

# SWAMINARAYAN **BLISS**

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May 2010

**SAT-CHIT-ANAND WATERSHOW**

Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar



Scenes from the soul-stirring Sat-Chit-Anand Water Show displaying a fusion of laser, light, fire, sound, animation and water: (Top) Nachiketa on his way to the abode of Lord Yama. (Middle) Yamaraj reveals the secret of immortality to Nachiketa. (Bottom) According to Yamaraj's revelation an ideal guru (Pramukh Swami Maharaj) is necessary to attain immortality.



# SWAMINARAYAN BLISS

May 2010, Vol. 33 No. 5

## CONTENTS

### Swaminarayan Akshardham

**4 Making of Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow**  
*Result of blessings and sterling efforts...*

**12 Grand Inauguration Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow**

**18 Opinions**

**21 Media Coverage**

**21 Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar**  
*Brief introduction...*

### Vicharan & Inspiring Incidents

**24 Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Vicharan; Living with Swamishri**

### BAPS News

**29 National Seminar on Yoga Darshan: Worldwide Philosophical and Cultural Impact, Ahmedabad**

**29 Satsang Shibir, Singapore**

**30 Sarah Brown Attends Women's Conference at London Mandir**

**30 Over 3,500 Take Part in the BAPS Charities 10K Challenge, UK**

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## FIRST WORD

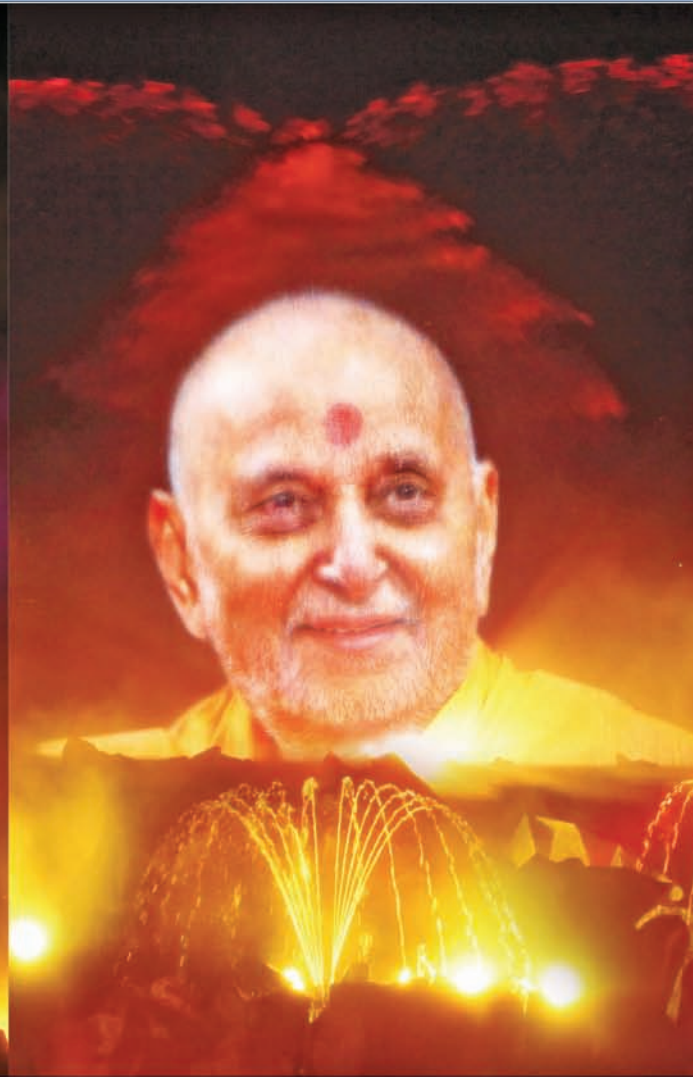
The Kathopanishad describes the story of a valiant young boy called Nachiketa. He was hurt when his father, Uddalak Rishi, gifted old, lean cows to Brahmins after completing a Vishvajit yagna. Nachiketa felt that charity meant giving the best or dearest things in life. When the son asked his father repeatedly as to whom he would give him in charity, Uddalak shot back angrily, "To Death I give you!"

Nachiketa went to the abode of the mighty Yama, the god of death, who had gone out at that time. He patiently waited at his door for three days without food and water. When Lord Yama returned, he was pleased with Nachiketa and he told him to ask for three boons. Then Nachiketa requested: **1.** "When I return, may my father's anger disappear, and may he recognize me and greet me." **2.** "Teach me about the sacred fire that leads to *swarga*." **3.** "What is the effect of death on man; whether after death his soul would exist or not?" In short, he wanted to know about immortality.

While Lord Yama granted the first two boons readily, he tried to dissuade Nachiketa from pressing for the third one by promising him horses, gold, elephants, kingship and beautiful maidens. But Nachiketa remained firm in his resolve to be enlightened about the atman and the knowledge about what happens after death.

Finally, Lord Yama revealed to Nachiketa the knowledge about atman and the path of *shreya*, or eternal happiness, and of *preya*, or the path of worldly happiness.

Nachiketa's desire for the knowledge of atman is a clarion call for humanity to rise above the human bondages and conflicts of life. ♦



*Making of*  
**Sat-Chit-Anand**  
**WATERSHOW**

Revealing the Secret of Eternal Happiness

Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar  
Inspirer: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj



We **Wonder What Happens...**  
when **fire flows** like **water** and **water flames** like **fire**  
when **sounds** paint **pictures** and **colours** sing **songs**  
when **clouds** come **down** and **rains** go **up**  
when **lasers** begin to **crawl** and **rocks** begin to **melt**  
when the **light** from the **past** illuminates the **stars** of our **future**  
when **science** and **spirituality** hold hands  
**time** stops... the **mind** opens... and the **heart** prays...  
amidst a mist of mysticism, the great **Upanishads** come alive  
and the ancient secret is **revealed**.

*Indian spirituality has inspired humanity for millennia and continues to do so even in this modern age of high-powered technology and glitzy attractions.*

*Yogiji Maharaj used to encourage the youths to adapt technology to convey Sanatan Dharma's eternal wisdom to all. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has adopted this maxim to fulfill Yogiji Maharaj's wish. The BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham complexes in Gandhinagar, the capital of Gujarat, and New Delhi, the capital of India, reflect the foresight of these two great holy persons. They are a unique and creative blend of ancient art, architecture and spirituality with modern technology.*

*Pramukh Swami Maharaj's latest addition to this portfolio of creative spiritual-themed attractions is the spectacular Sat-Chit-Anand Water Show at Akshardham, Gandhinagar. 'Sat' means Truth, 'Chit' means Consciousness and 'Anand' means Bliss: Consciousness of the Ultimate Truth leads to the experience of Eternal Bliss. The show reveals this ancient secret of India through the gripping Upanishadic story of Nachiketa, a nine-year-old boy who bravely confronts Yamaraj, the god of death, and receives from him the knowledge of immortality and eternal happiness. It is the world's first watershow used to convey a spiritual message through a delightful fusion of lasers, lights, water, fire, sound, animation, video projection and live characters.*

## **THE STORY**

The show begins with a mystical introduction to India's cultural and spiritual glory using colourful combinations of water, lasers and lights. The narrator then introduces the story of Nachiketa – a fearless and determined 9-year-old boy who has been an inspiration to the countless generations

of children of India since ancient times. Live actors play the roles of Nachiketa and his father, Uddalak Rishi, and take the audience back 10,000 years to the time of Vedic India. Nachiketa travels to the land of death when Uddalak, angered by his son's persistent questioning, sends him to Yamaraj. Nachiketa arrives in the land of death and has to wait for three days before he meets the god of death.

Projected on a 60-foot high water screen, Yamaraj creates thunderstorms, volcanoes, fire and tornadoes to scare the little boy by his powers of destruction. However, Nachiketa remains unmoved. Impressed by Nachiketa's fearlessness, Yamaraj offers him three boons. Nachiketa first requests that his father's peace of mind is restored. Then he asks for details of the 'yagna' ceremony by which all people can attain divine wisdom. Finally, Nachiketa asks Yamaraj to reveal the



*BAPS sadhus and volunteers discuss on-going work*

truth about what happens after death and how to attain eternal happiness. Not sure of Nachiketa's spiritual determination and eligibility to receive such elevated spiritual wisdom, Yamaraj tries to tempt him by offering him worldly pleasures – colourfully depicted by lasers, video projections, lights and water fountains – but Nachiketa remains unaffected by all the enticements. Yamaraj is thus convinced of Nachiketa's genuine spiritual quest and enlightens him with the knowledge of atman and Paramatman – the source of eternal happiness. The show concludes with a grand finale celebrating the joys of life, presented by an impressive combination of fountains, laser, lights, sound and fire.

### **PROJECT HISTORY**

Every year, since its opening in October 1992 over 2.3 million people have visited Swaminarayan Akshardham in Gandhinagar and have been inspired by its lofty spiritual messages.

In 2006 Pramukh Swami Maharaj suggested to Ishwarcharan Swami and the Akshardham team of sadhus that a spiritual themed water attraction be set up at Akshardham in Gandhinagar. After a thorough review of all options, it was decided that a water show be presented. With the BAPS Centenary Celebrations, in 2007, the water show project took a back seat. Then in 2008 during a meeting at the Fuldol festival in Sarangpur, Swamishri reminded the team of the water show and guided, "Produce the water show with help from the best. Make it the best so that it is a great hit. And minimize the budget." Thus, in these few sentences, Swamishri chalked out the action plan for the project.

While Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi was under construction, the world-renowned Yves Pépin had visited the site and was profoundly touched by what he saw, and thereafter resolved to offer the use of his creative skills for

the BAPS. Founder and creative designer of ECA2 in France, Yves Pépin is regarded as a pioneer of projections and special effects on large surfaces using cutting edge technology.

On his first meeting with Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Yves was deeply touched by Swamishri's simplicity, love and natural saintliness and decided then to offer his services for the water show at Akshardham. Further, on learning about the selfless voluntary services of the dedicated sadhus and volunteers, Yves waived his entire fee and served as a BAPS volunteer.

On 21 April 2008, Swamishri was in Sarangpur. At that time, work on the water show had just begun as a collaboration between BAPS and ECA2. BAPS would execute all the building and setup requirements, while ECA2 would provide guidance and implement the direction and programming for the show. Normally, ECA2 only accepts 'turnkey' projects in which they are responsible for the entire project from start to finish. Even when working on creative projects for renowned companies like Disney, ECA2 does not allow joint implementation. But for the first time, they relaxed their rule and agreed to collaborate with BAPS.

At the beginning, under the guidance of Ishwarcharan Swami, many hours were spent discussing the subject for the water show. Finally,



*Coordination meetings between BAPS and ECA2 personnel*



*Volunteers from London help with the installations*

with Swamishri's approval, the inspiring story of Nachiketa from the Katha Upanishad was selected. To help present the philosophical aspects of the story, advice was given by Viveksagar Swami and Bhadrash Swami. Thereafter, required research, script and screenplay were prepared by renowned scriptwriter Kamlesh Pandey together with Brahmavihari Swami and Aksharvatsal Swami.

While this preparation was in progress, Anandswarup Swami and Vishwavihari Swami supervised the demanding task of constructing the water show at Akshardham, Gandhinagar.

In consultation with Yves Pépin, Shrijiswarup Swami prepared the architectural concept for the watershow pavilion and water body. Bhaktinandan Swami meticulously prepared the rocks and 'Land of Yamaraj'.

The water show site construction was managed by Dilipbhai Patel and the land leveling was done by Ashokbhai (Jhakhora).

Coordination with ECA2 and technical details of all aspects of the show was managed by Kalpesh Bhatt and Ritesh Gadhia. This was a demanding responsibility requiring much attention to detail and hectic travelling. For acquiring technical equipments they shortlisted 130 companies in 20 different categories. After much scrutiny, they secured the required equipment from

internationally reputed companies with substantial discounts. These companies also generously gave technical guidance when required. The shipping of these items was coordinated by Dharmavatsal Swami and Rajendra Rathod.

The production of the film to be projected on the water screen was managed by Kalpesh Bhatt and Ritesh Gadhia. Editing of the film was done by BAPS volunteers, Krunal Bhavsar and Pradip Panchal. The animation work was done by Prana Studio, Mumbai, while Prime Focus, Mumbai, helped

with the special effects.

An essential part of the water show is the music and sound. The entire music composition, direction, mixing and sound system design was ably carried out by BAPS volunteer Parag Shastri. Renowned percussionist, Shivmani and 80 artistes also provided their skillful assistance in recording the music.

The water show presentation includes live characters enacting the roles of Nachiketa and his father, Uddalak Rishi. Uttamswarup Swami and Jasvant Dave contributed to the training of these actors and preparing a team of 14 Nachiketans and 7 Uddalaks to perform on a rota basis during the daily shows.

After the completion of the water body construction, the mechanical installations were completed between September 2009 and January 2010. This challenging task of fitting all the pumps and connecting the pipes was completed by Muniraj Swami and a team of 12 volunteers from London. Disregarding the daytime heat and nighttime cold, the volunteers worked round-the-clock to complete the work in just two months.

The electrical installation was supervised by R.M. Modi and Haresh Kataria. Ashish Chauhan of Nairobi and other volunteers helped with the electrical installation, laying out 25 km of



electrical cables.

Based on the designs of Yuichiro Ide of Japan, the DMX cabling and fire effects systems were installed by Nishkampurush Swami and BAPS volunteer, Amit Joshi.

The steel fabrication requirements were completed by Kirtisagar Swami and Subhashchandraji of Delhi. The mist generation system was designed and supervised by Divyapurush Swami.

The overall coordination of all the various departments was effectively carried out by Ritesh Gadhia and Yatin Patel of London, who spent one year in India to help with the project.

Other notable voluntary services were rendered by Sanjay Kara of London and key Akshardham staff members, Manish Mistry, Hitesh Parmar and others.

Another challenging feature of the water show set up was the installation of the numerous electrical implements acquired from different companies worldwide and their computerized integration. This task is the terrain of only a few \$50,000-a-month experts worldwide, but by the grace of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, BAPS volunteer and former ISRO scientist, Vipul Vaghela, successfully completed the installation and integration. He and his team provided the technical support that allowed Yves Pépin's creative genius to be expressed through the combination of lasers, lights, water jets, fire and film.

Over 1 km of fibre optic cable was laid to allow smooth control of all the various water nozzles, multicoloured lights and other equipment.

For the first time in such a water show, the 10.2 multichannel surround sound system has been used, giving 15000W of audio output. The installation and programming of the sound system was done by Parag Shastri with the help of Vipul Vaghela. The music score of the entire show was done by Parag Shastri.



*Volunteers checking the electrical installations*

A special feature of the show is the travelator, which was designed and built in-house, to transport Nachiketa across the water during the show, by Vipul Vaghela and his team – Sanjay Khamar, Santosh Kulkarni, Gunjan Jansari and others.

Also, Urjit Bhatt set up the lights, while Lalitbhai Shukla helped with the water filtration system.

The unique aspect of the volunteers was that most were not experts in their area of service and were able to accomplish this challenging project only through the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

In the recorded film, the role of Yamaraj is played by distinguished actor Surendra Pal and the role of Nachiketa by Munir Patel, a BAPS *balak*.

The installation and programming of the water show was completed in a mere six months to the amazement of Claude Lifante, a world renowned Hollywood and Universal Studio laser programmer. He commented, "For me, working here is like a dream since all my technical requirements are satisfactory fulfilled."

Yves Pépin's key programmer, James Thomson, commented, "In my experience of all installations upto now, only here has everything gone smoothly since day one." Although, he was involved



*Yves P  pin in discussion with Anandswarup Swami*

from the initial design phase, Yves P  pin’s main work began after all the construction work and installations were completed.

Over a period of 18 months, Yves had visited India six times. And for the final phase, he stayed continuously for 6 weeks. He delved deep into every detail, spending many hours in discussion with the sadhus to understand the philosophical details of the show and India’s spiritual traditions. Thus, he was able to focus on India during the film

shoots, animation, laser programming and music. He made a special effort to understand each word of the script and added his creative touches accordingly.

Also, the ECA2’s team from France diligently supported the entire project from start to finish: James Thomas, Laser programming – Claude Lifa; Nicolas Savigny and Ajay Sharma – lights programming; Jason Fischer – installation supervision; Guillaume Duflet – technical design, John Canizares – CEO. As the deadline for the inauguration approached, Yves and his team worked meticulously round-the-clock to ensure the best possible results.

Throughout the course of the project, over 450 BAPS volunteers contributed their skills and services. Thus, with such a spirit of dedication, devotion and teamwork, the Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow was completed. The Vedic Yagna and Mahapuja took place on 15 February 2010 and the public inauguration was held on 3 April 2010. ◆



*Swamisbri blesses the core team of sadhus in front of the water show stage*

# PROFILE: YVES PÉPIN, ECA2

ECA2's Creative Director, Yves Pépin, has conceived and staged one-off productions for a host of landmark events, including: the Euro Disney Opening Ceremony, the Opening and Closing Ceremonies



of the 1998 football World Cup in Paris, and the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens. He was also the Artistic Adviser, along with Steven Spielberg and Ric Birch, for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. ECA2 has also created permanent multimedia shows for theme parks such as Sea World (USA), Futuroscope (France), Tokyo Disney Sea (Japan) and Sentosa (Singapore).

When Yves Pépin agreed to join the Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow project, many in the entertainment industry were surprised. He was asked, "You have never done such collaboration with anyone before, yet why did you agree to

do so with BAPS." To this, Yves replied, "Since I saw the making of BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham in Delhi, I felt that the work you are doing would last for thousands

of years. No matter how elegant the attractions at Disney, what is their lifespan? But I saw that Akshardham was something totally different. Nowhere in the world have I seen anything that will survive for thousands of years. I feel content that I have served for a saint like Pramukh Swami Maharaj in a place that will exist for thousands of years. In my life I have made many shows for entertainment. They provide a few hours of pleasure. However, since I met Pramukh Swami Maharaj I have felt that he and BAPS try to make people happy for their entire life. So I decided to work with this Sanstha." ♦



## SHOW FEATURES

- 80 ft wide and 60 ft tall water screen
- 44,000 lumens of video projection
- Multicolour laser projection
- 10.2 surround sound system
- 4,000 water nozzles, 130 pumps, 2,000 lights
- 10 multidimensional water nozzles
- 12 fire balls and 500 sq. feet of fire on water



*Grand Inauguration*  
**Sat-Chit-Anand**  
**WATERSHOW**

3 April 2010, Gandhinagar



With all the intricate details accomplished, the Sat-Chit-Anand Water Show inauguration was held on Saturday 3 April 2010 in the holy presence of the inspirer, Pramukh Swami Maharaj. The chief guests on this auspicious occasion were Shri Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri R. Chidambaram, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India and Mr Yves P  pin, Creative Director of the show.

Among the 1,800 distinguished guests were: Shri Ashok Bhatt, Speaker of the Gujarat State Assembly; Shri Vajubhai Vala, State Finance Minister; State Ministers, Shri Nitinbhai Patel, Shri Saurabhbhai Patel and others; Dr Vijay Bhatkar, India's internationally renowned supercomputer scientist; renowned scientists, Y.S. Rajan and Shri Ghanshyam Pande; officers from the Indian Administrative Services and Indian Police Services; Presidents and CEOs of many leading companies; international businessmen, university vice-chancellors, doctors, chartered accountants, advocates, architects, engineers, authors; electronic and print media owners and journalists; and others.

The inauguration assembly began at 6.30 p.m. with a recital of Vedic mantras by BAPS children.



*Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami  
addresses the assembly*



*Swamishri ties a nadachbadi on  
Dr Chidambaram*



*Swamishri ties a nadachbadi on  
Shri Narendra Modi*

After this Ishwarcharan Swami gave a concise overview of the project.

Then Yves Pépin addressed the audience, “I first came to Akshardham in 2006 and since then my relationship with it has endured. I have seen Akshardham in New Delhi also. I have seen it being raised from beginning to end.

“I’ve also seen the film Mystic India directed by my friend Keith Melton. I’ve also seen the dedication of the volunteers and the sadhus to achieve their work, their mission.

“When I was asked to do the water show here in Gandhinagar, I did not hesitate. I said yes, to myself and on behalf of the team I was leading.

“It took us more than two years, nearly three years to put it all together.

“We worked as a team and I should make mention of all the people who joined the team, assisted me, the devotees and the sadhus who participated to make a single team to achieve this work.

“It is not just the technique. Techniques are like clothes. This water show has a deeper meaning for you. It is from your culture, your tradition. It has a deeper meaning for anyone who cares for his spirituality.

“We are happy to share this experience not only of Akshardham but of universal truth.

“I wanted to be a part of this project. First of all, because this project is different from any other I have done until now, very different because I made several shows, lots of shows and shows are intended to entertain people, but here there is a message and this show is about the story which is conveying a message. Of course this message is about cultural and deep spiritual Indian tradition from the Upanishads. But it is also a story which has very deep meaning for anyone who cares about spirituality. That is why I wanted to be a part of this project. Also, because in any project that I tried to work with people are a family to me. Because this is the best way to feel ourselves very well in our work as also to achieve the best work, and I must say that I have found it in all the volunteers who worked with me including all the sadhus and if you permit me, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj also. I found real family to work with and I felt so well with this relationship. In sharing these values, I spent my time for this project in very good spirit. This show is something very different from any other activity. For me and the team that I worked with it is the way to deliver a spiritual message and it is also the way to travel in the spirit of Akshardham and I thank you for that.”



**Dr R. Chidambaram**

Thereafter Dr R. Chidambaram delivered his thoughts, “I have been meeting Pramukh Swami Maharaj over the last 15 years and everytime it has been an uplifting experience. It has been a privilege to spend an hour with him this morning. I visited Akshardham here many years back and was present at the inauguration of Akshardham in New Delhi also. In Delhi, not only do you have the spiritual environment but you also have scientists. Eminent scientists of ancient India including Bhaskaracharya, Aryabhata, Sushruta and also statues of modern scientists C.V. Raman, J.C. Bose and others. In spectacular boat ride we have our ancient science.

“Whether it is the theory of relativity or whether it is the theory of evolution, science has its limitation. There are some questions science cannot answer. Who can say that the laws of nature in science which we interpret today will be valid next year?

“The spectacular water laser show created by Yves Pépin is a unique blend of technology and spirituality. It is also an attempt to paraphrase the Upanishadic interpretation of the boundary between life and death through the story of Nachiketa. This is the third gift of Yama which Yama has promised him, according to Kathopanishad. He wanted Yama to answer this question. There is doubt concerning people who are deceased. Some say they exist, some say they don't. It is not easy to understand. Nachiketa says, ‘No other gift will be complete without an answer to this and there is no teacher better than

you to answer this.’

“Nachiketa is the quintessential scientist, always exploring and asking questions. Yama's final answer, according to one interpretation, is that beyond the senses, there is mind, beyond the mind there is intuition, and beyond the intuition there is soul. And the soul is unmanifest. This is where science comes to a halt. What is not manifest cannot be accepted by science. What is unmanifest cannot really be answered by science.

“Beyond the unmanifest, there is spirit. Beyond the spirit, there is nothing. These are profound thoughts. They are not easy to understand and I am sure the water laser show which we are going to see is going to interpret this.

“Thank you very much. It is indeed a privilege to be here.”



**Chief Minister Shri Narendra Modi**

Then Chief Minister Shri Narendra Modi spoke, “Today, in a beautiful fusion of science and spirituality, the world's first spiritual water show is to begin. Here is a great creation which has the power to join all visitors to Akshardham to the millennia-old culture of India.

“I often feel that all management institutes throughout the world should undertake case studies of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's work. They will find high quality principles and a glimpse of India in them. To learn how best to utilize a person's talents and how to complete a project on time, it is necessary to study Pramukh Swami Maharaj's works. His works provide an ideal example of studying Indian management principles. Here,

sadhus are working smartly, utilizing modern management techniques and changing the view of others towards India.

“Information technology has forced others to look at India in a different way. I believe the work that is being done by Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj will force others to see, think about and accept our traditions in a new light.

“Here, there is a wonderful union of East and West. A Western artiste has combined our Eastern tradition with science. Only Pramukh Swami can do this. When Mr Yves Pépin came here, he probably had difficulty even pronouncing the name of Nachiketa. Still, as a result of great endeavour he fully understood the character of Nachiketa and has presented the story so creatively with technology. And this will benefit our future generations. Through this technology, the message will be conveyed naturally and in an entertaining way. A person’s faith will be strengthened by coming to Akshardham. By seeing the exhibitions, a person will be able to experience the vast canopy of wisdom.

“All who come here will be inspired to live in a different way. I bow respectfully to Pramukh Swami Maharaj for selecting the story of Nachiketa and congratulate Mr Yves Pépin.”



**Pramukh Swami Maharaj**

Finally, the inaugural assembly was blessed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, “Thank you all for attending this occasion today despite your busy schedules. Yves Pépin’s (Swamishri pronounces his surname as ‘Pipa’) name is truly appropriate:

you drink (‘pi’) and serve to others (‘pa’). The story of Nachiketa is wonderfully presented in the water show. So, drink (‘pi’) such spirituality and serve (‘pa’) it to others. Thus, his name is truly appropriate. He put tremendous efforts to accomplish this beautiful work.

“The story of Nachiketa is described in the Katha Upanishad. His father, Uddalak Rishi, performed a grand *yagna* and donated thousands of cows to the Brahmins. One should give good things in donation, but Uddalak gave weak and aged cows. Nachiketa thought that what his father is doing is not good. So, Nachiketa questioned his father, who became angry and donated him to Yamaraj. Nachiketa was virtuous and obedient, and so went to the court of Yamaraj, who was pleased by his determination.

“Nachiketa’s requests for the boons reflect the true values of Indian culture: that even though his father had sent him to Yamaraj, he asked for peace of mind for his father. Listening to and learning from such spiritual talks fosters peace in the family, community and country. There are many such stories in the Upanishads.

“When Nachiketa asks about the secret of death, Yamaraj offers him the joys of *devalok*. However, Nachiketa refuses and asks for the knowledge of spirituality and *kalyan* of the atman. He asked for peace and happiness and for the good of others. Yama tells him that if he seeks refuge at the feet of a great sadhu who himself experiences spiritual happiness, then he, too, will attain happiness. What is such a sadhu like? He has attained the *brahmic* state, constantly remembers God, works for the benefit of others and never troubles others – from such a *brahmaswarup* sadhu one will attain knowledge. What is the test to identify someone who is *brahmaswarup*? He is always blissful. Whatever he is doing, he is always happy. He is never in misery and never talks so that others are hurt. He never complains and does not have any wishes. Such a sadhu wishes for the good of all – that all attain *kalyan*. Only through such a sadhu do we attain happiness and peace.



“Bhagwan Swaminarayan manifest on this earth and gave this wisdom to all. Shastriji Maharaj was a great sadhu. And, Yogiji Maharaj was always smiling whenever you looked at him. He used to say, “May God do good for all...” Even if someone (incorrectly) wrote against him, Yogiji Maharaj would read it out in public and say that it was a reminder not to make such mistakes. Such was his wisdom. Today, we have attained that wisdom through him. We should read the Upanishads, Ramayan, Mahabharat, Gita, Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s Vachanamrut in the daily *ghar sabha*. Previously, the elders used to narrate stories from the Ramayan and Mahaabharat to the children and thus sustained the culture. Hence, Yogiji Maharaj used to insist on *ghar sabha*, so that our children become virtuous. There will be peace in the home, society and country. Such was his great thought. May all attain peace and happiness.”

Then the inauguration rituals were performed by Swamishri and the chief guests while 60 *balaks* in traditional costumes performed a presentation of the five elements – earth, water, fire, wind, space with the singing of Vedic mantras.

Then the Shanti Paath was recited. Thereafter Ishwarcharan Swami presented Swamishri with a beautifully decorated replica of the Katha Upanishad shastra. As Swamishri touched the centre of the book, jets of water shot up in the background, thus completing the inauguration of the water show, amidst a resounding round of applause by the invited guests.

With the completion of the ceremonies, the stage guests took their seat in the amphitheatre and the premiere of Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow was presented. For 45 minutes the entire audience was held spellbound, as first the glory and culture of India and then the story of Nachiketa unfolded. At the end, there was unanimous praise for the show, “Unique... Fantastic... Beyond imagination.... Beyond words.... Amazing...”

Even afterwards, while the guests dined, all the conversations centred on the thrilling water show they has just witnessed. ◆



“This water show has a deeper meaning for anyone who cares for his spirituality.”

- Yves Pépin

“Nachiketa is the quintessential scientist, always exploring and asking questions.”

- Dr R. Chidambaram

“Here, there is a wonderful union of East and West. A Western artiste has combined our Eastern tradition with science. Only Pramukh Swami can do this.”

- Shri Narendra Modi

# OPINIONS



It has come directly from the heart – Pramukh Swami's heart, and will reach millions of hearts.

**Shri Narendrabhai Modi**  
Chief Minister, Gujarat

The combination of Monsieur Yves Pépin's creative genius and the spiritual guidance of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj made for an unforgettable breathtaking laser-water-pyrotechnics show. The unique blend of high technology and spirituality is a characteristic of Akshardham. The choice of the Upanishadic story of young Nachiketa, whose inquisitive questioning of Yamaraj makes him a quintessential scientist though the context is spiritual, is praiseworthy.

The comments of Yamaraj, portrayed beautiful by Shri Surendra Pal, on the boundary between life and death have a profound message and will continue to have an impact on audiences in the years to come.

**Dr. R. Chidambaram**  
Principal Scientific Adviser to the Govt. of India

Anybody who comes to India will come to Gujarat. This show shall become a brand equity of Gujarat. Swamishri's divine inspiration and gift to Gujarat.

**Hon. Shri Jay Narayan Vyas**  
Health Minister

Mesmerizing. Unimaginable. A new dictionary will have to be created to describe the experience. Generations shall be uplifted and elevated by the message of the Upanishads.

**Shri Mukesh Patel**  
Chartered Accountant

Speechless. BAPS is not interested in publicity but only in sincere service to posterity. They could have done this in Delhi and got international acclaim but by creating it in Gujarat, they have put Gujarat on the international map.

**Hon. Shri Saurabh Patel**  
Energy Minister, Gujarat

For hours I could not come out of the story of Nachiketa, I could not leave the aura of the water show. It is so immersive that the show, the story, the message surrounds you.

**Hon. Shri Vajubhai Vala**  
Finance Minister, Gujarat

Pramukh Swami gave me the darshan of God. Never in my life will I forget the deep spiritual experience.

**Shri Nityanandam**  
Home Secretary

What can we humans imagine. What Pramukh Swami Maharaj has created is beyond, beyond, beyond expectation. A great service to society.

**Shri Shrenikbhai Kasturbhai**  
Industrialist

I have seen so many things, but nothing like this. So enriching, so elevating. God give me words to describe my experience!

**Shri Umang Hutheesinh**  
Industrialist

Nobody should miss it for anything. It should be shown to every child, in fact to everyone. The

water show is so captivating and the message so moving.

**Shri Rajagopalan**

Swamishri has done an incredible service to our culture and spirituality. Only he can bless such a project, which so perfectly combines modern media and the ancient message of Upanishads.

**Shri P.K. Laheri**

Former Chief Secretary

What I liked most about this show was the powerful story element which makes a deep impression on everyone's mind. The mysticism of spirituality is unravelled by this story in a very simple way.

**Dr. Hasmukh Adhia**

IAS, Principal Secretary, Gujarat

Whole Saturday night I could not sleep. The images of the water show filled and illuminated my mind. So inspiring, so fulfilling. I thank Pramukh Swami Maharaj countless times that he has gifted this to our country.

**Shri Yatin Oza**

Advocate

Such a masterpiece of a show requires great creativity, greater vision and even greater clarity to create. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has blessed humanity with this eternal message of immortality.

It has poetry, philosophy, literature, music, melody and, above all, spirituality.

**Shri Harsh Brahmhatt**

Secretary, Gujarat

The BAPS has always provided new concepts and opportunity for people of various class and background, to attract them toward the rich spirituality and cultural heritage of our great nation.

Where else in India, we see such efforts to bridge past and present and that to in a way everyone would love and enjoy.

I am sure and I can say with pride that our originality and culture is in safe hands of H.H. Pujya Shri Pramukh Swami Bapa, the mentor and head of BAPS.

**Dr. K.C. Thaker**

KCT Consultancy Services

It was a spectacular show and unimaginable. All persons who are involved with the project, deserve the congratulations and compliments beyond the limit.

This show is very different because it has a great message along with the entertainment and synergistic blend of science and spirituality.

The coming generation will cherish its values and the older generation will feel happy about the caring of our Indian culture.

**Dr. Pankaj Patel**

Dean, NHL Medical College, Ahmedabad



I have never seen such a laser-water-fire show with music and such an amazing blend of Western technology and Eastern concepts.

It is always a tradition of BAPS to organize and do something new for humankind and society. By going through this story of Nachiketa, we will learn so many important principles in life and will come to know that there is so much beyond death. I am sure that this will change our attitude towards living a life.

**Dr. Sanjay Shah**  
Trauma Surgeon, Ahmedabad

One of the most exciting and educative shows I have ever seen. It was one of the most mesmerizing experiences and I consider this show as one of the wonders of the world.

**Dr. Pranjal Modi**  
Dept. of Urology & Transplantation Surgery,  
Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad

‘Sat Chit Anand Water Show’ is magnificent concept knitted with our classical music, spectacular lighting, wonderful fountains and above all a spiritual message as to ‘What and Why the Human Life Is’ to the whole of humankind. I have seen a few of the world class water shows in other countries, but I consider this as the best. Let the world be blessed and inspired with the great message it spreads.

**Yogesh S. Lakhani**

The experience of the Sat-Chit-Anand Water Show was the greatest experience of my life not only in terms of its magnitude, not because of its technology, but the message it conveys and the values of Indian religion and culture it reflects.

**Dr. Sharad Vyas**  
Director, Emergency Medical Services

I have never experienced the enchantment which I have experienced while beholding the spellbinding water show at Akshardham Gandhinagar.

This is a place where anyone can forget oneself to achieve the ultimate goal of one’s life, i.e., peace.

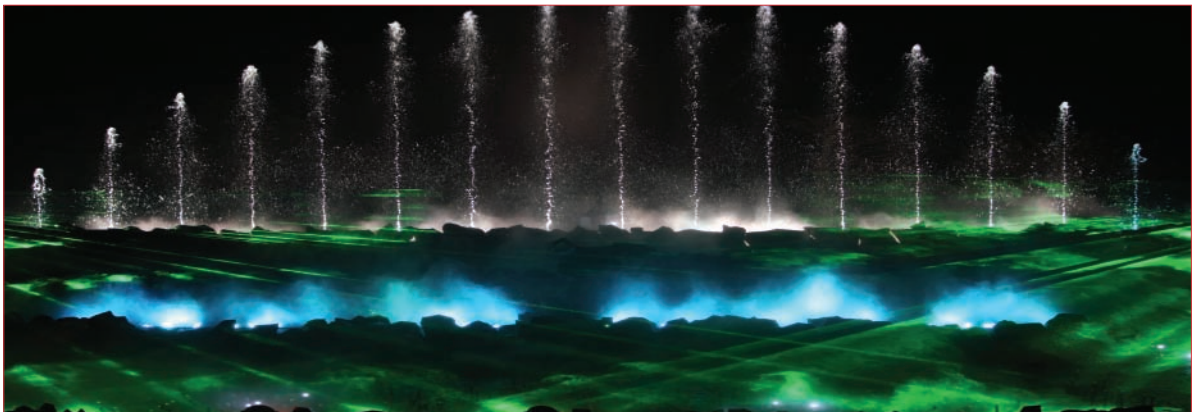
**Bhupendrasinh Chudasama**  
Former Gujarat State Minister

The Sat-Chit-Anand show was a spectacle in all senses, and even beyond the senses. The biggest impact of the show was in kindling of a fire within everybody present that sought for answers of some of the biggest questions of life, while making us believe that the answers lay within ourselves.

**Raju Ganguly**  
Director, Postal Services (HO), Ahmedabad

I am thrilled and highly impressed. The show is not meant only for entertainment, but it has spiritual and social values. Our new generation will learn from our ancient history.

**PK. Kulshrestha**  
Western Railways, Ahmedabad



# MEDIA COVERAGE



There was extensive national and international media coverage of the Watershow on 3 April 2010. Correspondents from all media newspapers and TV channels praised the inaugural assembly and the Watershow. News for the Watershow appeared in the following papers and channels:

Pravasi **28.** Mid-Day (Eng.) **29.** Mid-Day (Guj.) **30.** Sakal (Marathi) **31.** Lokmat (Marathi) **32.** Puthari (Marathi) **33.** Navshakti (Marathi) **34.** Hindustan (Delhi) **35.** Naya Padakar (Kheda dist.) **36.** Gujarat Times (Australia) **37.** Gujarat Times (Nadiad)

## NEWSPAPERS

1. Gujarat Samachar
2. Divya Bhaskar
3. Sandesh
4. Gandhinagar Samachar
5. Jay Hind
6. Jansata
7. Rajasthan Patrika
8. Metro Herald
9. Aj Kal
10. Prabhat
11. Western Times (Guj. & Eng.)
12. Times of India
13. Indian Express
14. DNA
15. Ahmedabad Mirror (AM)
16. Akila
17. Sanj Samachar
18. Aas Pas
19. Aaj Kal
20. Lokasamarthan
21. Fulchhab
22. Nutan Saurashtra
23. Gujarat Mitra
24. Navgujarat Times
25. Yug Prabhav
26. Mumbai Samachar
27. Janmabhumi

## MAGAZINES

1. Chitralkha
2. Feelings (Vadodara)
3. Dakshin Darshan (Halchal Group) (Bangalore)
4. Garvi Gujarat (UK)

## TV CHANNELS

1. Doordarshan
2. Aaj Tak
3. Star News
4. Zee News
5. NDTV
6. India TV
7. ANI
8. Sahara TV
9. TV 9
10. ETV
11. National Channel
12. GTPL (local) Channel.

BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha is grateful to all print and electronic media for their coverage. ♦

# SWAMINARAYAN AKSHARDHAM, GANDHINAGAR



## INTRODUCTION

The grand 23-acre Swaminarayan Akshardham complex was created by the inspiration of His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj (Swamishri) to fulfil the wish of his guru, Yogiji Maharaj.

The Vedic inauguration rituals of Swaminarayan Akshardham were performed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj on 30 October 1992 and the public opening ceremony was on 2 November 1992.

## AKSHARDHAM MONUMENT: PEACE IN PINK STONE

The majestic Akshardham monument is a beautiful architectural marvel comprising 6,000 metric tons of pink sandstone of Rajasthan which took 6 years and 8,000,000 man-hours of devotional labour to build. It is 108 ft tall, 240 ft long, and 131 ft wide and is surrounded by a red sandstone colonnade. The Akshardham Monument looks splendid with its 97 sculpted pillars, 220 stone-beams, 57 stone-windows, 17 domes, 8 ornate balconies, and a large podium.

Inside the imposing central hall of the monument is the 7-ft high, gold-leafed, serene and divine *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. There are also gold-leafed *murtis* of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagwan Swaminarayan's first spiritual successor, and Gopalanand Swami.

## PRASADI MANDAPAM: SACRED RELICS

The basement of the Akshardham monument showcases a treasure of objects sanctified by and used Bhagwan Swaminarayan, together with an account of their history. This exhibition of authentic sacred relics will forever remain witness to God's incarnation on earth.

## NEELKANTH & SAHAJANAND: HALLS OF VALUES

An enlightening exhibition depicting Bhagwan Swaminarayan's life, work and message through audio-visual presentations, life-size dioramas and photographic displays. The exhibition inspires virtues such as austerity, chastity, humility, spirit of service, prayer, forgiveness, equality and devotion.

## SANSKRUTI DARSHAN: MYSTIC INDIA

*Mystic India* is a superb, award-winning large format period film on the amazing 7-year, 12,000 km spiritual journey throughout India by Neelkanth Varni, the teenage-yogi form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, from the Himalayas in the north to the bristling shores of Kanyakumari in the south. Shot in 108 locations in India and featuring a cast of 45,000 people, the 45-minute film depicts Neelkanth's renunciation, encounter



with a man-eating lion, pilgrimage to Haridwar, breathtaking treks in the Himalayas, Man Sarovar and Mount Kailash, perilous travels through the jungles of Assam, grand felicitation in the Rath Yatra festival in Jagannathpuri, visit to Rameshwaram mandir, and finally his entry into Gujarat. The film presents the glory of India and its traditions, and inspires values of determination, effort, courage, truth and spirituality.

### **PREMANAND: SPIRITUAL HERITAGE**

The elevating eternal truths of Indian Culture are brought alive by elaborate settings and dioramas portraying scenes from the Upanishads, Ramayan and Mahabharat scriptures.

### **SANT PARAM HITKARI: ETERNAL HAPPINESS**

Bhagwan Swaminarayan, his sadhus and householder devotees have gathered for a spiritual discussion on the outskirts of a village in Gujarat.

Brahmanand Swami sings a devotional song before the discussion starts. Premanand Swami and Muktanand Swami accompany him on *sarangi* and *mridang* respectively. Then, in his dialogue with a devotee, Bhagwan Swaminarayan sheds light on the path to everlasting happiness. A superb audio-animatronics show brings to life

the atmosphere, characters and events from over 200 years ago and reveals the key to eternal happiness.

### **SAT-CHIT-ANAND WATERSHOW**

Projected on an 80-foot wide and 60-foot high water screen, the Sat-Chit-Anand WaterShow reveals the ancient secret of India through the gripping Upanishadic story of Nachiketa, a nine-year-old boy who bravely confronts Yamaraj, the god of death. It is the world's first water show used to convey a spiritual message through a delightful fusion of lasers, lights, water, fire, surround sound, animation, video projection and live characters.

Sent to the land of death, Nachiketa fearlessly asks Yamaraj to reveal the truth about what happens after death and how to attain eternal happiness. After thoroughly testing him, Yamaraj is convinced of Nachiketa's genuine spiritual quest and enlightens him with the knowledge of atman and Paramatman – the source of immortality and eternal happiness. The show concludes with a grand finale celebrating the joys of life, presented by an impressive combination of fountains, laser, lights, sound and fire. ♦

# PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S VICHARAN

1 January-1 March 2010

Nadiad, Vidyanagar, Madhubhan (Gana), Vadodara, Gandhinagar, Sarangpur

## JANUARY

- 1-6 Nadiad
- 6 Vidyanagar, Madhubhan (Gana)
- 7-10 Madhubhan
- 11 Madhubhan to Vadodara
- 12-31 Vadodara

## FEBRUARY

- 1-2 Vadodara
- 3-24 Gandhinagar
- 25 Gandhinagar, Sarangpur
- 26-28 Sarangpur

## MARCH

- 1 Sarangpur

## JANUARY: NADIAD

### 3, Sunday; Kishore Day

The evening assembly at the BAPS mandir celebrated Kishore Day. The assembly was themed on “Tamara Snehal Sathvara”, meaning “Your Loving Support”.

A drama written by Jnanratna Swami, “Katha Manavini, Vyatha Manavini”, meaning “The Story of People, the Miseries of People”, was performed by *kishores* of Nadiad *mandal*. Thereafter Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior sadhus. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, “Leading a life of faith in God affords us happiness and goodness. We find that some people stray due to bad company. One starts drinking and feels very good and becomes oblivious of the world. When liquor influences one in such a way then the power of bhakti to God will also reform you. But, one must have faith and trust in him.”

## VADODARA

### 14, Thursday; Uttarayan Festival

The evening celebration assembly of Uttarayan was held on an open ground opposite the mandir.

After Swamishri's arrival Viveksagar Swami spoke about the importance of the Uttarayan festival. This was followed by sadhus honouring Swamishri with garlands. Then members of the Kishore Mandal performed a traditional ox dance symbolizing the spirit of sacrifice. A brief drama on ‘Samat Patel’ showed his charity and love for Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Finally, Swamishri blessed the huge gathering, “God never forgets those who serve or give with profound love and glory. In fact he gives the fruits of one's devotion in manifold ways. When we were born we came with nothing; when we die we shall take nothing. Whatever good we do for God, guru, society and country will come with us (in the form of *punya*). And such service will bless us with inner peace and happiness.”

Thereafter Swamishri proclaimed the *joli* call, “Narayan Hare Satchidanand Prabho.” Then Swamishri sat on the stage as devotees came forward to make their donations. More than 17,000 devotees attended the festival and all were served with *mahaprasad*.

### 17, Sunday; 26th APC Annual Day

In the annual day celebration assembly of the Chhatralaya a drama, “Swapna”, written by Yogendra Swami, was performed in the presence of Swamishri. Thereafter, Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior sadhus.

In conclusion, Swamishri addressed the assembly, “Some students are devastated by the unwholesome culture in colleges today. They have big dreams bereft of our culture and values. To live and earn morally brings good dividends, whereas what is the use of earning without principles! When one does wrong during the day then one cannot sleep at night. By observing our values we are blessed with inner peace.”



## 20, Wednesday; Vasant Panchmi Celebration

Shri P. D. Patel and family donated an ambulance for the BAPS hospital in Dabhoi. Swamishri sanctified the ambulance and a van for the Sanstha's Amrut ayurvedic products.

Prior to Swamishri's morning puja the glory of Shikshapatri, Nishkulanand Swami and Brahmanand Swami were sung to commemorate their birthdays on Vasant Panchmi.

The main evening festive assembly commemorated the birthday of Shastriji Maharaj. The assembly theme was centred on the kirtan, "Aje Yagnapurush ne dwar nobat vage re lol...".

The programme was as follows:

- ❖ Traditional dance by children: *Kahe chhe loko a jaga ma...*
- ❖ Viveksagar Swami: speech on *Dham-Dhami padharaviya...*
- ❖ Tyagvallabh Swami: speech
- ❖ Traditional dance by *kishores*: *Gaame gaame ghume santo...*
- ❖ Dr Swami: speech on the hardships tolerated by Shastriji Maharaj
- ❖ Video on Shastriji Maharaj
- ❖ Mahant Swami: speech about Shastriji Maharaj's presence today.
- ❖ Swamishri inaugurated a new book publication, *Mahabalavant Maya Tamari*, by Viveksagar Swami
- ❖ Traditional dance by *kishores*, during which Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior sadhus.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the huge assembly of 16,000 devotees, "From his childhood days the mind of Shastriji Maharaj was on God. As a child he used to build mandirs of mud, plant a flag on them and place *murtis* inside. In other words his life was profuse with devotion, reflecting his future mission. He had come from Akshardham to accomplish his work. Yogi Maharaj was a God-realized person. He was very saintly, absorbed in doing *seva* and spreading the divine work of Shastriji Maharaj."

## 24, Sunday, Kishore Day Celebration

Kishore Day was based on the theme of "Asmita" or "Pride". In the Kishore Day assembly, after Swami's puja, several sadhus spoke on cultivating pride for Satsang.

The evening assembly was themed on "Asmita: Shastra, Satpurush and Swadharma." More than 3,000 *kishores* and *kishoris* of Vadodara city and rural areas were present. Dr Swami talked about having pride for "Satpurush". Then case stories of *kishores* who had remained steadfast in their *niyams* were presented. This was followed by a video on Swamishri as the ideal guru or *satpurush*. Then a traditional dance on the bhajan "Ham Bharat ke Javan..." was performed by *kishores*. During the dance, senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with garlands. A video show on *asmita* was shown. Thereafter a brief discussion was presented by *kishores* on the celebration theme.

Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Pride means to obey the commands of God, study the shastras and to walk the talk. Our shastras show us how we should live. What we should eat, see and think are prescribed by our sacred texts." Swamishri then elaborated upon the ill-effects of television and films, and the spiritual path shown by Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj.

## 26, Monday

Swamishri performed the *pratishta* rituals of the *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Maneja, Danteshwar, Saron (Tithal), Dhavat, Halol, Kali Dungari, Kharkhadi ni Muvadi, Segva (Tithal) and Kangvi.

## 31, Sunday: Parents Day Celebration

The evening *satsang* assembly was themed on "The Principal Beams of Homes Have Collapsed". A question-answer session was held with parents. A traditional dance, *Swagatam mangalam Swagatam*, was performed by children. Thereafter Swamishri was honoured with garlands. Then Swamishri inaugurated a new children's publication, "Sutev-Kutev", by Swaminarayan Aksharpith. This was followed by a drama presentation on today's theme. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Householders have to endeavour for their live-

lihood, and fulfil their social duties, but should never forget family values. Parents should listen to and understand their children's problems. One who does *satsang* properly becomes transformed and free from base instincts. So many have become pious through *satsang*. Where there is disunity; wealth and honour go away."

## **FEBRUARY: GANDHINAGAR**

### **7, Sunday; Kishore Day**

The evening *satsang* assembly was dedicated to Kishore Day. Teenagers performed a drama, "Doctor". Thereafter, several outstanding *kishores* were honoured for their steadfastness in following *satsang* values. Then a traditional dance was performed by *kishores*. Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "Yogiji Maharaj had great foresight. He thought of inculcating values in the lives of children through *satsang*, so that they grow up to become better citizens of society. Yogiji Maharaj was a great person, always helping others and wishing for the good of all."

### **10, Wednesday, Gandhinagar, Himatnagar, Gandhinagar; Mandir Shilanyas Ritual**

Swamishri travelled from Gandhinagar to Himatnagar. After having darshan and performing *arti* of Thakorji at the BAPS *hari* mandir Swamishri came to the new mandir site. The primary rituals for the foundation-stone laying ceremony were performed by Mahant Swami, Dr Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami.

On Swamishri's arrival at the site the *satsang* assembly was in progress. The senior sadhus had addressed the huge congregation of 6,570 participants and well-wishers. Swamishri was honoured with garlands by senior and other sadhus. Thereafter Swamishri blessed the occasion, "By the grace of God and his holy sadhu there has been steady progress in this region. Here, our sadhus travel to the tribal villages of Poshina to transform and elevate the lives of others. True progress means to become addiction-free, stop stealing and take to honest ways of earning one's living. Progress also means experiencing inner peace. Yes, we tend to

believe that progress merely lies in earning and amassing wealth, but then we will not have inner peace. This inner peace can be attained through mandirs, God and his holy sadhu. We gain this inner peace through imbibing our culture. Bhagwan Swaminarayan came on earth with the purpose of liberating souls." Swamishri also mentioned Gopalanand Swami, who was born in Todla as Khushal Bhatt and how he used to play with the *murti* of Bhagwan Shyamlaji. In conclusion, Swamishri appreciated the services of all devotees, government and municipal officials.

In all, 25,000 devotees and guests were served *mahaprasad* (Photos in March 2010 issue, back cover).

### **12, Friday**

Swamishri performed the *pratishta* rituals of puja and *arti* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Bavla.

### **14, Sunday, Children's Day**

In the evening Children's Day assembly children performed a traditional dance. Thereafter, Swamishri was honoured with garlands. Volunteers then performed a drama "Krutarth". In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly.

### **15, Monday**

The Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow at Swaminarayan Akshardham, Gandhinagar, was ready. As part of the ritual *vastu* of the Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow a *yagna* was held at 4.00 p.m. in the presence of Mahant Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami and Viveksagar Swami. The arrangements for the ritual *yagna* or *vastu-homa* were made by Shrutiprakash Swami and performed at the newly built amphitheatre by pundits Ghanshyambhai and Mukeshbhai. When Swamishri arrived he participated in the final rituals. Thereafter an assembly was held at the venue in the presence of devotees and volunteers. Ishwarcharan Swami explained about the components of the show and how it was created by the blessings of Swamishri. The creative director of the show, Yves Pépin, talked about how he became involved with the BAPS and the show. Mahant Swami also addressed the audience. And finally,

Swamishri blessed the guests, “All those involved in the show have prepared a beautiful show. Thousands will see this show and God will bless all those who have been involved in its making.”

At 7.05 p.m. the 45-minute-long Sat-Chit-Anand Watershow commenced. Thereafter, Swamishri personally expressed his appreciations to Yves Pépin and his team (Photos in April 2010 issue, inside cover).

## **SARANGPUR**

### **28, Sunday, Bhagatji Maharaj Birthday Celebration**

Swamishri blessed the celebration assembly after completing his morning puja, “Once, Gunatitanand Swami became pleased upon Bhagatji Maharaj and said, “Go home, you shall receive im-

mense wealth”. But Bhagatji did not want wealth. He wanted the *murti* of Gunatitanand Swami. On another occasion Bhagatji jumped into a trough of dirty water when Gunatitanand Swami, after dipping his toe in it, asked him where the 68 pilgrim places were. Later, when Gunatitanand Swami asked him to wish for whatever he desired, Bhagatji asked for spiritual knowledge; the knowledge of *atma* and *Paramatma*.”

### **1 March, Monday, Pushpadolotsav**

The Pushpadolotsav (Fuldol festival) commenced at 5.00 p.m. After singing of *dhun* and prayer, senior sadhus discoursed to the mammoth assembly. In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the gathering and showered sanctified coloured water on everyone. (For details and photos see *Swaminarayan Bliss*, April 2010, p. 23 and back cover). ♦

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# **LIVING WITH SWAMISHRI**

January-February 2010

## **SWAMISHRI'S HUMILITY**

### **2 January, Nadiad**

Swamishri was on his way to his morning puja in the mandir premises. Alongside his pathway, a couple of APC hostel students were discussing among themselves. When Swamishri came by, one of them asked, “My friend was saying that you are Shriji Maharaj and another was saying that you are Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Who are you?”

Without a moment's hesitation Swamishri replied, “I am a sadhu. I am a servant (*das*) of Shriji Maharaj.”

## **LESSONS IN PUBLIC SERVICE**

### **3 January, Nadiad**

Two members of Gujarat's Legislative Assembly (MLA) came for Swamishri's blessings. Swamishri honoured them and advised, “You have been elected to render public service. Do your work as a public servant (*sevak*). And you are young, so do not do your duties in haste, but with peace and patience.”

Swamishri briefly explained about how an official should ideally render service to society.

## **MEETING A VETERAN DEVOTEE**

### **5 January, Nadiad**

Swamishri was returning to his residence after doing his morning puja in the mandir hall. Hundreds of young and old devotees were seated and standing with discipline on either side of his pathway. On seeing Dayabhai Sarkar, a veteran and senior devotee, seated in a wheel chair, Swamishri instructed his attendant sadhu to steer his wheelchair to him. Swamishri met Dayabhai and asked, “How are you? Are you able to do bhajan?”

After the brief personal meeting, Swamishri proceeded towards his residence. Dayabhai was moved by Swamishri's care for him.

Many times Swamishri goes out of his way to meet old and ailing devotees. He appreciates them and remembers them for their services to Satsang.

## **TAKE CARE OF THEM**

### **6, Wednesday, Vidyanagar**

Swamishri arrived for a brief stop over to Vidyanagar to have his EECF treatment. On seeing Dr Bajadia and Dr Amrutbhai Patel from Ahmeda-

bad, Swamishri asked his attendant whether the two doctors had been offered any snacks. Then Swamishri called Vedpurush Swami, who looks after the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya, and told him, “Also make arrangements for snacks and tea for the policemen who have accompanied us from Nadiad.” Then Swamishri went away for his EECF treatment. After the treatment, Vedpurush Swami informed Swamishri that the guests had been served with snacks. Instantly, Swamishri replied, “Thank you. One should always look after (the devotees and guests) in this way.”

Since decades Swamishri has been serving devotees and others by taking care of even their smallest needs. He always puts others before himself.

## **MEETING A VETERAN DEVOTEE**

**28 January, Vadodara**

Swamishri was on his way in his golf cart to perform his morning puja on the grounds opposite the mandir in Atladra. Hundreds of devotees had lined up on both sides of his pathway for darshan. While exiting the main gate of the mandir, Swamishri saw an old devotee, Natubhai of Jaspur village, seated on a chair on one side. Swamishri started saying, “Stop the cart.” But because Swamishri’s seat was closed on four sides with acrylic sheets no one could hear him. Still Swamishri kept on repeating, “Stop the Cart.” A few moments later some sadhus noticed that Swamishri was saying something. They stopped the cart and Swamishri expressed his wish to meet Natubhai. Someone tried to call Natubhai to Swamishri, but because of the heavy rush it was not possible for Natubhai to come through. So, Swamishri instructed the driver to take his cart back to where Natubhai was sitting. On reaching Natubhai the latter started singing Swami’s glory with gusto, “*Swami-Shriji jinke hriday me so kachhu karma kare na kare...*” Then Natubhai placed his two hands on the acrylic sheet. In response Swamishri bent sideways and placed both his hands on the acrylic opposite Natubhai’s

hands. In this way Swamishri met him and expressed his care and love for him. Natubhai was simply amazed at Swamishri’s love and attention for him.

## **BALANCED ADVICE**

**5 February, Gandhinagar**

A youth from abroad explained to Swamishri about his quarrelsome parents. He said that they quarrelled with each other often. Furthermore, his mother’s nature was such that she became depressed very frequently and always advised him again and again on trifle things. The youth added that he was distraught and could not concentrate in his studies. And because of the strained atmosphere in his house he had failed his exams in the last three years. The youth asked Swamishri as to what he should do. He further explained that if he continued staying home, he would have to bear with his parent’s rows, and on the other hand he could not stay elsewhere because he did not have any money to support himself.

Swamishri blessed him and advised, “No matter what happens, let them (parents) say what they want, but learn to keep your mind stable. Do not be affected by your parent’s words and do not dislike them either. If at present you wish to study away from home, you can live at our mandir. In this way you can be away from home and you can visit them whenever you wish.”

The student felt blessed and happy with Swamishri’s wonderful advice.

## **A CHILD’S AMAZING REQUEST**

**6 February, Gandhinagar**

A child asked Swamishri during a personal audience, “May I become a devotee like you and inspire all in my home to follow *satsang*.”

Swamishri was pleased at his request and replied, “Study well. Bow and touch the feet of your parents daily, serve them and come to *satsang*. Do your puja and *mala* properly.”

Swamishri prescribed the way to become an ideal devotee. ♦

## NATIONAL SEMINAR ON YOGA DARSHAN: WORLDWIDE PHILOSOPHICAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT

27-28 March 2010, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad

On 27 and 28 March 2010, a National Seminar on ‘Yoga Darshan: Philosophical and Cultural Impact’ was organized jointly by Somnath Sanskrit University (SSU) and AARSH, Gandhinagar.

Held at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Ahmedabad, yoga scholars and experts from Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, as well as sadhus of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha gave effective guidance. The seminar covered four main topics:

1. Yoga Darshan: Literature and influence on Sampradayas 2. Yoga: Influence in ancient and modern times 3. Yoga and Education 4. Yoga and Health

In the inaugural session, Vice-Chancellor of SSU, Shri Pankajbhai Jani, delivered the welcome address. This was followed by a reading of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s letter of blessings for the seminar.

Among the speakers during the 2-day seminar were: Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami,

Anandswarup Swami, Aksharvatsal Swami (AARSH), Shrutiprakash Swami (AARSH), Bhadreswami (AARSH), Dr. B. P. Gorji (Jain Vishwavidyalaya, Ladnu, Rajasthan), Dr. Beeman Palji (Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad), Prof. Dr. Vodheji (Kaivalyadham, Lonavala, Maharashtra), Dr. Narendra Pandya, Prof. Dr. Devendranath Pandeji (SSU, Veraval), Dr. Bansidhar Upadhyaya (Lakulish Pashupat, Kayavarohan), Dr. Sadhna Dhamoriya (Bhopal Vishwavidyalaya, Bhopal), Shri Didiji (Brahmakumari Sampradaya, Mt. Abu, Rajasthan), Dr. Pravin Chaudhari (Kadi), Dr. Jadeja (Bhavnagar) and others.

The closing session of the seminar was attended by over 6,000 BAPS devotees, during which Mahamandaleshwar Swamishri Vedabhartiji (Head, Shri Ramsadhak Gram, Rishikesh) addressed the gathering.

The delegates of the seminar were delighted and inspired by the presentations and demonstrations over the two days.

## SATSANG SHIBIR

2-4 April 2010, Singapore

More than 25 BAPS devotees from Singapore participated in the 3-day *shibir* from 2-4 April 2010 at Sevana Cove Resort, Johor Bahru, Malaysia. The *shibir* was based on the theme, ‘Chaar Vaat Jivnu Jivan’ in which Vivekpriya Swami and a group of four sadhus spoke on the topics of *agna*, *upasana*, *suhradbhav* and *ekantikma priti*.

There were also interactive sessions along

with inspiring videos and group discussions on topics such as *ghar sabha* and nurturing children for a better future. The *shibir* gave the devotees an informative and practical insight into these important aspects of satsang.

Many devotees pledged to perform daily puja, apply *tilak-chandlo*, hold *ghar sabha* and regularly attend the weekly satsang *sabha*.

# SARAH BROWN ATTENDS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE AT LONDON MANDIR

11 April 2010

Sarah Brown, wife of the Prime Minister of Britain, was Chief Guest and Keynote Speaker at the International Women's Day conference hosted by BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, London, on Sunday 11 April 2010.

The two-day conference, entitled 'Celebrating Women: Past, Present & Future', aimed to celebrate the achievements of women and inspire them to fulfil their potential.

Mrs Brown was greeted in traditional Hindu manner with a flower garland and tying of a *nadachhadi*. After her tour of the mandir and paying her respects in the inner sanctum, the Prime Minister's wife entered the assembly hall.

In her keynote address Mrs Brown said, "It is indeed such an honour to be here at this truly stunning temple. I can entirely understand why

it is often referred to as the 'Eighth Wonder of the World', but I suspect what keeps thousands and thousands of people coming back here is not just how beautiful a building it is, but the warmth of the welcome and the compassion of the community..."

She added, "The women who have made the deepest impression on me are the people who show the determination to help others."

## Other IWD events hosted by BAPS

Apart from the two-day conference in London, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha celebrated International Women's Day with over 200 events across the UK, Europe, India and North America. ♦

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# OVER 3,500 TAKE PART IN THE BAPS CHARITIES 10K CHALLENGE

18 April 2010, UK

More than 3,500 people around the UK took to the streets and parks on Sunday 18 April 2010 for the BAPS Charities 10k Challenge to raise funds for children and other worthy causes.

BAPS Charities, UK, held this year's event in conjunction with the UK's leading children's charity, Barnardo's, as well as several smaller charities around the country. It brought together members of the community from a wide variety of backgrounds and ages – ranging from three to over 90 years – to walk, jog or run a distance of 10 kilometres.

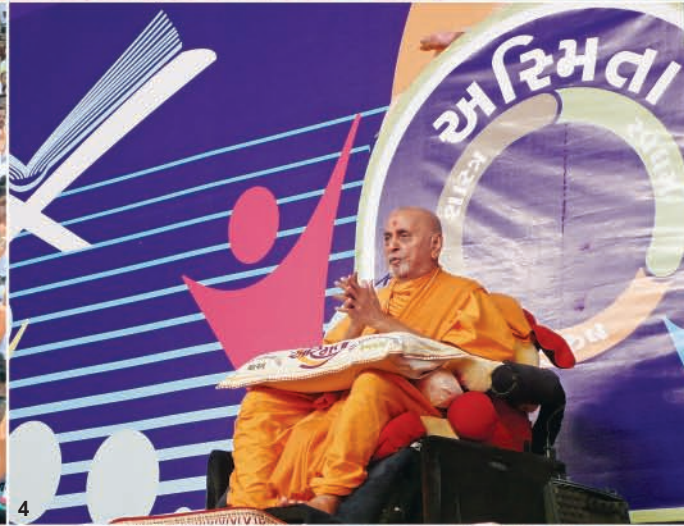
In London, the BAPS Charities 10k Challenge kicked off amid glorious spring sunshine from BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Neasden, in the presence of distinguished guests, including the CEO of Barnardo's Martin Narey

and Barnardo's ambassador and popular TV actress Nina Wadia. Also present at the opening ceremony were Mayor of the London Borough of Brent and other leading officials and sponsors of the event.

In his address, Mr Narey emphasised the importance of the partnership with BAPS Charities, saying, "The support from you and this partnership is absolutely essential to our work. I really look forward to this partnership being one of the most important in the history of Barnardo's."

The Challenge commenced in London from the Mandir and included two circuits of the scenic King Edward VII Park in Wembley, where bouncy castles had also been set up for the children. It became a fun-filled day for all the family.

The BAPS Charities 10k Challenge was held in a total of 15 centres around the UK with many supporting charities at the local level. ♦



**SWAMISHRI'S VICHARAN**  
**January-February 2010**

1. Youths perform a traditional dance during the Vasant Panchmi celebration assembly, Vadodara, 20 Jan. 2. Swamishri blesses the devotees in the Vasant Panchmi assembly, Atladra. 3. Over 3,000 *kishores* and *kishories* attended the special Kishore Day assembly, Vadodara, 24 Jan. 4. Swamishri blesses the youths in the Kishore Day assembly, Vadodara. 5. Children present a traditional dance during Swamishri's puja and Bal Din, Gandhinagar 14 Feb. 6. Devotees seated in the morning puja, Gandhinagar.



**AT-CHIT-ANAND WATER SHOW INAUGURATION, 3 April 2010**

At Swaminarayan Akshardham in Gandhinagar the capital of Gujarat, the exciting and enlightening new water show was inaugurated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj (inset) in the presence of Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Narendra Modi, Principal Scientific Adviser to Prime Minister Shri Dr Chidambaram, Creative Director Yves Pépin and 1,800 invited guests.