

"Shree Swaminrayano Vijayte"

Pramukh Swami Maharaj

(100 Inspiring Experiences)

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PREFACE

Once, Mr Bob Kaplan, former Solicitor General of Canada, spoke eloquently about Pramukh Swami Maharaj, “You are a good pious person. If the whole world took you as an example, it would be a better place – free of crime, of war, and most costly of all, self destruction of individuals by their own weakness. I believe you have valid answers to life’s toughest questions.”

Human life is often described to be a sum total of problems, and Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s sublime life was a repository of legitimate solutions. His life and works were a panacea for those bruised and maimed in the battles of daily life. Like the thirsty and parched, who soothed themselves with the cool waters of a pure, flowing river, the young and old, poor and rich, labourer and manager, all quenched their life’s thirst for peace and happiness from the great liberating river of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life.

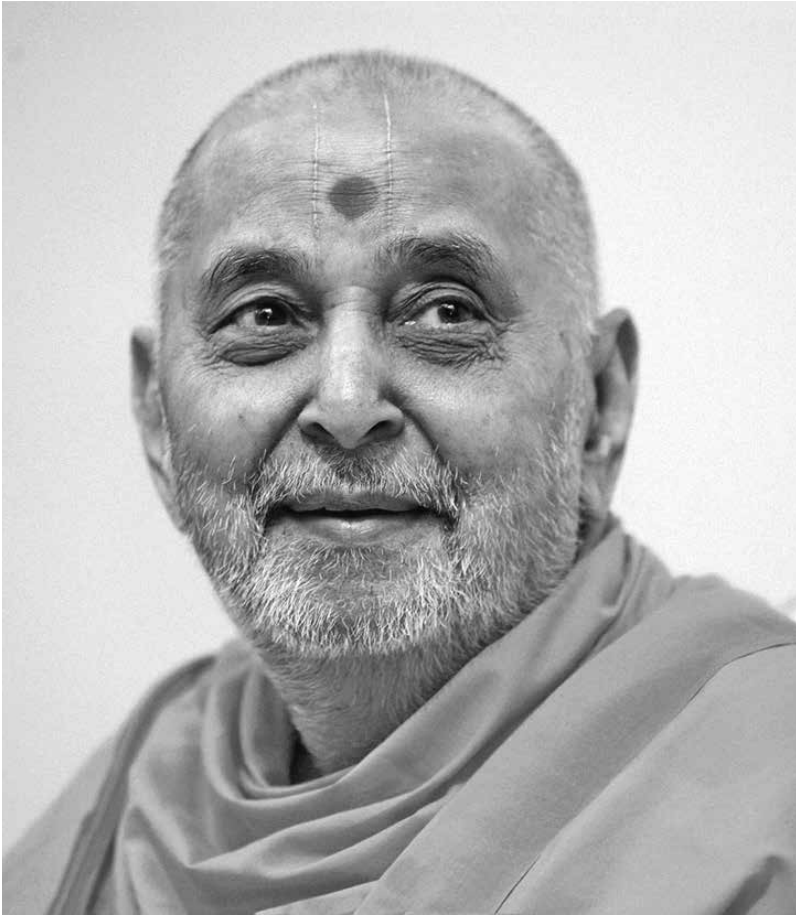
“I’ve never ever thought of doing bad to anyone.” These words of Pramukh Swami

Maharaj were not merely a sacred utterance, but his perennial way of life and work.

His greatness and glory was not only defined by his recognitions and honours, but more so in being enshrined in the hearts of countless. From presidents to the unlettered farmers, all declared they had been inspired by the profound lessons of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's divine life. Pramukh Swami Maharaj always remained humble and belonged to even the lowest of the low.

This small book, Pramukh Swami Maharaj: 100 Inspiring Experiences, a translation of the Gujarati version, 'Shatdal Pramukh-Parimal', contains 100 inspiring and enlightening experiences from the great life of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. They will help one to understand and be guided to solve life's issues and challenges, and to also experience peace and happiness, love for Bhagwan and compassion for humanity.

Come and savour these wonderful experiences.



“In the joy of others lies our own,
In the good of others rests our own,
In the progress of others lies our own.”

It was 13 June 1988. The day when Pramukh Swami Maharaj was invited to the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa.

As soon as Swamishri arrived, Hon. John Frazer, the Speaker of the Parliament, announced, “I wish to draw the attention of the parliamentary members to the distinguished presence in the gallery of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Head of the Swaminarayan Mission...”

All the members of parliament gave a big round of applause to welcome the guest. They looked eagerly towards the gallery, waiting to see the honourable guest. The occasion was special because the Canadian Parliament was going to honour a Hindu guru for the first time.

Surprisingly, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not rise from his chair after the announcement. In fact, he was explaining to the swami holding the *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj to stand up first. Subsequently, all the parliamentary members first had the darshan of Bhagwan and thereafter of Swamishri.

The successes that Pramukh Swami Maharaj had attained in his life would fill reams of paper:

In 45 years as the guru, he created 1,100 mandirs.

In 45 years, he initiated 1,000 youths into swamis.

He was honoured in many parliaments of other countries.

During his address at the United Nations in New York during the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religions and Spiritual Leaders, he spoke about dharma on behalf of 1 billion Hindus.

He successfully helmed the numerous BAPS social services.

One would be astonished by the inventory of his other works. He accomplished all of them in a short span of time, and that too with a formal education of up to only sixth standard. He executed all his works without any bias, and with equanimity, dynamism, love, detachment, humility and many other virtues.

On pondering about all his works, Swamishri was once asked in a question-answer session, “What is the essence of the successes you have attained?”

Pramukh Swami Maharaj replied, “There is only one essence – in having the single thought of how I can please my guru. After having met the genuine guru I shaped my life according to his commands [*agna*]. The main reason behind the progress [or success] attained is the guru’s *rajipo* [joy], his *drishtti* [grace] and his *ashirwad* [blessings].”

3

ALWAYS CALM



Someone asked Swamishri, “You remain calm and stable in the face of honour and insult, as if nothing has happened. What thought or attitude allows you to remain equipoised in such situations?”

He replied, “When Bhagwan and the guru remain pleased or happy in times of insult and honour one should also behave with joy and happiness in such times. In so doing, one remains unaffected. One should believe that

everyone else [those who insult or criticize] knows and understands, whereas I do not. Also, believe that all are senior to me and I am small and insignificant. By having such feelings one will not think that one has been insulted or honoured. So, one should not be pained by that, and one should never think about it. Then, one will remain undisturbed.”

4

BHAGWAN’S DARSHAN?



“I have a question,” asked a youth after the evening satsang assembly in Rajkot.

Swamishri said, “Ask.”

The youth enquired, “Have you seen Bhagwan?”

Swamishri spontaneously replied, “Yes I have, and that is why I experience joy, and also talk about him.”

The youth clarified, “You see Bhagwan in reality before you.”

“Yes, in reality.”

“Then, show him to me.”

“You cannot see him just like that. One has to have faith in the guru’s words and keep

striving [on the spiritual path]. I see Bhagwan in the guru.”

On another occasion, a journalist in Borsad asked a similar question to Swamishri, “When did you first experience Bhagwan?”

Swamishri replied, “I have his experience from the beginning.”

5 A LESSON IN SEVA



Once, during his *vicharan*, Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s stay was arranged in a newly constructed home in Anand. The bathroom and toilet walls were cladded with tiles of mosaic designs. But due to the recently completed work the tiles had colour stains and cement stuck on them.

After Swamishri used the attached bathroom and toilet, he started cleaning the tiles with his hands. When an attendant saw Swamishri he tried to stop him, “Swami, leave it. I will clean them.” Then, he added, “Why put in so much effort when we will be staying here for only one-and-a-half days!”

On hearing this, Pramukh Swami Maharaj

replied, “We should not leave it like this. The tiles must be cleaned. We should clean the house before we leave and return it in a much better condition than before. That will be our *seva*.”

6 CARING FOR ONE WHO SERVED HIM

In 1985, the BAPS in London had organized the Cultural Festival of India (CFI). A mini-spiritual township, called Swaminarayan Nagar, was created to give a glimpse of India’s glorious heritage. Every evening, wonderful stage programmes enlightened the audience with India’s wisdom, music and cultural dances.

Pratapsinh Parmar served Pramukh Swami Maharaj by driving Swamishri daily from his residence to the festival venue. Every afternoon, Swamishri would tell Pratapsinh to sit for lunch before him.

On 1 August 1985, Swamishri did not see Pratapsinh during lunchtime. So, Swamishri phoned him and said, “Bapu, I am waiting for you. Your plate is ready. I have not started eating lunch. I’ll do so once you join us.”

It was 12.40 p.m. when Swamishri phoned

him, and he waited for him till 2.10 p.m. Thereafter, Swamishri rang him again and Pratapsinh replied, “Bapa, I think I’ll be late today in finishing my work, therefore have your lunch.”

Only then did Swamishri take his first morsel.

7 INSPIRING VALUES

In 2009, a volunteer serving in the tribal areas in the Dahod region described to Pramukh Swami Maharaj about the difficulties and hardships that the sadhus were facing. He said, “The tribal region here is so backward that when our sadhus go for home visits [*padhramanis*] they do not get enough donations to pay for their transport expenses.”

Swamishri replied, “We have to spend from our own resources for *vicharan* in this region. Our purpose for travelling here is to inspire values and faith in their lives and not for getting donations. It is a big thing that they become moral and spiritual. When they give up addictions they will progress in their lives. That

should be our purpose of *vicharan* here.”

In 1997, Swamishri was doing *vicharan* in the tribal villages of the Surat region – Dedvasan, Gopla, Vanchkui and others – in spite of the rains and other difficulties. He entered the tribal villagers’ huts by stooping low and sanctified them. At that time a poor tribal donated Rs. 1.25 and said, “Bapa, I am giving you all that I have.”

In reply, Pramukh Swami Maharaj said, “Since all of you have given up addictions and are offering bhakti to Bhagwan, you have given me donations worth hundreds of thousands of rupees.”

8 INSISTED UPON USING THE OLD FRAME



In 1980, Swamishri had his cataract operations in Boston, USA. Subsequently, the optical numbers of his glasses had changed. So, to get them changed, Swamishri’s spectacles were given to a devotee. On returning the spectacles the devotee had also changed the old frame with an expensive new one.

On seeing it, Swamishri asked, “Why did you buy this new frame?”

“Bapa, it will look good on you.”

But Swamishri insisted upon using his old frame.

However, the devotee sweetly pressed Swamishri to use the new frame. Then, Swamishri asked him, “Do I have to see through the optical glasses or the frame!”

On hearing this, the devotee became silent and complied to Swamishri’s wish.

Swamishri used his old, simple and cheap spectacle frame.

9

FOR THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN

The BAPS boys’ hostel (*chhatralaya*) in Ukai, Gujarat, provided residential facilities and meals free of cost to tribal school students.

Once, Swamishri visited the hostel. During his round he enquired from the administrators, “What items do you serve for breakfast?”

“*Bateta-pauva*, grams, milk and other things.”

“What type of milk do you serve?”

“It’s made from milk powder.”

“Do all the students like it?”

“If someone doesn’t like it then he won’t drink it.”

Swamishri suggested, “We should serve them cow or buffalo milk, so that no one remains without having it. One should not provide anything that spoils the children’s health. Take proper care by giving nutritious food, so that their health remains good. They should also study well and be inspired with values.

“It doesn’t matter if we need to spend more for that.”

Then, Swamishri saw the blankets on each of the students’ beds. He added, “These blankets are coarse and thick because they are meant to keep them warm. But, have cloth covers for each blanket, so that when the students cover themselves their cheeks won’t get abraded or hurt.”

Swamishri’s care and instructions for the welfare of the children touched all.

In 1997–98, the regions of Saurashtra were under the grip of a severe drought. At that time, Pramukh Swami Maharaj addressed the BAPS

Sanstha's administrators of the educational activities, "Go and survey the situation of the homes of students studying in our schools in Gondal and Bhadra. Which of their parents are labouring in the relief work to earn a living? If both parents are labouring and barely making a living, how can they pay for their children's school fees? Therefore, return the school fees for this year and do not take it for the next academic year. Get their uniforms made and also give them notebooks and textbooks free of cost. If they require food rations, give it to them. If they hesitate to take all this then go to their homes to deliver it in order to maintain their pride. Do not worry about the expenses. Bhagwan takes care of everything for us."

10

A ROSE IN REPLY TO A THORN



Swamishri was recuperating at a devotee's home in Mumbai after being operated for a benign tumour. One day, a high-ranking government official came and met Swamishri. Out of his deep-rooted prejudice he started angrily hurling abuses and false accusations

at Swamishri. When he was supposed to have asked about Swamishri's wellbeing the official had lost all bearings of basic courtesy.

Swamishri, however, remained quiet and allowed him to vent his thoughts and feelings. Swamishri did not give any clarifications and also restrained other swamis from censuring him.

Two years after this incident, Swamishri was in Nairobi, and so was the government official who had insulted him. On knowing that Swamishri was there the official went to meet him. Swamishri was presiding over a satsang assembly. On seeing the official, Swamishri got up from his seat and honoured him with a garland. Then, Swamishri told him to sit next to him on the stage. When the leading devotees of satsang *mandals* from England and Africa came to Swamishri, Swamishri stood up to introduce them to the official.

Furthermore, Swamishri addressed the assembly to help the official who was having a hard time in accomplishing the work he had come for. In addition, the surprising thing was that the person was no longer serving in any government position at that time.

In 1978, the youths of the Mumbai Yuvak Mandal had organized a grand welcome assembly in Mumbai for Swamishri after his return from a satsang tour abroad. The programme included an interesting cultural programme with entry tickets for all. The earnings from the show would be used to pay for the expenses of the programme.

Prior to the commencement of the show, the entire hall was occupied by devotees before the ticket owners came. Subsequently, the ticket owners protested angrily outside the hall. The manager of the hall became worried and told the youths, “You calm down the situation or else I’ll call the police.”

The youths became anxious and rushed to inform Swamishri who was watching the programme inside the hall. Instantly, Swamishri got up and came outside the hall and humbly apologized, “I ask for your forgiveness. It is my mistake. We will arrange a special programme for you all.”

On hearing Swamishri’s words, everyone

calmed down and dispersed quietly. The youths who had organized the programme felt ashamed and guilty. They regretted, “Swamishri took their mistake upon himself and also apologized on the occasion of his own welcome assembly.”

After the programme was over, Swamishri returned to the mandir in Dadar. At that time the youths expressed their regrets to Swamishri. Swamishri answered obligingly, “You all do *seva* so shouldn’t I do this much for you!”

12 THE SAME HANDS

Yogiji Maharaj sent Pramukh Swami on his behalf to perform the *murti-pratishtha* of the *hari* mandir in Kantharia (district: Surendranagar). Pramukh Swami was also the main speaker of the three-day discourse (*parayan*) organized there.

One day, after delivering a discourse, Pramukh Swami passed by the kitchen. He saw a swami rolling puris and frying them single-handedly. Pramukh Swami instantly discerned that the swami was finding it difficult to manage two things together. So, he immediately entered

the kitchen, pulled an empty oil tin can to sit on and started frying the puris.

The very hands that were going to perform the *murti-pratishtha* rituals were now frying the puris! The speaker who had delivered a discourse from a holy seat (*vyas pith*) was now sitting on an empty tin can frying puris!

This tradition of doing humble *seva* as the president of a mega-organization continued even after Pramukh Swami became the spiritual head.

Once, after his appointment as guru, Swamishri was on an observation round in Gondal mandir. On arriving in the kitchen, he saw the large amount of dough for making chapattis, but there were not enough swamis to roll the pieces of dough. To ensure that the meals were completed on time to offer to Thakorji and the devotees Pramukh Swami Maharaj sat down and started rolling the pieces of dough.

The same hands that performed *seva* in running the BAPS did humble *seva* whenever an opportunity came his way.

13 TOLERATE PAIN

On 31 March 2011, Narayanmuni Swami was in a meeting with Swamishri. With reference to Swamishri's health, Narayanmuni Swami asked, "Bapa, how is your shoulder? Is it paining anymore!"

"Yes, it pains a little. Other than that there's nothing."

"That means it is paining!"

"But, what will happen by speaking about it? Simply tolerate it. By repeatedly talking about it the pain will never decrease," Swamishri stated.

"But if it pains a lot how can one tolerate it?"

"By grumbling, the pain will not get less; in fact it increases. And now with old age things like these will remain. So, one must understand this and remain happy. Believing it to be Bhagwan's doership, one must remain happy. Even if we try to do something, what can be done?"

"Everything happens by God's wish. By having such an understanding one will have

no problems. Otherwise, one who remains engrossed in the river of happiness and misery will be carried away.”

14 A TRIBAL’S REQUEST



Everyone was trying to decipher the illegible letter. In spite of much effort, no one could make head or tails of the letter and neither could anyone make out the name or village of the writer. Swamishri also took great pains to read the letter, but it proved to be useless. In the end, Swamishri’s sharpness enabled him to recognize the village name on the post office stamp. The postcard had come from the village of Hingatiya, near Khedbrahma.

Then, Swamishri rang the swami travelling in that region. But the swami could not be contacted because he was away doing *vicharan*. Finally, when the swami got the message, he contacted Swamishri. Swamishri informed him, “I have received a letter from Hingatiya village, which falls in your region. However, the letter is illegible. Find out who has written the letter and what does he require. Then, inform me

about it.”

The swami enquired and searched for the person who had written the letter. Finally, he got the information that he was a tribal named Reshma Parghi. He was a tyrant a year ago, but during his one-and-a-half minute contact with Swamishri he had totally given up his vices and criminal activities. Reshma had written to Swamishri to get the water hand-pump in his village repaired.

On learning about the details, Swamishri told the swami, “You personally go to his farm and check the hand-pump and get it repaired. If required, get a new hand-pump installed.”

It’s amazing that Reshma, a tribal, had trust in Swamishri to get his work done! And Swamishri, regardless of Reshma being a tribal, heard his call and made great efforts to help him.

15 SWAMISHRI’S EQUANIMITY



In 2002, the cruel and mindless terrorist attack on Akshardham in Gandhinagar had shocked and agitated countless people in India

and abroad. The attack started in the evening and carried on till late night. Anxiety hung heavily in the air in Akshardham as to what would happen and the repercussions thereof in Gujarat.

When Swamishri was informed in Sarangpur about the terrorist attack he was presiding over a meeting about the BAPS's rehabilitation projects in the aftermath of the 2001 earthquake in Kutch. He informed those in the meeting about the attack and then started praying for the situation to return to normal, that no more lives be lost and no further damage takes place. Thereafter, Swamishri instructed the senior and other swamis to rush to Akshardham to help bring the crisis under control.

A few minutes later, there was a phone call from the Chief Minister's office asking for blessings to successfully flush out and capture the terrorists.

Immediately thereafter, Swamishri became engaged in another meeting, discussing about the construction work of a hospital, students' hostel and a mandir in Surat.

Later, during an interview with TV

channels, Swamishri appealed to all to maintain peace in the state and not react in an adverse way.

At that time, everyone witnessed Swamishri's equanimity as described in the Bhagavad Gita.

16 IT WAS NOT SALT, BUT...

After having lunch, Pramukh Swami Maharaj routinely gargled with salt water. His attendant would give him the glass of salt water. One day, while gargling, Swamishri asked the attendant twice, "Is there salt in it!"

"Yes, I've added salt from a new pack into the bottle used for you," the attendant replied.

On hearing his answer, Swamishri did not ask anything further. He finished gargling by using all the water. Thereafter, because Swamishri had questioned him twice, the attendant swami decided to check whether he had added salt or something else. He went to the kitchen and tasted what he had filled the bottle with. To his shock and surprise he found it was not salt but crystals of citric acid (*limbu*

na ful).

Swamishri had not uttered a single word about it and never mentioned this incident again.

17 IT WAS KNOWN IN THE MORNING THAT...



That night, the cold was bone-chilling. Jagdish, a youth travelling with Swamishri, had caught a fever. His friend, Rajendra, was searching for a blanket so that he could cover him up to ward off the chill. But it was 12 midnight and pitch dark. Rajendra failed to find a quilt, and he was worried on seeing Jagdish shivering and whining.

At that time, Swamishri himself climbed the stairs to the first floor and came to the room where the youths were staying. He had a quilt in his hand. While giving it to Rajendra he said, “Here, take it and spread it over him.”

Before Rajendra could ask, “How Swamishri had come to know about the need for a quilt?” Swamishri had left. However, the next morning, the youths realized that Swamishri had given

his own quilt for Jagdish, whereas he had slept the whole night covering himself with only his upper cloth (*gatariyu*).

18 HIS DEEPLY CARING NATURE



A total of 1.8 million people provided hot meals...

4,190 homes reconstructed in 15 adopted villages...

49 schools built for the benefit of 15,000 students...

91,000 patients treated free of cost...

409 villages and towns provided relief materials and

2,250 people provided equipments to assist them in their daily work...

These statistics are merely a glimpse of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's relief and rehabilitation work in the aftermath of the 2001 earthquake in Kutch, Gujarat. During the relief work a total of over 900,000 food packets were distributed. Pramukh Swami Maharaj had visited the BAPS mandirs where the food packets were being made. On seeing a packet

being filled with 150 grams of *ganthiya* and 75 grams of *bundi*. Swamishri suggested, “Add two pickled chillies in each packet. It will make the snacks tasty to eat.”

Swamishri’s sentiments were not restricted to only fulfilling the hunger of those afflicted, but to also give them satisfaction and joy.

During the relief work, a total of over 250,000 kg of wheat flour was used for making the meals. Swamishri had instructed the swami looking after the kitchen, “Prior to grinding the wheat grains into flour take proper care to clean and sift the dirt and stones.”

Swamishri not only cared about serving tasty food to the earthquake victims, but also made sure that they got proper healthy food.

19

SWAMISHRI APOLOGIZES IN SPITE OF...



In 1987, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had embarked upon a pilgrimage of the holy places visited by Bhagwan Swaminarayan with a group of 450 swamis and devotees. The planning and arrangements for this pilgrimage was made two

months in advance.

Some time later, a person living in Romford, London, wrote a bitter letter to Swamishri. The letter said, “You should not have gone on a pilgrimage with such a large group. My pilgrimage coincided with yours. And, because of that, we faced problems in acquiring lodgings at every place. You made our family very unhappy.”

The question was who’s mistake was it? Was it of Swamishri and his group who had planned and organized the pilgrimage two months in advance or of the person who had not booked his lodgings for his pilgrimage beforehand?

In spite of the person’s mistake and negligence, Pramukh Swami Maharaj humbly replied, “I apologize for the discomfort and difficulties you had to face. If you had talked to us then we would have helped in making your arrangements. However, it was not our motive to make things uncomfortable and problematic for you.”



Once, Swamishri visited a dental clinic for an X-ray of his teeth. While the preparations were being made Swamishri sat in the waiting room reading letters from devotees.

When everything was ready, the dentist called Swamishri. But Swamishri was so absorbed in reading a letter that he continued reading it while he stood up. Then, he carried on reading it while he walked to the X-ray machine. He stopped reading it when the X-ray was being taken. Once it was over, he started reading another letter. In all, five X-rays were taken. During the interim period between each X-ray Swamishri read many letters.

Swamishri's habit of using every second purposefully was also seen during a public event organized by the Limbdi Municipal Corporation to honour him. In this event, as the mayor of the town was approaching Swamishri to present him with a citation, Swamishri was engrossed in reading a letter. Once the citation was offered, Swamishri resumed reading the letter.

21 “I AM SET EVERYWHERE...”

It was the last day of Swamishri’s stay at the Bochasan Mandir. Several swamis had gathered around Swamishri and were engaged in a light conversation. One swami casually asked Swamishri, “You’ve stayed here for quite a long time. After being set here do you feel like going elsewhere?”

“Why not!” Swamishri replied, “I’m set everywhere. There’s no question of becoming set. Wherever I go, I do bhajan and deliver discourses. When one is set in listening to spiritual discourses (*katha varta*) it means one is set [in all things]. It is not the case that only certain places are conducive to me. Happiness means listening to discourses and doing *seva*. That is what is called being set. Understand?”

22 ALWAYS HAPPY

Once, the renowned novelist and journalist Harkishan Mehta of Mumbai asked Swamishri, “Is there any incident, which on recalling, makes you unhappy?”

“There’s no such incident! I am always joyful and happy,” Swamishri revealed.

“Has there been an occasion when you were angry on someone?”

“There’s no reason for getting angry. Every person is liable to err.”

“Is there an incident where you have told anyone off?”

“I do reprimand, but with love and care so that the person gets inspired in the right way. I tell him so that he does not feel hurt and get depressed.”

“When someone criticizes you, then what?”

“I do not care about it. As long as I am true to Bhagwan let people say what they want! They say it out of ignorance, so some day they will realize [that they were wrong].”

“Do you ever feel like clarifying any critical remarks directed at you?”

“Not even the slightest!”

23

THE DAY AFTER HIS HEART ATTACK...



On 4 July 2011, Bharuch. Swamishri

reclined on his bed at night to sleep. Till then, there were no adverse signs in his health. If there were, then Swamishri had not voiced them to anyone.

However, the medical experts were shocked on checking Swamishri's pulse. The worrying and erratic pulse rate was an imminent sign of danger and that something terrible was happening to his heart. On further investigation, it became clear that at 90 years Pramukh Swami Maharaj was suffering his second heart attack. Emergency treatment was given and expert doctors soon arrived. They all unanimously decided, "The next 72 hours are critical. Therefore, Swamishri must take complete bed rest. The slightest movement may prove to be fatal for him."

However, the next morning, Swamishri expressed, "I want to go to the mandir for Thakorji's darshan."

The doctors strongly advised against it and refused. But Swamishri still went for darshan. He eagerly did darshan of Thakorji as per his daily routine, without the slightest trace of worry or haste. The following morning, in spite

of the heavy rains, Swamishri went for darshan with the same ease and joy. He also continued his darshan routine on the third day.

Everyone realized that Swamishri's heart was damaged, but he had not relaxed his bhakti towards Bhagwan.

24

A LESSON IN WHAT NOT TO WRITE

Shri Ajay Umat, a renowned journalist, came for Swamishri's blessings. At that time he recalled, "During the opening ceremony of Akshardham in New Delhi, a government official had stated, 'If someone were to inform me that he had one day in India, I would tell him to visit Akshardham first. And, if he had two days, then I would tell him to visit the Taj Mahal the next day.' Then, with reference to these words, I wrote in my column, 'Akshardham beats the Taj Mahal!'

"After reading this, you told me, 'Don't write about beating the Taj Mahal. We have created [Akshardham] for the good of all people, and not to downgrade anyone or anything. We have made it out of our bhakti

for and to fulfil the wish of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. We have not made it to compete with someone else's work.' I was deeply touched by your sentiments.

“Furthermore, while you were meeting people I saw you were passionately talking to a person to give up his addiction. I realized then that the importance you give to Akshardham, that same importance you were giving in helping the person give up his addiction. I am amazed about the immense interest you give for a small matter like de-addicting someone.”

25 CARING FOR ORDINARY PERSONS

The newly appointed six ministers of the Government of Gujarat came to Swamishri to receive his blessings before they commenced their duties. Swamishri honoured them all in a satsang assembly and presented mementos to them. Swamishri also gave *prasad* to their secretaries, security persons and drivers.

Dinner for all the six ministers was arranged in the mandir. However, Shri Mohansinh Rathwa, the minister for city councils, stood up to leave

because of other pre-arranged appointments. But, his driver could not be found. On finally locating him, it became known that Swamishri had arranged for the drivers and security guards to take dinner with the ministers. Then, Shri Mohansinh said, “Today, we have learnt from Swamishri to care for and give respect to even the most ordinary and insignificant person.”

26

PERSONALLY BLESSING THE TRIBAL DEVOTEES



On 3 March 2003, a public satsang assembly was arranged in Swamishri’s presence in Modasa. The tribal devotees from the remote areas of the Sabarkantha district had eagerly arrived for Swamishri’s darshan. On seeing them, Swamishri told the swami managing the assembly, “Arrange a separate assembly for the tribal devotees on the ground opposite our living quarters. Also, send a swami to address them. After attending the satsang assembly I will come over there. And make sure that no one else is present in the assembly.”

Then, Swamishri attended the public

satsang assembly in which renowned businessmen were present. After addressing them, Swamishri came to the tribal assembly and spoke to them about living a morally pure life, “I wanted to meet you all and so we have arranged this special assembly for you. It is not possible to meet you all in a public assembly, however, here I can see you, meet and talk to you from close quarters. Since I am unable to come to your homes, I felt I should meet you all when you have come here.”

Swamishri’s emotional words brought tears to everyone’s eyes. Then Swamishri said, “Now, all of you come to me one by one for darshan.” Then, Swamishri told the local swami acquainted with the tribals, “Introduce them to me as they pass by.”

In this way, Swamishri personally met and placed his hands on the heads of each of the 200 tribals and blessed them. He also gave instructions to give them *prasad*.

27 REMAIN HUMBLE



Once, while Swamishri was having a light

discussion with swamis at the Ahmedabad mandir he shared his feelings, “We do not want credit for anything we do. What we are doing we will keep doing. There is no point in making a show of what we are not doing. Instead of doing that, it would be better to do *mala* and bhajan! We do not want any importance, and neither do we want to take it.

“Yogiji Maharaj used to say, ‘*Nāne se ho nānā rahiye...* [Remain smaller than the small...].’ There is no need to boast, ‘Only Pramukh Swami Maharaj can build Akshardham, otherwise no one has the capacity and strength to do it!’ There is no problem in remaining small and humble. Also, there is no need to announce the donations we make to other organizations. We have come to worship and pray to Bhagwan. That bliss is worth taking.”

28

AN HONEST ACCOUNT OF EVERY PAISA



One of the satsang centres had collected funds for relief work in the aftermath of a tsunami. Since the total amount of funds

was not substantial the leaders of that village advised the devotees, “Use the tsunami fund for the construction work of your mandir.”

When the devotees informed Pramukh Swami Maharaj about it Swamishri clearly stated, “The funds for the tsunami cannot be used for the BAPS Sanstha. The funds received for a specific purpose should be used for that only. Every paisa received and used should be accounted for honestly and transparently. The same account must be given to the government as well. Even if we receive ₹5 the amount should be used for social service.”

29 A SMALL THING

One day, when Swamishri's car left the outskirts of Nadiad he became engrossed in reading the letters of devotees. Swamishri came across a long letter with many pages. While turning a page the paper clip holding the pages came off and fell down. So, Swamishri placed the pages to one side and bent down to search for the paper clip in the folds of his *dhotiyu* and also by his feet.

Swamishri saw the paper clip lying between his feet. To retrieve it, Swamishri took the large envelope of that letter, held the cover sideways with both hands, and scooped up the paper clip. Then, Swamishri placed it inside the cover so that it could be used again.

Swamishri had the habit of saving and using even the smallest of things.

30

AMAZING DETAIL FOR CARE AND CONCERN



Once, during Swamishri's stay in Gandhinagar he visited the artificial pond created in the Akshardham garden. The swami looking after the gardens informed Swamishri, "Ducks will be placed to swim in the ponds."

"Real ones or toy ducks?" Swamishri asked amusingly.

"No, real ducks."

Thereafter, Swamishri started enquiring in detail, "From where will you acquire the ducks? Have you thought about their food before bringing them here? And have you made arrangements for cages that are suitable for

them? Before bringing them here think fully about their arrangements and care. Otherwise, they will have to face difficulties.”

Swamishri’s detailed care and concern for the ducks not only touched all but were an eye-opener for all enthusiasts taking care of animals.

31 HE NEVER GOT FED UP



Once, a swami asked Swamishri, “Bapa, do you get fed up of writing letters or in reading them?”

“In neither of them. It is devotion to Thakorji. Where is the question of getting fed up? Wherever I have to write, I write; and whenever it’s time to read, I read. A businessman dealing in cloths shows reams of cloth yet does he ever get fed up! Similarly, I do not get fed up.”

“But a businessman gets profits, money and sees the benefits. So, he never gets fed up. What benefit or gain lies in writing letters?”

“One experiences the bliss of Bhagwan’s *murti*!” replied Swamishri.

Someone asked another question, “When

you accomplish a good work, don't you get fed up when people speak unfavourably about it? Don't you feel like giving it up and stop doing any other work?"

Swamishri explained, "One who wants to please Bhagwan never gets fed up or bored. Whatever work we have taken up to do is not for our own self, but for the sake of Bhagwan. By having such an understanding one doesn't get fed up. Otherwise, one gets upset."

32 ALWAYS BURDEN-FREE



Once, the youths at the Vidyanaagar Chhatralaya were engaged in a discussion with Swamishri. Someone asked Swamishri, "When we get any responsibility we become mentally tensed. Whereas, in your case, in spite of having many responsibilities and activities, you seem light as a feather. What is the reason behind this?"

"The reason is that [I believe] I am not the doer. Bhagwan is the all-doer. Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj are doing everything. When you feel 'I am doing it' then your tension

increases. So, I am not shouldering the task; I am following his instruction. Thus, by obeying his instruction he protects us. Whether the result is good or otherwise Bhagwan is still the all-doer. By understanding this single thing I do not feel any burden. Accept whatever that comes your way due to his wish.”

The youths asked another question, “When we are honoured we feel joyous and proud. However, what thought do you get when you are being honoured?”

“I cannot even break a baked *papad*. [Bhagwan is the all-doer, so] it is Bhagwan who is being honoured. Having obeyed his commands and pleased him, all the honour [given to me] is all due to him. People honour and call me by believing that I am His. Otherwise, who would call me? Therefore, keep the motive of how to obey Shriji Maharaj’s commands and how to please others, and remain a humble servant while doing your work.”

Swamishri revealed his thoughts about believing Bhagwan to be the all-doer in order to feel burden-free.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's discourse to a BAPS volunteer can be applied for successfully running a house, family and also a country. The discourse is called the 'Management Gita'. It is as follows.

“You are doing good work, and have done so [in the past]. Your opponents also know about it. It is due to one's *swabhavs* [base instincts] that differences and conflicts arise. And once there is opposition [against you], others do not see what is right or wrong. Hence, always take everyone's advice [those who are concerned] and proceed ahead. Be on good terms with everyone. Speak to and invite everyone generously. If you do this, you will progress in your work.

“One's base nature [*swabhav*] is the cause of opposition [in life]. Because of harsh speech one hurts another's ego. One should talk politely and calmly. If one doesn't want to do someone's work then at least listen twice to what he wants to say. This will satisfy him. The reason for this being that the people from whom one has to get work done are of different natures and

inclinations. One cannot expect all to follow or do what one wishes. So, when one humbly does one's work, one can win everyone's mind. What a difference there is between saying, 'Father's wife' and 'Mother'! One should learn to speak politely.

“When someone comes to you with a complaint, instead of refusing him, say 'I'll look into it and think about it'. Half the work will be done when one exercises self-control in one's speech. Forget the opposition of those who are against you and behave well with them, and also take their advice. Then, they will start supporting you. So, if anyone has done anything [against you], don't be bitter towards him. By being bitter no work will be accomplished. Be calm and peaceful while talking to him.

“During a meeting, when you allow others to talk 50 percent of the time, then they will listen to you. So, deal with others in such a way that there are no conflicts and arguments. Work with a compromising nature. One does not become small by taking another's advice. To the contrary, one's greatness increases. So, keep these things in mind.”

On the day after Yogiji Maharaj's earthly departure to Akshardham Pramukh Swami Maharaj asked the swami taking care of the farm in Gondal mandir, "Senior swamis and trustees of the Sanstha have decided to cremate Yogiji Maharaj's mortal body on the ground where wheat has been grown. So, what is your opinion?"

The swami replied, "Swami, you are the head of the BAPS Sanstha. I am your servant. Whatever you decide must be okay. You do not have to ask me."

"You had sowed the wheat grains and put in great efforts. So, I have to ask you," Swamishri explained.

Swamishri's humility and straightforwardness moved the swami's heart.

Swamishri instructed him, "For the present, cut half of the wheat crop growing by the compound wall near the roadside. Let the crop growing by the water tank be as it is. If the need arises, then it can be cut."

Furthermore, Swamishri asked, "Since the

wheat crop is green can it be used as fodder for the cattle?”

“They would eat it for two to three days but not more than that,” the swami replied.

“Then, once the wheat crop is cut load the fodder into a tractor and transport it to the cow shelter in the town and also give some to the street cows. At least they would get green fodder for the day.”

The swami was astonished about Swamishri’s calm composure while taking detailed decisions in spite of the sad departure of guru Yogiji Maharaj.

35 TALK DAILY...

On 3 October 1980, a child asked Swamishri in Boston, “Swami, have you ever talked with Bhagwan?”

“Yes. I talk to him daily,” Swamishri replied.

36 THE WAY BHAGWAN TALKS

Once, a youth in Mumbai asked Swamishri, “Swami, how does Bhagwan talk to you?”

“The way you talk with me,” Swamishri replied.

37 THINKING OF BHAGWAN AND OTHERS’ WELFARE



On 27 June 1994, Orlando, three Americans came to meet Swamishri. One of them asked, “Have you ever had a bad thought?”

“I get thoughts about Bhagwan. I also get thoughts about others’ welfare,” Swamishri answered.

“Have you ever sinned?”

“Where is the question of sinning! I have satsang since the day I was born.”

38 SWAMISHRI’S EQUANIMITY



In Bhavnagar, Swamishri was reading letters by devotees. There was a light bulb on a wall behind him. For some reason the bulb dislodged from the socket and fell onto Swamishri’s neck and slipped down from his shoulders. Though the bulb was hot, Swamishri had remained undisturbed while reading a letter, as if nothing

had happened.

When Swamishri finished reading the letters, the swamis informed him about what had happened. To everyone's surprise Swamishri asked, "When did the bulb fall?"

On hearing this someone praised, "Your equanimity is amazing!"

Swamishri clarified, "With [my] mind in Bhagwan, how could I have known?"

All were awed by Swamishri's divine state of mind.

39

CALMING A TROUBLED FATHER

"We don't understand what mistakes we have made. Our son is misbehaving day by day. He beats his mother. He also behaves and speaks rudely with me. He gets angry and sulks in little matters. We have both always showered our love on him and fulfilled all his wishes. Yet, his adverse behaviour makes us feel bitter towards life."

The father's words revealed the bitter unrest between him and his son. Swamishri consoled him and asked, "Have you lapsed in

your duty as a parent?” “No, Swamiji.”

“Have you ever hurt him in any way?”

“Not even once! Except, whenever he beats his mother I’ve scolded him.”

“Look, you have done all your duties well. You have not hurt him in any way. So, it is not your fault when he starts beating, insulting or behaving erratically! It’s all due to yours and his [past] karmas. He has come to settle a score of his karmas with you. Once it is done, things will return to normal. You are not at fault. And, there’s no need to think that whatever has happened is because of your mistake.

“Offer prayers. Bhagwan is on your side, so you remain peaceful. Don’t listen to what others say. Everything will turn out to be fine.”

Swamishri’s soothing words calmed the distraught father and revived hope and joy in him.

40

A SOLUTION IN ONE MINUTE



“Help us solve our problem. The issue is about distributing a fair share of our parental property and belongings between the two

brothers,” appealed the members of a family to Swamishri. Swamishri replied happily, “It can be solved in one minute.”

The family members smiled with joy and hope, and uttered “Wonderful!”

Then, Swamishri revealed, “If you give up your mind’s resolve it will be solved in one minute! But no one gives up his own decisions! One should give up one’s wilfulness instantly and do what one is told. Your father earned a lot, but after passing away, did he take anything with him? Then, what are you going to take away? You are not poor. You have also earned a lot. So, you should say, ‘Brother, you take everything.’ But one is not able to say that. That is why the problem remains unsolved.”

41 FOR ALL FATHERS AND HUSBANDS



Daniel Cook, an industrialist in Utah, USA, asked Swamishri, “How can I become an ideal father and husband!”

Swamishri replied, “One has to follow the rules and regulations and have harmony (*samp*) in the home. Then, to sustain the love

between you and your wife one has to learn to give and take. Spend time with your children and wife. Sit daily with them and have a family assembly (*ghar sabha*). Cut down your time in watching TV, sit casually with your family and read good books.”

42 ONE HAS TO UNDERSTAND THIS...

A devotee came to Swamishri with a proposal for his son’s re-marriage. Swamishri advised him about the type of behaviour and relationship he should have with his daughter-in-law. Swamishri said, “It’s fine to bring a daughter-in-law into your home, but you must know how to enable her to get set in your home. Your wife and two daughters have their own habits and natures (*swabhavs*). When your daughter-in-law arrives at your home you must accept her to be like your own daughter and deal harmoniously [*samp*] with her. If she doesn’t know how to do something, then teach her kindly.

“You work according to your old nature and style and your daughter-in-law is from the modern era, so how can things work out

[between you]? Therefore, first try to match your nature. You have to let go a bit. Tell her softly and lovingly, then she will remain in high spirits. But when you show no affection towards her then how can she feel like standing before you? She, too, requires warmth and sympathy. Then, as the years go by both of you will become set with each other's nature."

43 HOW TO OVERCOME A BROKEN HEART



"I'm in love with a girl. However, due to her parents' pressure she got married to someone else. I cannot bear to see her go elsewhere. I want to marry her only. If that is not possible I will commit suicide. I'll not disturb her, but die instead. I'm ready to wait for not one but one hundred births to marry her. Give me your blessings and have compassion upon me."

The youth, overwhelmed by passion, stood appealing before Swamishri.

Swamishri remained silent on seeing his infatuation. Then, he gently stated, "This must have happened by God's wish. Understand this

and go ahead with your life, because therein lies your good.”

Swamishri’s words were difficult to digest. The youth added, “I get a lot of negative thoughts!”

“They will remain for some time because of your passion. However, they will disappear from your mind. Forget about it all and you’ll experience peace. Whatever that has happened is for your good. In future, you both may have faced problems, so God deemed it unacceptable from now. Therefore, peacefully chant the name of Swaminarayan and do bhajan. It is for your good. Don’t think about suicide. Obey these words of mine and believe strongly from your heart that what God has done is for your benefit. Pray and forget whatever that has happened.”

44 GETTING RID OF ONE’S SWABHAVS GIVE PEACE



A woman from abroad sent a letter to Swamishri, saying, “My husband has stopped coming to the mandir since a long time. He talks about the faults of the devotees. I offer

my services as a volunteer [*karyakar*], but I, too, find faults in others. We quarrel a lot in the house. We find faults with each other and then fight. You had placed a *kanthi* around my husband's neck. I ask you to be merciful upon us.

“Out of my rage towards my children I behave like a beast. When my husband and I get angry, we lose control over what we say. Bless us so that we do not get angry.”

Swamishri tellingly smiled after reading the letter and said, “There will be peace only if one's *swabhavs* [base natures] are eradicated.” Then, Swamishri told the attendant to write, “Whenever you both get angry chant Swaminarayan, and one of you must leave the room temporarily.”

45 BHAGWAN IS THE ALL-DOER

After the birth of two daughters, a husband found out that his pregnant wife was expecting a third baby girl. He angrily blurted out to his wife, “You might as well die!” The wife could not bear her husband's insults anymore. So,

she wrote a letter to Swamishri, “If you want me to live then bless me with a son. And, if you do not wish me to have a son then take me to Dham!”

Another woman, who desired for a male child, wrote to Swamishri, “You had blessed my husband [for a male child] and thus you would liberate his family, his forefathers and the future generations. So, with faith in your blessings, we planned for another child after having a girl child. I, too, started doing daily puja and also prepared for the satsang exams. I had stopped eating onions and garlic and prayed [for a boy] at the Akshar Deri. But, Bhagwan has betrayed me – another baby girl was born! Those who sin still get a male child, whereas I, in spite of my faith and devotion, got this result! I am hurt, so now I’ve stopped doing puja.”

Swamishri’s answer to their problem was, “Bhagwan is the all-doer. Therefore, accept the result and you’ll be happy. The birth of a girl child makes her a member of your family. So, whatever that has happened is for your good. Stay in accordance with Shriji Maharaj’s *agna* [command], and do not think otherwise!”

Once, a couple, who had strongly desired for a male child, got a female baby. The father felt so bad that he cried by placing his head on Swamishri's lap. Swamishri soothed him, saying, "Believe that Lakshmiji has arrived, and be happy!"

46 WITH LOVE AND PEACE

“With regards to raising our child, my wife's and my opinions differ. When our child gets mischievous and troublesome I try to gently and lovingly correct him by making him understand. However, my wife punishes him for his minor mistakes by beating and scolding him. Because of this, differences arise between us. I don't know what to do.”

For such a difficult and sensitive issue Swamishri advised about how best to rear a child. He said, “A child is ignorant. One should talk to him with love as much as possible and explain to him calmly. He will improve and progress when dealt with love. By beating him, he won't improve and advance in life. So, try to correct him with love and explanations.”

47 FOR A HAPPY MARRIED LIFE

Aksharamrutam, a book in Gujarati, was being read before Swamishri. The reader read, “One should not argue with one’s own wife.”

Swamishri explained, “At home, one should not argue too much with one’s wife. Say sorry and let things pass. When you want to get some work done [from her] then do so gently and peacefully.”

Swamishri then smilingly added, “A wife must also cultivate the same understanding. She should also not enter into false arguments and learn to make compromises. Then, both will have a happy married life.”

48 SWAMISHRI’S ADVICE MENDS A BITTER RELATIONSHIP

On 19 June 2006, a distinguished person in Ahmedabad came to convey his appreciations to Swamishri. He expressed his indebtedness to Swamishri for making his life happy and harmonious, “About five to seven years ago, when I came for your darshan my family was broken

and devastated. There was no communication between me and my brothers. When I talked to you about this you advised me, ‘In spite of your brothers fighting with you, not coming to your home and not helping you, you should talk to them, go to their homes and help them in their social occasions.’

“I followed your advice. I looked after one of my brothers when he was in a hospital. As a result, there was a change in attitude among my other brothers. Presently, all my brothers have started coming to my home. Furthermore, I feel peaceful and happy in having served my brother.”

After hearing him, Swamishri said, “By being humble one experiences peace. Are we going to take any of our material things [after we die]?”

49 KEYS TO SUCCESS



A youth asked Swamishri, “What should a youth do to become successful?”

Swamishri replied, “Firstly, one must have faith in God.

“Secondly, read the scriptures and follow the moral rules and regulations prescribed by Bhagwan. Then, stay away from addictions and vices. Never commit adultery. Then, Bhagwan will be pleased and you will become successful. Keep the company of good people. You will progress by keeping good company in your social affairs, satsang and at work.”

50 FOR INNER PEACE



“I am from Lebanon. During a war there in 1975, I lost my mother and brothers. Whenever I remember this I become disturbed and grief-stricken. My heart feels burdened. My only question is ‘Why did God do this?’”

This question by Manzoor Hurani, a renowned engineer and architect of Houston, had been troubling him for a long time.

Swamishri defused his agitation, saying, “God is neutral and he does not side with anyone. He wants to do good to all.

“There is misery and pain because of a person’s nature, behaviour and ego. This pain comes and goes. However, one has to understand

that whatever God does is for one's good. No one knows how one is going to die, but death is inevitable. Because of one's feelings and attachment [to one's relatives] it is natural to experience pain and unhappiness. To overcome them one needs *jnan* [spiritual knowledge]. And, the more good works one does the more peaceful one's heart becomes. Keep doing the good work and God will be pleased, and you'll experience inner peace."

51

GITA FOR HOUSEHOLDERS



Advising two brothers in Surat, Swamishri provided golden guidance for family life, "You have all excelled through hard work. Now there is a dispute about wealth. But you should keep an open mind, sit together, understand each other and resolve the issues. If you seek mediation from outside, they are more interested in splitting you instead of uniting. By going to the courts, you will waste money and increase disharmony. If you are not united, that mindset develops in your children as well. So, be careful that does not happen. Money is not important.

What is important is that your love for each other remains. It is important that your family unity remains.

“So, when you are splitting your wealth, think about this. Nobody can prevent what is in your destiny. You will get what you are destined to get. So, instead of placing importance on money, give priority to family unity. If it is in their destiny, the children will also earn. So, leave that concern on God.”

52 NO ARGUMENTS, NO DOUBTS



A devotee was troubled by a situation faced by many. He asked Swamishri for a way out of the problem, “Is there a way to be free of tension?”

Swamishri replied, “Yes, the formula is to do as the guru says. No arguments, no doubts.”

53 APPEAL TO PLANT TREES



Swamishri received an anonymous note, “In today’s age, having the darshan of saints like you gives my eyes the joy of having met God. On the

day of Guru Purnima, I humbly request you to instruct every devotee to plant trees. Apart from you, nobody can make this earth into a heavenly garden. This is my humble request.”

This was an appeal to Swamishri, who had already inspired the planting of hundreds of thousands of trees. Yet, Swamishri remembered the request and after his blessings on Guru Purnima, he instructed the announcer, “Announce that all devotees take a *niyam* to plant a tree in their village, or the outskirts or anywhere convenient so that the environment benefits.”

54 TEAMWORK

The Janmashtami celebration had been organized in Swamishri’s presence in Altadra from 8.30 to 10.30 p.m.

When Swamishri enquired about it, the sadhus told him, “Let us know if you want to make any changes. We will do as you say.”

Swamishri replied, “No, not what I say, but what does everyone else say? It should not happen ‘as I say’, but what all agree upon.”

Swamishri's words reflected his team approach.

55 WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT?

A *satsangi* youth wanted to marry a girl from a different tradition and culture. His parents disapproved of the marriage, but, very reluctantly, they gave permission. The marriage was to take place in the near future. The youth had convinced and gotten permission from the girl that the wedding meals would be without onions and garlic. However, she insisted that she wanted to serve everyone biscuits made with eggs.

The youth came to Swamishri for guidance on how to resolve the issue. The youth said, "I think that to gradually draw her into satsang, this much should be allowed so that her feelings are not hurt."

The youth's words reflected his helplessness. Swamishri told him, "We do not eat meat. If she has agreed to give up onions and garlic, why does she not agree to this?"

"I feel that instead of saying no to her for

everything, we should let her do this to keep her happy.” The youth’s attempt to justify the idea again revealed his helplessness.

But Swamishri opened his eyes to the reality, “Just as you want to marry her, does she not have the same wish to marry you? To marry her, you have bypassed your parents’ wish and agreed to her wish, so would she not do this much for you? Explain to her that by serving such items will your status be enhanced? And if they are not served, will the marriage stop? The celebrations will be grand. I will pray; God will inspire her. What is more important? To eat or to observe *niyams* and dharma? By observing *niyams* and dharma, God is pleased. What does eating such food achieve?”

The confused youth left with renewed courage and determination.

56

A DIFFERENT ATTITUDE



Antwerp, Belgium; 8 April 1984. A spiritual seeker asked Swamishri, “When we clash with others, we see the faults in the other person. You know the faults of all, yet what thoughts do you

keep?”

Swamishri replied, “God and his Sadhu do not look at anyone’s faults. Knowing, yet ignoring; seeing, but turning a blind eye; hearing, but turning a deaf ear. The other person may have 99 faults, but he will have one virtue, won’t he?”

57 BE TRUTHFUL

Swamishri was sitting down for lunch while discussing the work of one of the Sanstha’s departments. The lead volunteer told Swamishri, “I always emphasize to the staff not to show more than we actually have.”

Agreeing, Swamishri instantly said, “That’s right. Never try to deceive the government or society. To do less is fine, but do not give incorrect figures.”

Swamishri never liked to boast, but to always remain humble and truthful.

58 OUR TECHNOLOGY

“Bapa! Look, this is our technology. This transparent capsule contains two cameras. Once a patient swallows this, the cameras take photos of the inside of the body and transmit them to the outside. This allows us to see the state of his intestines. So, now that I have shown you our technology, please show us your technology.”

After this request by a doctor from Chicago, Swamishri said, “Our technology is to become *aksharrup* and offer bhakti to Purushottam. Our true form is the *atma*, *akshar*, *brahman*. This understanding should be consolidated. The *atma* has no parents, no relatives. If you realize this, then you will be liberated from the clutches of *maya*.”

59 DIVINE WAY TO RESOLVE MISERIES AND PAIN

A devotee from Luton told Swamishri, “A devotee works in my shop. He has tremendous *nishtha*, but suffers from a severe leg problem. He is unable to stand much and has to go

every few days to the hospital for dressings. Why does God give such pain to devotees?" His concern for the devotee was evident.

Swamishri replied, "He may be a staunch devotee, but often he has to suffer his destiny. God allows him to suffer it all, so that he does not have to take birth again and attains Akshardham."

"Is there no other way for such a staunch devotee?"

"Deficiencies have to be removed! By giving such misery, God removes the devotee's attachment for the world, *maya* and his body. The devotee then pleads, 'O Lord! Please take me from here.' So, God gives misery for our good. All the deficiencies that remain in us are removed. We become pure, so our focus does not go anywhere except on God. Then, even while engaged in worldly duties, one's mind remains on God."

"What you say is right. But at least God should look at the plight of such staunch devotees."

"He certainly sees and wants to take him to Akshardham this time. When he becomes

pure then he will take him.”

Swamishri was compassionate towards the miseries of devotees, but he also clarified and consolidated true understanding.

60 FOREVER AND NEVER

Once, the sadhus asked Swamishri, “Which thought do you have continuously.”

“Of God.” Then, Swamishri added, “I will tell you which thought I have never had. I have never had a thought that others suffer. Only thoughts for the good of others.”

61 CALMLY MANAGING THE SANSTHA

In 2003, a devotee named Mangalbhai asked Swamishri, “How do you so calmly manage all these 500 mandirs and this vast Satsang that is spread around the world?”

Swamishri smiled on hearing this, folded his hands and said, “I do not manage them. Only God and guru are managing them. I do not believe that I am doing anything. God is the all-doer. When one believes that ‘I am doing this’, then

when a task is not done one becomes depressed. We should put in sincere effort. Then, whatever result God wants to give depends on him. And if he does not give success, we should firmly believe that even that is for our good.

“My guru had taught me that if you carry pots full of water on your head, you will constantly feel the weight. But if you dive into the water, tons of water flows over your head, yet you do not feel its weight. So, [remaining immersed in God and guru I believe] I am not doing anything. God and guru are doing everything. If one has ego and attachment, there is no end to suffering. So, I constantly believe that it is God and guru who are doing everything. This is how the Sanstha is being managed.”

62

CONSTANTLY WITH GOD



September 1998, Edison. Renowned editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and Pulitzer Prize winner, Shri Ronald Patel, was interviewing Swamishri. Swamishri had recently (July 1998) had a heart bypass operation and so he was

attempting to discover Swamishri's experiences.

Ronald Patel asked, "When you regained consciousness after the bypass surgery and realized that you were on this earth, what was your first thought?"

Swamishri said, "Of God."

Ronald Patel asked, "When you awoke after the surgery were you not disappointed to be here instead of with God?"

Swamishri replied, "No. God is constantly with me."

Hearing these natural, spontaneous and forthright answers, Ron was astonished by the clarity and depth of Swamishri's thoughts.

63 "HIRO WAS OURS"

Even villagers were modern in comparison to him. His coarse clothes reflected his rugged life. He was of simple appearance and had very little education. His speech was also rustic. He served in the Sarangpur mandir *gaushala*. But, Swamishri would always remember him and spend time with him. He would listen to him. He was Hiro Bharvad.

In 1997, Hiro passed away to Akshardham. But the events that followed are revealing.

On learning that Hiro had passed away, Swamishri called the administrators of the *gaushala* and said, “We have to do the twelfth- and thirteenth-day post funeral rites for Hiro. Also, you must go with his sons to disperse his ashes.” In this way, Swamishri ensured that all the rites were performed properly.

On the thirteenth day, Swamishri arranged to feed all members of the cowherd community in memory of Hiro. The community members said to Swamishri, “You are the one who has really served Hiro. Our community is overwhelmed that Pramukh Swami has done all this for Hiro.” Hearing this, Swamishri simply said, “Hiro was ours.”

The entire community in turn felt, “Pramukh Swami is ours.”

64 “WHAT IS THE DATE TODAY?”

On seeing Naimish from America, Swamishri said, “Your father’s name is Rameshbhai. His father was Bhailal. His was

Chaturbhai, and his was Shamalbhai.”

Hearing Swamishri recall the names of five generations instantly and fluently, everyone hailed Swamishri’s memory.

Then, after meeting the devotees, Swamishri became engaged in writing letters. After writing one letter, he paused and looked around. Seeing this, someone asked, “Do you want something?”

Swamishri asked, “What’s the date today?”

Hearing this question, everyone was surprised, since that morning in the presence of 92,000 devotees, Swamishri’s 74th birthday had been celebrated and he had been honoured with many decorative garlands. Cards had been presented. To everyone’s surprise, Swamishri instantly recalled the names of five generations, but was unaware of his own birthdate.

Such memory power! Such forgetting power!

65

MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT PRAYER



London 1990. It was well past midnight when Swamishri’s attendant sadhu suddenly

woke up. Amid the serene silence, he could hear a faint murmuring of 'Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan...'

He wondered, "There's no one else in this room, except for Swamishri and me. So, where is this murmuring coming from?" He sat up and noticed Swamishri sitting cross-legged on his bed, chanting the mantra with eyes closed and intense concentration.

He waited for 30 minutes till Swamishri finished. And as Swamishri leaned back to sleep, the attendant supported his recline. Swamishri was surprised.

The attendant asked, "What were you praying for?"

"There is a severe drought in India. Without water people will face many difficulties. So, I was praying for the rains," Swamishri revealed.

"But why at night?"

"In the day's busy schedule there's no time."

"How long have you been praying like this?"

"Whenever it's possible," Swamishri replied without elaborating.

The divine light of Swamishri's compassion brightened the darkness of the night.

66 SELF SERVICE

One day, Swamishri finished writing letters and stood up to prepare for rest. He placed his reading glasses in the stand of the side table. And then switched off the table lamp. Seeing this, a sadhu commented, "You don't remain idle for even a minute. You do even the smallest of things like placing your glasses in the stand and switching off the lamp."

"Instead of calling someone else from a distance to switch off the lamp, I can do it myself," Swamishri said. "But at age 90, you should call someone to do it."

"I know that I can do at least that much by myself. Shastriji Maharaj used to do everything by himself till the end. Even Yogiji Maharaj did so. We should do such close range tasks by ourselves."

Then, Swamishri said, "Actually, the thing is that it's become a habit." With this, he switched off the table lamp on the other side.

One evening, Swamishri was to arrive in Vadodara. At that time Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami was making all the arrangements for his visit.

He had arranged for Swamishri to take his meal at the home of a devotee in the Manjalpur area. Then, after *padbhramanis* at the homes of two or three devotees living nearby, Swamishri would reach Atladra mandir for rest.

However, Swamishri did not reach Manjalpur till much later in the night than expected. When Swamishri sat to eat, Tyagvallabh Swami also sat down to have his meal. He thought that even though it was already late, the other devotees would have prepared for Swamishri's visit. He wondered, "What should I tell Swamishri now?"

After Swamishri had finished eating, he took everyone's leave and walked towards the door. Suddenly, he turned towards Tyagvallabh Swami and asked, "What's the programme now?"

As Swamishri himself had asked,

Tyagvallabh Swami told him, “Bapa, we’ve arranged *padhramanis* to the homes of two-three devotees.”

Without the slightest trace of displeasure, Swamishri said, “Let’s go.”

And Swamishri left to do the *padhramanis* at around midnight.

68 GIFT FOR LIFE

Once, in Sarangpur, while Swamishri was eating, a *parshad* recited verses he had memorized from the Shikshapatri. In that context, another *parshad* told Swamishri, “The Shikshapatri commands that one should not go empty-handed to the guru. So, I want to give you a gift. Will you accept it?”

“If it’s appropriate I will accept it. If it’s something related to God, satsang, dharma-*niyam*, then I will accept it,” Swamishri informed.

The *parshad* continued, “I want to give you half of my lifespan.”

“To remain staunch in satsang is like having given your life. Observe *niyam*-dharma, and remain firm in *agna* and *upasana*. Developing these

virtues is like having given your life,” Swamishri said.

69

BEYOND THE LURE OF TASTE

Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami recalled his experience during the overseas satsang visit to Africa in 1959–60, “At that time I cooked the meals for the sadhus. Except for Pramukh Swami Maharaj, all the sadhus had a preference for non-spicy (bland) food. Yogiji Maharaj preferred bland and non-spicy food. Even Sant Swami and Balmukund Swami preferred the bland diet. That left Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He could eat spicy food, and preferred it when available. But I was also a novice in cooking and for nine months with my ordinary culinary skills, I cooked what I knew. However, Pramukh Swami Maharaj never even once complained or commented about the food, even though I must have been making mistakes with the cooking. He would silently eat whatever was served to him in his *pattar*, while remembering Shriji Maharaj. That’s when I first experienced that he had overcome the desire for taste.”

A *karyakar* who had served for many years in Surat had moved to a different region. His wife was also a *karyakar*, but she found it difficult to tune with the women volunteers of the new region. So, she insisted that they return to Surat. This raised a concern for her husband. On hearing of the situation, Swamishri said, “This will mean a lot of moving around. Moving home, moving the furniture, and moving other possessions. Everything has to be moved. But, instead, what if one’s *swabhav* is changed? One has to overcome one’s *swabhav*. Whether you go into the sky or to heaven, without shedding one’s *swabhav* there is no joy. It’s all the same. So, the miseries due to *swabhavs* have to be overcome. One should learn how to live with everyone. If you come here and the *swabhavs* remain, then you will still not get along with others. Then what will happen? Only in Akshardham there is no misery. So, wherever you go, live like you are in Akshardham.”

71 ACHIEVING BALANCE

There is a fine line between having a virtue and that virtue becoming a drawback. It requires the ability to balance like Arjun did while shooting an arrow at the fish's eye. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was adept at balancing his countless virtues such that they did not become troublesome.

He was humble, but not weak-minded.

He was frugal, but not miserly.

He was strong-willed, but not obstinate.

He had full faith in God, but did not procrastinate.

In this regard, he once revealed, "God is certainly the all-doer, but that same God resides in us and inspires us to action. But thinking that 'God will do everything and his wish prevails', one should not sit idly. You have to put in full effort. God inspires one to act and makes one a medium of his work. So, you must certainly put in effort, and then when something does not happen in a way one wants, understand it to be God's wish."

That is the appropriate way to achieve

balance.

72 SIGNIFICANCE OF SWAMISHRI'S ACTION

Once, during dinner, Swamishri was eating *khichdi*. At the end, one grain of *khichdi* remained in his *pattar*. Swamishri tried to pick it up with a spoon. Having pushed it to the rim of his *pattar* the grain was about to fall out. So, Swamishri immediately pushed it back down into the *pattar*.

He did this four to five times in quick succession, but could not gather the grain in the spoon. So, Swamishri put the spoon to the side picked up the grain with his right hand and ate it. Now the *pattar* was totally clean.

Everyone who observed this wondered, “What was the significance of this darshan? Was it that even one grain should not be wasted? Or was it that Swamishri will not let anyone who has come in his contact slip from the path of liberation?”

73 THAT IS REST

Harshadbhai Rana was travelling with Swamishri. He asked Swamishri, “We have been in *vicharan* with you for one month and two days. With all this travelling, we are exhausted. You travel like this for 365 days a year.”

Someone added, “Also, for us, Sunday is a holiday, but for you it is even more busy. From morning till night, you are busy with work. There is no rest for you.”

Swamishri said, “To meet the devotees is itself rest. To be able to do devotion and discourses is also rest.”

74 SELFLESS SERVICE

“I often wonder about whenever a mandir is built in my region and I serve in some tangible or intangible way, how much *punya* do I get,” a sadhu joked with Swamishri.

Swamishri, continued in that light vein and said, “For generations you will earn *punya*!” Then, on a sober note, Swamishri added, “We should do everything, but not desire for a

share. Remain detached. ‘I have done this, and I should get a share’ – do not keep such an attitude. We are not the doers anyway. It’s good that thousands benefit from this.”

“But having put in the effort we should keep a wish for it,” the sadhu continued.

“If you desire it then you will lose out. That is just like having kept a share. The inspirers and doers are Shriji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. Then, where is our share?”

“But, we are a medium [for the work], aren’t we?”

“If you believe yourself as a medium, then your *seva* is of no consequence. It is our great fortune to have received such *seva*. In *seva*, only keep the thought that God becomes pleased. They [our gurus] also never took the credit. We should learn that method and sustain it.”

Swamishri’s standard for selfless service is so high.

75 NO DOUBTS



Prof. Raymond Williams, a professor from Wabash College in America, was engaged in

studying the BAPS Sanstha and Swamishri. He was astonished to see Swamishri satisfactorily guide countless devotees daily through their myriad problems.

So, in that context, he asked Swamishri, “Outwardly, it seems you have no experience of worldly life. Yet, how are you able to give guidance to questions in that regard?”

Swamishri said, “God has all the experience.”

“Do you ever feel doubts that sometimes you may have given one answer, but then later think that it would have been better to answer in another way?”

“No, I never feel like that.”

“For example, if you had given guidance to someone to run a business and they suffer losses, do you regret and feel that you should have told them not to do business?”

“No. God inspires the answer. God knows the past, present and future. Eventually, whatever is beneficial for that devotee will happen. So, I do not regret,” Swamishri answered.

76 NO REGRETS

On 12 March 1986, a newspaper reporter asked Swamishri, “What do you regret?”

“We live according to God’s will. Everything happens according to his wish. If some work remains undone, still it is God’s wish. So, I do not have any regrets.”

77 SWAMISHRI’S HOME

Once, in Bochasan, a devotee named Harishbhai asked Swamishri, “You’re coming to my house aren’t you?”

“Where?” Swamishri sought clarification.

“When you come to America, you will come to my home, won’t you?” the devotee asked, since Swamishri was due to visit America in the near future.

Swamishri said, “The whole of America is my home.” Then, he added, “No not just the whole world, but the infinite *brahmands* are my home.”

It was as if the Upanishadic mantra ‘*Ishavāsyamidam sarvam...*’ was echoing in

Swamishri's words.

78 SUPPORTER OF THE LONELY

In 1974, during his overseas satsang tour, Swamishri visited the home of Chandubhai. One of his English neighbours came to meet Swamishri. Chandubhai introduced him to Swamishri and informed that his children had left him, and that he was lonely, and was spending his old age in misery.

Swamishri was moved by his predicament, and immediately instructed Chandubhai, "You should take care of this English gentleman like a member of your family."

Having arranged this family support for a lonely person, Swamishri departed.

Then, ten years later, in 1984, when Swamishri was again in London, that English gentleman came joyfully to meet Swamishri. With great emotion, he told Swamishri, "I thank you very very much. For the past ten years, this devotee of yours has taken great care of me. You have given me joy in my old age."

Swamishri gave such support to so many

lonely people.

79 THE JOY OF AN OLD, BLIND MAN

When departing from a *shikharbaddha* mandir, Swamishri would normally have Thakorji's darshan and then sit in the car. However, once, while departing from Bochasan mandir, after having Thakorji's darshan, Swamishri started walking towards the assembly hall. Everyone wondered where Swamishri was heading. They followed behind him.

In the assembly hall, Swamishri stopped at a pillar where an old, poor and blind devotee was seated turning the *mala*. He was a resident of Thasra.

Swamishri stood there and said, "Jai Swaminarayan, Manibhai."

"Who?" enquired the blind devotee.

Swamishri replied, "It's me... Pramukh Swami."

Hearing this, Manibhai extended his arms and searched for Swamishri's feet. His voice croaked with emotion, as tears dripped from his closed eyes.

Swamishri bent low, placed his hand on Manibhai's head and asked, "How are you?"

Still moved to tears, Manibhai was unable to speak. After a short while, he emotionally said, "Yesterday was Guru Punam and due to the rush, I could not meet Swamishri personally. I was very disappointed within. Today, Swamishri has himself come and given me infinite joy."

80

GENUINE AFFECTION



"Bapa! Will you come to my home?" Swamishri was in Devgadh Baria, when 4-year-old Shambhu of Malav village made this request.

Hearing his request, everyone was put in a quandary since the road to his village was merely a dusty path and full of bumps and craters. It was totally inconvenient for Swamishri's health and time schedule.

However, Swamishri agreed to the boy's wish.

The next day, on the way from Rabod to Ghoghamba, Swamishri had his car taken to Malav village and to Shambhu's home. The house was small and cramped, yet Swamishri

joyfully went in and sat there. Thakorji's *pujan* and *arti* were performed, but amidst the frenzy, Swamishri noticed the absence of Shambhu. So, Swamishri called for him, held Thakorji in his hands and allowed Shambhu to repeat the *arti*. Filling the heart of a child with love and joy, Swamishri departed.

81 IS THERE A YARDSTICK?

At 3.45 p.m., Swamishri was preparing to go to the bathroom when a devotee arrived and said, "Bapa! I want to meet you in private for a few moments."

"OK, come in," Swamishri said and sat down to listen to his question. The discussion continued until 7.00 p.m.

Yet, there was not the slightest trace of frustration or irritation on Swamishri's face. Just an appearance of his usual patience and affection. For over three hours, Swamishri suppressed his bodily needs and satisfied the devotee.

As soon as this meeting had finished, another devotee came and requested to meet

Swamishri. This devotee was unaware that Swamishri had blocked his bathroom needs for over three hours. He requested, “Bapa! I’d like to talk to you for a couple of minutes.”

“Come in. Why just two. We can sit for five,” Swamishri said. Again, Swamishri sat with this devotee for a considerable length of time.

When Swamishri finally stood up and went to the bathroom, it was past 7.30 p.m.

Is there a yardstick to measure Swamishri’s compassion? For over 3½ hours he suppressed this body needs to satisfy the wish of devotees.

82 THE SIXTH AREA

“Swamiji! To transform India from a developing country into a developed nation, we have identified five important areas to transform India: education and healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, information and communication, and critical technology. Our main problem is how do we create people with values to realize such an ambitious vision? For this, you are an expert. We need your advice.”

On 30 June 2001, in New Delhi, Dr A.P.J.

Abdul Kalam, then the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India and Shri Y.S. Rajan, a senior government scientist, presented this question to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Swamishri replied, “Along with your five areas to transform India, add a sixth one – faith in God and developing people through spirituality. This is very important. For this, we need to rekindle faith in our scriptures and God. Without this, there will be no transformation; nothing can be solved.”

Swamishri gave a roadmap for transforming India into a developed nation.

83

“I CAN FORGIVE YOU”



“I want to meet Swami,” a person said to one of the sadhus overseeing Swamishri’s arrangements. The sadhu was aware of the person’s problem-laden background and said, “I will arrange for you to meet Swamishri, but you must do one thing. Listen silently to whatever Swamishri tells you, even if he rebukes you.”

The person agreed, because that is why he had come. Up to now, afraid of what people

would think about his mistakes, he had stayed away from satsang. But, his own mistakes were troubling him from within, robbing him of his peace of mind. He wanted to confess his mistakes, seek forgiveness and unburden himself.

When he met Swamishri he unburdened his heart. In reply, Swamishri said, “These are not major mistakes. I can forgive mistakes that are countless times graver. Do not worry. But now come regularly to the mandir, and worship with true devotion.”

84

“HAVE YOU SENT THAT PHOTOGRAPH?”



One night, Swamishri was in Kurai village in the district of Vadodara. He was seated on a simple chair with some sadhus and devotees seated around him, engaged in casual discussions. Swamishri noticed the presence of Chhagan of Thikariya village in the seated group and said, “Chhagan! Sing a kirtan.”

Chhagan was delighted by this request and opportunity. He immediately stood up and joyfully began to sing. He sang with such

feelings that nobody was able relate to his humble background.

Chhagan's financial circumstances were very weak – he even had to fix his pan to bake *rotlos* with a wire because he could not afford a new one. No one could imagine that he faced such daily struggle, considering the joy with which he sang.

After singing, he also narrated some of his memories with Yogiji Maharaj. Then, Swamishri called a photographer and he took a photograph of Chhagan, in his unkempt clothes, with Swamishri. Chhagan was overjoyed.

Thereafter, Swamishri continued his *vicharan* to Mumbai. The photographer was also with Swamishri. One day, Swamishri asked him, “Have you sent Chhagan that photo taken in Kurai?”

Swamishri was particular in ensuring that even the smallest of tasks were completed, even amid his busy workload.

85 PLEASED A CHILD

On 10 January 2005, Swamishri was in Mumbai. In the morning, around 125 devotees were waiting in queue to meet him for personal guidance. After this, Swamishri had to attend some important meetings.

While meeting the devotees, a *balak* handed Swamishri a *mala* and requested, “Please sanctify this for me.”

Swamishri touched it with his hands and returned it. The *balak* said, “Not like that. Please turn one whole *mala* and sanctify it.”

Everyone thought that the *balak*’s insistence was improper. However, despite the long line of devotees waiting to meet him and the scheduled meetings, Swamishri patiently and devoutly turned one *mala* and then placed it around the *balak*’s neck. The boy was delighted.

86 ENTIRE LIFE IS PUBLIC

To provide a lasting memory for each sadhu accompanying Swamishri on his 1988 overseas Satsang *vicharan*, the devotees had arranged for

each to have an individual photo taken with Swamishri.

The photo session was in progress when it was the turn of a sadhu who wore *chakhdis* (wooden slippers). The sadhu requested Swamishri to wear the *chakhdis* and have a photo taken.

Swamishri said, “I don’t wear *chakhdis* so why should I do that? No need to put up a show.”

“From the beginning I have not liked pretense...”, “My whole life is public. Nothing private...”, “I do not know how to pretend like that...” and similar remarks by Swamishri are better understood in the light of this situation.

87 NO HABIT FORMED

In 1980, Swamishri had cataract operations in both eyes. While he was recovering from the operations, arrangements were made for Swamishri to use a table and chair while eating, instead of sitting on the floor.

One day, while Swamishri was eating, a devotee seated there commented, “When I was

admitted to hospital for treatment, I also ate using a table and chair. Now it has become a habit. I (always) feel more inclined to using a chair. Will you also not develop a habit to eat like this?”

“Till now, I have never developed a habit for such things. From the beginning, I have never been dependent on things such that I cannot do without them. Whatever is available, by God’s grace, is fine,” Swamishri said.

88

INSPIRING OTHERS

Shri Bharatbhai, chairman of a bank with 150 branches in America, came to meet Swamishri.

A few days prior to this, Bharatbhai had returned home after visiting several of his bank branches. Casually, he told his wife, “Now I find it difficult to work. I get tired.”

At that time, his wife gave him a book on Pramukh Swami Maharaj and said, “See this. Pramukh Swami Maharaj, even at this age [84 years at the time], continues to do *vicharan* everywhere. He doesn’t get tired and at this

age, you get tired! Take at least this inspiration from his life!”

Hearing this, Bharatbhai was rejuvenated and had come to thank Swamishri.

Who can know where, when and how many people’s thirst the waters of a river quenches?

Shri Kamath, who has headed many leading companies and is a renowned economist, comments, “In my life, I have used as a guiding light, the story of Pramukh Swami Maharaj going to Makrana (in Rajasthan) and amid many hardships accomplishing his tasks. From that incident I have learnt never to give up in spite of obstacles.”

89

BEYOND BIRTH AND DEATH



“I am late in doing so, but I want to congratulate you,” said a devotee in America on the phone to Swamishri. On 13 December 2010, Swamishri’s 90th birthday had passed. The devotee made this call on 21 December 2010.

In reply, Swamishri said, “I am beyond the need for such congratulations, since I have no

birth and no death. I am eternally blissful.”

“Yes, you are beyond all this. But we are obliged to wish you so,” the devotee responded and suddenly a sadhu next to him said on the phone to Swamishri, “Bapa! Happy birthday?”

Hearing this, Swamishri again emphasized, “I’ve just told him [the devotee] that I am *atmarup*, blissful.”

90

NO AWARDS NECESSARY



On 11 July 2002, Shri S. Balkrishnan, a senior reporter from the *Times of India* newspaper, came to meet Swamishri. Overwhelmed by Swamishri’s aura, he said, “Pramukh Swami Maharaj! You are a spiritual engineer. You have done much wonderful work. You have done a thousand times more than the country’s leading industrialists. Their work is limited to career and business. But from your work countless people are inspired and awakened towards dharma. I think you deserve the Bharat Ratna award. You are, in fact, a ‘Bharat Ratna’ (Jewel of India). But it should be officially endorsed.”

Hearing this, Swamishri pointed to the

murti on the opposite wall and said, “This is Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Yogiji Maharaj. I am happy and satisfied with the award they have given. There is no need for such worldly awards.”

91

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTING OTHERS

In 1987, to help ease the effects of the severe drought in Gujarat, the BAPS set up several cattle camps to look after the cattle of the farmers affected by the drought. The cattle were cared for very lovingly and with great attention to detail. The scientific approach and volunteer spirit touched and was appreciated by all who visited the camps.

A philanthropist from Mumbai heard about these cattle camps and came to meet Swamishri. He said, “I want to donate Rs. 100, 000 for the cattle camps that your *sanstha* operates.”

But Swamishri said, “Give this donation to other *sansthas* which are running cattle camps in Amreli, Gadhada, Botad and other places.”

Swamishri’s view was that the cattle in other cattle camps should also receive enough

food and other necessary care.

But that philanthropist said, “No, Swamiji! I want to give only for your cattle camps. Who knows what will happen to the money in other cattle camps?”

However, Swamishri explained to and convinced him to donate that amount to other places where it was needed.

Similarly, a Sai Satsang Mandal from a suburb in Mumbai had collected Rs. 100,000 by singing bhajans during their daily train ride. Representatives of that *mandal* came to Swamishri to donate the money for the Sanstha’s cattle camps.

Swamishri said to them, “You are natives of Gadhadi, so please support the cattle camp in Gadhada. There is no need to give to us.”

Such was Swamishri’s generous support to other cattle camps who endeavoured to help others.

92

JUST ONE SENTENCE



“My wife and I had told him so many times, but he still did not stop watching TV. But last

time you just said to him, ‘Do not watch TV,’ and he immediately stopped watching TV,” a devotee living in Washington said to Swamishri.

“Previously, I loved to eat tasty foods. In particular, on seeing mangoes my mouth would water. If I was not given some, I would get angry. But, ever since you told me ‘Eat mangoes in moderation, I don’t feel like eating them. That is the power of just one sentence of yours. In this way, remove all my drawbacks,” a sadhu once said to Swamishri.”

“I had began studying at university. By coming to satsang, I had the understanding to not become influenced by external temptations. But there, what was to happen, happened. I was drawn into and affected by bad company and failed my exams. To meet the costs I worked throughout the whole summer. I was pained within and regretful. Then, I heard in your discourse, ‘Joy resides only in following *agna*.’ This one sentence changed my life. At present I am studying for a PhD. That is the power of your one sentence.” This is the testimony of a *yuvati* from England in a letter to Swamishri.

Just one sentence of Swamishri’s can have a

significant, transformative and positive impact on the lives of all.

93

FROM UNKNOWN TO WELL KNOWN



Mayor Nathan Kahara of Nairobi was so touched by Swamishri's personality that he arranged a special assembly in the Nairobi City Council to present a special crest of honour to Swamishri. He even sent his own cavalcade of cars to drive Swamishri to and from the city council building.

The honour assembly was celebrated in a grand way. It was perhaps the first such occasion to be held in Nairobi's city council premises. Despite their different faith, language, nationality and culture, the African government officials were drawn towards Swamishri. What could they have seen that drew them to Swamishri.

After the assembly, while driving Swamishri back, the Mayor's driver also felt privileged to be chauffeuring such a distinguished personality.

You can measure the body's temperature with a thermometer, but there is no instrument

to measure the joy a person feels.

To add to this delight, Swamishri conversed with him, with the help of a translator. Swamishri lovingly enquired about his life and family. The driver was amazed and said, “He is so great. In such a short time, he has become close to me. I have been driving mayors and other dignitaries for many years, yet how many have taken such interest in me? They used to sit with me. But how much interest did they have in me? But, this Swamiji!...”

Today, the driver felt really proud. His entire body felt joyous. He said, “Swamiji! Do you have time? If you do, I will take you in this car and show you the whole of Nairobi.”

In a matter minutes, during two short trips, it was as if an unknown had become well known.

94

“I WANT TO WORK WITH YOU”



Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi was inaugurated on 6 November 2005.

On that occasion President of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was the chief guest of

honour. He said to Pramukh Swami Maharaj, “Ever since I entered Akshardham, I have had a question that ‘How is it possible to do such grand and divine work through thousands of people?’ But now I have the answer: ‘Bhagwan Swaminarayan has fully entered your *atma* and from that Akshardham has naturally come about.’

“When I saw Akshardham and see your work, I feel that I want to work with you. So that a prosperous, protected and spiritual India develops. You are a source of total spirituality. You have such divine powers that on seeing this work [Akshardham] I think anything is possible in this world. So, I want to work with you.”

95 CHARACTERISTIC OF A TRUE SADHU

Swamishri had received a letter from a village in the Bhavnagar district. The sender wanted to dig a well in his farm and wanted guidance on where to dig. He had sent a map of his farm with the letter.

Swamishri studied the map in detail for about five minutes, then he placed a mark on

the map and wrote about where to dig.

Similarly, an *adivasi* from a village in the Ahava (Dang) district wrote to ask, “Where in the farm to drill for a bore well?” He, too, had sent a map. In this case also, Swamishri analyzed the map for five minutes and placed a mark where he should drill.

Observing Swamishri reply in this way, reminds one of a characteristic of a sadhu, “One who always has time for the most minor task for the smallest of people is a sadhu.”

96

UNIQUE FAREWELL ASSEMBLY



In 1984–85, Gujarat was troubled by widespread disturbance on the issue of student reservation quotas. For eight months, there was social unrest disrupting the lives of the public. At the time, Swamishri was the last resort of solace for all. Swamishri was trying his utmost to unite all and bring a resolution to the problem.

For this, he met senior government and police officials at the BAPS Mandir in Shahibaug. A former Chief Justice of Gujarat also helped with the reconciliation. Spiritual leaders of

the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian and other faiths also attended the meeting. A unanimous appeal for peace was conveyed to the public.

One day, the leaders of the student delegation came to meet Swamishri. That evening, a farewell assembly had been arranged for Swamishri before he departed for an overseas satsang visit. Thousands of devotees were present for this assembly. Everyone was excited since the overseas tour included the Suvarna Tula Mahotsav of Swamishri.

However, Swamishri's meeting with the student leaders continued without an end in sight. The assembly started and continued without Swamishri. Then, the time for Swamishri to bless the assembly came. So, a coordinator came and requested Swamishri to come to the assembly. But, Swamishri told the assembly coordinator to wait a few minutes. When the coordinator again requested Swamishri, he gave the same reply.

Even the student leaders knew of and appreciated the significance and sentiments of the assembly. So, when the coordinator came a third

time to request Swamishri, the student leaders also urged Swamishri to go to the assembly. But Swamishri said, “To resolve this situation in Gujarat and establish peace is [for me] the assembly.”

And the meeting continued. Swamishri’s farewell assembly concluded without him even attending it!

There has probably never been such a unique farewell assembly like this anywhere.

“In the joy of others...” This motto of Swamishri’s echoed throughout the farewell assembly without him speaking or even being present.

97

FUTURE VISION

Seeing the progress of the BAPS, one well-wisher asked Swamishri, “How do you envision the state of the BAPS in a hundred years’ time.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj informed, “This is the work of Bhagwan and his Sadhu. Shastriji Maharaj was so powerful and foresighted that he has thought about the future and done accordingly. He has thought many years into the future. Shastriji Maharaj was the manifest

form of God. So, he had total knowledge of everything. He knew the past, present and future. He had divine foresight. In worldly terms, he was the most intelligent among the intelligent. He established this Sanstha.

“Also, a capable saint like Yogiji Maharaj strengthened the foundations of this Sanstha. He initiated sadhus and with his blessings the number of sadhus has continued to increase. This indicates that the Sanstha’s work will continue to flourish. There will be no problem of any kind in that. The lives of the sadhus are full of dharma, *jnan*, *vairagya* and bhakti. The devotees are also dedicated and have *nishtha*. So, the Sanstha will become strengthened. At the root, it is God’s work and he will do it. So, the Sanstha will progress well, since the doers had foresight. There will always be a great focused person due to whom the Sanstha will always – after 100 years and even after that – continue to run smoothly. I have such faith. There will be no problem in that.”

“You are vast and deep like the ocean. But the ocean is salty, while you are full of sweetness. So, you are not like the ocean, but you are selfless like a tree. But a tree remains only in one place and does good for others, while you go everywhere and do good for others. So, you are not like a tree...”

A youth at the Akshar-Purushottam Chhatralaya in Vidyanagar had written an article about such similarities and differences.

After presenting his article before Swamishri, he asked, “Now you tell us who you are.”

Swamishri asked the youth in return, “What have you decided based upon the association you have had up to now?”

“I don’t have any idea. I have just written whatever thoughts I had.”

Swamishri did not respond to the youth and continued to drink his *ukalo*.

So, the youth again asked, “Tell me, what is the answer to my question? Who are you?”

“The form of Akshar... Bhagwan.

Everything is included in that,” Swamishri revealed.

99 BEST MOMENT

In Dallas, on 12 July 1994, *balaks* and *kishores* asked Swamishri, “For you, which is your best moment of the day?”

“Every moment during the 24 hours is with Maharaj (Bhagwan Swaminarayan). So all the moments are the best,” Swamishri answered.

100 “I AM A SEVAK”

“You are manifest God,” said a dignitary who had been overwhelmed on seeing Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi to Swamishri.

In reply Swamishri said, “No... No... I am a servant.”

Once, Krishnamurti, a youth in London, wanted to sponsor a meal for the youths. So, in a casual way, he asked Swamishri, “What party should I give (meaning what menu should be prepared)?”

Swamishri said, “Whatever is Bhagwan’s wish.”

So, Krishnamurti said, “For us, you are our Bhagwan. So, you tell me...”

Interrupting him, Swamishri said, “Bhagwan is only Shriji Maharaj. I am his *das*, devotee.”

In Atladra, Dr Hemantbhai, who had come to receive blessings, said to Swamishri, “I say ‘Jai Pramukh Swami’ when I perform operations and get 100% success.”

Swamishri said, “First you should say ‘Jai Swaminarayan’. I am merely a *sevak*.”

GLOSSARY

A

adivasi	tribal
agna	spiritual or moral instruction, order, command
Akshar	one of the five eternal realities. In its personal form, Akshar serves Purushottam in Akshardham and manifests as his choicest devotee on this earth
aksharrup	one who has realized one's true self as <i>atma</i> and attained the qualities of Akshar
arti	worship ritual of waving lighted wicks before the <i>murtis</i> of God
atma	the <i>jiva</i> , the soul, distinct from the physical, subtle, and causal bodies
atmarup	one who has realized one's true self as <i>atma</i>

B

balak	child
bhakti	devotion to God
Brahman	Akshar, Aksharbrahman

brahmand	universe comprising of a system of 14 realms, of which there are millions on various planes
bundi	sweet food item

C

chhatralaya	hostel
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D

das	servant
dhotiyu	lower garment worn by men

G

ganthiya	fried, savoury snack food
gatariyu	upper garment worn by a sadhu or <i>parshad</i>
gaushala	cowshed
ghar sabha	daily spiritual assembly amongst the family members in one's home

H

hari	a type of mandir where the pujari is a householder
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J

jnan spiritual knowledge

K

kanthi double-threaded necklace,
usually made of tulsi beads,
received by *satsangis* upon
initiation into the Satsang
Fellowship, and worn as a sign
of their affiliation to God

karyakar volunteer

khichdi spiced boiled rice and lentil
grain

kishore teenager

M

mala rosary with 108 beads used for
chanting God's name

mandal group

maya anything that deviates one from
the worship of God

murti sacred icon of God that is
worshipped

murti-pratishtha traditional Vedic ceremony
in which *murtis* or images are

ritually installed in a mandir

N

nishtha	faith; loyalty; conviction in the form of God
niyam	moral and spiritual disciplines

P

padhramani	visit by sadhus to sanctify a home or place
papad	a light crispy item usually eaten with meals
parayan	spiritual discourse
parshad	a male renunciant who wears white robes and observes the vows of celibacy
pattar	wooden bowl for eating
prasad	food sanctified by offering to God
pujan	to worship, to render homage or reverence to a <i>murti</i>
punya	accrued merit from good deeds

R

rajipo	pleasing God and the Satpurush
rotlo	a thick coarse bread made of millet flour, usually the staple diet of villagers

S

samp	harmony, unity
sanstha	organization
satsangi	member of the Satsang fellowship. One who practices satsang
seva	voluntary spiritual service
sevak	one who serves
shikharbaddha	mandir in which five <i>artis</i> are performed daily and worship of the deities is performed by sadhus
swabhav	base nature

U

ukalo	hot milk with condiments
upasana	to offer worship to God by believing him to be the cause of all incarnations, eternally with

divine form, the all-doer and
manifest

V

vairagya detachment from material
 objects and pursuits
vicharan spiritual touring

Y

yuvati young woman