

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Peace is No Longer a Dream

"Just as a rough slab of marble must be carefully quarried, cut and polished to make it beautiful and valuable, the Mandir will serve as a tool to carve and mold an individual's soul to be selfless and pure." These words by His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj signify August 8th as a landmark day for both Hindus and non-Hindus throughout the United States as the celebration of the opening ceremonies occurs in Chicago for a traditional limestone and marble Hindu Mandir (the Sanskrit word for temple). The most unique aspect of the Bochasanwasi Shree Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Mandir in Bartlett is that it is not simply a temple but is a symbol of peace, understanding and tolerance for citizens from all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Open to all, the newly inaugurated Mandir will help the over one-hundred thousand Indo-Americans in the Chicagoland area to "celebrate their past heritage, address their present problems and bless their future generations," said Pujya Vivekmurti Swami, the senior most sadhu (Saint) in the Midwest region of BAPS, with regards to the benefits of the Mandir in Bartlett. In addition, the unique and intricate architecture of the Mandir, built according to ancient custom, truly makes it a sight to behold.

The inspirer of the BAPS Shree Swaminarayan Mandir and spiritual leader of BAPS, His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj began the ceremonial opening with the release of 60 doves as a representation of the Mandir being a place of paramount peace. Illinois State Representative John J. Millner also echoed this feeling when he summarized the sight by stating, "This is the temple of peace!" Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj has gone further by describing the Mandir as a place "which instills character, teaches us to respect one another, and where the mind becomes still and allows us to realize God." Many people from around the US, UK, Africa, Australia and India took part in the celebrations today. When asked how he thought the Mandir would impact the community, Consulate General of India Arun Kumar added that "The Mandir is great. When you go to the Mandir, you will not only find peace within your heart but also within the heart of others." He added that he was very impressed with the BAPS community and was very proud to have such a beautiful representation of India in our community. In addition to the opening of the Mandir, many were able to savor and experience the rich Indian culture and heritage yesterday morning through a Shobha Yatra (grand procession). This majestic parade on Columbus Drive featured nine ornately decorated floats, festive Indian dances and colorful costumes representative of a diverse India.

Today, as part of the Murti Prathista (installation of the sacred idols), His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj infused life into the sacred images that will reside in the Mandir for centuries to come. Through Pramukh Swami Maharaj's teachings,

devotion and inspiration, thousands of volunteers have taken on such daunting tasks as the building of the Bartlett Mandir in addition to numerous humanitarian and social causes in order to spread the messages of purity and peace throughout the world. US Congressman Henry Hyde supported this idea when he addressed the assembly and said that he "hopes that the entire community at large will come to appreciate the value of peace embodied in the Mandir."

One step towards spirituality, one step towards enlightenment, one step towards peace ... the BAPS Shree Swaminarayan Mandir.

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 Godconscious, 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.

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