

SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

March-April 2013

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Thousands of Youths Participate and Attend
BAPS YOUTH ACTIVITIES
60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj





Top: Swamishri greets devotees during the Uttarayan festival, Ahmedabad (14 January).

Bottom: Swamishri presides over the Vasant Panchami celebration assembly, Ahmedabad (15 February).





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

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Contents



4 First Word

6 Jhinabhai Darbar's Resolve

9 Yogiji Maharaj's College of Brahmaildya

13 BAPS Youth Wing Timeline: 1952-2012

16 60th Anniversary Celebration of BAPS Youth Activities

35 From the Celebration Stage

39 Stars of BAPS Youth Wing

42 Golden Anniversary Celebrations, Ahmedabad

54 Dental Health: Hygiene and Complications, Part 1

56 Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Vicharan

58 Living with Swamishri

59 BAPS News



FIRST WORD

A Glimpse of BAPS Youth Energy



It was a historic occasion on Sunday, 6 January 2013. A vast concourse of youths assembled at the Sardar Patel Stadium, not far from the banks of the River Sabarmati in Ahmedabad. They were drawn from different corners of India and the world. The sun was preparing to set. It was the height of winter. The warmth of the youths' devotion to their guru and the discipline instilled by dedicated sadhus was visible despite the chilly atmosphere. To be specific, there were over 60,000 youths of both genders in the arena. They symbolized character-building and bhakti in this materialistic age. It was indeed a heart-warming sight. The festive atmosphere was energized by divine energy. It only proclaimed their guru bhakti. The ambience raised momentary surprise as to whether the scene belonged to the 21st century or a spectacle straight out of an ancient *gurukul*.

The occasion was the 60th anniversary of BAPS Youth Activities. The arrangements from parking to eating were planned with meticulous care. Nothing was left to chance. Every eventuality was visualized and solutions worked out to be implemented, if and when necessary. The veteran sadhus and volunteers were constantly on their feet.

The main feature of the whole show was the all-pervading youth power – represented by thousands of *satsangi* youths inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. This created an abiding faith in the future.

On one side was this spiritual spectacle and on the other was the hustle and bustle of the world.

The world is passing through a crisis. Materialism tethered to creature-comforts is edging the entire world away from spiritual values. This is the main cause for the current unrest. What is the condition of India which has been described as a cultural millionaire? The country finds an entry in the index of those states beset by unrest and violence. Any cultured Indian will be surprised at the figures of the National Crime Records Bureau. In 2010 there were 6,750,748 crimes on the register. During the last 40 years, crimes have gone up to such an extent as to surprise any law-abiding citizen: there has been 873.3 percent increase in rape cases. This is apart from instances of murder, looting, cheating, etc. More surprising is that most of the culprits have been youths.

What is the solution? Police? Law? Law courts?

Not only in India, but this question is plaguing other parts of the world. Wherever there is unemployment, this problem is cropping up.

In this situation, the work being done by BAPS *yuvak mandals* is awe-inspiring.

Six decades ago the path shown by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj comes to mind. He had given a clarion call for the activities of the BAPS Youth Wing. His golden way was to

endow youths with moral values to build their character. This, he emphasized, should be done from childhood. The little lamp lit by him has proved to be the beacon for all times to come. The BAPS Youth Wing has grown into a banyan from the seed he had planted. This was his panacea for peace. In this way BAPS gifts the world with thousands of youths endowed with character.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan manifested on this earth and gave to the world the philosophy and worship of Akshar-Purushottam. In order to further his message Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj founded BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha 105 years ago in 1907. From 1951, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj was given the spiritual reins of the organization and he started the youth activities to inspire the youths in Bombay. This momentous event took place in 1952 in Bombay.

The *yuvak mandal* was started in Mumbai by Yogiji Maharaj with just six youths. From that humble beginning it has grown to massive proportions. The love and affection that Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj bestow on youths is well known. These sadhus have dedicated their whole and soul to the uplift of youths. The latest festival is but a commitment to the furtherance of the noble ideals inspired by them. The programme was telecast live by Aastha Channel and shown live through webcast by the Multimedia Unit of BAPS for the benefit of devotees and interested viewers worldwide. This issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* gives glimpses of the 60th BAPS Youth Activities Celebration and of the Golden Jubilee of the Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad. Both functions had one thing in common – the divine presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Let us bow at his feet and offer our gratitude for showering his abundant blessings, guidance and wisdom. ♦

YEAR-LONG SPECIAL YOUTH ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Different events were held to mark the 60th anniversary of the BAPS Youth Wing. On 6 January 2012, Pramukh Swami Maharaj lit the lamp to inaugurate the celebrations at Mumbai. The following are some of the highlights of the year-long celebrations:

Declaratory Function

Functions were arranged in every village and town to inaugurate the anniversary.

Pledge-taking Ceremony

Assemblies were held in which youths took pledges to lead a moral life.

Padyatra

808 youth forums organized *padyatra*, covering 3,039 kilometres. In all, 25,000 boys and girls participated in the *padyatras*.

Youth Adhiveshans

78 Inter-zonal Youth Adhiveshans were held in which 24,320 boys and 22,364 girls participated. Of these, 3,900 boys and girls qualified for the National Youth Adhiveshan at Sarangpur.

Similar *adhiveshans* were held at Jaipur and New Delhi; and also in England, African countries and Australia.

Self-awareness Campaign

875 youths toured 350 villages to spread the message of Satsang. They visited 4,455 households and freed 2,584 individuals from addictions.

Village Satsang Vicharan

In every zone young men and women organized village satsang tours; 25,000 youths from 47 centres participated in such tours.

Yuvati Mahotsavs

New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and six other metropolises witnessed such festivals where the glory of India's culture was highlighted by the *yuvatis*.

JHINABHAI DARBAR'S RESOLVE

*After celebrating the Shakotsav in Loya,
Shri Hari performs another lila...*

A COPY OF NARAD PANCHRATRA

The next day Shri Hari called Nityanand Swami and said, "In Junagadh someone should be having the Narad Panchratra shastra. Go there personally and have it copied." You may leave after lunch and take the sadhus in your group with you." Maharaj took lunch and gave the sanctified *thal* to Nityanand Swami. After having the *prasad* Nityanand Swami came to take leave of Maharaj. He said, "Maharaj, Rampratapbhai (Maharaj's elder brother) wishes to go on a pilgrimage to Dwarka. We are taking him with us to Junagadh and will make the arrangements for him from there. I have appointed Kalidas, a Brahmin, in his personal service and Rathod Dhadhal and Kalo Makwano for his hospitality and *seva*."

Sura Khachar gave some money to Rampratapbhai for his expenses and spendings. The latter was pleased with the generosity and goodwill shown to him.

MY ENTIRE PILGRIMAGE IS INCLUDED AT YOUR HOLY FEET

Shri Hari asked Ichchharambhai, "Don't you want to go on a pilgrimage?" Maharaj's younger brother answered, "I believe all *tirthas* are at your holy feet. However, I will do whatever you wish." Then Ichchharam added, "Maharaj, I



wish to call my family for your darshan. It will give them inner joy and satisfaction. I stay in Ambaliya, a short distance from where Rampratapbhai lives. I live separately from Rampratapbhai because of his wrathful nature. In Ambaliya, the community of Sarvariya Brahmins are courageous and have good respect for me and my family."

Shri Hari smiled at Ichchharam's words and said, "You may return home to bring your family here. Let Rampratapbhai come later." Shri Hari told an attendant, Kanji *parshad*, to bring a mature camel and a short horse for his brother. Sura Khachar gave some clothes to Ichchharam and cash to spend on the journey. Nana Sukhanand Swami and Gumanji *parshad* escorted him till Vadodara.

FESTIVAL OF MAHA SHIVRATRI

The festival of Maha Shivratri arrived. Shri Hari instructed the sadhus and devotees to undertake a fast. He, too, did the same. Maharaj wished to promote respect for all the divine incarnations and devas. On that day he held a Maha Rudra *abhishek* ritual performed by Brahmins. Maharaj gave cash donations to them, and the next day he held a feast in their honour. The Brahmins were pleased and praised Maharaj. They sanctioned his devotees' reverence for him as God. Their own perception

towards Maharaj took an upturn.

JHINABHAI'S STUBBORN RESOLVE

Jhinabhai Darbar of Panchala became unhappy because Shriji Maharaj had refused his request to visit Panchala. He soon came out of his melancholy mood through his spiritual understanding and knowledge. However, he remained adamant that Maharaj must come to Panchala. For this he pledged, "Till Maharaj does not visit Panchala I will abstain from taking ghee, milk, curds, buttermilk, and food items made from edible oil and sugar crystals. I will also not wear a headgear (*pagh*)."

Jhinabhai's obstinate pledge troubled his family members. Whenever Jhinabhai and his family attended social functions their relatives felt it to be inauspicious for Jhinabhai to come without wearing his *pagh*. They all criticized him because in those days a headgear was not worn for a prescribed period after the death of a kin. In spite of the censure, Jhinabhai remained stubborn in his resolve. Whenever guests came to his home in Panchala, they felt offended when Jhinabhai was without his headgear.

One day, Verabhai of Upleta came to Panchala. He heard of Jhinabhai's strange pledge and the frustration it was causing to his family and relatives. Verabhai talked to Jhinabhai in solitude, "Bapu, you are spiritually knowledgeable, therefore you should remain happy in whatever Maharaj wishes and does. Do you know your pledge is the cause of blatant censure from all relatives and others?"

"Yes, Verabhai! However, I can no longer bear Maharaj's separation. My heart is on fire. Only if Maharaj comes to Panchala will it be doused." Jhinabhai's face was enveloped in deep gloom.

Verabhai shot a smile in response and humbly said, "Bapu, I'm a small person before you, so it would be improper for me to offer you advice. Even in Satsang I'm a novice, and have been recently transformed from my unscrupulous ways.

Whereas Bapu, you are a veteran *satsangi* and highly knowledgeable in spiritual matters. To resolve your poignant yearning for Maharaj why don't you go for his darshan to wherever he is? You should not insist that Maharaj comes to Panchala to relieve you from the pangs of separation.

VERABHAI PROMISES TO BRING MAHARAJ

Verabhai's words touched the conscience of Jhinabhai. He understood that one should be happy in accordance with Maharaj's wish. But, he still felt that Maharaj should come to Panchala. Then he relented, "Verabhai, I'll do whatever you say."

Verabhai was pleased and appealed, "Bapu, give up your pledge. Put on your headgear. People speak ill of you and blame Maharaj for it."

"But, what about my pledge?" Jhinabhai fretted.

Verabhai reassured him, "I will bring Maharaj from Loya straight to Panchala. And if he refuses, I will die." Verabhai's promise alleviated Jhinabhai's anxiety. He felt confident that Verabhai would surely bring Maharaj to Panchala. Jhinabhai agreed, "I will do as you've said, but Maharaj must come."

Verabhai was happy. He guaranteed, "Just as your pledge is firm, so is mine. Now you must stop worrying."

MAHARAJ REFUSES TO GO TO PANCHALA

Verabhai set off to Loya that very day. On meeting Maharaj he informed him of Jhinabhai's pledge. Shri Hari merely listened silently. Verabhai asserted, "Maharaj you'll have to come to Panchala straight from here. Otherwise, I'll stab myself with a dagger. I, too, have pledged thus."

Shri Hari turned solemn at Verabhai's words and replied, "Since Jhinabhai and you have pledged, I too have vowed to make you give up your pledges. I wish to make you relinquish your wilful pledges. I am not going to Panchala.

And I will not stop you from stabbing yourself.”

Momentarily, Verabhai looked crestfallen. Then he mustered some courage and spoke, “Maharaj, I will keep my word!”

Shri Hari called Brahmanand Swami, Muktanand Swami and others and announced, “Get ready to go to Gadhpur.” Then Maharaj called Naja Jogiya and told him, “Get ready quickly. I want to go to Gadhpur right now. Tell all the *parshads* to prepare to leave.” Shri Hari told Verabhai to come with him. Verabhai was dumbstruck.

“I AM FOREVER WITH MY DEVOTEES.”

Maharaj departed from Loya with his sadhus and twenty-five *parshads*. But Verabhai trailed behind. He thought that he had no alternative but to stab himself to death. Only Brahmanand Swami or Sura Khachar could make Maharaj change his decision. But they had all left. With these thoughts he dismounted from his horse and tethered it to a tree. Then, he took out his dagger and raised his hand to stab himself. But surprisingly someone got hold of his hand from above. When he looked upwards, he saw no one. When he turned behind he was bewildered to see Maharaj. He thought that Maharaj had long since departed, “He must be a few miles away, so how could he come here?”

“There is no need to think thus Verabhai! I am forever with my devotees. On seeing your care and love for Jhinabhai I have given up my vow. You go to Panchala right now. I will come and stay there to celebrate the festival of Fuldol.”

Verabhai was perplexed; he did not know what to do. Should he go to Panchala or should he gallop forth in the direction Maharaj had taken? He decided to catch up with Maharaj. He rode his horse swiftly and joined the retinue. Muktanand Swami and Brahmanand Swami were travelling in bullock carts. On seeing Verabhai they said, “Verabhai, there is no need to join us. Maharaj has told you to go straight

to Panchala. We, too, are all going to Panchala. Verabhai smiled with joy. He felt God fulfils the wishes of his devotees. Since he had stood by Jhinabhai, Maharaj was happy. Verabhai bowed to the sadhus and headed for Panchala.

MAHARAJ ARRIVES IN PANCHALA

Shri Hari travelled to Pipardi, Hathsani, Jasdand, Atkot and reached Gondal. Here he stayed at a guesthouse. When the king of Gondal, Shri Motiji, heard of Maharaj’s arrival he felt honoured. He was further enthused on seeing Muktanand Swami, who had inspired him into Satsang. King Motiji immediately ordered his men to bring food materials. Then his royal cooks prepared meals for Maharaj, sadhus and the devotees. Mukund Brahmachari prepared a meal for Maharaj. After taking his meal Maharaj gave the *thal* to Shri Motiji and then served his sadhus. Shri Hari served them generously and urged all to eat heartily.

Shri Hari left Gondal and proceeded to Kandorda, Jhanjhmer and Ganod, where he spent the night in a mango orchard. The next day, Maharaj left for Panchala. Prior to Maharaj’s arrival, sadhus from Junagadh had reached Panchala to make preparations. Verabhai had arrived in Panchala four days earlier and informed Jhinabhai of the good news. He told him, “Maharaj is coming because of your devotion to him. He tested you, but he also put me through a similar trial. Trials are his means to gauge our devotion and faith. Let us be happy in abiding by his wish.” Jhinabhai realized that he should never ever be stubborn in making Maharaj comply to his wishes. ♦

(Contd. in next issue)

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



Yogiji Maharaj's College of Brahmavidya

Everyone remembers a great teacher. Maybe he or she was from our childhood years when, while playing with crayons, we were taught the colours of the rainbow. Or maybe the teacher who put us through some of the toughest tests, not in the classroom, but on the playing field. As rain lashed down and the bitter wind froze our enthusiasm, the gym teacher never stopped blowing his whistle, egging us on to finish that final lap. We had fallen twice, grazed our hands and bruised our knees, but he never failed to impart the lesson of perseverance and determination. We might even remember, unwillingly, the teacher who kept us back, long after the bell had rung and the corridors emptied. Even though you pleaded that it wasn't you who threw the

paper aeroplanes, the teacher knew better and handed you detention. Sitting in that damp, lonely classroom the echoes of students playing outside seemed louder than ever. Waiting for the moment you could join your friends, you stared at the clock. The long hands were labouring slower than usual – they were not on your side. Neither was the teacher, you felt, but this was an important lesson on discipline.

Clearly, learning is more than course textbooks, periodic tables and mathematical formulas. Learning is about life.

The writer Mitch Albom learned this truth the hard way when he discovered his college professor, Morrie Schwartz, was dying. Every Tuesday he would visit Morrie in his home. Mitch would bring a hamper of goods – salad,

vermicelli and vegetables. Morrie would give him advice – on love, family and happiness. This continued until Morrie passed away.

However, the teacher we wish to highlight was different. His messages were not realizations at his death-bed. He did not have just the one student whom he taught only once a week. His teachings were from within; indeed, they were eternal. And they don't simply guide us in life, but in the afterlife too. This teacher is Yogiji Maharaj.

MONDAY MORNING BLUES

Come Monday morning and getting out of bed to go to school seems harder than getting a PhD. It's either too cold to go outside or you've got a stomachache or your homework is due and you haven't even started it.

A university professor once set an exam question in which he asked, "What is the difference between ignorance and apathy?" The professor felt he had no choice but to give an A+ to a student who answered, "I don't know and I don't care." These two devils in disguise lead to laziness – something Yogiji Maharaj despised.

To ensure the youths were never sitting around idle, Yogiji Maharaj would create a six-day timetable to follow. He would do all this despite his own hectic schedule of *vicharan*, *padhramanis*, *sabhas*, discourses, writing letters and meeting devotees. If he felt necessary, he would meet the youths individually and give specific instructions on how to correctly complete their tasks.

When 20 or 30 youths were travelling with him, Yogiji Maharaj would split the youths into three groups and give them different projects to complete. In each group he designated a leader responsible for the entire group, similar to a head-boy or prefect. While one group would listen to discourses, another would memorize selected Vachanamruts, Swamini Vatos and kirtans. The third group would fetch water to

wash their clothes, clean the dishes and the mandir campus. He made sure they utilized their time to the fullest – there were no free periods!

Yogiji Maharaj even made a list of rules and regulations they had to follow. If any individual fell behind in his studies or chores he would sit with him and discuss a plan to get back on track. Days, even weeks later, in his natural, caring way he would ask for a progress report, motivating him again if necessary.

Behind Yogiji Maharaj's care and concern for the students was the pure intent to award them the highest certificate, the highest reward – supreme bliss. He once revealed to a youth, "I want to give you all wisdom and elevate you to the status like that of Bhagatji Maharaj."

When you knew this, getting out of bed seemed to be worth it.

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE LABORATORY

Sometimes, reading chapter upon chapter is not enough. You have to slam the book shut, put on a pair of safety goggles and try your hand at mixing some chemicals in a beaker. We can only learn so much from theory – after which, practical experiments and demonstration take over.

It was Diwali season and Yogiji Maharaj was in Gondal. He was about to leave for Rajkot, when he saw some youths washing dishes. He walked over, bent down and picked up a dish. As he wiped his finger across the dish, the greasy residue left a mark. The youths had not scrubbed it thoroughly enough. He turned to them and said, "You shouldn't wash it like this. Thakorji (God) eats from these dishes." Defending their laxity, the youths replied, "But Yogi Bapa, the devotees eat from these dishes..." "Does God not reside within the devotees? Maharaj and Swami residing within these devotees eat from these dishes. That's why we should take care and ensure they are clean and shine like silver. Look, like this...."

Wearing his *pagh* and shawl, an ageing Yogiji Maharaj crouched down and washed some utensils himself.

Yogiji Maharaj was forever ready to put theory into practice.

ONTO THE PLAYING FIELD

When training for track and field or pacing through sports drills, we are often reminded of two important mantras. Yogiji Maharaj coached the youths and hit both these lessons home.

The first is “No pain, no gain” – without hard work we cannot succeed.

Yogiji Maharaj once asked a young child to observe a waterless fast. The child found it extremely difficult. In the evening, he urged one of the youths to ask Yogiji Maharaj to let him drink water. The youth turned to Yogiji Maharaj and questioned, “Don’t you feel pity on this young child?” Yogiji Maharaj’s reply was insightful, “You feel pity towards his body; I feel pity upon his soul.”

Often, Yogiji Maharaj would have the youths perform fasts every five days. Before the memory of the previous fast had faded, there was another one waiting for them. On one occasion a youth brought his friend along to meet Yogiji Maharaj. Yogiji Maharaj had barely asked him his name when he immediately threw down the gauntlet, “Will you do a waterless fast?”

It’s not what you’d expect on meeting someone for the first time. But Yogiji Maharaj knew that in performing such austerities, the reward was the bliss of God. He handed out fasts so generously that the youths branded their group “YYUC” – meaning “Yogi Yuvak¹ Upvas² College”.

The second mantra is “There is no ‘I’ in team” – work together not against each other. Yogiji Maharaj was a team player and he expected us all to stand together shoulder to shoulder.

Yogiji Maharaj was in Gondal. On seeing two people arguing, he turned to a youth next to him, swiftly led him away and revealed, “If people wouldn’t argue like this, I’d live another fifty years on this earth.”

Yogiji Maharaj could tolerate many things – physically and mentally – but discord among devotees made him wince. If he felt it creeping in, he would let the youths know. In fact, he once made Vinubhai (Pujya Mahant Swami before initiation) perform two waterless fasts to atone for having merely heard negative talks about devotees.

YOGIJI MAHARAJ’S MARKING SYSTEM

Yogiji Maharaj’s Brahmavidya College was a college with a difference. You didn’t have to bring any books and there weren’t any written exams. That’s because every day was a test in itself – whether it was performing *seva*, reciting bhajans or simply understanding the greatness of fellow devotees. If you tried hard, Yogiji Maharaj didn’t give you an A+ or draw a smiley, but he awarded you his care and affection. It was this that won over the youths.

A youth was once struck with fever. At two in the morning he woke from his sleep to find someone massaging his head. His pain temporarily relieved, he didn’t feel like getting up. Half an hour went by. When he eventually unfurled the bed sheet covering his head, he bolted upright. All the while it had been Yogiji Maharaj massaging his head!

In Dar-es-Salaam, Yogiji Maharaj entered the bathroom and saw the youths had left their dirty clothes lying there since morning. Spotting an opportunity, he locked the door from inside and washed all their clothes.

We saw earlier how Yogiji Maharaj gave fasts as if handing out sweets. But with as much concern, if not more, he would ensure the youths had a proper breakfast the next day.

When the teacher goes to such lengths for

1. ‘Youth’.

2. ‘Fast’.

you, it's difficult not to be won over.

One night, while everyone was asleep, Vinubhai woke and saw Yogiji Maharaj doing *dandvats*. When Vinubhai asked who he was doing *dandvats* to, Yogiji Maharaj replied, "To the youths! They've left a large city like Mumbai to travel in the villages where they tolerate hardships and perform *seva*; the least I can do is understand their greatness."

He understood that by giving up the freedom and luxuries of a cosmopolitan life, the youths had made a huge sacrifice.

BACK TO SCHOOL

As a new school year begins, a new teacher steps in. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has not only followed the curriculum set by Yogiji Maharaj, but has given the course much impetus and taught it to youths worldwide. In fact he did so even before he took the role, as he continues to do so today.

The year was 1968. Pramukh Swami, the president of BAPS, reached Vidyanagar after midnight. Not wanting to wake anyone, he noticed a light glimmering inside one of the dorm rooms. As he pushed open the door he glanced at the empty room. Moments later the occupants entered just as he was making preparations to go to sleep. The youths, startled to see Swamishri in their dorm room, insisted they wake up the resident sadhus so that suitable arrangements could be made for him. Swamishri refused and signalled he would be comfortable sleeping on the floor. The youths were embarrassed. They offered their beds, but again Swamishri flatly declined.

The youths faced another dilemma – it was time for their tea-break. Staring at each other, they thought how would they make tea with Swamishri in their room? One youth spoke and pretended that they wanted to drink some warm milk. They felt Swamishri would leave them to it. However, they were surprised when

he offered to make the milk for them. When Swamishri finished, their eyes could not hide what they tasted – Swamishri had served them all tea!

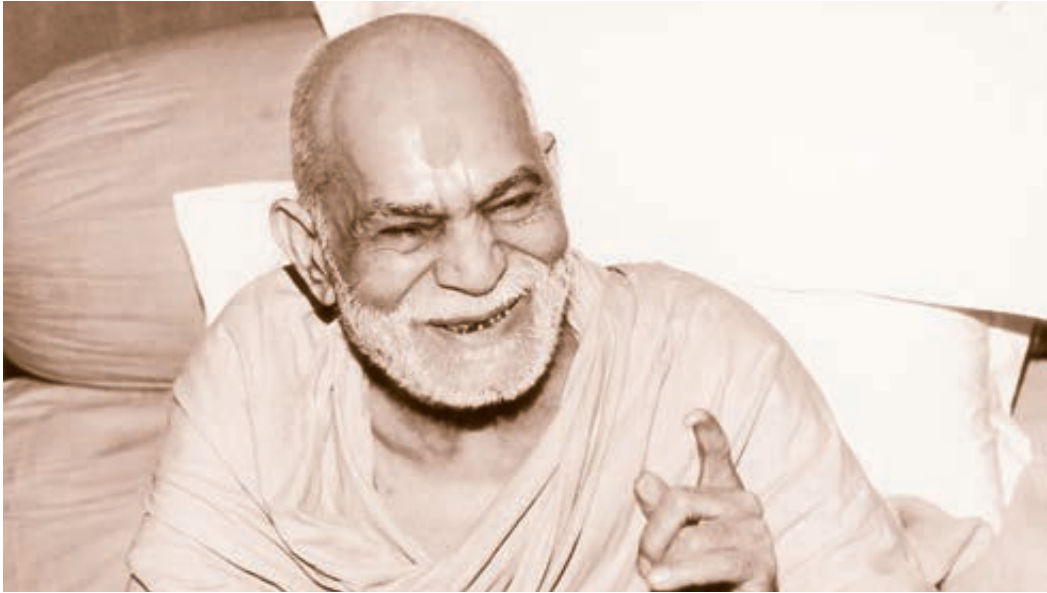
The youths asked, "How did you know we wanted to drink tea?"

Smiling, Swamishri replied, "I knew."

Here is a teacher, a mentor, a guru who looks after our simplest needs. But he doesn't stop there. In 2007 a convention was held in Jacksonville, Florida. Thousands of youths had gathered for the event. The audience was told to stand up if Swamishri had chosen their name. A very large number of youths rose to their feet. A second question was asked, "If you have ever received guidance from Swamishri through a letter, then stand up." Again, many stood up. One by one, the youths were asked if Swamishri had helped them in some way in their studies, blessed them over the phone, personally met them, etc. By the end there was not a single person sitting.

These were youths thousands of miles away from India. Many were born and brought up in America. Yet, Swamishri's care and guidance has gone not only beyond the classroom walls, but crossed oceans and continents.

Emulating Yogiji Maharaj, Swamishri has not written his lessons on the blackboard, where they can be erased, but directly onto the youths' hearts, minds and souls. Further, there's no end to his love; school doesn't end at 3 or 4 p.m. when the bell rings. It goes on around the clock, day and night. Nor does it stop at the end of term or on graduation day – it continues until you've attained the final degree of eternal bliss – Akshardham. That's the teacher's guarantee. ♦



BAPS Youth Wing Timeline 1952-2012

- 1952, November:** Yogiji Maharaj establishes BAPS Youth Wing. First *yuvak mandal* in Mumbai: Weekly *sabhas*, three-monthly handwritten magazine – *Jnanyagna*.
- 1952:** *Yuvak mandals* started in Kampala and Mbale in Uganda.
- 1953:** Youths begin to attend satsang *sabha*, London, England.
- 1955, 27 January:** ‘Madhyasth Karyavahak Samiti’ – Yuvak Mandal Central Office formed.
- 1955, 23-29 May:** 1st Yuvak Shibir, Atladra. Attended by 226 *yuvaks*, 24 senior devotees and 15 sadhus. Welcome address by Shastri Narayanswarupdasji (Pramukh Swami Maharaj).
- 1955:** *Yuvak mandals* started in Nairobi, Mombasa, Jinja, Tororo and other centres during Yogiji Maharaj’s visit to East Africa.
- 1955, October:** Youth volunteer force established to serve in festival celebrations and other BAPS activities.
- 1956:** 1st Adhiveshan, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1957:** 2nd Adhiveshan, Mombasa, Kenya
- 1960:** *Yuvak mandals* started in Nakuru, Kisumu, Mwanza, Dar-es-Salaam and other places in East Africa.
- 1962:** 3rd Adhiveshan, Tororo, Uganda.
- 1964:** 4th Adhiveshan, Mwanza, Tanzania.
- 1965:** 5th Adhiveshan, Gulu, Uganda.
- 1965:** Yogiji Maharaj inaugurates first Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar, Gujarat, India.
- 1967:** Separate youth satsang assemblies begin, London, England.
- 1969, 9-11 May:** 1st National Adhiveshan, Atladra, Gujarat, India. Over 500 youths participated in 11 competitions. Prizes presented by Yogiji Maharaj.
- 1970:** 6th Adhiveshan, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 1971, 17-21 May:** 2nd National Adhiveshan, Gondal, Gujarat, India. Over 1,200 youths from 100 BAPS youth centres. Welcome address by Shastri Narayanswarupdasji (Pramukh Swami Maharaj).
- 1972:** 7th Adhiveshan, Kampala, Uganda.



Yogiji Maharaj inspires youths towards a nobler life



Prize winners and participants of the *adhiveshan* with Yogiji Maharaj, Atladra, 1969



Swamishri blesses the prize winners and other youths, 1971



Swamishri blesses youths after a traditional dance performance

- 1972:** *Yuvak mandal* started in Ashton-under-Lyne, England.
- 1973:** Adhiveshan, London, England.
- 1974:** *Yuvak mandal* started in Leicester, England.
- 1976, 10-11 January:** 1st Karyakar Shibir, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. Youths from centres throughout Gujarat attended *karyakar* training *shibir*. Held annually since then.
- 1977, November:** National Bal-Yuva Adhiveshan, London, UK.
- 1978:** National Bal-Yuva Adhiveshan, Gondal, India. 4,000 participants.
- 1979, August:** National Bal-Yuva Adhiveshan, London, UK.
- 1980, November:** National Bal-Yuva Adhiveshan, London, UK.
- 1984, 15-27 May:** 750 youths participate in 'Maru gam Sanskardham' project to promote addiction-free, faith-based life. Total of 208 villages in Gujarat and Maharashtra visited, 11,000 people freed of addictions and 29,000 families contacted.
- 1987, August:** National Bal-Yuva Adhiveshan, London, UK.
- 1990, 22-26 May:** International Yuva Adhiveshan. Over 21,000 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* from throughout Gujarat, Mumbai, Kolkata, UK, USA, Africa, Middle East and other countries participated. Vice-president of India, Shri Shankardayal Sharma, attended.
- 1994, 26-28 August:** National Bal-Yuva Adhiveshan, London, UK. Over 650 participants.
- 1994, 8-16 October:** National Bal-Yuva Karyakar Adhiveshan, Vidyanagar, India. Over 4,600 participants.
- 1996, 28 July to 2 August:** *Adhiveshan* in Catskills, USA. Over 3,000 participants.
- 1996, October:** Regional Karyakar Adhiveshans,

India. Around 1,450 participants.

2000, May-June: Inter-Regional Kishore-Kishori Adhiveshans, India. Over 5,000 participants.

2001, May: Inter-Regional Yuva Karyakar Adhiveshans held in India. Over 4,600 participants.

2003, May-June: *Adhiveshans* held in India at following levels: National Senior Yuva Karyakar (465 participants), Inter-Regional Kishore-Kishori (8,300), National Bal-Balika Karyakar (4,800) and Inter-Regional Bal-Balika (35,000).

2005, April: The BAPS Women's Wing initiates BAPS Women's Ideals for Learning and Living (WILL) programme for the academic, social, vocational and spiritual training of young women.

2005, May-June: Regional and Inter-Regional Yuva Karyakar Adhiveshans, India. Over 17,300 participants.

2006, 22-23 August: National Kishore-Kishori Adhiveshan, London, UK. About 400 participants.

2007, 30 April: Yuva Talim Kendra (Youth Training Centre) begins at Sarangpur, Gujarat, India. In-depth six-month residential training for 100 youths. New batches every year.

2007, May-June: Regional, Inter-regional and National Kishore-Kishori and Yuvak-Yuvati Adhiveshans, India.

2012: National Youth Adhiveshan to celebrate BAPS 60th Year of Youth Activities in Sarangpur, in which 3,900 male and female youths participated.

2012: Year-long celebrations of 60th anniversary of BAPS Youth Wing (see box p. 5).

2013, 6 January: International celebration of 60th anniversary of the BAPS Youth Activities, Ahmedabad. Over 60,000 youths attended. ♦



International Yuva Adhiveshan, 1990



Youths present a drama during the Youth Adhiveshan, 1990



Youths serve in disaster relief work, Surat



Youths engaged in spiritual discussions

BAPS FESTIVALS

60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Grand, Colourful Celebrations in Ahmedabad



OF BAPS YOUTH ACTIVITIES

6 January 2013





Parking for over 800 buses and hundreds of other vehicles on the riverfront of Sabarmati River

It will forever be fondly remembered as a unique display of youth energy. On 6 January 2013, over 60,000 yuvaks and yuvatis gathered from all over the world to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the BAPS Youth Wing established by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj in 1952. Based on the divine Vedic principles revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and the messages of virtuous character and noble living, a spectacular vibrant presentation enthralled the worldwide audience...

From 1.00 p.m. a steady stream of *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* had begun to proceed towards the Sardar Patel Stadium in Navrangpura, Ahmedabad. When the entry gates opened at 3.30 p.m. the uniformed youths entered the arena, collecting their pre-packed evening meal, celebration flag and *arti*. The upper perimeter of the stadium was decorated with flags of 29 nations alternating with BAPS flags. The *yuvaks* were seated in stands 1 to 10, while the seating for the *yuvatis* was in stands 11 to 16. Soon the stadium was abuzz with the

anticipatory chatter of youths. As they eagerly awaited for the start, they marvelled at the 3,600 sq. ft. main stage and the beautiful artistic decorations on its 30-ft. high backdrop. At the centre of the backdrop was a *tilak* with an Akshar Deri in the middle, from which emerged cut-outs in six colours, symbolizing youths and representing the six main values promoted by the BAPS Youth Wing over the past six decades.

In front of the main stage was the 3,000 sq. ft. performance stage, fitted with a wide variety of stage lights. Adjacent to the main stage were



Over 60,000 youths seated in the Sardar Patel Stadium



Mahant Swami and the Chief Minister light the inauguration *deepa*



Youths perform the *deepa* dance

two large and two medium-sized LED screens to display the images captured by the 20 video cameras located at various vantage points throughout the stadium.

By 4.30 p.m. the majority of youths had settled into their seats and so an impromptu pre-celebration show was presented on the performance stage by groups of youths from Nadiad, Kolkata, Dar-es-Salaam and other centres.

At precisely 5.15 p.m. the celebration assembly commenced with youths hailing the 'Jai Naad' and blowing conches. In addition to youths watching in the stadium, the assembly was relayed live to thousands of youths and devotees worldwide by webcast on the Sanstha's website and on AASTHA TV channel.

After singing of the Swaminarayan *maha-*

mantra dhun, the prayer '*Bhāv dharine bolo jay jay...*' was sung. Then, a breathtaking video compilation of the celebratory events held throughout the past year by youths at BAPS centres in India and abroad to commemorate the 60th anniversary was shown on the LED screens.

Thereafter, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Mahant of the BAPS Mandir in Bochasan, addressed the youths.

Following this, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Narendrabhai Modi, was welcomed on stage to rapturous applause by the youths. He was delighted to see such a large gathering of disciplined and spiritually oriented youths. The view of the uniformed youths seated in the stands and the grounds was indeed a great and impressive sight. Due to the blessings of Pramukh



Chief Minister Shri Narendrabhai Modi addresses the youths



Parade by youths from BAPS centres worldwide



Mahant Swami and the Chief Minister flag off the grand BAPS Parade

Swami Maharaj, these youths represented the modern-day Nachiketas, the torchbearers of Hindu culture and spirituality.

The assembly continued with words of praise for and prayer to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

On behalf of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the *sadguru* sadhus of BAPS, Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Doctor Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami, were garlanded on stage.

Then Chief Minister Narendrabhai Modi garlanded the life-size *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj on the stage. Pujya Mahant Swami garlanded the Chief Minister. Then, together, they both lit the inauguration *deepa* for the day's celebration. Simultaneously, the youths pre-

sented the *deepa* dance to the Sanskrit prayers '*Vande shri Purushottamam cha paramam...*'. The lively dance concluded with the youths arranging themselves in a formation to spell 'BAPS', conveying the message that countless youths have been taken from the darkness of ignorance to the light of spiritual knowledge by the BAPS Youth Wing.

Then, addressing the youths, the Chief Minister said, "I bow at the feet of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, whose blessings we forever experience and for whom there is no difference between manifest and non-manifest. The whole world is seeing this spectacle. From wherever in the world people may be watching this, they will be experiencing such faith that even in this age there is a divine energy on this earth. Today, this divine energy is being experienced, and because of it they will be experiencing hope for mankind's val-





140 youths on 70 motorbikes circle the stadium

ues and liberation. It is a matter of great pride that this divine event is occurring in Gujarat.”

Thereafter, Pujya Mahant Swami and the Chief Minister waved large BAPS flags to set off the grand BAPS parade. One-by-one groups of youths from different regions of Gujarat, India and the world, displayed the variety and specialty of their own particular area or country, either on the performance stage or on the ground perimeter. Flag-bearing youths marched on to the performance stage to the tune of the bhajan ‘Jay ho, jay ho, jay jay ho, yuvā shakti ki jay ho... Manāye ham, shashti purti mahotsavam...’. The parade then continued as follows:

- On the outer perimeter of the ground, 140 youths on 70 motorbikes – one riding, one standing and holding a *mashal* flame – circled the seated audience, as the bhajan

‘Ame sau yuvā, Swāminā shurā...’ played in the background.

- Anand and Vidyanagar youths carrying Shri Harikrishna Maharaj on a *palkhi* with some playing the *shehnai* and dancing to the bhajan ‘Rele sharnāinā sur ke haiyu have hāth na rahe...’
- Youths of Manjipura playing the *shehnai* and dancing in the South Indian Bharatnatyam style.
- Youths of Dhuliya performing the Ganesh dance of Maharashtra.
- Traditional dances of Rajasthan: *lathi* (stick) dance by youths of Jaipur and Shirohi; *manjira* dance by youths of BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad.
- South Gujarat’s *nauka* (boat) dance by youths of Tithal. Bhajan: ‘Dariyāmā chālī holi...’.





Lathi dance by youths from Jaipur and Shirohi



Nauka dance by youths from South Gujarat



Bhangra dance by youths from Punjab and New Delhi



Ganesh dance by youths from Dhuliya, Maharashtra

- *Raas* (stick) dance of Saurashtra by youths of Gondal.
- *Bhangra* dance by youths of Punjab and New Delhi.
- Youths of Adas (Gujarat) saluted India to the tune of the bhajan '*Sukhdam, shubhdam, varadam yashdam Bhārat Mātaram...*'.
- East and South African dances by youths of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.
- *Ekta* (unity) dance by Bharuch youths, followed by representatives of BAPS youth centres in Africa, Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific carrying their national flags. Bhajan: '*Ham ek hai, ektā hai shakti hamāri...*'.
- Youths of BAPS *chhatralayas* dancing to the tune of the bhajan '*Akshar-Purushottamnā dankā digantmā sambhalāy chhe...*'.

The simultaneous presentations on the performance stage and around the ground perimeter, together with the upbeat music and meaningful lyrics combined to produce a grand cultural display of the worldwide BAPS Youth Wing. The enthusiasm of youths from the megacities of America to the *adivasis* of India was transmitted to the youths in the stadium, who cheered the parade from start to finish. The Chief Minister was also deeply touched by the kalaidoscopic parade. Then, Pujya Dr Swami honoured the Chief Minister with a shawl and Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami presented him a memento. Thereafter, the Chief Minister bid farewell to youths and departed from the assembly.

The assembly continued with a moving video tribute to Nilkanth Varni – the ideal of youth – portraying his virtues of service, austerity, *brahmacharya*, fearlessness, patience, humility, discipline and others.

Over the past 60 years, the BAPS Youth Wing has nurtured youths on the path of spirituality and morality. Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, the first member of the Youth Wing established by Yogiji Maharaj in 1952, then spoke to the youths,

narrating the 60-year journey of the BAPS Youth Wing, “Sixty years ago, as instructed by Yogiji Maharaj, six youths gathered to form the *yuvak mandal* in Mumbai. With Yogiji Maharaj’s blessings, today over 60,000 have gathered here. Yogiji Maharaj’s grand vision was that youths worldwide develop good character and practice spirituality to lead a happy life. With Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s blessings, seeing the progress of the youth activities and today’s divine gathering, the faith that Yogiji Maharaj’s vision will certainly be fulfilled is strengthened.”

Afterwards, a delightful video of Yogiji Maharaj and youths was shown on the LED screens. Through his selfless and innocent love, Yogiji Maharaj inspired youths to develop discipline, satsang and good character, perform service, and observe commands and cultivate other virtues.

Following this introductory section highlighting the history and spread of the BAPS Youth Wing, the next phase focused on six of the values at the heart of BAPS Youth Activities.

The youths compering in this section were Ashish Chondagar and Pawan Adesra. Each value was introduced in turns and elaborated upon through speeches, skits, video shows and story narrations.

SIX VALUES OF THE BAPS YOUTH WING

Established by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj in 1952, the BAPS Youth Wing has continued to flourish like a giant banyan tree due to the selfless love and efforts of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Thousands of youths daily experience the divine fruits of the BAPS Youth Wing by progressing on the path of cultivating Vedic values in their lives. The six prime values of BAPS Youth Wing are: *sanghnishtha* (unity), *sayam* (self-control, discipline), *seva* (service), *sanskar* (good character), satsang (spirituality) and guru bhakti (devotion to guru).

The presentations of each of these virtues is subsequently described.



South and East African dances by Dar-es-Salaam youths



Traditional dances from throughout India



Traditional tribal dance by *adivasi* youths



Floats displaying various traditions: Guru-shishya tradition



SANGHNISHTHA: Flags representing BAPS centres worldwide. All centres are part of the BAPS family

YOUTH VALUE 1: SANGHNISHTHA

Sanghnishtha means unity.

Today, BAPS's one big family of youths had gathered; they have the same goal and the same inspirer. And united youths can achieve anything. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has given youths from all backgrounds one common spiritual identity and united them on a common platform. This is indeed a remarkable achievement. With each other's help, they are all progressing on the spiritual path.

Expressing this message of unity the bhajan, *'Ham hai BAPS ke yuvā, ham yuvā navyuvā, ham*

hai Swāmi ki santān...' was relayed as youths wearing the special 60th anniversary T-shirt and cap presented a vibrant victory dance.

With each verse, the audience responded to the increasing tempo. The dancers rhythmically danced carrying the flags of different nations. At the end they combined to display the various flags together and, finally, in one swift move, they reversed the flags to reveal the BAPS flag and logo. The audience vigorously applauded the message that no matter where in the world BAPS youths may reside, but they are all part of one big, happy family.

After the dance, a video of the major BAPS centres located on different continents was shown.

Then, Pujya Dr Swami reinforced the message of unity, "At the root of why we have all gathered here today is unity. And at the root of this unity is *swarupnishtha* – firm faith in God and the Gunatit Saturush. The belief that Bhagwan Swaminarayan is supreme God, Gunatitanand Swami is Aksharbrahman, and Shri Bhagatji Maharaj, Shri Shastriji Maharaj, Shri Yogiji Ma-





SAYAM: The frightful dance of terror in the form of addictions

haraj and Shri Pramukh Swami Maharaj are all the Gunatit Satpurush. They are the gateway to *moksha*; they are our gurus. It is because this faith is firmly embedded in hearts of youths that there is unity. But still we must continue to progress in this direction.”

YOUTH VALUE 2: SAYAM

Sayam means self-control – leading a disciplined life.

Today, society is plagued with the scourge of addictions, vulgarity and uncontrolled materialism. Even amid these evils, BAPS youths lead a life of self-control and shun these temptations.

On stage, the fear-inducing sounds of addictions filled the air, as dancers dressed as larger-than-life beer bottles, cigarettes, hookahs, drug injections, *gutkha* pouches and other forms of addiction scampered around during the dance of terror. Amid the commotion, virtuous BAPS youths arrived on stage and challenged the addictions. The mere presence of the youths caused the addictions to disperse.

Thus, this creative dance conveyed the message that wherever BAPS youths go, they are able to dispel the nuisance of addictions.

Many BAPS youths endure great difficulties to observe the *niyams* given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The story of one such youth, Ambarav Jadav, who served under immense hardships during the Kargil War, was depicted in a short skit scripted by Adarshjivan Swami (see p.39 for details of story).

Thus, BAPS youths spread the light of addiction-free life and character wherever they go.



BAPS youths dispel addictions



SEVA: *Seva* dance depicts social and spiritual services by BAPS youths

YOUTH VALUE 3. SEVA

Seva means service.

BAPS youths are taught to selflessly serve their family, society and country. Whether the service is big or small, when done selflessly it achieves great results and through such service even the ordinary can become great.

To the tune of the bhajan, '*Sevā jīvanmantra hamārā jan sevā aur Prabhukī sevā, sevā hī jīvan hamārā...*' youths performed an energetic dance showing the wide variety of services performed by BAPS youths. The services depicted included

cleaning of large utensils, assistance in construction work, earthquake relief work, helping the ill and housekeeping. At the centre, the dancers erected a wall, which when rotated 180° revealed the message '*seva*'. The audience applauded the entire performance, which revealed how BAPS youths serve in productive ways.

By the inspiration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, BAPS youths are actively involved in relief work during famines, droughts, earthquakes and other natural disasters. The catalogue of such past services was shown by a video presentation. The video included a message from the late Jain Acharya Pujya Muni Sushilkumarji, "The youths who are serving are so obedient and humble. Towards others they are generous while they remain self-disciplined – such service is difficult."

BAPS youths serve without prejudice towards religion, caste, social status or any other differences.

Commenting in the video, Kanubhai Patel, who gave up his dream job in the USA to dedicate himself in service, said, "It is my great



Spirit of *seva* enacted by youths



SANSKAR: BAPS youths live life of good character and inspire others also

privilege that I have this opportunity to serve in Pramukh Swami Maharaj's great works. Such service is the fulfilment of my life. My biggest reward in life is to be able to serve this Sanstha, society and country."

After the video, Adarshjivan Swami narrated the stories of service by two youths. The first was about Brijrajsinh Mukeshsinh Chavda – who rescued a 3-year-old boy who had fallen into an 80-ft. hole in Gandhinagar's Sector 28. The second was of Niral and Vishal Soni of Mumbai. The block of flats where they lived in was in imminent danger of collapsing. Yet, instead of saving their valuables, they helped others to escape from the impending danger (see pp.40-41 for details of both stories).

YOUTH VALUE 4: SANSKAR

Sanskar refers to good character.

For millennia, Hindu tradition has placed greater importance on wealth in the form of good character rather than material wealth. BAPS teaches youths to develop good virtues in their life.

Youths presented this value by performing a dance displaying the various virtues of BAPS youths. Youths also endeavour to impart the message of good character to others, no matter what difficulties they encounter. This was symbolized in the dance by youths dressed as oxen pulling a cart.

Then a video on the theme 'Develop good character and create a society with good character' was shown.

Thereafter, Atmatrupta Swami narrated the story of Pinkesh Patel of Siswa village, who served his ailing mother for 18 years and exemplified the



Youths dance to portray the theme of good character



SATSANG: Creative dance depicting the spiritual foundations of the BAPS Youth Activities

message, 'Mātru devo bhava' – Serve your mother like God – in his life' (see p. 41 for story).

YOUTH VALUE 5: SATSANG

Satsang refers to spirituality.

On the foundation of spirituality, Pramukh Swami Maharaj has nurtured virtuous youths. These youths have immense faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan; their minds are filled with thoughts of pleasing God; they are engaged in *navdha* bhakti and singing the praises of God; and they observe austerities. Seeing them convinces others that

spirituality itself has become young.

On stage, youths presented a vibrant dance displaying the various satsang activities BAPS youths perform, using a larger-than-life Vachan-amrut, Swamini Vato, Shkshapatni and *gaumukhi*.

The real importance of satsang and spirituality is realized in adverse situations. Sometimes in life, one's physical strength, wealth, intelligence and social connections are unable to help or save oneself. In such situations, spirituality provides the necessary support. Thousands of BAPS youths have benefitted from such spiritual strength in their time of need. It has provided them courage and faith to persevere.

The touching story of 30-year-old Niral Patel, who was raised in America, was presented in a skit. From a young age, both of Niral's kidneys had failed and as a result he had to endure numerous operations. Yet, through faith and prayer, he has persevered through many illnesses and continues to contribute in BAPS activities at his local centre in Chicago (see p.41 for story details).

Then, Pujya Mahant Swami addressed the



Youths dance to portray spirituality



GURU BHAKTI: Colourful and vibrant expression of the youths' devotion to guru

youths, “We have seen that BAPS youths have the values of unity, service, self-control, good character and others. At the root of all is spirituality.

“Spirituality means faith in God. Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj are the manifest forms of such faith. They have immense faith in God. In honour or insult no matter what the difficulty, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj truly believe that God is the all-doer. Such faith has been cultivated in thousands of youths, volunteers and devotees. My faith in God arose only due to my association with Yogiji Maharaj. Today, we see thousands of youths with faith in God. This is the divine work of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.”

YOUTH VALUE 6: GURU BHAKTI

Many people ask, “In today’s muddy world of materialism and lack of faith in God, how are thousands of BAPS youths able to blossom like lotuses amid the mud and spread the fragrance of their good virtues?”

The answer: guru bhakti – devotion to guru.

Just as when the sun rises, flowers naturally blossom, similarly, due to the sun in the form of guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj, thousands of youths blossom with virtues. This message was depicted via a video show while youths presented a thrilling dance on the performance stage. By the divine light of the spiritual sun in the form of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, countless youths have been infused with spiritual energy. The dancers dressed as rishis, sunflowers and other symbols formed the sun and its rays in a variety of ways. The audience, too, enthusiastically appreciated



A scene from guru bhakti dance



Youths who participated in the Torch Relay Run present a formation on stage

this creative performance, as everyone recalled their debt towards Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the spiritual energy and direction he has been constantly providing.

People wonder: Amid this craze for materialism, how is Pramukh Swami Maharaj able to infuse spiritual virtues in youths? Pujya Viveksagar Swami gave the answer in his speech revealing that it was because Swamishri had endured many hardships for the welfare of the youths and showered his selfless love upon them.

Then, through an emotional video presentation Swamishri's selfless efforts for youths were shown, as the youths silently offered prayers. The compere then introduced Swamishri's video blessings by asking, "Firm *atmabuddhi* (attachment) with the *satpurush* is the means to God realization. Swami, you are such a Gunatit Satpurush so how can we develop such firm *atmabuddhi* towards you?"

Swamishri replied, "Today, many youths have come to this assembly and your enthusiasm is also evident. You will experience great joy

because you have satsang in your lives and have love for God. That is why you are happy. Otherwise, at this age, youths indulge in parties and other wasteful activities. Youths would not even like to sit here and would question, what is the need for *atmabuddhi*? Elsewhere, there are attachments of different types.

"However, here you have Yogi Bapa's blessings. He has said, 'Youths are my heart.' You all understand the importance of the heart. If the heart stops, everything stops – Jai Swaminarayan! But, Yogi Bapa has showered so much grace. He wishes to bring everyone into his contact and make them happy. That is why he showered such affection on the youths.

"Yogiji Maharaj is our heart, and we are Yogiji Maharaj's heart. The heart has to be well looked after. So, do you not have to follow his wishes? Since we are his heart, we should live with such awareness that his heart experiences no trouble at all. So, we should not act improperly. Never even think about doing wrong. Engage in discourses, singing bhajans and worship. Doing



Hundreds of torchbearing yuvaks and yuvatis stand on the stairs and various levels of the stadium

what Yogiji Maharaj likes will please him. He does not like cinema, but he does like satsang. Because you all attend the youth assemblies, Yogiji Maharaj will be smiling in Akshardham and will greet you, ‘O! My youths have come.’

“He has accepted us as his own. Who is our *atma*? The *satpurush*. So, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj are our *atma*. Their darshan is like having darshan of the *atma*. This is our principle, which you must understand. If you have *atmabuddhi* and affection for the *satpurush* everything will be fine.

“In the Vachanamrut, Shriji Maharaj has said that the way to experience the manifest darshan of God is to have *atmabuddhi* towards the *satpurush*. So, *atmabuddhi* towards the *satpurush* is equal to the darshan of Bhagwan Shriji Maharaj. This is the highest thought of all. This is the idea that has to be strengthened in oneself. You have all spent money to come here and you have not come here because you are idle. You have left your work behind and come to develop that *atmabuddhi* and deep affection towards the *satpurush*. By

understanding this about the *satpurush*, you will be happy wherever you are. No matter which corner of the world you are in, you will be happy.

“When the bhajan ‘*Ame sau Swāminā bālak, marishu Swāmine mātē...*’ was composed, the devotees had to tolerate much opposition. They were expelled from their social communities. But, what did the devotees say? They said that no matter what, but we are Swami’s children; we are Shriji’s children. We are not ordinary. Such was the enthusiasm of the devotees then.

“They endured many difficulties to spread the knowledge of Akshar-Purushottam. They were fully dedicated to the cause and were prepared to sacrifice everything for it – just as in a *yagna* one offers a coconut in sacrifice. They did not tell others, ‘You sacrifice first,’ but they themselves sacrificed first. Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and other senior sadhus dedicated themselves and so we remember them today. We must remember their sacrifices and continue the tradition. If we do this, then in 100 years Satsang will have grown immensely. We should not sit around idly. Shastriji





60th Anniversary Celebrations
of BAPS Youth Activities,
Sardar Patel Stadium.
Youths perform *arti*

Maharaj's impetus has seen us happily through the past 100 years. So now we must live in such a way that hundreds of thousands are drawn and impetus is given for the next 100 years. Do not sit idly. We are whose children? We are the children of Shriji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. That is our legacy. It is such a legacy that you will never experience any misery.

"Shriji Maharaj says that we have attained the truth. We should not engage in false talks. No gossiping. Do not desire for praise or recognition. Be a servant and serve everyone.

"Always engage in talk of *mahima*. Yogiji Maharaj used to say that one should always talk positively. That is our tradition. Even amid many hardships, our forefathers have talked only positively. They have never discouraged anyone and have nurtured this Satsang. We enjoy that legacy today. The more we protect it, the more peace and joy we will experience. So, now we must give impetus to the Satsang for the next 100 years through our lives, our actions, our tolerance and our humility. Just as our predecessors expanded the Satsang, if we maintain *samp*, *suhridaybhav* and *ekta* then there will be no problems. Nobody will be able to do anything to us. May all be blessed to live and work in this way."

To commemorate the 60th anniversary, BAPS youths from two directions had participated in a week-long Torch Relay Run. One run had begun in Dhari, the birthplace of Yogiji Maharaj, and the other had started from Mumbai, where Yogiji Maharaj had established the first *yuvak mandal*. Youths from selected BAPS centres on the route to Ahmedabad from both directions took turns to run while carrying the torch. Representing them all, 60 youths ran onto the performance stage carrying torches. At the same time, hundreds of *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* holding torches stood up from the top stand of the stadium and took up their positions. It was as if these torches symbolized the vibrant energy of the youths. Interspersed between the torchbearing youths were

youths with BAPS flags. This rapidly and meticulously executed manouvre was greeted with enthusiastic applause. Meanwhile, on stage, the youths had arranged themselves into the figure '60', to symbolize the 60th anniversary of the BAPS Youth Wing. The 60th anniversary *jai naad* echoed around the stadium. The lights dimmed and the torches glowed in the stadium. Amid this divine and breathtaking scene, Yagnapriya Swami, head of the BAPS Satsang Activities Central office, read out a *pratigna* (resolution) which was taken up by all the youths. 'O Parabrahman Bhagwan Swaminarayan! O *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj! Today, we the youths of BAPS resolve before you that, according to your wish we will forever maintain a virtuous character in our lives and endeavour to create a virtuous society. With sacrifice as our motto, we will serve God, our traditions, our country and our society. Together, with one thought, one aim and friendship, we will promote the *upasana* of Akshar-Purushottam throughout the world."

Then, with hundreds of *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* still holding their burning torches, all 60,000 youths in the stadium lit their *diva* in preparation for the *arti*. Meanwhile the 60th anniversary souvenir books prepared by the youths of Surat, Vadodara and Rajkot were inaugurated on the main stage by the senior sadhus.

Thereafter, with the blowing of conches, the *arti* began. On the performance stage, youths in traditional attire performed *arti* and on the main stage, the senior sadhus also performed *arti*. A sea of lights filled the entire stadium.

After the *arti*, youths performed the final dance. Then the final *jai naad* concluded the celebration assembly.

It was as if the entire four-and-a-half-hour assembly had passed in just the blink of an eyelid. The variety-packed, fast-paced and inspiring programme had truly enthralled and enlightened the worldwide audience. It was indeed a memorable performance. ♦

From the Celebration Stage



HON. SHRI NARENDRABHAI MODI
CHIEF MINISTER OF GUJARAT

The sadhu knows the past, the present and the future. Sixty years ago Yogiji Maharaj saw the youths around him and to nurture their character he sowed the seeds of the youth wing, which today has blossomed into a giant banyan tree. Today, this banyan tree continuously spreads its fragrance of character in society, provides refuge to people in times of need and inspires hope for the future.

The day is not far off when from among the youths gathered here today, a powerful energy will be born and inspire spirituality.

The world says that this 21st century is India's, because India has the most youths. Today, 65% of Indians are below the age of 35. What can these youths not give to the world? The world is not yet aware of India's spiritual strength. India's shastras, rishis and sadhus have shown the way for the liberation of the world.

Our forefathers have taught us that God has not given us this human birth merely for material enjoyment. They have taught us that the 'world is one family'. If we have such feelings towards the whole world then there is no scope for violence.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan followed the path of service to help the poor and the needy. This is the inspiration we gain from his life.

As Chief Minister I have experienced this. In Gujarat's times of need – during floods, famines, earthquakes – Pramukh Swami Maharaj reaches out to help. But who performs these services? They are performed by youths like you, because of your upbringing.

I have seen these sadhus go into the jungles

of Gujarat amid the *adivasis* and inspire them to quit addictions. Such endeavours will nurture values, character, sacrifice, service, austerity and other virtues in future generations.

We are fortunate to have had the opportunity to observe from close quarters the life of such a great sadhu like Pramukh Swami Maharaj and to receive his blessings. You are all privileged to have joined his endeavours in nurturing values, services and character in society.

Those who are interested in human values and in protecting them – wherever they may be in the world and whatever faith they follow – their hearts will be touched by the efforts of youths like you.

Seeing you all has filled me with new energy, inspiration and strength. May Pramukh Swami Maharaj's blessings be on you all and may all your dreams come true.



PUJYA MAHANT SWAMI

Those in this world who have faith in God have been able to accomplish the seemingly impossible. Gandhiji, Abraham Lincoln and other great men of the world had faith in God.

Today, people ridicule values. But the cause of disputes, strife and violence in this world is man's polluted mind. Such polluted minds can be purified by pious values. Values give rise to faith and faith gives strength to maintain stability of mind in times of honour or insult.

BAPS youths have faith in God, in Yogiji

Maharaj and in Pramukh Swami Maharaj. As a result they boldly apply the *tilak-chandlo* and remain free of addictions.

True faith arises by the company of true *satpurushes* like Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj. They dedicate their entire life for us. With selfless love they suffer for us, so that our faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan is strengthened. Hence, all offer devotion to God, and due to this faith, they also remain mentally stable in times of joy or misery.

May our faith towards Parabrahman Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Gunatit Satpurush continue to be strengthened.



PUJYA DOCTOR SWAMI

Bhagwan Swaminarayan and our gurus are always with us. They are constantly watching us, they know us and they give us the fruits of our karmas. They forgive even our gravest sins, but do not tolerate even our smallest deficiency.

God is present in the hearts of all. To experience his presence, one has to reach the heights of unity.

Now introspect. How many of you are married? Do you have unity with your spouse? Do you have unity like that of Ram and Sita. Think in this direction. Youths from many BAPS centres have come here. There should be a feeling that you are all one family.

For this, *swarupnishtha* is necessary and in that, *atmanishtha* is essential. 'I am *atma*,

brahman, akshar; I am the form of bliss, wisdom and joy and am peaceful. I have no caste or community.'

Strengthen this foundation and remove all differences. Unity will arise on the basis of such *swarupnishtha*.

For one's dharma, Bhagwan Swaminarayan has stressed the need for *brahmacharya*. Today, our courts are burdened with cases of murder, rape and other such crimes because of the lack of dharma.

Mobiles, internet, TV, newspapers and magazines promote vulgarity and destroy unity. So, you must remain alert and think about this.

May all be blessed with unity and *swarupnishtha*.



PUJYA ISHWARCHARAN SWAMI

In the 1950s, Yogiji Maharaj used to tour the villages and youths used to seek his company. Yogiji Maharaj taught them the *niyams* of the Shikshapatri: purity of diet, not to watch cinema, to perform puja, etc. He also allocated a *seva* to each youth. He trained them to perform even the most menial of services, such as washing utensils and cleaning toilets. In this way, through service, he banished the ego within the youths.

He also taught the youths self-control and encouraged them to observe austerities. He insisted that all live simply.

In addition, he inspired the youths to attend the weekly satsang assembly and study the

shastras. He encouraged them to start separate youth assemblies. Today, with his blessings, there are over 17,000 youth, children and satsang *sabhas*.

He encouraged youths to prepare handwritten magazines and beautiful decorations to develop their creative skills. He also encouraged youths to form musical bands.

Yogiji Maharaj officially established the youth wing in India in 1952. Then, in 1952 youth activities were started in Uganda and later in Kenya and Tanzania. In 1955, Yogiji Maharaj went to Africa and gave the youths there great encouragement. Almost every year they held *adhiveshans* for which the youths received training in *mukhpath* (memorizing shastras), speeches and other skills.

In India also, Yogiji Maharaj inspired, *adhiveshans* and *shibirs*. In 1969, at Atladra, the first national *adhiveshan* was held in Yogiji Maharaj's presence. Then, in 1971, he wished that over 5,000 youths participate in the *adhiveshan*. He got us to make all the preparations. We prepared an invitation card and showed it to Yogiji Maharaj. He pointed out, "Why have you not written Pramukh Swami's name in this? Write his name. This youth *adhiveshan* will be held in his presence."

And that is what happened. In January 1971, Yogiji Maharaj returned to Akshardham and the *adhiveshan* was held in Pramukh Swami Maharaj's presence in Gondal.

Yogiji Maharaj also liked the youths delivering speeches, and engaging in discussions and question-answer sessions so that their satsang values and scriptural knowledge was strengthened. He also participated in spiritual discussions with the youths at 5.00 a.m. and at night he would talk to the youths till midnight.

He also inspired youths to become sadhus. At Gadhada in 1961, he initiated 51 educated youths into the sadhu-fold. He prophesied that in the future Pramukh Swami Maharaj will

initiate 700 sadhus.

At the root of all this is Yogiji Maharaj's selfless love towards the youths and his wish that they progress in life.

After Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj has continued to inspire the youths. He has personally met thousands of youths, infusing them with strength and inspiration.

A few months ago, in Sarangpur, 3,900 youths participated in the *adhiveshan* and offered their devotion. *Adhiveshans* are also held abroad.

Worldwide, in America, England, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and many other countries, the BAPS Youth Wing is increasing.

May we all be blessed to forever live by the wishes of our gurus.



PUJYA VIVEKSAGAR SWAMI

In 1990, 21,000 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* participated in the *adhiveshan* in Vidyanagar. On that occasion, Pramukh Swami Maharaj personally met the 10,800 *yuvaks* who had participated, in one sitting. It was incredibly hot and his lunch had been delayed, but Swamishri said, "Look at the efforts of the youths."

In 1995, in Mumbai, Swamishri was stretched for time, yet he somehow managed to spare time to attend the assembly that had been arranged there for the 30th anniversary of Vidyanagar *chhatralaya*.

A youth named Ganesh Sindhav was

studying in Vidyanagar and requested Swamishri to visit his village. In the sweltering heat and with no proper roads leading to the village, Swamishri still went. A *sabha* was held amid the light of a lantern and he spent the night in a mud hut.

Ramjibhai Vaishnav of Sukhpur also invited Swamishri to visit his village. We all said no, but Swamishri told him that he would come. And, even despite his tight schedule, Swamishri spared some time to go.

In Johannesburg, South Africa, Swamishri had a fever, yet he still pleased the youths by attending their assembly.

Swamishri has gone out of his way and tolerated many hardships to please the youths.

Once, when Swamishri visited Ahmedabad, Kiranbhai Pithwa and other youths decided that every day a different *yuvak* would stay with Swamishri. Often, there was no space in the car, but Swamishri would squeeze the youth in and even at midnight would listen to the youth's report of his day's experience.

In 1974, Swamishri was in America. Atul Ajmera of Kolkata had recently migrated there. Swamishri asked the devotees to locate him. When Atul flew in from Raleigh, Swamishri was having lunch at Paresh Trivedi's home in New York. On seeing Atul, Swamishri got up from his meal and embraced him.

Bipin, a youth from Vadodara, had joined in Swamishri's *vicharan*. Swamishri was in Piplav and it was unbearably cold. Swamishri gave his bedding to Bipin. In 1976, in Dasaj, Swamishri and other youths were sleeping on the school platform. It was extremely cold. Bipin was in deep sleep. Yet, slowly, he encroached on Swamishri's bedding. Swamishri vacated his bedding for Bipin and slept on a platform.

Swamishri has lovingly tolerated so much for the youths so that they progress on the path of God. ♦



STARS OF BAPS YOUTH WING

Daily, thousands of BAPS youths lead lives wedded to self-control, discipline, service, spirituality and other noble virtues. The BAPS Youth Wing's 60th anniversary celebration was an opportunity to pay tribute to them all. The stories of a few of these dedicated youths were presented during the celebration assembly.

Their story details are presented below.

AMBARAV JADAV

Devotion to God and Country

A dedicated member of the BAPS Youth Wing, Ambarav Jadav was also a committed soldier of the Indian Army. During the Kargil War, he led a group of soldiers and contributed to India's victory. However, even amid the intense hardships of open warfare, he devoutly observed the *niyams* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. In 2001, even while serving in the army, he wrote 500,000 mantras under the auspices of the 'Swaminarayan Mahamantra Bicentenary Celebrations'.

Once, as part of his training, Ambarav went to Sikkim. From early morning till late night, he had to endure immense physical

challenges. Hence, a proper diet was essential. However, since vegetarian food was not available, he did not eat for seven days. As a result he became weak and ill. His colleagues arranged a medical checkup in which the doctor advised him to eat eggs and meat, and to drink alcohol. Ambarav boldly told the doctor, "I am a devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, so I will never take meat or alcohol."

The doctor warned Ambarav that without such a diet his health would deteriorate and that he would not be held responsible for this. Ambarav's reply surprised the doctor. He instantly wrote on a piece of paper, "I will not under any circumstances take meat or alcohol."



Ambarav (standing, second from left) with fellow soldiers in Kargil



Youths enact Ambarav's story on stage



Ambarav Jadav



Brijrajsinh Chavda



Niral Soni



Vishal Soni



Pinkesh Patel

If as a result I encounter any difficulties, then I am, myself, personally responsible for the consequences, not the doctor.”

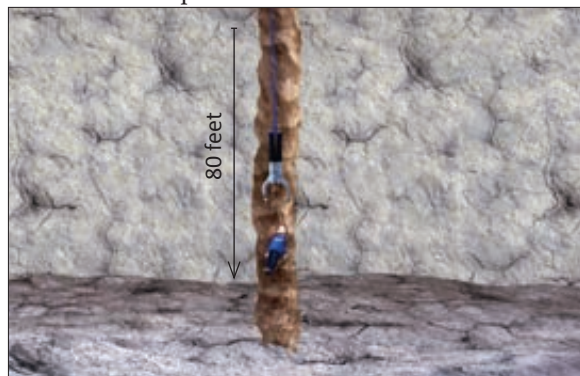
Ambarav’s strict observance of *niyams* touched his colleagues and the doctor and they saluted his discipline.

BRIJRAJSINH CHAVDA

Risking Life to Serve Others

On 2 March 2004, at 6.00 p.m., 10-year-old BAPS youth Brijrajsinh Mukeshsinh Chavda was on his way home in Gandhinagar.

At that time he saw a large crowd of people gathered at the ‘Cha’ government quarters in Sector 28. On enquiry, he learnt that a 3-year-old boy had fallen down 80 ft. into a tube-well of 1¼ feet diameter. The fire brigade officials appealed to the youths present hoping that someone would volunteer to enter the narrow well with a rope tied to his feet and rescue the



A graphic diagram showing Brijrajsinh being lowered 80-ft. into the tube-well

boy. Who would risk their life by descending into such a dark place where it would be difficult to breathe. And what if the rope broke? With these fears, nobody came forward. Then, seeing the slim frame of the passing Brijrajsinh, a fire officer requested him to enter the narrow well. Immediately, he agreed. So, a rope was tied to his leg and slowly he was released head-first into the well. Frequent collisions with the wall of the narrow well resulted in scratches and cuts to his body, but ignoring all the pain, Brijrajsinh reached the crying boy 80 feet below ground. He picked up the boy and the firemen hauled them both up by pulling the rope. When they emerged safely at the surface, a roar of spontaneous joy erupted among the onlookers. The child’s parents rushed to thank and reward Brijrajsinh. He refused to take any money, despite their insistence. Later, in recognition of his heroic service, Brijrajsinh was honoured by the Gujarat Government and 14 other reputed organizations.

NIRAL & VISHAL SONI

Awake in the Service of Others

Dedicated members of the BAPS Youth Wing in Mumbai, brothers Niral and Vishal Soni lived in a block of multi-storey flats. Suddenly, at 12.30 a.m. on 18 March 2012, the entire building began to collapse. At this time over 100 people were in the building – most of them



Collapsed block of flats



Youths enact the story of Niral's deep faith

asleep. In this emergency, without worrying about their own valuables and at immense risk to their own lives, the two brothers went to every floor and awoke everyone. Where the doors were closed, they forced their way in. Suddenly, they reached a flat where an aged woman, a pregnant woman and a three-month-old girl were shouting for help. Without wasting any time, the two brothers helped all three to escape safely. In just a short time, the entire building collapsed. But, due to the selfless work and courage of Niral and Vishal Soni, there was no loss of life.

PINKESH PATEL **Serving His Mother**

Pinkesh Patel of Sisva village in the Charotar region of Gujarat is a dedicated volunteer of the BAPS Children's Wing. At a very young age, he lost his father. Then, when he was nine, his mother became totally blind. So, for the past 18 years Pinkesh has devotedly served his mother. Not only does he earn the household income by tending to his farm and running a small shop, but he also does all the household chores. His mother says, "In this Kaliyug, I have been blessed with a son like Shravan."

NIRAL PATEL **Strength of Faith In God**

Now 30 years old, Niral Patel of Chicago,

USA, lost both his kidneys at a very young age. Uptil now, Niral had undergone many operations and has to take multiple medicines daily.


Yet, despite all the health problems, he is always smiling. Also, on countless occasions, he has participated enthusiastically in the various day-long *seva* activities organized at the mandir.

By 2004, when the Mandir Mahotsav in Chicago was being celebrated, he had already had three kidney transplants.

Once, while serving during the celebrations, he developed severe pain in his kidney and had to be hospitalized. Niral's third kidney had also begun to fail, yet he was unfazed. Doctors stabilized his condition, but he was still quite ill. After a few days, when he was discharged from the hospital, Niral asked his father to take him first to the mandir so that he could continue his *seva*. His doctors were truly touched by his firm faith in God. They commented, "The victory due to faith in God is evident in your life." Niral replied, "In this materialistic age, such spirituality has been inspired in countless youths by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Through the BAPS Youth Wing, youths have learnt how to confidently face any challenge, strengthened by their faith in God." ♦



BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad
GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY



Sunday, 4 January 2013 was a red-letter day in the history of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad.

The mandir was celebrating its golden anniversary grand finale at the Sardar Patel Stadium in Ahmedabad. Over 50,000 devotees were treated to a spectacular four-and-a half hour cultural and spiritual

programme. The 50-year history of the mandir unfolded on the giant performing stage with the presence of kalashas (urns) that symbolized the mandir. Five decades of its golden history was presented through a collage of traditional dances, skits, video shows and speeches. The core theme was the impact of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Ahmedabad, established to fulfil the principle of upasana as taught by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The cultural extravaganza was mesmerizing...

1962-2012
CELEBRATIONS

4 January 2013



As part of the 'Suvarna Gatha Sukhkari' presentation children and youths perform a traditional dance on the Swaminarayan Maha-mantra.

The metro city of Ahmedabad has had a blessed past and has an equally glorious present. More than 200 years ago it was sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and thereafter by his spiritual successors – Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pragat Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Their spiritual purity and ceaseless efforts led to the phenomenal growth of Satsang and a culmination in the consecration of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad.

The mandir was inaugurated with Vedic rites in 1962 by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj. Inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the year-long Golden Anniversary Celebrations in 2012 comprised of spiritual performances, celebrations and pledges to augment faith in thousands of *satsangi* families in Ahmedabad.

The grand finale took place on 4 January 2013 (Magshar *vad* 7, V.S. 2069). It was 3.00 p.m., and the temperature was 18°C. When the ten gates to the stadium opened, devotees of Ahmedabad and its neighbouring rural villages entered jubilantly. Prior to entering the grounds, each devotee was given a sealed dinner plate

with seven food items. Parking facilities were at the Sabarmati riverfront, which was not far from the stadium. Separate entry and seating arrangements on the stands for men and women were arranged.

The main stage was 120 ft long, 30ft deep and 10ft high. The grand backdrop for the day's function was a large graphic image of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad. In each of the mandir shrines large printouts of the images of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Ghanshyam Maharaj, Harikrishna Maharaj and Radha-Krishna Deva, Guru Parampara and Sukh Shaiya were installed. The inscription '50: Suvarna Mahotsav' adorned the mandir image. To the top right and left of the mandir, graphic images of devas were shown showering flowers to commemorate the Golden Anniversary Mandir Mahotsav. On the main stage a life-size *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj was installed in the centre, flanked by seats for senior sadhus and guests. In front of the main stage was the performing stage, which was 60 ft. by 50 ft. and five feet high. On either side of the main stage four large LED screens displayed the stage performances.

The celebration commenced at 6.15 p.m. with



Devotees of Ahmedabad engrossed in the Golden Anniversary celebration programme at the Sardar Patel Stadium

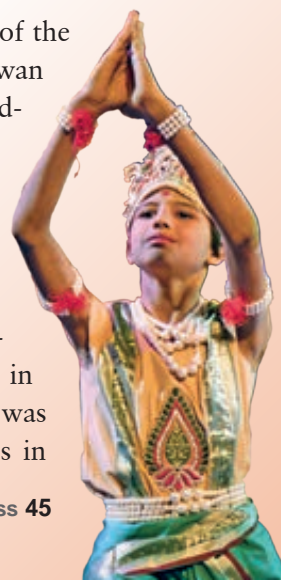
dhun and prayer sung by sadhus. Then a video was shown on the highlights of the year-long events of the Golden Anniversary Celebrations. The video showed the inaugural assembly announcing the celebrations, kirtan concerts, *maha-annakut*, *mandir patotsav*, *maha-yagna*, grand bhakti *yatra*, pilgrimage to Ambli Vali Pol by sadhus and devotees from Shahibaug mandir and festivals celebrated during Swamishri's present stay in Ahmedabad.

Then the 200-year old history of the mandir and its roots were presented. Two hundred years ago Bhagwan Swaminarayan visited and sanctified Ahmedabad. He sowed the seeds of Satsang and the Akshar-Purushottam *upasana*. Thereafter the guru *parampara* nourished and increased Satsang in Ahmedabad. The 200-year history was presented as 'Suvarna Gatha Sukhkari' ('The Happy Golden Story').

The Suvarna Gatha commenced with the theme dance by children of BAPS Bal Mandal, Ahmedabad. The impact was enhanced by colourful strobe lights, music and lyrics. The next scene transformed into a group of spright children engaged in animated dialogues with a grandfather. The grandad tried satisfying the enquiries of the children by explaining about

the specialties of the Swaminarayan satsang in Ahmedabad. In the course of his explanation one child wandered to a *kalash* on stage and touched it out of curiosity. There was a thunderous sound and fog started issuing from the *kalash*. (The dramatic crashing sound and fog from each *kalash* launched the story of each era portrayed.) Thereafter, a scene from Bhagwan Swaminarayan's time was enacted. Sadgurus Anandanand Swami and Bhumanand Swami and devotees of Ahmedabad – Damodarbhair, Kuber-sinh Chhadidar, Purushottamdas – and English officers of Ahmedabad, started remembering the divine *lilas* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Ahmedabad.

At this point, a video of the places sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Ahmedabad was shown. Thereafter a conversation ensued on stage among the group of sadhus and devotees. Someone questioned as to Maharaj's favourite place in Ahmedabad. The answer was the grove of mango trees in





BAPS sadhus during the celebration programmes



Devotees watch the performances on a large screen



Granddad and children in a lively conversation on stage



Pujya Mahant Swami felicitates Shri Umang Hatheesingh with a golden *kalash*

Shahibaug. Maharaj used to rest here on his way to and from north Gujarat or while going to and from the River Sabarmati for his daily bath. To portray this, a lively procession of devotees and sadhus carrying a *murti* of Maharaj in a palanquin came on stage. The devotees and Mr Dunlop of Ahmedabad were shown welcoming the procession. The festive performance was electrifying and memorable.

Then Pujya Shrihari Swami gave details of Shriji Maharaj's visits to Ahmedabad and mentioned some of the milestone events.

The names of many leading devotees of Ahmedabad in the time of Shriji Maharaj have been noted in the Sampradaya's books. Three descendants whose forefathers had honoured Shriji Maharaj were called on stage. They were honoured by presenting the *kalashas* that symbolized the mandir. The descendant of Shri Himabhai Sheth who had welcomed Shriji Maharaj with flowers made of gold and silver, Umang Hatheesingh, Kubersinh Chhadidar's descendant Pradyumnasinh and Damodar Patel's descendant Bharatbhai Patel were honoured with *kalashas* by Pujya Mahant Swami.

After the portrayal of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's era the signature dance of Suvarna Gatha resumed. Again the group of children with grandfather came talking on the stage. A child asked about how the Satsang in Ahmedabad flourished after Bhagwan Swaminarayan's earthly departure. Grandfather answered that it was due to Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami and Brahmawarup Bhagatji Maharaj's efforts and saintly charisma. He added that Gunatitanand Swami had visited Ahmedabad quite often and revealed the supreme glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the assembly hall at the Swaminarayan Mandir in Kalupur. Bhagatji Maharaj had declared the glory of Gunatitanand Swami as Aksharbrahman in Ahmedabad. Thus, those present at the Swaminarayan Mandir in Kalupur were witnesses to the declaration of the Akshar-Purushottam *upas-*

ana.

While grandfather continued narrating the above story, a child went and touched the second *kalash*. A loud crashing sound followed with smoke issuing forth. When the fog cleared, a scene from 1950 in Ambli Vali Pol in Ahmedabad appeared. Devotees danced to the bhajan, “*Swāmiṇi to mahāpratāpi enu dhāryu thāy...*”. The then prominent devotees, Shri Champaklal Banker, Shri Bhogilal Chokshi, Shri Khengarjibhai Chauhan, Shri Rasikbhai Secretary, Shri Vinayakrao Trivedi, Shri Someshwar Pithva, Shri Bapubhai Kothari, and others were talking about Shastriji Maharaj’s greatness and saintliness. A devotee then recalled Shastriji Maharaj’s declaration to build a *shikharbaddh* mandir in Shahibaug.

A skit was enacted, showing the episode where Shastriji Maharaj appointed 28-year-old Narayanswarupdas as the President of BAPS. From that day onwards the BAPS was gifted with Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The pledge Swamishri made on that occasion was presented in his own voice. Further incidents about Shastriji Maharaj in Ambli Vali Pol and his stay in Ahmedabad were presented in a speech by Pujya Dr Swami. He said, “Shastriji Maharaj made the decision to build a *shikharbaddh* mandir in Gadhada from Ambli Vali Pol. Another seminal work he accomplished there was the initiation of Shantilal as a *parshad*. Then Shastriji Maharaj appointed him as the President of the BAPS and draped a shawl around his shoulders. And the mandir in Shahibaug was accomplished because of Shastriji Maharaj’s wish.” In addition he explained, “When we consolidate the virtues of friendship (*suhruddbhav*), faith in God’s form (*swarupnishtha*) and firm moral behaviour (*swadharmanishtha*) then only can we proclaim to have fittingly celebrated this Golden Anniversary.”

Thereafter, devotees who had helped and supported Shastriji Maharaj were remembered. They had helped in acquiring the land for the



A procession of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Ahmedabad



A boat-dance performed by children



Children offer a vote of thanks and voice a pledge for all



The final dance to thank Swamishri and express sentiments of obligation

mandir and in contributing their all for raising the mandir in difficult times. To represent them all, descendants of three devotees were called onto the stage to be felicitated by Pujya Mahant Swami with a golden *kalash*. They were: Sheth Champaklal Banker's grandson, Asit Banker, Rasikbhai Patel's son Harikrishnabhai Patel and Someshwar Pithva's grandson Kiran Pithva.

After the portrayal of Shastriji Maharaj's era, the signature dance 'Suvarna Gatha Sukhkari' commenced, followed by a dialogue between the grandfather and children. This time the granddad's stick accidentally hit the third *kalash* and the resultant outpour of mist unfolded the year 1962 – the era of Yogiji Maharaj. The 'Mahol Dance' was performed to the beat of the popular bhajan, "*Yogi āvo te rang mane shid lagādyo...*". A video was shown of Yogiji Maharaj consecrating the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug in 1962. The video transported the audience 50 years back in time. The video included the *mahayagna*, *nagar yatra* (procession), *murti-pratishtha* rituals, sadhu *diksha* of youths, and the large satsang assembly. Pujya Viveksagar Swami, who had witnessed the mandir inauguration, narrated incidents of Yogiji Maharaj in Ahmedabad.

Over five decades since the mandir inauguration, devotees who are still offering *seva* to the mandir were represented by three veteran devotees: Shantibhai Shah, Upendrabhai



K. Patel and Harikrishnabhai M. Patel. They were felicitated with a *kalash* each by Pujya Mahant Swami.

The theme of the celebration resumed with the brief signature dance and conversation between granddad and children. The group then touched the fourth *kalash* together in a spirit of unity, heralding the memories of Pramukh Swami Maharaj from the year 1971 and onwards. A dance ensued with the bhajan, "*Lāgo chho pyārā pyārā Pramukh Swāmi...*". Thereafter, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, head of Satsang and Youth Activities, recalled vignettes of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's stay in Ahmedabad during the past 40

Children and youths perform the final awe-inspiring dance, "*Anant runa ham par ham par, heh Guruvar, heh Guruvar...*"





years. He elaborated on the Bicentenary Celebrations of Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1981) and Gunatitanand Swami (1985), Centenary Celebrations of Yogiji Maharaj (1992) and the BAPS (2007) inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj. In addition, he remembered Swamishri's home visits (*padhramanis*), satsang assemblies, *diksha* functions he presided over and other landmark events and works. He also described the growth of Satsang centres in Ahmedabad and its children's and youth activities. In conclusion, he stressed, "Today, let us abide by Swamishri's central message of harmony, friendship and unity and develop the Satsang further."

A video was shown of the festivals held in Ahmedabad in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

These past 50 years the BAPS mandir in Shahibaug has been a fountain of spiritual faith (*shraddha*). It has enriched, enlightened and made countless devotees and aspirants happy. To highlight this element a beautiful 'Shraddha Nrutya' was performed by children.

A video of the 35 *hari* mandirs or *sanskardhams* in Ahmedabad, born from the flagship mandir in Shahibaug, was shown. Thereafter, state ministers Shri Bhupendrasinh Chudasama and Shri Saurabh Patel were honoured on the stage.

The BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad, has left an enduring impact not only on devotees through its spiritual and character-building activities, but also on society through its relief work in times of calamity, services in brokering peace in times of turmoil and conflict, building character in children and youth. These and many more philanthropic efforts were made possible through the inspiration and blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The mandir's multiple roles in uplifting individuals and society were elaborated through brief speeches by sadhus.

The mandir as an abode of faith and devotion for thousands of devotees was explained by Pujya Anandswarup Swami. On behalf of all,



Dr Madhusudanbhai Patel, a senior and ardent devotee, was felicitated with a golden *kalash* by Pujya Mahant Swami.

A speech on the mandir as an abode of values and character in the lives of thousands of children and youths was delivered by Pujya Vivekjivan Swami. On behalf of all, Kaustubh Shukla, a dedicated youth, was honoured with a golden *kalash* by Pujya Mahant Swami.

The mandir has become an icon of service and peace for countless people. It has inspired the spirit of service, moral transformation and peace in society. Pujya Brahmavihari Swami narrated incidents in these contexts. On behalf of all, Shri Harshadbhai Brahmhatt, Vice-president of Essar, was felicitated with a golden *kalash* by Pujya Mahant Swami. In 1985, when Gujarat was affected by the impact of a students' agitation, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired a peaceful solution at the Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug. The then leader of Vali Mandal, Shri Shankarbhai Patel, who pulled back the agitation at Swamishri's word, was called onto the stage and honoured with a golden *kalash* by Pujya Mahant Swami.

The mandir has also become a symbol of sacrifice. Pujya Narayanmuni Swami spoke about the mandir as an inspiring force for devotees to serve and give their all. Ninety parents were remembered for offering their sons wholeheartedly to become sadhus. Pujya Kothari Satsangjivan Swami, who has offered his services as Kothari of Ahmedabad Mandir for the last 40 years, was felicitated with a golden *kalash* by Pujya Mahant Swami.

BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad, is an epicentre of many social activities. From 1996 the mandir conducted a health centre from its premises. Today, its health services have developed into a 100-bed multi-speciality hospital, BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital. The mandir also provides scholarships to over 1,000 students. The Swaminarayan Vidya Mandir



The maha-arti by devotees concluded the celebrations programme

school in Raisan, inspired by the Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug, provides primary and secondary education, along with values and spirituality, to over 1,000 students. Soon, a residential school in Raisan for 800 girls is going to provide value-based education. The mandir also has a modern printing press for publishing subsidized spiritual and life-oriented books, monthly magazines, newsletters, bhajan CDS and DVDs. The publishing house is called Swaminarayan Aksharpith. In addition to these contributions by Pramukh Swami Maharaj he has endowed Ahmedabad mandir with priceless memories of his stay. A short video was presented depicting the countless memories he has given to the Satsang in Ahmedabad.

Pujya Mahant spoke about his experiences of Swamishri's divine personality. He said, "Swamishri's entire life and every second has been imbued with spirituality. He does not have an iota of *mayik* or materialistic propensities. His entire being is spiritual. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has said that God sees through such a sadhu, he walks through him and he pervades in all his actions. He is a fitting vessel for God to reside eternally. Swamishri contains God in every pore of his body. This tradition and power of God-realization is seen in him unceasingly. When one examines the past history of BAPS one sees absolute divinity because of the profound spirituality in our gurus. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had declared that he will remain ever-present on earth through the Gunatit sadhu."



Thousands of devotees had performed various spiritual sadhanas to please Swamishri during the Golden Anniversary year. Devotees had written 357,025,000 Swaminarayan *maha-mantras*, turned 87,000 extra *malas* daily and performed 44,361 *pradakshinas* daily. In addition, many had observed fasts and performed other sadhanas. To honour Swamishri for inspiring faith and virtues in countless lives, senior sadhus garlanded the *murti* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. At the same time a garland was offered to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, who was watching the celebrations live at the mandir in Shahibaug.

The senior sadhus present in the celebration on behalf of Swamishri were appreciated and honoured.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has visited Ahmedabad 462 times and blessed all with his divinity and spiritual inspiration for 2,809 days. Today, the mammoth assembly experienced his blessings on the video screen: “God likes cleanliness. He resides in one’s heart when it is pure. Thus, one must make efforts to remove the inner impurities of ego, lust, anger, greed, delusion, mineness, deception and others. To eradicate these impurities Shriji Maharaj came on earth with his divine abode – Akshardham. Maharaj has instructed, ‘Become *aksharrup* and offer bhakti to Purushottam.’

“We have to bond with God and attain Akshardham. Remember God in all your actions and pray to him in happy and sad times. Accept happiness when God gives it to you, and also

accept misery whenever he gives it to you. He is the all-doer. Believe him to be supreme and offer bhakti to him. All your wishes will be fulfilled, and everyone will be happy.

“This festival is being celebrated in Ahmedabad. Your enthusiasm and devotion are wonderful. By doing darshan and *abhishek* of Maharaj he will fulfil your wishes and bless you with peace.”

Children and youths performed a touching and beautiful dance expressing one’s obligations to Swamishri for everything that he has done for all. The words of the bhajan were, “*Anant runa ham par ham par, heh Guruvar heh Guruvar...*” Meaning, “O Guruji, we are obliged to you countless times....”

After the dance, children in white and red clothes appeared on the stage. Out of them five children expressed their gratitude and gave the vote of thanks to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, guru *parampara* and the sadhus and devotees of each of the eras portrayed. They also touched upon the fact that the devotees present should also pass on the Satsang heritage to their children. They administered a pledge for all, telling all to repeat the words, “Till the Centenary Celebrations of Ahmedabad mandir (in 2062) we shall strengthen our own satsang and also impart satsang in our children.” Finally, everyone chorused with supreme joy “Ahmedabad Mandir Centenary Celebrations *ni jai*.”

The culminating moments of the celebration began with the *maha-arti*. The entire stadium seemed as if the stars had descended on earth. More than 60,000 *diyas* (lamps) flickered in the dark during the *arti*. The mass ritual of devotion was simply breathtaking.

For more than four-and-a-half hours the mammoth gathering was enthralled by the function. As they slowly exited the stadium they realized the deep spiritual and thrilling impact of the programme. All lauded the celebrations as elevating and matchless. ♦



Dental Health

Hygiene and Complications

Part 1



The oral cavity, or the mouth, is an important structure in the human body that is uniquely designed to carry out two main functions:

1. Begin the process of food digestion by biting, chewing and swallowing.
2. Produce speech.

Together with speech, the mouth is also an important communication tool allowing humans to express their feelings of emotion with many different facial expressions. It also plays a vital role in breathing.

Personal hygiene plays a vital role in all individuals and dental hygiene should be part of our daily personal hygiene regime. All societies accept personal hygiene to be a basic requirement. This is not only to be accepted in society, but also boosts an individual's self esteem and confidence levels. First impressions are very often based on a person's appearance and the teeth are often the first thing noticed when meeting new people. Hence in today's society people are spending vast sums of money on cosmetics, especially to have brighter, whiter and healthier teeth.

Humans have been cleaning their teeth for centuries. Records of ancient civilizations contain descriptions of medications and treatments used to prevent the loss of teeth, and evidence of dental decay and gum disease has been found in fossilized human skulls of ancient populations. Evidence that oral hygiene was practiced in

ancient civilizations is also available. It is well known that the Hindus used frayed sticks from the neem tree to brush their teeth (*daatan*), the Chinese used a chew stick, and the Assyrians and Babylonians wrapped line strips around their fingers to wipe tooth surfaces clean.

Oral hygiene includes all the processes for keeping the mouth clean and healthy. This includes the teeth and gums and also the tongue. Dental hygiene in simple terms keeping your teeth and gums healthy by correct and regular cleaning. Good dental hygiene is necessary for the prevention of tooth decay, gum disease, bad breath and other dental problems.

Our diet, with the foods we eat, can also have a direct effect on our teeth and this in turn affects the dental hygiene. In this article we shall look at how to achieve and maintain good oral hygiene and its benefits.

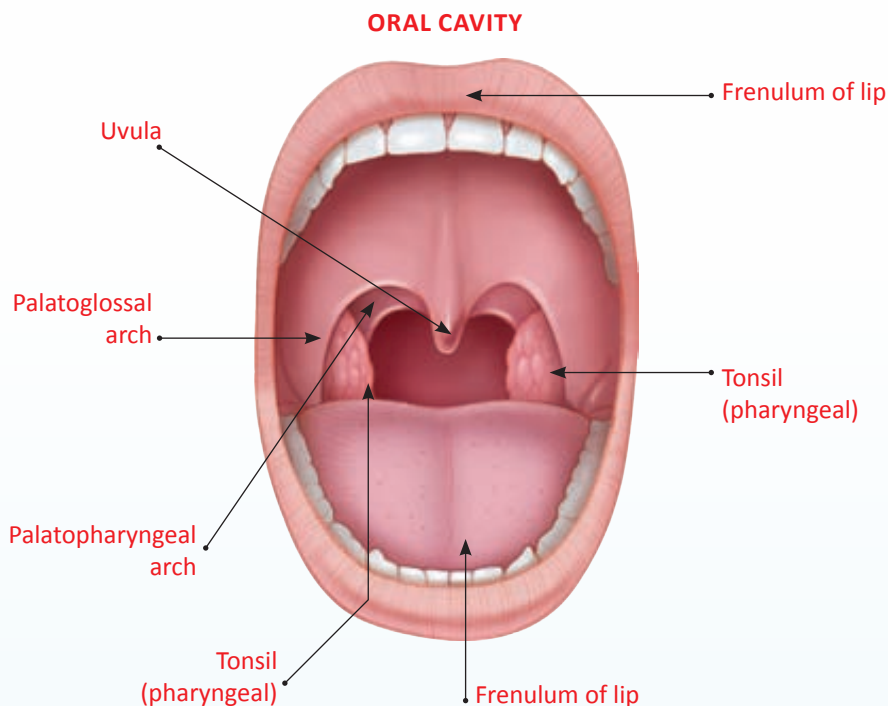
THE ORAL CAVITY

Within the mouth there are important structures that allow the above functions. These are:

1. Teeth
2. Gums and bone that support the teeth (periodontium)
3. Tongue
4. Saliva.

PLAQUE

Plaque is a yellow sticky film that forms



on the teeth and gums and can be seen at gum margins of teeth. It contains bacteria and debris. The bacteria in plaque convert carbohydrates in food (such as sugar) into acid that demineralises teeth, eventually causing cavities. Daily brushing and flossing removes plaque and can prevent tartar from forming on the teeth.

Plaque can also cause gum irritation (gingivitis), making them red, tender and cause them to bleed. In some cases, the gums pull away from the teeth (receding gums), leaving cavities inhabited by bacteria and pus. If this is not treated, bones around the teeth can be destroyed. Teeth may become loose or have to be removed due to periodontal (gum) disease, mostly in adults. Eating a balanced diet and limiting snacks can prevent tooth decay and periodontal disease (gum disease).

Plaque is formed from saliva by a complex mechanism. Plaque is found in the small grooves in the teeth and also at gum margins – where the tooth joins the gums. Plaque contains lots of different bacteria, some good and some bad. If plaque is allowed to build up on the teeth, then

more and more bacteria are found in it. Plaque can then turn into calculus, or tartar. This is the hard yellow deposit found on the teeth and on gums. This is more difficult to remove and may need to be scraped, or scaled by a dentist.

Plaque can build up on fillings, crowns and dentures. It is also found in grooves on the tongue.

Healthy gums are pink in colour and are not swollen. They should not bleed when the teeth are cleaned. If the gums are not healthy, then they appear more red and inflamed. They would also bleed when the teeth and gums are cleaned.

KEEPING TEETH AND GUMS IN GOOD SHAPE

Daily care of your teeth and gums is as important as having regular dental checkups. A simple home regime will prevent the build up of food particles and bacteria on the tooth surfaces and thus reduce the risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

There are a variety of implements available to help maintain the oral hygiene to an optimal level. Everybody knows you should brush



Brushing your teeth correctly

your teeth twice a day, especially after meals. But knowing how to brush correctly is most important. Many of us will brush our teeth very quickly missing vital areas where plaque can accumulate. How you brush will be more effective than what type of brush you use.

The following is advised:

- ◆ Choose a toothbrush with a relatively small head with soft or medium bristles.
- ◆ Brush your teeth by gently massaging the brush for at least 2 minutes.
- ◆ Change your toothbrush very 3-4 months, before the bristles get splayed.
- ◆ Consider an electric toothbrush to use with your normal manual toothbrush. Electric tooth brushes are highly effective in plaque removal. Some models may also have timers so that you brush for the correct length of time.
- ◆ Floss between your teeth daily.
- ◆ Use regular fluoride toothpaste.
- ◆ Use a regular fluoride mouthwash.
- ◆ Use a tongue scraper.
- ◆ Avoid or limit consuming foods that have high sugar content, such as sweets and fizzy or fruit drinks. Snacking between meals with foods containing high sugar causes damage to teeth in the long run. Sugarless snacks such as nuts, celery, carrots and cheese are better for your teeth.
- ◆ Visit your dentist regularly.

TOOTHBRUSHING TECHNIQUE

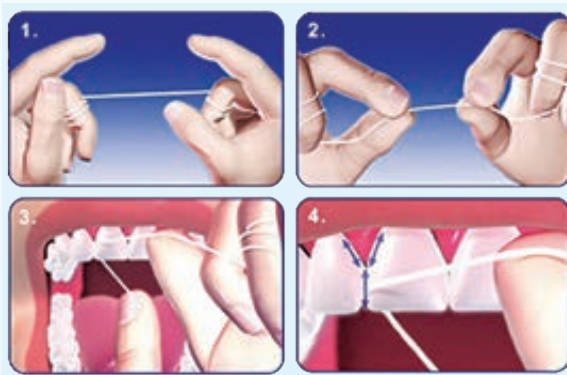
Your teeth need brushing twice daily for at least two minutes each time. Teeth have different surfaces. All the surfaces must be

cleaned, especially where they meet the gum. The toothbrush head should be angled to 45 degrees to allow the bristles to get just below the gum line. In this way you are gently massaging the toothbrush rather than scrubbing the tooth. The back surfaces of the teeth that you cannot see must also be cleaned:

The brushing action should involve very little force so as not to wear the teeth away. Vigorous brushing with a hard brush can wear the tooth enamel away over time. This can then lead to sensitivity and other dental problems.

The toothbrush bristles can also be used to clean the surface of the tongue. Alternatively, a tongue scraper is recommended.

HOW TO FLOSS YOUR TEETH



Flossing your teeth removes plaque

Flossing removes the plaque that you cannot get to with a toothbrush. Flossing cleans between the teeth surfaces that are too small for the toothbrush to reach. Small interdental or interproximal brushes may also be used in these areas.

A 6-8 inch thread of floss is tied around your middle fingers leaving about 2.5 cm between your thumbs. The floss is gently moved between

the teeth contacts and is slid towards the gum. Gently move the floss up and down allowing it to touch the tooth surfaces and the floss should slide just below the gum line. Do not push into the gum too far since that may cause trauma. Many types of floss are available, for example, waxed floss, dental tape or 'spongy' floss. Choose the one you find easiest to use, as they all do the same job.

INTERDENTAL BRUSHES

These small brushes are designed to clean between teeth and also below the gum margin in difficult to reach areas and are also very helpful in gum disease and when the gum is inflamed. Again, there are various types and sizes available.

You should follow your dentist's advice about using interdental brushes, including how often you should use them. The tips below may also help:

- ◆ Use a brush appropriate for the size of the space between your teeth, as advised by your dentist
- ◆ Insert the brush gently between your teeth – don't try to force the brush into the space
- ◆ If you work to a pattern round the whole of your mouth, it will ensure that you do not miss any of the spaces.

TOOTHPASTES AND MOUTHWASHES

Toothpastes and mouthwashes are essential dental hygiene products and necessary for use with the above techniques. The brand or flavour one uses is a personal choice, but the essential requirement is that they both must contain fluoride to combat dental decay.

Toothpastes and mouth rinses are to be used with tooth brushing techniques as an accessory aid to help optimise dental hygiene. Although most of the cleaning is done by the mechanical action of brushing, they also help in suppressing bad breath from food chewed by that area and

from the bacteria that are present in the mouth.

DIETARY FACTORS

A healthy balanced diet is the key to maintaining all body systems in good working order. The oral cavity is no exception. A diet high in refined sugars will result in tooth decay. As the decay is restored with fillings and crowns, the dental work carried out will require more maintenance to keep the teeth healthy. If dental hygiene in such situations is not adequate, then further dental problems will arise.

Smoking is the most common risk factor for developing gum disease. About 70 per cent of all adult tooth loss is due to gum disease. Smoking also stains the teeth and stains can also harbour bacteria. Hence, dental hygiene is compromised.

SUMMARY

In summary, plaque control is the mainstay of maintaining good dental hygiene. This is achieved with:

- ◆ Physical (i.e., tooth brushing and flossing)
- ◆ Chemical (e.g. mouthwashes and tooth-pastes)
- ◆ A low sugar diet.

Also, to keep your teeth and gums healthy, it is necessary to consult your dentist every 6-12 months. He or she will examine your teeth and gums and also the rest of your mouth. It is also beneficial to see a dental hygienist or oral health educator who can provide more advice regarding diet and oral hygiene techniques.

The next article will take a look at some of the more common dental diseases and treatments.

Further information:

- ◆ World Health Organization site on oral health
- ◆ British Dental Association – www.bda.com
- ◆ British Dental Health Foundation – www.dentalhealth.org
- ◆ Oral B – www.oralb.co.uk/Oral-Care ◆

Vicharan

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

8 November to 31 December 2012, Ahmedabad

NOVEMBER: AHMEDABAD

11, Sunday

Swamishri inaugurated two new audio CDs, *Prabhatiya* 3 and *Sant Samagam* Parts 1 and 2, released by Swaminarayan Aksharpith.

13 & 14, Tuesday and Wednesday, Diwali, New Year's day and Annakut Celebrations

Diwali and Annakut celebrations were held in Swamishri's presence. On Diwali day, Swamishri sanctified the Sanstha's and devotees' account books. After Thakorji's darshan on Diwali day, Swamishri was given a *divo* in hand. He blessed the devotees and circled the *divo*, performing *arti* of all in the mandir premises.

On New Year's day, a *mahapuja* was performed by senior sadhus. Then, Pujya Dr Swami addressed the devotees.

An *annakut* of 1,252 food items was offered to Thakorji in the mandir shrines. Swamishri performed the *annakut arti* in all three shrines and blessed the devotees with darshan in the assembly hall. (Details in *Swaminarayan Bliss*, Jan.-Feb. 2013, pgs. 51-52.)

18, Sunday; Labh Pancham

Swamishri performed the *shilanyas* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* for the *shikharbaddh* mandir in Navsari. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the devotees of Navsari. Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Dr Swami and Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami had performed the pre-rituals of the *shilanyas* ceremony before Swamishri's arrival.

22, Thursday

Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for the three BAPS *hari* mandirs in Botad: Pramukh Park, Ashok Vatika and Turkha Road.

24, Saturday; Prabodhini Ekadashi

The auspicious day marked the celebrations of Deva Prabodhini Ekadashi, the beginning of Tulsi Vivah, offering fresh vegetables to Thakorji, the end of Chaturmas, the birth of Dharmadev, the *diksha* day of Nilkanth Varni, Shriji Maharaj's appointment by Ramanand Swami as his successor and Shastri Narayanswarupdasji's *parshad diksha* by Shastriji Maharaj at Ambli Vali Pol in Ahmedabad.

A red carpet was laid out for Swamishri's arrival. The pathway was flanked by decorations of *rangoli*, candle lights and baskets of vegetables. Pujya Mahant Swami and Pujya Dr Swami garlanded Swamishri and honoured him on the anniversary of his *diksha* into the *parshad* order. Swamishri performed *arti* of Thakorji in all the three mandir sanctums, where baskets of fresh vegetables were displayed. Then he was wheeled into a vegetable shop set up beneath the mandir dome. Here Swamishri held a variety of vegetables and sanctified them to the joy of all.

26, Monday

Swamishri sanctified the flagstaffs and golden *kalashes* for the *shikharbaddh* mandir in Nagpur and performed the *pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir of Chandrapur, Maharashtra.

DECEMBER: AHMEDABAD

1, Saturday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs of Ajarpura (Anand region), Kasor (Anand region), Sevaliya (Thasra region) and the *murti* of Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Vasna (Borsad).

2, Sunday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of Shri Nilkanth Varni Maharaj and Guru Parampara *murtis* for Sankari mandir and the *murtis* of Shri Radha-Krishna Dev for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Palsana. Swamishri also blessed the devotees of Sankari.

7, Friday

According to the English calendar it was Swamishri's 91st birthday today. He completed 91 years and entered into his 92nd year. A red carpet was laid out with candles and flowers bordering the pathway. When Swamishri came, the devotees greeted him by singing "Happy birthday to you...". On behalf of all, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami offered Swamishri a garland of dry fruits and thereafter senior sadhus offered a garland of roses. The devotees also cheerfully greeted Swamishri and wished him 100 years of good health. When Swamishri was asked about how to celebrate his birthday he replied, "By obeying God's commands and doing what pleases God and his Sadhu."

13, Thursday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Varachha (Surat), Shivchhaya (Katargam, Surat), Vankal and Dihen.

20, Thursday; 92nd Birthday Celebration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj

Swamishri was cheerfully greeted by sadhus

and devotees on his birthday celebration; completing 91 years and entering into his 92nd year. The festive premises of the mandir was overflowing with devotees. It also included a 140 ft long birthday card, a 22 ft long by 8 ft wide birthday cake, the Yogi Band of Nadiad and the renowned percussionist Shri Shivamani.

Before Thakorji in the mandir, Paramtattva Swami offered his PhD thesis on 'Identifying and Locating Hindu Theology in the Swaminarayan Vedant Tradition' to Swamishri.

Swamishri was brought to the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh where the celebrations assembly was in progress. Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami inaugurated a DVD '*Sant Paramhitkari*, Parts 1 and 2', a drama on Swamishri's life and work scripted by Brahmaprakash Swami. More than 7,000 devotees in the assembly sang in unison the mantras "*Gurur Brahmā...*" and "*Shobho sādhubhugune...*" and offered flowers to honour Swamishri. (Details in *Swaminarayan Bliss*, Jan.-Feb. 2013, p. 53.)

22, Saturday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Memka and Dedadra (Surendranagar district), Bhuvaldi (Dehgam region), Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Kolvada (Koba region), Ugamedi and Pipal (Gadhada region) and Dhangla (Damnagar region).

27 Thursday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra-pushpanjali* of *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandirs in Bhavada (Dharampur region), Khergam, Chari and Ghej (Ghej region), Kakvadi (Dharasana region), Goima (Pardi region) and Vijapur (Vijapur region). The new *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj which would replace the old ones were also sanctified for the *hari* mandir in Huka.

Shri Biren Desai honoured the *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj for Swamishri's good health.

30, Sunday

Swamishri inaugurated a print publication, 'Hinduism FAQs', published by Swaminarayan Aksharpith.

31, Monday

Swamishri inaugurated the 'Tribal Youth Training Centre' to educate and enlighten tribal

youths about satsang. On behalf of the 44 tribal youths Pujya Mahant Swami and Pujya Ishwaracharan Swami honoured Swamishri with a garland. Thereafter, Swamishri released a bunch of balloons in the air to symbolize the inauguration of the training centre. ♦

Translation from Gujarati text

LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

November-December 2012, Ahmedabad

WHAT SWAMISHRI LIKES

23 November

An attendant sadhu offered a thin slice of dates to Swamishri while he was having lunch. Swamishri said he didn't wish to have it. When asked why, he replied, "I don't like it." Then Yogvivek Swami asked, "What do you like?" Swamishri replied, "God and his Sadhu." In response Ramswarup Swami remarked, "How can they fulfil one's hunger?" Swamishri affirmed, "Yes, one can do so through God and his Sadhu."

SATPURUSH IS ETERNAL

7 December

After Swamishri's puja, Anandmuni Swami communicated in sign language to Swamishri the figure 150, meaning that he should live

healthily for 150 years. Swamishri's attendant, Narayancharan Swami, asked Swamishri to reply in 'yes' or 'no' to his request. To everyone's surprise and joy, Swamishri replied, "Avinashi," meaning eternal.

Swamishri's reply resonated with that of Gunatitanand Swami's words, "I am eternal." The God-realized Sadhu is always present on earth.

FAITH IN SHRIJI MAHARAJ'S DOERSHIP

8 Saturday

While Swamishri was giving darshan in the mandir precincts to all, a fat devotee requested, "You become (healthy) like me." Swamishri replied, "There is no need to become fat but to become like what Maharaj wishes." ♦

Translation from Gujarati text

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Address: Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad-4.
6. **Owner's Name:** Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad-4.

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

(Signed) Swami Swayamprakashdas. Date: 5-3-2013



UK & Europe

CONFERENCE ON 'LIVING WITH CANCER'

5 January 2013, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London

Around 60 young and elderly delegates attended the conference on 'Living with Cancer' organized by BAPS Charities in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and St Luke's Hospice.

The conference included discussions with patients who have been affected by cancer, sharing the importance of having a positive attitude, being open and honest about the diagnosis with family and friends, and making sure all treatments offered by the medical services are accepted.

Delegate were informed about the main signs and symptoms of cancer and the importance of screening, emphasising the importance of seeking medical help if any unusual symptoms persist for longer than three weeks, since early detection significantly increases the likelihood of a cure for cancer. The role of the hospice in caring for cancer patients and others with chronic illnesses was described.

Workshops were also held in which sound therapy and relaxation techniques were demonstrated to help deal with stress and foster a positive mental attitude.

NATIONAL 'KIDZ ULTIMATE CHALLENGE'

CONCLUDES WITH AWARDS CEREMONIES

13 & 26 Jan 2013, United Kingdom

Hundreds of children from across the UK came together at two awards ceremonies and to present their talents. These grand finales were hosted at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir,



Leicester, on 13 January 2013 and at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, on 26 January 2013.

In January 2012, the Bal-Balika Mandal had embarked on a year-long, multi-event Kidz Ultimate Challenge (KUC), during which more than 1,000 children aged between 3 and 14 participated in a variety of events held at BAPS centres in the UK and Europe. The competitions included memorizing shastras, public speaking, mono-acting, singing, playing musical instruments, sports and much more.

The prize-giving ceremonies were combined with presentations by selected talented children who had performed exceptionally well in the competitions.

Commenting on the benefits of the KUC, one mother, Ranjana Patel, expressed, "The KUC brought us closer together as a family. I am really proud of my children. Through the KUC their spirituality has been strengthened, and they have become more confident."

Roshni, a participant, spoke of her wonderful experiences throughout the KUC, and in particular how she would be able to "use the techniques and guidance from my mentors to help me in my studies."

USA

BAPS CHARITIES DONATES TO THE NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

13 February 2013, New York, NY

BAPS Charities has donated \$250,000 at the Founding Sponsor level to the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center site.

The 9/11 Memorial is a symbol of the strength and perseverance of the American spirit. The Memorial has had more than 6 million visitors since opening in September 2011. The Memorial includes two enormous reflection pools that feature 30-foot waterfalls and sit within the footprints of the Twin Towers. The pools are ringed with bronze inscribed with the names of the nearly 3,000 men, women and children killed in the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 and 26 February 1993.

The 9/11 Memorial Museum, which is under construction, will display monumental artifacts linked to the events of 9/11, while presenting intimate stories of loss, compassion and recovery.

Africa

BAPS CHARITIES AID ORPHANAGES

January-February 2013, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

13 January 2013: BAPS volunteers visited Almasi Orphanage to give individual packages of food and other essential items to the children.

13 February 2013: BAPS volunteers visited Malaika Orphanage and provided all the children individual packages of food and other essentials. Food and other items supplies were also donated to the home. In addition, new slides and swings for the playground, designed and built by BAPS, were handed over to the orphanage.

BAPS DONATES SUPPLIES TO SOLEMN ACADEMY **1 February 2013, Nairobi, Kenya**

BAPS, Nairobi, donated stationery and



other supplies to Solemn Academy, a school which provides education to 56 underprivileged children from Sudan and Kenya.

India

MURTI-PRATISHTHA CELEBRATIONS

13-17 December 2012, Varachha, Surat



Five days of inspiring events marked the opening of the new BAPS *hari* mandir in Varachha, Surat. On 13 December 2012, over 11,000 devotees and well-wishers saw the drama titled 'Kafan', which imparted the message of an addiction-free life. On the 14th, 15,000 devotees were present for the melodious kirtan bhakti performance by BAPS sadhus. On the 15th, a special assembly was held to honour Shri Harikrishna Maharaj.

On the 16th, in the morning, 300-kund Yagna for World Peace was held in which 2,280 *yajmans* participated. In the afternoon, a colourful *nagar yatra* of the *murtis* took place through the streets of Surat.

On 17 December, the *murtis*, which had

previously been sanctified by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Ahmedabad, were installed with full Vedic rites in the new mandir by Pujya Mahant Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami, Viveksagar Swami and Ghanshyamcharan Swami. Over 30,000 devotees were present to celebrate this auspicious function.

ANNUAL KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

November 2012-February 2013, Gujarat, India



Satsang and Youth Karyakar Shibirs: Between 30 November 2012 and 31 January 2013, a total of 12,000 men and women volunteers engaged in BAPS Satsang and Youth Activities throughout Gujarat and Mumbai attended the 19 annual training *shibirs* held at BAPS Mandirs in Gondal, Gadhada, Sarangpur, Bochasan, Bharuch, Navsari, Sankari and Tithal.

The theme of the *shibirs* was ‘Purushottam Bolya Prite...’ in which the spiritually elevating messages of Bhagwan Swaminarayan were presented through speeches by the *sadguru* sadhus and other experienced sadhus, audio-visual presentations, discussions and question-answer sessions.

Bal Pravutti Karyakar Shibirs: Between 7 December 2012 and 3 February 2013, 4,160 *bal* and 3,060 *balika mandal* volunteers involved in BAPS Children’s Activities at 6,265 children’s centres in Gujarat attended the 10 annual training *shibirs* held at, Gondal, Gadhada, Ahmedabad, Bochasan, Bharuch, Sankari and Tithal. The theme of the *shibirs* was ‘Gunatit Het’, emphasizing that the selfless love of the *gunatit guru parampara*

has strengthened Satsang. Similarly, by adopting this approach *bal* and *balika mandal karyakars* can also strengthen Satsang in children.

UTTARAYAN CELEBRATIONS WITH PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

14 January 2013, Ahmedabad, India



The Uttarayan assembly was held in the morning. Senior sadhus – Pujya Doctor Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami – addressed the large gathering of devotees and recounted how Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj have been celebrating this festival over the years. The festival of flying kites was enhanced by Bhagwan Swaminarayan by setting a historical precedent of devotees making pledges on this auspicious day.

When Swamishri came out for darshan wearing a *pagh*, Ishwarcharan Swami handed him the string of a kite which he held and pulled to the joy of all present. Swamishri then continued to greet the gathered devotees in the area decorated with kites and streamers. The senior sadhus garlanded Swamishri, after which he hailed the traditional call of “Narayan Hare, Sachchidanand Prabho.” Swamishri recounted how as young sadhus they used to visit villages and towns to ask devotees to donate grains for the mandir. The *sinhasan* of Harikrishna Maharaj (Swamishri’s Thakorji) had been decorated specially for the occasion with a kite in Harikrishna Maharaj’s hands. Swamishri devotedly had darshan of Thakorji and the *murtis* in the mandir and then returned to the

mandir courtyard to greet devotees gathered there. After his puja, sadhus honored him with shawls and garlands made by devotees.

MURTI-PRATISTHA CELEBRATIONS 26-27 January 2013, Surat, India



As part of the celebrations marking the opening of two new BAPS *hari* mandirs in Katargam, Surat, a Vishwashanti Mahayagna was held on the morning of 26 January 2013, in which more than 2,000 devotees participated and prayed for world peace.,

In the evening, a grand *nagar yatra* of the *murtis* to be consecrated in both mandirs was organized around the city.

In the evening satsang *sabha*, a drama on the importance of mandirs in society and other programmes were presented.

On 27 January, the *murtis*, previously sanctified by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Ahmedabad, were installed in the two new *hari* mandirs amid Vedic rituals by Pujya Mahant Swami at Hariom Society and by Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami at Shivchhaya Society. Around 32,000 devotees were present on both these joyous functions.

VASANT PANCHAMI CELEBRATIONS WITH PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ 15 Feb 2013, Ahmedabad, India

The Vasant Panchami celebrations in Ahmedabad was celebrated in the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.



Vasant Panchami is an auspicious occasion for the Swaminarayan Sampradaya as it celebrates completion of the Shikshapatri by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the birthday of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj – the founder of BAPS, and the birthdays of Brahmanand Swami and Nishkuland Swami – two of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s most distinguished *paramhansas*.

The *sinhasan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj had been decorated specially for the occasion with a background of ‘Hari Mandap’, where Bhagwan Swaminarayan wrote the Shikshapatri in Vartal.

The morning assembly began with kirtans sung by sadhus, remembering the life of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj and the glory of the Akshar Purushottam philosophy revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Senior sadhus, Pujya Viveksagar Swami and Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, spoke about the importance and significance of the Shikshapatri and the divine vision of Shastriji Maharaj. Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s arrival delighted the audience. After darshan in the mandir, Swamishri arrived on stage wearing a *pagh* tied in the traditional manner worn by Shastriji Maharaj. Swamishri viewed a short skit by children that recreated the historical incident of Shastriji Maharaj reciting the Mahabharat at a very young age, while playing the ‘maan’. Senior sadhus garlanded Swamishri to mark the occasion. Finally, Swamishri inaugurated two new English publications – ‘Yogi and the Magical Sage’ and ‘Values for Children’. ♦



MURTI-PRATISHTHA CEREMONIES OF NEW BAPS MANDIRS

1. Pujya Kothari Bhaktipriya Swami inaugurates the new 'Narayan Sabhagruh', Jacksonville, Florida, USA.
2. Pujya Kothari Swami (centre) performs the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* ceremony, Jacksonville, Florida, USA.
- 3-4. Pujya Mahant Swami performs the Vedic *murti-pratishtha* rituals at BAPS Mandir, Siswa, Gujarat.
5. *Nagar yatra* prior to the *murti-pratishtha* at Palsana, near Sankari, Gujarat.
6. Pujya Mahant Swami inaugurates the new BAPS Mandir at Palsana.

Inset: BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Palsana.



INSPIRER OF 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF BAPS YOUTH ACTIVITIES & GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF BAPS MANDIR, AHMEDABAD

1-3. On 6 January 2013, thousands of youths and devotees gathered at the BAPS Mandir in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad, to offer *pranams* and prayers to *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Swamishri blessed all by waving the BAPS flag.

Inset: Swamishri sanctifies the special memento for the Golden Anniversary Celebration of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad, 4 January 2013.

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