth as one of us."

Q.8 Select the SIX correct sentences from below and write them in the correct story sequence in the boxes. [6]

Topic: Devanand Swami at Muli Mandir

1. Devanand Swami's guidance, as well as his blessings, moulded Umashankar into a great poet.
2. Devanand Swami wrote thousands of kirtans, most describing spiritual teachings with an emphasis on knowledge. 3. The next day, the devotee saw the kumkum footsteps Devanand Swami had mentioned.
4. Upon hearing Devanand Swami's verses, Nanalal, was so moved that he decided to become Devanand Swami's student. 5. He completed construction of the mandir and surrounding buildings. 6. His eye-opening verses are thus popularly known in the fellowship as the 'examples' of Devanand Swami. 7. Please make a wooden chair to take my body to the funeral pyre. 8. If five footsteps of kumkum show up at the entrance to your home tomorrow. 9. Devanand Swami began to learn music and Pingal from Premanand Swami.
10. After Brahmanand Swami went to Akshardham, Devanand Swami succeeded him as mahant of Muli mandir. 11. Devanand Swami Born in Kartik sud Punam, Samvat 1860. 12. With his expertise in management, he greatly increased the mandir's prosperity.

- (1) **Write the correct sentence numbers** **Note: (1) 3 marks will be awarded for the correct sentence numbers only if all the six sentence numbers are correct and (2) 3 marks will be awarded only if all the sequence of sentence numbers are correct. Otherwise no marks will be given.**
- (2) **Correct sequence of sentences**

Q.9 Write short notes on 'Jhinabhai: Conqueror of the senses' (In 15 lines). [5]

Q.10 Answer ALL of the following, using one sentence (not just one word) for each answer. [4]

1. Highly respected by the devotees, what was Nirgundas Swami like?
2. Which wish did Devidan express to Maharaj?
3. How many kirtans did Brahmanand Swami compose on Maharaj's murti?
4. Whom did Ramanand Swami appoint as his successor?

Q.11 Rewrite the incorrect words shown below in relation to the sentence heading. [4]

Note: Marks will be awarded only if a completely correct sentence is written. Otherwise no marks will be awarded.

Example: Swami Yagnapriyadasji: Just after Yogiji Maharaj passed away to Akshardham, Ishwarbhai, at the age of 60, took parshadi diksha at the hands of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Ans. Swami Yagnapriyadasji: Just after Shastriji Maharaj passed away to Akshardham, Ashabhai, at the age of 70, took bhagvati diksha at the hands of Yogiji Maharaj.

1. **Bhaktaraj Joban Pagi:** Sundar, however, was eager as ever to test Maharaj. So, he woke up in the middle of the morning and left for the Dardar's enclave. Reaching Ranchhodbhai's home, he slowly pushed open the entrance gate. Yet, the gate stuttered, awakening Shyamji, a devotee.
2. **Swami Yagnapriyadasji:** Yet, the scoriobite's effects were too mild. Motibhai soon passed away. Losing his brother was a blow Ishwarbhai simply could not bear. Though he consoled others, he was deeply relieved himself.
3. **Sadguru Brahmanand Swami:** Once, Maharaj had fallen ill in Panchala. During his illness, he would call Mulji Brahmchari to see him every day, praising him and giving him prasad from Thakorji's dish. Brahmachari, however, had his doubts.
4. **Sadguru Shukanand Swami:** Sixteen months younger than Acharya, Shukmuni's physical condition had always been delicate. Magshar vad 6, Samvat 1926, Shukmuni passed away in Gadhada.

Q.12 Give reasons for the following (two to three lines each). [4]


1. From the speeches and letters of Nirgundas Swami, new aspirants were nourished.
2. The devotees learnt to work together in farming.


SECTION 3: ESSAY

Q.13 Write an essay on any ONE of the following. (In approximately 30 lines.) [10]

1. Shri Swaminarayan Arti (Swaminarayan Bliss, January-February 2019, pp. 49-52)
2. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 98th Birthday Celebration (Swaminarayan Bliss, January-February 2020, pp. 18-32)
3. Giving Up Everything for the Adhiveshan (Swaminarayan Bliss, July-August 2019, pp. 20-24, 35)



 **Important Note:** Past Papers and solutions of main exam can be downloaded from the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha's website - Link : <http://www.baps.org/Satsang-Exams.aspx>

 **Matter of above three essays are shown in the following pages.**
(One essay from the list of above essays will be asked in the Final Examination of March-2022)

Satsang Pravesh-1

Essay-1

1. SHRI SWAMINARAYAN ARTI

Inspired by Pragat Brahmaswarup Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj

INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION

Jay Swāminārāyan, Jay Akshar-Purushottam, Akshar-Purushottam jay, darshan sarvottam... Jay Swāminārāyan... O Swaminarayan! Praise to you! O Akshar-Purushottam! Praise to you! O Akshar-Purushottam! Praise to you! Your darshan is supreme...

Mukta anant supujit, sundar sākāram, Sarvopari karunākar, mānav tanudhāram... Jay Swāminārāyan...1 He [Bhagwan Swaminarayan] is worshiped by countless mukta (liberated souls), possesses a [divine] form, and is splendid. He, who is supreme and bestows compassion [on all], manifested [on earth] with a [divine] human form... 1

Purushottam Parabrahma, Shri Hari Sahajānand, Aksharbrahma anādi, Gunātītānand... Jay Swāminārāyan...2 Purushottam Parabrahman is Shri Hari Sahajanand, The eternal Aksharbrahman is Swami Gunatitanand... 2

Prakat sadā sarvakartā, param muktidātā, Dharma ekāntik sthāpak, bhakti paritrātā... Jay Swāminārāyan...3 [Bhagwan Swaminarayan] is always manifest, the all-doer, and the bestower of ultimate liberation. He is the establisher of ekantik dharma and the protector of bhakti (devotion).. 3

Dāsbhāv divyatā saha, brahmarupe priti, Suhradbhāv alaukik, sthāpit shubh riti... Jay Swāminārāyan...4 Servitude with [an understanding of all to be] divine, offering [loving] devotion upon becoming brahmarup, and divine amity; [these] auspicious means he established... 4

Dhanya dhanya mam jivan, tav sharane sufalam, Yagnapurush pravārtit, siddhāntam sukhadam... Jay Swāminārāyan...5 Jay Swāminārāyan, Jay Akshar-Purushottam, [O Akshar-Purushottam!] My life is blessed! It has become fruitful at your feet. This doctrine [established by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and] propagated by Yagnapurush [Shastriji Maharaj], bestows ultimate happiness. O Swaminarayan! Praise to you! O Akshar-Purushottam! Praise to you! O Swaminarayan! Praise to you!... 5

Jay Swāminārāyan, Jay Akshar-Purushottam, Jay Swāminārāyan

This arti, inspired by Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj, pays reverence to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, that is AksharPurushottam Maharaj. This is the arti of Swami with Narayan. In other words, it is the arti of Akshar with Purushottam. The heart of a true devotee constantly echoes with the glory of Paramatma. The devotee's heart brims with joy and with the supreme truth that Paramatma is always and everywhere glorious. The first words of the arti – 'Jay Swāminārāyan, Jay Akshar-Purushottam' resonate this sentiment that Bhagwan Swaminarayan, or Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, is ever glorious. Shriji Maharaj had himself given his followers the Swaminarayan Mahamantra, which incorporated his heartfelt principle, to chant. He had himself clarified that, in this mantra, 'Swami' refers to Aksharbrahman and 'Narayan' refers to Purushottam-Parabrahman. In this way, 'Swaminarayan' indicates Swami alongside Narayan, and 'Akshar-Purushottam' refers to Akshar alongside Purushottam. This is the meaning of the words 'Swaminarayan' and 'Akshar-Purushottam'. Thus, the words 'Swaminarayan' and 'AksharPurushottam' are synonyms. Therefore, the glory of Swaminarayan signifies the glory of AksharPurushottam, and the glory of Akshar-Purushottam represents the glory of Swaminarayan. This highest truth resonates in these words of the arti. These words further reflect the devotee's feelings that Bhagwan Swaminarayan, or Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, is glorious in every way. What can be greater than to see Parabrahman Purushottam manifest with his ideal devotee, Aksharbrahman? To have the darshan, together, of Swami and Narayan, or Akshar and Purushottam, is the greatest benefit of having eyes. Only those who are truly blessed have the opportunity to have this darshan. And, those who attain this darshan are blessed with further good fortune. Each mandir of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha grants people such darshan. This divine and heavenly darshan of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, or Bhagwan Swaminarayan, has thus been referred to in this arti as 'sarvottam darshan', or the greatest darshan. 'Darshan', however, refers not only to the act of seeing. It is also used to refer to doctrinal principles. The core of Shriji Maharaj's philosophical teachings was to become like Swami and offer humble upasana and bhakti to Narayan, that is, to become like Akshar and offer humble upasana and bhakti to Purushottam. These words of the arti, therefore, also reflect that the AksharPurushottam Darshan revealed by Parabrahman Swaminarayan is the greatest and

highest philosophical principle. The arti's first couplet thus signifies the abovementioned sentiments. The subsequent couplets encapsulate the following thoughts:

Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan presiding in his Akshardham is eternally sakar (possesses a form). His divine form is complete in every way and is beautiful. Infinite liberated souls, who have attained oneness with Akshar, offer puja, that is, upasana and bhakti to Purushottam Narayan.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan, or AksharPurushottam Maharaj, described above, assumes a human form and comes to earth solely out of compassion for the jivas. n We are blessed that the one whom the shastras call Purushottam, Narayan or Parabrahman came to earth as Sahajanand Shri Hari and graced us with his shelter. We are also blessed that the one whom the shastras call Akshar, Brahman or Aksharbrahman came to earth along with Sahajanand Swami as Gunatitanand Swami, and that we have recognized him as such. Therefore, for us, the two entities of Purushottam Narayan and Aksharbrahman are not non-manifest. Rather, they are present before our very eyes.

Of these two entities, Parabrahman Purushottam Sahajanand Shri Hari is supreme God and is the all-doer. He himself came to this earth, and he alone established ekantik dharma and established the principle of becoming brahmarup and offering bhakti. And, he alone has granted us moksha. Moreover, to forever continue this unique principle revealed by him and the path to moksha, he has remained present on earth through the Aksharbrahman Gunatit gurus.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan and our Gunatit gurus have also clarified for us the path of spiritual endeavour. Through their grace, humility (dasbhav) adorns our bhakti and divinity (divyabhav) beautifies our vision. By their grace we have become brahmarup, and so eligible to offer true upasana to Parabrahman. Additionally, they have taught us about samp, suhradaybhav and ekta, allowing us to experience the true bliss of satsang. They alone have established this divine path for the moksha of countless spiritual aspirants.

Indeed, we experience good fortune and happiness today because we have attained the divine shelter of both Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan Shri Swaminarayan Bhagwan himself, and Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami and the Gunatit guru parampara through whom Bhagwan Swaminarayan manifests. However, we truly owe infinite gratitude to Brahmaswarup Yagnapurushdasji, or Shastriji Maharaj, for teaching us Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. Shastriji Maharaj learnt this philosophy through his association with Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj. Thereafter, he dedicated his entire life to spread the knowledge of Sahajanand Shri Hari's supreme upasana and Gunatitanand Swami as Aksharbrahman. He built grand shikharbaddha mandirs and, in their central shrines, consecrated panchdhatu murtis of Sarvavatari Parabrahman Purushottam Sahajanand Shri Hari and Mul Aksharmurti Gunatitanand Swami Maharaj. For the entire Swaminarayan Sampradaya, this was a new, unique and supreme accomplishment. He himself gave the name 'Akshar-Purushottam' to Bhagwan Swaminarayan's philosophical principle and enshrined it. For this very reason, Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj insisted that Shastriji Maharaj's name, Yagnapurush, be included in the final couplet of this arti.

CONCLUSION

In this way, this arti conveys the following:

Parabrahman Swaminarayan Bhagwan's greatness – he is eternally with a form, supreme, the all-doer and manifest through the Gunatit gurus.

Sahajanand Shri Hari himself is the entity the shastras call Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan and Gunatitanand Swami himself is the entity the shastras call Aksharbrahman.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan established ekantik dharma, and the concepts of offering bhakti after becoming brahmarup, ultimate moksha and others.

Swaminarayan-specific spiritual endeavours such as humility, seeing all as divine, friendship, becoming brahmarup and others.

The experience of fulfilment upon having attained something truly great.

A commemoration of Shastriji Maharaj, who propagated the Akshar-Purushottam principle. In this way, this arti is the ultimate, divine tribute of Pragat Brahmaswarup Guruhari Mahant Swami Maharaj to Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj – Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Aksharmurti Gunatitanand Swami – and Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj (Yagnapurushdasji), who enshrined the murtis of Gunatitanand Swami and Sahajanand Shri Hari as Swami and Narayan, that is, Akshar and Purushottam, in the central shrines of grand shikharbaddha mandirs. This arti encapsulates the heartfelt prayers of and glory sung by Parabrahman Swaminarayan's devotees. It also reflects the joy of the devotees who are

dedicated to the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. Furthermore, it offers devotion towards God, guru and the Akshar-Purushottam principle. This arti is, in the true sense, a prayer to and a song of glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. It represents the inner voice of the entire BAPS family. And, most of all, it is a devotional tribute offered affectionately at the feet of our beloved guruhari Pramukh Swami Maharaj to commemorate his centenary celebrations.

Essay-2

2. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 98th Birthday Celebration

The grand celebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 98th birthday were held on 4 December 2019 in Mumbai in the presence of Mahant Swami Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had visited the city of Mumbai over 150 times to inspire and bless the satsang. In fact, in 1968, at the express wish of Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 48th birthday was celebrated in Mumbai. Thus, Swamishri's birthday was publicly celebrated for the first time in Yogiji Maharaj's presence. Thereafter, Swamishri's main birthday celebrations were held in Mumbai in 1983, 1986, 1987, 1995, 2010 and 2011. Over 72,000 devotees and well-wishers from throughout India and the world flocked to the D.Y. Patil Stadium in Vashi, New Mumbai, to witness the grand 98th birthday celebration assembly of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. A grand stage had been erected on the east side of the stadium. The audience were seated on the lawn in front and in the stands. The stage backdrop comprised fibreglass models of the shikhars of Swaminarayan Akshardham and decorative arches housing large LED screens for use during the celebration presentations. The lighting effects added to the appeal of the stage. To each side of the stage were large LED screens for the audience to view the stage programmes. The celebration assembly began at 5.30 p.m. with dhun and bhajans by sadhus and youths. The entire celebration assembly was compered by Adarshjivan Swami and Bhagvatsetu Swami. After the dhun and bhajans, Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke briefly about Swamishri's visits to Mumbai. Thereafter, while children performed a colourful traditional dance in honour of Swamishri's centenary to the bhajan 'Shat shat varas sare, guru jivanjyot jale...' images of Swamishri were displayed on the multiple stage screens. Then, Dr Swami addressed the packed assembly, explaining the significance of Swamishri's centenary, "What message should we learn from this celebration? The glory of God and his Sadhu. That God is present in our hearts. God is the cause of everything. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had this profound understanding. He lived an extraordinary life. We cannot even contemplate the innumerable honours he received, yet he never became egoistic. He always used to say, 'Everything happens by the wish of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the blessings of gurus Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj.' He always highlighted the efforts of the sadhus and devotees. The words 'I' and 'mine' were not even in his dictionary. He always kept God at the forefront. "From his life, let us imbibe the message 'In the good of others lies our own.' By truly understanding that everything happens due to God's blessings, we will progress in all aspects of our life and experience inner peace." The time now came to welcome Mahant Swami Maharaj into the celebration assembly. From the right of the stage, two decorated chariots entered the stadium grounds. The first housed a life-sized seated murti of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and in the second Mahant Swami Maharaj was seated with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. The two chariots were paraded around the perimeter, on the pathway between the audience seated on the field and in the stands, so that all could have the close darshan of Swamishri. Meanwhile, on the stage, children and youths performed an exhilarating welcome dance and youths of the Pramukhraj Band from Khandesh (Maharashtra) played the drums in their lively, traditional style. Also, as the chariots passed by, balaks in traditional costumes showered flower petals. With the stage and stadium lighting effects, the entire atmosphere echoed with divine joy. The welcome dance consisted of a series of short presentations of the traditional dances of various regions of India. Shri Dr Vijaybhai Patil, Founder President of the D.Y. Patil Stadium, devoutly drove Mahant Swami Maharaj's chariot around the stadium. After completing the perimeter circuit, Swamishri took his seat on a raised platform in front of the main stage to view the birthday celebration presentations. Seated with him were the Home Minister of India, Shri Amitbhai Shah; former governor and educationist, Shri Dr D.Y. Patil; Maharashtra legislative Assembly Opposition Leader and former Chief Minister, Shri Devendra Fadnavis; distinguished Dubai businessman and philanthropist, Shri Dr B.R. Shetty, other guests and the sadguru sadhus. In the audience, many well-known and respected dignitaries from throughout Mumbai were also present. The main part of the celebration then commenced, based on the theme: 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Divine Touch.' By Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine touch, countless people have been transformed and elevated. Through his pious words and proximity, and by remembering and praying to him, innumerable people have felt his divine touch and experienced divine joy and success in their lives. Reflecting the sentiment 'Your birth on our earth made my world special, made our world special', youths presented a devotional dance to the lyrics 'Purvanā punya falyā, jivan ādhar malyā, Swami tarā rupe āj Shriji malyā' ('Past merits have borne fruit, we have attained our life's support and through you, Swami, today we have attained Shriji [Maharaj]'). Pramukh Swami Maharaj constantly strived to give solutions to the variety of problems faced by the modern world: addictions, depression, anger and ego,

discord and faithlessness. The celebration programme presented these five topics in creative ways. After each presentation, the audience was requested to recite a pledge to resolve such problems in their lives.

FREED FROM ADDICTIONS

Pramukh Swami Maharaj liberated countless people from the shackles of addictions. As an example, through the creative use of dance and screen animations, the uplifting effect of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine touch on Shri Harshadbhai Brahmabhatt, a senior vice president for Reliance corporate affairs, was depicted. Thereafter, he narrated his story, "I developed the habit of smoking bidis and cigarettes from a young age. Even in school I would smoke about 20–25 bidis a day. As a youth, I upgraded to cigarettes, smoking up to 40–45 a day. For 35 years I was a chain smoker. I sincerely tried to quit this addiction. I resolved to quit at many holy places of pilgrimage, when my son was born, when my father passed away and on numerous other occasions – but I failed every time. "Once, I visited the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Ahmedabad, where I had the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I described my addiction problem to him. This was a magical moment in my life. At that moment my life's direction changed. Pramukh Swami Maharaj said to me, 'You do not have any addiction. In fact, you will free many from addictions.' I was really surprised. "Bapa then placed a kanthi on me and blessed me. It was as if a switch had been pressed and the tube light turned off. Instantly, I was freed from my addiction. His blessings have come true and today I help others quit their addictions. "I am not alone in receiving such blessings from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Swami Bapa inspired lakhs of people and they now spread the light of an addiction-free life." Then, a video was shown revealing the uplifting experiences of some who had been inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj to quit their addictions. Thereafter, the audience recited a pledge to remain free of addictions.

UPLIFTED FROM DEPRESSION

Depression is a burning problem worldwide. Its darkness envelopes the life of those affected, preventing them from leading a productive, joyful life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj uplifted many from the shadows of depression into the light of joy. Youths presented a creative dance based on the story of Shri Arunbhai Thakkar. Thereafter, Atmatrupt Swami narrated Arunbhai's story, "Arunbhai Thakkar lives in the Chembur suburb of Mumbai. He became burdened with massive debts and frustrated by the daily demands of payments and repayments. This led to family discord. To escape, he resorted to heavy smoking, but eventually decided that the only way out was suicide. He decided to end his life, but first went to visit the Hanumanji Mandir in Sarangpur. When he reached Sarangpur, he inadvertently entered the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, where he saw many people joyously making their way in one direction. He learnt that they were going for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan. He went along with them and sat in the assembly. Shortly, Pramukh Swami Maharaj arrived and this first darshan filled Arunbhai with peace and quelled his inner turmoil. His worries were banished and his mind was rejuvenated. He felt as if Pramukh Swami Maharaj had grasped his hand. He dropped his plan to commit suicide and stayed a few days in Sarangpur. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's daily darshan removed all his negative thoughts and generated positive thoughts. His external circumstances had not changed, but his inner landscape had been transformed and charged with new energy. When he returned to Mumbai, others noticed the change. With great patience, he gradually began to resolve his financial and other difficulties. He believed that Swamishri's blessings were with him. He eventually cleared all his debts, overcame his addiction and banished all negative thoughts from his mind." Concluding, Atmatrupt Swami said, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj's contact not only converted negative thoughts into positive ones, but also removed the fear of death – as demonstrated by the story of Niraj Patel of Chicago, USA." Then, a video depicting Niraj's inspiring story was shown. Niraj was born with polycystic kidney disease. Doctors first operated on him when he was 15 months old. By the age of 35, he had undergone 74 operations, including 4 kidney transplants. But when his latest kidneys failed, the doctors said that due to the scarring from all his operations, there was no place to put another kidney. His family was in tears. But Niraj had tremendous faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan and guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj and gave his family immense courage. He revealed, "I currently experience the divine bliss of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Maybe, due to some deficiency in me, this has all happened. But God has kept my ears healthy so I can listen to bhajans. He has preserved my hands, so that I can turn the mala. What more do I need than this?" He continued, "In 1997, Pramukh Swami Maharaj covered me with his gatariyu (upper robe) and promised to take me to Akshardham. After that I have never experienced any misery." Despite his unbearable physical pain and difficulties, Niraj was never depressed and remained joyous till the end, in the knowledge that Pramukh Swami Maharaj will take him to Akshardham. Such is Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine touch that it removes all negativity and replaces it with courage. Then, all pledged to shun negative thoughts and adopt a positive, courageous outlook.

BEYOND EGO AND ANGER

Ego and anger cause much personal and inter-personal strife. A creative dance depicted how ego and anger result in much discord and that removing them brings tremendous peace. Hemantbhai Patel was plagued by these twin evils. He narrated, “During the 1985 Bicentenary Celebrations of Gunatitanand Swami, I rented a stall, in the belief that due to the lakhs of visitors, I would make a healthy profit. But, my expectations were not met. In any case, I had animosity towards sadhus and sampradayas from a young age. So, this was an opportunity for me to display it. Without reason, I attributed the blame for our slow trade on Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I spoke abusive and unwarranted words about him and I publicly desecrated his murti. “Three years passed, during which time I learned about Pramukh Swami Maharaj – his piety, selfless services, devotion and faith in God. I repented for my past actions and wanted to seek his forgiveness. So, on 9 April 1989 I went to Sarangpur to meet him. I revealed everything to him and feared how he would respond to my having insulted him. But he was the epitome of tranquility. He calmly and lovingly said, ‘Forget, whatever you did then and begin afresh.’ His soothing words, free of any anger or malice, gave me great inner peace. I broke down in tears; he placed my head in his lap and blessed me. “After meeting him, I thought that although Swamishri has forgiven me, God would never forgive me. With this thought, I was among a crowd of people as Swamishri was climbing down the mandir steps later that day. He spotted me from a distance and came up to me. Placing a hand on my shoulder, he said, ‘Do not consider yourself as a sinner. You are not at fault.’ His loving facial expression convinced me that now even God has forgiven me. “Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s forgiving and humble nature changed my life. I now live in America and am a photographer. I have taken many photographs of him. See his impact. The one whose murti I desecrated, now gives me great joy to photograph.” Then, further describing Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s egolessness, Anandswarup Swami spoke, “Thousands of devotees have, like Hemantbhai, been transformed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s humility. “Pramukh Swami Maharaj successfully completed innumerable works which received worldwide acclaim. Among them was Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi. The Guinness World Records have recognized it. Visitors see every part of Akshardham as magical. But the most amazing fact is that it was completed in only five years. “Padma Vibhushan Shri Satishbhai Gujral, a renowned architect, said, ‘In my experience a large complex like Akshardham should take about 50 years to build. But by the grace of God it was completed in five.’ “The late Mahamandaleshwar Pujya Swami Satyamitranand Giriji said to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, ‘Even Brahma would be surprised that it took him countless years to create the earth, whereas you built Akshardham in five. Swami, you are a divine incarnation, otherwise it is not possible to build such a pilgrimage place.’ Former American ambassador to India, Shri Robert Mulford saw Akshardham and commented, ‘If you want to begin to understand this country’s roots, then Akshardham is the first and best place.’ “Millions of people from 193 countries, numerous national leaders, royal and other dignitaries have visited and praised the work of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Yet, Pramukh Swami Maharaj never took credit for building Akshardham. He always humbly attributed all accolades at the feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, guru Yogiji Maharaj, and the hard work of the sadhus and devotees. “His humility was not due to any compulsion, but was due to his constant communion with Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He believed himself to be a mere drop compared to the ocean-like God. Due to such humility, he constantly experienced joy, peace and happiness in his life. So, to experience such joy and success and to please God, humility is essential.” Thereafter, a video of Dr Abul Kalam narrating how he had experienced the egolessness of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was shown. Then, everyone pledged to shed ego and anger from their lives.

DISMISS DISCORD, HARBOUR HARMONY

For joy, peace and prosperity in the family and the world, harmony is necessary. Today, instead of harmony, discord is growing, because people have become more self-centric. Through a creative dance and an animation video, such discord and how the divine touch of Pramukh Swami Maharaj leads to harmony was portrayed. Then, Aksharvatsal Swami described the story of Kanuji Thakor, “Everyone feels that their view is the best and that is what causes conflict and discord. This is what happened to Kanuji Thakor, who got married in 2002. Outwardly, everything appeared fine, but within a short time, the flames of inner turmoil exploded. Conflicts between husband, wife and mother-in-law surfaced. Sometimes, the arguments became so unbearable, that Kanuji would call his in-laws to say, ‘Please take back your daughter, I cannot live with her anymore.’ Such family discord continued for about 12 years and it adversely affected their young children. The internal conflicts became so intense that the only way out seemed to be divorce. But the effect of such a step on their young children worried them. “Then, suddenly, the situation changed. From somewhere, Kanuji got a copy of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s Vachanamrut and began to read it. He was drawn to the deep spiritual principles explained by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in simple language. This led him to the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad, where, by attending the satsang sabhas, he learnt about Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s insistence on conducting a 15–20-minute ghar sabha for family harmony. “So, in 2014, Kanuji began conducting a regular ghar sabha with his family. And today, in 2019, this gift from Pramukh Swami Maharaj has transformed his family’s discord into harmony. His easily triggered anger

and other family conflicts have been extinguished. Their home feels like a mandir, due to the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. “The ghar sabha is the divine touch of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He brought harmony not only to families, but promoted harmony between communities, villages and faiths.” Thereafter, a video of Pramukh Swami Maharaj promoting interfaith harmony by offering prayers at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem was shown. He placed two sanctified flowers in this sacred Jewish place of pilgrimage and prayed, “May the prayers of all who have prayed here and will pray here in the future be fulfilled.” The video also showed an excerpt of Swamishri’s speech at the Millennium World Peace Conference for Religious Leaders at the United Nations in 2000, in which he set out a roadmap for world harmony. Thereafter, everyone recited a pledge to maintain harmony.

ESTABLISHING FAITH

Pramukh Swami Maharaj enriched the lives of many by removing their faithlessness and establishing faith – in themselves, their family, the guru and God. Such faith released them from many difficulties. The strength derived from faith was depicted through the story of Prahlad, effectively portrayed by a splendid fusion of dance, videos and acting. Then, Brahmavihari Swami spoke about how Pramukh Swami Maharaj generated faith in all he met, “The story of Prahlad is one of faith, and the question facing the world is one of faithlessness. This is a big challenge. The miracle of faith is not just that it gives you the power to do the impossible, but the power to see the invisible and to feel the presence of God in everything. Faith gives you the power to believe, the power to hope and to be positive. This was perhaps the greatest miracle Pramukh Swami Maharaj worked. He inspired and rejuvenated faith in everyone he met, whether you were faithful or faithless. No wonder Dr APJ Abdul Kalam often said, ‘I learnt the value of thinking from Socrates, truth from Galileo, nonviolence from Gandhi, equality from Lincoln, forgiveness from Mandela, compassion from Buddha, but I learnt the value of faith in God from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He became my ultimate teacher.’” Thereafter, Brahmavihari Swami narrated the occasion when President Kalam phoned and then sent his close friend and famous cartoonist, Shri R.K. Laxman, to visit Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi. He was 85 years old, frail and wheelchair bound, but he had lost none of his powers of observation and ability to pass sharp, focused comments. He visited the main Akshardham mandir, the cultural boat ride and then, just after the Neelkanth Varni large format film had started, he abruptly decided to leave. The next morning President Kalam called again to say that Shri R.K. Laxman wanted to visit again and finish watching the film. So, he returned and attentively watched the film till the end. Continuing his narration, Brahmavihari Swami said, “I asked R.K. Laxman, ‘Do you want to meet Pramukh Swamiji?’ He questioned, ‘Why? Who’s he?’ I replied, ‘He’s our spiritual leader, the creator of Akshardham.’ ‘So what? Why should I see him?’ Then, he asked, ‘Has Kalam met him?’ I replied, ‘Yes. Several times.’ Then suddenly, he exclaimed, ‘OK, Let’s go to meet him.’ “When he was wheeled into Swamishri’s room, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was reading letters and gently talking to two saints. Swamishri wondered who the guest was. Swamishri did not know English, had never read the Times of India nor seen the Common Man cartoons. Swamishri did not know who R.K. Laxman was and R.K. Laxman did not know who Pramukh Swami was. This was a meeting of strangers. Swamishri lovingly stretched out his hand and held R.K. Laxman’s hand. At that moment, R.K. Laxman broke down and started crying nonstop for a few minutes like a baby. Innocently, Pramukh Swami asked, ‘What is the name of the guest?’ This is when the sparkle happened. R.K. Laxman clenched his throat, held back his breath and said, ‘There is a flood of peace... a flood of peace. All my life I have found faults with everything and in everyone. There’s always something to criticize. My day begins with criticism and ends with criticism. Today is the first day in my life where there is nothing to criticize. My perspective of life has changed.’ On his way out R.K. Laxman once again asked, ‘What was the Swami’s name?’ I said, ‘Pramukh Swami.’ He respectfully repeated it five times and said, ‘I am going to go back to Kalam and tell him that today I met the finest person on this earth.’ Now more at ease, he questioned, ‘Was I really crying? Please send the pictures of me crying. My wife will be really happy!’ “That very night, President Kalam called and said, ‘Miracles still do happen. My friend Laxman has come back with renewed faith, more faith in life, more faith in people.’ Pramukh Swamiji’s single touch created this magic. Neither knew each other, had never met, and did not talk. But one single touch impacted his life. “The miracle of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was that he rejuvenated faith in the hearts of millions wherever they were, and whoever they were... believers or nonbelievers... whether it was faith in God, faith in people, or faith in life. He painted everything positive.” Thus, through even the fleeting divine touch of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, countless have been infused with faith – faith in life, people and God. Thereafter, everyone pledged to establish and nurture faith in their lives.

OUR FUTURE IS BRIGHT

After these five presentations, Shri Dilipbhai Joshi, a renowned Bollywood actor and a dedicated BAPS devotee, addressed the assembly on a topic of everyone’s interest: ‘Concern for the Future.’ He said, “I want to express my debt to guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj, because I firmly believe that whatever I

have achieved is entirely due to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings. He lived his entire life for the benefit and joy of others. My many years of acting experience have taught me that it is easy to make people laugh for a few seconds, but difficult to always keep them joyous. Pramukh Swami Maharaj gave everyone inner joy – I am one of them. "In 1986–7, I first had the darshan of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. A college friend, Nitinbhai Desai, insisted that I visit Dadar Mandir for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan. I, too, wanted to have his darshan, but for some reason, I was unable to go. "Once, I was riding a scooter with Nitinbhai seated behind me. We were travelling from the Haji Ali area to Vile Parle. Again, he reminded me to come for Pramukh Swami Maharaj's darshan. I told him I really want to come, and couldn't understand why I was unable to arrange it. Just then, a car passed by with Pramukh Swami Maharaj seated in the front passenger seat. I wondered if this was a mistake. No, it was real. Every time I recall this, my hair stands on end. Even today, by sincerely remembering him, he is present in a divine form amidst us and in the form of Mahant Swami Maharaj. "I want to present a problem: even a person who is successful and happy has a concern about his future. It's because the future is unknown, uncertain, unclear. People wonder, 'What is my future. What is the future of this country and the world?'" Having presented this question, children entered on to the stage while a large round cutout of the world was seen at the centre of the stage. The earth was lifted to reveal Mahant Swami Maharaj seated on the stage. Everyone greeted this darshan with tremendous applause. Everyone believed that their future is bright because Pramukh Swami Maharaj has gifted Mahant Swami Maharaj. He has also nurtured a divine community which will continue to spread pious living and service. Representing this future, six young children presented a glimpse of the future, confidently ensuring all that with the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj, children will free their families and society from the concerns of the future. The children resolved to live by the wishes of Mahant Swami Maharaj. Thereafter, the chief guests and senior sadhus took their seats on the stage: Shri Amitbhai Shah (Home Minister of India), Shri Devendra Fadnavis (former Chief Minister of Maharashtra), Padmashri Dr D.Y. Patil (Founder, D.Y. Patil Group, and former Governor of Tripura, Bihar and West Bengal), Shri Dr Vijaybhai D. Patil (Chancellor, D.Y. Patil University and Founder President of D.Y. Patil Stadium), Shri Dr B.R. Shetty (Philanthropist and Businessman, UAE). Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami welcomed all the stage guests with garlands. Then, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Convener of BAPS' international activities, delivered the Vote of Thanks and announced the major events arranged during the forthcoming year. Thereafter, Home Minister of India, Shri Amitbhai Shah addressed the assembly. "Today, seeing over 60,000 devotees seated in this assembly reflects how much Pramukh Swami Maharaj has touched and inspired your lives. "Pramukh Swami Maharaj has rejuvenated society's faith in saints and spirituality. BAPS and its hardworking saints have strived in India and abroad to remove negative ideas and actions and replaced them with positivity. The world will appreciate their efforts. "Pramukh Swami Maharaj lit the flame of inner peace, faith, devotion and fraternity in countless people through his travels to over 17,000 cities, towns and villages. Today, people endeavour to advance spirituality, but do not know the essence of spirituality. During his long life, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not give long lectures, but through his life and works explained the essence of spirituality. "In my personal life, whenever I have faced difficulties, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the first to phone. He would bless me, 'Everything will turn out fine. Leave all your worries on God, on Shriji [Maharaj]'. His words would inspire and re-energize me to face the challenges and fight for the truth. "Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired many like me. Today, his sadhus spread his teachings to the society with great dignity." Then, Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami prayed before Mahant Swami Maharaj on behalf of all, "May all attain perfection in ekantik dharma. May samp, suhradbhav and ekta increase in families, society, satsang and the world. May all see the good in everyone and not the faults. May we be able to serve all and progress on the path of devotion." Thereafter, Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the assembly, "Pramukh Swami Maharaj was a divine saint, with a pure mind. His whole life was divine and pure. He was simple, but he touched everyone. He guided countless on to the paths of righteousness and devotion to God. He accomplished many great works. "It is difficult to control the mind. But Pramukh Swami Maharaj had conquered his mind, travelled within society, and uplifted and awakened it. Through his divine touch many great things were achieved." On this occasion, Mahant Swami Maharaj and Shri Amitbhai Shah inaugurated the third part of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's detailed biography, written by Adharshjivan Swami. Also, it was announced that on 28 November 2019, Mahant Swami Maharaj had inaugurated the BAPS Kalakendra in Vashi, New Mumbai. Then, the sadguru and other sadhus honoured Mahant Swami Maharaj with garlands, after which everyone in the stadium participated in the samuh arti. The entire arena resembled a sea of lights amid the dark night. To celebrate this occasion, 80 youths from Vadodara had pilgrimaged in a Jyot Yatra by foot carrying mashals (flame torches) from Chhapaiya in Uttar Pradesh (the birthplace of Bhagwan Swaminarayan), through various places of pilgrimage, including Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh) – the birthplace of Mahant Swami Maharaj. They were welcomed into the stadium. From here, after the celebration, they would continue their pilgrimage to Chansad and then Vadodara, where Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 99th birthday will take place in 2020. This will complete their 2,100-km pilgrimage. Also, every year, since

the launch of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's centenary celebrations in 2015, BAPS youths of Chansad have participated in a Jyot Yatra to the venue of the birthday celebrations: 2015 – Sarangpur, 2016 – Surat, 2017 – Anand and 2018 – Rajkot. This year, around 100 youths participated in the 480-km Jyot Yatra to Mumbai for the celebration. The entire birthday celebration was possible due to the tireless efforts of the sadhus and volunteers. The excellent stage presentations were prepared under the guidance of renowned creative director Shri Arunbhai Sheshkumar and Pankitaben Sadrani. To prepare for the celebration, Shri Vijaybhai Patil generously allowed the use of the stadium for 18 days, free of charge. He also provided accommodation for Mahant Swami Maharaj in his hospital, adjacent to the stadium, and supported the celebrations in numerous other ways. To house the volunteers preparing for the celebration, many builders provided their flats. And on the day of the celebration, over 640 buses were used to transport devotees to and from the stadium and the various suburbs of Mumbai.

Essay-3

3. Giving Up Everything for the Adhiveshan

To prepare for the adhiveshan, balaks and balikas gave up their play and vacation time, while some even cancelled their holiday trips! Disability, illness, the passing away of a loved one – nothing could deter these participants. Below are just a few of the inspiring incidents revealing how they balanced time challenges, family commitments and emotional setbacks

CHILDREN'S DETERMINATION Not Giving Up Despite Father's Demise

Harsh Jaykishanbhai Khamar of Patan bal mandal studies in the 8th grade. His father was admitted to a hospital due to poor health. Just days before the Zonal Adhiveshan, Harsh's father's health worsened and he suddenly passed away on 1 March 2019. Harsh was deeply saddened by his father's death, but he remained firmly intent on taking part in the adhiveshan. The mourning ceremony was to be held on 3 March, the same day as the Zonal Adhiveshan. Harsh remained calm and firm in the face of this tragic loss. After the ceremony, with his mother's permission, he participated in the Zonal Adhiveshan. Similarly, Nadiad resident Chirag Rangvani's father also passed away. Yet Chirag, too, remained mentally and emotionally strong and prepared for the adhiveshan.

Unsuccessful Participants Pray for Others

Two balikas from Ahmedabad, Khushi Hingu and Krishna Panchal, took part in the Regional Adhiveshan, but did not progress to the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan stage. Yet these two selfless balikas helped to prepare mukhpath papers for the balikas who had progressed. Also, Khushi and Krishna prayed for the success of their fellow balikas who had progressed. During the day, they would even go to Shahibaug Mandir to prepare decorations to be used in the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan in Sarangpur.

Resolute in the Face of Illness

Sajal Keyurbhai Patel of Patan studies in the 5th grade. He had various stomach illnesses for two months. Then, on the night of 4 May 2019, having developed a high fever and severe headache, Sajal had to be admitted to hospital. He was released after treatment and reached home at 2.30 a.m. His father had passed away three years ago, so he called his mama (maternal uncle) to come early next morning to help him. His mama is disabled. At 5.30 a.m, Sajal, his mother and mama left for their region's main centre, Himmatnagar, on a three-wheeled Activa scooter. They arrived at 8.30 a.m., just in time for the Regional Adhiveshan. There, he gave mukhpath of 12 chapters, despite being tired and sick!

Cancelled Overseas Trip

The family of Jeet Sunilbhai Bhatt of Satellite in Ahmedabad had planned a trip to London to visit his mama. Even his ticket had been booked, yet he said, "No, I don't want to go to London. I've been selected for the adhiveshan, so I would like to prepare as best as I can and earn Swamishri's rajipo." Similarly, the family of Param Tiwari of Anand had planned to go to the Shilanyas Mahotsav in Abu Dhabi. But they postponed their visit so that Param could prepare for the adhiveshan.

Competed Despite Blood Transfusions

Vandan Mayurbhai Thakkar of Mulund, Mumbai, suffers from an illness called thalassaemia since birth. This means he has to have a blood transfusion about twice a month. Following the Zonal Adhiveshan, he went to Dubai for treatment and a vacation, but returned before the Regional Adhiveshan. Immediately after returning, he had to have a blood transfusion on 30 April 2019. Yet, on 1 May, Vandan successfully gave mukhpath for all 25 chapters. Also, he performed well in the Satsang Q & A,

storytelling and monoacting competitions. During his month-long stay in Dubai, Vandan's karyakars had helped him to prepare for mukhpath via video calls.

Blind Balak Does Mukhpath

Keyur Mukeshbhai Priyan of Nikol in Ahmedabad has been blind since birth and his body remains weak and frail. Yet, Keyur memorized chapters from the Satsang Mukhpath and studied for the Satsang Q & A by listening to audio recordings of the texts, and repeatedly revising them word-for-word. He successfully memorized 25 chapters and 100 questions as well. Keyur is also a good singer. With his parents' help, he worked exceptionally hard. Keyur won a prize in the Mukhpath competition and earned Swamishri's rajipo.

Took Part Despite Operation

Kunj Patel of Ahmedabad had a major kidney operation on 26 February 2019. The following week, he participated in the Zonal Adhiveshan and qualified for the Regional Adhiveshan.

Staying Strong in the Face of Obstacles

Jeel Patel of Vadadla near Petlad had just recovered from a hand fracture when his father suffered a fatal heart attack and passed away on 4 May. Still, on 5 May, he participated in the Regional Adhiveshan. He had memorized 25 chapters, and a hundred questions and answers. Jeel prepared for the adhiveshan, despite the uncertainty about his admission to a new school and his family's financial difficulties, with the understanding that whatever Maharaj does is always for our own good.

Unbearable Kidney Stone Pain

Mit Rathod of Ahmedabad suffered from repeated bouts of pain due to stones in both his kidneys. The day before the Regional Adhiveshan, the doctors gave him a choice: be admitted for treatment or tolerate the pain. Deriving strength from how Mahant Swami Maharaj completes his daily routine despite many health challenges, Mit decided to delay admission and to participate in the Regional Adhiveshan. He was selected for Satsang Mukhpath, Satsang Q & A, Storytelling, Speech and Mono-acting.

Memorized with Understanding

Tilak Chudasama studies in Standard 3. Having progressed to the Regional Adhiveshan, he memorized all 25 chapters of the Satsang Mukhpath and thoroughly studied the Satsang Q & A booklet. Once, during his family's ghar sabha, his parents were discussing how atma darshan is possible. To their immense surprise, Tilak answered their question by quoting a passage from Vachanamrut Vartal 11, and added that by developing profound love for the Satpurush, Mahant Swami Maharaj, atma darshan is possible. Not only had the young balak memorized the passage, but had understood its meaning as well.

Mukhpath Despite Disability

Mit Kotadiya of Bhojraj Para, Gondal, is severely physically handicapped and requires assistance to complete all his daily activities. After the adhiveshan was launched, Anantcharan Swami said in the bal sabha, "God has given us infinite abilities." This motivated Mit to participate. He told his mother, "In any way possible, I want to participate in the adhiveshan." So, with the help of the audio books prepared by the Sanstha, he persevered. In the Zonal Adhiveshan, he memorized 10 chapters. In the Regional Adhiveshan, he memorized 20 chapters.

Studies Boosted

Amit Chavda of Surat performed poorly at school. But by participating in the adhiveshan, he developed his abilities of reading and memorizing to reach the Akhil Bharatiya Bal-Balika Adhiveshan. This has also helped him to improve in his studies at school. Some gave up on their favourite pastimes... some sacrificed vacation fun... some disregarded illness and physical pain... some overcame the sorrow of a family death... they all stood strong amidst many challenges... all with a common aim: to earn Mahant Swami Maharaj's rajipo. These children worked hard and participated in the adhiveshan and passed with distinction. We bow down to these children who, like flowers, have spread the fragrance of satsang and sanskars around them, and thus earned the priceless rajipo of Mahant Swami Maharaj.

SUPPORT OF PARENTS

Parents Help Their Children to Prepare

Agna, who studies in the third standard, had participated in the adhiveshan. Whenever her mother helped her with preparations, her four-year-old sister, Upasana, would be around too. So, she also

started picking up the mukhpath. Thus, four-year-old Upasana learnt by heart five complete chapters. For the Zonal Adhiveshan, Agna had memorized eight chapters. But her mother felt that Agna could memorize all 25 chapters. So, for the Regional Adhiveshan, Agna memorized 25 chapters with the help of her parents. In the morning, her father would help her prepare new mukhpath and revise what she had already memorized. Her mother, a school teacher, would help her after school. Whether it be in the bathroom, in the car, while playing, while her mother was cooking or during the ghar sabha, the only focus was the adhiveshan. Besides Satsang Mukhpath, Agna also won prizes in Satsang Q & A, Colouring and Mono-acting. Her mother said, “The adhiveshan has benefited me immensely. Both my daughters, Agna and Upasana, have learnt a lot from it.”

Helping Both Their Daughters

Khushi and Palak, two sisters who attend the balika sabha in Mumbai, participated in the adhiveshan – Khushi in Group 1 and Palak in Group 2. Their father’s name is Anandbhai Thakkar. Since the girls are studying the CBSE syllabus, along with the adhiveshan, they also had their final exams in the same month. Their mother removed the TV cable connection. So, instead of watching TV, they would listen to the adhiveshan audio. Similarly, they would listen to the audio while bathing, getting ready and eating. Due to their hard work, Palak won five prizes and Khushi won three prizes in the Zonal Adhiveshan. These girls had their exams just prior to the Zonal Adhiveshan and then they had school before the Regional Adhiveshan. Just before the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan, Palak was seriously ill, hence had to take complete bed rest. Even in such conditions, their mother helped her to work hard for the adhiveshan. And as a result, in the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan, Palak won prizes in Satsang Mukhpath and Storytelling.

Grandmother and Mother Help to Prepare

Nayan Shukla of Bharuch studies in the 8th standard. His 64- year-old grandmother has only studied up to the ninth standard, many years ago. She had to have a leg operation and was advised complete bed rest for two months. While in bed, she would help Nayan to read the questions and answers. In total, his mother and grandmother would daily spend about four to five hours helping Nayan with reading, writing and understanding and prepare him for the adhiveshan. They would also test him on whatever he had prepared. In spite of being busy serving her mother-inlaw, looking after guests coming to their house, doing household chores, and looking after yuvati activities, Nayan’s mother would find time to help him with his preparations as well. While cooking, she would help him to do his mukhpath. She would also prepare question papers for him to test his Satsang Q & A knowledge. Nayan’s final CBSE exams finished just two days before the Zonal Adhiveshan. He developed a high fever. Even then, his mother motivated him saying, “You will receive Bapa’s rajipo by participating in the adhiveshan.” With help from his grandmother and mother, Nayan succeeded in getting a prize in the Akhil Bharatiya Adhiveshan.

Support Despite Lack of Resources

Umesh Rakholia (Standard 5) of Nikol, Ahmedabad, achieved success in the Shishu Adhiveshan through prayers and the support of his parents and karyakars. Daily, his parents took him to the hari mandir in Nikol where karyakars helped him and other balaks to prepare. The mandir is about 4 km from his house and his family does not have a private vehicle. So, his mother or father would drop him there and pick him up again, either by rickshaw or bus. Even at home, he would prepare for the adhiveshan.

Parents Would Bring Food and Snacks

Upendrabhai Patel serves as a sah-nirdeshak for Ahmedabad Zone 16. He reported that balaks used to stay from early morning till late at night in the local hari mandir to prepare. So, parents would bring them food and snacks. Not just for their own balak, but also for others. The parents were delighted that the children were engaged in such a constructive activity. Thus, parents and karyakars would encourage the children to earn Swamishri’s rajipo. They would specially take out time from their routine activities to help the children prepare.

EFFORTS BY KARYAKARS

Grasping the adhiveshan as an opportunity to please Swamishri, the karyakars also poured their hearts into doing whatever was required to help the children prepare in the best way.

Giving Priority to Adhiveshan Preparation

Dipakbhai Soni, sah-nirdeshak for Anand 1 commutes daily to Vadodara for work. The round trip takes about four hours.

So, he would reach the home of the balaks at 7.00 a.m. to check on their progress for the adhiveshan and motivate them. On returning at 9.00 p.m. in the evening, he would again visit the balaks and encourage them and their parents to prepare properly. Due to his selfless efforts, the parents also assisted in preparing their children for the adhiveshan.

Helped to Prepare Despite a Fractured Foot

Joybhai, a bal karyakar from Satellite, Ahmedabad, was teaching the role of Joban Pagi to a balak for the mono-acting competition. As Joybhai stood on a chair, three of its legs suddenly buckled and he fell, suffering several fractures in his toe. Doctors told him he should rest for one month. Despite this, he daily gathered the balaks at his home to guide their preparations for the adhiveshan.

A Pilot Helped Children Prepare for Mukhpath

Amitbhai Shah from Mumbai is a pilot with a reputed airline. However, whenever he was not flying, he would spend all his free time to help children prepare for mukhpath competitions.

Reduced Job Hours Niteshbhai Chauhan serves as a nirikshak and BSS sanchalak in Paldi, Ahmedabad. He was assigned the task of helping the balaks with their preparations. He was wondering how he would find time for this seva. He works for 14 hours daily at a medical store. So, he decided to cut down on his overtime for about two-and-a-half months. He sacrificed on his income to find time for his seva.