

Satsang Pravin Essay 1

Prime Minister Shri Narendrabhai Modi: Inauguration of Abu Dhabi Hindu Mandir

The date of 11 February, 2018 became an immortal day to remember in the history of U.A.E. In the city of Abu Dhabi, the building of the very first Hindu mandir was announced and the Shila Pujan ceremony was conducted in the presence of Shri Narendrabhai Modi. This was a 'Millennial Moment' where the occasion took place in two places. Shri Narendrabhai Modi and the 1800 Indian residents of U.A.E. gathered at Dubai's famous Opera House. At the same time, the Shila puja ceremony took place on the land that Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi had donated per Vedic rituals in the presence of Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and other Santos and devotees. Let's take a look at both occasions.

The grand assembly at Opera House

The Indian ambassadors, in association with BAPS, organized an assembly at the Opera House. This was an extraordinary moment where Indians full of pride gathered on the morning of February 11. More than 300 BAPS volunteers had organized the event. They visited house to house to invite over 1800 guests. The building of a BAPS Hindu mandir in Abu Dhabi sends the message of cultural and spiritual values as well as world harmony. This mandir is a result of the blessings of Brahaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed al Nahyan, Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendrabhai Modi, and the resolution of many to maintain harmony between the two countries.

In 2015, Narendrabhai Modi had come to Abu Dhabi, and this is when he had requested the Crown Prince to build a mandir. Due to the continuous efforts of BAPS and the citizens residing in Abu Dhabi, this wish came true. The Crown Prince donated a 20,000 square meter plot of land for the mandir. BAPS was chosen for the design, building and management of the mandir. The very first Hindu mandir to be built in the Middle East will be unique and extraordinary. The mandir location is in Abu Mureikheh, midway between Abu Dhabi and Dubai. It will serve as a societal, cultural and spiritual center apart from all aspects of it being a mandir. There will be a visitor's center, prayer rooms, exhibitions, exhibits showcasing values, and a bookstore.

In the packed Opera House, as soon as the stage curtain was lifted, Shri Narendrabhai Modi came on stage amidst a loud applause and a standing ovation. After this, a video made by BAPS showcasing today's "Millennial Moment" was presented. Thereafter, a picture of Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj was shown on the large screen. The audience once again clapped and offered their obeisance to him. A live feed from the Shila puja ceremony, led by Ishwarcharan Swami, was then telecasted on the screen for the audience.

After the Shila puja ceremony, the unveiling of the mandir model was done on stage. Volunteers brought the model covered in palm leaves, a symbol of the Middle East nations. With the press of a button by Shri Narendra Modi, the leaves unfolded and the model of was unveiled. The audience erupted with applause and jaynad. The event was televised, so everyone around the world was able to be a part of the event.

Addressing the audience, Shri Narendrabhai Modi said, "Perhaps after so many decades, a deep and vibrant relationship has been built between the Middle East countries and India. More than 3 million Indians have witnessed this progressive journey. The Middle East countries have made it feel like a second home to Indians. When I met the Crown Prince in Abu Dhabi in 2015, I had talked about building a mandir here. I thank the Crown Prince on behalf of the 125 billion Indians. A mandir is a stimulus for humanity and harmony. This mandir will be unique from the perspectives of architecture, modern technology, and messaging; it will become India's future identity. The rulers here have shown respect for India and its cultural traditions; it is now your responsibility to see that none of us fall back."

Shila Pujan at the Mandir Site

At 8:30am, the ceremony for the Shila puja started in the presence of Ishwarcharan Swami, Santos, and devotees from around the world. Shri Rakeshbhai Zaveri, a renowned guru and leader of Rajchandra Ashram-Dharampur was also present.

The preparations for the ceremony had been going on for many days. The land was prepared to hold parking and also a beautiful, large canopy. Under the guidance of Santos, more than 400 volunteers handled

everything from parking to the food preparation. Everyone who attended ceremony was welcomed with rice-red vermilion and a sacred thread on their wrists.

Our sanstha's priest Shri Mukeshbhai Shastri conducted the ceremony based on our Vedic scriptures. On January 26, 2018 in Gondal, Mahant Swami Maharaj had consecrated a few Shilas at Akshar Deri. Those Shilas were established on stage at the ceremony. Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami said, "This moment is very divine and pure. The reason is that today in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. marks the beginning of the construction of a historic Hindu mandir. This mandir is everyone's. This mandir is for the Indians that live in this country. Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj built mandirs so that we can offer our 9 types of bhakti. Here, these 9 types of devotion will be offered, and also based on Indian tradition, festivals like Janmashtami, Ramnavami, Swaminarayan Jayanti and Shivratri will be celebrated. You will benefit from the visits of many Hindu leaders/ gurus. This mandir will be pivotal in passing on our values to the children and youth of the new generation. No amount of thank yous' are enough in offering our gratitude to the leaders of Abu Dhabi for donating this land. We pray to Bhagwan that may he bless the Royal family and its political members.

For the past 20 years, Pujya Brahmavihari Swami has come here for BAPS satsang related activities. Remembering Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, he said, "The BAPS sanstha is humbly thankful to the leaders of U.A.E. and India for choosing it to build the Hindu mandir, choosing its design, and for its management. Pramukh Swami Maharaj was constantly an inspiring force for the building of a mandir here so that Hindus can offer their devotion. He encouraged everyone with enthusiasm. For this reason, we have this moment in front of us today. This mandir sends a message of harmony to the whole world." Saying this, he once again thanked the 7 Middle East countries, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed al Nahyan, and Sheikh Zayed. All the Indians present this day were full of happiness. All had a light ray of hope in their hearts.

Satsang Pravin Essay 2

Sowing of Affection, Understanding, Unity: Ghar Sabha

In 1998, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was residing in New York. A 16 to 17-year old boy named Tarun called Swamishri. A sant picked up the phone. Tarun told him, "Swami! I can't come for Swami's darshan, but today is my last phone call." The sant was shocked and asked Tarun, "Friend! What's going on? Why are you crying? And what do you mean by 'this is my last phone call'?" Tarun said, "Today I want to commit suicide." Hearing this, the sant became very alert and convinced Tarun to come meet Swamishri.

Swamishri was still recovering from his bypass surgery. He called the teenager to sit next to him and put his hand in his. Swamishri listened to Tarun patiently while he poured his heart out. Swamishri gave Tarun a lot of strength, guidance and blessings. Swamishri said, "Be strong now; believe there's nothing wrong. Shriji Maharaj is with you!" When Tarun returned home, he experienced a new ray of hope rather than defeat. Today, he has become very successful.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has found a path to help many such defeated souls rise, and that is through religiousness. In today's age where more and more people are succumbing to suicide, it has become necessary to try to control this feeling of defeat through religiousness. Our Shastras tell us to hold on to the path given by the great Satpurush and follow it. The guidance from such a Sant can weigh down all questions and problems in one's life. Brahmaswarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj has found such medicine: ghar sabha. There are many families who are falling apart and suffering. And then there are many who have gained fruits from following Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 'cure' and are experiencing peace and happiness. The biggest reason for this is those families are regularly conducting ghar sabha and thus have built love, unity, and understanding amongst each other. Here are stories of many families that tell the tales of how the boon of ghar sabha has helped them.

A New Light Came: Ajitbhai Gamaar, Tuver (Poshinaa)

In a family, there are always little disputes. We were victims to such quarrels. Due to misunderstandings, there were many arguments, and thus we were tired of one another. But today, we all have changed. The reason is the ghar sabha that we started due to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's command. Ever since we have started ghar sabha, we all have experienced peace. There was a time where none of us family members would sit together, but now we do because of ghar sabha. The little children in the family are studying very well. We also invite the neighboring kids to our ghar sabha, adding to our enjoyment. My parents were not into satsang at all, but with ghar sabha they have become satsangis. Not everyone is educated in our family; importance was never given to education. However, they are now educating me and encouraging me along the way. My parents also gave up their addictions because of ghar sabha.

Sabha in the ICU: Hiresbhai Patel, Anand

After completing the Yuva Talim Kendra in 2015, I started ghar sabha at home. At first, only my mother joined me. My father wasn't interested, but we continued anyhow. Slowly he started understanding its value and he joined us. We started developing understanding and patience. The true test was experienced during an illness. After a short time, my father had a bout of tuberculosis and he had to be in the ICU. Even after being admitted, we continued ghar sabha in the ICU. People were surprised, but they also had an appreciation for Pramukh Swami Maharaj. During the 7 days that my father was in the ICU, we would talk about ghar sabha to all the relatives that would come to see him and when the time came, we would conduct sabha unfailingly. The result of this is that many of those relatives started doing ghar sabha in their homes. Our ghar sabha has also prospered. No matter the occasion- wedding or anything but we do ghar sabha regularly and attain the rajipo of Satpurush.

Sabha during Wedding: Mahendrabhai Prajapati, Amdavad

With the agnaa of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, we started doing ghar sabha in 2004. We had no idea how beneficial it would be! But everyone was determined to do ghar sabha because it was Swami's agnaa. Due to his grace, the motivation to do ghar sabha is the same to this day. No matter what the occasion is- wedding or relatives visiting, we do ghar sabha regularly. My daughter's wedding was at 3 in the afternoon. The procession

was coming at 3, so we did sabha at 12 pm. My son's procession was leaving the next day at 3, so we did sabha at 12 that day as well. In the chaos of the back to back weddings, we would do ghar sabha before going to sleep at night. One time we had to go out of town, so we did sabha in the hotel. In 2016, we went on a pilgrimage, but we still did ghar sabha and our sons did their sabha at home. Because we have been doing ghar sabha regularly, we have experienced peace within the family. We are experiencing the rajipo of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Not TV, Ghar Sabha: Govindbhai Vegad, Jamnagar

We came into satsang in 1992 but started ghar sabha in 2007. We have 2 shops. Sometimes we close at 10pm but we still did sabha at 10:30. We did ghar sabha regularly even if it was late at night. ; I didn't like this. Sometimes I had to forgo satsang sabha because of my business. So, I decided to sell off one of the shops. Despite this, with God's grace we are doing well financially and I'm able to attend both satsang sabha and ghar sabha without difficulty. After starting ghar sabha, we started watching less and less TV. My son married a non-satsangi girl, but she joined us in ghar sabha. We told her once, "If you want to watch TV, it's okay. We can buy you one." But she herself said no and to this day she has never asked for a TV. Ghar sabha has taken the place of TV in our house. Because of this, we are experiencing peace and happiness.

Our House Flourished: Divyangbhai Master, Vadodara

When I started ghar sabha five years ago, the conditions in the house was very unfavorable. My wife was not into satsang at all. She couldn't live without garlic and onion. She used to get angry very easily, and thus would fight with my mother all the time. But after about 1½ years later, she started sitting in ghar sabha and there started the series of changes. In a short time, she gave up garlic and onion. Her anger issues became less and she started getting along with my mother. Today, she doesn't get mad no matter whose fault it is. Our son is 19 years old. He also has become staunch in satsang. He studies out of town, but follows his niyams faithfully. My wife says, "Satsang and understanding came in my life because of ghar sabha. I was able to improve my personality." Today there is peace in my house; if we didn't do ghar sabha there would be distress. In just a matter of 5 years, I have seen my house conditions improve. I'll never be able to repay the favors ghar sabha has done to us.

Thank You, Ghar Sabha: Narendrabhai Soni, Visnagar

When both my sons got married, their wives initially didn't get along. They began to quarrel about house chores and it got the point where they weren't talking to each other. If something needed to be bought for the house or something needed to be made, they would pass on the message to each other by some way or another, but they wouldn't directly communicate. We started doing ghar sabha when this was going on. My wife and I would sit initially. My sons would join, but their wives would call them. Slowly, the wives started listening to the prasangs read aloud in the ghar sabha. They felt good and started coming to the sabha. Both daughters in law started talking to each other again and started to do their work around the house in harmony. Times are different now. They both eat from the same plate. They no longer have a sister-in-law relationship; they act like sisters. Today, my 7-member household lives in unity, and the only reason is ghar sabha, which Pramukh Swami Maharaj has given to us as a boon. I can't thank him enough!

The Sweet Fruits of Ghar Sabha: Kanujibhai Thakor, Amdavad

Before we became satsangis, there were many issues in our house. My wife and I had many problems in our relationship. She also didn't get along with my mother. Many times my wife and I would fight all night. It got to the point where I'd call her father at 2 or 3 in the morning and ask him to take her. The environment in the house was always hostile. We always would talk about getting a divorce. We came into satsang amidst all these problems, and we started ghar sabha. What we learned through sabha about satsang slowly started seeping into our lives and we started understanding it slowly. We learned to introspect as a result. I was a very angry and obstinate person, but I gradually started changing. My wife also changed her personality. Her relationship with my mother started to get better. Right now, my home environment is like a mandir. We are reaping the fruits of doing ghar sabha for the past 4 years.

Satsang Pravin Essay 3 Yogi Yuvak Upvas College

You may be wondering what type of college is this. You may have heard colleges of arts, science, commerce, technical, medical, etc. but never may have you heard of this type of college. This faculty has arisen from India only. The yogis of the ancient times laid the foundation for this, and thereafter, many incarnations, Santos and devotees built the structure on this foundation, but Bhagwan Swaminarayan has given it a new twist.

Maharaj loved penance. At the age of 11, he traveled all over India barefoot. He tolerated extreme heat, torrential rains, and cold wearing only a loincloth. He pleased Surya Narayan by doing penance in Pulhashram for 6 months. When he arrived in Loj, he told Muktanand Swami that I want to go back to the jungles after meeting Ramanand Swami. His Santos also did penance and passed through many tests.

This is just a preface to this 'college'. Let's go, I'll show you this college; its name is upvas college. And the head of this college is none other than Yogiji Maharaj! All his life he did fasts along with seva and devotion. Penance was his unfailing weapon. Yogiji Maharaj used this 'weapon' to bring today's yuvaks on the path of ethics and good conduct.

One time, he was putting on clothes after a bath. Usually there would be yuvaks surrounding him. Yogiji Maharaj had given 5-7 yuvaks the agnaa to do fasting the next day. At the time, a yuvak came for darshan. Swami asked him, "You'll fast tomorrow, right?" The yuvak replied, "Yes Bapa!" Yogiji Maharaj said, "You'll do a waterless fast, right? Here, take my blessings." And then Yogiji Maharaj said, "This is Upvas College. He who comes here has to fast." A yuvak enthusiastically said, "Yogi Upvas College." Swamishri said, "No, Yogi Yuvak Upvas College." How could he connect with his beloved yuvaks without being one with them?

Little kids, teenagers, yuvaks, would all do waterless fast upon Yogiji Maharaj's agnaa, and that too willingly; the kids who ate 4- 5 times a day would do waterless fast! Yogiji Maharaj had made the niyam that the yuvaks who come to do his seva have to fast for 5 days. If a new yuvak joined in his seva, he too had to fast. These incidents happened every day. Many yuvaks brought their classmates and friends to have darshan of Yogiji Maharaj. Some came out of curiosity, some came because their friend's insistence, others came willingly on their own. Swamishri asks for their introduction and then lovingly asked them to do a fast. And they willingly would say yes! One time 126 yuvaks and children had fasted nirjala for Jaljhilani Ekadashi per Yogiji Maharaj's agnaa. There was one child by the name of Harikrishna B. Brahmabhatt from Mumbai who Yogiji Maharaj lovingly called 'Sample'. He had also fasted. During the assembly, Yogiji Maharaj had Harikrishna get up and he told everyone, "Do you think these kids can even skip a meal? They eat 4-5 times a day, but he did a waterless fast. What a satyug this is!"

One prasang highlights how much importance Swamishri gave to fasting. Yogiji Maharaj was going from Amdavad to Bochasan for Guru Poornima samaiyo. He reached Bochasan via Dabhan at roughly 11:30 p.m. Thousands of devotees had been waiting for his darshan. He was very tired, but still sat in the assembly and gave everyone blessings. He then proceeded to his utaro. It was around 12 a.m. Everyone was very sleepy. At the time, 60 yuvaks from the Vidyanagar Chhatralay came for Swami's darshan. He met all of them and told them, "Tomorrow you all have to do waterless fast. Tomorrow is Guru Purnima. You get a lot of fruit from doing waterless fast." Everyone enthusiastically agreed to do the fast. Even in these conditions when Swamishri's uniqueness shines, one still can't help but be surprised.

In today's age where everyone is indulged in worldly pleasures, fasting and physical penance seem like a mockery. But by Yogiji Maharaj's word, thousands of yuvaks and children fasted, and this was a surprising fact for this age. This makes us realize that God is present on Earth. Gunatitanand Swami has also said that doing one fast is equal to doing 100 fasts in Badrikashram.

Once while Swamshri was bathing, a list of the yuvaks who would be fasting the next day was being made. There were 64 on the list. Bharat Mehta brought his Punjabi neighbor for Swami's darshan. Swami immediately asked the neighbor whether he'd also fast the next day. He agreed and then told Swami that he was fasting today as well. Swami asked him why so, and he said that he fasts every Monday. Swamishri then told him to still fast the next day, and he agreed! Swamishri then gave him a pat on his back and told him, "Here, I give you 2 kilos of strength!" Saying this, he showed his pleasure towards the yuvak. Jokingly, yuvaks would ask

Swami for strength in kilos. And Swamishri would do so just to please them. Who else can give such strength? "Here, I give you 2 kilos strength." Those sound like the words of a businessman. Weight has an old relationship with business. But business of strength? What must that be like? Bodily strength or spiritual strength? No one can give bodily strength, but one can definitely give spiritual strength! Shriji Maharaj has said in the Vachanamrut that if one has spiritual strength, he can overcome any fear.

A sant has said that without being in the company of a good sant and his compassion, one may read all the scriptures but he won't understand them and all his efforts will be fruitless. Yogiji Maharaj would many times exemplify this thought. When yuvaks and children would come to bathe him, he would take a 'fee' in the form of fasting. These children and yuvaks had a hard time doing fasts, so they would come running to him. But Yogiji Maharaj was very strong in this penance, so he wouldn't let anyone lose. He would tell them, "Here, I gave you 2 kilos of strength. Nothing will happen and you'll pull through." And by his touch, his eyesight, and his words, everyone would get the self-confidence and enthusiasm needed to do the fasts. Many have experienced this. One gains strength only at the refuge of Bhagwan or the Sant. He who has the unlimited strength of God can say such words and give such strength. Yogiji Maharaj very easily said such words; had others experience that strength.