॥ श्री स्वामिनारायणो विजयतेतराम् ॥

Vadtal Dham manifested into iridescent colours by the loving Brush-Strokes of genius artists!

# sahajANAND

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#### H. H. Acharya Shri **Rakeshprasadji Maharaj**



Shreeji Maharaj, out of sheer Karuna (kind and loving feelings) mostly talks about His Jnan (spiritual knowledge) and His Swaroop (divine form) to all human beings.

Shreeji Maharaj opines that every Satsangi, by becoming humble devotee, should be in touch with a true saint.

When we talk about a true sant, we come across many definitions of a true sant in many scriptuires. A true saint has thirty attributes; a true saint behaves as per the holy commands of the Lord, follows five Vratmans (vows), a true saint is above any expectations or desires. If we associate with a true sant, then virtues like Shraddha (faith), Vairagya (non attachment) increase in our hearts. But if we remain in touch with Kusang (vices), then whatever good virtues we possess, they perish periodically.

Shreeji Maharaj also talks about avoiding bad nature. He also talks about making introspection about Kusang that prevails in our nature.

The Vachnamrut (Gadhada First 18) is very deep and meaningful. The message of this Vachnamrut is that no one should do any kind of Kusang. Kusang means one should not trust our Mann (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (consciousness) and Ahamkar (self-consciousness). It happens that a devotee follows the religious codes but becomes helpless before his mind and ultimately becomes Kusangi. The devotee does follow the code of religious conduct and often avoid them. This is called Kusang.

In this Vachnamrut, Shreeji Maharaj has given us a significant message. It is very useful. In this modern life, human beings deal with very unsteady environment. An individual wants to have all worldly comforts; hopes to have a front-row seat, wants to get all his desires fulfilled, also expects that no one should observe his vices. The human beings want to progress on their own terms. Shreeji Maharaj also says that, with all prudence, one should try to avoid Kusang. He also talks about the characteristics of a fool. The fool sticks to his nature. To get rid of such nature, one must take shelter of a Sat-purush (virtuous person), introspect and always become a humble person. This helps to avoid kusang.

Shreeji Maharaj, through His merciful statements, intends to save us from all these worldly lures. This is the sum and substance of this Vachnamrut.



## SHIKSHAPATRI

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Shantikumar Bhatt

My disciples should mark on their forehead the Urdhvapundra Tilak mark. 41

Tilak should be made with Gopichandan, with sandal paste, saffron etc. which are left over after Puja. 42

In the middle of it a round mark should be put on with Gopichandan or Kumkum graced by Radha and Lakshmi. 43

- Bhagwan Swaminarayan

- Q. The Tilak, the mark on the forehead is said to be Urdhva Pundra. What is the meaning of Urdhva Pundra?
- A. Pundra means a lotus. Here it means the lotus-feet of Shree Hari. Urdhva means upward. The lotus-feet of Shree Hari looked from the heel, appears like a lotus with five petals. The Tilak mark is therefore the symbol or the imprint of the lotus-feet of Shree Hari.
- **Q.** Why is the Urdhva Pundra Tilak applied primarily on the forehead?
- A. Because that is the place of Agnya Chakra, the commanding center of spiritual power.
- **Q**. Should we have this Tilak mark for the whole day and every day?
- A. Certainly, but if not possible due to unavoidable adverse circumstances, you should have Tilak mark every morning during ceremonial worship or when you go to the temple. When the saints were harassed and tortured by adversaries, Shree Hari had Himself ordered the saints not to have Tilak mark for the time being.
- **Q.** What happens if Tilak mark is completely omitted?
- A. The scriptures declare that without Tilak

mark; Japa, Yajna, charities, study of holy scriptures are sheer waste of time.

- **Q.** What is the significance of the shape of Tilak?
- A. The two vertical lines pointing upwards show that the Tilak mark leads upward finally to Akshardham. Also these two vertical lines are the symbol of two divine legs of God Supreme. The red mark is the symbol of Lakshmiji (spiritual prosperity) living at the holy feet and within the heart of Shree Hari.
- **Q.** What are the benefits of having this Tilak mark?
- A. It protects you from worldly bondage, leads to external spiritual liberation, the body remains as holy as the temple of God. It burns off the mountains of sins. The bearer gets the merits of Puja for public welfare and great charities, of performing all yoga techniques.
- Q. Who has standardized our Tilak mark?
- A. Shree Hari Himself has standardized the Tilak mark. The saints and followers of Shree Hari formerly belonged to different sects. Each of these ten sects had their own specific design of the Tilak mark. The location, dimension and shape of the circular Chandraka inside also varied. To bring uniformity Shree Hari Himself made a standard Tilak mark on the forehead of Nityanand Swami and asked all the followers to follow this specification. Since then the uniformity of Tilak mark is maintained.
- **Q.** If the Tilak mark is rubbed out during the day, should we do it again?
- A. It is good if you may do it so if it's convenient.
- **Q**. Why Gopichandan (a particular yellowish mud) may be used?
- A. It is sanctified by the Gopies. The symbol of unconditional divine love for God. It is the cheapest material easily available near Dwarika.

## Eved om

#### Prof. Rajnikant M. Pancholi - Vadodara

#### Rambai wedded to the Lord

#### (Contd.)

An atom is small, almost invisible. But when it explodes, its powerful effect spreads all over the land. The message which Lord Swaminarayan had sent was just a short sentence; but its inner meaning could be understood only by Rambai, the blessed soul. She knew what she should do.

The messenger who brought the word of Lord Swaminarayan for Alaiya Khachar conveyed exactly the message as he was told to remember: "Let Rambai marry and then worship God." Alaiya Khachar called Rambai to his presence and conveyed the message of Lord Swaminarayan to her. She was perplexed for a while. She thought about it deeply. There was then a flash in her inner self. She had succeeded in deciphering the conundrum of the message. She had grasped its deep inport.

"Now tell me, my child," Alaiya Khachar said, "what would you do? Well, you didn't follow my earlier advice; but now it is the word of Shriji Maharaj, our Master. You'll surely not disobey His word!"

Rambai smiled at that, her smile was anigmatic.

"Bapu," she said, "the word of Lord Swaminarayan is a command for me. I don't have to think twice about it. Well, you have won in persuading Him to your opinion. Let us begin the process of the ceremony then; I agree exactly to do what our Lord says".

Alaiya Khachar was pleased at this. A search was instituted for the suitable bridegroom. A

virtuous young man in the Koli caste from the village Khasma was found to be the proper match for the bride. The engagement ceremony between him and Rambai was performed with religious rites. The assembly of men from both the sides witnessed the ceremony and partook of ceremonious snacks of jaggery, coriander pods and dates.

The marriage ceremony was to take place in a big pandal. All the relatives of Rambai and her foster father Alaiya Khacher were ready to play hosts to the bridegroom's party. The whole village of Prince Alaiya Khacher was invited to witness the festive occasion. There was music of flutes and drums to receive the party of the bridegroom. Women sang auspicious songs of blessing the young couple. The priest started the ritual of the wedding ceremony with the chanting of the Vedic hymns. The sacred fire before which the young couple was to take the marital oath was lighted. It was now the time of the giving away ceremony of the bride. The priest exhorted all concerned, "Now be vigilant all of you. Let the bride be brought forth for the wedding. Saavdhan .... Take heed."

"Take heed" is a very significant word. It makes you feel responsible, vigilant, careful of what you are about to do. A marriage is a serious affair. The couple about to take the marriage vow is thereby exhorted not to be tempted into the fleshly delight but to turn the desires into their refined, compassionate form of showing concern not for the self but for the Supreme Lord. But very few comprehend the deeper meaning of these words.

Of these few awakened souls, one was the saintly Rambai. She looked beyond the worldly joys promised in the ordinary wedding; she looked for the union with the divine.

Rambai was then escorted to the marriage pandal in all her bridal finery. In the marriage ritual the bride leads in three turns in circumambulating the sacred fire and in the last turn it is the groom who leads the bride. At every turn parents of the bride, friends and relatives offer gifts to the bride groom. Alaiya Khacher generously gave the bridegroom all the gifts even beyond his expectation.

When the fourth turn was over, Rambai asked the old priest, "Venerable sir, is the wedding ceremony now over?"

The simple old priest said, "Yes, the fourth turn around the fire completes the wedding. The next ritual is just a sacrifice to the fire."

All the relatives and men and women of Alaiya Khacher's family had offered their gifts to the bridegroom as per the social convention.

Now Rambai lifted bridal veil and got up. She started taking off all her gold ornaments one by one, her earrings, her nose-stud, her gold chains, her bangles...! No one could understand what she was up to.

"Look my brother," she said to her newly avowed husband, "I have fulfilled the command of my Master and Lord, our Lord Swaminarayan. I am now giving all these ornaments as gifts to you as a sister at your wedding. Henceforth our relationship is that of a brother and sister."

When she spoke these words, a luster was seen on the face of this saintly lady.

"Oh my dear daughter, what's meaning of all this ?" said Alaiya Khacher in great surprise and consternation. "Have you gone insane ?"

"No, dear father, I do this with completel awareness of my senses. I have fulfilled the first command of Lord Swaminarayan; His second command is to worship God. Now I must follow his second command."

The father was overcome with compassion for his daughter about to follow the religious order. Very few people had witnessed such moving scenes - a life of renunciation immediately after the wedding ceremony is over. Rambai's determination to renounce worldly life was firm and steadfast. No persuasion could change her mind.

Alaiya Khacher tried to placate the stunned bridegroom: "We are very sorry, sir. We are helpless before her will. All these gifts and her cartload of dowry is our gift to you, sir. You can always get a good match for you."

But other members of the bridegroom party felt insulted. It was a humiliation for them to return to their village without the bride. But the bridegroom pacified them. This was no ordinary wedding. Rambai's was a high soul. Often in ordinary weddings people sing bawdy songs and drinks flow and there are mean quarrels. This was a wedding of a high note. He said, he was lucky to be associated with such a saintly lady.

The bridegroom approached Alaiya Khacher in his royal residence and said, bowing, "Father, I have to return this dowry to my newly accepted sister. It is my gift now to her wedding with her Divine Master. I cannot take anything from my sister, sir; and now on her word she is my sister. I would now like to pay my respects to that saintly lady, my spiritual sister, who is blessed by God. A sight of her divinized self will ennoble me."

Rambai was called before her erstwhile husband, now her brother of soul. He bowed to her and touched her feet for blessing.

"Dear brother," she said, "May Lord Swaminarayan's blessings grace your life."

The bridegroom thus left with his party, not dejected but reconciled to what was God's will.

Next day Alaiya Khacher asked Rambai, "Now my dear daughter, what is your next wish?"

"Dear father," she said, "let us yoke a chariotcart. My Gadhada calls me. I shall not be happy here. Gadhda is the place of my Lord. There I shall serve the devotees of the Lord along with princesses Jivuba and Laduba. I shall practise



austerities there and pass my time in devotion to Lord Swaminarayan and follow the rules of His religious order."

Alaiya Khacher was overcome with deep emotion of joy that his foster daughter had undertaken such a high mission in her life.

But Rambai was humble. She told Alaiya Khacher, "Bapu, I was born in a lower caste of Koli; but your upbringing has raised me to where I have reached. Though I lost my parents in early childhood, you never let me feel that I was an orphan. I am deeply thankful to you. If at all there is any lapse in my service to you, I crave your indulgence and ask for your forgiveness."

"Dear daughter," said the saintly man, "it is my fault that I did not recognize the great soul within you. A bird is destined to fly in open heavens - that is what you are! And I tried to put you in a cage." And he felt such a deep emotion, that he started sobbing and crying. The luster of her Brahmacharya was brighter than her foster father's. He bowed to her superior soul in his mind.

Next day a chariot was yoked and Rambai was sent ceremoniously to Gadhada, a spiritual centre where Lord Swaminarayan sojourned.

Rambai spent the rest of her life in the service of Lord Swaminarayan in Gadhada. In the religious fellowship she is known and remembered with respect as "Mota Rambai."

We bow down in all reverence to Great Rambai who took the path of spiritual love and service of the lord in preference to a life of an ordinary householder. Hers was a great, blessed soul that resides in Akshardham.

Our obeisance to her divine spirit.

### Whats & Whys Answers to the questions of curious seekers

Mantra Jaap

(Chanting the Name of God)

While turning rosary, we keep the first finger straight and suggest that our aim points towards Guru i.e. Lord Swaminarayan. The elements of fire, air and sky are associated with Guru. The element of fire can burn all factors connected with Maya. The element of air puts strength of judgement in the intelligence and the element of sky makes us detached. It means the first finger teaches us to remain free from Sattva, Rajas, Tamas and Guru acts as the proper and real guide and gives us knowledge and light.

The second one is the finger of Saturn who is the son of Sun. Usually, Saturn is considered to cause negative effect, but in reality, it is positive. Being the son of the Sun, he symbolizes limitless light. But as his place is very far from the Sun, he is believed to be the planet of darkness. Saturn suggests hard work and struggle and also suggests night time. Though Saturn is the symbol of creative genius, astrology considers it with different angle due to the qualities of fear and selfishness. But if we consider its spiritual aspect, we will find that one who crosses the painful (negative) period of Saturn, proceeds towards the Sun and our culture calls it the transition from darkness to light -Tamaso ma Jyotirgamay. Saturn includes the elements of sky and the soul.

When we turn rosary, we catch the bead

between the second finger and the thumb which means we combine Saturn with Sun. Two things happen when Saturn and Sun are together. The person in the spiritual process may go upward or downward. If he turn beads with the strength of the first Guru finger, he can progress on the spiritual path by the power of his detached devotion. If he turns beads with passion and desire, he decreases himself to the level of Maya.

So when we turn the beads and as the thumb touches each bead we should concentrate on the grandeur of Lord Swaminarayan. The stream of our inward spirit flows towards the idol of Lord Swaminarayan. That would be considered the best Mantrajaap which is done with such mental and emotional condition, and only such chanting can become fruitful.

> The reason behind giving details from astronomy and spiritualism is not to lead one into firm belief in astrology. But if we have full k n o w l e d g e o f t h e supplementary aspects, we can cultivate appropriate awareness at the time of turning the beads on rosary i.e. Mantrajaap; and it will open up the possibility for the realization of the idol of Lord Swaminarayan.

The beads of rosary are made from tulsi or sandal wood. We can use the rosary after touching it with the idol of Lord Swaminarayan. Generally, it happens that due to the hustle, bustle and anxiety of routine life, man cannot do worshipful remembering of God. This has come down through ages. Rishis and elders inspired souls to remember and meditate on Shri Hari. It is possible that the rosary with 108 beads as a tool was born from the necessity of counting Mantras and their repetitions.

Why only 108 beads? There are two important points about the number of beads. As per the physical structure, an average (adult) man breathes 15 times per minute. So he breathes 21.600 times in 24 hours. If we deduct 12 hours of night time, he breathes (in and out) 10800 times during day time. It is ideal to recite mantra with every breath but practically it is not possible. But as per the method recommended by Muktanand Swami - Hold in mind Shri Hari's body part one by one and utter the name Swaminarayan. If we can do only one full counting of rosary holding in heart Shri Hari's different body parts; the fruit will be 100 times greater. Turning one such Japamala means offering worship at every breath. 108 x 100 = 10800 beads. But here emotional condition is more important than the number of beads. Chanting remembering with mind, heart and soul is necessary, for spiritual progress.

Astronomy explains that seasons on this earth are caused by the movements of the Sun and the Moon. Our ancient Rishis have divided the orbit of the Sun into 27 parts. Groups of stars belonging to each part are called "galaxy" or constellation and each one has four **Charan** i.e. subdivision, therefore there are  $27 \times 4 = 108$ . The number of beads in a rosary seem to be decided following this astronomical principle. As per the Hindu culture and astronomical Mathematics, Mountain Sumeru stands at the centre of the circle of 27 Nakshatras (groups of stars) which is also the centre of the universe. When one full cycle of counting ends, there comes the bead of Meru in rosary, which is respectfully touched at the eyes by the devotees. It suggests that one sacred round of Japamala is over. This 108<sup>th</sup> bead is decorated with lace and silk thread. It is outstanding and enjoys a special importance in the rosary of 108 beads.

To conclude, let us remember the advice of Muktanand Swami, **Without break turn beads, of course with love and emotion.** When awareness enters and attains appropriate emotional state of mind, any tool (means) becomes subordinate and target or aim gets supreme importance.

A dialogue took place between the Gopis and Uddhavji in which Uddhavji became wonder-struck and was totally put out. Uddhavji had deep knowledge of Hindu scriptures but he was left speechless by the words of the Gopis. "O Uddhavji if someone makes a flute out of our bones when we die, you will hear the words 'Krishna, Krishna' from that flute. Well, this is the climax of Japa - Yajna practised by the Gopis. The name Krishna has gone deep into their consciousness, so when you touch the bones, the name would ring out. Even after physical or biological death (end), the spiritual vibrations continue.

Therefore, whatever time you get in life for chanting Swaminarayan Mantra and can attach your feeling with the idol of Lord Swaminarayan, every moment of life spent in Mantrajaap with emotional involvement will become the golden moment of your life. Man lives in moments and not in years. Such moments of spiritual act done with emotional involvement spread light in the path of life. Nhrimad 'Satsangi Jeevan' a literary scripture is not an ordinary scripture. It was composed by an enlightened saint Shatanand Swami. Having penned it himself and written in Sanskrit language, it can be easily understood. While Swami was writing this scripture, after completion of every topic, he would present it to Lord Swaminarayan and Lord Shri Hari would read these topics.

Shatanand Muni, after completing each topic, would narrate it before Shri Hari, residing in His Akshar Oradi at Gadhpur.

Shatanand Swami, while explaining the importance of this scripture, writes, 'The ones who most respectfully adopt the nectar-like this scripture, get free from the entanglement of 'Kaal' and attain Lord's divine abode.

Swami writes, "If a man reads this scripture in a substantial auspicious manner,

or for some time or even for a moment, he will be definitely saved from any untowardness. The fruit that one attains by

performing several sacrificial rites, equivalent amount of fruit one shall bear if one listens to this holy narration with utmost affection.

When some one performs any untoward action or does some vice, then one has to bear the consequences. Entire world becomes sorrowful. But this scripture is so great that when the person commences the action of listening to this great scripture, then all vices gather and get doomed in sorrow.

Swami writes, "At the beginning of listening to this Saga, the various vices start crying. O hell! This voice will demolish us forever. This voice will instantly cause our destruction."

When this scripture got over, the expansive Universe's Supreme most deity and controller, Lord Shri Swaminarayan, Himself, with the purpose of doing ceremonial rites, came adorning his three tasseled turban and placed this scripture over His head. Then He roamed all along from Shri Gopinathji Maharaj's temple to Laxmivadi in Gadhada. He did 'aarti' Himself and in His words praised this scripture, its author and said, "O Shatanand Swami, this beautiful scripture is the best amongst all scriptures. And in future too, it will remain supreme." Not only that, when Lord Shri Hari decided to depart from this world, He remembered this scripture.

In Kaliyug, to make people's lives welfaregenerating, He made Shatanand Swami write this scripture and named it 'Satsangi Jeevan'. This scripture is all encompassing and on its completion, Lord was relieved that if He had to depart from this world now, it wouldn't be a cause of worry.

So to describe the importance of this scripture is not possible. Shatanand Swami

"From amongst all written scriptures, I give more importance to this Shri Hari's all inclusive, supreme scripture. I have written this auspicious

'Satsangi Jeevan' scripture only with Shri Hari's kindness and grace, while staying in close proximity with him."

This scripture is not just about character. It consists of religion, knowledge, detachment and devotion. The description about all four of these is given in detail and in a wholesome manner.

In this scripture, there are 5 volumes, 319 cantos and 17627 verses.

Worship worthy Deity is Lord Swaminarayan.

Scripture's author is Shatanand Swami.

Scripture narrator is Shatanand Swami.

Scripture's first listener is Darbar Pratapsinh Raja, Bhader.

> Shastri Swami Bhanuprakashdasji (Porbandar)





The day when one dies all money will remain in the bank.

When we are alive, we feel we do not have adequate money to spend. But the truth is that huge amount of money remains unspent at the time of our death.

One Chinese software engineer died. He had left 2.9 million dollars in the bank for his widowed wife. The widow married the young servant. Servant said, "I always thought that I work for my boss. But now I understand that whole life the boss worked for me actually speaking."

Moral : It's important to live more rather than earning/ saving more.

Try to achieve good and healthy body.

• 70% functions of expensive phones remain unused.

• 70% speed remains

## about MONEY

unutilized of expensive cars.

- 70% space of a huge bungalow remains unused.
- 70% clothes from the entire wardrobe remain as it is.
- 70% of our life's earnings goes to others hands.
- 70% virtuous qualities remain unused in life.
- But the 30% that you use, how would you use it?
   Even if you are healthy, do regular check-ups.
   Even if you are not thirsty, keep drinking water.
   Get rid of your arrogance.

In spite of being powerful, stay simple and humble. Stay satisfied even if you are not rich/ wealthy.

It's very easy to run away but very difficult to get awakened.

How is the heart functioning that any doctor will be able to tell you. But what is going on in the heart, for that you need true friends!

Once in a small hut in bitter cold weather, two small boys were sleeping covering their body with newspaper! They didn't have a quilt/ blanket to cover their bodies. Just then one boy told the other, "What would happen to those who don't have newspapers to cover themselves?"

It's not important how you live your life but what you think in life holds more importance.

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Our Swaminarayan Fellowship had a galaxy of great saints during Shriji's times. One of them was Santdasji – a very great star shining brilliantly among others. He was very great in terms of devotion, penance, detachment and renunciation. Once in a village called Kadi of North Gujarat Shriji Maharaj enjoined Santdasji to pay a visit to the Badrikashram. Swamiji immediately set out on his journey. First of all he took a dip in the pond of the village, but ah! When he emerged from water he found himself in the Badrikashram itself. What a miracle! First he had a Darshan of Shri Nar-Narayan Dev with deep-felt devotion. Then, Santdasji left for the divine lake Mansarovar. From this holv place, he made his return-journey.

Near Tibet there were some mountainous states which were ruled by a King who was surprisingly a determined Yogi (hathyogi). The King had such a spiritual power that he could easily fall into trance. But while in the state of trance he could not help remembering his family. The King's passion for his family was very strong, it was invincible. The King sincerely wished to get rid of this hurdle-like passion. So when he heard of Santdasji's arrival in his state he went to him for his Darshan. The King earnestly prayed Santdasji to eradicate his family passion. Merciful Swamiji blessed him and advised him to enter into trance while, chanting the Mantra "Swaminarayan". As the King followed Swamiji's advice, he fell into trance. But this time his trance made him feel the highest ecstasy, without any passionate disturbance. By Swamiji's grace the King's efforts at last yielded the desirable fruit that being the good riddance from the family-passion.

Swami Santdasji then started climbing down the mountains of the Himalayas. On the way he came across a village namely Verval. The name of the village sounded that



most of the villagers here were seekers of revenge, excepting some good ones. Just as every cloud has a silver lining, every village has a dung-heap. This village had a dungheap of bad people, mostly idlers. When Swamiji entered the village, it was twilight and darkness was gradually descending and surrounding it. On the outskirts there was a big tree with a raised platform (otta) round its trunk. On this platform were seated some idle, dung-heap like fellows boasting like anything. Such idlers are more harmful to society than any others. There goes a proverb: 'An idle brain is a devil's workshop'. An idler would never think of worshipping God.

Santdasji's entry was seen by those impolite idlers, sitting under the tree. Swamiji was carelessly free, self-willed, engrossed in meditating upon his beloved God even while walking in an elephantine style. It was his natural gait. He was clad with space, that is to say, he put on no clothes whatsoever like a Jain Digambar Sudhu. If somebody would, sometimes, take pity on him and offer a piece of cloth to cover his naked body, he would accept it unwillingly but while bathing in the river if that piece would get drown or would flow away unawares, he would feel quite happy to be again burden-free. On seeing Santdasji, those idlers started commenting: "He looks like a wandering sadhu. But no, there can be no sadhu in darkness. He must be a thief, to be sure. All those who move stealthily in darkness are certainly thieves." None from the crowd nourished an ounce of feeling or thought that Swamiji was quite naked, with nothing to own, walking with his

eyes cast down. Suddenly they rushed to him and caught hold of him as if he were a thief.

Swamiji, of course was strong enough to defy them single-handedly but no, he remained silent. He continued chanting the name of his favourite God. Meanwhile one man from the crowd fetched a rope and tied Santdasji's hands and feet. Still he kept mum. But Swamiji's silence strengthened and confirmed their doubt that he was an accomplished thief. Then they started beating him. One of them first gave him a kick and the rest of the rowdy followed him. Swamiji began to smile and continued chanting 'Swaminarayan' 'Swaminarayan'. He did not resist their onslaught. So the crowd began to strike him even more, at random. Someone shouted: "Fetch me a sword. I will cut off his hands and feet." One man, in no time, fetched a sword. But another man said: "Wait, wait! Leave all this hubbub. Let us kill him outright putting an end to all troubles." At this instigation, from the crowd a sword was raised, some spears too were raised to kill Swamiji. But luckily at this juncture a group of people came running down hastily from the opposite direction. The group consisted of a stout man, his sister other three young ones. They all came very fast calling out loudly: "Be alert! Stop vou nonsense. Don't kill him. He is my son. Why have you tied him? That tied father of yours is not a thief."

On hearing these loud challenging words, the village-crowd took to their heels and disappeared from the scene. Then Swamiji was relieved from the bondage of the rope. But who were these relievers? None other than his own relatives of his former stage of life (The stage of Gruhasthashram). But these relatives were not real ones, to be more precise. Their manifest human forms were assumed by Shriji Maharaj Himself. It was Shri Hari, in different forms at a time, came to rescue Santdasji. What a miracle! Miracles do happen even today but take it for granted that they are the fruits of firm faith.

Throwing light on Santdasji's trance Swami Nishkulanandji has composed a few lines in the Chapter No.49 of the Bhaktachintamani. After Ramanand Swami's departure from this world, Shri Hari started a new chapter of sending people into trance extempore. But Muktanand Swami was not in favour of this practice because the state of trance is not attainable by any Tom, Dick and Harry. It is the eighth and the last stage in the Yoga system. So in order to convince Muktanand Swami of the truth of trance. Shri Hari sent Santdasii, who was nearby into trance. Then Muktanandji was asked to wake him up. He tried hard to feel Santdasji's pulse but to no avail. Santdasji was surely in trance. Thereafter Shri Hari awakened Santdasji who narrated what he saw in trance. Nishkulanandji writes:

> Santdasana chhe satya bol, Kahe ditho men Brahma Mahol. Teman murti dithi men doy, Udhav ne Shri Krishani soy. Uddhav te Ramanand rup Shri Krishna te aa Hariswarup.

"Santdasji's words are true. He says he has seen the Brahma Mahol (the celestial abode called Akshardham). In that abode I have seen two live images - one of Uddhav and the other of Shri Krishna. Uddhav is found in the form of Ramanandji and Shri Krishna is found in the form of this Shri Hari."

Thus through Santdasji's trance Shriji Maharaj reveals His identity as the supreme God and Guru's identity as Uddhavji.

> - Gordhanbhai M. Patel Bharuch.

> > 11



Once he was sitting near his house in quite hale and hearty condition, there appeared three horrible figures of Yamadutas - the envoys of Yama, terrifying him! Many of the residents of Kariyani village had become Satsangis by being attached to Shree Lord Swaminarayan; yet among them there was a spoiltsoul called Manashiyo Kathi. He had developed many evil qualities through his association with unworthy Gurus.

Manashiyo Kathi



You became a spoilt-soul through evil association; tell us why did you prefer us neglecting the Lord? Having come under our control, you can't expect any pleasure.

He said, "I have to pass through this hardship as I have no good deeds to my credit except that I had the Darshan of Lord Swaminarayan. I can be saved from this calamity only if He becomes my Savior and Protector.





We bow our heads to Lord Swaminarayan who is the Savior of thousands of fallen souls and the Remover of bondage of time, action, Maya and the destroyer of the terror of Yama.



Harendra P. Bhatt

Whatever happened for the first time during the lifetime of Lord Shree Swaminarayan or in the Swaminarayan Holy Fellowship, is mentioned in "the First" series. Topics covered in this series are of two types: one, related to Lord Shree Swaminarayan and second, related to Swaminarayan Holy Fellowship. Yet, everything is centred around Lord Shree Swaminarayan. The topics, having religious as well as sociological impact, are historical milestones of the Swaminarayan Holy Fellowship. Like them, this is also the first attempt of the author.

## **16.** The idol of Shree Harikrishna Maharaj at Vadtal : the first idol of Sahajanand Swami consecrated by Himself.

Lord Swaminarayan consecreated his own idol known as Shree Harekrishna Maharaj at Vadtal on Kartak Sud 12, VS 1881. The idol of Shree Harekrishna Maharaj, installed in the South Sanctum Sanctorium along with the idols of Shri Krishna and Radhikaji and Shree Harikrishna Maharaj became the first idol of the Lord Swaminarayan to be installed by the Lord Himself. The Lord performed the Aarti and Puja of this idol too.

Lord Swaminarayan preached what he wrote in Shikshapatri: Just as Jiva is installed in the heart, so does Isha abides in the heart of Jiva as the Inner controller is absolutely independent and is (Judge Supreme) the bestower of the fruits of all actions of all Jivas. (Shlok 107, Eng. Translations Ramesh chandra L. Pandya). There is no difference between the pragat (living) God and the God residing in the Aksharshardham and one in the idol of Shree Harekrishna Maharaj. They are all one.

17. Charnarvind.

Sahajanand Swami gave Charnarvind to the Maharaja Raisinhji of Vasanda at his Palace in Vansada for the First time in the history of Swaminarayan Sampradaya. (Harikrishnayan 340)

**18.** Shikshapatri : the first scripture translated in English.

Professor Monier Williams, the Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford and the founder of Indian Institute Library, translated Shikshapatri into English and this translation was published in the October 1882 issue of Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. When Prof. Monier Williams, along with the Collector of Kaira District in Central Gujarat, visited Vadtal Mandir on a full-moon day in 1870, he was presented a copy of Shikshapatri by the then Acharyashri of Vadtal diocese. An example of his translation: that being known by various names such as glorious Krishna, Param Brahma Bhagwan, Purushottam - the cause of all manifestations is to be adorned by us as our one chosen deity? (S108).

#### (Contd.)



#### Re Nar Hari bin koi na tera

Re Nar Hari bin koi na tera re; Medi Mandir chhod chaloge, jungle hoyega dera re; Jyo tetar par baaj firat hai, tyo Jam det hai fera re; Durlabh deh milyo manushya ko, taa te chet savera re.

O common mortal ! God is your only eternal companion.

You will have to leave all your dwelling places one day,

And wither away in wilderness.

Just as the falcon hovers over the partridge,

likewise, Yam-doot keeps an eye on the lapsed souls.

The day you awaken to the realization that,

you have been bestowed with a rare human existence,

Will set forth a new beginning that will lead you towards the path of bliss.

With these lines, Muktanand Swami gives us a glimpses of life's journey that a common man undertakes through with his physical state of being. Putting in a lot of hard efforts, man builds storeys over his house, becomes a priest in a temple, but when death arrives, both of them have to leave their dwelling places. The man engulfed in worldly pursuits has to leave his shelter and the renouncer has to leave his temple. Their final journey is towards the cremation ground, where besides God, there is no one with them at that Time.

As the falcon always eagerly waits to attack the partridge, likewise, a man without a spiritual inclination, Yam-doot (messenger of the god of Death) keeps his eye over such worthless souls. The ones who realize the fortune of being bestowed with a rare human existence, and thereby, shift their life's focus towards engrossing in Lord's meditation, prayer, remembrance and lead their lives doing good deeds, such souls undoubtedly become happy. Therefore, the one who awakens to his conscience that Time is running and I am unable to free myself from the entanglements of materialistic pursuits and connect with Lord Swaminarayan, such a thought makes him to walk on the correct path of life - the path of spirituality.



There was a Baniya devotee called Uddhavji who had involved himself in selfless devotion and who chanted the name of Lord Swaminarayan night and day. Once house breakers attacked his residence. They caught him, took him in the open, barren ground. They cut a branch of babul tree having many pricking thorns and said, "If you do not pay us the rupees demanded by us we will surely thresh you with this babul baton." When they raised the baton to beat the devotee got terrified."

He thought "How shall I be able to bear the beating and pricking of thorns. There is no money in the house and how can I pay money and save myself from these thieves? My death is certain."

He began to offer earnest prayers to Shri Hari and urged and beseeched the Lord to save him from the calamity.

In response to the earnest prayers of Uddhavji the Lord appeared there and gave him darshan. By looking at the appearance of the Lord the devotee felt pleased by heart.

Tears began to flow from his eyes and he spoke in choked voice. "O Lord! I feel blessed as You have taken pity on this poor devotee!"

"If the Lord had not come at this crucial moment my death at the hands of this robber was sure and certain." When he touched the feet of the Lord the shelter of the shelterless Shri Hari spoke

> Bhakta bhay ma rakhish koy, Have raheje nirbhay man moy.

"O devotee! Do not have any type of fear. I will not let you suffer even a little. You shall be able to return home without getting any harm from the house breakers."

After speaking these words the Lord left that place and went to the wife of that robber.

The Lord told the woman, "Your husband is a sinner. He brings wealth by torturing the devotees of God. At once get that devotee released from the clutches of your husband."

The Lord set out from thereafter telling



Thus how God saved His beloved ones.

these words. Then the thieves brought the man to his house and kept him locked for one night. Then the wife of the robber said, "You caught this fellow and brought him here and by troubling this devotee you have committed the crime of the Lord. If you want to be free from that crime please donate garments to this man and put him back to the place from where

you have brought him." Then the thief followed the advice of his wife. He sent back the devotee after offering good clothes to him.

The story of Uddhavji is a living example of the fact that the Lord listens to sincere prayers and he does not make any delay. As soon as the devotee offers earnest prayer, the Lord rushes to save him at the spur of the moment.

Sincere prayers rise from the heart and they create the vibrations of sacred telepathy. The vibrations of the devotees heart reach the God's heart and he rushes to save the devotee right at that moment.

- Prof. Madhusudan Vyas, Vadodara.



Prof. Harendra P. Bhatt

#### Victory over Death

Manilal C. Parekh, in his Shri Swaminarayan, has aimed to give a faithful picture of Swaminarayana, not only as he was, but as he came to be believed in his own lifetime and later. He has pointed out many remarkable features of the life of Lord Swaminarayan; one of them is the Victory over Death. After carefully depicting this extraordinary feature of the Movement, he honestly confessed that nowhere in any religion such a thing happened. To him, this is a unique thing of the Movement. That is why we have gladly reproduced here some part of his research.

A most remarkable feature of this Movement (Swaminarayan Sampraday) is its positive assurance of victory over death and a very vital experience on the part of its followers at the time of death of being taken to Heaven by their Master. One meets this at every turn in their Literature and Tradition, and almost every family of the Fellowship knows of such remarkable experience on the part of some of its members at the time of their their passing away, and these are some of the deepest things which the family has known in its history. This is something unique, and the present writer knows nothing like it in any other religious movement of the world. Death has neither terrors nor sting for the members of this Satsang, for it is nothing but an entrance to the Heaven of Heavens. They rarely use the term Death and they describe it by saying that their Lord Swaminarayan took away such and such a person to his own abode. This is not a matter of theory or belief or faith, but one of very real vision on the part of the person dying and often even of others. There are hundreds of cases mentioned in the Literature with the names of the persons thus testifying at the time of their death. There are cases where a member of a family, the only believer therein, thus dying has been the means of converting the entire family. There are others where because of such visions some of the people in a village or a town have been converted.

The most remarkable thing about these visions is that they were prevalent even when Swaminarayan himself was living. The earliest account of these is in a book written soon after he assumed the leadership of the Movement, a book called Yama Dand (the Judgement) by Swami Nishkulanand, wherein the astounding claim is made on behalf of this Teacher that he comes in person to take his disciples when they die to his eternal abode which is the Highest of Heavens. This was the belief held by the believers all through the period that the Master was in flesh, and the true believers were assured in their mind, and some of them even testified that the Master had come to take them at the time of their passing away. The same belief has been held all this time, and the visions are still seen although centuries (two by now) have already been passed.

What is still more remarkable is that it is not the Master alone who is thus seen. Sometimes he comes with one or two of his

principal disciples or a company of sadhus and at times he is seen with his party of Kathi horsemen. At such times once in a while even the village people or the neighbours see him, but most often it is the dying person who sees him and speaks about the matter to his or her attendants. Whatever it be, this is a most marvellous phenomenon in religious life, and the fact that such a belief should have been persisted in for over a century, and that hundreds of stories should be told of visions of this kind with the names of persons and places where they lived, etc.. It is unique in religious history. This, together with all the great things done by this Movement, testifies in an unmistakable manner to its wonderful character.

Such visions show the wonderful kind of Supernaturalism with which this



In the last moments of Ramsevak, Shri Hari appears while riding the eagle and takes away him to His Akshardham!

Sampradaya is pervaded through and through. That such things can be believed in and passed on from generation to generation in the family and in the community is the great wonder, and there is nothing like it in any other religious movement. It is altogether original to this Fellowship and as such unique. It is the major miracle of the movement, or rather a series which started with the beginning of the ministry of Swaminarayana, continued all through his life on earth, and is still going on although a full century has passed by. When the present writer spoke of this to a religious leader in America, he said that there was no such thing known outside the pages of the New Testament. One might go even further and say that even there this kind of phenomenon is absent. St. Paul speaks of the believers who die as "those who sleep in the Lord." The very belief that the Christians must wait in their graves for the resurrection until the second coming of the Lord Christ made such a phenomenon impossible. Before writing these last few sentences the present writer wanted to make sure whether there was anything like such visions in the lives of the great Christian saints, and he looked up for this purpose the Life of St. Francis of Assisi by Paul Sabatier and Saint Theresa of Lisieux by the Rev. Thomas N. Taylor, two of the noblest Roman Catholic Saints, and was disappointed to find nothing of the kind. Nor does he know of such phenomena being reported in connection with any other religious Teacher in India. Whatever it be taken all in all, in Swaminarayan we have a religious Teacher and Leader of Supreme Significance.

Shri Swaminarayan, Manilal C. Parekh, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1st edition 1936, pp 239 to 240, 241



## Health Spirituality

Dr. Dhanwantari Jha - M.B.B.S., M.D. (Ayurveda), Anand

#### Yoga and Spirituality

Yoga word is derived from the root 'Yuj' which means 'to Unite' or 'to integrate'. Yoga is an age old Indian science which has been practised in India since thousands of years. Yoga is not just merely a physical form of exercise but a guide to completely harmonise your body with the universe and feel the 'oneness' of the Universe.

#### 2) Niyam

The second component of Patanjali's Yoga path is called Niyam, which includes virtuous habits, behaviors and observances (the "dos"). Sadhana Pada lists the Niyamas as : 1. Saucha : Purity, clearness of mind, speech and body. 2. Santosh: Contentment, acceptance of others, acceptance of one's circumstances as they are in order to get past or change them, optimism for self. 3. **Tapas** : Persistence, perseverance, austerity. 4. Swadhyay : Study of Vedas, study of self, self-reflection, introspection of self's thoughts, speeches and actions. 5. Ishwarapranidhan : Contemplation of the Ishwar (God, Supreme Being, Parabrahman, Unchanging Reality). As with the Yamas, Patanjali explains how and why each of the above Niyamas help in the personal growth of an individual.

#### 3) Asan

Patanjali begins discussion of Asan (posture) an Asan is what is steady and pleasant. By defining it as follows, स्थिरसुखमासनम् - ४६ Motionless and Agreeable form (of staying) is Asan (Yoga-posture). -Yoga Sutras - 46

Asan is thus a posture that one can hold for a period of time, staying relaxed, steady, comfortable and motionless. Patanjali does not list any specific asana, except the terse suggestion, "Posture one can hold with comfort and motionlessness". Aranya translates verse - 47 of Yoga sutra as, "Asanas are perfected over time by relaxation of effort with meditation on the infinite." This combination and practice stops the quivering of body. The posture that causes pain or restlessness is not a yogic posture. Other secondary texts studying Patanjali's sutra state that one requirement of correct posture is to keep breast, neck and head erect (proper spinal posture).

Later yoga school scholars developed, described and commented on numerous postures. Vyasa, for example, in his Bhasya (commentary) on Patanjali's treatise suggests twelve:[ Padmasana (lotus), Veerasana (heroic), Bhadrasana (lotus), Svastikasana (like the mystical sign), Dandasana (staff), Sopasrayasana (supported), Paryankasana (bedstead), Krauncha-nishadasana (seated heron), Hastanishadasana (seated heron), Ushtranishadasana (seated elephant), Ushtranishadasana (seated camel), Samasansthanasana (any motionless posture that is in accordance with one's pleasure).

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika describes the technique of 84 asanas, stating four of these

as most important: Padmasana (lotus), Bhadrasana (decent), Sinhasana (lion), and Siddhasana (accomplished). The Gheranda Samhita discussed 32 asanas, while Svatmarama describes 15 Asanas.

#### 4) Pranayam

Pranayama is made out of two Sanskrit words **Pran** (breath) and **ayam** (restraining, extending, stretching). After a desired posture has been achieved, verses - 49 through - 51 recommend the next limb of yoga, pranayama, which is the practice of consciously regulating breath (inhalation and exhalation). This is done in several ways, inhaling and then suspending exhalation for a period, exhaling and then suspending inhalation for a period, slowing the inhalation and exhalation, consciously changing the time/length of breath (deep, short breathing).

#### 5) Pratyahar

Pratyahar is a combination of two Sanskrit

words Praty - (towards) and ahar (bring near, fetch). Pratyahar is fetching and bringing near one's awareness and one's thoughts to within. It is a process of withdrawing one's thoughts from external objects, things, person, situation. It is turning one's attention to one's true Self, one's inner world, experiencing and examining self. It is a step of self extraction and abstraction. Pratyahara is not consciously closing one's eyes to the sensory world, it is consciously closing one's mind processes to the sensory world. Pratyahara empowers one to stop being controlled by the external world, fetch one's attention to seek self- knowledge and experience the freedom innate in one's inner world.

Pratyahara marks the transition of yoga experience from first four limbs that perfect external forms to last three limbs that perfect inner state, from outside to inside, from outer sphere of body to inner sphere of spirit.

(Contd.)







### SATSANG

One man regularly used to attend Satsang. Every day, he would take out 30 minutes for Satsang. He would listen to various sermons delivered in Satsang most attentively. His friend did not like this. His friend believed it to be sheer waste of time. His friend would often show resentment for Satsang.

One day both friends went out for an outing. On the way, the topic of Satsang erupted. The friend who found Satsang futile asked his friend, "As far as I know you have been attending Satsang since past 10 years and you have attended so many meetings. Among all those talks and discussions done in Satsang, how much do you retain, how much and what all you remember?"

The Satsangi friend immediately replied, "I don't remember anything." Listening to the answer, his friend laughed aloud and said, "If you don't remember anything then what did you do in Satsang?" Satsangi friend replied, "Brother, before I answer your question, let me ask you a question, and based on your reply, I will answer your question." Satsangi's friend agreed. So immediately Satsangi asked, "How long you have been married friend?" Immediately came the reply, "I have been married since last 10 years."

Satsangi friend continued the conversation ahead and asked, "Now tell me, in last 10 years Bhabhi(sister in law), might have served you various kinds of food dishes. How many of them do you

remember? Friend said, are you crazy? We don't remember food items but we eat hence body gets nutrition. For healthy body, what difference does it make if we don't remember the food items?" Satsangi friend said, "Friend, after marriage even if you don't remember the food prepared by your wife and before marriage food prepared by your mother, just as your body gets nutrition from that food; likewise, through the holy sermons in Satsang, my soul gets nutrition and with that thought, my mind becomes strong. Whether I remember the Satsang talk or not is not important."

So friends, as the intake of regular food is important for body's nutrition; similarly for soul's nutrition, regular association with saintly persons or good thoughts is equally important. Even if we don't remember thoughts, our thoughts definitely work to train our minds.





#### **10** GOLDEN ADVICE

#### 01

Please stop using the term "God fearing" -Hindus never ever fear of God. For us, God is everywhere and we are also part of God. God is not a separate entity to fear. It is integral.

#### 02

Please do not use the meaningless term "RIP" when someone dies. Use "Om Shanti", "Sadhgati" or "I wish this atma attains moksha/sadhgati /Uthama lokas". Hinduism neither has the concept of "soul" nor its "resting". The terms "Atma" and "Jeeva" are, in a way, antonyms for the word "soul".(to be understood in detail)

#### 03

Please don't use the word "Mythology" for our historic epics (Ithihaas) Ramayan and Mahabharat. Rama and Krishna are elated, historical heroes, not just mythical characters.

#### 04

Please don't be apologetic about idol worship and say "Oh, that's just symbolic". All religions have idolatry in kinds or forms - cross, words, letters (calligraphy) or direction.

Also let's stop using the words 'idols', 'statues' or 'images' when we refer to the sculptures of our Gods.

Use the terms 'Moorthi' or 'Vigraha'. If words like Karma, Yoga, Guru and Mantra can be in the mainstream, why not Moorthi or Vigraha?

#### 05

Please don't refer to Ganesh and Hanuman as "Elephant god" and "Monkey god" respectively. You can simply write Shree Ganesh and Shree Hanuman.

#### 06

Please don't refer to our temples as prayer halls. Temples are "devalaya" (abode of god) and not "prarthanalaya" (Prayer halls).

#### 07

Please don't wish your children "black birthday" by allowing them to blow off the candles that are kept on top of the birthday cake. Don't throw spit on the divine fire (Agni Deva). Instead, ask them to pray: "Oh divine fire, lead me from darkness to light" (Thamasoma Jyotirgamaya) by lighting a lamp. These are all strong images that go deep into the psyche.

#### 08

Please avoid using the words "spirituality" and "materialistic". For a Hindu, everything is divine. The words spirituality and materialism came to India through evangelists and Europeans who had a concept of Church vs State, or Science vs Religion. On the contrary, in India, Sages were scientists and the foundation stone of Sanatan Dharma was Science.

#### 09

Please don't use the word "Sin" instead of "Paapa". We only have Dharma (duty, righteousness, responsibility and privilege) and Adharma (when dharma is not followed). Dharma has nothing to do with social or religious morality. 'Paapa' derives from Adharma.

#### 10

Please don't use loose translation like meditation for "dhyana" and 'breathing exercise' for "Pranayama". It conveys wrong meanings. Use the original words.

## Remember, the world respects only those who respect themselves!

### Vadtal Darshan through loving Brush Strokes !

Shreeji Maharaj encouraged art and artists. Swaminarayan Sampraday possesses rich artistic works including wall paintings. Vadtal Dham recreated this rich tradition by organising 13<sup>th</sup> Kala Festival in association with Kala Pratisthan, Surat from 22 to 24 February at Vadtal Dham. **H. H. Acharya Shree Rakeshprasadji Maharaj** blessed the event in the beginning while the Collector Shree of Kheda district, along with Jashvant Raval the editor of Naya Padkar and Bipinchandra P. Patel (Vakil), graced the concluding session.







Some 75 artists from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan painted around 375 pictures in water colours and justified the glory of the Vadtaldhaam. The artists were guided by Ramnik Zapadia the secretary of the Kala Foundation, while Shailesh Savalia arranged and managed the event. Dr. Santvallabhdasji Swami, Shyam Swami, Nautam Swami, Sukdev Swami, Lalji Bhagat, with the help of the temple staff, made the programme successful and memorable one.

- Prof. Harendra P. Bhatt







Just behind the Laxminarayandev Temple - Vadtal in the middle of the circumabulation path, there is a (Chhatri) traditional sacred monument. It is said that Lord Swaminarayan used to circumabulate the Vadtal temple 200 times! Lord Swaminarayan used to sit here while circumambulating the temple. This artistic monument echoes with the flow of Shri Hari's divine sermons. Shari Hari also determined here to write Shikshapatri and to dig Gomati lake! This chhatri carries sacred memory of the Lord !