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May 24, 2004

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MEDICO-SPIRITUAL CONFERENCE KICKS OFF PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S NEW JERSEY VISIT

After spending 8 days in New York, His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj arrived in New Jersey on May 22nd. A *Swagat Sabha* (welcome assembly) was attended by members and well-wishers of the Bochasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) at the Exposition Center in Edison, New Jersey. Edison Mayor George Spadaro was present to receive Swamishri on behalf of the community.

On May 23rd, over 350 healthcare professionals from throughout the New York metropolitan area came together at the BAPS temple in Edison. The event, entitled "Medicine with Spirituality", was a joint collaboration of BAPS Care International, BAPS Medical Services, American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), Indian Dental Association and the Indo-American Pharmacists Association.

The purpose of the conference was to delve into the role spirituality plays in total health care. Speeches in Hindi and English by learned BAPS *sadhus* (monks) demonstrated that regardless of the patient's background and illness, prayers and spirituality are positive influences and necessary components to the betterment of an individual. One of the *sadhus*, Pujya Doctor Swami, had received his medical degree prior to accepting the sainthood. During his speech, he mentioned that to drive this spirituality component it is essential that healthcare professionals stress the importance of positive thinking.

The 2-hour program concluded with blessings from Pramukh Swami Maharaj. While addressing the gathering, he touched upon the fact that many of the issues which plague society and the individual would be solved if everyone would add a component of spirituality in their personal, family and professional lives. In speaking to this particular group, Swamishri stated that everyone deserves happiness and appealed to them that they have a higher degree of responsibility in making sure that the body, mind and soul of their patients are healthy and happy.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj is on a 95-day tour of North America until August 17th. After staying in Edison until June 6th, he will also visit Atlanta, Los Angeles, Orlando and Toronto. This trip will be capped with the inauguration of two traditional Hindu temples in Houston and Chicago. These temples are designed and constructed using authentic techniques inscribed in the Vedic scriptures and are the first of their kind in North America.

For more information on BAPS and further details of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's North America schedule and program, please visit <http://www.swaminarayan.org>.

About BAPS

The Bochasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), a worldwide socio-spiritual organization in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, is dedicated to community service, peace and harmony. Founded on the pillars of practical spirituality, BAPS strives to care for the world by caring for societies, families and individuals. Through a number of medical, cultural, educational, environmental, social and spiritual activities, BAPS endeavors to produce better citizens of tomorrow, who have very high esteem for their roots - the rich Indian culture. Its 9,000 centers including more than 5,000 youth centers across the world support these activities of character building. Under the guidance and leadership of His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, BAPS aspires to build a community free of addictions and that is morally, ethically and spiritually strong.

About Pramukh Swami Maharaj

His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the fifth spiritual successor of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, has inspired millions of devotees across the world to lead a God-conscious, character-centered life. As the present leader of BAPS, he travels from village to village, continent to continent, inspiring people of all ages to center their lives on moral values and sound judgment. He emphasizes the importance of family harmony, community service and spiritual progress among others. Representing the essence of Hinduism, his compassion for humanity, universal wisdom and striking simplicity have touched many world religious and national leaders.