

# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

May-June 2013

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*Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Ahmedabad*

Seated in the mango grove in Shahibaug, where the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir is located today





### SWAMISHRI PRESIDES OVER PUSHPADOLOTSAV CELEBRATIONS

27 March 2013, Ahmedabad

In the mandir precincts, from 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon, sadhus and devotees joyously participate in the Pushpadolotsav celebrations with Swamishri seated inside the Akshar Jharukho.

*Inset:* Swamishri showers flowers inside the *jharukho* and then presses a switch to start a shower of flowers on the assembly of sadhus and devotees.



### GRAND PUSHPADOLOTSAV CELEBRATION

27 March 2013, Sarangpur

On 26 March, the birthday of Bhagatji Maharaj was celebrated in Sarangpur with bhajans and speeches by sadhus on the glory of Bhagatji Maharaj.

On 27 March, from 5.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m., over 70,000 devotees attended the Pushpadolotsav celebration assembly in the presence of senior BAPS sadhus. They delivered speeches on the virtues of dharma, *jnan*, *vairagya* and *bhakti* in the life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Senior sadhus performed *pujan* and *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and showered him with saffron-scented water. In consideration of the prevailing drought in Gujarat, the devotees were showered with sanctified *gula* powder.



# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

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Akshar Purushottam Maharaj

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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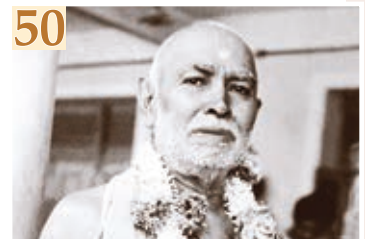
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# FIRST WORD

**A**hmedabad is an ancient city through which the River Sabarmati flows.

Previously known as Ashalav, Ashapalli, Karnavati, Rajnagar and Srinagar, it is now renowned as Ahmedabad.

In the extensive annals of Ahmedabad's history, Bhagwan Swaminarayan's name is etched in gold letters.

Even today, a recollection of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's visits to Ahmedabad 200 years ago fill one with emotion and delight. From the Sampradaya's literature one learns that Bhagwan Swaminarayan visited Ahmedabad 26 times, sanctified 62 homes and places and 119 devotees have been noted. This bond between Ahmedabad and Bhagwan Swaminarayan has remained strong to the present day.

The bond between Ahmedabad and Bhagwan Swaminarayan is not merely confined to the past, but over the past 200 years, the impetus for the BAPS Sanstha's growth has been provided from Ahmedabad. After Bhagwan Swaminarayan, his spiritual successors – the Gunatit gurus – have also sanctified the city.

In 1856 CE, Acharya Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj lovingly honoured Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami at the Swaminarayan Mandir in Kalupur. At that time there was an open ground in place of the existing artistic wooden haveli. Once, Gunatitanand Swami sat there and in the presence of the mandir *mahant*, Anandanand Swami, proclaimed the supreme glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

In 1866 CE, Bhagatji Maharaj would sit outside the main gate and, pointing to Gunatitanand Swami, declare, "The one who is walking is Akshar; he who is talking is Akshar; the one who is sitting is Akshar. Recognize him fully."

So, Ahmedabad is witness to the first proclamations of the glory of Akshar and Purushottam.

To sustain the knowledge of Akshar and Purushottam in Ahmedabad, Shastriji Maharaj wished to build a mandir on the land sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Shahibaug. And, in 1962, Yogiji Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* of the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug.

Over the past five decades, by the inspiration of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, this mandir has provided spiritual happiness to countless devotees, transformed many lives, served society through numerous welfare projects and relief works, and has continued to inspire men and women, young and old, with noble virtues.

This special issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* is a pilgrimage of the places sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Ahmedabad. The text is a translation of the details from the May 2012 issue of *Swaminarayan Prakash*. ♦



Bhagwan Swaminarayan discourses on the mandir grounds in Kalupur, Ahmedabad



# ADHYĀY 2

## BRĀHMI STHITI YOGA:

### The Turtle Tendency of the Sthitapragna

#### Part 15



**T**he *sthitapragna* state represents self-control. Lack of self-control is the result of an unsteady mind. The free-minded cannot accept self-control. They cannot turn away from indulging in pleasures. That is why there is a continuous battle between indulgence and self-control, both within the self and without in the external world. What leads to supreme happiness? Is it indulging in sensual pleasures or living a life of self-control? Such agitating doubts make one indecisive, or cause one to make incorrect decisions. In such times, the Gita clears our confusion. It warns us to keep away from indulgence by explaining the true princi-

ples of self-control of our senses and mind. The following *shlokas* highlight this.

#### Withdrawing the Senses

Shri Krishna says,

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः । इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थे यस्तस्य  
प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ।

‘*Yadā samharate chāyam koormongāneeva sarvashaha, indriyāneendriyārthebhyastasya pragnā pratishthitā.*’

“When a person withdraws the senses from their pleasures, like a turtle withdraws its limbs from all directions, that person is said to have a stable intellect (Gita 2.58).”



The word ‘*samharate*’ is the key word in this *shloka*. ‘*Samharan*’ means to withdraw and ‘*kurma*’ means a turtle. To withdraw one’s limbs at will is a special trait of a turtle. It is able to withdraw six limbs – four feet, head and tail, all in a short time. Thereafter, it is as though it has built a firm wall between it and the outside world. It has nothing to do with the ongoing outside. It can enjoy a protected life. We will call this ability to withdraw its limbs the ‘turtle tendency’. A *sthitapragna* person is constantly wed to such a ‘turtle tendency’; he withdraws the senses from worldly pleasures like a turtle withdraws its limbs.

It is common to indulge in what one desires. The entire world is carried away in this way of life. We are controlled by our desires. We indulge in pleasures, and as we do so more and more, the desires become more intense. Consequently, we cannot resist from indulging; we become addicted, and as a result, there is no end to misery. This is the underlying problem.

Self-control is the solution to this problem. Self-control means withdrawing the senses and restraining them from indulging in mundane pleasures; to shun the pleasures, i.e. the ‘turtle tendency’. With the example of a turtle, the Gita teaches us a lesson in self-control, withdrawal and repulsing.

To become self-controlled, two things must be understood – the senses and pleasures. Eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc. are our outer senses; the mind is an internal one. Whenever we do any action – like moving, walking, speaking, seeing, listening – we use our external senses. When we want to think of something, we use our internal sense – the mind.

There are five main types of sensual pleasures – sound, touch, beauty, taste and smell. These five pleasures are experienced with the corresponding sense organ.

Now, let us think of an everyday situation. To look at something is the subject of the eyes. We

all see beautiful things, but there are times when we cannot resist from looking at them – our eyes are drawn to them. Sometimes, we cannot resist from looking at things which would cause us harm – this results in periods of distress, turmoil and misery.

Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj often explained this with the following example:

There was once a carpenter. He got a job to cutting wood at the house of a Portuguese officer in Div. Once, while the carpenter was working in the house, the officer was sitting with his wife on the upper floor. His wife was very beautiful. The carpenter saw her once, and his eyes were drawn to her beauty. He could not resist from looking at her. As he cut the wood, he would keep taking a glance. He thought no one was looking, but the officer noticed his behaviour. The officer warned him not to look, but the carpenter’s focus had been drawn and thus he could not resist looking. He kept on glancing. He was warned three times yet he continued to look a fourth time. The officer got angry and poked his eyes out with the carpenter’s chisel. The carpenter was blinded for life.

“What did he gain from looking?” Yogiji Maharaj used to say sarcastically, inspiring us to think of the consequences of indulgence.

The same applies to the ears, tongue, skin and nose. The ears are drawn to hear what should not be heard and hear it. The tongue is drawn to taste what should not be eaten and eats it. The skin is drawn to touch what should not be touched and touches it. The nose is drawn to smell what should not be smelt and smells it.

That is why the word ‘*sarvashaha*’ – ‘from all directions’ – has been used in the above *shloka* to give greater depth in meaning. It does not tell us to withdraw from our senses from just one pleasure, but from all pleasures in all manners.

### The Agitiveness of the Senses

Shri Krishna clarifies this matter further with



the words, च्यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः । इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः – ‘*Yatato hyapi Kaunteya purushasya vipashchitaha, indriyāni pramātheeni haranti prasabham manaha.*’ – ‘O Son of Kunti (Arjuna)! The senses, which have a tendency to disturb, forcefully capture the minds of even the intelligent who try to repel them (Gita 2.60).’

The strength of the senses can be understood from this. Let us take a more detailed look at the words, ‘*yatato hyapi*’, ‘*vipashchitaha*’ and ‘*prasabham*’. ‘*Yatato hyapi*’ means even of those who are trying. ‘*Vipashchitaha*’ means even the intelligent. ‘*Prasabham*’ means forcibly.

How many people try to turn back from a life of indulgence? Of those, how many endeavour intelligently and sincerely with an understanding of the characteristics of the senses and pleasures? The world is filled with people who ignorantly remain engulfed in indulgences, but such ordinary people are not used as an example here. Here, the example is of those who try to change their lives for the better, those who are intelligent, those who know the characteristics of the mind, senses and pleasures. The senses forcefully draw even such people who try with a sincere knowledgeable effort. The senses forcibly make them sin. They do not want to do anything wrong, but, subject to the senses, they end up doing wrong. This is the strength of the senses.

Now, if the senses are able to forcefully draw even a knowledgeable person putting in a sincere effort towards indulgence, then what can be said of those who have no intention of turning away from pleasures at all? To believe that one can win the battle by freely indulging in pleasures is childish ignorance. It is suicidal self-confidence. In today’s intellectual era, seized by a life of indulgence, many thinkers say, “The principle of self-control has peculiar effects on the mind. By starving the mind, it becomes more attached to pleasures. Thus, instead of adopting self-control one should indulge in pleasures and keep the

mind at rest. There is no need to refrain but to awake.” But this is false. Such thoughts will never fall in accordance with shastras like the Gita. Such thoughts would amount to something like mounting a chariot that has strong young wild horses joined to it, and letting go of the leash to welcome death head-on. Thus, such distorted thoughts are the by-product of an intellect which is wed to desires and the body. The Gita forewarns us so that our intellect is not smeared with such distortion.

After describing the strength of the senses, it then explains the strength of pleasures.

### Pleasures Depart but the Desires Remain

Shri Krishna says,

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः । रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥

‘*Vishayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaha, rasavarjam raso’pyasya param drushtvā nivar-tate.*’

‘Those who do not partake in pleasures via the senses are only relieved of those pleasures, but not of the desires for those pleasures. One is only relieved of the desires for pleasures when one realizes Paramātmā (Gita 2.59).’

‘*Nirāhāra*’ means to not partake in food. Normally this word is associated with not eating, but Shri Krishna uses it here in a much broader sense. ‘*Nirāhāra*’ does not just mean to refrain from eating, but from the ‘food’ (objects) of all the senses – the eyes, ears, tongue and nose also. In other words, to refrain from pleasures is ‘*nirāhāra*’.

‘*Rasa*’ means desire or affection. It is possible to become ‘*nirāhāra*’, i.e. to physically refrain from pleasures, but still harbour the desire for those pleasures.

Let us take an example of a fast. On the day of a fast, we refrain from taking food – we are ‘*nirāhāri*’, but we all experience that we think of food more on such days. This is indeed the

(Contd. on pg. 43)



# AHMEDABAD AND SHAHIBAUG

Sanctified by the Divine Presence of Bhagwan Swaminarayan

Over time, Ahmedabad has been ruled by a variety of rulers, but who first established this great city and when still remains a mystery to historians. However, archaeological excavations do confirm that there were residents here at least 5,000 years ago.<sup>1</sup> So, who knows how many millennia the city has celebrated? What is known with certainty is that 1,000 years ago, on the banks of River Sabarmati, the flags of Ashapalli city fluttered proudly. It is said that Asha Bhil, the king of 600,000 Bhils, had taken up residence here.<sup>2</sup> Whether the city's

name of Ashapalli or Ashaval was derived from the founder king – Asha Bhil or Asha Raj – is a matter for research. One thing is certain, though, Ashapalli's fame had spread throughout Gujarat and was on par with the splendour of Patan and Khambhat. Ashapalli was pervaded by spiritual sentiments and was well versed in business and manufacturing. The bells of its many mandirs could be heard throughout the day. And it was a centre of trade on the route from the port of Khambhat-Bharuch to Delhi.<sup>3</sup>

In the latter half of the 11th century, Karnadev Solanki, ruler of Patan, conquered King Ashapall and the city also became known as Karnavati. After Karnadev's victory, he built the Kochharba (presently, Kochharab) Devi Mandir.

1. Parikh, Rasiklal Chhotlal & Shastri, Hariprasad Gangashankar, (eds.). *Gujarat Rajkiya ane Sanskrutik Itihas (G.R.S.I.)*, Vol. 5. Ahmedabad: Sheth Bholabhai Jesangbhai Adhyayan-Sanshodhan Vidya Bhavan, 1996.
2. Mehta, Kapilray M. *Ahmedabad Sarvasangraha*. Ahmedabad: Gujarat Publishers, 1948, p. 2.
3. Ibid.

A painting of Ahmedabad by Dutch artist Philip Baldaeus during his visit to Ahmedabad in the 17th century





At the spot where he had defeated Asoraj, he had a grand mandir built wherein he had the *murti* of Jayanti Devi installed.<sup>4</sup> He also built Karneshwar Mahadev Mandir and the beautiful, large Karnasagar Sarovar (Lake).<sup>5</sup> Today, the mandir no longer exists, but it is likely that the Karnasagar Sarovar is today's popular Lake

4. During excavations at the location of the current BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Paldi old sculpted stone and *murti* artefacts were found. Researchers believe that this mandir may have been built here. *G.R.S.I.*, Vol. 4. p. 202.

5. *G.R.S.I.*, Vol. 4. p. 42, 165.



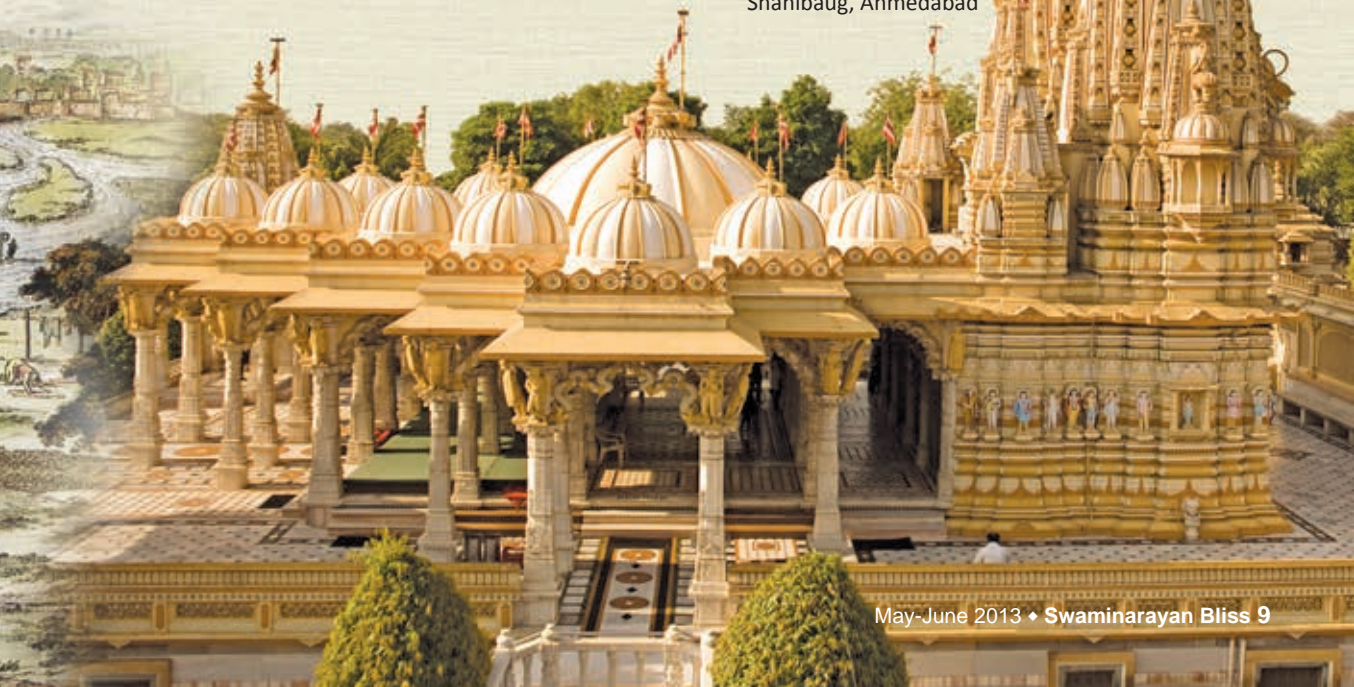
Bhagwan Swaminarayan addressing the devotees and sadhus in the mango grove of Shahibaug

Kankaria.<sup>6</sup>

During the rule of the Delhi Sultanate, Karnavati was developing into an important city. Over the years, the city passed from one ruler to the next. Allauddin Khilji (14th century) defeated the last

6. *Ibid.* p. 47.

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad





Solanki king of Gujarat, Karna Vaghela, and for a century, Karnavati passed through chaos and confusion.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the 14th century, the Delhi Sultanate's last *subo*, Muzaffar Shah, became independent and acquired the throne at Patan. His grandson, Ahmadshah, inherited the throne in 1410 and found the climate of Karnavati-Ashaval to his liking. So, he decided to take up residence in the northwest of Ashaval-Karnavati.

On 17 April 1411 CE (Vaishakh *sud* 7, Vikram Samvat 1468), during the *pushya nakshatra*, the stone of the *rajgadh* (fort of the kingdom) of Ahmedabad was ceremoniously laid in accordance with scripturally specified rituals.<sup>8</sup> The new fort was called Bhadra, after the one in Anhilvad-Patan. With the setting of the first stone, Manek Buraj developed, which today is located on the east side of the Vivekanand (Ellis) Bridge in the southern direction of Ahmedabad.<sup>9</sup> This fort covered 43 acres, had 14 *burajs* (watchtowers), and over time new suburbs were established around it.<sup>10</sup>

The Muhurt Pol in Manek Chowk was the first *pol* to be established in Ahmedabad. Thereafter, over time the *amirs* of the Sultanate began to reside in suburbs named after themselves. Slowly, Karnavati and Ahmedabad merged into one.

Within a hundred years, Ahmedabad's fame had been established.

The 15th century historian and author of the chronicle *Tarikhe Ahmad-Shahi*, Hulvi Shiraz, wrote that the city was resplendent like a unique and beautiful birthmark on the face of the earth.<sup>11</sup>

Author of *Tarikhe Firishta*, Mohammed Kashi, wrote, "Overall, in the whole of

Hindustan, Ahmedabad is the most beautiful city. And maybe even in the whole world. Its main roads are so wide that ten carts can pass at a time."<sup>12</sup>

Ahmedabad was famous throughout the world for its trade. *Kinkhab* (high grade silk), *mashru* (soft cloth made from mixture of cotton and silk) and *sutrao* (cotton) cloths were exported abroad from Khambhat. They were in high demand from Cairo to Peking. On the African coast, the cloth was sold in place of gold and was valued one hundred times more. Every ten days, 200 carts of expensive merchandise were sent from Ahmedabad to the port in Khambhat.<sup>13</sup>

In 1588 a traveller named Caesar Frederick wrote, "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I would not have believed that Ahmedabad had such a large trade." In 1638, Mendelslow, a European, noted, "There are only a few peoples and goods from the whole of Asia that you do not see in Ahmedabad."<sup>14</sup>

In 1695, Jemil Carreri noted, "Ahmedabad is a leading centre for trade. It is the biggest city in Hind. And for its variety of birds and flowers it is in no way inferior to Venice."<sup>15</sup> Another historian recorded, "At one time, in Ahmedabad there were a hundred *crorepatis*. There were moneylending cloth merchants of Ahmedabad in every big city of Asia and Europe. So, promissory notes from Ahmedabad could be encashed in any city."<sup>16</sup>

Ahmedabad was renowned for its *sutar* (cotton), *resham* (silk) and *kinkhab*. Tavernier, a European writer, who came to Ahmedabad during the reign of Aurangzeb, noted, "Ahmedabad is one of the biggest cities in Hindustan. There is

7. *Ahmedabad Sarvasangraha*. 1948, p. 2.

8. *Prabandh Chintamani*. p. 55; G.R.S.I., Vol. 5. p. 59; *Ahmedabad Sarvasangraha*. 1948, p. 2.

9. G.R.S.I., Vol. 5. 1977, p. 59.

10. Ibid. p.61.

11. Jot, Ratnamanirao Bhimrao. *Gujaratnu Patnagar Ahmedabad*, 1929; G.R.S.I., Vol. 5. 1977, p. 62.

12. Firishta, Mohammed Kasim, *Tarikhe Firishta*, Parts 1-2. Pune, 1831-32; Gujarati trans., A.M. Diwanji, 1917, *Firishta Krut Gujaratana Mussalmani Samay-no Itihas*; G.R.S.I., Vol. 5. 1977, p. 68.

13. Jot, Ratnamanirao Bhimrao, *Gujaratnu Patnagar Ahmedabad*, 1929; G.R.S.I., Vol. 5, 1977, p. 68.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid. p. 69.

16. Ibid.

tremendous trade in *resham*, *malmal* (fine, thin cotton) and *kinkhab* there.”<sup>17</sup>

This prosperous city, vibrant in the cloth trade, was sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He frequently visited the beautiful suburb of Shahibaug.

Historians record that a few centuries ago, Ahmedabad was more beautiful and verdant than today. The city was full of pleasant gardens and fields. In the Badshah era, in the southeast corner was the Navlakha Garden. In the 5 *gau* by 1 *gau* garden were 900,000 mango trees.<sup>18</sup> In the west of Ahmedabad opposite the river were the Fatah and Farman Gardens.<sup>19</sup> In the north were the Rustam and Gulab (Rose) Gardens. Impressed by such beauty, historians of the time note that Ahmedabad was a more beautiful city than Delhi or Agra.

The suburb of Shahibaug was established in 1621-22 CE by the Mughal prince of Ahmedabad, Shah Jahan. Later becoming globally famous for building the Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan learnt about architecture by his development of Shahibaug: “It was on the garden palace (Shahibaug) and for such a beneficent purpose that Shah Jahan tried his practice hand in Ahmedabad.”<sup>20</sup>

It is said that to give employment to the drought-afflicted, Shah Jahan commissioned the building of Baug-e-Shahi or Shahibaug. The appointed experts selected a site in the north of the city, to the south, west and east of the riverbank to build the gardens. To further develop the Shahibaug suburb, 105 *vighas* of Maksudpur, and many acres of land from other small villages were acquired.

Within a short time, this barren land soon

blossomed into a heavenly garden. When Shahibaug was fully developed, from the Delhi Gate to the river, there were countless gardens, shaded areas provided by fragrant creepers, bungalows, benches, canopies and rivulets.<sup>21</sup> Seeing all this historians have noted that nowhere in the country were there such beautiful gardens. It was like a dream.

The maintenance of Baug-e-Shahi was also supervised by the Shah. In addition to the river water, there were 11 wells. Also 100 bullocks, 70 gardeners, a superintendent, a manager, 7 servants and many sweepers were engaged in its maintenance.<sup>22</sup>

Before Shahibaug was created, a wealthy Gujarati named Rustam had developed the Rustam Gardens on 60 *vighas* of land. This later became incorporated in the Shahibaug suburb. Next to the Rustam Garden was the Gulab (Rose) Garden, in which an abundance of fragrant roses were always in bloom. From these roses high quality rosewater and perfumes were prepared and sent to Delhi for the Mughal rulers till the end of their reign. Next to the Rose Garden was the Setur Garden, which was also well known. All these gardens became incorporated in Shahibaug.<sup>23</sup> In addition, to the west of the Shahi Palace was an old garden named Andhari (Dark) Field, since due to its many trees it was dark there even during the day. The remnants of this garden existed until the 19th century, and then became a part of Shahibaug.<sup>24</sup>

So, amid all these beautiful gardens, Shahibaug also developed into an extraordinary beautiful garden.

In the 17th century, Theve, a European visitor to Ahmedabad, profusely praised Ahmedabad,

17. Ibid. p. 65.

18. Ratnamanirao Bhimrao. *Shahibaug*. Ahmedabad: Gujarat Sahitya Sabha, 1928, p. 2.

19. Ibid. p. 3.

20. Prof. Commissariat, ‘History of Gujarat Sultan’, in Yatin Pandya. *The Ahmedabad Chronicle Imprints of a Millennium*. Ahmedabad: Vastu-Shilpa Foundation, 2001, p. 6.

21. Douglas, James. *Western India*. pp. 307-314; Ratnamanirao Bhimrao. *Shahibaug*. Ahmedabad: Gujarat Sahitya Sabha, 1928, p. 2.

22. Khan, Ali Mohammed. Gujarati trans. K.M. Jhaveri. *Mirate Ahmadi*. Parts 1 to 4, Ahmedabad, 1934.

23. Shahibaug, pp. 6-7.

24. Ibid.





This Shahibaug Mahel (above and left), now known as Sardar Patel memorial, was built by the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan in c. 1622. It was sanctified many times by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The Peshwa rulers of Ahmedabad also once honoured Shri Hari here. Then, during British rule also, Shri Hari was invited many times. Also known as the Padshah Vadi, Shri Hari bathed in the Sabarmati at the ghat behind it on numerous occasions. He also sanctified the surrounding gardens on many occasions. Today, it is popularly known as the Sardar Rashtriya Smarak. This mansion, its gardens and ghat have been sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

“In the city, Shahibaug is next to the river. All types of trees in Hindustan grow there. Long, straight roads have been made with trees on both sides. In truth, there are many undulating gardens filling the landscape. The garden area is very big and so much can be seen from its long roads. Along the centre, from one end to the other, countless flower bushes flourish. At the crossroads, there are structures of fragrant creepers, on the roof of which are tiles of green glass. Youths from the city come to see the many coloured fish in the shallow pool built here.”<sup>25</sup>

25. Ibid. p. 14; *Thevenu Ahmedabadnu Varnan, Puratatva Puravni 2; Ahmedabad Gazetteer*. p. 283 (Note).

In the 17th century, a German traveller named Mendolo came to Ahmedabad. He described Shahibaug as follows, “This garden is very big and surrounded by a wall. Its streams are full of water. I have rarely seen such beauty anywhere. In winter, its large central lake remains full of water. In summer, water is drawn for irrigation by bullocks. And the wells are so deep that they would never dry out.”<sup>26</sup>

Shahibaug’s splendour was sustained for two centuries. Up to the end of the 18th century, it

26. Ibid. 18, p. 13; Burgess, James. *Architecture of Ahmedabad*, Vol. 2. Archaeological Survey of Western India, p. 57.

was the best place to visit in Ahmedabad. Over time, the beauty of Shahibaug declined due to the actions of kings, princes, *subas* (local administrative heads), Marathi officers, British officers and businessmen. Still, up to the middle of the 20th century, the Shahibaug suburb was regarded as one where the wealthy lived.

The history and sacredness of Shahibaug was enriched by the frequent visits of Bhagwan Swaminarayan around 230 years ago.

In 1804, when Bhagwan Swaminarayan first visited Ahmedabad, he also sanctified Shahibaug. Bhagwan Swaminarayan's excursions through the Delhi Gate to the Sabarmati River in the north of the city are described in the *sampradayic* texts, "After bathing and dressing, Shri Hari, on invitation by the Suba<sup>27</sup>, went to his mansion (Shahibaug Mahel) on the banks of the nearby Sabarmati River. The Suba respectfully welcomed Shri Hari, performed his *pujan* and *arti* and presented gifts. Seeing the beauty of the trees, flowers and birds on the riverbank, Shri Hari profusely praised the city and river. After seeing the heavenly structure and splendour of Shahi Mahel, Shri Hari mounted on elephant... and returned to his lodgings in Navavas."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, on his first visit to Shahibaug, Bhagwan

27. At that time, Suba Kakasaheb Raghunath ruled Ahmedabad. He did not oppose Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Kakasaheb's senior administrator was Mallaba. Mallaba's nephew (brother's son), Chimanraoji, was also a respected administrator of the city. Through Khushal Bhatt (later, Gopalanand Swami), Chimanraoji became a *satsangi* and developed faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Due to his association with Chimanraoji, the Suba also respected Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Chimanraoji has asked questions to Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Vachanamruts Vartal 6 and 7 (*Ahmedabadma Bhagwan Swaminarayan*, pp. 28-29).

28. Mahant Shastri Ghanshyamswarupdasji, *Ahmedabadma Bhagwan Swaminarayan*. Ahmedabad Swaminarayan Mandir, Kalupur, 1978, p. 36.

Note: This book has been prepared from various sources of the Sampradaya. But, since these original sources have not been referenced in the book, only this book is referenced here.

Swaminarayan was given a grand welcome. Thereafter, whenever he visited Ahmedabad he would visit Shahibaug – whether going to the Sabarmati to bathe or travelling to and from North Gujarat (Dandhavya Pradesh). In this way, he had constantly sanctified Shahibaug.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan's arrival in Ahmedabad via Motera in Samvat 1862 is described in the *sampradayic* texts, "After waking up early and completing his morning routine, Shri Hari left for Ahmedabad. He came in front of the Padshah Vadi (in the precincts of which was the Shahi Mahel) and crossed the river. For 90 minutes, he bathed and played watersports with the sadhus and devotees. While bathing, Shri Hari remained in the upstream waters and his sadhus and *parshads* stayed downstream. And his devotees stayed even further downstream since they understood the glory of Shri Hari and the sadhus."<sup>29</sup>

After bathing, Bhagwan Swaminarayan proceeded towards Delhi Gate to enter the city of Ahmedabad. When Shri Hari was near the city, the Suba came to welcome him. The *sampradayic* texts note, "Everyone garlanded Shri Hari, gifted coconuts and other items and offered *sashtang* prostrations to him. Then, under the shade of an a tamarind tree, a seat was prepared and an assembly was held. Shri Hari sat there.... The Suba said, 'It is my great fortune that I have had darshan of you and the sadhus. This association is not possible without fate.... Those who have your darshan are freed from the cycles of birth and death.' Shri Hari was pleased to hear the Suba.

"Then Shri Hari mounted an elephant and also sat the Suba with him. With a golden stick in hand, Motiram and Kubersinh loudly proclaimed Shri Hari's glory.

"On both sides of the road, there were immense crowds of city residents standing for Shri Hari's darshan... En route countless residents garlanded

29. Ibid. p. 77.





A photo of Delhi Gate shortly after the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He passed through this Gate countless times and devotees in large numbers often gathered for his darshan. Bhagwan Swaminarayan often sat in the room atop the gate and held assemblies there.

Shri Hari. *Gulal* filled the atmosphere. The roads were filled with colour and flowers. The beauty of the roads was enhanced by the gardens of trees and fruits and the singing of birds on both sides. In each garden was a bungalow. People stood for darshan on the rooftops. In this way, Shri Hari's procession entered the city through the decorated Delhi Gate.”<sup>30</sup>

The *sampradayic* texts and devotees describe that Shri Hari sanctified a mango grove on numerous occasions. He held assemblies, delivered discourses and rested there countless times.

30. Ibid. pp. 78-80.

By personally contacting and discoursing with sadhus and devotees from Bhagwan Swaminarayan's time, Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj identified and authenticated this sanctified mango grove. He said, “The grove of mango trees in Shahibaug where Bhagwan Swaminarayan sat and conducted assemblies, is where we want to build a mandir.”

He acquired that land and in 1948 CE blessed, “A grand mandir will be built here.” He also initiated the necessary arrangements. Today, the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir stands resplendently on that land.<sup>31</sup>

Many stories of Shri Hari's divine exploits in Shahibaug are recorded in the *sampradayic* texts. The following is a small selection.

- ◆ In 1806 CE (V.S. 1862), when Shri Hari visited Ahmedabad, Raghunathdas, a former disciple of Ramanand Swami, was causing trouble. So, for five days Shri Hari stayed amid the trees at Shahibaug. Here, at the Shahi Mahel Ghat and Narayan Ghat, he would bathe in the River Sabarmati and offer puja at the Mahadev Mandir on the banks.<sup>32</sup>
- ◆ In 1806 CE (V.S. 1862), Shri Hari visited Ahmedabad twice, both times arriving from North Gujarat. The second time he also visited Shahibaug.<sup>33</sup>
- ◆ After Uttarayan in 1809 CE (V.S. 1865), Shri Hari visited Ahmedabad and then departed to Motera via Shahibaug.<sup>34</sup>
- ◆ In 1811 CE (V.S. 1867), when Shri Hari came to Ahmedabad from Motera, a grand procession was organized in his honour from the mango grove towards Delhi Gate into the city. During this visit,

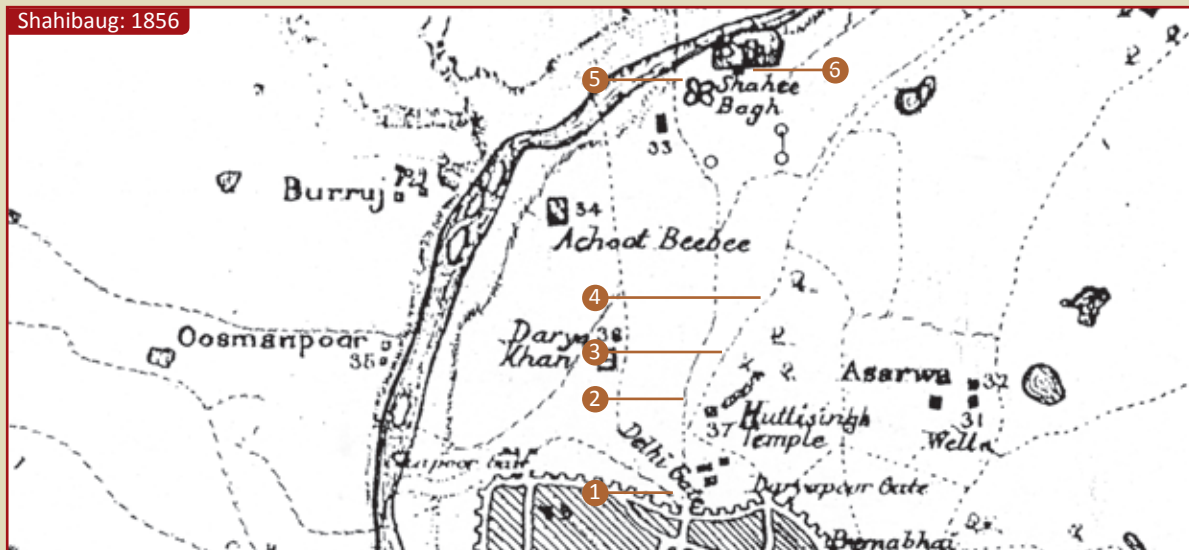
31. It is worth noting that even in contemporary maps, the sanctified land identified by Shastriji Maharaj was depicted as a garden or mango grove. For details, see maps on p. 17.

32. Ibid. 28, pp. 84-85.

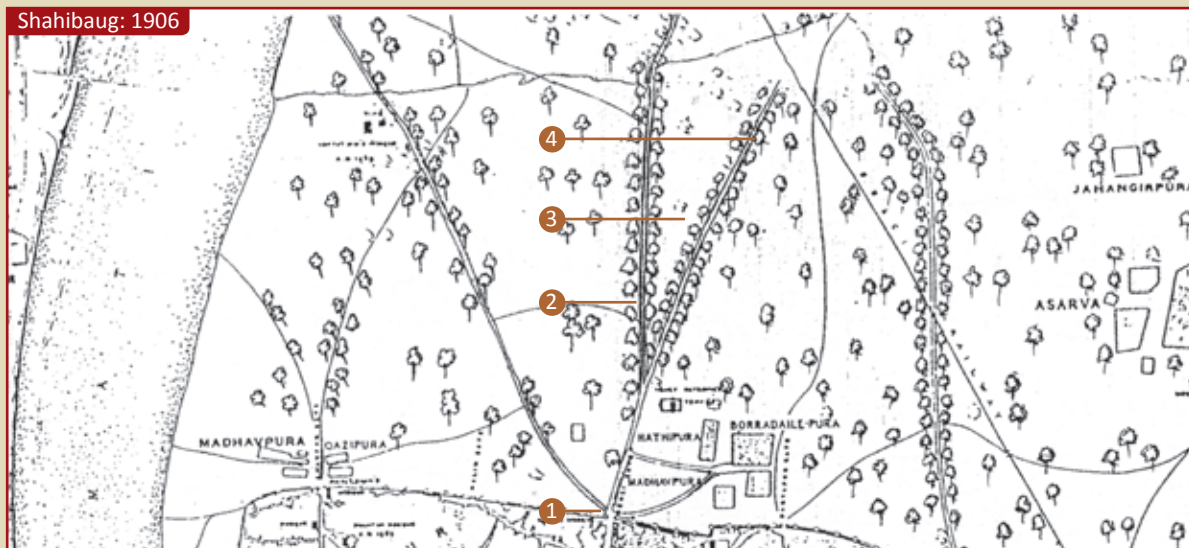
33. Ibid. p. 86. The road from North Gujarat to enter the city passes through Shahibaug.

34. Ibid. p. 89.

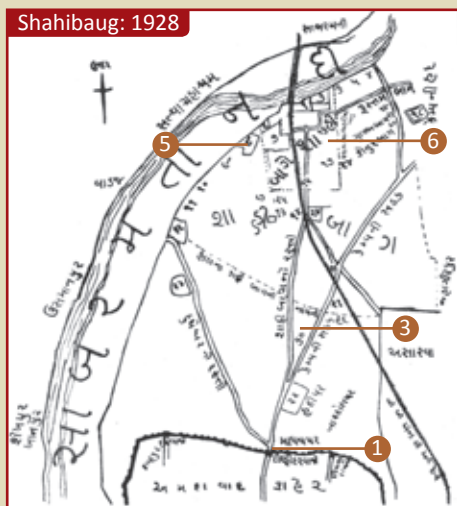
Shahibaug: 1856



Shahibaug: 1906



Shahibaug: 1928



Bhagwan Swaminarayan visited and sanctified Shahibaug on numerous occasions. The route Shri Hari took from Delhi Gate to Shahibaug and from Shahibaug to Delhi Gate is shown in the maps by the number 2. Sometimes, when he went to the Shahi Mahel he used route 4. Until 1906, both of these routes were full of dense trees. In particular, the orchard of tamarind and mango trees where he often rested and from where the welcome processions started is the triangular area depicted by the number 3. The 1856 and 1928 maps also show this area to be a garden. Maps from between 1830 and 1928 show that from Narayan Ghat (number 5) and Shahi Mahel (number 6) towards Delhi Gate, there is only one mango grove. Brahmaswatur Shastriji Maharaj confirmed the sanctity of this place and decided to build a mandir on this land. Today, the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir stands on this land sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.



the then Marathi Subo of Ahmedabad, Vitthal Rao, plotted to kill Shri Hari. But, the all-knowing Lord exposed the plot. Humiliated and angered, the Subo ordered Shri Hari to leave the city. On that occasion Shri Hari passed through the Dariyapur Gate and Padshah Vadi towards Motera.<sup>35</sup>

Then for 10 years, Shri Hari was not allowed to visit Ahmedabad. In 1818 CE, Maratha rule ended and the British East India Company assumed power. Under the Collector of Kheda District, John Andrew Dunlop, officer Mr. Heron was responsible for Ahmedabad. At the request of the British officials, Shri Hari was welcomed back to Ahmedabad and again graced Shahibaug.

In 1819 CE (V.S. 1875), Bhagwan Swaminarayan came to Ahmedabad from Motera. On this occasion also a grand reception was held at the mango grove. The event has been described as follows, “The city’s devotees, and prominent residents and businessmen led a grand entourage to welcome Shri Hari. Mr Heron also came to greet Shri Hari. He told Shri Hari, ‘We are all very delighted by your darshan. You stay here and build a mandir. I have received from your devotees your request for some land in Navavas and have forwarded a recommendation letter to the Company’s directors abroad. We will give a deed for the land that will be valid forever.’

“Then Shri Hari garlanded Mr Heron, who bowed at his feet and departed. Thereafter, the others garlanded Shri Hari and had his darshan. The music of western and local instruments filled the atmosphere. The procession departed from there and at sunset Shri Hari entered the city from the Padshah Vadi and then through

35. Ibid. pp. 115, 135. Note: This road is adjacent to the east side of the present BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug. Whenever Bhagwan Swaminarayan went to the Sabarmati to bathe or to the Padshah Vadi, he used one of two routes. He passed through the area of the present BAPS Mandir adjacent to both routes. Thus, Shri Hari sanctified this land by both routes. For details see maps on p. 15.

Delhi Gate.”<sup>36</sup> So, in fact, the British official’s promise to grant land for the first mandir was made on the sanctified land of Shahibaug.

During this visit, when Shri Hari celebrated the Prabhodini Ekadashi festival he again bathed in the Sabarmati at Narayan Ghat and the devotees honoured him. Again, the following year, Shri Hari was welcomed at Shahibaug.

So, the mango grove in Shahibaug was sanctified many times by Shri Hari’s visits.

At the request of Himabhai Hathisinh, a leading city resident, Shri Hari visited the Hathisinh Temple near Shahibaug.

In the month of February 1822 (Maha, V.S. 1878), when Shri Hari visited Ahmedabad, the construction of the mandir at Kalupur Navavas was nearing completion and preparations for the *murti-pratishtha* had begun. Shri Hari personally inspected the accommodation options for the sadhus and devotees expected from outside Ahmedabad for the celebration. Shahibaug was one of the possible options. So, Shri Hari went there to assess its suitability. The visit has been described as follows, “Shri Hari walked from Mandvi Pol and via Manek Chowk reached Delhi Gate to the north. From there, he went northwards towards the Padshah Vadi (in Shahibaug) on the banks of the Sabarmati. On the banks there is a grand mansion, where the city’s Collector Dunlop lived. Surrounding it were many tamarind and other types of trees. Also, saplings of trees from abroad had been planted. The entire area was a beautiful garden. Shri Hari liked the place and so requested Collector Dunlop for permission to use it for accommodation. Mr Dunlop happily agreed, without worrying about the possible damage that could result from so many people using it. Shri Hari inspected the area in detail and was happy that the nearby river would provide ample water and the trees enough shade. Then, despite its convenience, Shri Hari thought that

36. Ibid. pp. 167-168.

the throng of devotees may damage the trees and hence it would not be appropriate to use it for accommodation. He felt it would not be right if even slight damage occurred to the place.

Shri Hari inspected the Andhari Garden next to the mansion. Here, there were many *sitafal* trees and since they may also be damaged, Shri Hari decided not to use it. Then Kubersinh led Shri Hari to all the places around the mansion which Mr Dunlop had permitted for use.”<sup>37</sup> So, as a result, Shri Hari walked around extensively and sanctified Shahibaug once more.

During Shri Hari’s stay in Ahmedabad during February-March 1825 CE Maha and Fagan of V.S. 1881, the account of the Fuldol celebration is well-known throughout the Sampradaya. After the celebration, Shri Hari came via the Delhi Gate to Shahibaug to bathe, “Shri Hari

37. Ibid. pp. 217-218.

walked towards the Padshah Vadi and exited the city through the Delhi Gate. The group of accompanying devotees stretched for one *gau*. All felt that Shri Hari was walking with them. On the way, Shri Hari was eating a pomegranate.

“The procession proceeded from the Delhi Gate, past the Hathisinh Temple towards the Dariyakhan Ghummat. To the left, a little ahead, was a banyan tree where everyone noticed a man dressed as a fakir. He prayed to Shri Hari, who gave him half the pomegranate and blessed him. Shri Hari said to Muktanand Swami, ‘That was Dariyakhan. When you stayed at the Dariyakhan Ghummat, by your association he developed faith in me. So I have granted him liberation.’”<sup>38</sup>

(Contd. on pg. 43)

38. Ibid. pp. 326-327. Note: The descriptions suggest that this area later housed the Advance Mill. At present this area is part of the Shahibaug Mandir complex.

## BY WHICH ROUTE DID SHRI HARI ENTER AHMEDABAD?

Despite the changing rulers and the fluctuation between honour and insult, Bhagwan Swaminarayan visited Ahmedabad about 26 times over a span of 19 years. But, by which route did Bhagwan Swaminarayan enter and exit Ahmedabad?

Ahmedabad can be entered through 21 gates. However, Bhagwan Swaminarayan mainly used the following three: Delhi Gate, Raipur Gate and Jamalpur Gate.

The usual route for his entry and exit was as follows: Dandhavya (North Gujarat) – Ahmedabad – Dashkroi (Aslali, Jetalpur, Vahelal, etc.). As an exception, on two occasions, Bhagwan Swaminarayan arrived from Anand via Sarkhej – that is from the southeast.

Whenever he came from or went towards North Gujarat, he always passed Shahibaug. Whenever he came from or went towards Aslali or Vahelal, he mostly came through the Raipur



Gate or another gate in the east of the city.

Only on two occasions did he come to Ahmedabad from Saurashtra, passing Sanand and Sarkhej. At that time, there were no bridges or roads from the gates in the west leading into the city. So, from Sarkhej, he crossed the river at Shahbari and entered the city through the Jamalpur Gate. An analysis of the maps and routes indicates that Bhagwan Swaminarayan very frequently used the Shahibaug-Delhi Gate route and so sanctified it.



# SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR

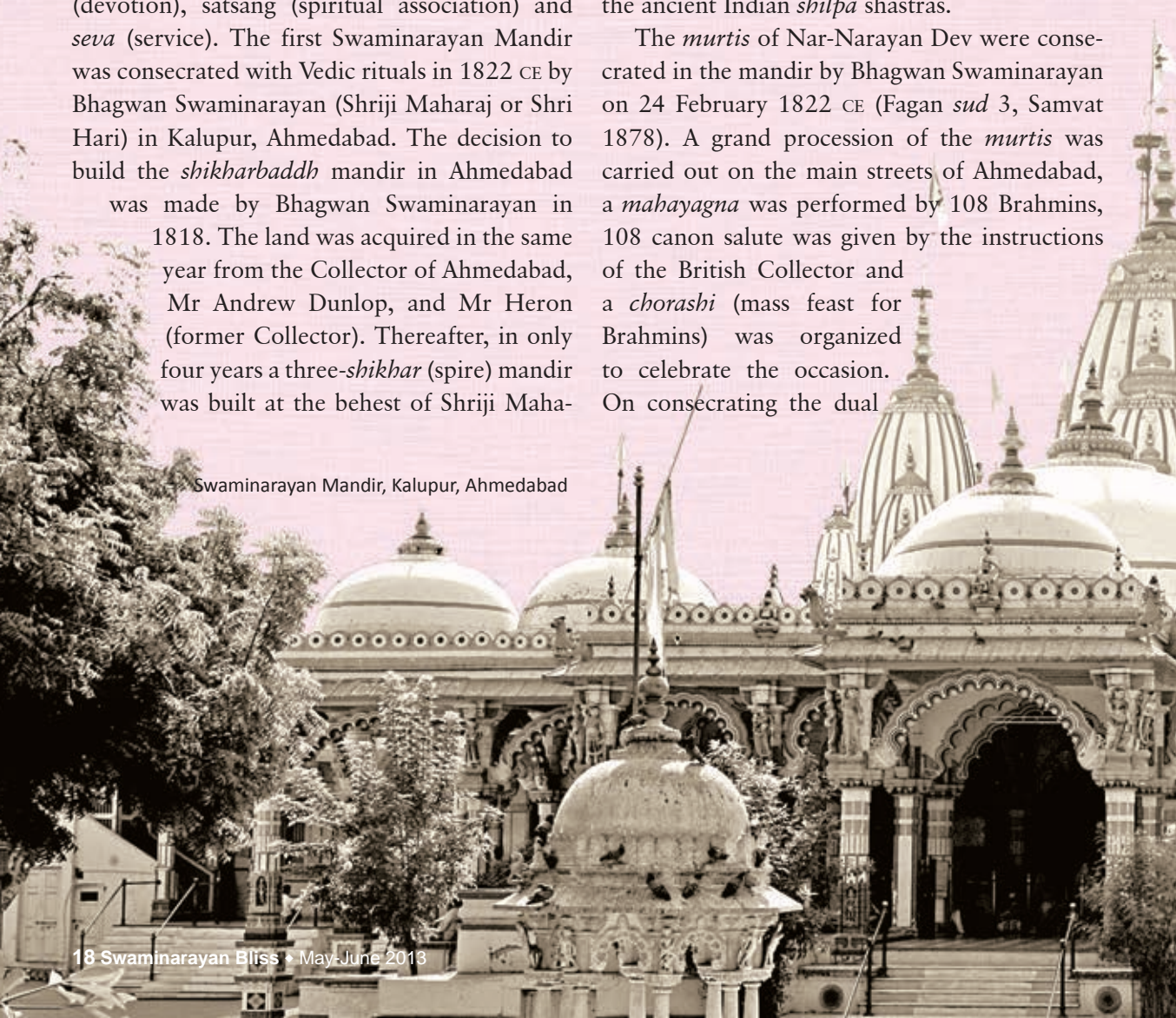
Consecrated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in 1822, Ahmedabad

Mandirs are a hallmark of the worldwide Swaminarayan Sampradaya. Every mandir is vibrant with the traditions of *upasana* (worship), *bhakti* (devotion), *satsang* (spiritual association) and *seva* (service). The first Swaminarayan Mandir was consecrated with Vedic rituals in 1822 CE by Bhagwan Swaminarayan (Shriji Maharaj or Shri Hari) in Kalupur, Ahmedabad. The decision to build the *shikharbaddh* mandir in Ahmedabad was made by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in 1818. The land was acquired in the same year from the Collector of Ahmedabad, Mr Andrew Dunlop, and Mr Heron (former Collector). Thereafter, in only four years a three-*shikhar* (spire) mandir was built at the behest of Shriji Maha-

raj. His wish was actualized through the efforts of Brahmanand Swami, Anandanand Swami and two *sthapatis* (traditional architects), Shri Ambaram and Kuber, working in compliance with the ancient Indian *shilpa* shastras.

The *murtis* of Nar-Narayan Dev were consecrated in the mandir by Bhagwan Swaminarayan on 24 February 1822 CE (Fagan *sud* 3, Samvat 1878). A grand procession of the *murtis* was carried out on the main streets of Ahmedabad, a *mahayagna* was performed by 108 Brahmins, 108 canon salute was given by the instructions of the British Collector and a *chorashi* (mass feast for Brahmins) was organized to celebrate the occasion. On consecrating the dual

Swaminarayan Mandir, Kalupur, Ahmedabad





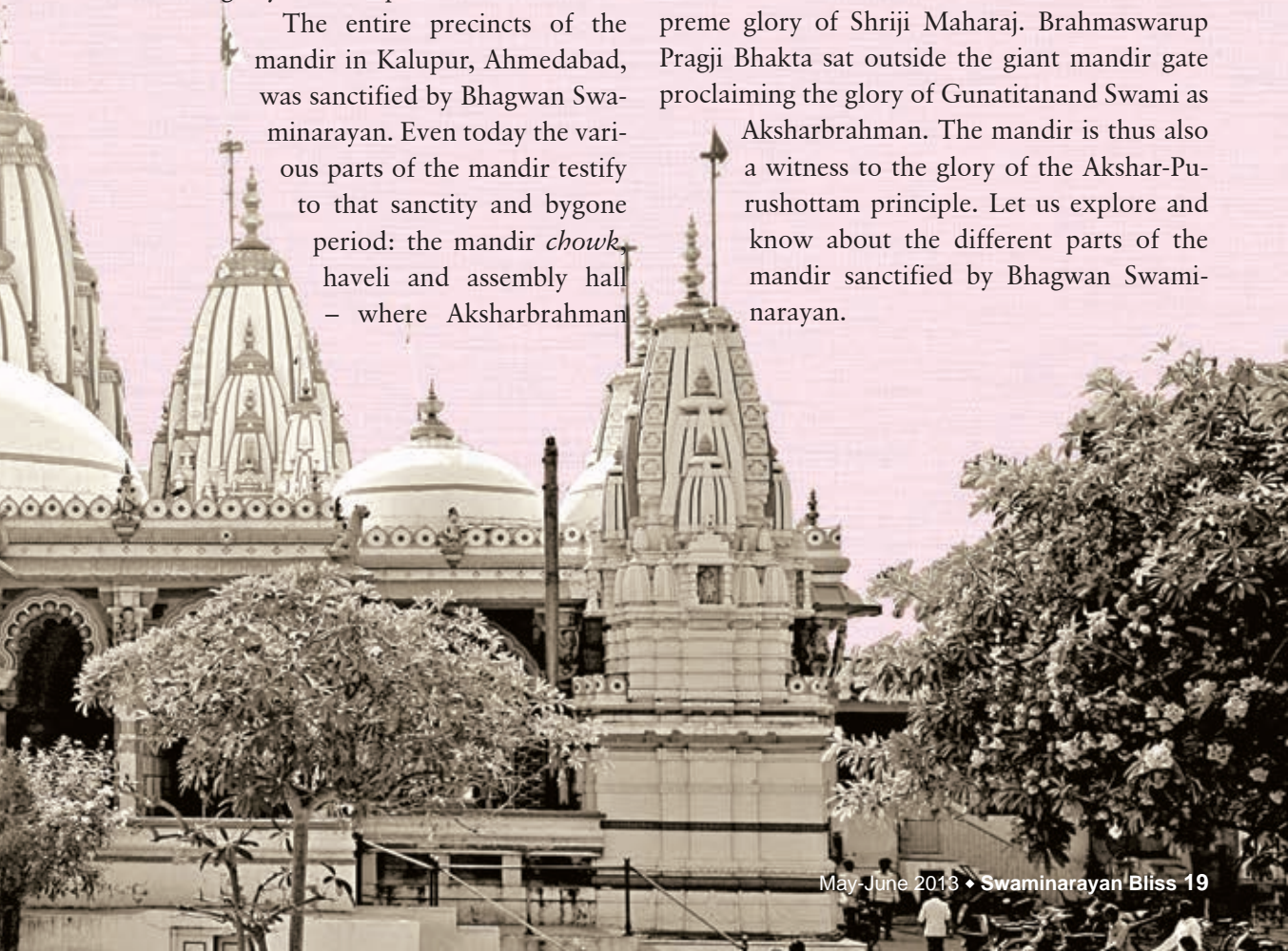
*murtis* of Nar-Narayan Shriji Maharaj alluded to the principle of Bhakta-Bhagwan (i.e. Akshar and Purushottam). Then he stood on the threshold of the sanctum sanctorum and revealed his glory as the supreme God.

The entire precincts of the mandir in Kalupur, Ahmedabad, was sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Even today the various parts of the mandir testify to that sanctity and bygone period: the mandir *chowk*, haveli and assembly hall – where Aksharbrahman



Bhagwan Swaminarayan discourses to his disciples on the precincts of Swaminarayan Mandir, Kalupur

Gunatitanand Swami discoursed about the supreme glory of Shriji Maharaj. Brahmaswarup Pragji Bhakta sat outside the giant mandir gate proclaiming the glory of Gunatitanand Swami as Aksharbrahman. The mandir is thus also a witness to the glory of the Akshar-Purushottam principle. Let us explore and know about the different parts of the mandir sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.







## MURTIS, SINHASAN, UMBRO (THRESHOLD) AND GARUDJI

Prior to the consecration of the *murtis* in the three shrines of the mandir, Shriji Maharaj called a few of his sadhus and devotees and said, “I shall sit in each of the *sinhasans* (thrones) and I would like you to see whether any changes in the height and width of the *sinhasans* are required.” Shriji



Maharaj sat in all the three *sinhasans* and thus sanctified them before the *murtis* were installed. At present the upper part of the *sinhasans* have been changed, and the three seats or platforms (*bethaks* or *otlas*) on which the *murtis* were installed are the same. The *murtis* of Garudji (left) in all three seats (*bethaks*) are original, i.e. the same as when they were first installed. The *umbro* (threshold: see bottom photo) of the *garbhagruh* (sanctum sanctorum) is the same and sacred because Bhagwan Swaminarayan sat on it after performing the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of Nar-Narayan Dev. From here he accepted jewellery and clothes donated by devotees while they filed past for darshan. Maharaj then passed on the gifts to the *brahmachari* pujaris standing inside the *garbhagruh*. On that same *umbro* Shriji Maharaj stood and looked at the *murtis* of Nar-Narayan, infusing in them his divine light. On many other occasions he had sat on the *umbro* and took lunch. This sacred *umbro* still exists today.





### SABHA MANDAP AND BETHAK

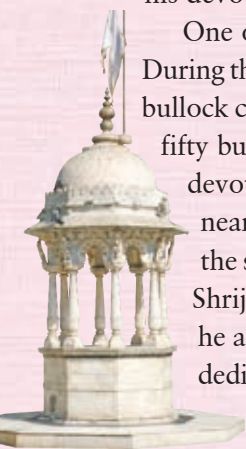
**Sabha Mandap:** A residential quarter (*dharmashala*) for sadhus was built with Shriji Maharaj's instruction and completed prior to the mandir construction. Today, in its place lies the *sabha mandap* (assembly hall: above), which is located opposite the mandir. Shriji Maharaj used to sometimes stay at the *dharmashala* or often go to meet the sadhus. Here, he also served food to the sadhus and sat on a chair to give darshan.

**Bethak:** Shriji Maharaj often sat on a stone seat by a pillar in the western part of the *sabha mandap*. Presently, a shrine (above) with Maharaj's *charnarvind* (marble footprints) marks the sacred spot where the stone seat was located. The stone seat is presently kept for darshan on the right side after the flight of steps to the Rang Mahol.

### SACRED STHAMBH AND SHRINE

In the middle of the open grounds of the mandir lies a memorial shrine (left). The shrine marks the very place from where Shriji Maharaj sprayed coloured water on his devotees and sadhus.

One of the pillars (right) beneath the mandir dome is of special relevance. During the construction work of the mandir, devotees transported stones in their bullock carts from Himmatnagar (70 km from Ahmedabad). Once, a caravan of fifty bullock carts loaded with stones was on its way to Ahmedabad. A poor devotee's ox broke its leg. So the devotee hired two bullock carts from a nearby village; placing his injured bullock in one cart and transferring all the stones in the other. On reaching the construction site in Ahmedabad, Shriji Maharaj hurriedly got the injured ox treated and bandaged. Then he acknowledged the service of the poor devotee by embracing him and dedicating in his name a pillar carved from one of the stones he had brought.







## GRAND HAVELI

There was an open ground in place of the existing Haveli in the mandir precincts. Shriji Maharaj used to sit there on a wooden platform to discourse to an assembly of devotees. Once, a troupe of acrobats performed before him and thereafter he discoursed about the importance of concentration and daily practice to his devotees. He also told them to meditate on God's divine *murti*. On the same



open ground Maharaj used to arrange dinner for the devotees. On this sacred place Acharya Ayo-dhyaprasadji Maharaj built the Haveli (top) in 1846 (Samvat 1902). The Haveli and its ornate carvings are renowned for its heritage and architecture.

## MAIN GATE OF MANDIR AND SHRINE

Before the existing main gate of the mandir (middle) there used to be a gate with a hall on top. Maharaj used to often stay and sleep there and give darshan to devotees from its terrace.

There was a neem tree near the main gate, where Shriji Maharaj delivered the Vachanam-ruts. After the neem tree fell a memorial shrine was built on that spot (left).



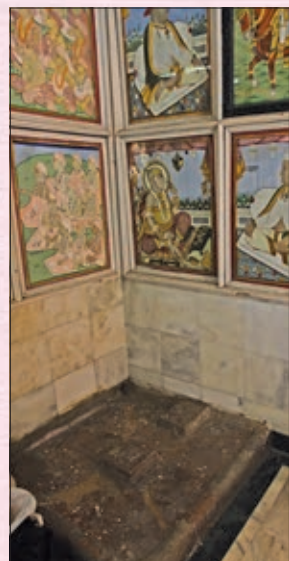
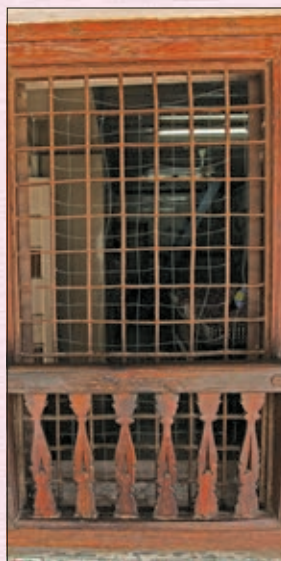




### RANG MAHOL AND SACRED WELL

During the construction of the mandir the sadhus and devotees built the living quarters of Shriji Maharaj. It is called the Rang Mahol (above). In the Rang Mahol, the *chokdi* (bathing area: far right) and the window on the first floor (near right), where he used to sit, are the same even today.

Adjacent to the Rang Mahol was a well (see top right), where Shriji Maharaj used to bathe. A shrine (top right) has been built to denote the sacred well. The well water was used for drinking and other domestic purposes. The well was later sealed and a marble platform with Maharaj's *charnarvind* is open for darshan today.



### SUKH SHAIYYA

Maharaj used the *sukh shaiyya* (right), now displayed in the Rang Mahol, to sleep on or to stand on when he sprinkled coloured powder on devotees during the Fuldol festival in Ahmedabad. On the uppermost floor of the Rang Mahol a palanquin (*meno*) used by Bhagwan Swaminarayan is displayed for darshan. ♦





# RIVER SABARMATI

Blessed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan

**T**he *pauranik* (ancient) name of River Sabarmati is Sabhramati. The Padma Purana (Uttarkhand, Ch. 231) lavishly praises the river, “The pilgrim places of Prayag, Naimisharanya, Brahmasarovar, Dashaashwamedh, Ganga Dwar and others are present in the waters of Sabarmati. All the holy rivers and all the Brahma-*tirthas* reside in the Sabarmati.”

The Puranas describe that King Bhagirath performed austerities and brought the waters of Ganga to earth, similarly, Kashyap Rishi performed austerities and brought the River Sabarmati to earth. So, it is also known as Kashyapi Ganga.

River Sabarmati, Ahmedabad

In the Swaminarayan Sampradaya the highest glory of the River Sabarmati lies in the fact that it was sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself. In the history of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, after the River Ghela in Gadhada, the second most frequently used river in which Shriji Maharaj bathed and performed *lilas* was the Sabarmati. Whenever Maharaj visited Ahmedabad he used to bathe on the various banks of the Sabarmati. However, the most times he had bathed and performed *lilas* were from the river bank at Shahibaug. Today, the same place commands an undiminishing attraction as a pilgrim place for the faithful.





Bhagwan Swaminarayan praised the Sabarmati on par with the River Ghela. He said, “Just as the Ghela river is dear to me so is equally the Sabarmati. When anyone bathes in the Sabarmati with the knowledge of my glory, that person will attain *moksha* and all his wishes will be fulfilled. When anyone immerses the *asthi* (bones and ashes) of a deceased with the knowledge of my glory, the person’s soul will be liberated even if he has been condemned to Yampuri (hell).”

So, in spite of the River Sabarmati getting a facelift with the riverfront project and the waters



Shriji Maharaj and his sadhus bathe in the River Sabarmati

of River Narmada flowing in it, the sanctity bestowed by Shriji Maharaj will forever remain so.

Let us see some of the places that Shri Hari sanctified on the banks of the Sabarmati.







### NARAYAN GHAT

By the banks of River Sabarmati, near Subhash Bridge, lies a beautiful ghat called Narayan Ghat (above). It was sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, where he bathed a number of times and performed many *lilas*. Whenever Maharaj visited Ahmedabad he invariably came to Narayan Ghat to have a bath and celebrate with his sadhus and devotees. There are memorial shrines dedicated to senior *paramhansas* and Acharya Ayodhyaprasadji of the Ahmedabad diocese.



### SAPTARSHI GHAT

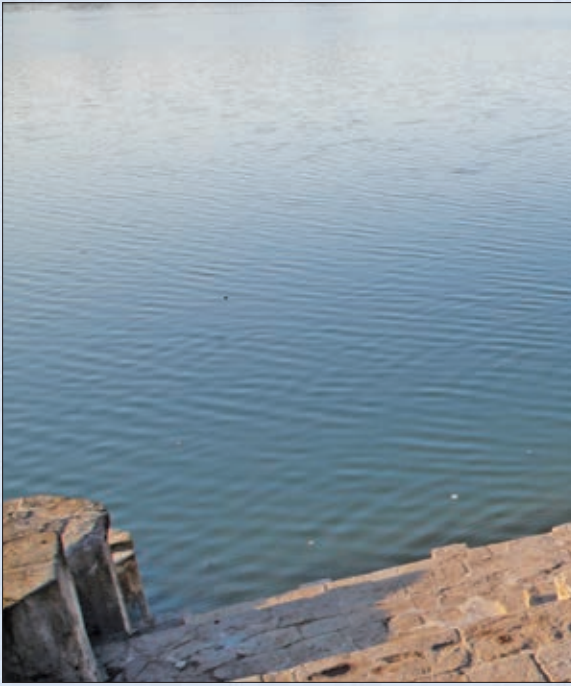
The Saptarshi Ghat (left) lies near Sardar Bridge, built over the River Sabarmati. Shriji Maharaj had visited this point and the opposite bank to bathe and rejoice with his devotees.



### BHIMNATH GHAT

Bhimnath Mahadev Mandir and its ghat are well known in Ahmedabad. The mandir lies in a garden called Padshah Vadi near Shahi Palace in Shahibaug. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had visited the mandir and the adjoining ghat on many occasions for darshan and to take a dip in the River Sabarmati. The place is sacred because of the mandir and the visit by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.





### DUDHESHWAR GHAT

This Ghat (above) lies to the northwest of the city. Also known as Dadhichi *tirth*, it is where the great Rishi Dadhichi performed austerities and sacrificed himself so that the devas could win the war against the demons. Shriji Maharaj had visited this ghat and taken a bath there.



### SACRED SHRINE IN MOTERA

Motera village is located in the northern part of Ahmedabad, near the banks of River Sabarmati. The entire village was populated with Swaminarayan *satsangis*. Shriji Maharaj had visited the village on many occasions to address the devotees and sanctify their homes. He had also bathed in the waters of the Sabarmati many times.

### GANESH WINDOW GHAT

This Ghat (left and below) lies near Ellis Bridge (also called Lakadiya). It seems that this place was once a part of Bhadra Fort. Shriji Maharaj visited the Ghat with his sadhus to take a bath. At present the place is derelict. ♦





# LAKE AND PONDS

Sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan

For over 600 years Ahmedabad has had a beautiful landmark called Lake Karnasagar or Lake Kankariya. The River Sabarmati flows around the north, west and south sides of Ahmedabad. In the eastern part of Ahmedabad lies Lake Kankariya, which has a perfect circumference. The lake has been associated with the history of Ahmedabad and has always been an attraction for visitors and its local people.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan had on many occasions rested and stayed many nights by the lake. He had bathed in its waters and discoursed by its bank. The *paramhansas*, Devanand Swami and Bhumanand Swami, wrote bhajans about Maha-

raj's *lilas* in Ahmedabad and at Lake Kankariya.

In 1822 CE Shriji Maharaj performed the *murti-pratishtha* of the first Swaminarayan Mandir in Kalupur, Ahmedabad. At that time Maharaj, his sadhus and devotees had stayed by the lake in tents pitched beneath the lush mango and tamarind trees. Today, Kankariya has become a spot for entertainment and celebrations for thousands. However, people who visit the place are not aware of its sacredness bestowed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Shriji Maharaj had sanctified, besides Lake Kankariya, many wells, ponds and Lake Chandola in Ahmedabad.

Sadguru Bhumanand Swami had versified the divine *lila* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan during his

Lake Kankariya, Ahmedabad





visits to Lake Kankariya.

*“Kānkarie krupālu padhāriya...”*

*“The compassionate one (Maharaj) had come to Kankariya...”*

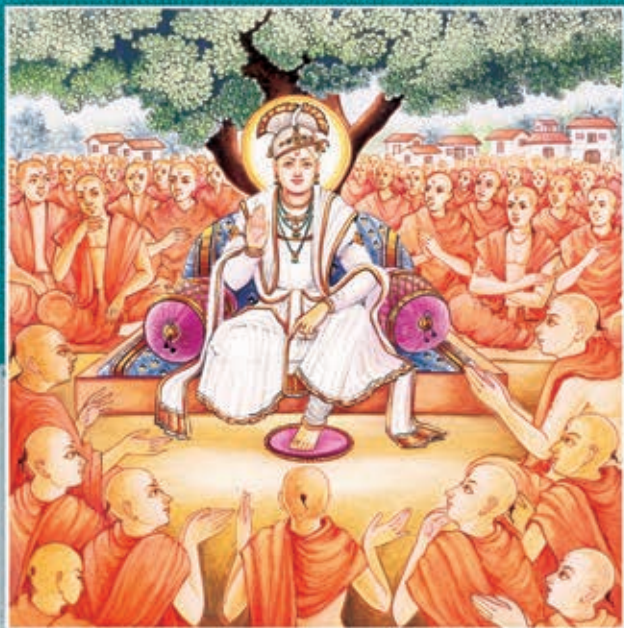
*All the citizens came to see the beautiful Lord. The king of the city came too and bowed to him... 1*

*All eight siddhis (powers) and nine nidhis (treasures) came in human forms;*

*For the purpose of holding a yagna and to give gifts and donations... 2*

*The Lord circumambulates on horseback along with many;*

*While countless Brahmins feast in the middle,*



Shriji Maharaj discourses to his paramhansas  
by Lake Kankariya

*hailing the Lord's name... 3*

*O wonderful the lila was, the devas came in heavenly vehicles to see Bhumanand's Lord instantly... 4*







### KANKARIYA LAKE, DRAINS AND NAGINA VADI

The Kankariya Lake (left) in Ahmedabad had been sanctified many times by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He used to bathe and frolic with his devotees in its cool waters. Before and after the consecration of the *murtis* of Nar-Narayan in the mandir in Kalupur, Maharaj stayed with hundreds of devotees beneath the tamarind trees by the banks of the lake. Here, he also held a feast (*chorashi*) for many Brahmins. The lake holds great significance in the Sampradaya because of the sacredness bestowed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.



**Drain Pipes on East Side of Lake:** After bathing in the lake, Shriji Maharaj used to often sit on the platform on top of the drain pipes (above) and discourse to his devotees.



**Nagina Vadi:** At the centre of the lake lies the Nagina Vadi (left), which still has a bungalow and a garden (below). Maharaj meditated in the garden and thereafter discoursed to his congregation. In addition, by the resting place on the south side of the lake Maharaj used to sit on the parapet to meditate and thereafter talk to the devotees.





### CHANDOLA LAKE

Chandola Lake (above) lies in the southern part of Ahmedabad city, near the national highway. Bhagwan Swaminarayan sanctified the lake by resting beneath nearby trees while going from Ahmedabad to Jetalpur or vice versa. On a number of occasions he and his devotees bathed in its waters. He also discoursed to his sadhus and devotees on its banks. Many references of his respites by the lake are found in the Satsang literature.




### HANUMANJI MANDIR (PAGLA MANDIR)

On the way to Pushpakunj from Kankariya Lake in Maninagar lies the Pagla Mandir (left), also known as Swaminarayan Bethak (Seat). The spot commemorates the very place where Maharaj stayed in a decorative tent after performing the *pratishtha* of Nar-Narayan Dev. It was on this very place where Maharaj stood on a platform to supervise the feast (*chorashi*) for Brahmins. He also used to sit here and deliver discourses to his devotees. Shriji Maharaj consecrated a small *murti* of Hanumanji (left: image with a golden arch) on the same place. In memory of Maharaj's divine *lila* Acharya Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj installed a shrine with a pair of marble *charnarvinds* (left) in front of Hanumanji's small *murti*. ♦



# DEVOTEES' HOMES


Sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan



The hallmark of old Ahmedabad city is its narrow streets and narrow *pols* (narrow streets). Today, many centuries later, some parts of the old city appear as they were, frozen in time. People of all walks have spent their lives in these *pols*: tradesmen, noblemen, rich, poor and robust. They lived, died and were forgotten.

But one name still survives till today – Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He first came to Ahmedabad in 1804 (V.S. 1860) and thereafter for a total of 25 times till 1829. During each visit he stayed in the homes of devotees located in *pols* or narrow streets. He blessed them, discoursed to them and performed many divine *li-las* for their spiritual uplift. In the Sampradaya's literature one finds the names of 119 devotees of Ahmedabad during the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

What was Shriji Maharaj's daily routine in Ahmedabad? The Sampradaya's literature notes that after his morning rituals of bath, worship and breakfast he visited the homes of devotees and well-wishers at their requests. He took lunch at their homes, rested there in the afternoon and discoursed to them in the evening. He sanctified the opulent homes and havelis of Himabhai Hathisinh Sheth, Sheth Becharbhai Mankivala, and Sheth Lallubhai Badarbhai and also the ordinary homes of devotees in the narrow streets and *pols* of Ahmedabad. During his home visits Shriji Maharaj also sanctified practically all the streets and *pols*





of Ahmedabad. Whenever his processions were carried out on the streets and *pols* they resounded with the holy chantings and kirtans of his sadhus and devotees. Today, after 200 years, the homes and streets sanctified by him exude divinity and evoke memories of his love and compassion for his devotees. Today, in spite of some external changes, we can still see most of the homes and *pols* sanctified by Shriji Maharaj as they were.







### HIRACHAND CHOKSI'S HOME

On several occasions, Shriji Maharaj visited the home of Hirachand, a leading devotee. He also took lunch there. The house is located in Haja Patel's Pol. Presently, the descendants of Hirachand have bought the neighbouring home of Nathu Bhatt, which was also sanctified by Maharaj, and combined it into one house.

### DAMODARDAS PATEL'S HOME

Damodardas Patel was one of Maharaj's prominent devotees in Ahmedabad. He served Maharaj and the Nar-Narayan Dev *murtis* by proclaiming their names aloud (as a *chhadidar*). Maharaj visited his home in Nani Salepari in Dariyapur many times for lunch. His descendants still have some sacred memorabilia of Maharaj.



### LALDAS GORA'S HOME

Laldas Gora was a leading devotee of Maharaj. He gave money to Maharaj for the *chorashi* (feast for Brahmins) held in Ahmedabad, and was thus blessed by Maharaj for obeying his wish. Shriji Maharaj visited his home in Jhapada's Pol many times.

### SHETH BECHAR MANKI'S HOME

Becharbhai Manki, a leading businessman of Ahmedabad, lived in Gundini Pol. He became a *satsangi* and developed firm faith in Shriji Maharaj through Muktanand Swami. He invited Maharaj and his senior sadhus to his home several times and offered respects by performing puja.







### MOHANLAL SHETH'S HOME

Mohanbhai was a Vaishnav and a businessman. His home is in Panchbhai's Pol in Gheekanta. He came into Satsang after experiencing Shri Hari's divine glory. Maharaj came to his home to bless his son during his marriage ceremony.

### KUBERSINH CHHADIDAR'S HOME

Kubersinh was a leading devotee of Shriji Maharaj. Kubersinh and his brother, Motiram, played an important role in acquiring the land for the mandir in Kalupur. Many times Kubersinh had invited Maharaj to his home in Dariyapur, performed his puja and offered lunch.

### BAPALAL PANDIT'S HOME

Bapalal Pandit was a famous Sanskrit pandit in the time of Shriji Maharaj. During the *yagna* in Ahmedabad he invited Maharaj to sanctify his home. Maharaj visited his home and blessed him. Bapalal's home is located in Sankadi Sheri (street) in Bapa Shastri's Pol.

### AMRUTLAL SHETH'S HAVELI

Amrutlal Sheth's haveli lies inside the old city precincts opposite Hatkeshwar Mahadev Mandir in Amrutlal's Pol. Shri Hari visited his haveli and praised his devotion.







### MANEK CHOWK (SANKADI SHERI)

Manek Chowk (above) has been the business hub of Ahmedabad for many decades. It got its name from Maneknath Bawa, a leading businessman. Whenever Shri Hari came to Ahmedabad he always came to this *chowk* (open space). He was welcomed here with a grand procession that proceeded to Sankadi Sheri. The upper class citizens and loving devotees of Sankadi Sheri showered flowers made of silver and gold upon Maharaj. Shriji Maharaj also visited the homes of devotees living in Sankadi Sheri and the neighbouring *pols*.



### PURUSHOTTAM PATEL'S HOME

Shriji Maharaj and his sadhus used to stay at Purushottam Patel's house (left). His house is located in Nava Vas, next to the Kalupur mandir gate. There was a large neem tree and an open compound in front of his house. Maharaj used to sit beneath the neem tree and graced many with samadhi and his discourses. Once, when he blessed a Bhat's son, who was illiterate and lacked intelligence, the boy started chanting Vedic mantras and explaining their meanings. A shrine (left) with Maharaj's *charnarvind* commemorates the place where the sanctified neem tree stood.



### AMBARAM VAIDYA'S HOME

Ambaram Vaidya of Ahmedabad was a well-known devotee of Maharaj. Born to a Kadva Patel family his real name was Amichanddas. He invited Maharaj to his home on many occasions and performed his puja, and offered donations and gifts. His home (left) still exists at Dariyapur in Rupapari, which lies inside Kadiyavala Street.





### AMBABA'S HOME

Ambaba was a female Nagar (Brahmin), who became a *satsangi* in the time of Ramanand Swami. Shriji Maharaj stayed many times in her home. Ramanand Swami had also stayed at her home. Once, the Lolangar *bawas* made an attempt to attack Maharaj when he was at Ambaba's home. Shriji Maharaj foiled their attempt.

Many times Maharaj had discoursed here. The house lies in Haveli Pol near Mandvini Pol. Inside the home is a mandir in the haveli style (above).

### NATHURAM BHATT'S HOME

Whenever Shriji Maharaj came to Khokhra village on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, he stayed at Nathu Bhatt's home. Once, while Maharaj was having lunch at Nathu's home the Lolangar *bawas* attacked Maharaj's sadhus. At that time the Kshatriya *parshads* fought against them and demonstrated their bravery and *paksha* (allegiance).

A shrine has been dedicated to mark the home of Nathuram Bhatt (right).



### KHOKHRA VILLAGE

A historic shrine (right) is situated in the west part of Khokhra village. The day the Lolangar *bawas* came to attack the Swaminarayan sadhus Shri Hari was seated here on a platform discoursing to his devotees. Then Maharaj told Muktanand Swami to sit in his place and talk to the audience. During that time Maharaj went to Nathu Bhatt's home to take lunch. The shrine built on the spot marks the skirmish between Maharaj's *parshads* and the Lolangar *bawas*. ♦





# FORTS AND GATES

Sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan

**A**hmedabad was initially known as Ashapalli. Then it became known as Karnavati. The city has a history that goes back to over 600 years. The once walled-city was punctuated with imposing stone entrance gates. They still exist today as witnesses of a bygone era. The ancient city was circled by a fort embellished with 21 giant gates. Today, the walls have almost gone and only 12 gates remain, dotting the periphery of the old city. These giant gates, the fort of Bhadra located in the city centre, along with the palace of Azam Khan give an inkling to the opulence of the city's past. These gates and forts are symbols of the glory and power of Mughal emperors like





Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jahan and others. They have heard the sound of bugles and thunderous marches of the Subas and British who ruled the city. And above all, the giant gates and the Bhadra Fort were not only spectators to, but also the recipients of the holy touch and presence of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. It was through these grand gates that Bhagwan Swaminarayan passed in processions, with his sadhus and devotees chanting Maharaj's name and glory. The Bhadra Fort and Azam Khan's palace are of historical and spiritual value because of their association with Bhagwan Swaminarayan. During the Maratha rule the Suba (Viththalrao Balaji) invited Shriji Maharaj to the Bhadra Fort with a conspiracy to kill him. Shriji Maharaj exposed his evil plan and



Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his sadhus singing bhajans while leaving Ahmedabad

left the Fort. Several years later, when the British came in power, one of its ruling officers arranged a function to honour him at the same place. The Bhadra Fort witnessed the equanimity of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in both situations.

Let us briefly remember those gates and the Bhadra Fort that have been sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Bhadra Fort







## BHADRA FORT

The Bhadra Fort lies in the centre of Ahmedabad. It was built by Ahmed Shah more than 600 years ago, and spread over 43 acres. With the passage of time renovations and additions were made. Today, however, the fort is reduced to its main palace building only, which is utilized as government offices.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan first visited Ahmedabad in 1804. At that time a leading citizen and *satsangi*, Chimanraoji, took Maharaj to the palace in Bhadra Fort and honoured him.



In 1809, the then Suba (Maratha chief), Vitthalrao Balaji, invited Maharaj to his Bhadra palace. During his second visit the Suba had conspired to kill Maharaj by arranging a cauldron of boiling oil beneath his seat. The all-knowing Shriji Maharaj exposed his evil plot.

The Maratha rule in Ahmedabad was overtaken by the British in 1818. Thereafter, the British honoured Shriji Maharaj many times at the Bhadra Fort and palace. Mr Heron, on behalf of the first collector of Ahmedabad, Mr Andrew Dunlop, welcomed and honoured Maharaj in the Bhadra Fort. At that time Mr Heron proposed to Maharaj to build a mandir in Ahmedabad. Later, the acting collector Mr Edward Leighton Jenkins invited Maharaj to the Bhadra Fort and honoured him. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had thus sanctified the Bhadra Fort several times.





### DELHI DARWAJA (GATE)

To exit the old walled city and head towards the north one has to pass through Delhi Darwaja (above). Bhagwan Swaminarayan passed through this gate whenever he was heading towards North Gujarat or returning to the city. He was welcomed on many occasions by the leading lights of the city at this gate. Maharaj used to pass through Delhi Darwaja while going towards Narayan Ghat, to the river bank near Dudheshwar or to any other part of Shahibaug. The gate, which still exists today, is a memorial to the history of Ahmedabad.

### RAIPUR DARWAJA

This gate (right) is located on the east side of the former walled city. Whenever Shriji Maharaj travelled to Kankariya Lake he always exited from here and on his return entered from here. Many times he had climbed up to the top of Raipur Gate and given darshan to well-wishers and devotees. He had also delivered discourses from the top. The gate still reminds one of the divine memories of Shriji Maharaj.



### ASTODIA DARWAJA

Bhagwan Swaminarayan used the Astodia Gate (right) whenever he travelled to Jetalpur or Ashlali or when he returned from there. Sometimes he used to sit on the platform of the gate to give darshan and blessings to all. The sanctified gate is still standing today.







### THREE DARWAJA

‘Teen Darwaja’ or Three Gates lies about half a kilometre from Bhadra Fort. The stone gate has ornate carvings. Maharaj used this gate to go to the Bhadra Fort. There are records of Maharaj and his sadhus and devotees having climbed to the room on top of the gate. He stood there to give darshan and blessings to all standing below.



### JAMALPUR DARWAJA

Shriji Maharaj entered Ahmedabad city through Jamalpur Darwaja to quell the crises raised by Raghunathdas, a disciple of Ramanand Swami. He had also entered and exited through this gate on many occasions.



### KHANPUR DARWAJA

The gate lies to the west of the former walled city and it is also quite near to the banks of River Sabarmati. Bhagwan Swaminarayan passed through this gate whenever he went to bathe in the river. Today, every year, a procession of Thakorji and the *murti* of Ganapati passes through this gate to celebrate the Jal Jhilani celebration in the River Sabarmati.



### KALUPUR DARWAJA

Shriji Maharaj passed through Kalupur Darwaja whenever he came from or went to the villages of Vahelal, Kathvada, Kanbha and others of the Daskroi region around Ahmedabad. He also used the gate while going to the villages of Saraspur, Khokhra and Gomtipur, which are now a part of greater Ahmedabad city. The gate still stands today. ♦



(Contd. from pg. 7)

very speciality of pleasures. When we physically refrain from partaking pleasures, they stay afar, but they leave behind desires for them. The pleasures go, but they do not take the desires for them with them. Therefore, even after having physically forsaken them, there still remains a mental desire to indulge in pleasures.

This can be seen in birds and animals too. If a dog or crow comes to eat some cooked food, we deter it with a stick or stone. It is not able to eat the food, but it cannot stop thinking about it. That is why it comes back a short while later. The thing that makes one think about pleasures is called desire. If a bullock is tied up all day and not given any food, it does not eat any forage,

but it still continues to think of it. A bullock can be separated from forage physically, but it cannot be separated from the desire for it. Bhagwan Swaminarayan calls this '*dhoralānghana*', i.e. merely fasting physically (Vachanmrut, Gadhada II 8). With regards to desires for sensual pleasures, man is no better than animals. This is the essence of the word '*rasavarjam*'.

Thus, Shri Krishna gestures to us to make refrainment more stable by detachment, i.e. make refraining from pleasures more stable by shedding desires.

The above precepts inform us of the characteristics of the senses and mundane sensual pleasures. ♦

(Contd. from pg. 17)

"Then, Shri Hari bathed in the Sabarmati at Narayan Ghat. The clothes of the sadhus and devotees had so much colour that the river water changed colour. Thereafter, Shri Hari donned new clothes and after a *padhramani* in Motera, returned to the city via Shahibaug.

In V.S. 1882, Shri Hari again celebrated the Rangotsav in Ahmedabad. Also on this occasion, he bathed in the Sabarmati near the Padshah Vadi in Shahibaug. In addition, he presided over an assembly amid the dense *ambli* trees in the Shahibaug.<sup>39</sup> A poet-devotee, Badrinathdas,<sup>40</sup> described this,

*"Em kahina Puranchand, Pādshāh Vadi gayā Govind;  
Temā āmblo ek bhāri, tyā sabhā kare Girdhāri...*

*Chālyā Nārāyanne Ghāt, nāva nirmā re..."*

#### Meaning,

"After discoursing, Puranchand/Govind (Shri Hari) went to Padshah Vadi. There, amid the many *ambli* trees Girdhari (Shri Hari) held an assembly...

Then went to Narayan Ghat to bathe..."

The divine occasions of Shri Hari bathing,

celebrating the Rangotsav and sanctifying Shahibaug have been captured in the nine verses of the famous bhajan '*Ek samay Amdāvādmā, āvyā Shyām sujān...*' composed by Gopaldas Swami, a contemporary of Shri Hari. These verses are still widely sung throughout the Sampradaya even today.

In this way, Shri Hari sanctified Shahibaug on numerous occasions. The above is just a summary of the documented visits. The divinity of the area is palpable even today.

In V.S. 1878, Shri Hari decided not to stay in Shahibaug out of concern that the gardens may be damaged by the large flow of devotees. Now, on this sanctified land where once the *ambli* and mango trees stood Shri Hari resides permanently with his ideal devotee, Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, in the central sanctum of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir consecrated by Yogiji Maharaj in 1961.

Daily hundreds of devotees come for their darshan and to receive the blessings of their divine gaze. ♦

39. Ibid. 339-40.

40. Ibid. p. 441.



# MANDIRS AND OTHER HOLY PLACES

Visited by Bhagwan Swaminarayan

**B**hagwan Swaminarayan respected all the deities and devas of the Hindu pantheon. During his seven-year sojourn of India he visited many pilgrim places and offered his respects to the deities. He talked of their glory and consolidated spiritual faith in countless lives.

Ahmedabad in his times was dotted with shrines and mandirs of different deities. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had visited most of them. At some he either stayed the night, gave discourses or worshipped the deities with *chandan* and kumkum. He had also ritually installed the *murtis* of devas in some mandirs. He went for

Hathisinh Temple, Shahibaug





darshan at these mandirs to bless the aspirants who had built the mandirs and to give fillip to their devotion.

After 200 years, the places sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan still exist today. The information gleaned from these holy places and the Sampradaya's literature has been presented here in brief.







### MAHADEV MANDIR

The mandir is located to the east of Narayan Ghat by the banks of River Sabarmati and tucked besides a railway bridge. Since the mandir is small it is difficult to notice its presence. When Shriji Maharaj stayed secretly in Ahmedabad for three to four days he resided and meditated at the Mahadev Mandir, Andhari Vadi and Narayan Ghat. The Andhari Vadi is extinct today, whereas the Mahadev Mandir is still as it is by the River Sabarmati.



### HATKESHWAR MAHADEV OF VISNAGAR'S NAGARS

The Hatkeshwar Mahadev or Shiv Mandir still stands in Amrutlal's Pol in Khadia, Ahmedabad. It belongs to the Nagars of Visnagar. Shriji Maharaj often visited devotee Amrutlal Sheth's home opposite the Hatkeshwar Mahadev. Each time he came there he also visited the Mahadev Mandir for darshan. The *murti* of Mahadev is believed to be ancient, and the outer part of the mandir has been renovated.



### NRUSINHJI'S MANDIR

The Nrusinhji Mandir is located in the eastern part of Ahmedabad near Sarangpur Gate. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had visited the mandir several times and discoursed to an assembly.



### KOTESHWAR MAHADEV MANDIR

The mandir lies in the northern part of Ahmedabad, near Motera village, and by the River Sabarmati. A ghat (steps) was built near the mandir so that aspirants can bathe in the river. Whenever Maharaj travelled from North Gujarat (Dandhavya) towards Ahmedabad, he always passed through Motera. At that time he visited the Mahadev Mandir and bathed by the ghat. Because of his visits the mandir and ghat have gained respect and prominence.



### NILKANTH MAHADEV MANDIR

Asarva village was once outside the former walled city of Ahmedabad. Here, one finds a mandir of Nilkanth Mahadev. The mandir was built at the behest of Bhagwan Swaminarayan by the wealthy Vaishnav businessman, Sheth Becharbhai Mankivala. Shriji Maharaj visited the mandir while it was under construction and also thereafter. The mandir hosts many sadhus and sannyasis. Presently, the Asarva area is part of Ahmedabad city.



### MAHADEV MANDIR AT KALUPUR RAILWAY YARD

The Shivalaya or Mahadev Mandir is accessed by turning to the right of Asarva bridge. It is located in the precincts of a railway yard. Since the mandir is below ground level it is also known as Gupteshwar Mahadev. Two hundred years ago there was no railway station here. Shriji Maharaj had visited this mandir.



### RAMJI MANDIR (HAJA PATEL'S POL)

The Ramji Mandir lies in Haja Patel's Pol in Khadia, Ahmedabad. Shriji Maharaj visited the mandir several times and he respectfully touched the *murti* of Bhagwan Ram. The entire mandir was sanctified by Maharaj's visits. Ramanand Swami had also visited the mandir many times for darshan.



### AMBABA'S RAMJI MANDIR

The mandir is located in Akash Sheth Kuva's Pol and it has the *murtis* of Bhagwan Ram. They were sanctified by Ramanand Swami and Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The mandir was donated to Ramanand Swami by a Nagar (Brahmin) devotee named Ambaba. Whenever Ramanand Swami came to Ahmedabad he used to stay at this mandir. Maharaj, too, had stayed in this mandir.







### SHETH HATHISINH'S DERA

The Jain *derasar* (place of worship) was built by Sheth Himabhai Hathisinh, a leading businessman of Ahmedabad. Himabhai had honoured Bhagwan Swaminarayan on several occasions. When the ornate *derasar* (temple) was being built Shriji Maharaj came there at the invitation of Himabhai Sheth and sanctified the entire ground. The *derasar* is a popular tourist spot, located near the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug.



### RADHA-KRISHNA MANDIR

The mandir is located in Raipur, opposite Pakhali Pol. It was the property of Ambaba, who donated it to Ramanand Swami. Thus, the latter visited the mandir quite often. After Ramanand Swami passed away, Raghunathdas, who was later excommunicated from the Sampradaya, took over the mandir. Shriji Maharaj had visited the mandir only once.



### SHVET KRISHNA MANDIR

The mandir is located by the banks of Ganesh Bari in the Maholla of Dakshinis. Shriji Maharaj had visited this mandir at least three times and blessed the blind pujari, Shri Pushkardasji, with sight. Whenever Maharaj stayed in Ahmedabad, the pujari would come for his darshan twice a day. After the Swaminarayan Mandir was built in Kalupur, Pushkardasji went there for darshan twice a day.



### CHHABILA HANUMANJI AND PANCHMUKHI HANUMANJI

Near the entrance to Pakhali Pol in Raipur lies the Hanumanji Mandir (far left). It is popularly known as Chhabila Hanuman. Shriji Maharaj had visited this mandir several times.

**Panchmukhi Hanumanji:** The mandir is located outside Panditji's Pol. The *murti* of Hanumanji has five faces (left). Shriji Maharaj had visited the mandir.





### MAHALAKSHMI MANDIR

The mandir lies in Mahalakshmi Pol in Raipur, Ahmedabad. Mahalakshmi is the patron goddess of goldsmiths. Many devotees who were goldsmiths and sang *ochhaviyas* (bhajans in traditional tunes) stayed in the Pol. Shriji Maharaj visited the mandir, sanctified their homes and took lunch there.

### SHANKARACHARYA'S HAVELI

The Haveli lies near Bhaishankar's Haveli in Raipur Chakla. Shriji Maharaj had sanctified the Haveli when two sannyasis called Madhvanand and Devanand had invited him for a scriptural debate.



### GAURISHANKAR MAHADEV MANDIR

The shrine is located outside and to the north of Pankor Naka in Gola's (Ghanchi's) Vadi. The mandir houses the five-faced *murti* of Mahadev and so it is also called Panchmukhi Mahadev Mandir. Shriji Maharaj had sanctified the mandir.

### MAHADEV MANDIR OF VADNAGAR'S NAGARS

The Shivalaya lies outside Haveli's Pol in Raipur. It is known as Hatkeshwar Mahadev and belongs to the Nagars of Vadnagar. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had visited the mandir many times.







## Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad

Shahibaug was a unique area of Ahmedabad. God had blessed this land with nature's abundance. But, of a more lasting matter is its bond with Bhagwan Swaminarayan. This bond was further strengthened by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj. For it was he who identified the sanctified land where Shri Hari had rested many times, where he had given spiritual guidance to sadhus and devotees, where the sadhus had sung and played musical instruments to please Shri Hari and from where on numerous occasions Shri Hari was honoured in grand processions and welcomed to the city. Shastriji Maharaj personally met sadhus and devotees who had witnessed Bhagwan Swaminarayan's divine *lilas* at Shahibaug and learnt from them its locations and the divine occasions described in the *sampradayic* texts.

So, when Shastriji Maharaj decided to build a mandir in Ahmedabad he chose Shahibaug as its site, even though bigger and better plots were available in other areas of the city. For the devotees at the time these other plots were more convenient and preferable, since Shahibaug was regarded as distant from the main city area and had few residents. But Shastriji Maharaj had firmly decided to build the mandir on this sanctified land. The devotees even requested Shastriji Maharaj, "For us to come here from the city is quite a distance." Shastriji Maharaj replied, "This place will become the centre of the city." Today, these words have proved true.

Shastriji Maharaj's fondness for the sanctified land of Shahibaug is evident from the articles published in *Swaminarayan Prakash* at the time.

On 24 February 1945, Shastriji Maharaj suffered a severe heart attack in Ahmedabad. Dr Makad and Dr Chhotubhai Nayak, who were treating Swamishri, strictly advised him to take absolute rest. On 25 February, when Yogiji Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami and the young Shastri Narayanswarupadasji heard the news they, together with Maganbhai, Harmanbhai and others who had come from Africa, rushed to Ahmedabad from Nenpur. A report from the *Swaminarayan Prakash* notes, "Everyone's life-force had assumed ill health and was resting. So everyone was downcast. When Shastri Narayanswarupdas and guru Shastriji Maharaj met the former burst into tears. Even Shastriji Maharaj's eyes became moist. The intense love of his disciples brought tears to Swamishri's eyes. Many devotees also became tearful. Then *mukhtaraj* Ashabhai emotionally prayed to Swamishri to control his illness and bless all.

"Hearing this, Swamishri sat up in bed and, as usual, leaned on a pillow, his face glowing and eyes showering affection.

"In this delicate condition, Shastriji Maharaj spoke to all about building a mandir in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad, 'To stay or go is Maharaj's wish. Mul Aksharmurti also departed at the age of 82. Similarly, I will also leave. So, be diligent in observing *agna*. There was no reason for a mandir in Ahmedabad, but Mistry placed a *murti* of Mul Aksharmurti Gunatitanand Swami in the assembly hall of the old mandir [at Kalupur]. Acharyashri himself accepted the gift. A donation was made to Lalji Maharaj as well. Then after a few days, 'Aksharmurti' [and the rest of the line] was deleted. So, I wish to build a mandir here of Maharaj and Sadguru Gunatitanand Swami. So, it will be done" (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, March



1948, pp. 140-141).

The report stated that on hearing this from Shastriji Maharaj, the devotees were delighted.

Even though he had suffered a severe heart attack, Shastriji Maharaj showed his enthusiasm to build a mandir in Shahibaug.

On the morning of 10 February 1948, Shastriji Maharaj sat in Revashankar Trivedi and Sheth's car to visit the land in Shahibaug. At the time, even the registered deed for the land had not been made. But, Shastriji Maharaj enthusiastically visited the land with the devotees from Africa – Maganbhai, Harmanbhai, Tribhovandas, Ambalal, Chunibhai and other devotees. He showed them the land and declared his plans for the future mandir (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, March 1948, p. 138).

There was a bungalow on this sanctified land in Shahibaug. Shastriji Maharaj's fervent wish to purchase it was fulfilled on 8 March 1948 – marking the first step in the mandir project.

The news was noted in *Swaminarayan Prakash*, "The deed of the bungalow purchased to build a mandir in Ahmedabad has been registered. To celebrate, *mukhtaraj* Ashabhai and Harmanbhai distributed *pendas*. Senior devotees of Ahmedabad – Champaklal Sheth and Bhogilal Chokshi – performed *pujan* of Swamishri. Chimanbhai Dalal, Maganbhai, Kothari Babubhai and others presented garlands to him. Everyone appreciated the services of Shri Hirabhai and Shri Mathurbhai in preparing the deed. Everyone was overjoyed" (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, March 1948, p. 142).

Shri Bhogibhai Chokshi's role in acquiring the land was pivotal and the enthusiastic support of Sheth Champakbhai Banker, Babubhai Kothari and others was outstanding.

Shastriji Maharaj was delighted at having acquired this sanctified land and sent devotees who came to meet him for darshan there.

For example, on 5 May 1948, Shastriji Maharaj travelled by train in the third class

compartment from Rajpur to Ahmedabad. That day, Kuberbhai of Bhavnagar had also come to Ahmedabad. On seeing him, Shastriji Maharaj instructed him to go for darshan of the sanctified land in Shahibaug (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, May 1948, p. 186).

Shastriji Maharaj often said, "This place is sanctified by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The Harililamrut describes that when Bhagwan Swaminarayan went with the sadhus to bathe in the Sabarmati at Narayan Ghat, there was a garden on the way where he rested. This is that garden sanctified by Maharaj."

The bungalow on the sanctified land became known as 'Akshar Bungalow'. From 5 to 17 August 1948, during the holy month of Shravan, Shastriji Maharaj held a *parayan* there. The learned Shastri Purushottamcharan Swami gave discourses on the Satsangijivan (Third Canto) and Shrimad Bhagvat. Shastriji Maharaj attended every assembly, granting darshan to all and addressing the gatherings also. Yogiji Maharaj and Nirgundas Swami also discoursed to the assembly. The report in the *Swaminarayan Prakash* states, "Daily, the assembly was packed. Diwan Bahadur Lakhia and other respected guests came for darshan. Sheth Nandubhai Manchharam and other devotees also frequently attended. Nirgundas Swami pleased all by his discourses and the reading of his inspiring letters to the devotees of Africa. On the evening of Ekadashi, Swamishri went to Narayan Ghat with the sadhus and bathed in the Sabarmati. Swamishri was seated in a Victoria buggy. The sadhus and devotees were singing kirtans and joyously walking along with him. It was 15 August [a public holiday] and so thousands of people had Swamishri's darshan. At 6.00 p.m. on Monday 16, a public assembly was held. Many of the city's leading mahatmas and dignitaries had been invited. Shastri Vishwanathbhai, Shastri Narmadashankar, Shastri Chimanlal Yagnik, Professor Bambhaniya Maneklalbhai,



Vinubhai Saheb and other leading scholars were present. They addressed the assembly and pleaded Swamishri" (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, August 1948, pp. 252-257, p. 264).

On this occasion, the distinguished Shrimad Bhagvat scholar, Vishwanath Shastri, said, "What Swamishri speaks always become true. That is my experience. And that is why I firmly believe that a grand marble mandir will be built here in a short time."

Shankarlalbhai opined, "In accordance with Swamishri's principle, if we want to become *aksharswarup* [*brahmarup*] then we must have an ideal *aksharmurti* before us. For this, Swamishri tolerates many hardships and gives us the true knowledge of the form of Mul Aksharmurti Gunatitanand Swami. Also, so that this *upasana* is sustained forever, he has built grand mandirs. And now it is Ahmedabad's great fortune that he has acquired this site to build a mandir. I have complete faith that an incomparable grand marble mandir will be built here in no time" (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, August 1948, pp. 255-256).

In short, due to Shastriji Maharaj's inspiration, everyone was motivated to build a mandir on this sanctified land.

From 24 September to 1 October 1948, Shastriji Maharaj was in Ahmedabad. During this time, he stayed at the Akshar Bungalow in Shahibaug for three days. There, thousands of aspirants came to witness Shastriji Maharaj granting samadhi to many and to listen to his discourses. Like they had done in the other suburbs of Ahmedabad, Champaklal Sheth and Vasantray Pandya arranged a samadhi assembly in Shahibaug.

*Swaminarayan Prakash* reports, "Thousands of aspirants from throughout Ahmedabad were delighted to witness the samadhis. Devotees of different faiths had darshan of their chosen deity" (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, October 1948, p. 22).

On 12 November 1948, when Shastriji Maharaj again visited Ahmedabad, a satsang

assembly was held at the Akshar Bungalow in Shahibaug. *Swaminarayan Prakash* reports, "Over a thousand devotees crammed into the bungalow's main hall. Swamishri observed everyone with an eagle eye... Yogiji Maharaj spoke in the assembly and the atmosphere was filled with joy" (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, November 1948, p. 47).

On 14 January 1950, Shastriji Maharaj celebrated the Uttarayan-Jholi festival in Ahmedabad. At 5.30 p.m. on 15 January, he held an assembly at Akshar Bungalow and blessed everyone" (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, February 1950, p. 30).

On 2 February 1950, Shastriji Maharaj again visited the Akshar Bungalow in Shahibaug and blessed everyone (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, March 1950, p. 134).

In May 1950, Shastriji Maharaj again suffered from a heart problem in Ahmedabad. On 10 May 1950, when his health was abnormal, he stayed at the Akshar Bungalow in Shahibaug. On 18 May 1950, Gulzarilal Nanda came from Delhi for Shastriji Maharaj's darshan and even requested Shastriji Maharaj to come to Delhi. However, Shastriji Maharaj said, "Now take Yogiji Maharaj. My health is not good. Then Swamishri narrated to Nandaji the stories of Sadguru Bhai Ramdas Swami, Bhai Atmanand Swami, Swayamprakashanand Swami, Nishkulanand Swami, Adbhutanand Swami, Vignananand and other *paramhansas*. Finally, he said, "I have decided to appoint Shastri Narayanswarupdasji in my place as the president of the Sanstha.' The assembly continued until 1.00 a.m. and Swamishri said, 'Nandaji has come here from Delhi so we should welcome him. So, these talks I have given are his welcome'" (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, July 1950, p. 276, Title 4).

In 1950, Shastriji Maharaj also arranged for the Sanstha's newly appointed president, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, to deliver a *parayan*



at Akshar Bungalow in Shahibaug. This *parayan*, based on the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Satsangijivan, took place during the second fortnight of the additional Purushottam month of Ashadh. Yogiji Maharaj was also present on this occasion (*Swaminarayan Prakash*, August 1950, p. 376).

The many divine memories granted by Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj have become one with the sanctified land. When Shastriji Maharaj was at Akshar Bungalow in the evenings he would have a cot placed outside his room and have water sprinkled around it. He would sit on the cot and conduct spiritual discourses. The spot he used to sit on is under the shrine where, at present, the *murti* of Shastriji Maharaj has been consecrated.

While Shastriji Maharaj was here, he gave guidance on how the mandir should be built. It was his intense wish to build a mandir and consecrate the *murtis* of Parabrahman Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami. He expressed this on many occasions.

Once, standing by the verandah near the goldsmith's shop outside Ambli Vali Pol, with his right hand raised, Shastriji Maharaj said, "I want to build a mandir in Srinagar and consecrate (the *murtis* of) Maharaj and Swami in it together."

Once, at Ambli Vali Pol, devotees were singing bhajans before Shastriji Maharaj. They sang a prayer requesting him to build a mandir in Ahmedabad. So Babubhai Kothari sarcastically said to the devotees, "Swami does not want to build a mandir here."

Hearing this, Shastriji Maharaj smiled and said, "Why will I not build a mandir here? I certainly will. Just see, whether it happens or not! Within six months Shastriji Maharaj bought the bungalow in Shahibaug, where the mandir now stands.

Even before commencing the marble mandir in Gadhada, Shastriji Maharaj had written a letter to Kothari Harijivandas Swami in which

he wrote, "I want to lay the foundations for a big mandir in Ahmedabad.

Once, Bhagatji Maharaj gave darshan to Ashabhai of Radhu and said, "I want to build the sixth *shikharbaddh* mandir in Ahmedabad." Shastriji Maharaj made Ashabhai narrate this on many occasions.

When the sanctified mango grove in Shahibaug was purchased there were two large bungalows on it. One bungalow and its surrounding land had been acquired, but there was a delay in acquiring the second plot. Shastriji Maharaj wished to build a mandir in the middle of the two plots. He instructed Liladhar Mistry to prepare a plan that would preserve the Akshar Bungalow, with a grand *shikharbaddh* mandir at the front. Unfortunately, that land was not acquired in Shastriji Maharaj's presence.

However, on Friday, 16 January 1959 (Posh *sud* 7, V.S. 2015), Yogiji Maharaj performed the *shilanyas* ceremony in the presence of thousands of devotees. Yogiji Maharaj descended into the 40-ft. deep foundations to lay the first stone.

The mandir construction proceeded at a fast pace, and on 10 May 1962, Yogiji Maharaj consecrated the *murtis* of Parabrahman Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami in the central shrine. The devotees who had contributed significantly to the building of this mandir included: Babubhai Kothari, Champakbhai Sheth, Bhogibhai Choksi, Khen-garjibhai Chauhan, Rasikbhai Patel, Someshwar Pithwa, Gordhanbhai Brahmabhatt, Manibhai Brahmabhatt, Purushottamdas Gajjar, Rameshbhai Dalal, Prabhashankar Pandya, Ambalal Bhagat and others. Yogiji Maharaj blessed, "Maharaj will come to collect whoever recalls this celebration. This is an assembly in Akshardham. Today, Shastriji Maharaj will be rejoicing."

Just as Ahmedabad is the foremost city of Gujarat, similarly the mandir in Shahibaug is the hub of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, from where countless derive spiritual inspiration. ♦





# Dental Health

## Dental Diseases and Treatment



### Part 2

**D**ental disease is disease of the teeth and gums. Tooth decay (dental caries) and gum disease (periodontal disease) can exist independently or in combination.

Dental diseases can also affect other areas of the mouth and the severity can range from a simple mouth ulcer or a small cavity in a tooth to the more serious mouth cancer.

Dentists and other dental health professionals, such as dental hygienists, provide treatment and advice to help prevent dental disease. Specialist dentists provide specific types of dental treatment on teeth and gums. For example, endodontists carry out root canal treatments and periodontists carry out gum treatments.

Although other dental diseases exist, caries and periodontal disease are by far the most common dental diseases. The most common causes of tooth loss are tooth decay and gum disease.

### TOOTH STRUCTURE

A tooth is composed of a hard outer layer called enamel, and a softer inner layer called dentine. In the centre of the tooth is the pulp. The pulp contains the nerves and blood vessels.

Enamel is the hardest substance in the human body (of similar hardness to diamond). It is brittle and can fracture when the underlying dentine is weakened by decay (caries).

Dentine constitutes the bulk of the tooth. It is softer than enamel and is darker than enamel. The dentine is sensitive to hot, cold and sweet

substances. Cementum covers the root surface of the tooth. It is of similar hardness to bone. The cementum has fibres (the periodontal ligament) running from it to the bone and this helps attach the tooth to the jaw bone.

The pulp is a soft tissue within the tooth. It is found in the centre of the tooth and in the root canals of the teeth.

### DENTAL CARIES

Dental caries, also known as tooth decay, or a cavity, is the breakdown of the dental hard tissues. It is a bacterial infection. Specific types of bacteria produce acid in the presence of fermentable sugars, such as, sucrose, fructose and glucose. The acid attacks the mineral content of the enamel causing demineralization and subsequent destruction of the hard surface of the tooth. This can eventually lead to a hole or cavity in the tooth. The extent of caries can vary depending on the type of tooth and where the decay develops. Early caries can be undetected as it may not cause any pain. If the caries becomes extensive, then it may cause toothache. Other signs of caries include change in tooth colour, tooth crumbling or breaking away and foul breath.

Regular dental check ups can detect early signs of caries and provide preventive advice.

Diet, in particular sugar consumption in various forms, is associated with the development of caries. The frequency of sugar consumption is



far more significant in the development of caries than the amount consumed at any one time. The longer the sugar stays in contact with the tooth surface, the greater the acidic attack on the surface and hence risk of decay. Saliva acts to neutralize the acid and reverse the effect of the acid in the mouth, but this can take between 30 minutes to 1 hour.

During an acid attack, the enamel starts to dissolve and this is the demineralization process. As the acid attack reduces, the enamel undergoes a phase of remineralization to repair itself. When episodes of demineralization exceed episodes of remineralization, caries develop.

## STAGES OF CARIES

The stages of caries development are as follows:

- Small pit – an initial break in the enamel surface that can be probed with a fine dental instrument by a dentist.
- Blue/white lesion – caries destroys dentine under the enamel more rapidly since the dentine is softer than the enamel.
- Open cavity – more enamel collapses and there is an obvious ‘hole’ in the tooth.
- Pulpitis – when the nerve is reached, the pulp becomes inflamed and pain occurs.
- Apical abscess formation – infection spreads and the tooth becomes dead. Pus forms and swelling may occur.

## TREATMENT FOR CARIES

Not all tooth decay will cause pain. Small carious lesions on a tooth surface may not be noticed until it is carefully examined by a dentist. Simple fissure caries can occur in the complex grooves on the biting surface of molar teeth. Once tooth decay is diagnosed it usually requires treatment.

### SIMPLE FILLINGS

Simple carious cavities are cleaned and filled

with a filling material. This usually involves having a local anaesthetic to make the tooth numb. The caries is then removed using a dental drill. The cavity is made clean and filled with the chosen filling material.

The filling seals the cavity and allows the tooth to function as normal. The filling in the tooth will also take away toothache that may have been there previously.

Children may have special preventive sealants placed into the complex fissures of molar teeth to prevent caries developing if the dentist feels this would benefit the child.

## COMPLEX FILLINGS AND CROWNS

More extensive cavities and decay would require larger fillings that would cover more of the tooth surface. If the filling covers a lot of the tooth surface then there may not be enough support for the tooth and the risk of the tooth breaking is high. In this case, the tooth may require a crown.

A crown, or cap, is a covering placed over teeth to restore their function. Crowns can be made of metal, e.g., gold, precious alloys or porcelain (white crowns).

For a tooth to receive a crown, the tooth is first filed and shaped into a stump shape. Moulds or impressions are then taken of the tooth. A dental technician then constructs the crown. This is then fixed onto the tooth with a special bonding material by a dentist.

Crowns can be made so that they either cover the whole tooth surface (full crowns) or they cover it partially (inlays or onlays). The type of crown or restoration that is the most beneficial for the tooth is assessed by the dentist.

## ROOT CANAL TREATMENT (ENDODONTIC TREATMENT)

When tooth decay is very extensive and invades the pulp (or nerve) of the tooth then the root canal treatment may be performed. The



pulp is removed together with the nerve and blood supply. This is a time-consuming procedure carried out by the dentist or sometimes an endodontist, who specializes in carrying out root canal treatments.

Teeth can have a single root, such as the front incisor teeth, or they can have multiple (two or three) roots, such as the back molar teeth. Each root has a root canal that carries the nerve and blood supply to the teeth. During root canal treatment, the root canals are thoroughly cleaned with special files. The root canals are disinfected and dried and then sealed with a special root filling material called gutta percha. The remainder of the tooth is then usually restored with a crown or a large filling.

Root canal treatment is a very common dental procedure. The thought of having a root canal treatment is traditionally associated with pain! But success rates of root canal treatments remain high and with the advances in techniques, results are more predictable. The alternative, on the other hand, is the tooth being removed!

A crown is usually required after the root canal treatment to protect the remainder of the tooth. This also decreases the risk of the tooth breaking.

If a root canal infection is left untreated then a dental abscess may gradually develop. This can cause severe pain on touching the affected tooth and on biting and chewing. It may also cause loosening of the affected tooth and cause a red, tender swelling on the gum next to the tooth with pus draining into the mouth. If the infection spreads then it can lead to a swollen face.

## TOOTH EXTRACTION

In many cases it may not be possible to save or restore a tooth. In such cases there is no alternative but to remove, or extract, the tooth. Tooth extraction is also a treatment of choice where the tooth holds a poor long-term prognosis, or if it is a non-functional tooth. A non-

functional tooth can be a lone standing tooth that has no opposing tooth to contact.

Tooth extraction may also be favoured by patients who cannot tolerate complex and time-consuming treatment. Once the tooth is extracted the space can be left as it is or restored with a bridge or a dental implant. Not all extracted teeth necessarily need to be replaced.

## DISEASES OF THE GUMS

Inadequate cleaning leads to a build up of plaque on the surfaces of the teeth. If this is not removed efficiently, it causes the gums to become inflamed. The gums may become red and they bleed when touched with a toothbrush. In more serious cases, the teeth loosen and come out as a result of gum recession and severe bone loss around the tooth roots.

### Gingivitis

Gingivitis is a reversible gum condition that is usually caused by poor oral hygiene. The pink healthy gums change to a more red-purple appearance and they will bleed easily when the teeth are brushed. Medications, for example, by using certain drugs to control blood pressure and epilepsy, can make gingivitis worse. Pregnant women are also more susceptible to gingivitis because of dramatic changes in the hormone levels during pregnancy.

If not treated, gingivitis can progress to cause more changes around the tooth and gum. The gums may start to recede and the teeth start to loosen.

### Treatment for Gingivitis

Home oral hygiene and plaque control has to be improved through thorough instruction. The plaque and calculus (tartar) may have to be professionally cleaned from teeth (simple scaling and polishing) by a dentist or dental hygienist. If the gingivitis is medication related, then your dentist may communicate with your doc-



tor to review your medication and try an alternative that does not have a side effect on the gums. Pregnancy gingivitis usually resolves after the pregnancy.

### Periodontitis

Periodontitis is a progression from gingivitis. Periodontitis affects the supporting structures of the teeth rather than just the gums. The gum pulls away from the tooth and a 'pocket' develops between the gum and the tooth. Plaque accumulates in this pocket. This area is difficult to keep clean. The deeper the pocket, the greater the severity of the disease. It can lead to bone loss around the tooth roots in varying degrees of severity and hence can eventually lead to tooth loss. Unlike gingivitis, periodontitis is not a reversible condition. Once there is bone loss and gingival recession, it cannot be reversed. But the rate of progression of the disease can be controlled with the oral hygiene regime.

The most common form of periodontitis is chronic adult periodontitis. Poor oral hygiene is a risk factor. Another major risk factor is cigarette smoking. It is well documented that smokers are highly susceptible to periodontal disease. Periodontal disease is diagnosed with a clinical examination with radiographs to assess the level and severity.

Early symptoms of periodontal disease may be similar to gingivitis: red, inflamed gums with bleeding. Late stages of periodontal disease may present as toothache, loosening of teeth, gum swellings and possible dental abscess formation.

Certain illnesses such as diabetes also have an effect on the gums. Individuals with diabetes are at increased risk of infections, including gum disease. Other diseases such as cancer and AIDS and their treatments can also have a negative effect on the gums. Also, in some people there is a genetic susceptibility to periodontitis. This is why regular dental examinations are very beneficial.

### Treatment for Periodontal Disease

Better oral hygiene and giving up smoking will help the gums from receding further and prevent complications developing. The gum treatment is usually more intensive and involves deep cleaning and debriding in the pockets that have developed between the teeth and gums (root planing). This is where the root surface of the tooth beneath the gum is cleaned and scraped by the dentist or dental hygienist or a periodontist, who specializes in gum diseases and treatments. If deep scaling and root planing are not effective, surgical gum treatment may be advised. In this, the gums are cut and the teeth and bone are exposed. The affected area is cleaned and the gums are stitched back together to reduce the size of the pocket so that it is easier to clean.

After intensive gum treatment there is a risk of further gum recession. This occurs as the gums 'heal' with the inflammation reducing and the gums becoming firmer and healthier. As a consequence some teeth may become more sensitive to hot and cold substances.

Treatment for severe periodontitis may also require a course of antibiotics. Once treated, the teeth and gums will require meticulous care and attention to maintain as healthy as possible. Regular deep scaling and root planing sessions are helpful.

### Summary

The two most common dental diseases are dental caries and gum disease. Both can be prevented with good personal oral hygiene together with a healthy balanced diet.

One should visit the dentist for routine dental examinations even in the absence of any toothache. Early diagnosis and prevention is always better than cure. ♦



# Vicharan

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S  
January-February 2013, Ahmedabad



Swamishri performs the *pratishtha arti* of the murtis for the *shikharbaddh* BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Selvas



Swamishri engaged in darshan of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj on Gunatit Diksha Day

Swamishri's daily routine consists of Thakorji's darshan in the morning in the mandir, darshan to devotees from the Akshar Jharuko (glass cabin) during early afternoon and again in the evening. The remainder of the day Swamishri spends in listening to spiritual discourses, exercise and short walks, besides attending to letters and meetings in his room.

Devotees from India and abroad come for Swamishri's darshan. During his darshan in Akshar Jharuko the youths and children on the ground perform traditional dances and give special presentations to please Swamishri.

In Dhanur Mas (January) decorations and special displays were arranged before Thakorji in the mandir sanctum.

## JANUARY: AHMEDABAD

### 4, Friday; BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir Suvarna Mahotsav

The grand finale of the Golden Anniversary Celebration of BAPS Swaminarayan Man-

dir, Ahmedabad, was held in the evening at the Sardar Patel Stadium. The four-and-a-half hour long enthralling cultural programme included dialogues, skits, traditional dances and speeches by senior sadhus. (For details see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, March-April 2013.)

### 6, Sunday; BAPS Youth Activities 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

The culmination of the Youth Activities 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration was held in the evening at Sardar Patel Stadium. More than 60,000 youths had assembled from all corners of India and abroad. The celebration was held in the presence of senior sadhus. (For details see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, March-April 2013.)

Due to Swamishri's ill health he was unable to attend the celebration, but he gave darshan and blessings to youths from the Akshar Jharuko in the afternoon.

The event was broadcast live on Aastha Channel and webcast from the Sanstha's website.



## 12, Saturday; Swamishri's 73<sup>rd</sup> Bhagvati Diksha Celebration

The day marked Swamishri's 73<sup>rd</sup> *diksha* anniversary. Shastriji Maharaj had given him the *bhagvati* (saffron) *diksha* in Akshar Deri, Gondal.

Swamishri came for Thakorji's darshan wearing a *pagh* on his head. On the pillow resting on his lap were symbols of the *bhagvati diksha* – a saffron *pagh*, an upper cloth, a *kanthi*, *mala* and a *janoi*.

Swamishri blessed the devotees assembled on the mandir grounds. Then Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami honoured Swamishri on behalf of all with a beautiful garland.

## 14, Monday; Uttarayan and Jholi Celebration

The Uttarayan celebration assembly was held in the morning in the presence of Pujya Dr Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami.

When Swamishri came for Thakorji's darshan he talked to some of the leading devotees, pulled the strings tied to a kite and recited the traditional *jholi* call, "Narayan Hare Sachchidanand Prabho..." (For details see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, March-April 2013, p. 61.)

## 18, Friday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs at Katargam (Surat) and Madharkui (Sankari region).

## 26, Saturday; Republic Day Celebration

On India's 64<sup>th</sup> Republic Day Celebration a large gathering of devotees on the mandir grounds waved the Indian flag during Swamishri's arrival. Swamishri, too, waved the national flag and blessed all.

## 27, Sunday; Gunatit Diksha Day Celebration

The ambience of a *yagnashala* was created in

the mandir sanctum to celebrate Gunatitanand Swami's *diksha* day. Swamishri was pleased with the special darshan of Thakorji.

In the evening, Swamishri read aloud the pledge that he had read out during the 200<sup>th</sup> *diksha* day celebration of Gunatitanand Swami in Dabhan on 31 December 2009.

## 29, Tuesday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for eight BAPS *hari* mandirs: Vadavi (Kadi region), Anjar (Kutch), Ghayaj (Goriyad region), Devgadhi Bariya (Panch Mahal), Torna (Kathlal region), Nanikhadi (Donja region), Sadarvel (Donja region) and Ankav (Ankav region).

## FEBRUARY: AHMEDABAD

### 7, Thursday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra pushpanjali* of the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj, Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, Shri Radha-Krishna Dev, Shri Sita-Ram, Shri Shiv-Parvatiji, Shri Guru Parampara, Shri Nilkanth Varni (*abhishek murti*), Shri Hanumanji and Ganapatiji and Sukh Shaiyya for the *shikharbaddh* BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Selvas. Swamishri invoked the deities in the *murtis* with the ritual touching of a gold-tipped stick. Swamishri also performed the *abhishek* of Nilkanth Varni with saffron water and blessed that the *murti* will fulfill the wishes of devotees.

Swamishri also performed the *pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Mogri (Gana region).

Swamishri blessed 2,200 devotees, who had come for the *pratishtha* rituals, from the Selvas region. Then the senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with a unique garland made of small orange *paghs* prepared by the Selvas sat-sang *mandal*.



## 11, Monday

During Swamishri's evening Jharukho darshan, an interesting game was played between Swamishri and the devotees gathered before him in the mandir compound. For each question asked, the devotees had to answer by raising a corresponding coloured card of the three options given.

Then Swamishri was asked to show his answer to each question by raising a coloured card.

The questions, options and Swamishri's answers are as follows:

1. **Question:** Which is the principal means to become free of base instincts (*doshas*)?

**Options:** Self introspection, austerity or having *nirdosh buddhi* for the Satpurush (i.e. to believe the Satpurush to be pure and divine.)

**Swamishri's answer:** *Nirdosh buddhi* in the Satpurush.

2. **Question:** What spiritual thought should we engage in every day?

**Options:** To contemplate on one's *atma*, engage in *sankhya vichar* (that everything material is temporary and full of misery and pain) or think about how to please God and his Sadhu.

**Swamishri:** To please God and his Sadhu.

3. **Question:** Which festival do you like the most?

**Options:** Pushpadolotsav, Vasant Panchmi or Diwali.

**Swamishri:** Vasant Panchmi, because it is guru Shastriji Maharaj's birthday.

4. **Question:** If you were to give an *agna* (command) to someone, which one would you give from the following three.

**Options:** Daily darshan of mandir, daily *ghar sabha* or fast on *ekadashi*.

**Swamishri:** Swamishri raised all the three cards saying that all three were important to follow.

5. **Question:** Swamishri, when you shower

your joy upon us which one thing would we be blessed with?

**Options:** Inexhaustible wealth, all types of happiness in samsara (world) or Akshardham.

**Swamishri:** Akshardham.

Finally, the presenter of the game prayed to Swamishri on behalf of all that they all be able to follow his wishes and thus be blessed with spiritual happiness.

## 12, Tuesday

Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of the *murtis* (painted images) for the BAPS San-skardham in Ashadeep Society, Varachha, Surat.

## 13, Wednesday

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra. pushpanjali* of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Cincinatti (Ohio, USA), Vadodara (Panigate suburb), Raj Pipla (Narmada district), Louisville (Kentucky, USA) and Ronak (Virginia, USA). Swamishri also invoked the deities in the *murtis* by ritually touching a gold-tipped stick to each of them.

## 15, Friday; Vasant Panchmi Celebration

Swamishri celebrated the birthday celebration of Shastriji Maharaj (Vasant Panchmi) on the mandir grounds. (For details see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, March-April 2013). Swamishri also inaugurated two English print Publications by Swaminarayan Aksharpath: 'Yogi and the Magical Sage' and 'Values for Children'. ♦

(Compiled and translated from the Gujarati text.)



# LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

January-February 2013, Ahmedabad

## TRUE COLOUR OF SATSANG

12 January

A few *satsangi* youths from abroad were singing the bhajan, “Yogi āvo te rang mane shid lagādyo...” while Swamishri came before them. Then they asked, “What should we do so that we do not get stained by the ‘colours’ of this world?”

Swamishri replied, “Since you are doing bhajan the colour (of spirituality) will become a part of your lives. Due to Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj you have got the right direction, so that (spiritual) colour will penetrate within. May you remember Maharaj and be blessed with the true colour of satsang.”

## DOERSHIP OF GOD AND GURUS

17 January

Once, Swamishri was attending to some letters from devotees. He signed a few letters by writing his name in brief, “Sha. Na.” – meaning Shastri Narayanswarupdas. Thereafter, Viveksagar Swami praised Swamishri, “You are the President of BAPS, and the Sanstha functions on your signature.”

Immediately Swamishri replied, “The Sanstha is run by the wish of Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj and not on my wish.”

Even at 91 years, when Swamishri has done and achieved so much, he believes in the absolute doership of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his gurus.

## HOW TO BECOME EKANTIK

22 January

A few youths from America performed a humorous skit before Swamishri on how to

become *ekantik* (God-realized). The skit was based on their own views about becoming *ekantik* in different ways. In conclusion, they asked Swamishri for the right way to become *ekantik*.

Swamishri replied, “Do bhajan and follow the commands of the guru – therein lies the way to attain the *ekantik* state.”

## “DO NOT FORGET GOD”

27 January

Some youths started singing “*Bhulisha hu jagatni māyā...*” (“I’ll forget the world’s *maya*...”) while Swamishri was giving darshan to them on the mandir grounds. Then one of them asked the rest, “You are all singing the bhajan, but what is it that you have to forget?”

One of the youths proclaimed, “I’ll forget to eat.”

The second one said, “I’ll forget to drink water.”

The third youth claimed, “I’ll forget to study.” The fourth boy stated, “I’ll forget to get married.”

Finally, they all asked Swamishri, “Bapa, tell us what we should really forget?”

Swamishri simply explained what they should not forget, “See that you do not forget God.”

## GUNATIT GURU IS EVER-PRESENT

27 January

A few devotees inquired of Swamishri, “Gunatitanand Swami has said in his discourses related to us that our body will perish in ten to twenty years time whereas he is eternal. Swami, you are the same Gunatit guru so does that mean you are eternal?”

Swamishri acknowledged by saying, “Yes.”

## GOD'S WISH

27 January

On many occasions sadhus and devotees have expressed their love and wish to Swamishri that they would like to celebrate his birth centenary in his presence. Today, a few attendant sadhus pressed home this point again before Swamishri.

In response Swamishri replied, "God's wish prevails. Whatever Maharaj wills happens. Nothing happens according to our wishes. Our life should be in accordance to God's wish. My life has been so in accordance with my gurus' wish. So, I do not have a wish for a longer life. Our lifespan is because of God's wish and so is our life. There is no question of having our own wish. It is all God's wish and the wish of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj is right for us."

## SWAMISHRI MOTIVATES, LIBERATES AND GUIDES

28 January

A youth was waiting with his father for Swamishri's darshan. He had become less active in satsang because he rarely came to the mandir and had totally stopped attending the Sunday satsang assembly. When Swamishri was informed about this the youth tried to save his face, "But I obey all the other *niyams*."

Someone asked Swamishri, "If he starts coming to Sunday satsang assembly will you be pleased?"

Swamishri said, "Yes."

Instantly, the youth promised that he would do so.

\* \* \*

A child entreated Swamishri, "I have come by plane all the way from America for your darshan. Similarly, I ask you that when the time comes take me in a plane to Akshardham."

Swamishri promised, "We'll take you."

\* \* \*

A youth from Chicago spoke to Swamishri, "I'm going back to Chicago today. So what

should I take back with me?"

Swamishri responded, "God and his Sant."

## SWAMISHRI BELONGS TO GOD

7 February

Hundreds of devotees were engaged in Swamishri's darshan while he was passing by in his wheelchair. At that time some devotees from London said aloud, "Swamishri belongs to London, because he has visited and stayed there many times."

Then someone added, "Swami is from Akshardham."

A third devotee exclaimed, "Swamishri does not belong to London alone, but to America as well."

The devotees from Africa claimed, "Swami belongs to Africa."

A devotee interrupted and asked, "Bapa, who do you belong to?"

Swamishri replied instantly, "We belong to God."

## GOD RESIDES WITH THOSE WHO FOLLOW NIYAMS

24 February

A few *satsangi* youths of the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar performed a skit before Swamishri about having firm faith in God and observing morality. Then they all prayed to Swamishri to bless them with strong faith and morality in their lives along with a request that he be with them always.

Swamishri replied, "I will be with you."

A sadhu asked Swamishri, "With whom will you be with: one who follows the moral rules or one who eats in a hotel?"

Swamishri explained, "Bhagwan stays with one who observes moral principles." ♦

(Translated from the Gujarati text.)





## PUSHPADOLOTSAV CELEBRATION WITH PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

27 March 2013, Ahmedabad, India

Over 25,000 devotees from throughout India, USA, UK, Canada, East Africa and other parts of the world enjoyed the colourful annual Hindu festivals of Holi and Pushpadolotsav in the presence of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Ahmedabad.

The morning celebration assembly on 27 March 2013 featured speeches by senior sadhus in which they explained the spiritual significance of these traditional Hindu festivals. Sadhus also sang bhajans commemorating the festive occasions.

Swamishri graced the assembly from the balcony (*jharukho*), which was decorated as a royal *hansa* flying in the sky surrounded by devas sprinkling colourful flowers. Swamishri was welcomed by the stirring beats and lyrics of the bhajan ‘Vadtāl gām fulvadie re, hindolo

āmbāni dāl...’. Thereafter, he inaugurated a new publication by Swaminarayan Aksharpith: ‘Akshar-Purushottam Mahatmyam’ – a 5-volume text of 19,000 Sanskrit verses with Gujarati translations written by Sadhu Shrutiprakashdas. The publication describes the glory of Bhagwan Purushottam and Akshar, the traditions of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya and the glory of the BAPS guru *parampara*. Then, Swamishri sprayed saffron-scented water upon the small *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and, in turn, Swamishri was lightly sprinkled with saffron-scented water through a spray in the hands of Thakorji. Thereafter, Swamishri pressed a switch to shower everyone with rose petals. Devotees danced with delight while they enjoyed Swamishri’s darshan in the Akshar Jharukho. ♦





## GRAND PUSHPADOLOTSAV CELEBRATION

27 March 2013, BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Sarangpur

In the evening, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., over 70,000 devotees gathered at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Sarangpur in the presence of the senior BAPS sadhus – Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Doctor Swami, Pujya Bhaktipriya (Kothari) Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami – to celebrate this annual festival.

Speeches by the senior and other sadhus and video shows described how Pramukh Swami Maharaj's life has been coloured with the virtues of dharma, *jnan*, *vairagya* and bhakti.

Following the inauguration of new publications by Swaminarayan Aksharpith, the senior

sadhus performed *pujan* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and sprayed him with saffron-scented water. Thereafter, *arti* was performed.

At the conclusion of the celebration, a specially compiled video of the past Fuldol celebrations held in Sarangpur in the presence of Swamishri was shown. Finally, volunteers sprinkled scented *gula* powder, previously sanctified by Swamishri, on all the devotees.

This year, due to the drought in Gujarat, *gula* powder, flowers and flower petals were used for the celebrations at both Ahmedabad and Sarangpur instead of the traditional use of water. ♦

## DIKSHA CEREMONY

11 April 2013, Ahmedabad, India

In a grand *diksha mahotsav*, *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated 28 youths as *parshads* and 45 as sadhus. Among the youths were doctors, engineers, pharmacists, MBAs and graduates of other faculties. Of the 73 youths, 16 were from abroad.

The youths, and their parents and relatives performed the Vedic *mahapuja* rituals. Later, the parents wholeheartedly offered their beloved sons for becoming sadhus at the holy feet of guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The devotees present

in the assembly hailed the newly initiated youths and their parents in reverence.

Senior sadhus of BAPS – Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Doctor Swami, Pujya Kothari Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami – were present in the initiation ceremony. They expounded on the spiritual significance of receiving initiation from an enlightened guru.

At the end of the ceremony Pramukh Swami Maharaj personally gave the guru mantra to





each of the 73 youths. Blessing them he said, “These youths will go to the villages and cities in India and abroad to inspire others to live an addiction-free life and instill morality and faith

in countless people.” Pramukh Swami Maharaj appreciated the sacrifice of parents who had offered their sons to become sadhus for the service of society and God. ♦

## SHRI SWAMINARAYAN JAYANTI CELEBRATION

20 April 2013, Ahmedabad, India

With the Akshar Jharukho symbolically transformed into the historic Moksha Pipalo of Chhapaiya, thousands of devotees attended the evening celebration of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s 232nd birth anniversary in the presence of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The assembly featured bhajans and speeches by the senior sadhus. Pujya Viveksagar Swami spoke about the six reasons for Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s manifestation on earth. Then,

Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami elaborated on how the Guru Parampara – Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and, presently, Pramukh Swami Maharaj – the manifest forms of Bhagwan Swaminarayan on earth, have continued to fulfil the objectives of Bhagwan Swaminarayan by guiding countless devotees towards attaining the divine *brahmic* state and worshipping God. Pujya Mahant Swami addressed the assembly and emphasized



that all actions of God and his God-realized Sadhu are divine and for the liberation of all.

After Swamishri's arrival in the Akshar Jharukho, *balaks* briefly enacted the incident in Chhapaiya of Ghanshyam's friends searching for him and finding him atop the pipal tree looking westwards. When questioned, Ghanshyam revealed that he yearned to meet the countless devotees awaiting him everywhere and grant them liberation. Today, that Ghanshyam in the form of Pramukh Swami Maharaj continues to fulfil that wish.

Devotees then narrated how Swamishri had inspired the ideals taught by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in their lives.

Then, tributes were paid to Bhagwan

Swaminarayan by offering the five elements: to symbolize 'earth', flowers were showered; for 'water', *abhishek* was offered to the *murti* of Shri Nilkanth Varni; for 'wind', conch shells were blown; and to symbolize 'space', a selection of the names of Bhagwan Swaminarayan were recited.

The fifth element – 'light' – was offered through the *arti* ceremony. Swamishri performed *arti* of the *murti* of Thakorji, senior sadhus performed *arti* in the mandir sanctums, and sadhus and devotees seated in the compound also performed *arti*. At the conclusion of the celebration assembly, everyone had darshan in the main mandir and were given *panchajiri* as *prasad*. ♦

## UK & Europe

### BAPS PARTICIPATES IN EARTH HOUR CELEBRATION

23 March 2013, North America, UK, India



Joining iconic landmarks like the Empire State Building, the Eiffel Tower, the Great Pyramids of Giza, the Sydney Opera House and others in 7,000 cities, towns and municipalities across more than 150 countries and territories around the world, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandirs across North America, UK and India commemorated Earth Hour 2013 by switching off lights at 8:30 p.m. local time.

Earth Hour is a worldwide attempt to raise awareness about climate change and make a

“collective impact, beyond the hour” in the pursuit of a cleaner and safer planet.

### THE SWAMINARAYAN SCHOOL RECEIVES NEW NATIONAL AWARD FOR ABLE CHILDREN

28 February 2013, London, UK



The Swaminarayan Preparatory School has been recognized by the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) with its special Challenge Award for “helping pupils achieve their best”.

The NACE Challenge Award is recognized by external bodies as a mark of “quality provision” which honours schools that produce high quality work and encourage pupils to achieve their best. It is regarded as “one of the most purpose-



ful, rigorous yet supportive awards that schools can achieve". The NACE inspector shared some comments in a report following the evaluation process: "The Swaminarayan Prep School is a school with many outstanding features. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional and their leadership skills are deployed to very good effect. The pupils are also lively and engaged and very articulate."

**'BECOME ADARSH' – NATIONAL YUVAK-YUVATI MANDAL SHIBIR, UK & EUROPE**  
17 & 23 February 2013, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandirs, London & Leicester



A National Yuvak-Yuvati Shibir was held in London on 17 February and in Leicester on 23 February in the presence of Pujya Bhaktipriya Swami (Kothari Swami). The *shibirs* marked the beginning of a year-long spiritual development programme for youths in the UK. They were attended by almost 700 participants.

The *shibirs* featured speeches by Pujya Kothari Swami and other sadhus on topics including: the concept of 'adarsh', meaning 'ideal', through the examples of devotees who have followed the guidance of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, maintaining spirituality in one's home and place of work, prioritizing one's life based on the advice of Swamishri, stability and the importance of spiritual wisdom to help overcome setbacks in life, importance of upholding traditions and

performing daily rituals, benefits of *seva* and others.

Pujya Kothari Swami concluded the *shibir* by encouraging everyone to draw inspiration from Swamishri as the ideal example and, throughout the year, to continually introspect on one's spiritual progress.

## USA

**SPECIAL HONOUR FOR BAPS YOUTH**  
January 2013, USA



Neil Patel, grandson of Dr K.N. Patel of Mumbai and a regular member of the BAPS Yuvak Mandal in Charlotte, NC, USA, and his team solved a problem based on William Shakespeare's play *To Be or Not to Be* in eight minutes on the spot and beat 60 teams to win an international competition.

The team was honoured by the Congressional Youth Leadership Council (CYLC) to attend the 5-day Presidential Inaugural Conference in Washington DC, and witness the 57th Presidential Inauguration Ceremony of President Barack Obama.

## Africa

**BAPS VOLUNTEERS HELP AT BUILDING COLLAPSE SITE**

**29 March 2013, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania**

Following the collapse of a 16-storey building near the Ithnaashri Mosque in Dar-es-salaam, BAPS volunteers rushed with emergency supplies for the survivors. The volunteers also



rescued survivors trapped in the rubble, and carried survivors and the deceased to the waiting ambulances. BAPS volunteers continued to help at the site for two days.

On 1 April 2013, BAPS was honoured for its efforts by the Home Minister of Tanzania in a small ceremony organized by the Ithnaashri community.

## India

**GOVERNOR JACK MARKELL VISITS  
SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM  
9 February 2013, New Delhi**



Governor of the State of Delaware, USA, Jack Markell, visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi with a 10-member delegation.

Senior sadhus welcomed and honoured Governor Markell in traditional fashion. He admired the Mayur Dwar (Peacock Gate) and the Gajendra Pithika (Elephant Plinth).

The delegation experienced the *Sanskriti Vihar* boatribe exhibition and the *Neelkanth Darshan* giant screen film, and prayed for world

peace and harmony by offering *abhishek* on the sacred *murti* of Sri Neelkanth Varni.

Captivated by the Akshardham Mandir, the Governor of Delaware expressed, “This is a remarkable place with great dedication and faith.”

He also wrote, “I am overwhelmed by Akshardham. The philosophy that we are responsible for our own destiny – that we are the sculptor of our future – comes through clearly. I am moved by the entire experience.”

## INAUGURATION OF BAPS SHASTRIJI MAHARAJ HOSPITAL

**15 February 2013, Atladra (Vadodara), India**



The inaugural function of BAPS Shastriji Maharaj Hospital in Vadodara was attended by around 14,000 people, including invited guests, doctors and paramedics. The 100-bed Multispeciality Hospital was dedicated to the people of Vadodara and Gujarat on the 148th birth anniversary of Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, founder guru of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, on Friday, 15 February (Vasant Panchami) 2013.

The Hospital was inaugurated by Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Doctor Swami, Shri Nitinbhai Patel, Minister of Finance, Health & Transport, Gujarat Government, and Shri Saurabhbhai Patel, Minister of Energy, Petrochemicals, Mines and Minerals, Gujarat Government. Also blessing the occasion were Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami.



**NATIONAL SEMINAR ON SHRI SAHAJANAND  
SWAMI AND THE SWAMINARAYAN  
SAMPRADAYA: HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND  
CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES**  
1-3 March 2013, New Delhi, India



Around 80 scholars from Gujarat, South India and New Delhi attended the 'National Seminar on Shri Sahajanand Swami and the Swaminarayan Sampradaya: Historical, Social and Cultural Perspectives' from 1 to 3 March 2013. The seminar was organized at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi, by the Gujarat Itihas Parishad in collaboration with the B.J. Study and Research Institute, Ahmedabad, and the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute in Akshardham. It was inaugurated by Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami. The seminar enabled scholars to analyze the life and work of Sahajanand Swami from a broad variety of historical, social and cultural perspectives. The topics included: Historical and cultural influences in Gujarat and India at the time of Sahajanand Swami; Sahajanand Swami's travels throughout India as a child and teenager, and his stay in Gujarat; Sahajanand Swami and contemporary Gujarat, and its demography and geography; Sahajanand Swami's philosophy and values, Sahajanand Swami's magnetic personality as a leader of the masses: his inspiring nature, lifestyle, manners, speeches, discussions, language and interaction with people and others.

Among the distinguished scholars who presented papers at the seminar were: Dr Makarand

Mehta, Professor Emeritus, History, Gujarat University; Subhash Brahmabhatt, Principal, H.K. Arts College, Ahmedabad; Dr R.T. Savalia, Director, B.J. Study and Research Institute; Dr Rizvan Kadri, Associate Professor, Swaminarayan Arts College, Ahmedabad; Dr Thomas Parmar, Trustee, Gujarat Historical Society; Dr Jagdish Chaudhary, President, Gujarat Itihas Parishad; Dr Hasmukh Patel, Secretary, Gujarat Itihas Parishad; Dr Jyotindra M. Dave, Director, BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute, New Delhi; Dr D.K. Hari, President, Bharat Gyan Research Institute, Chennai; Dr S. Suresh, Convener, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, Tamil Nadu Chapter, Chennai; and others. Papers were also presented by sadhus of the BAPS.

Other distinguished speakers at the Seminar included Padmashri Dr Vijay Bhatkar, renowned computer scientist and pioneer of PARAM supercomputers; Dr Radhakrishna Bhatt, Head, Sanskrit Dept., Mysore University; Dr Raghuvir Chaudhary, renowned author and poet, Shri Madhav Ramanuj, famous poet; Shri Chandrakant Sheth, scholar and poet and Dr G.C. Tripathi, Director, B L Institute of Indology, New Delhi.

The Seminar consisted of Inaugural and Closing Sessions, a separate session for the presentations by BAPS sadhus and five other sessions. The delegates also had an opportunity to enjoy the art, architecture, exhibitions and serene surroundings of Swaminarayan Akshardham.

**SATSANG ACTIVITIES KARYAKAR SHIBIR**  
13-14 April 2013, Haridwar

BAPS Satsang activity *karyakars* from Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Hariyana, Delhi and Rajasthan convened at the Patanjali Yogapith in Haridwar for a two-day *shibir*. Based on the theme 'Let Us Fill the Sky with the Praise of Swaminarayan', Atmaswarup Swami and other sadhus presented speeches and

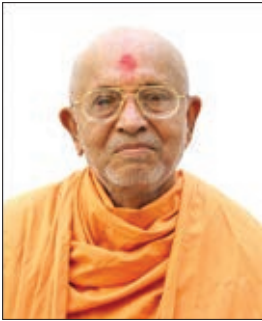


audio-visual shows, and conducted discussions, interviews, message-oriented games and other activities to enlighten and encourage the volunteers.

Yogacharya Pujya Ramdev Baba also visited the *shibir* and in his address praised the life and work of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

The *shibir* provided the *karyakars* with guidance, motivation and renewed resolve to fulfil their duties. ♦

## SADGURU PUJYA BALMUKUND SWAMI (26-4-1917 TO 4-3-2013)



The passing away to Akshardham of 96-year-old Pujya Balmukund Swami is a great loss for the Sanstha. He came into contact with Shastriji Maharaj in 1950 and then served at the Atladara Mandir,

even while continuing his job.

On Janmashtami 1952, Yogiji Maharaj initiated him into the sadhu-fold and named him Balmukund Swami. He served diligently according to Yogiji Maharaj's instructions and earned his blessings. In 1955, he was selected to accompany Yogiji Maharaj on his first overseas

Satsang tour to Africa. But, at the last moment, he instantly complied with Yogiji Maharaj's wish and stayed behind to serve the ailing Aksharpurushottam Swami.

By his saintliness and expert execution of duties, he earned the immense grace of Yogiji Maharaj. He served as *kothari* of Akshar Mandir, Gondal, until 1981. Thereafter, he toured the villages, serving and delivering spiritual discourses.

For decades, his insightful and stirring discourses enlightened and energized the Sanstha's sadhus and countless devotees worldwide. His humble and saintly personality endeared him to all.

We offer our humblest *pranams* to such a respected senior sadhu. ♦



### SHRI SWAMINARAYAN CHARITRA: PART 2

## Ghanshyam and the Miracles of Life

Inspirer: H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj

BAPS Swaminarayan Aksharpith Presents...

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Available at all BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir bookstores.





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1. Newly initiated sadhus with Swamishri (10 April 2013, Ahmedabad).
2. *Parshads* participate in the *janoi* (sacred thread) ceremony as part of the sadhu *diksha mahapuja* rituals (10 April 2013, Ahmedabad).
3. Senior sadhus, invited guests and delegates on the dais during the inaugural session of the National Seminar on Shri Sahajanand Swami and the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. It was held at Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi from 1-3 March 2013.
4. The newly opened BAPS Shastriji Maharaj Hospital, Atladara (15 February 2013).





### **BHAGWAN SWAMINARAYAN'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION 20 April 2013, Ahmedabad**

Swamishri presided over the colourful and devotional celebration of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's 232<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary. Senior sadhus presented speeches on the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan to commemorate the occasion.

Over 200 years ago, Ghanshyam had climbed the pipal tree and looked west, casting his divine, graceful gaze on all spiritual aspirants.

Swamishri appeared in the Akshar Jharukho which had been transformed into the *moksha pipalo* of Chhapaiya as part of the stage decorations.

Shri Hari's birth was celebrated with devotional offerings representing the five elements – earth, water, air, space and light.

The birth celebration climaxed with the performance of *arti* by all.