

# The Grand Celebrations - Murti Pratishtha Mahotsav LA

~ Bhavisha Tailor

**Many** years ago, a very devout young satsangee, Pujya Alkaben through marriage to Pujya Dineshkumar, moved to Los Angeles from Khambhat. Within a short time of this, Guruhari Sahebji came to the USA, and through tears Alkaben told him, there is no satsang, please bring the satsang here. The ardent prayer of a devotee was accepted and over a period of time the spark of satsang and the love of Guruhari Sahebji touched Pujya Dineshkumar's inner being and he too joined the satsang. The weekly satsang sabha began.

In 2003, when the Allentown mandir was opened, the murti's that had graced the Pocono's mandir came to Los Angeles and according to Guruhari Sahebji' *aagna*, a Hari Mandir was created in Pujya Vishnumama and Pujya Smitamami's home. Here, devotees gathered weekly, engaging in satsang, seva and kirtans, and not only did the mandal blossom, but satsang in the entire West Coast belt flourished, from San Diego, Los Angeles, Fresno, San Francisco, Seattle right through to Vancouver. Guruhari Sahebji's constant *vicharan* over the span of fifty years and through his association, grace

and blessings, immense transformation happened in the lives of bhakto, whose devotion, dedication and samarpan heightened to such an extent that Shri Mukta Akshar Purushottam Maharaj decided to take His seat there!

The Los Angeles Murti Pratishtha Mahotsav took place from 1 July to 4 July 2023 and what an immense occasion it was! Sadguru Param Pujya Ashvindada and Santo flew directly to Los Angeles from eight weeks of vicharan in Australia and New Zealand. Guruhari Sahebji Maharaj graced the soils of Los Angeles on 23 June 2023 to the joyous welcome of Santo and bhakto.

Having darshan of the mandir campus one week prior to the Mandir opening, one would think completion within that time frame to be an impossibility. But the force of God's strength at work was evident and it gathered an immense boost with Guruhari Sahebji's arrival. Everywhere one looked, there were Santo and bhakto, working on the painting, the carpentry, the outside walls and two days prior to the opening, the marble floor within the mandir was still to be laid! However, as Maharaj has stated, it was evident that each sevak was working with the force of 10 sevaks at once! Every department was in full swing, and under the guidance of the elders, Pujya Dr Virendrabhai, Pujya Dr Jitubhai, Pujya Dineshkumar, Pujya Bhavinbhai – the youth wing took on great responsibility! According to Guruhari Sahebji's wish, more than 150 youth had gathered to volunteer and take on the responsibilities of the samaiyo, with many arriving more than one month in advance, taking leave from jobs. P. Mihir, P. Maharshi, P. Trushil, P. Yashvi, P. Bansari and others took on entire departments from transport to accommodation and overall management of the event. With over 1000



Guruhari Sahebji performing opening puja of Mandir Doors

bhakto coming from all over the USA and from all over the world, they took this in their stride. However, the great privilege was to witness the *mahatmya* with which their seva translated into utmost devotion. The samaiyo was not just to participate in the historic occasion of the Murti Pratishtha but also to have darshan of the magnitude of Guruhari Sahebji's work and vision, to see it come to fruition, and take the opportunity to learn wonderful lessons from it.

On Saturday 1 July 2023, a beautiful sunny Californian morning, in the unassuming quiet neighbourhood of Norwalk, the grand opening of the Mandir campus began. Guruhari Sahebji, Sadguru Ashvindada and Santo, with a crowd of bhakto stood at the gates of the beautiful mandir, and poojan, shloks, dhun and prayer filled the air and reached the skies as prashadi pushpo were scattered and balloons flew free in the wind. The gates were opened and with the jainaad, the divinity and joyousness enveloped everyone! Guruhari Sahebji performed poojan of the Mandir entrance and with Santo and bhakto took the first step into the mandir that awaited Shri Thakorji's arrival.

Following this, an excellent exhibition spearheaded by Californian youth, P. Yashvi and a team, was also inaugurated. With Mantra-pushpanjalim and arti the exhibition was officially opened and Guruhari Sahebji with Santo and bhakto were given a guided tour by the

youth at every station within the exhibition. It was a beautiful exposition reflected in the title, 'Guruhari Sahebji – 50 Years of Giving.' It showed the work of Guruhari Sahebji in the USA, the history of Anoopam Mission, through a wonderful documentary and interviews, and the impact of Guruhari Sahebji's life and work on the spiritual landscape of the USA. It paid tribute to both Sadguru Santo – Param Pujya Shantidada and Param Pujya Ashvindada, whose gift has been given to us by Guruhari Sahebji.

In the late afternoon, the Mahotsav was officially opened through the Opening Ceremony Sabha. A large marquee had been erected on the grounds of the Saddleback Hotel where the majority of bhakto were accommodated, a few minutes walk from the mandir. Guruhari Sahebji and Santo were welcomed into the marquee by over 150 youth. Deep-pragatya took place and with five diva stands, and Guruhari Sahebji and Santo in the centre, each stand had sevaks from the various departments. Param Pujya Ashvindada officially opened the Mahotsav, and said Guruhari Sahebji has himself lit the lamp and has spread light, so let us sit with the doors of our hearts wide open and let this light in. Guruhari Sahebji showered his blessings and said, it is only when one has the *punya* of countless lifetimes that one is able to get seva such as this, offering prayers for everyone to enjoy the peace, joy and bliss of God.



Guided exhibition tour by youths



Core team of youth Sevaks with Guruhari Sahebji

On the morning of Sunday 2 July, the entire marquee had been re-arranged as bhakto gathered to participate in the Maha-Yagna. In the divine presence of Guruhari Sant Bhagwant Sahebji, Sadguru Param Puja Ashvindada, Param Puja Dinkar Uncle, more than 1000 bhakto took their seats to offer their devotion and prayers through the Yagna. Led by Sadguru Puja Manojdasji and Santo, it seemed to lift everyone into a space of utmost peace and divinity. This Yagna was unique, for it was the first time in the history of Anoopam Mission, that each couple was provided with their own Yagna-kund. The meticulous arrangements had been the exceptional seva of Sadhu Puja Rajudasji and the team of sevaks in Mogri. The setting up was done by the army of youth volunteers, and the exceptional bhakti was clear as sevaks from each department, took place in the yagna. They had completed their seva ahead of time. Those from the kitchen department had begun cooking seva at 3.00am in order to be able to participate in the Yagna! In his blessings, Sadguru Param Puja Ashvindada spoke of the global community being present, which shows that Shri Akshar Purushottam Maharaj, who is taking his seat here does not belong just to the local mandal, but to the entire global community, in the same way that our Guruhari is one and all's. Guruhari Sahebji showered his utmost blessings and spoke of how the Santo who have

all been trained by Sadguru Param Puja Shantidada have performed their seva with such precision and perfection to please Shri Thakorji. Speaking of Sadguru Param Puja Manojdasji's mahima, Guruhari Sahebji showed that it is Param Puja Shantidada's swaroop that we have got in the form of Param Puja Manojdasji.

Later that afternoon, preparations were underway for the Shobha Yatra, which began at the Saddleback Hotel and made its way to the Mandir. It was a vision of amazing oneness, a heartfelt togetherness of bhakto. Each mandal carried the banner of its country and each mandal expressed its overwhelming joy through folk dances as Shri Thakorji and Guruhari Sahebji's chariots made their way to the Mandir. However, each mandal while separate, was together, and this unique oneness, the bonding and the love was felt in the air, culminating in devotional ecstasy as Shri Thakorji entered the gates of the Mandir compound, where the chariot stood and *baheno*, welcoming Shri Thakorji joyously performed *garba*. That evening after Mahaprashad, bhakto joined in Kirtan Sandhya, the outpouring of devotion by the West Coast mandals, as youth immersed bhakto in their kirtan-bhakti.

The day that everyone had eagerly been waiting for, the Murti Pratishtha Mahotsav was finally here! Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, the most auspicious day of Guru Purnima, and Shri Mukt Akshar Purushottam Maharaj



Rushi Kanya taking blessings prior to the Maha-Yagna



Rushi Kumars taking blessings prior to the Maha-Yagna

and Swaropo took their throne in the majestic mandir of Anoopam Mission, in Norwalk California. The vidhi led by Sadguru Param Pujya Manojdasji, took place behind closed curtains, as Guruhari Sahebji, Param Pujya Ashvindada and Param Pujya Dinkar Uncle and Santo performed the praan-pratishtha of the Murtis. As the curtains finally opened, to the great jubilation of bhakto, Shri Thakorji Maharaj and Santo gave their darshan and everyone's eyes filled with tears. The Murtis which had graced the UK Mandal bhakto for 25 years, had also graced Mogri, India for 2 years and completing a global yatra, were now taking their throne in the USA! As preparations took place for Anakut and aarti, Pujya Bhavinbhai, Pujya Shubh and Pujya Dharmendrabhai spoke of their journey with regards to the mandir, in a most moving sabha. Pujya B.U. Saheb and Pujya Dr Kiranbhai (Florida) had graced the occasion and whose support has always been with us, were honoured with a shawl, khes and silver kalash memento, and Pujya B.U. spoke of Guruhari Sahebji's magnanimity. Sadguru Param Pujya Ashvindada and Guruhari Sahebji showered their utmost blessings upon everyone, and as the drums rolled the curtains opened and Shri Thakorji's darshan with the vast and splendid array of food prashad items, were a feast for the eyes.

Later that afternoon, in the Guru Purnima Sabha, Pujya Satishbhai, Sadguru Param Pujya Ashvindada and Guruhari Sant Bhagwant Sahebji gave their blessings. It was also the pragatyadin of Param Pujya Jayeshdasji who was honoured on this most auspicious day. All bhakto had the exceptional and divine opportunity of Guru poojan.

On the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> July, all the youths put on the most magnificent cultural programme. Not only was it planned, managed and executed by all the youth, and not only was it so splendid in its artistry, it's ultimate beauty was in the understanding and the *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta* with which they had performed.

Recounting many prasangs that had taken place when preparing for the cultural programme, Pujya Archanaben (Seattle) spoke of the unimaginable understanding with which the youths worked. It was truly the darshan of the impact of Guruhari Sahebji in their lives, as it showcased the selflessness and harmony with which they had worked with each other and cared for each other. Sadguru Param Pujya Ashvindada and Param Pujya Manojdasji showered their immense blessings upon all the youths.

Numerous publications were inaugurated over these days, including a precious volume of prayers written by Sadguru Param Pujya Shantidada – 'Sadhu Hriday ni Prarthana Ganga', the inauguration of a collection of bhajans with video darshan (the first of its kind published by Anoopam Mission's Guru Sabha youths) and the inauguration of Spiritual Essence 7.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July, the concluding sabha was also the celebration of 50 Years of Guruhari Sant Bhagwant Sahebji's Global Dharma-Yatra. Pujya Dr Jitubhai spoke beautifully of the history and how Guruhari Sahebji had so deeply impacted the lives of so many people. Representatives from different countries and continents were chosen to speak of Guruhari Sahebji's *vicharan* and impact and the following bhakto, P. Bhavishaben (Africa), P. Vinubhai Nakarja (UK), P. Dipenbhai (Australia), P. Rajshreeben (UAE), P. Dhavalbhai (Canada) all recounted their great experiences. Sadhu Pujya Manojdasji showered his blessings and showed how Guruhari Sahebji, had impacted lives not only at the personal, individual level, but at the family level and at the level of community. Param Pujya Dinkar Uncle, showered blessings and Guruhari Sant Bhagwant Sahebji showered his utmost blessings, showing his immense *prasannata*. Sadguru Param Pujya Ashvindada concluded the Mahotsav, which had come to be an immensely uplifting, divine and unforgettable experience by all.

