

# SWAMINARAYAN **BLISS**

March 2008

Annual Subscription Rs. 60



Brahmaswarup Bhagatiji Maharaj



**SWAMISHRI IN MUMBAI**  
**January 2008**

1. The *murti* of Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj, Mumbai mandir.
2. After Thakorji's darshan, Swamishri greets the devotees at the mandir in Dadar (1 January 2008).
3. After the successful angiography, senior sadhus present the Purna Kumbh as a symbol of gratitude to the team of two internationally renowned cardiologists, Dr. Ashwin Mehta (Mumbai) and Dr. Fayaz Shawl (Washington DC).
4. Swamishri in a relaxed and jovial mood after the angiography procedure at Jaslok Hospital (2 January 2008). All reports were normal.
5. Swamishri resting in hospital.

**Cover Title:** Obeisance to Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj on his birth anniversary on 21 March 2008, who spread the glory of Gunatitanand Swami as Aksharbrahman and Bhagwan Swaminarayan as the supreme God.



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March 2008, Vol. 31 No. 3

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## FIRST WORD

Take a break. Remember, it is not a waste of time to take official breaks during the day at work or from study. By skipping them you won't necessarily save a great deal of time or accomplish more in whatever you are doing.

Failure to take breaks soon wears you down and makes you less productive. It increases frustration, leaving you less attentive and irritable. At the slightest error you become edgy and explosive. Your creativity and insight are also diluted. The values of human interaction, conversation and service to others tend to fade, making you self-centred and ego-centric. Soon a rigid and condescending attitude sets in.

Breaks allow you to unwind and refresh yourself. They give you time to think of and consider other perspectives and ways. New ideas develop and you get time to evaluate yourself. Breaks also allow mental and physical recovery and replenishment of your inner resources. They rejuvenate the enthusiasm and concentration that are often sapped by a hectic life.

It is important to remember that your breaks should not disrupt your work. And neither should they be taken out of idleness or lethargy. They should not be too long to upset your work or develop into a practice of indiscipline.

So, take planned short and long breaks every day, week, month and year. Spend them relaxing, reading, exercising, conversing with family and friends, holidaying, praying or visiting a mandir for *satsang*. The breaks will be like pushing a 'reset button', providing you with a fresh start. ♦

# THE INSULT IN ANAND

*The devotees of Anand insisted that Shriji Maharaj come to their town and bless them. Maharaj replied that its local people were averse to Satsang and thus the time was not right. However, at their repeated insistence Shri Hari set off to Anand...*

When the devotees of Anand welcomed Maharaj on the outskirts Shri Hari asked, “What are the feelings of the local people?”

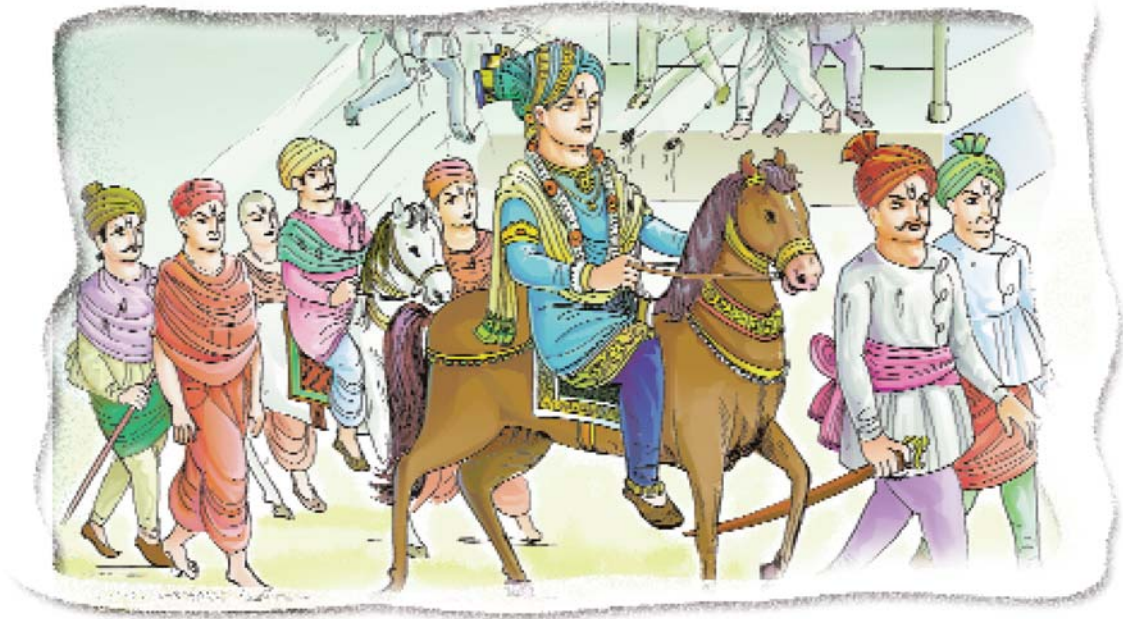
The devotees replied, “Maharaj we have invited you to bless us. Why do you ask about the local folks!”

Shri Hari arranged the procession, “The devotees will be up front chanting the *dhun*. Then the sadhus will follow singing kirtans. Thereafter I will ride with a cordon of Kathi devotees around me. And finally the *parshads* shall follow in the rear.” Then Maharaj repeated again that everyone must tolerate, forgive and not retaliate at all. Maharaj’s words created a

concerned flutter in the hearts of the devotees of Anand. They realized that an agitation was in the offing. There was nothing they could do now. They proceeded forward into town with Maharaj’s name on their lips.

The moment Maharaj’s entourage entered the town centre the belligerent crowd began hurling sand, brickbats, dung and whatever else they had. They cursed and swore, oblivious of and in stark contradiction to the norms of their Vaishnav allegiance. Despite all this the sadhus calmly tolerated and continued singing kirtans, remaining absorbed in Maharaj’s divine *murti*. Since they truly revelled in bhakti they remained impervious to the affront being heaped upon

*Bhagwan Swaminarayan rides into Anand amidst a hail of insult*



them. The crowd turned wild on seeing their indifferent attitude. Shri Hari was pleased at the spiritual equanimity of his sadhus. The devotees met the same fate, but they too remained calm and tolerant because of Maharaj's mandate. But when they saw mud and dung hurled upon Maharaj they became furious. Bhaguji angrily unsheathed his sword. Though he was short he had the power and courage to single-handedly defeat everyone. At the same time Joban strung his bow and took aim. An angry wave of war rippled through the entire rank. Dada Khachar had his dagger ready for the strike. Shri Hari grasped the scene in a flash and felt that if a fight broke out then 'victory' would be snatched from their hands; his mission to establish *ekantik* dharma would be hampered. He immediately called out, "If anyone wields his weapon then he will have lapsed in abiding to my word. Sheath your weapons instantly!" Shri Hari's commands echoed through the company of Kathi devotees and immediately they retracted their resolves. Maharaj's words averted a bloodbath. Bhaguji then advanced towards the agitated crowd and uttered to them, "It wouldn't have taken long for me to finish you all, but my Lord does not desire it. But I will say that all of you who have participated in this sinful act shall have no progeny. Even your daughters shall remain childless!" Everyone flinched at Bhaguji's curse. They all turned, seething with rage, towards the main perpetrators, Ramkrishna and Haribhai Pandya, who were standing on a platform watching the scene. They rushed towards both of them baying for their blood, but the two managed to get inside the mandir and lock its doors.

Shri Hari told his entourage to turn back and leave Anand. On seeing Maharaj depart Dinkar Pandya, Ajubhai, Jibhai and other devotees stood with tears in their eyes. They remained speechless and pained. The terrible insult to Maharaj and his sadhus scorched their hearts with

remorse. They felt that if only they had not been stubborn in making Maharaj come to Anand then nothing of the sort would have happened.

Shriji Maharaj and his group halted at the Gosai's farm. Everyone cleaned themselves, brushed the dirt off their clothes and drank water from the well. Thereafter they advanced towards Vartal.

On reaching Vartal Maharaj sat in the mango grove in Gnanbaug. Devotees rushed for Maharaj's darshan and blessings. On seeing the sadhus and devotees in a dishevelled state they enquired as to what had happened. Shri Hari replied jubilantly, "Today, we have returned as victors!"

Brahmanand Swami agreed and said humorously, "Yes Maharaj, we have won. And our victory was such that the people of Anand welcomed us with mud, dung, brickbats and stones! Furthermore, when a bridegroom goes with his party of people for his marriage they have to bear the insults and jibes of their host. But after that they are treated to a sumptuous lunch. However in our case, we had only insults to bear, and no lunch to eat! It seems that we have returned victorious by conquering the fort of Idar."

Everyone was amused at Brahmanand Swami's telling words. Then Brahmanand Swami added, "Look at this *gula* on my body! It will require several washings, at least two to three days, to remove it. My eating bowl and drinking gourd are broken, but by Maharaj's grace I'll get another."

Mulji Brahmachari commented, "Maharaj, today you have tarnished our names and prestige."



Shri Hari replied, “Since you all obeyed my wish your names and prestige have in fact increased. If you had retaliated then you would have sown the seeds of vengeance, and the government officials would have locked you all behind bars. But because of your patience and tolerance see how peacefully we are all sitting here now. The perpetrators must be repenting for their actions. They will come to welcome us, and many will become *satsangis*.”

From this one incident Shriji Maharaj revealed the saintliness of his sadhus and the tolerance of his brave devotees. He also exposed the nature of hostile people. For him it was not an occasion of insult and ignominy but one of sterling pride and honour for Satsang. The memorable day was 10 June 1818 CE (Jeth *sud* 6 V.S. 1874).\*

Shri Hari departed from Vartal and travelled to Gadhpur.

### **Satsang in Vadodara**

Prior to his *diksha* as a sadhu Gopalanand Swami was known by the name of Khushal Bhatt. He had stayed for sometime in Sarsavni village and Vadodara. There he had inspired *satsang* and the glory of Shriji Maharaj in many people through his yogic powers. Thereafter, *satsang* in Vadodara gradually spread. The local devotees, namely, Nath Bhakta, Sadashivbhai, Vaidraj Ramchandrabhai and others became staunch devotees through the association of Gopalanand Swami.

The *diwan* (minister) of Vadodara, Babaji Apaji, and his son Vitthalrao Babaji, were averse

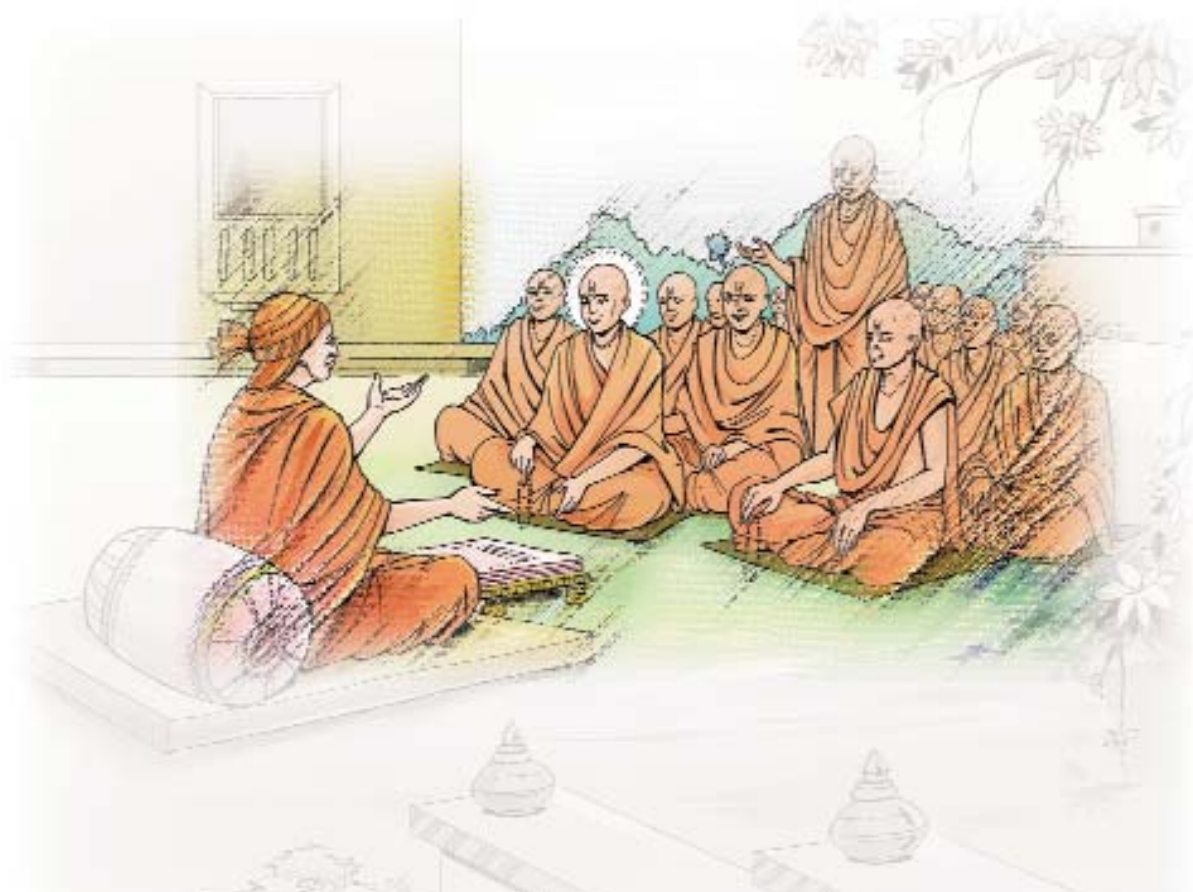
towards *satsang*. They were bitterly against the *satsang* activities in their region. So to suppress them they employed their political powers. But they failed. The devotees remained undeterred because of their faith in Shri Hari and their spiritual association with Gopalanand Swami. The *diwan* sulked. He was further angered when he learnt that his wife, Tuljabai, had been attracted to Satsang and had become a *satsangi*. Tuljabai could miraculously see the divine forms of Shri Hari and Gopalanand Swami. Whenever she talked of the divine darshan to her husband, *diwan* Babaji Apaji simply ridiculed her.

One day, Tuljabai told her husband, “Shriji Maharaj and Gopalanand Swami appear to me daily. They said that they will take me to Akshardham in three days. So you be patient and cultivate love and devotion for Shriji Maharaj. Ask him to forgive you for your sins.” Diwan Babaji was shocked to hear about her impending death. But still, on seeing her in good health he simply ignored her words and felt she was saying it out of her devotional frenzy. On the third day Tuljabai had the divine darshan of Shri Hari and Gopalanand Swami. She called out to her husband and said, “See, Maharaj has arrived and Gopalanand Swami is with him. They have come to take me to Akshardham. You must wish well for and have good feelings towards Satsang.” And then she said, “Jai Swaminarayan,” closing her eyes forever.

Babaji simply watched on helplessly. He saw his wife’s death with his own eyes, but could not see the divine presence of Maharaj and Gopalanand Swami. Despite being the *diwan* of Vadodara, he felt powerless and puny. After this his aversion for Satsang should have dissolved, but on the contrary, he thought that Shri Hari had used dark powers to kill his wife. Diwan Babaji Apaji deeply grieved the loss of his wife. Three months later he too passed away. ◆

\* Following the shameful incident in Anand its people went through difficult and miserable times. They realized that it was a consequence of their dastardly act against Bhagwan Swaminarayan, his sadhus and devotees. Furthermore they were anxious of Bhaguji’s curse upon them. To ward off any further misery the agitators met the devotees Dinkar Pandya, Ajubhai and others and came to Vartal to apologize to Maharaj. Shri Hari forgave them and blessed them. They all became devotees of Maharaj. Thereafter the Satsang fellowship flourished in Anand, its people became prosperous and the curse of Bhaguji ended.

## “PUT THAT GLASS DOWN!”



**A** lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked, “How heavy is this glass of water?” The answers called out ranged from 20 g to 500 g. The lecturer replied, “The absolute weight doesn’t really matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it.”

He continued, “If I hold it for a minute, that’s not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I’ll have an ache in my right arm. In each case, it’s the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it feels. And that’s the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all

the time, sooner or later, the burden becomes heavier and we won’t be able to carry on.”

This principle of stress management is very relevant to spiritual advancement. It is said in the scriptures that spiritual progress or regress is directly related to the observance or non-observance of God’s and guru’s commands – *agna*. The Upanishads sing the glory of Satyakam Jabali, Aruni and Upmanyu. They describe the way in which they all attained spiritual heights by obeying the guru’s commands. Even today, their spirit of obedience sets an example for all spiritual seekers. Their examples typically show that if we hold on to

our mind's thoughts and disobey the guru's word, we not only regress spiritually, but the burden of disobedience gives us stress. We have to learn to obey the guru's wishes to avoid further ache, just as we obey the mind by putting the glass down.

It is a burden on the spiritual path to hold on to our mind's thoughts. We lose the opportunity of pleasing God and our guru. We don't need to look further than the glaring incident of Shantanand Swami in the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

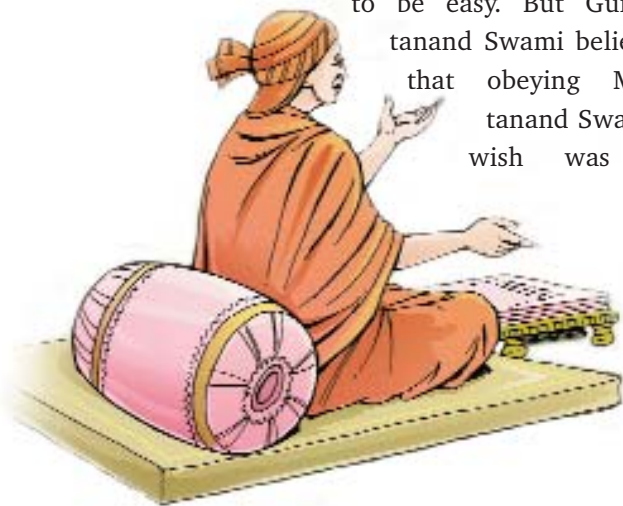
Once, Muktanand Swami was in Surat along with Gunatitanand Swami and other sadhus. A local devotee had specially prepared some fresh pickles for Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who at the time was in Gadhada.

"Swami, is there anyone who can carry these jars of pickles to Gadhada for Maharaj?" the devotee asked.

Muktanand Swami thought for a while. He had concluded writing his scripture, *Sati Gita*, and was also looking for someone to take it to present it to Shriji Maharaj. He looked around in the assembly of sadhus and fixed his gaze on Gunatitanand Swami.

"If it is your wish, I'll go," Gunatitanand Swami complied to Muktanand Swami's wish.

The four-day journey by foot was not going to be easy. But Gunatitanand Swami believed that obeying Muktanand Swami's wish was of



paramount importance. They both smiled. Just then, another sadhu, Shantanand Swami, got up in the assembly and blurted out, "Swami, I will accompany Gunatitanand Swami to Gadhada." And before Muktanand Swami could react, Shantanand Swami added adamantly, "I will still go, even if you say no." Muktanand Swami was speechless. He had no choice. He smiled again and said, "Since you have decided on your own, I can't say anything."

And so, without Muktanand Swami's consent or inner wish, Shantanand Swami wilfully prepared to set out for Gadhada with Gunatitanand Swami.

The small contingent of devotees seated in the assembly requested Gunatitanand Swami, "Please, Swami, embrace Shriji Maharaj on our behalf and pass on our regards."

Gunatitanand Swami started his long journey on foot, accompanied by Shantanand Swami, who had decided to carry the burden of his mind's thoughts. They arrived in Gadhada on the fourth day with three large jars of pickles, the *Sati Gita* scripture and a fine rug.

But Shriji Maharaj was in Kariyani. So, the two sadhus went to Kariyani. Bhagwan Swaminarayan was having lunch when the two came. Swami offered the jars of pickles and the *Sati Gita* sent by Muktanand Swami. Then Maharaj enquired about Muktanand Swami's health and *satsang* activities in Surat. Swami replied in detail. As soon as Shriji Maharaj finished his meals, Gunatitanand Swami humbly requested, "Maharaj, the devotees of Surat have asked me to embrace you on their behalf."

The innocence in Gunatitanand Swami's voice pleased Shriji Maharaj, who willingly agreed to do so. One by one, Swami called out the names of the individual devotees. In total, Maharaj embraced Swami twenty-two times. Just then, Shantanand Swami got up and requested, "Maharaj, please embrace me, I



have also accompanied Gunatitanand Swami from Surat.”

“But you have come here without Muktanand Swami’s consent,” the all-knowing Shriji Maharaj told him bluntly. Even before Shantanand Swami could respond, Shriji Maharaj continued, “Look, you have come of your own accord, so I will not embrace you.” Shantanand Swami was stunned. But Gunatitanand Swami intervened, “Maharaj, you are compassionate so please forgive his fault and embrace him. He helped me carry the jars of pickles on the way.”

“Very well,” said Shriji Maharaj and he embraced Shantanand Swami.

But at the same time Bhagwan Swaminarayan starkingly revealed his unhappiness at those who disobey. He told Shantanand Swami, “I did not feel the burden of embracing Gunatitanand Swami 22 times. But embracing you just once was a burden!”

Not only that, but Shantanand Swami was himself burdened by the thought of having disobeyed a simple command. If only he had requested Muktanand Swami instead of stubbornly stating his resolve.

We have a tendency to act according to our mind’s thoughts which burden our spiritual progress. But if the Satpurush tells us to do something for our own good, we should happily oblige. Every time we obey, we are putting

the glass of water down and relieving ourselves of unnecessary aches.

Gunatitanand Swami has said precisely this in the *Swamini Vato* (5/210). “We have met and recognized God and his Sadhu so there is nothing left to be done. But we still do not feel at peace. The reason for this is that there is desire for enjoying worldly pleasures. By doing as the mind wills, transgressing commands, and ignorance, peace is not experienced.”

That is why it is important to be flexible and fit in with the guru’s commands.

Once, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was in Bochasan. A devotee had just bought a new spectacle frame for himself. He explained to Swamishri, “Bapa, these spectacles cost Rs. 18,000. The metal frame is flexible. It bends in any direction.” Swamishri mused and said, “In Satsang, if we become flexible like that, then our value also increases.”

Yogiji Maharaj has said in *Yogi Gita*, “I have lived my life only according to Shastriji Maharaj’s wishes, but I have never done anything that my mind wills. And, that is why I am happy.”

So the next time you are having a glass of water, try it for yourself. If you hold on, you will have an ache. The longer you hold on, the more the pain. But put it down and you will be relieved. ◆

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

(Signed) Swami Swayamprakashdas. Date: 5-3-2008

# ENHANCING MENTAL STABILITY



**H**induism is a goldmine of inspiring and enlightening rituals which bring divine joy and peace. There seems to be a ritual for every occasion. Some rituals, however, are to be performed everyday, for example, personal puja. In such cases the rituals are done so often that they become more of a mechanical routine than a spiritual experience. This is a common feeling for many people. But in reality, puja is much more than just a ritual. It is a tool, and when employed properly, it has not only positive spiritual benefit but also much physical benefit.

In the Bhakti Sampraday, puja is a form of

devotion and is a medium which helps to bring one closer to God. There are different types of puja in Hinduism. Some are performed on a daily basis whereas others are performed on special occasions. Some are done individually and others in groups. In the Swaminarayan Sampraday, puja is performed by an individual on a daily basis. It is a personal form of devotion that allows a one-to-one connection with God.

Puja involves not only meditation but also many other aspects, all of which contribute to mental stability. In a society where everything happens at such a fast pace, mental stability is



essential in reducing the stress, which would otherwise negatively affect one's mental and physical health. It stops one from over-reacting to situations and so prevents one from draining oneself of energy unnecessarily.

So let us now discuss the actual steps that comprise daily puja. Puja is commenced by doing *atma vichar*, that is, thinking of one's true form as the soul, and not the body. This helps to think of one's ultimate goal in life (i.e. *moksha*), rather than just temporary, materialistic goals. Thinking of oneself as separate from the body, enables one to think of why one is here on this earth and what one wishes to accomplish.

The next step involves contemplating on Paramatma, thinking of the greatness of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Thinking about his greatness humbles the mind as it becomes evident that without his will, nothing happens, not even the movement of a dry leaf. Developing these thoughts during puja makes it easier to recall them throughout the day. It becomes a tool to help overcome any obstacles one may face. When something goes wrong, understanding it as the wish of Bhagwan Swaminarayan allows one to become proactive rather than dwelling solemnly on the situation.

Following this *dhyana* is performed. In this, the mind is focused solely on Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the guru, while at the same time,

avoiding any worldly thoughts. In Hinduism, *murtis* are used to help focus one's mind on God, as they are a tangible form of divinity. It is believed that Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the Guru Parampara actually reside in the *murtis*, and so puja is done with the feelings that they are actually present in front of you. By focusing the mind and senses on Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the gurus, worldly desires are subdued. *Dhyana*

also helps to improve concentration, as it involves fighting with the mind to prevent materialistic thoughts from arising.

This concentration in turn is useful in all aspects of life, whether you are studying or working on a project at work.

Another way to focus one's mind on Bhagwan Swaminarayan is by doing *mantra jap*, the chanting of the Swaminarayan mantra while turning the *mala*. This is done after *dhyana*. As each bead of the *mala* is turned, the Swaminarayan mantra is recited in one's mind. Initially, it may be hard to focus and say the Swaminarayan mantra with every bead. But what is interesting is that if concentration is lost and other thoughts arise, turning of the *mala* will stop. This is how one can catch oneself and then try to re-focus.

Following *mantra jap* is *pradakshina* or circumambulations. This is walking clockwise around the *murtis* laid out on the puja mat, and sym-



bolizes that God is the centre point of all our activities and our life. After doing eleven *pradakshinas*, *dandvats* (prostrations) are offered. They signify the surrendering of oneself to God and are also a way to pay respect, similar to the way one bows down to one's parents. Doing *dandvats* with these thoughts helps to reduce one's ego. Five *dandvats* are done and then an extra one is done to ask for forgiveness for mistakes done in puja and for having knowingly or unknowingly slighted or insulted anyone.

The last step of puja is reading the Shikshapatri. The Shikshapatri outlines the codes of conduct for all devotees. Reading it at the start of the day makes it easier to remember the codes throughout the day. Being able to remember them, in turn makes it easier to follow them. In this way, puja is complete.

During puja, one experiences a feeling of relaxation, as it is an opportunity to break away from daily stresses and by solely focusing on God, it brings great mental relief. Doing puja also evokes feelings of admiration and love for Bhagwan Swaminarayan as well as for the gurus.

Performing personal puja is much more beneficial than meditation alone. It is a way to relax both the body and the mind. After completing puja, the feeling of tranquility experienced during puja continues to persist. Puja is a way to train the mind to remain calm even during difficult situations, and a sense of prepared-

ness develops by performing puja. Strength is obtained in facing obstacles. This divine connection with God enables one's mind to remain calm and stable. One also feels closer to God, which in itself is a peaceful feeling.

From my personal experience, the mental stability and peace gained from puja has been invaluable. Being a person who is easily stressed, this stability has helped me in all aspects of life. It has kept me calm during tense situations, both at school (such as when writing an exam) and at work (when trying to meet a tight deadline). I find that on days when I rush my puja, my entire day becomes rushed. However, on days when I do my puja properly, I find myself being able to think with clarity before acting and thus prevent myself from being entangled in stressful circumstances. Therefore, when performing daily puja, do not think of it as just another passive, mechanical ritual, but rather as a way to control your mind, and thus, your life, and to develop a connection with God and guru.



# POLITENESS: A VIRTUE OR HABIT?

*In dealing with people, our own personality is displayed. Based on this, others pass judgement on us. So living by the ideal, 'Treat others the way you would like to be treated yourself', is the surest way to develop good rapport with others.*



**Anil:** Hey, that Falgun is really a very nice guy – he’s good at helping others, he helps out with *seva* at the mandir, does well at his work, and even has time left over to play baseball every week!

**Biren:** Yeah, but I’m not sure I like him much. He didn’t speak to me properly the last time we met. He acted as if he was really occupied on the phone.

**Anil:** Maybe he was busy. After all, he is into this 24/7 customer care business. And just because he wasn’t polite to you on one occasion doesn’t mean he isn’t a nice guy.

**Biren:** Yes, but politeness does matter! You have to be polite to your parents, you know, and to your seniors, so why shouldn’t we be polite to each other?

**Anil:** Look, politeness is good, but it’s not the end of the world, right?

**Biren:** Yes, but we should have good virtues...

**Anil:** Politeness is not a virtue, it’s more like a habit. Just saying thanks or sorry doesn’t make a person better, you know, it only means a person can talk more humbly.

**Biren:** Look at all the big people, aren’t they all polite?

**Anil:** Well, a Hitler might have been as

polite as a Gandhi, but it doesn’t make him a better person. In fact, Al Capone was known for his kind words.

**Biren:** Okay, okay, point noted. But think about what Maurice Maeterlinck said, “Manners are like the zero of arithmetic. They may mean nothing by themselves, but they add a great deal of value to everything else.” So politeness can only be a starting point or a small part of your virtues.

**Anil:** Agreed. Politeness is a small part of other virtues like being humble or being patient.

**Biren:** Well, that’s exactly what I’ve been saying! A humble person or a patient person will always be polite, right?

**Anil:** Yes, and that’s one of the reasons that we should be polite. Because learning politeness will help us to gain better virtues, become more humble and develop a better character. It is a habit, but one that helps us get nearer to bigger virtues.





## LIKE BEES TO A FLOWER

*Bhagatji Maharaj was from a very ordinary background, but through his association with Gunatitanand Swami, he attained extraordinary spiritual heights. His spiritual magnetism attracted all...*

**B**rahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj's contributions for the spread of the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy are incomparable. At a time when many had misunderstood Bhagwan Swaminarayan's original teachings, Bhagatji Maharaj was a saving light. His resolute proclamations and explanations that Bhagwan Swaminarayan was Purushottam – the supreme God – and Gunatitanand Swami was Aksharbrahman – the ideal Devotee – guided the devotees onto the right path. Despite much resistance, he persevered. In addition to his profound, insightful discourses, his saintly life also touched deep into people's hearts and convinced them of the truth of this teaching. It was this combination of a saintly life and sincere message that drew people of all backgrounds to seek his company and strive for the divine joy of God he constantly enjoyed.

Much of the antagonism towards Bhagatji Maharaj was due to the fact that he was a tailor by birth and lacked a formal education. Yet, he had so wholeheartedly served Gunatitanand Swami and so completely understood his teachings that people were drawn to him like bees to

a flower and accepted him as their guru. Apprehensive that he was taking the limelight, the then administrative powers of the Sampraday in Vartal placed many restrictions on the activities of Bhagatji Maharaj and his faithful devotees in an attempt to stifle their genuine spiritual endeavours. However, such was the trusting bond between guru and disciples that nothing deterred them. They stoically accepted all the limitations placed on them, but did not waver in their faith.

Among those who revered Bhagatji Maharaj as a spiritually perfect guru and the manifest form of Aksharbrahman, was Shastri Yagnapurushdasji – Shastriji Maharaj. Many ridiculed this scholarly and saintly sadhu for accepting a tailor as his guru. But, as Bhagwan Swaminarayan had taught, on the spiritual path, worldly status is absolutely irrelevant. Thus, together with a dedicated group of sadhus and devotees, Shastriji Maharaj continually endeavoured to seek the spiritual company of Bhagatji Maharaj despite the huge restrictions and humiliating treatment they were subject to.

An idea of the situation at the time can be gauged by the written accounts of Shastriji Maharaj and Nirgundas Swami in their correspondence to Bhagatji Maharaj and others. The following selection of letters reveal the bold resoluteness of Shastriji Maharaj and his profound understanding of the real glory of guru Bhagatji Maharaj.

### **Revoking the Order**

As Bhagatji Maharaj's popularity increased in the Sampraday, resentful sadhus and devotees instigated the administrative authorities to reduce his influence. The authorities had to bow to the pressures and unreasonable demands of this powerful lobby. Thus, to appease them, Bhagatji Maharaj was banned from venturing outside his home town of Mahuva to preach, nobody was permitted to visit him for spiritual association without permission of the authorities and the sadhus who were closest to him were forced to exchange their saffron robes and wear white robes – a humiliation worse than death for a sadhu. Even so, the resolve of the faithful sadhus and devotees could not be broken.

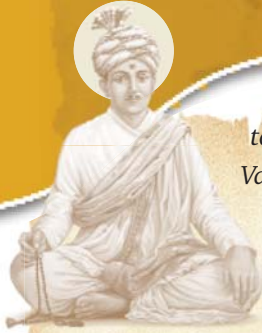
The following is a letter written (c. 1890) to Brahmaswarup Pragji Bhakta by Shastri Yagnapurushdas, describing the events occurring when he met Acharya Maharaj at Kandari. 'Maharaj' and 'Maharajshri' refer to Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj. In this letter, "regain the status of a sadhu again" refers to reinstating Shastriji Maharaj to his saffron robes after making him and his supporters wear white robes for two years. It also reveals the high regard that Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj had for Bhagatji Maharaj.

*To the best of devotees, disciple of the Pragat Purushottam, param ekantik Pragjibhai Govindhai in Mahuva, Jai Shri Swaminarayan from Sadhu Yagnapurushdas from Vadodara.*

*You had sent me a message through Shivshankarbhai that I should insist on studying [shastras] and become a sadhu (to regain the status of a sadhu from parshad status). Afterwards, I went to the village Kandari to have darshan of Maharajshri. I requested him to make me a sadhu again since I would like to resume my studies. Also, I can stay here and serve Mitha Bhagat by helping him in the administration in the best way. Maharajshri was pleased and agreed to make me a sadhu (he agreed to revoke his order to wear white robes). Then, since Shankar Bhagat went to Dhuliya, Maharajshri placed him here in Mitha Bhagat's service instead of me and made me a sadhu. And Maharajshri kept me with him for studies. I studied 11th Skandh [of the Shrimad Bhagvat] at Thasra. Then my teacher, Keshavprasaddas, was sent to Vartal. I study under him, therefore, I am also going to Vartal tomorrow. I have come here for my books [for study] from Sadhi, where Maharaj is right now.*

*Maharaj asked me about your health and was very pleased with me. Now, there are no difficulties to face. [Maharajshri] will reinstate Keshavprasad to a sadhu status during the festival. Then he will call others from Dhuliya. (Vignandas, Bechar Bhagat, and the rest will be called to reinstate them to their previous sadhu status).*

*Maharajshri had called me to the village of Pipli, where Shastri Dharmatanaydas was present, and asked me, "Does Vignandas possess Bhagat's [Pragji Bhakta's] knowledge of the Vachanamrut comprehensively or not? And what is lacking now?" Then I answered that Bhagat [Pragji Bhakta] has*



taught him all the Vachanamruts, and he [Vignandas] is constantly engaged in devotion as well. However, what is lacking is that just as Bhagat [Pragji Bhakta] withdraws his senses, introspects and speaks with Shriji Maharaj, that level hasn't been taught [by Pragji Bhakta]; that much is lacking. So Maharaj said, "I am worried Bhagat's knowledge will leave with him. It would be good if he makes someone reach his state. He is old now, so there is no certainty regarding the body."

Then Dharmatanaydas said, "He will not leave his body without making someone reach that level. So do not be concerned about that." Then Maharaj said, "Very well. And for the next 12 months, you all must not say anything in public that can cause problems, and then I will definitely call Bhagat [Pragji Bhakta]. You have affection for me and do as I say, so I'm obliged to fulfil your wishes. And I also wish that the knowledge known by Bhagat [Pragji Bhakta] spreads everywhere!"

Then I said, "Last time in the village of Bhadrod, Bhagat [Bhagatji Maharaj] told us that if you please Acharyaji Maharaj and all of Satsang, I swear in the name of Purushottam ([Bhagatji Maharaj's nephew] that I will impart my knowledge to you. Also, if you please Acharyaji Maharaj, then Shriji Maharaj will also be pleased." That is what he said. He also said many, many times, "That you all did not abandon Satsang was in itself a great thing. Therefore, regain your sadhu status in any way you can." He said that.

Then, he [Maharajshri] told Muni that whoever associates with Bhagat walks on the right path. This is how he (Acharya Maharaj) calls us frequently and shows good humour.

### Unique in the Sampraday

This letter is written by Nirgundas Swami on 1 February 1916 to a devotee in Bhavnagar describing an incident which occurred in Gadhadra (Gadhpur) where a scholarly guru of another sampraday, Shastri Rangacharya, prostrated to Bhagatji Maharaj openly upon meeting him. Even though he was the student, Shastri Maharaj had won over his preceptor, Shastri Rangacharya, by extolling the virtues of Bhagatji Maharaj. The letter also describes the unmerited reprimand Shastri Maharaj received for this commendable act.

On the occasion of the yagna in Samvat Year 1949 (1893 CE), Viharilalji Maharaj invited Rangacharya to Gadhpur. Bhagatji Maharaj had also come at that time. [Rangacharya] prostrated to [Bhagatji Maharaj] in the ground before the mandir. All the sadhus and thousands of devotees were upset on seeing this. Not only were they not pleased, but they also began to reprimand Shastri Maharaj saying that he has corrupted Shastri's (Rangacharya's) mind. Didn't you feel ashamed teaching him (Rangacharya) such knowledge? How can you preach to a leading scholar of another sampraday? But they did not think that, "Shastri Maharaj is praiseworthy that he so convinced such a great Shastri of the glory of Bhagwan Shri Swaminarayan such that he prostrated to someone like Pragji Bhakta; therefore he is praiseworthy!" But such thinking is hard to develop. Even after staying at Vartal for many years we were not able to convince them. Then, they [sadhus and devotees] scolded Shastri Rangacharya, "Why did you prostrate to a tailor?" Shastri (Rangacharya) replied, "What would you understand. The glory of a spiritually perfect devotee is tremendous; [Bhagatji Maharaj] is such a mahatma, not any ordinary



ascetic.” Rangacharya also said that there is no one as scholarly as Shastri Yagnapurushdas, “Asmin sampradāye ekameva!”<sup>1</sup>

### Verses of Glory

This letter was written by Nirgundas Swami on 1 February 1916 to a devotee in Bhavnagar giving a glimpse of the early days and the amazing incident in which Bhagatji Maharaj asked Shastriji Maharaj to recite the *shloks* he had written. Shastriji Maharaj employed his mastery of Sanskrit in extolling the glory of his guru Bhagatji Maharaj, who was his whole and soul.

During the Samvat Year 1950 (1894 CE), after returning from Vansada, Pragji Bhagat stayed at the Ahmedabad Mandir with two hundred devotees for two months continuously. With his discourses, [he] flooded everyone in divine bliss. It became a grand celebration. Bhagatji Maharaj would speak in assembly. Sadguru Krishnaswarupdas, an elderly sadhu, was a great scholar. Through his association with Bhagatji Maharaj, he developed venerable thoughts [towards Bhagatji Maharaj] and he became like a disciple. (At first, he was against this knowledge of Akshar-Purushottam and loathed Gopalanand Swami and Gunatitanand Swami without reason.) Bhagatji Maharaj always sat near Sadguru Krishnaswarupdas’s seat and delivered discourses. Meanwhile, Shastriji Maharaj’s group of sadhus was at Mahemdabad. They came for spiritual association and stayed for five days. When everyone gathered in the assembly, Bhagatji Maharaj said to Sadguru Krishnaswarupdas, “This Sadhu Yagnapurushdas has written *shloks* about Pragji the tailor,<sup>2</sup> so how would that suit the sadhus of Vartal? That this would cause a conflict is no surprise. If I am lying, then ask him.” Then Shastriji Maharaj said that he has indeed written them. He

answered bashfully. Then, Purani (Sadguru Krishnaswarupdas) asked him to recite them. Despite being shy, he recited them realizing it was the wish (of Bhagatji Maharaj).

He recited nine *shloks* beginning with ‘Shri-man-nirgunmurtye...’. Bhagatji Maharaj said, “Explain the meaning.” So Purani said, “So that everyone understands, say the meaning.” Then Shastriji Maharaj explained all the *shloks*. Purani questioned, “What’s prohibited about these *shloks*? Whatever virtues you have have been described in these *shloks*. Hail to that sadhu (Shastriji Maharaj). Only he could do so even after facing so many insults. If I had not met him, what would have happened to me? I cannot say. I had resentment for great sadgurus such as Gopalanandji and Gunatitanand Swami, but it has been eradicated now. Now I understand that they were the two sadgurus who were the saviours of this sampraday.” Then Purani wrote this *shlok* and recited it daily for the rest of his life.

Now, while the assembly was dispersing, Bhagatji Maharaj put both his hands on Shastriji Maharaj’s head. Ramchandra Suba, who was there to take Bhagatji Maharaj with him, was present in the sabha and said, “Oh! Oh! Bhagatji, how can you put your hands on a sadhu’s head?” Bhagatji replied, “It is not I placing them, but Shriji Maharaj himself came and placed them.” The people who saw this are still present today. In this manner Bhagatji Maharaj showered his abundant blessings. ♦

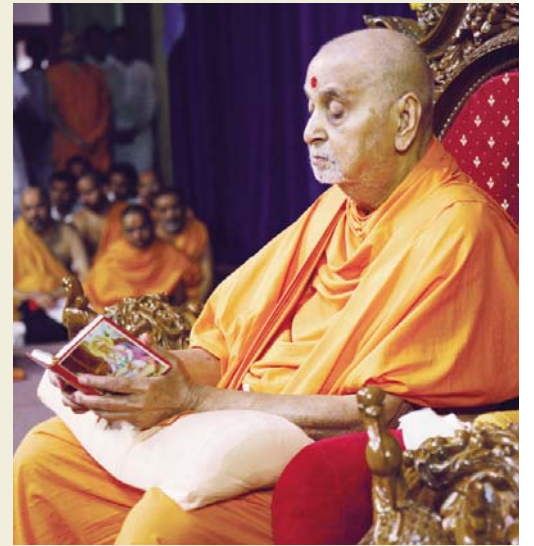
1. This is a Sanskrit phrase Shastri Rangacharya used for Shastriji Maharaj to pronounce that, “In the Swaminarayan Sampraday, there is only one like Shastriji Maharaj.”

2. i.e. Bhagatji Maharaj, referring to himself



# PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN

November & December 2007  
Gondal, Rajkot, Sarangpur, Bochasan, Ahmedabad



*From top left, clockwise:  
Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj, Gondal;  
Swamishri blesses balaks on Children's Day, Rajkot; Swamishri reads Shikshapatri in morning puja, Gondal; Swamishri discusses mandir complex expansion project, Gondal*

### **GONDAL: 1 to 11 November**

During Swamishri's stay Children's Day (1/11), Kishore Day (4/11), Diwali (9/11), Annakut and New Year's Day (10/11) were celebrated.

#### **1 November 2007**

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Hanumanji and Ganapatiji and Shri Guru Parampara for the BAPS hari mandir in Karanj village.

#### **9 November 2007, Diwali**

At 6.15 pm Swamishri arrived for the Chopda *pujan* ceremony in which account books for the New Year were ritually worshipped. Swamishri presided over the *mahapuja* that was performed on the mandir precincts called Akshar Chowk. The backdrop to Swamishri's seat was the huge entrance to the assembly hall. It was decorated with *divas* and Diwali banners. During the *mahapuja arti* there was a firework display. Then Viveksagar Swami discoursed about the significance of the Diwali celebration. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Shastriji Maharaj acquired this place and enshrined our philosophy, built this mandir and enhanced the glory of Gunatitanand Swami. Yogiji Maharaj stayed here for many years. The

*mahapuja* was performed to erase our mistakes, negative attitudes and inner darkness. For many lifetimes there has been darkness. Out of compassion Shriji Maharaj brought his abode, Gunatit, and Shastriji Maharaj preached their glory, thus illuminating our hearts with divine light – that is true knowledge."

#### **10 November 2007, New Year's Day Celebration**

The New Year's Day *mahapuja* rituals were performed parallel to Swamishri's morning puja. The morning assembly was addressed by Viveksagar Swami. At 10.20 am Swamishri arrived and blessed the devotees. He said, "You have all come to celebrate the *annakut* festival here so I pray to Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj to bless you all with happiness. To attain Akshardham is our goal. The monkeys in the time of Ram built a bridge and realized that he was God. They said the name of Ram and the stones floated. They said his name with the faith that he was God. When such faith is absent one does things for mere show, which obstructs the accomplishment of any work.

"A person or thing becomes divine through an association with God. The Kathis became divine due to their association with Shriji

**Chopda Pujan at Gondal mandir**



Maharaj. To overcome the cycles of life and death one needs to associate with God in human form.”

At 11.15 am Swamishri went to the mandir sanctum where *annakut* had been beautifully arranged before Thakorji. Swamishri sat before the middle shrine, accompanied by Gondal Naresh Shri Jyoti Bapu and Prince Hemanshu. After singing five *thals* Swamishri performed the *annakut arti*. Thereafter Swamishri went to Akshar Deri and performed *arti*. In all, 20,000 devotees attended the grand *annakut* celebration.

### **RAJKOT: 11 to 17 November**

*During Swamishri's stay Children's Day (13/11) and BAPS Centenary Year Celebration (15/11) were held.*

### **15 November 2007**

The evening assembly to celebrate the BAPS Centenary Year was held at the Racecourse Ground. The assembly was based on the theme “In the joy of others lies our own”. The stage backdrop comprised a giant replica of Akshar Deri enshrining the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj along with huge photographic scenes of both Swaminarayan Akshardhams, in Delhi and Gandhinagar.

Viveksagar Swami first addressed the assembly. Then Dr Swami spoke on BAPS' spiritual

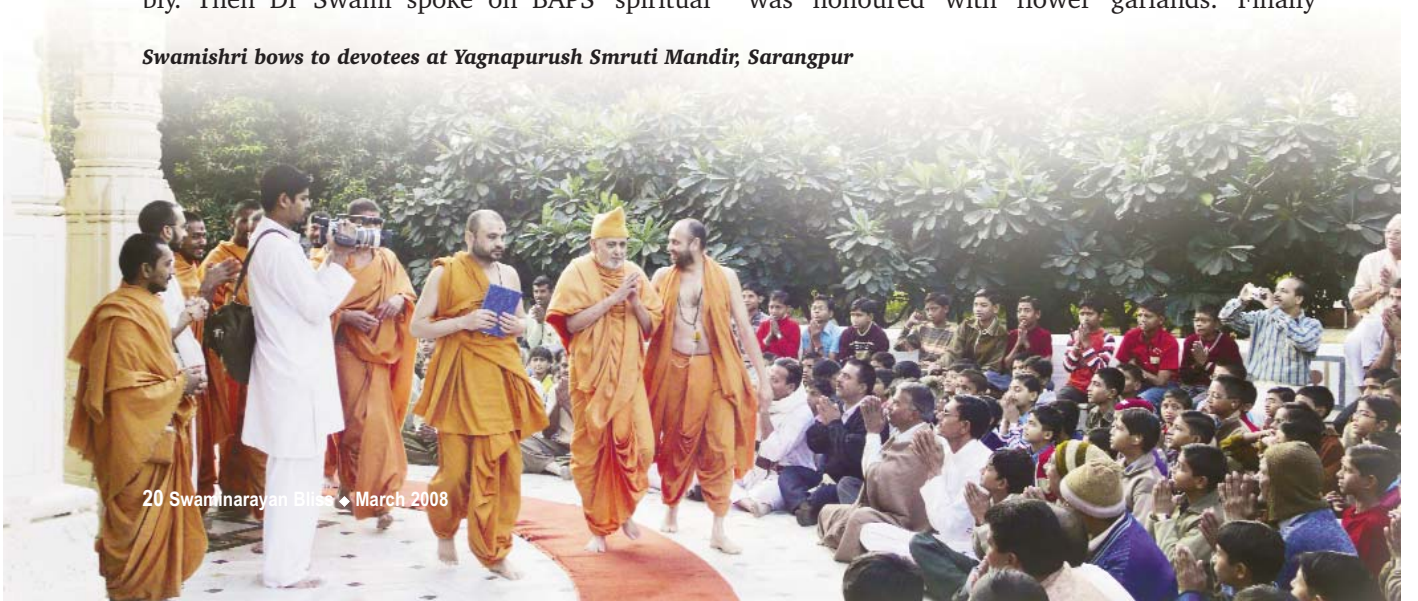
and secular activities. Two videos on Akshardham and Pramukh Swami Maharaj were shown. Then the senior sadhus, devotees and guests honoured Swamishri with flower garlands. Children performed a cultural dance. To crown the assembly Swamishri blessed the huge gathering of 20,000 devotees and well-wishers, “Because of I-ness and Mine-ness one experiences pain and unhappiness in life. If they are dissolved then one experiences the divine joy of God. One must first understand that one's true form is *atma*, and within it resides Paramatma. When God leaves from within then nothing will work. No matter how intelligent one may be nothing will be possible through one's own effort.”

In conclusion more than 20,000 devotees and guests performed *arti*. The celebration ended with a spectacular fireworks display.

### **SARANGPUR: 17 to 22 November 18 November 2007**

The evening assembly was held to commemorate the BAPS Centenary Year. Viveksagar Swami spoke about Swamishri's *vicharan* and the historical events of BAPS. Then children enacted a drama related to Swamishri's greatness. The bhajan ‘*Gunātitakā dankā ālamme*’ was sung by sadhus with all devotees joyously waving BAPS flags. The youths of Botad performed a drama on the story of Rajabhai of Khorasa. Then Swamishri was honoured with flower garlands. Finally

*Swamishri bows to devotees at Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir, Sarangpur*



Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Shriji Maharaj celebrated festivals here. Nishkulanand Swami then described this place as ‘*Shobhāvānt Sārangpur gām*’. There was nothing so decorative or glorious then. But Maharaj was pleased by the deep devotion and love of the village devotees. The glory was due to the presence of God and his sadhus. Wealth and clothes make the body beautiful but true beauty lies in having the association of God and his Sadhu.”

In conclusion Swamishri and devotees performed *arti*.

### **BOCHASAN: 22 to 30 November 24 November 2007, Dev Diwali**

Like every year an *annakut* was offered to Thakorji in all three shrines of the mandir on Dev Diwali. The Kartik Punam assembly commenced at 8.00 am on the grounds of Akshar-Purushottam Vidyalay:

- ◆ Viveksagar Swami spoke on Swamishri’s *vicharan* abroad.
- ◆ Children and youths of Adas *mandal* performed a cultural dance.
- ◆ Dr Swami spoke on how to become an ideal devotee.
- ◆ Ishwarcharan Swami gave highlights of the BAPS Centenary Celebrations to be held in Ahmedabad and invited all to attend.

*Devotees during Dev Diwali assembly, Bochasan, 24-11-2007*



- ◆ Mahant Swami spoke about the Centenary Celebrations.

- ◆ Senior sadhus garlanded Swamishri.

Finally Swamishri blessed the festival assembly, “No matter how much effort a person puts in but if God does not shower his grace then the task remains incomplete. We have forgotten that God has given us this human body. It is the best of all life forms. Even the *devas* desire for a human form. By doing good deeds one gets happiness in return, but base instincts are not erased. As long as one’s inclination for and attachment to worldly pleasures remain one cannot progress. The main aim in life is to become *aksharrup* and attain Purushottam. In all activities be conscious of God.”

More than 20,000 devotees attended and had *prasad*.

### **26 November 2007**

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Hanumanji, Shri Ganapatiji and Guru Parampara for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Ratanpura.

### **3 December 2007**

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of *murtis* for *hari* mandirs in Chansad and Karvan.

### 7 December 2007

Today, according to the English calendar, it was Swamishri's 87th birthday. When Swamishri came for Thakorji's darshan, children, youths and devotees hailed Swamishri's *jais* and waved flags to express their love and honour. At the same time in Chansad, Swamishri's birthplace, the senior sadhus were performing the *murti-pratishtha* rituals at the newly built BAPS *hari* mandir. On the day before, a *yagna* and grand procession of the *murtis* were held. The senior sadhus requested Swamishri to come and perform the rituals, but Swamishri refused saying that Maharaj had prohibited sadhus to visit their native village. More than 25,000 devotees had attended the *murti-pratishtha* festival in Chansad.

The devotees celebrated Swamishri's birthday in the evening assembly. The senior sadhus eulogized on Swamishri's saintliness. When Swamishri arrived in the celebration assembly at 7.15 pm a cultural dance was in progress. Thereafter senior sadhus garlanded Swamishri. Viveksagar Swami addressed the celebration assembly. Finally, Swamishri blessed the congregation, "I bow and convey my Jai Swaminarayan to you all for coming in such large numbers and for your services to the Akshar-Purushottam Sanstha. Shriji Maharaj came on earth with a resolution that all people become happy, be liberated and attain *moksha* in life. He came with his abode (Gunatitanand Swami) and *muktas*. It is because of his divine resolution and wish that the Sanstha has developed and progressed. God is the all-doer. Gunatitanand Swami revealed Maharaj's wish. Then Bhagatji Maharaj spread the glory of Gunatitanand Swami as Mul Akshar and Shriji Maharaj as Purushottam. Then Shastriji Maharaj understood this firmly and established Akshar-Purushottam mandirs."

In conclusion mass *arti* was performed by all devotees.

### 13 to 17 December 2007, Ahmedabad

BAPS Centenary Celebrations were celebrated in the suburb of Chandkheda, Ahmedabad. Detailed reports of Inauguration and Youth Day (13), Women's Day (14), Children's Day (15) and Guru Bhakti Day (17) have appeared in the January-February 2008 special issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss*.

### 15 December 2007, Ahmedabad

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Radha-Krishna Dev, Guru Parampara, Hanumanji and Ganapatji for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Kukadiya.

### 19 December 2007, Ahmedabad

Swamishri performed the *murti-pratishtha* rituals of *pujan* and *arti* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Hanumanji, Ganapatiji and Guru Parampara for the BAPS mandir in Jagannathpuri.

From this evening Swamishri caught a mild fever and the day after suffered a bout of diarrhea and fever. The malaise left Swamishri weak. Swamishri recuperated till 23/12, but physical weakness prevailed for several days thereafter.

### 30 December 2007, Ahmedabad

At 12.00 noon Swamishri decided to walk in the mandir precincts. Swamishri's pulse was being monitored by Dr Kiranbhai. During his third round Swamishri became tired and sat down in a chair exhausted. There were some irregularities on his ECG report. After a little rest Swamishri's condition returned to normal. The next day, after consultation with expert doctors they suggested that though there was no cause for any concern Swamishri should have an angiography done to know his exact condition. Subsequently, Swamishri went to Mumbai where his angiography reports were normal. ◆

## SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOURS

To please Bhagwan Swaminarayan and guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj children, youths and senior devotees perform austerities, pilgrimages and other devotional means. The spiritual endeavours performed by devotees during Swamishri's visit to the local centres are congratulatory and worthy of recognition. They also reflect Swamishri's divinity for inspiring such spiritual efforts in children, teenagers and devotees.

### GONDAL

**November:** ♦ **2:** Harshadbhai of Jetpur observed a 10-day liquid fast. Vipulbhai of Jetpur observed an 86-hr fast. ♦ **4:** 200 male and female devotees pilgrimaged 100 km by foot from Amreli, Dhari, Chalala and Devrajiya; 8 female and 13 male devotees from Derdi – Kumbhaji; 8 women and 3 male devotees from Mehta Khambhaliya; and 43 women and 15 male devotees from Moviya. ♦ **8:** 15 devotees pilgrimaged by foot from Jasdhan.

### RAJKOT

♦ **11:** Pragnesh (6 yrs) observed an 108-hr liquid fast; Rashmin Parmar and Pratap Chauhan observed waterless fast for 100 hrs, Hari Krishna Ranpara (72 hrs), Dinesh Amipara (24 hrs) and Siddharth Parsana (50 hrs). Many devotees observed liquid fasts: Ramesh Kholiya, Kishore Gohil and Rakshit Kheraiya (200 hrs); Siddharth Parsana and Pravin Ramani (187 hrs); Devraj Hirani, Mihir Chotaliya, Vishal Gediya and Jayesh Dakshini (100 hrs); Jitendrasinh Vala (144 hrs), Kartik Gediya (125 hrs), Alkesh Parikh (87 hrs) and Kirit Belar 36 hrs. Sharad Kacha refrained from ghee, cooking oil and salt. Umang Bhatt ate only one meal a day (*ektana*) for four months. Many female devotees observed different types of austerities: 20 women observed waterless fasts for 100 hrs, 25 women observed a 100-hr liquid fast, 5 women observed *khatras*, 550 women observed a chain of waterless fasts for 42 days. One female devotee observed *dharna-parna* for 100 days. 78 women devotees performed *dhun*, *mantra jap*, *mantra lekhan*, Janmangal Namavali, *pradakshina* and *dandvat*. They also chanted non-stop *dhun* for 100 hrs. ♦ **12:** A child named Harsh observed waterless fasts for seven days and also pilgrimaged 15 km by foot to Gondal. ♦ **13:** 1000 *bal-balikas* performed 25 *malas*, *dandvats* and *pradakshinas* for Swamishri's good health. ♦ **14:** 8 devotees pilgrimaged by foot from Moviya. 275 *balikas* observed various austerities. ♦ **15:** 17 devotees pilgrimaged by foot from Bhadra; 17 male and 27 female devotees pilgrimaged by foot. ♦ **16:** Eight devotees pilgrimaged by foot from Paddhari–Moviya. Eight youths cycled from Sankari (450 km). ♦ **17:** Seven devotees pilgrimaged by foot from Jaliya.

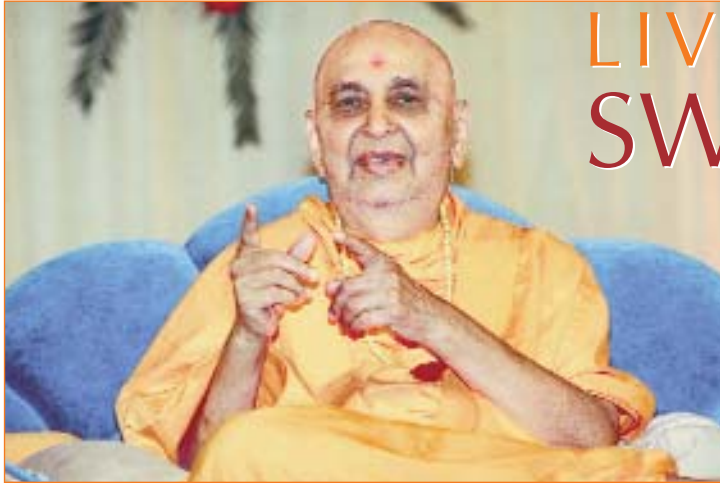
### SARANGPUR

♦ **18:** 137 devotees pilgrimaged by foot from Mahuva, 65 from Amreli, 107 from Gadhada, 103 from Rajula, 12 from Savarkundla, 25 *sadhaks* and 7 *sadhus* from Gadhada mandir (38 km). ♦ **20:** 51 devotees from Vallabhipur, 35 from Pachchhegam and 4 from Ratanpar. 375 from Bhavnagar (80 km). ♦ **22:** Six youths performed prostrations from Samadhiyala.

### BOCHASAN

♦ **23:** Two BAPS *sadhus* and 25 youths, and 5 devotees from Dudhvala pilgrimaged by foot. ♦ **25:** 22 youths and *kishores*, 20 male devotees and 21 female devotees came by foot from Mahelav (22 km). Ten youths pilgrimaged from Petlad.

**December:** ♦ **5:** Ramanbhai, Khodabhai, Thakorabhai Gohil, Kaushikbhai Patel and Lakshminarayan Yogi, who offer their services at Swaminarayan Akshardham, cycled from New Delhi to celebrate the BAPS Centenary Celebrations.



## LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI

### **NO PERSON IS SMALL**

**4 November 2007, Gondal**

Swamishri was retiring to bed at night. Sadhus and devotees were engaged in Swamishri's darshan. At that time Bhimo, one of the mandir cooks, was also doing darshan. Swamishri saw him and enquired as to when he had started wearing spectacles. Bhimo was called nearer, and Swamishri asked several questions regarding how he managed his life and expenses. Bhimo has been offering his services as a cook in the Sanstha for many years. Swamishri took interest and care in Bhimo and blessed him for his sincere services.

### **SWAMISHRI'S HUMILITY**

**13 November 2007, Rajkot**

A distinguished guest came for Swamishri's darshan and blessings. He praised Swamishri and requested, "If I can get even a little amount of the energy you have, then I believe nothing would be impossible for me to do. I am impressed by your organization because everything is so well planned, and it is all due to you. It is due to your energy."

Swamishri replied, "No. It is due to Shriji Maharaj's."

"But you are the means," the guest added.

"But it is his inspiration," Swamishri responded with humility.

### **NO BOREDOM IN SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES**

**16 November 2007, Rajkot**

BAPS volunteers presented a short discussion on the principles of Akshar-Purushottam and the efforts of Shastriji Maharaj. Swamishri was very pleased and inspired them, "We have to repeat the same thing again and again, that is, (the philosophy of) Akshar and Purushottam. Like we eat *dal*, vegetables and rice daily (we should repeat the same knowledge of Akshar and Purushottam)."

Swamishri then asked a devotee seated before him, "What do you do when you get to the office? You have to answer phone calls!" The devotee replied in affirmation. "Then what do you do the next day?" Swamishri enquired. "The same thing," the devotee answered.

"Then it is the same for spiritual matters. Like you never get fed up of attending to telephone calls, you should never get bored in doing this repeatedly. This is what you have to do."

Swamishri inspired the volunteers to understand and consolidate their understanding of the core principles of *satsang*. ◆



## EYE CARE CAMP

**17 November 2007, Kitunda Primary School, Tanzania**

As part of BAPS Centenary Celebrations, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Tanzania, in collaboration with CCBRT Hospital of Dar-es-Salaam organized an Eye Camp at Kitunda Primary School (near Kitunda Clinic) on Saturday 17 November 2007.

The Eye Camp was officially opened by Hon. Abbas Kandoro, Regional Commissioner of Dar-es-



*A volunteer doctor examines a patient*

Salaam.

Over 600 patients attended the camp, and received medicines and spectacles.

By the kind support of the doctors and staff of CCBRT Hospital, Dar-es-Salaam and all the volun-

teers of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Tanzania, the Eye Camp was a tremendous success.



## KARYAKAR SHIBIRS

**28 December 2007 to 3 February 2008, Gujarat, India**



*Mahant Swami inaugurates a Satsang Activity  
Karyakar shibir*

Every year *karyakar* training *shibirs* are conducted at BAPS Mandirs throughout Gujarat by the Satsang Activity Central Office and Children's Activity Central Office to guide registered volunteers.

In these 1½-day *shibirs* the *karyakars* are inspired by senior sadhus through speeches and question-answer sessions. Also, guidance is given by learned sadhus and experienced volunteers through speeches, debates, discussions and dramas, as well as, audio-visual shows.

This time, from 28 December 2007 to 3 Feb-



*Inaugural prayers at a Children's Activity  
Karyakar shibir*

ruary 2008, a total 4,800 children's activity *karyakars* participated in the 11 *shibirs*. The theme of these *shibirs* was 'Sincerity in Duty and Service'.

During the same period 10,680 *satsang* activity *karyakars* attended a total of 16 *shibirs*, based on the theme 'I Am a BAPS Karyakar'.

In these *shibirs*, the agenda and details of activities that the volunteers will be coordinating this year was also discussed.



## THE SWAMINARAYAN SCHOOL RANKS 4TH IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL LEAGUE TABLES

10 January 2008, London, UK

Since it was founded by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in 1992, The Swaminarayan School in London, Europe's first independent Hindu school, has been progressively successful in securing both academic excellence and well-rounded personal development for its pupils.

The School regularly features in the UK's top league tables. This year, on the basis of the 2007 Achievement and Attainment Tables for Key Stage 4 (pupils aged 14 to 16) published on 10



January 2008 by the UK Government, The Swaminarayan School in London was confirmed as the fourth best independent school in the country. This reflects the exceptional performance by teachers and students working with an ethos inspired by Swamishri.

The school also contributes to the community through social and charitable work.

Congratulations to the pupils and staff of The Swaminarayan School for being amongst the top performing independent schools in the UK. ♦

## ASIA-PACIFIC BAL SHIBIR – INDIA TRIP 2007-8

13 December 2007 to 17 January 2008, India

From 13 December 2007 to 17 January 2008, *balaks*, aged 11 to 13, and *karyakars* from Australia, New Zealand and Singapore gained a hands-on experience of India.

After attending the BAPS Centenary Celebration in Ahmedabad they visited most of the BAPS *shikharbaddh* mandirs throughout Gujarat, as well as Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi and the *shikharbaddh* mandir in Jaipur.

The *balaks* and *karyakars* also enjoyed Swamishri's darshan and company which turned out to be a truly marvelous, divine and enlightening experience.



*Shibir participants with Swamishri, Ahmedabad*

The culmination of the trip was an inspiring *shibir* in Sarangpur entitled 'Brahmavidyani College'.

The 7-day *shibir* was conducted by learned sadhus in Sarangpur, and consisted of interesting workshops, speeches, audio-

visual presentations, interactive group discussions, outings, field trips, sports, games and fun time such as kite-flying and campfires.

The youngsters all resolved to make their lives better and more Satsang-centred by focusing on *niyams*, *seva*, bhakti and studies. Many *balaks* took vows to obey and respect parents.

The India trip and Bal Shibir was an unforgettable and wholesome experience for all. ♦

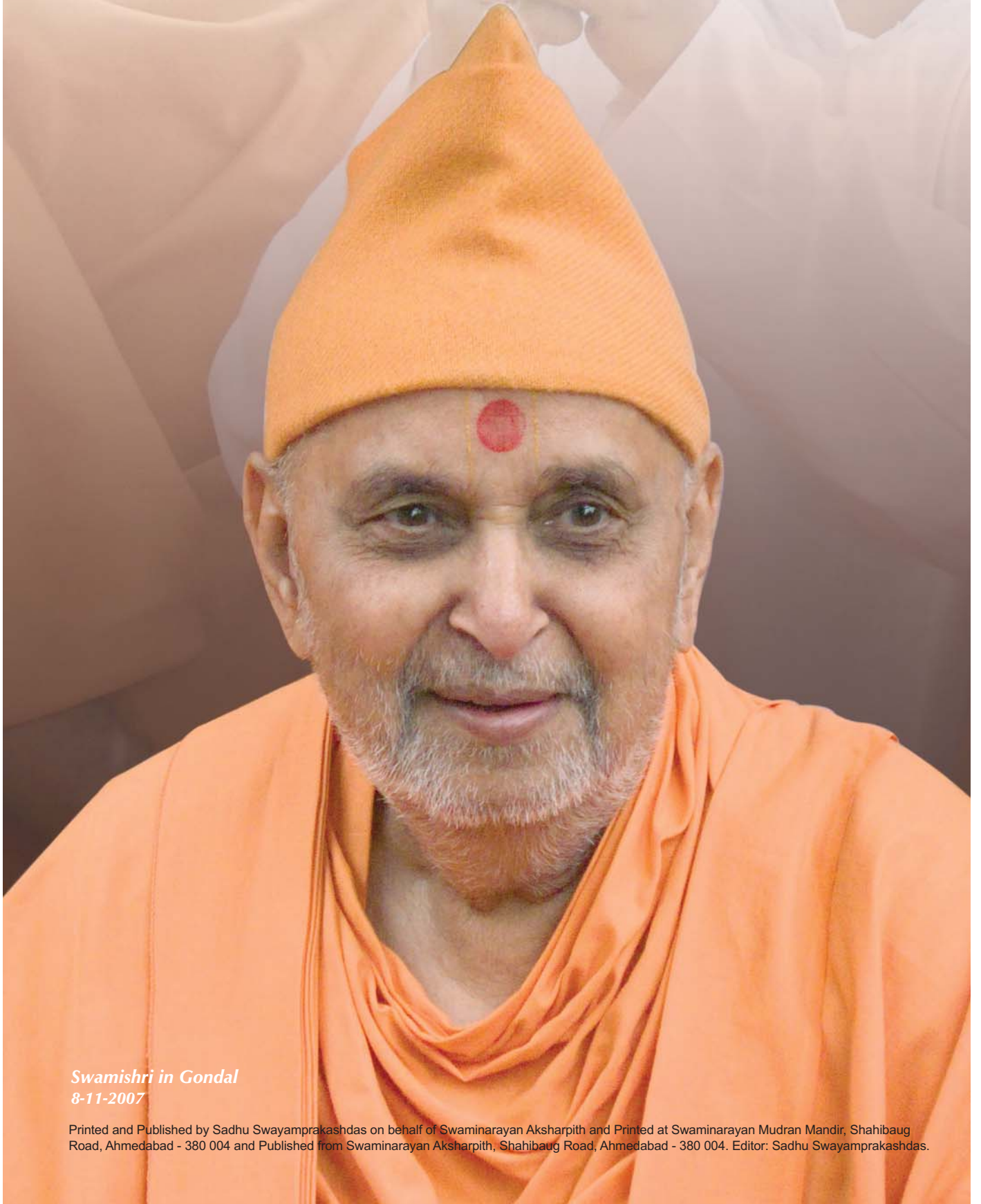


**SWAMISHRI IN MUMBAI**  
**January 2008**

1. Swamishri blesses the devotees who have come to the mandir for morning darshan. *Inset: View from above of devotees seated on the mandir grounds.*
2. During his morning rounds on the mandir terrace Swamishri shares light moments with the sadhus.
3. Swamishri blesses devotees in the mandir.

**Back Title:** *Swamishri in an illustrious and divine mood at Akshar Mandir, Gondal, 8-11-2007.*

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