

Satsang Pravesh Essay 1

This mandir spreads divine vibrations: Heartfelt message of UAE leaders

Dr. B.R. Shetty, Founder & Chairman of NMC Healthcare and Chairman of UAE Exchange, and a leading member of the temple committee articulated his happiness, "I believe in this Mandir and can feel that Pramukh Swamiji is saying that his wish has been fulfilled. It is a dream come true for all of us in the UAE and I believe that the impossible has become possible. Hence, we must all unite and collectively contribute to this noble cause" He also said during the vedic shila puja vidhi of Abu Dhabi mandir, "I am speechless. The generosity of the rulers of the UAE, the clarity of India's Prime Minister and the integrity and ability of the BAPS is incredible. We are soon going to have an iconic temple complex that will serve everyone for generations to come."

Shri Nazim Al Kudsi, eminent businessman from UAE, who has served as the CEO of Invest Abu Dhabi and managed sovereign fund of Abu Dhabi as well. His grandfather served as the Prime Minister and later President of Syria. A few years ago, he met Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Ahmedabad and by his own account, his life changed thereafter. He reminisced his transformational spiritual experiences with Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He said that how he saw Pramukh Swami Maharaj as a vast spiritual reservoir.

Prime Minister thanked the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for his generous gift. "I believe this temple will not be only unique in terms of architecture and splendor, but will also give a message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' to people across the world,"

Commenting, the Consul General of India, Shri Vipul, said, "This is a historic event, rightly called the millennial moment. The first traditional stone temple built by the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha shall serve the needs of the entire community. Closely working with their hundreds of volunteers and saints, I know the selfless spirit with which they dedicate themselves. The temple and its activities shall be path-breaking for promoting love, tolerance and harmony in the UAE and the neighboring regions."

After learning about the mandir, Dr Mustafa (a businessman) said, "This mandir will become such a place in the world where different people from diverse background will come to see it and they will be able to become close to each other and forget their differences. This is truly a millennial moment in the history."

Shri Gopinath, who is a business, said, "We are feeling very energized as the mandir is starting to get built. I feel very fortunate to be able to be part of the mandir building process. I congratulate this sanstha and its disciplined volunteers."

Open to people of all beliefs and backgrounds, races and religions, this traditional temple will be a part of the UAE's mission of happiness and harmony by helping to foster love, tolerance, understanding and peaceful coexistence. It will facilitate the traditional practice of the Hindu faith and serve the over 3.3 million Indians residing in and the millions of international tourists annually visiting the UAE through interfaith dialogue, pluralism and universal human values. It will also nurture the children of today and future generations towards a brighter future.

Satsang Pravesh Essay 2
Ghar Sabha: Make Your Home Ideal
(Bliss September- October 2018, page 27)

A devotee's home and family should be ideal. Having furniture in the house is not the only way to make a home beautiful. In fact, having dharma, values and peace are the true reasons that make a home beautiful. A home should be such that by entering it one experiences peace. But how can that happen? The answer lies in bringing back our foundational values in life.

Today, in the West, we find homes bereft of family feelings. Everyone is independent in their own way. When a son turns sixteen, his father cannot tell him anything. And when the father falls ill the son does not go to see him. Whereas our culture is emotionally oriented. If something happens to someone in the family, the other members feel the pain too. However, recently, the Western influence has affected innumerable families in India. Divorces have increased manifold in India.

Today's age is one of materialism. Science has progressed a lot and it is required and necessary. Science has sent man to the moon. It has given us the television and internet. Because of TV, email, internet and other things there are 'fires' in homes. All are burning in that fire. Today, televisions are found in all homes, and all enjoy by watching various programs. Parents, sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, little children – all sit before the TV and watch things that they should not. Then, how can children learn to respect their elders? All family members should respect elders and conversely all elders should behave in such a way that all are inspired to respect them. But, by watching TV (indiscriminately) how can our children learn our values and exercise discrimination? In fact, people learn to become violent, stoke commotion, steal, commit adultery, drink liquor and gamble. Because of these vices, they lose their pride, wealth, self-worth and everything. We have forgotten our values. Formerly, when people used to wake up in the morning they would immediately perform their ablutions and daily puja. Today, instead of (giving importance to) a home mandir the television has become prominent.

If we wish to have peace then we'll need to go back to our fundamental values. An increase in materialism and wealth often results in more vices in people's lives. Subsequently, everyone's mind in the house will split from each other. Only if there is spirituality in the home will the members be saved. For that, everyone should sit in the ghar sabha every night and read the scriptures or good books and engage in spiritual talks. Also, by sitting together during meals everyone's minds come together. By doing satsang and reading the scriptures one is able to cultivate vivek. So, our scriptures teach us to accept good things and give up bad things. Our hearts become pure by reading or listening to our spiritual books and the biographies of ideal persons. Children, too, imbibe good values. We make arrangements for our children's education, but miss out in teaching them values. If they do not receive good values at home, they are not going to get them from outside. Do you want to make your children good? Then hold ghar sabhas. Read our scriptures to them. When they read, listen or learn all this from a young age they will be instilled with good sanskars and feel proud about being Indian. Instilling such pride will be a great service to society.

By reading our scriptures one is inspired to introspect and is awakened with sentiments of respect towards one's parents, teachers and guests. Because children are not taught such values from early childhood problems arise in the home. Many parents believe that their children know a lot of things. But what do they know? They know only about worldly things! And parents believe this to be important, but (the reality is) that children lack sanskars. So, it's important to do ghar sabha.

People do not have time because all their time is utilized in earning money. Because one leads a householder's life, money is required. In addition to going to work or doing business, you must also take time out to sit with your children for half an-hour daily. If you want to bond with them, you must sit, talk and have fun with them and teach them good things. Then, as they grow up they will obey your wishes. Make your young children sit with you when you do your daily puja and also eat together as a family. At night, during ghar sabha, you can ask them what they have learnt in school. Tell them small incidents and a few inspiring words so that they receive sanskars.

One must always reserve a little time for children. The reason why kusang takes over lies in us not giving quality time to our children and, as a result, no mutual bonds develop. The lack of bonding leads to conflicts and unrest in the house. Never scold your children. Similarly, a husband should never rebuke his wife and vice versa. Talk to each other with love. By so doing, the other person will accept what you say. Talk gently with your children and with love. By becoming angry on your children nothing is accomplished. Talk and listen to them with love. Try to understand what they say and they will understand you. The more loving your bonds are with them the more peace and happiness will prevail. To develop such bonds do ghar sabha.

During former times, after the evening meal was over, all the family members would gather together and talk about satsang. One can talk about incidents that impact us from the Ramayan and Mahabharata – who was Ram and what his ideals were. However, today, one finds the sovereignty of Ravana in most homes – in other words there are conflicts and commotion. Bhagwan Ram was maryada Purushottam. When you have Ram in your heart you'll know how to conduct your social affairs and behave in society. But if you have Ravana in your heart then there will be explosions around. Till one does not remove him, one will not experience peace in one's heart and family.

Today, people do not spare time to listen to such talks because they keep roaming outside and thus never come home in time. Subsequently, one thinks that by doing this one has advanced and become a better person. But, in fact, one has become spoilt. There are no prohibitions in earning money but one must observe moral disciplines (maryada). If one wants to keep a wholesome ambience at home then adjust your time and have dinner together. Then, sit together and read the scriptures. But we never think about sitting together, and therefore conflicts arise. We have to understand our own self. By so doing, our family will be happy. If we introduce the tradition of sitting together, observing a little silence and singing a prayer and dhun then our life will get better. Keep a mandir in our house and install whichever deity we believe in. We should do daily arti, offer thal and sing bhajans and prayers. When our children see this they will know about the murti of Bhagwan. Otherwise, there are children who do not know this. In fact, parents should take the initiative and care in such matters. One must also take care in doing ghar sabha.

There is no end to our logical arguments against spiritual matters. However, by having faith in God's words, scriptural words and the words of great spiritual masters, and accepting that whatever they say is true and there is not an iota of falsehood, then one becomes spiritually liberated. However, we doubt whether anything can happen by practicing spirituality. But it can, providing we offer bhakti with resolute trust and faith. When one member of the family sits down to do ghar sabha with faith then the entire family will experience peace. Gandhiji had faith in truth. Subsequently, many joined him on his word and made India independent (from British rule). Likewise, what cannot be achieved by having faith in Yogiji Maharaj's words? Do ghar sabha with such faith. Even when no one listens, do it alone with resoluteness. Contemplate about it. Gradually, all the members will join.

Today, brothers and sisters have become independent in their homes. So, they don't listen to each other. Though they belong to one family, they file suits against each other. The reason for such conflicts lies in the erosion of our culture and sanskars. Without sanskars, patriotism, family feelings and societal feelings break down. Then, there will be conflicts. In addition, corrupt sanskars lead to disrespect among family members. A husband and wife fail to respect each other. They thus quarrel and fight. Children cry and say that their parents fight with each other. Fights erupt because of minor differences. But what is the benefit of fighting?

To avoid this, all members should assemble together to do ghar sabha and share their thoughts, pray to God, do bhajan and remember Shriji Maharaj. Try to understand each other. Tolerate a little and learn to let go. This will definitely bring peace in your home. It ushers in spirituality. The reason for pain and discord in all homes is due to lack of sanskars. However, if there is spirituality at home then the family members will forgive each other and dignity will be restored. By sitting together our minds coalesce. In other words, thoughts become one and life becomes straightforward. Because we do not sit together to talk, our thoughts get disturbed, we become angry and break moral rules. There should be no clashes in a satsangi's home. Everyone should live with love, talk with love, do bhajan out of love and work together lovingly. When this happens, we have truly come to understand what satsang is.

The highest of all things is love. No matter how bad a person may be, but he can be transformed through love. So, when a person improves, the family improves; when a family improves, society improves; when society improves, the country improves; and when a country improves, the world improves. But the family improves through the practice of ghar sabha. Therefore, do ghar sabha and make your house sacred and ideal like a mandir.

Satsang Pravesh Essay 3
BAPS Mandir Consecrated in Japan
(Bliss May-June 2018 Page 47)

Background

Between 1952 and 1970, His Holiness Yogiji Maharaj often said, “The whole world will chant the name of Swaminarayan. Satsang will spread to America, Japan, Germany, and Russia....” Today, these prophetic words can be seen to be coming true. In 1984, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited Japan for the very first time with a group of sadhus. Shri Popatbhai Chokshi, a devotee residing in Kobe, hosted Swamishri.

Then, in 1986, Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and a few sadhus visited Japan. Thereafter, in 1992, Pujya Viveksagar Swami and, in 1994, Pujya Swayamprakash Swami (Doctor Swami) visited Japan with some sadhus, and conducted many satsang assemblies and visited the homes of devotees and well-wishers.

Since then, BAPS sadhus have visited Japan on a few occasions to nurture the satsang. In 2015, during a visit to Tokyo by BAPS sadhus, Kuldeepbhai Mehta and his family were inspired to join the Satsang. In December 2015, at Sarangpur in Pramukh Swami Maharaj's presence, Kuldeepbhai proposed that a mandir be inaugurated in Tokyo. Then, he procured a property and dedicated the ground floor for the mandir.

On 16 April 2017, in Ahmedabad, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj performed the Vedic murti-pratishtha rituals of the murtis of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Shri Radha-Krishna Dev and the Guru Parampara for the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Tokyo, Japan.

Murti-Pratishtha Mahotsav

To commemorate this auspicious occasion, the devotees of Tokyo had devotedly decorated the mandir with flowers. On the morning of 31 March 2018, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami performed the Vedic murti-pratishtha ceremony of the murtis which had earlier been consecrated by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj in 2017. Over 120 devotees from Tokyo, Kobe, Kofu, Kyoto, Osaka and Yokohama participated in the Vedic rituals.

After the rituals, Ishwarcharan Swami addressed the assembly, “Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami manifested on this earth to liberate everyone from the darkness of maya. That work was carried forward by Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj, Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj and is being continued today by Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj.

“Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj had said on many occasions that the whole world will chant the Swaminarayan mantra and that mandirs will come up in America, Japan, Germany and Russia. At that time, no one could imagine that there would be a mandir in Japan because there were no devotees here. But Yogiji Maharaj was no ordinary person and his words were not ordinary. Today, we are all witness to this mandir here in Tokyo. And Yogiji Maharaj will be extremely happy.

“Today, with the grace of Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj and the dedication of Shri Kuldeepji, this beautiful mandir has come up. The murtis are divine. God is totally present here in these murtis, and all who come here, do darshan, do dandvats, do seva, do satsang, will all be blessed. Japan is blessed. Kuldeepbhai Mehta and his family have earned the blessings of Maharaj and Swami through their seva and devotion.”

After his address, Ishwarcharan Swami presented an Amrut Kalash to Kuldeepbhai. A Mandir Mahotsav Assembly had been organized at the nearby TKP Hall. Munivatsal Swami spoke about Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the work of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. He also explained the importance and need for mandirs in today's society. Thereafter, Ishwarcharan Swami concluded the assembly with his address explaining the importance of daily mandir darshan and daily satsang in one's life. Over 230 people attended the assembly.