

MESSAGE FROM FAKIR HASSEN ON THE PASSING OF PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJI

In my journalistic career of more than four decades, I have been privileged to meet, photograph and write about many people, ranging from people sleeping on the streets to heads of state. Many of them displayed some form of humility and compassion, but in no one else have I found these two human qualities to override everything else that they do than in Pramukh Swami Maharaji.

I have also had the rare pleasure of covering the opening of both major BAPS Mandirs in South Africa, in Lenasia and Mayfair, in the presence of the revered leader, and have attended many functions at these two venues. On every occasion, I was welcomed warmly by devotees who never had any qualms about my being from a different religious group. This was firm evidence of the impact of the humility and caring for fellowmen that followers of Pramuk Swamiji have imbued over three generations in South Africa.

The legacy that Pramukh Swamiji leaves in South Africa will be these hundreds of adherents to his principles, which they display in everything they do with such passion; whether a religious celebration or events to better the lives of less privileged members of society, always without any expectation of reward or return. I have witnessed their commitment to Pramukh Swamiji's principles over and over again.

In January this year, I was party to the launch of *Transcendence*, the book in which the late President of India, Abdul Kalam, detailed how he too was humbled by Pramukh Swami's influence. This further reinforced my view that I had indeed been very privileged to have shared a minute part of Pramukh Swamiji's life. As short as those interactions might have been, they have left a lasting impact that will stay with me for the rest of my life, and no doubt will inspire the descendants of those who will constantly remind them of his impact on their own lives in this generation.

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