

# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

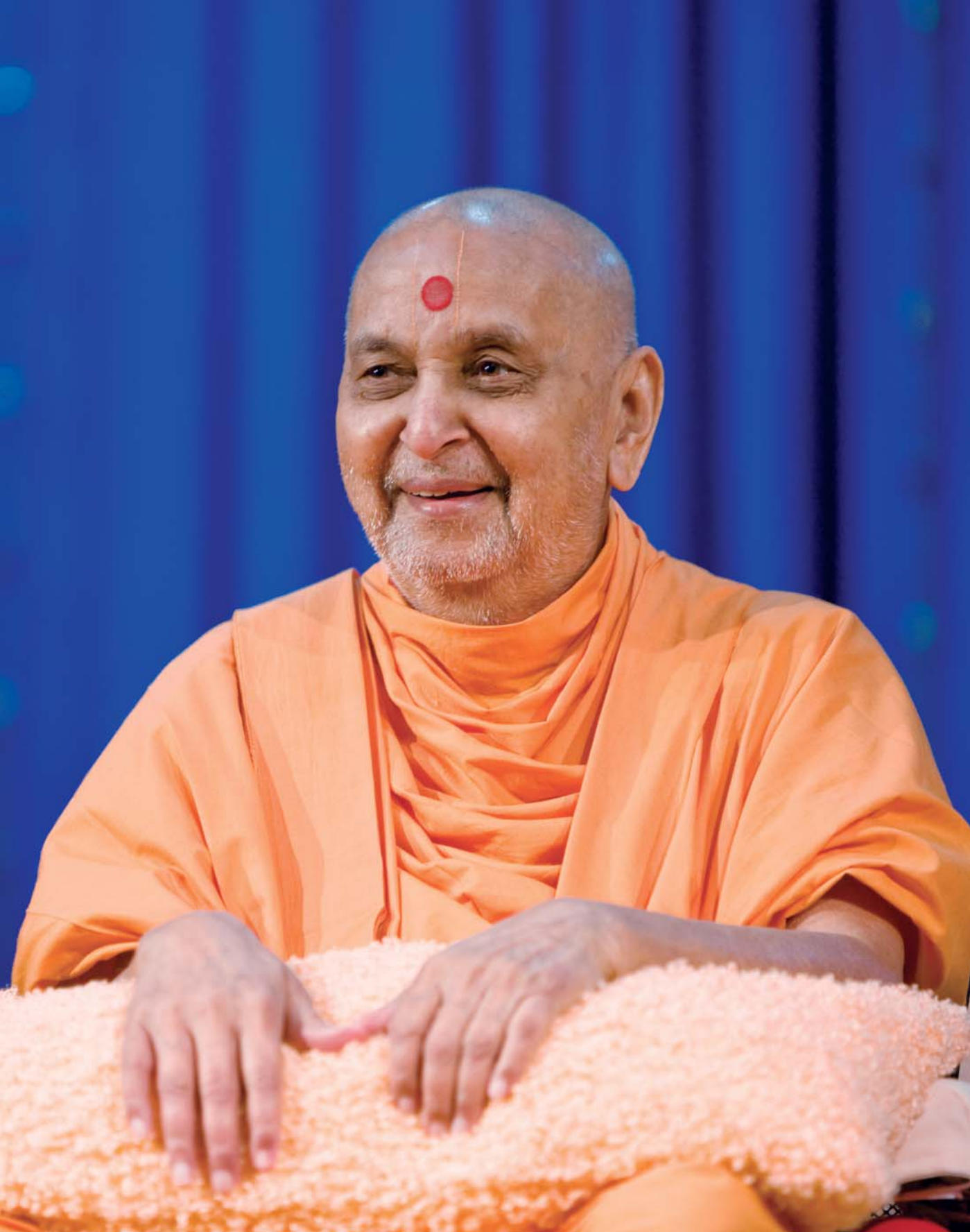
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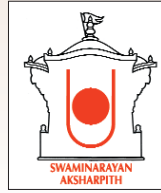


**Bhagwan Swaminarayan Discourses to Devotees**





Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Ahmedabad, September 2008



# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

November 2008, Vol. 31 No. 11

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*Website:* [www.swaminarayan.org](http://www.swaminarayan.org)  
*E-mail:* [magazines@in.baps.org](mailto:magazines@in.baps.org)

**Founder:** HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj  
**Editor:** Sadhu Swayamprakashdas  
**Contributors:** Sadhu Vivekjiandas, Sadhu Amrutvijaydas  
**Designer:** Sadhu Shrijiswarupdas  
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## FIRST WORD

Diwali and New Year celebrations are the crown of all festivals in the Hindu calendar. They not only usher in a spirit of joy, divinity, love and celebration but instil a new zest for success and transformation in life. Both festivals empower us with spirituality; awakening all that is positive and good within.

Amidst all our daily burdens and responsibilities it is important to be optimistic. Optimistic people have more chances to succeed and be happy not only because they believe that things will turn out right, but because their positive thoughts make them strive harder and be mentally accommodative.

Another aspect of today's life is that our energies are dispersed in too many things, some of which are unnecessary, wasteful and harmful. The result is that we fail to be outstanding in anything. We need to decide and learn to concentrate on a definite aim, purpose or vision that is important in achieving something substantial in life.

The third element for upgrading ourselves is the willingness to work hard. We should buoy our minds for hard work. Through hard work one acquires not only outward success but one learns about oneself that which idleness never reveals.

The fourth point is discipline. Without discipline we cannot hope to achieve enduring happiness and joy.

And lastly, faith in God is the panacea of all our ills and the source of eternal bliss.

May Diwali and New Year celebrations help kick-start a higher and happier life.

A Happy Diwali and New Year! ◆



# A Proposal to Build a Mandir

*Shri Hari arrives in Ahmedabad amidst a warm welcome by the British administrator, Mr. Heron, his officials, and the local devotees and citizens. Mr Heron requests him to stay and build a mandir...*

Motera had become a holy place due to Maharaj's association. Purushottamdas Patel and Bhudardas Patel, the local devotees, welcomed and honoured Shri Hari on his arrival. They offered a feast for Maharaj and his entire entourage. Thereafter Maharaj proceeded ahead towards the river Sabarmati that flowed on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. On seeing its clean waters Maharaj expressed a wish to have a bath. He got off his mare, Manki, and advised all, "Look, the river has deep currents in the middle, producing eddies. Don't swim that far. Only those who can swim should enter the waters while the rest can bathe by the banks." Then Shri Hari entered the water and swam to the deep middle part of the river in spite of everyone having told him not to do so. Then Maharaj went under water. Everyone held their breaths anxiously. Some started chanting *dhun* for his safe emergence. When Maharaj broke the surface all breathed a sigh of

relief. Shri Hari said, "One who is drowning will drown another, but one who can swim will save another." A sadhu replied, "But an eddy pulls in even the best of swimmers." Maharaj smiled and added, "Through my association even an eddy gives up its deathly swirls and becomes normal." Then Maharaj explained, "A tornado asked someone, 'Have you seen the wind?' Pat came the reply, 'Give up your swirls and you will become the wind.' Similarly, because of a turbulent nature the wind becomes a tornado and water becomes an eddy." Shri Hari's telling words oozed with wisdom.

It was dusk when Maharaj arrived at the city of Srinagar (Ahmedabad). He was festively welcomed by Mr. Heron, the British administrator, his officers, and the local devotees and citizens. Maharaj met Mr. Heron. He doffed his hat and offered namaskar. Then he shook hands with Shri Hari and welcomed him spoke in broken Hindi, "Please stay here and make a mandir. You have chosen the land next to

Navavas, for which your disciples have made the required application procedures. I have already sent the papers with my recommendation to London. Once the approval arrives I will give you the land with its official documents.” Shri Hari was pleased with him, and blessed him with garland. Thereafter Mr. Heron and his officers departed.

Shri Hari entered the city through the Delhi gate. What a grand joyous welcome it was. He had not visited Ahmedabad since the day the Suba had ordered him out ten years ago. The devotees were simply overwhelmed at Maharaj’s arrival. The streets were clean and decorated in his honour. The English band marched and played a string of welcome tunes. Several groups of musicians sang and played the cymbals and *dhols* heralding Shri Hari’s arrival. The sadhus too sang bhajans. At intervals the loud proclamations of ‘Swaminarayan’ rent the air. All this arrested the attention of residents and passersby. Many came out onto their galleries and verandahs to see the divine spectacle. The devout showered flowers to honour Maharaj. The procession arrived at Manek Chowk by the mansion of Himabhai Sheth. His mother and family members honoured Maharaj by showering gold and silver flowers. They felt blessed by Maharaj’s darshan.

Soon the procession terminated and Shri Hari arrived at Navavas. Here he sat on a seat arranged beneath a neem tree in an open ground. Maharaj talked about the *annakut* festival that he had celebrated at Adaraj. Then he added, “Tomorrow is Prabodhini *ekadashi*. It is also the birthday of my father, Dharmadev. Thus tomorrow is a sacred day. Everyone shall observe a waterless fast. To restrain our five senses from their respective ‘foods’ is the essence of the *ekadashi* celebration. Therefore all should observe it with faith and devotion.” Everyone agreed to abide by Shri Hari’s command.

The next day Maharaj saw the plot of land

for the proposed mandir. He called Kubersinh and told him, “We want to also acquire the open land around this proposed mandir plot. Make a further application for it and obtain the necessary documents thereafter.”

Kubersinh informed, “My younger brother, Nanabhai, was thinking similarly to what you’ve said.” Maharaj called for Nanabhai and blessed him with a garland round his neck and said, “Once the land officially becomes ours first construct residential quarters for the sadhus.” Then Maharaj showed him the extra land he desired to have and said, “Make the documents on my name.”

Shri Hari then visited and sanctified the homes. Motiram the sentry told Maharaj, “Mr. Heron has great respect and admiration for you. He wishes to invite you to his residence. At your consent I shall inform him.”

Maharaj told Motiram to do so.

Mr. Heron had made all the arrangements for Shri Hari’s arrival. He sent his men to escort Shriji Maharaj, Muktanand Swami, Nityanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami, Anandanand Swami, and devotees: Nanabhai, Kubersinh Chopdar, Hirachand Choksi, Damodar Patel, Pranath Shukla, Narbheram Shastri, Dahan Khachar, Sura Khachar, Somla Khachar, Vasta Khachar, Amra Khachar and others. Shriji Maharaj rode on his Manki and the devotees were astride on their horses. The sadhus were walking ahead singing bhajans while many devotees were following at the rear of the group singing the Swaminarayan *dhun*. The residence of Mr. Heron was by the Three Gates (Teen Darwaja). On arriving there they were led to Mr. Heron. Mr. Heron held Maharaj’s hand and led him to an ornate chair. After exchanging formalities and courtesies Maharaj stated, “God is pleased upon one who has morality in life. One who abides by dharma in his administrative duties and in life becomes ever victorious and successful. But when one transgresses dharma one loses one’s wisdom and becomes socially



devastated.” Then Maharaj added, “I like the open space near Navavas and we have as yet to apply for it.” Mr. Heron happily gave his consent and garlanded Shri Hari. Then he offered baskets of paan, cloves, cardamom and expensive cloth to Maharaj. He then applied perfume on Shri Hari’s hand and offered an expensive shawl. Mr. Heron also offered a shawl to Muktanand Swami and expensive cloths to sadhus. Then he briefly conversed with the Kathi *darbars*.

As Shri Hari was about to depart Mr. Heron folded his hands in respect and farewell. Maharaj told Muktanand Swami, “Ten years ago the Peshwa’s Suba had conspired to kill me in this very place. And today, the English ruler has honoured and welcomed us. People recognize great holy men through their sanskars, regardless of whether they are English or Hindus.” Mr. Heron added, “What you said was true. A kingdom is destroyed by flouting morality or *dharma*. Bless me that my mind does not become corrupt and base.” Shri Hari blessed him and returned to his residence.

Maharaj stayed in Ahmedabad for fifteen days. The highlight of his stay was the launching of the mandir project. On the day that Maharaj was to depart Nathu Bhatt came and prayed, “Maharaj you have sanctified everyone’s homes but I was left out. Do come and bless my home.” Shri Hari agreed immediately and told him to call Damodarbai, a sincere devotee, at his home. When Maharaj arrived Nathu Bhatt worshipped him and offered clothes, a *pagh* and donations in cash. Maharaj was aware of Nathubhai’s poverty and meagre means, so he stated, “It seems that *lakshami* (wealth) has been generous upon you without my consent!” Nathu Bhatt simply broke into a smile and replied, “Maharaj, *lakshami* is your servant. She would never bless anyone with riches without your command. Whatever that I’ve offered is not mine, but someone else’s. I subsist by begging.”

“Then on whose behalf have you offered all this?” Maharaj enquired.

“Maharaj, it all belongs to the widow of Mr. Parekh – the latter was a renowned wealthy person of Ahmedabad and Vadodara. She is a Vaishnav by faith. And through the discourses of Ajubhai, a devotee who lives at Karali near Vadodara, she became a *satsangi*. All this is has been offered by her.” The widow, who was present at Nathubhai’s home, called Nathu Bhatt and gave a necklace studded with gems, a coat, *surwal*, red *rento*, shawl and other things for Maharaj. Nathu Bhatt offered them all to Maharaj, then smeared *chandan* on Maharaj’s feet and on the forehead of all sadhus. Then he gave each sadhu a *dhotiyu*. Shri Hari was pleased with the widow’s devotion.

Shri Hari told Nathu Bhatt, “You have been serving me a lot. Even today you have brought a lot of gifts. But you have not been able to realize my true form.”

Nathu Bhatt was a little puzzled as to what Maharaj was saying to him. He asked, “Maharaj, I am unable to understand what’ve said. I do deeply believe that you are God.”

“Then why did you slap Damodar after what he had said?” Maharaj asked.

Nathu Bhatt recalled the incident and clarified, “Damodar has no intelligence. He does not understand the words of the shastras. Once he told me, ‘Maharaj is supreme God and the cause of all avatars. Rama, Krishna and other avatars are born from Maharaj’s divine form and finally they all merge into him. By saying such things that are against the shastras reflect badly upon you and our *sampraday*. Ever since the day I slapped him he has stopped talking in such a manner.”

(To be contd.)



Translation from *Bhagwan Swaminarayan*

by H.T. Dave

# What's in a Name...?

What Are You



The fact that your mind is capable of taking a circle, two dots and a line and turning them into a face is nothing short of incredible!

But still more incredible is the fact that you cannot avoid seeing a face here. Your mind won't let you!



*What do people think about and value the most?*

*What are the consequences of this?*

If you think about what the illustration is trying to say – it is quite

amazing. Given a crude circle and a few lines, we identify ourselves. In fact, our minds won't let us see anything there but a face. We are so conditioned to this that we see ourselves in everything – even an electrical outlet! Our ego and mind are this powerful. Since all of humanity seems to have this flaw it affects society itself. We spend millions of dollars on ourselves, indulging in cosmetic surgery to that ab-roller machine that collects dust under our beds. In fact, this force is so strong that it affects even the so-called logical and unbiased realm of science. For how many years did the European scientific community believe that the Earth was the centre of the universe? In retrospect it seems silly, however back then man saw himself in everything and thus considered himself to be of utmost importance so it made sense that the entire cosmos should centre around him. Thus, we can see that man holds his body in great importance.

Scientific studies by distinguished scientists from reputed universities have shown that people have strong affinity for their names and many of

We humans are a self-centered race.



We see ourselves in everything.



And we make the world over in our image.



their major life decisions are influenced by their names.

Professor Brett Pelham and others at the State University of New York at Buffalo analysed millions of American census and social security records and discovered that there was a statistically significant higher proportion of people called Charles in St. Charles, Thomas in St. Thomas, Helen in St. Helens, and so on. The research team found that this was not because parents named their children after their place of birth, but that it was due to people migrating to places featuring their own name.

Another study by Pelham and his associates, in which they scrutinized 15,000 marriage records from between 1823 and 1965, showed that people were more likely to marry partners with the same first letter of their family name than expected.

Pelham and his team also found a relationship between names and occupations. A survey of the online records of the American Dental Association and American Bar Association revealed that the names of dentists were more likely to begin with 'Den' than 'Law' and that the names of lawyers were more likely to begin with 'Law' than 'Den'. A survey of the hardware stores and roofing companies in America's 20 largest cities showed that the surnames of hardware store owners was more likely to begin with 'H', while those of roofing company owners was more likely to begin with 'R'.

This research supported a similar list collected in the late 1990s by the *New Scientist* magazine from their readers. That list included music teachers named Miss Beat and Miss Sharp; British Meteorological Office staff called Flood, Frost, Thundercliffe and Weatherall; a firm of lawyers called Lawless & Lynch, private detectives named Wyre & Tapping; and the head of a psychiatric hospital called Mr. McNutt.

Professor Pelham and his colleagues published a paper entitled 'Why Susie Sells Seashells by the Seashore: Implicit Egotism and

Major Life Decisions', in which they concluded that these observations should not surprise as since they 'merely consist of being attracted to that which reminds us of the one person most of us love so most dearly.'

This feeling however does not stop with just the body. This narcissistic love affair of the self extends to groups as well. When we watch a sporting event we all cheer for the home team. They represent us; we love ourselves and see ourselves everywhere; so we cheer our home team which represents us to win. If someone from our hometown were to compete in any competition it is natural to root for them, because we see our town winning and in turn we see ourselves win. Thus, we can see that man holds his home-town in great importance.

This feeling can be extended even further. When we watch the Olympics do we root for some nation we have never heard of before? No. We root for our nation. When our flag is hoisted and our national anthem is played, we feel proud. We can also see that man holds his nation in great importance.

Gunatitanand Swami knew of this and in one of his talks he has said, "*Potpotāno deh sāro lāge, gām sāru lāge, desh sāro lāge, e to daivni māyānu bal chhe*" (Swamini Vato: 5-323). Meaning: "Everyone feels that their own body, village and country is good. This is due to the power of God's *maya*."

Thus, all these examples illustrate that throughout life, man is, consciously or unconsciously, preoccupied with thoughts of himself. This is the major reason for all conflicts, so by overcoming one's self-centred approach to life, peace and happiness can be experienced. ◆





# STEP-BY-STEP OR GIANT LEAPS?



**Dilip:** Hey Jayesh! How come you're just sitting there doing nothing?

**Jayesh:** That's what it might look like to you . . .but I'm thinking.

**Dilip:** That's a change from the Jayesh I know. Since when did you . . .

**Jayesh:** OK, OK, cut the smart lines. I was dreaming of a really great invention. I have an idea that could make cars run on water, save billions of dollars and get me the Nobel prize.

**Dilip:** Sure, and probably win you free pizzas for a lifetime too. Why not do something more productive than just dreaming . . . . If you're good at inventing, try making something.

**Jayesh:** Look, to get ahead and to help civilization progress, you have to have great inventors like me who dream of really great leaps in science. Don't make fun of me!

**Dilip:** I'm not making fun of you. But I do think that making small improvements to the technology we have can be more useful than dreaming about huge quantum jumps.

**Jayesh:** If everyone was as unhelpful as you, we'd never have invented the wheel or fire!

**Dilip:** Well, for one, the wheel's design was possibly more of nature's indication than just man's effort. And fire, obviously, is not an invention – we got it from lightning and volcanoes and learnt to control it. Inventions are often more of a learning from what already exists, than truly creating something new.

**Jayesh:** So are you saying that all invention and innovation is a sham?

**Dilip:** No, but I am saying that improvement is more important than invention.

**Jayesh:** Hah! I disagree. Where would the world be without innovation and invention. Look at the car you drive – GM would never have been able to make the Saturn series if they had just tried improvements on their Buicks and Cadillacs.

**Dilip:** And you would not be driving around in your Toyota Corolla E140 without their philosophy of constant improvement. Do you know that Toyota has been improving the Corolla since the 1960s and it's the largest selling car in the world?

**Jayesh:** Of course I know – that's why I bought it. But what's this constant improvement?

**Dilip:** Toyota has been practicing ‘kaizen’ for decades now – that’s Japanese for continuous improvement. So without the small improvements that add up to huge changes, the Corolla would not be here today.

**Jayesh:** But without out-of-the-box thinking, we wouldn’t have the lightbulb and the telephone either. And without someone to think of a radical notion like a horseless carriage, you wouldn’t have cars at all. So there!

**Dilip:** That’s true, I have to accept. But if you didn’t have kaizen, the Tata Nano would still be a dream. . . they took everything that a modern car is made of, and re-engineered it to be cheaper and smaller while still remaining strong and efficient.

**Jayesh:** So I guess it depends on each company – whether they want to concentrate more on continuous improvement or on innovation and inventions.

**Dilip:** True. And the same principle applies to individuals too. You can choose to constantly improve yourself – and at the same time change yourself in many ways for the better with large jumps, which you’d label as ‘great leaps.’

**Jayesh:** What do you mean by great leaps in changing yourself?

**Dilip:** Well, let’s say there’s this really heavy guy who wants to reduce his weight. Should he go on a crash diet or reduce his food portions slowly, over a few months?

**Jayesh:** I don’t know. He should decide, depending on whichever is more comfortable for him.

**Dilip:** Yeah, I think the same too. It depends on each individual, or even each company. There’s no single correct answer, so you have to select the option that suits you best and which you will be able to follow for a longer time to give you the best results. It’s like deciding when you’re in a hurry: should you walk or run? It depends on how far you have to go, how soon you need to reach, and your own capacity to run!

**Jayesh:** Hey, that reminds me of that special session we had at the *yuvak shibir* in the mandir last month – about Anthony Robbins’ CANI – Constant And Never-Ending Improvement. The Swami who gave that talk spoke about walking and running too.

**Dilip:** Yes of course, the Swami explained that really well, saying that we could use these principles in our professional and personal lives to constantly improve ourselves and lead happier lives. We have to select which steps to prioritize and deal with first, which ones to walk for and which ones to run with... and that depends on each one of us.

**Jayesh:** So we do a ‘kaizen plus big leaps’ programme individually in *satsang* and in our lives? Decide on running or walking for each change that we want to make?

**Dilip:** Correct. It’s like this, there are advantages both in innovation and in kaizen. For a company like Toyota or Tata, they might prefer to use kaizen principles for their spare parts management, but they would still depend on innovation and open-ended creativity for new designs for the next generation of vehicles.

**Jayesh:** And we can apply the same principles to our personal improvement in *satsang*?

**Dilip:** Right, improvement in *satsang* is like a personal kaizen – a CANI for the soul, so to speak. Certain things need huge leaps – like quitting an addiction. And other things, like controlling anger, need to be worked on slowly, everyday, bit by bit.

**Jayesh:** So I could still have huge improvements and quantum jumps – like changing my diet for the better from today... though reducing my anger or other traits will take some more time.

**Dilip:** Now you’ve got it. Decide on the right combination for you, and keep going at it – pray for the strength to keep pursuing the changes, because change is never easy.





# Nirvikalp Uttam Ati Nischay Tav Ghanshyam...



At the loving insistence of the devotees of Surat, and in particular, Shri Ardeshar Kotwal, Shriji Maharaj had accepted their invitation to visit Surat. Maharaj arrived on Kartik vad 7 Samvat 1887 (7 November 1830). He stayed for nine days and during this time, Maharaj and the accompanying sadhus and devotees stayed at Lalkrishna Vadi.

One day, Shriji Maharaj was returning from a visit to Ardeshar Kotwal's bungalow. The procession of sadhus and devotees were walking towards the Vadi. On the way, Premanand Swami and other sadhus were singing bhajans. Suddenly Premanand Swami's musically tuned ears noted a melodious sound in the vicinity. He turned his ears to the music and his mind became focused on it. Gradually, without him realizing it, he slowed and fell behind the group. Shriji Maharaj's sharp observation noted that Premanand Swami had been left behind. So, he turned his mare, Manki, and rode up to

him. Sweetly rebuking Premanand Swami, Maharaj said, "Swami, why have you fallen behind?"

Embarrassed by his lapse, Premanand Swami asked for Maharaj's pardon. Maharaj pulled the reins, and said, "You should have control over music and music should not gain control over you." Premanand Swami rejoined the procession and everyone arrived at the Vadi.

Later, Maharaj called Premanand Swami and told him, "Man's nature will take him anywhere. The art of music is great, but it is of use only when used for pleasing God. But when it is used as a form of mere worldly entertainment, it is of no lasting value. Such worldly music is a hindrance even to sadhus. Since you were drawn by the sound of such music, as atonement you should observe the *chandrayan* fast."

Premanand Swami accepted Maharaj's command and left. The next morning Premanand Swami approached Muktanand Swami and asked him, "Please state all the major features of *ekantik dharma*, so that I never again lapse in observing Maharaj's wish." For two days, Muktanand Swami talked to Premanand Swami. On the third day, Premanand Swami composed a prayer in Hindi incorporating the salient points he had learnt from Muktanand Swami. On the fourth day, Premanand Swami sang the prayer before Shriji Maharaj.

"*Nirvikalp uttam ati nishchay tav Ghanshyam;*

*Māhātmyajñānyukta bhakti tav, ekantik sukhdhām...*"

As he sang each couplet, Premanand Swami prostrated to Maharaj. In this way, he sang all



12 couplets and prostrated each time. Maharaj listened with total concentration and blessed him at the end.

That evening, after the *arti* and *dhun* had been sung, Maharaj had Premanand Swami's new prayer sung. Then he instructed, "From today this new prayer should be sung daily after the evening *arti*."

The words of this famous prayer composed by Premanand Swami are as follows:

*Nirvikalp uttam ati, nischay tav Ghanshyām;  
Māhātmyajñāyukta bhakti tav, ekāntik sukhdhām...1  
Mohime tav bhaktapano, tāme koi prakār;  
Dosh na rahe koi jātko, suniyo Dharmakumār...2  
Tumhāro tav haribhaktako, dhroh kabu nahi hoy;  
Ekāntik tav dāsiko, dije samāgam moy...3  
Nāth nirantar darsh tav, tav dāsanko dās;  
Ehi māgu kari vinay Hari, sadā rākhiyo pās...4  
He Krupālo! He Bhaktapate! Bhaktavatsal! Suno bāt;  
Dayāsindho! Stavan kari, māgu vastu sāt...5  
Sahajānand Mahārājke, sab satsangi sujān;  
Tāku hoy dradh vartano, Shikshāpatri pramān...6  
So Patrime atibade, niyam ekādash joy;  
Tāki vigati karat hu, suniyo sab chitt proy...7  
Himsā na karni jantuki, partriya sangko tyāg;  
Māns na khāvat madhyaku, pivat nahi badbhāg...8  
Vidhvāku sparshat nahi, karat na ātmaghat;  
Chori na karni kāhuki, kalank ka koiku shragāt...9  
Nindat nahi koy devku, bin khapto nahi khāt;  
Vimukh jivake vadanse, kathā suni nahi jāt...10  
Ehi dharmake niyam me, barto sab Haridās;  
Bhajo Shri Sahajānandpad, chhodi aur sab ās...11  
Rhi ekādash niyam me, karo Shri Haripad prit;  
Premānand kahe dhāmame, jāo nishank jag jīt...12*

## Meaning

O Maharaj!

Please grant me the highest level of faith in your divine form; may I develop unparalleled devotion towards you, together with knowledge of your glory (1).

O Maharaj! May I never perceive any faults in your devotees (2).

May I never malign you or your devotees. Please forever grant me the company of your spiritually enlightened devotee (3).

O Maharaj! Please always grace me with your darshan and the darshan of your devotees. Please always keep me with you; that is my earnest request (4).

O Maharaj! You are merciful and compassionate; you are the master and succour of your devotees. Please grant me the seven requests above (5).

Listen, all devotees, to the codes of conduct Sahajanand Swami Maharaj has prescribed in the Shikshapatri and sincerely observe them (6).

In the Shikshapatri, eleven main codes of conduct are described. I will give you their details, so listen with attention (7).

Never harm any living being, do not associate with women not closely related to you; do not eat meat or drink intoxicating beverages (8).

Do not associate with widows, do not commit suicide; do not steal, do not falsely blame anyone (9).

Do not insult any deities, do not eat food prepared by inappropriate people, do not listen to discourses by those who are *vimukh* (10).

These codes of conduct should be observed by all devotees, sadhus and householders; worship Shri Sahajanand Swami, forsaking all other wishes (11).

Live by these eleven codes and please Shri Hari. Thus, says Premanand, you will, without a doubt, overcome worldly desires and attain Akshardham (12).



# Aim for Success

## Ready...set...aim!

Perhaps you have played darts. The game is simple: throw the dart and hit the target. Of course, like most things in life, it is easier said than done. Although hitting any part of the dartboard will gain points, those with a thirst for winning always aim for the centre.

In life, we follow a similar behavioural pattern. We aim our darts hoping for success in our education, career, or family life. Unconsciously, we set goals daily, even if they are as small as getting to a meeting on time. We are constantly setting aims and following up with methods of execution. We are all well-versed in why we should set aims. What we haven't yet figured out is *how* we should aim.

Michelangelo, the famous Italian sculptor, states the answer most eloquently: "The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark."

If our aim in life is to simply breathe in and out then we've done a great job. Simply wanting to breathe is like aiming the dart toward the outer rim of the dartboard. It requires less concentration and the chances of success are much greater. But, aiming for what is easiest, quickest, and least problematic is not always wisest. In our rapidly developing society, we are surrounded with many tools to make achieving our aims more convenient. So why should we aim

any higher if we can meet a minimum requirement for achieving these aims?.

We know there are real rewards for being at 'the top'. As stated by bestselling author and marketing expert, Seth Godin, in his book *The Dip*, our culture celebrates superstars. Winners win big, regardless of whether it's resumes, college applications, best-selling records, and anything in between. People simply don't have a lot of time or opportunity in today's society to experiment so we intentionally limit our choices to those items that are the best.

In a world that is driven by success, being mediocre is not an option.

## Why 'World's Best'?

The concept of 'World's Best' can be difficult to grasp. After all, there *are* a lot of people in this world. How can I be better than 6.7 billion people? And isn't it egotistical to want to be the best? Don't we hear in our Sunday assemblies that we must be humble in life?

Godin defines 'Best' as: best for a particular person (you) at a particular time (right now) , based on what the individual believes and knows. And 'World' is defined as: the individ-

ual's world, the world she has access to. So this does not mean being better than 6.7 billion people at any given point in time, but rather to be the best in the smaller microcosm within which we are striving to be 'World's Best'.

Pujya Doctor Swami is a proponent of aiming to be the World's Best and drives this point home by taking it to the deeper level of our personal *satsang* and spirituality. He says that it starts with perfecting our daily lives, whether we are taking a shower, brushing our teeth, wearing shoes, or eating meals. Each activity in our daily lives should be carried out with perfect technique and discipline. Only then can we become the world's best. Aiming high begins bottom-up. And when you think about it like that, it doesn't seem so impossible. Because aiming high in the modest details of our life, which when perfected and then summed up, helps us achieve our final goal of becoming 'World's Best'.

### **Success is Relative**

So who's to say what is mediocre and what is excellent?

The answer: each individual. One person's definition of success does not necessarily have to be another's. For example, a dabbawalla is a person who carries and delivers freshly made food. It is actually a specialized trade that is a century old in Mumbai, India.

In 1968, The Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Association was formally established. The task for the NMTBSA is simple: pick up and deliver freshly made food. However, the NMTBSA have refused to aim for mediocrity. They complete over 400,000 transactions every day. Even during the harsh summer monsoons, the service is maintained uninterrupted. Their efficiency and success has won them numerous awards and acclaim. Top business schools and corporations use the NMTBSA in their case studies to train their students and employees. They have even been mentioned in the *Guinness*

*World Records*. To many, a tiffin delivery service can appear basic and fundamental. However, NMTBSA has defined their level of success and in turn have established what they deem as mediocre and excellent.

### **Swamishri: An Ideal Example**

To find out how aiming high can lead to excellence, we merely have to look to our beloved Swamishri, whose very life symbolizes perfection. Swamishri sets high goals for our Satsang and for each of us individually. Twenty years ago, no one would have dreamed that Akshardham would stand so majestically on the banks of the Yamuna River, or that there would be six *shikharbaddh* mandirs outside India. Yet Swamishri's far-reaching vision inspired all of us to dream big and act big. He truly is the ideal role model for us.

### **Conclusion**

So, *how* should one aim? Aiming for success differs from person to person. We are different from one another in ideas and interests; consequently, it is natural that our definitions of success will also vary. Winning an Olympic medal or climbing Mt. Everest is not everyone's dream. Aiming for success comes down to setting high personal goals, then doing your best to achieve them and realizing that your best is always good enough. Having role models and learning from those around you is vital. But relying completely on someone else's standards to define what 'your best' is will never bring satisfaction. And once we begin applying this mind-set in all aspects of our life – school, career, family, *satsang* – then we just might be able to calibrate our dart to aim for the centre of the dartboard.







# Igniting the Light Within

9 November, 2007, Gondal



*Every year on Diwali Day (Aso vad 30), the last day of the Hindu year, it is customary to perform puja of one's accounts books. This is called Chopda Puja and is an occasion to sanctify the New Year's account books. Prayers are offered by devotees for success in their personal and professional lives.*

*In 2007 (V.S. 2063) Swamishri was in Gondal to perform the auspicious Chopda Puja. Thereafter, he blessed the assembly of devotees seated in the open courtyard of Akshar Mandir, Gondal.*

Shastriji Maharaj acquired this place and built a mandir based upon our (Akshar-Purushottam) philosophy, thus proclaiming the glory of Gunatitanand Swami. In this Akshar Mandir, the Akshar Deri is especially sacred. Yogiji Maharaj stayed here for many years. He frequently toured throughout Gujarat, but spent most of his time here – just like Maharaj toured and would return to Gadhadra.

Yogiji Maharaj had great affinity and affection for Akshar Deri. He blessed that the wishes of all who pray here would be fulfilled and they would benefit. He used to perform the (annual) Chopda Puja here.

We make many mistakes in our lives. If we close the books we keep on other people's faults, then our own inner darkness will disappear. If everyone lights a lamp in their heart, then darkness goes and there is bright light.

Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Shastriji Maharaj manifested on earth and their luminosity is such that it continually gives us light and with it eternal joy.

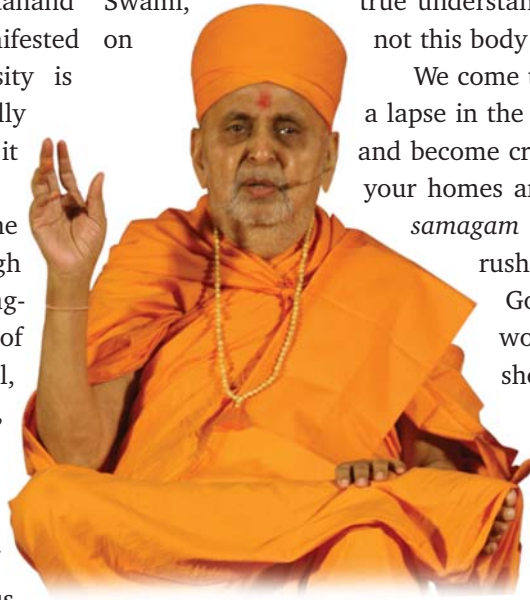
We are plagued by the darkness acquired through countless births. But Bhagwan Shriji Maharaj, out of great compassion for all, brought his abode, Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, with him, and Shastriji Maharaj explained the glory of Akshar-Purushottam thus enlightening us with the true knowledge. It is because of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj that we have understood this knowledge. So, now this will be our last birth.

There is so much other worldly knowledge. People study, attain degrees, become scientists, go to the moon and so on. All this is necessary, but when true knowledge is attained there will be light within the heart.

So, we should understand this glory and realize our debt to God. We brought nothing with us into this world and will take away nothing when we depart. Whatever is attained in this world has been placed there by God. People have learnt to extract things from the earth and sea, but God put everything there first.

We use our resources for the family, society and country, but using them for God is of lasting benefit. Even using a little brings great rewards. By folding one's hands and bowing to God, our work gets done, since God is so merciful. Strengthen this understanding to overcome one's ego.

Using one's wealth and property for good causes will bring peace. But as long as one harbours the feelings of 'me and mine', there will be pain, misery and conflict. So, develop the



true understanding that one's true form is not this body but the *atma*.

We come to the mandir, and if there is a lapse in the arrangements one feels hurt and become critical. But why have you left your homes and cars and come here? For *samagam* (association of the Satpuru-  
rush) and for the darshan of God. We do not come here for worldly pleasures. So, one should be delighted by the darshan and discourses and remain elated.

Yogiji Maharaj used to say that even if one gets only a small bowl of *dal* to eat, one should remain happy. But if one is body-centred one will feel that the arrangements are not proper.

So, with true knowledge one becomes blissful. True knowledge is that of Akshar-Purushottam. Other knowledge is merely for worldly gains. Fulfil all your duties, but if one lives for this knowledge then one can serve (God) with body, mind and soul.

Parvatbhai did not get any food for seven days when he stayed with Shriji Maharaj in Gadhada. He didn't complain and said to Maharaj, "Your darshan and company is enough. Everything is included in that." Such understanding gives peace and happiness.

Yogiji Maharaj stressed that one should not perceive faults in others. We have come to remove our own faults and habits. If this is realized, then one will not see the faults of others. See the good in all. One or two faults do not make the person bad. Listen to and narrate talks of God's glory. Practicing *satsang* in this way will bring peace within and we will attain God's abode. So, on this auspicious day of Diwali, we pray to God that he blesses everyone for good health, sound mind, financial security and peace in all respects. ◆

## EUROPE KARYAKAR MILAN 2008

“Karishye Vachanam Tava...”

19 to 22 September 2008, Engelberg, Switzerland



A total of 65 *karyakars* from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom gathered in the small, picturesque town of Engelberg, Switzerland for the first European Karyakar event between 19 and 22 September 2008.

The Karyakar Milan was an opportunity for

the *karyakars* to meet, exchange ideas and share best practices to help strengthen Satsang throughout Europe. Sadhus, trustees and *karyakars* joined them from the UK, some of whom have been travelling for Satsang Pravrutti within Europe since 1982.

The event included various motivational speeches, question-and-answer sessions, interactive workshops, group discussions, and video and multimedia presentations. Everyone had the opportunity to meet each other and understand the challenges that are faced in the different countries.

Everyone departed to their respective countries thoroughly motivated and spiritually charged. ◆

## FAMILY ACTIVITY CENTRE OPENS AT THE BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR

7 September 2008, Lilburn, GA

On 7 September 2008, Family Activity Centre (FAC) of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Lilburn, GA, was inaugurated.

The inauguration *mahapuja* ceremony was performed in the presence of sadhus, with the chanting of Vedic *shloks*.

John Oxendine, the Commissioner of Insurance for the State of Georgia, and Pujya Yagnavallabh Swami inaugurated the FAC by unty-



ing the thread at the main entrance gate.

In the inauguration assembly, an enlivening traditional folk dance was performed by the youths of BAPS and discourses were given by sadhus.

The FAC is clad with Indian pink sandstone and houses a 24,000 square foot assembly hall. It will hold weekly assemblies and will be the primary venue for cultural programmes and youth activities. ◆



# OPEN HOUSE LONDON

## BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Neasden

### 20-21 September 2008



Visitors view the 'Understanding Hinduism' exhibition



Visitors welcomed in the mandir haveli

**H**undreds of visitors came to The BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden, London – one of 700 beautiful buildings 'on show' across the historic city of London, as it featured again as a part of Open House London. This year the annual event took place during the weekend of 21 and 22 September 2008.

The Mandir, recently acclaimed by *Time Out* city guides as "one of London's Seven Wonders", is a traditional favourite among architecture buffs who eagerly attend this regular showcase.

Individuals were free to absorb the atmosphere as they wished and many chose to take the personal audio-guided tours. For larger groups, volunteers were on hand for special guided tours of the grand Haveli Prayer Hall and the 'Understanding Hinduism' exhibition. Many even attended the midday *arti* ceremony. Almost 1,400 visitors chose to explore and enjoy the beauty and serenity of the Mandir over the sunny weekend.

Below is a selection of some visitors' opinions:

*Beautiful carvings – but my biggest impression is that Hinduism is a religion of peace in a way I had never realised before.*

**- Claire (Working in Media Industry)**

*Wonderful. Very peaceful and beautiful. Taking part in prayers was unbelievable. Did not wish to leave your lovely building.*

**- Christine Ensom**

*The Mandir is a wonderful place. The experience is marvellous. It has been the best organised Open House event I have attended. I will recommend it.*

**- Michael Reeves  
Advertising Executive)**

*Welcoming and informative. The atmosphere of silence was moving and a deep experience to see so many in sincere and perfect prayer. Thank you for great hospitality.*

**- Sister Alexine CSJP (Retired Teacher,  
Sisters of St Joseph of Peace)**

*I found my visit to be peaceful and spiritual – a reminder why we are here on Earth and how far modern life has taken us away from our reason of existence, whatever one's religion.*

**- Arjen Westerdijk** ◆

# NATIONAL VIDYARTHI SHIBIR

“Brahmavidyani College”

26-28 September 2008, London

The first ever National Kishore-Kishori Vidyarthi Shibir for university students, ‘Brahmavidyani College’, was held at London Mandir, from 26 to 28 September 2008.

It enlightened the students about the challenges and practical skills required in university life. Guidance from graduates and the sadhus motivated them to excel studies and *satsang*.

The *shibir* comprised inspirational videos, dis-



cussions, question-answer sessions, workshops, interactive sessions and cooking.

A special session in the presence of parents, also gave them a valuable insight into university life.

The *shibir* proved a great success as partici-

pants departed with renewed confidence, enhanced abilities, and increased motivation to attain greater heights in their education as well as their personal *satsang*.

## ALL-INDIA KARYAKAR ADHIVESHAN

11-12 October 2008, Bochasan & Ahmedabad

This year, 2008, has been deemed as the BAPS ‘Year of the Karyakar’. Continuing the many events to commemorate this year, separate *adhiveshans* for men and women *karyakars* were held.

During the weekend of 11 and 12 October 2008 the BAPS mandirs in Bochasan and Ahmedabad buzzed with excitement and anticipation as 277 men *karyakars* gathered in Bochasan, and 284 women *karyakars* gathered in Ahmedabad to participate in the All-India Karyakar Adhiveshan. There were representatives from 131 regions.

The *karyakars* had earned the right to compete in this final *adhiveshan* by winning through the previous two phases.

In the first phase on 28 September 2008 over 8,225 (men and women) participated in the



28 locations, 2,620 men and 2,427 women *karyakars* competed in the Inter-Regional (Antar-Kshetriya) Adhiveshan. The winning *karyakars* from here were invited to compete in the All-India Karyakar Adhiveshan.

The *adhiveshan* competitions comprised Prathmik Mukhpath, Jnanvardhak Pprashnottari (a 90-mark question paper on a booklet of selected articles), Speech and Nirupan. The *karyakars* were assessed by experienced sadhus and senior men and women *karyakars* at each phase.

The efforts of all the *karyakars* in each phase were highly commendable. ◆

Regional (Kshetriya) Adhiveshans held in 191 regions throughout Gujarat and Mumbai. *Karyakars* who performed well in this phase qualified to participate in the second phase.

In the second phase, held on 5 October 2008 at

28 locations, 2,620 men and 2,427 women *karyakars* competed in the Inter-Regional (Antar-Kshetriya) Adhiveshan. The winning *karyakars* from here were invited to compete in the All-India Karyakar Adhiveshan.

The *adhiveshan* competitions comprised Prathmik Mukhpath, Jnanvardhak Pprashnottari (a 90-mark question paper on a booklet of selected articles), Speech and Nirupan. The *karyakars* were assessed by experienced sadhus and senior men and women *karyakars* at each phase.

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# GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS BOOK FEATURES

BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

as World's Largest Hindu Temple

17 September 2008



The internationally acclaimed BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi has been featured in the 2009 edition of the *Guinness World Records* book as the largest Hindu temple in the world. It appears in the 'Central and Southern Asia' section with a large double-page colour photo of the grand, ornately hand-carved stone temple. In addition to a brief visitor's guide of the complete 100-acre complex, the accompanying text reads:

## LARGEST HINDU TEMPLE

BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi, India, has a total area of 8,021m<sup>2</sup> (86,342 ft<sup>2</sup>). The temple was built within five years by 11,000 artisans. It measures 108.5m (356 ft)

long, 96.3m (316 ft) wide and 42.9m (141 ft) tall.

The world record was presented to His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the creator of Akshardham and spiritual leader of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, on 17 December 2007, by Michael Whitty, official world record adjudicator and member of the management committee of Guinness World Records.

Since its opening in November 2005, BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham has attracted over 12 million visitors from over 113 countries.

The *Guinness World Records* book is the biggest selling copyright book in history, with more than 100 million copies sold in 100 countries around the world in 24 languages. ♦





Age old Ayurveda  
at its purest best



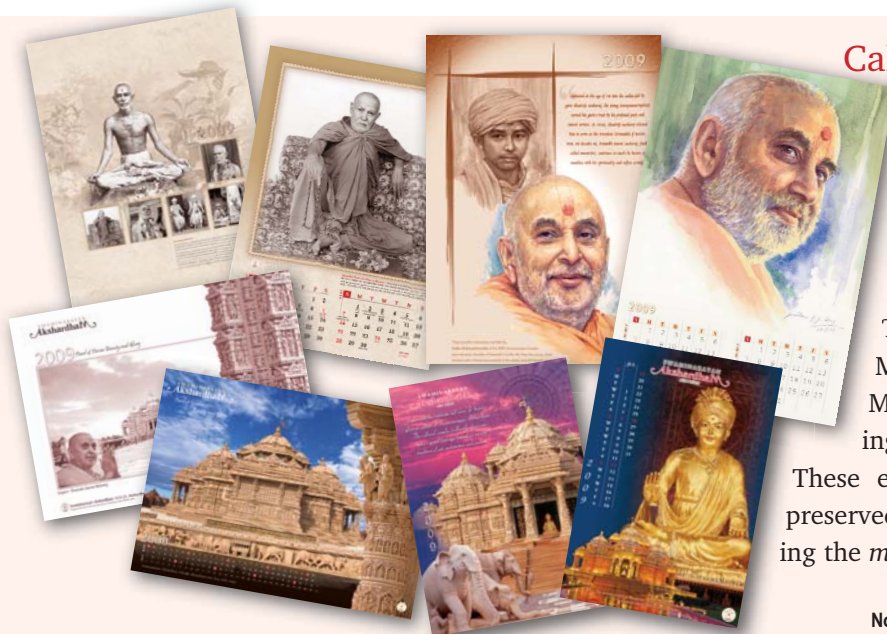
### Ayurvedic & Herbal Products



The New Website for BAPS Swaminarayan Herbal Care was launched on 21 September 2008 by Pramukh Swami Maharaj at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad.

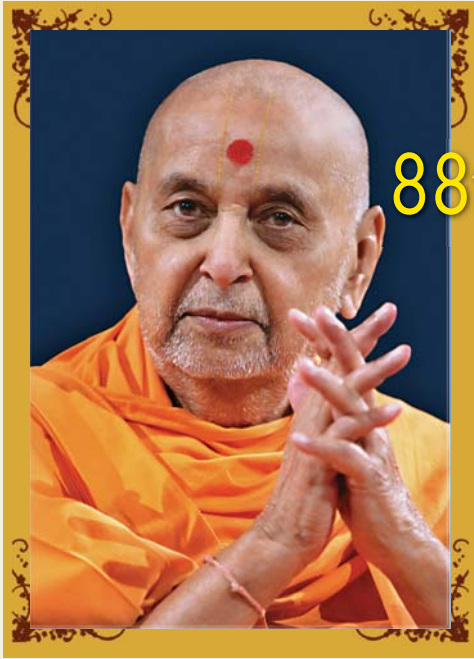
This well-designed website provides useful information on the science of Ayurveda and details of the many Ayurvedic medicines and Herbal Bodycare products available under the brand name of 'BAPS Amrut'. Guidance is also available on which preparations to use for particular ailments. Orders can be placed online, with delivery possible to anywhere in India. View the site on <http://herbal.baps.org>.

### Calendars for 2009



Colourful wall and desktop calendars for 2009 for homes and offices are now available from BAPS Bookstalls. Themes are: Shastriji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (water colour paintings) and Delhi Akshardham.

These excellent calendars can be preserved even afterwards by framing the murtis.



# PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S 88th Birthday Celebration

6 December 2008, Mumbai

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION

### Important Announcements and Information

1. The celebration assembly is from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. on 6 December 2008.
2. There are no facilities for lodging or boarding, so all are requested to arrive only in the afternoon for the festival.
3. On the festival day only, lunch will be provided at the festival ground to all devotees till 1:00 p.m.
4. Devotees who will be arranging private buses from their centres should, through their Sant Nirdeshak or Nirdeshak, inform the organizers in Mumbai on the following phone number by 1 December 2008. Ph: 9004059221/23  
No lodging-boarding facilities can be provided even for those travelling by bus.
5. No buses are allowed into the Dadar area by the Municipal Authorities. So devotees coming by special buses will not be able to come to Dadar Mandir.
6. The festival ground is just 10 minutes from Bandra train station, so devotees travelling by train from Gujarat should choose trains that stop at Bandra.

7. Devotees should not carry unnecessary valuables or cash with them.
8. Devotees arriving by private vehicles from Gujarat should take the Western Express Highway into Mumbai and then take the following route: Virar-Bhayender-Dahisar-Malad-Andheri-festival ground (MMRDA at BKC).
9. On 6 December 2008, Swamishri's morning puja and the evening Janma-Jayanti Celebration will be telecast live on Aastha TV channel.
10. For the safety of young children, give them an ID card in their pocket with your contact details. If you are separated from them, immediately inform the nearest security post.
11. Those on regular medications should bring the required medicines with them.
12. Keep the contact numbers of your Mumbai relatives/friends handy.
13. Do not touch any unknown object or those lying unclaimed on the roadside, even if they are very attractive.

### FESTIVAL DETAILS

Festival Day: 6 December 2008, Saturday

Festival Time: 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Festival Place: MMRDA Grounds

Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC)

Mumbai

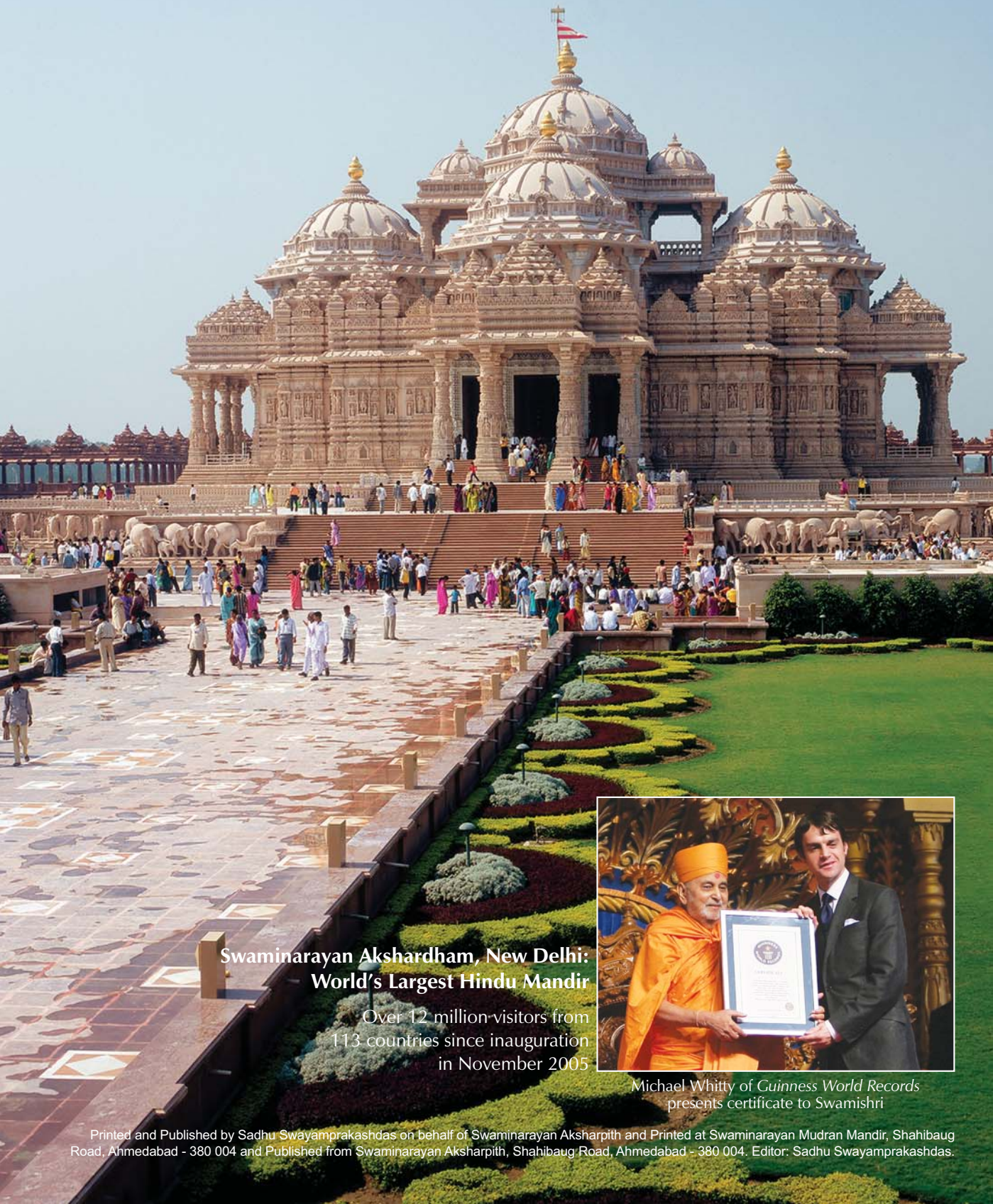






Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Gondal





**Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi:  
World's Largest Hindu Mandir**

Over 12 million-visitors from  
113 countries since inauguration  
in November 2005



Michael Whitty of Guinness World Records  
presents certificate to Swamishri