

A Textbook of the Bal Satsang Examination Series

Bal Satsang 2

Translation of Gujarati Version



Swaminarayan Aksharpith
Ahmedabad

Bal Satsang 2

(A specially written Satsang textbook through which *satsangi* children can, in an easy and enjoyable manner, learn general satsang knowledge and tradition.)

Inspirer: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

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INTRODUCTION

A child's mind is comparable to a fertile field. Whatever you plant in it grows abundantly.

A farmer can choose what he wants to grow. He can nurture beautiful roses, grow juicy apples or cultivate vegetables. He may neglect his field and let weeds overrun it or he may even harvest narcotic plants.

Similar is the situation with children. Whatever we sow in their minds will grow and flourish. The young child has the potential to mature into a caring doctor or a creative engineer, helping himself and society. He can also sprout into a rogue, murderer or social parasite, being of no use to himself or to society. Which side the scales tilt towards will depend on what he reads, hears, sees, and whose company he keeps.

In 1954, Yogiji Maharaj recognized the potential of the pure and fertile mind of children. He saw in them the citizens and leaders of tomorrow's world. Yogiji Maharaj gave great importance to the upbringing of children. With his far-sighted vision he established the "Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Bal-Mandal", a network of centrally guided weekly Satsang assemblies attended by children of all backgrounds. Moral and religious teachings were imparted in an easy to grasp, enjoyable manner. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has carefully tended the Bal Mandal with the result that today there are over 5,000 weekly assemblies held at BAPS centres throughout the world.

Through Pramukh Swami Maharaj's experienced guidance and blessings Satsang literature is now widely available for children. Subsequently, 'Bal-Satsang Examinations' have been arranged. These two voluntary examinations based on the books *Bal Satsang 1* and *Bal Satsang 2* have been tremendously successful. Children have become familiar with the traditions of our Indian Culture, its ideal style of life and the importance of *satsang* and moral life.

Parents, guardians and the Bal Mandal *sanchalaks* form the

necessary framework for the development of an ideal child. It is they who shoulder the responsibility of teaching and guiding the children during their *satsang* reading. With encouragement and constant effort children achieve good grades in the examinations. More than that, they learn to value, and live a moral and spiritual life.

- Swaminarayan Aksharpith

Shri Swaminarayano Vijayate



*Ame sau Swāminā bālak, marishu Swāmine mâte;
Ame sau Shrijitanā yuvak, ladishu Shrijine mâte.
Nathi dartā nathi kartā, amārā janni parvā;
Amāre dar nathi koino, ame janmyā chhie marvā.
Ame ā yagna ārambhyo, balidāno ame daishu;
Amārā Akshar Purushottam, Gunātīt gnāne gaishu.
Ame sau Shrijitanā putro, Akshare vās amāro chhe;
Swadharmi bhasma choli to, amāre kshobh shāno chhe.
Juo sau Motinā Swāmi, na rākhi kāi te khāmi;
Pragat Purushottam pāmi, malyā Gunātīt Swāmi.

* For meaning see page 92

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SECTION A

1. Lucky Bhadra!

There is a small village in Saurashtra.
In the village there lives a Brahmin.
In the courtyard of the house is a cradle.
A small child is playing in the cradle.
A four-year-old child rocks that cradle and plays
with him. He is his elder brother.

Their mother was busy housekeeping. But she was more interested in what the boys were doing. She heard Mulji sing a rhyme saying he would make his brother a sadhu.

She ran into the room and said, "Son, Mulu, what is all this talk of sadhus?"

Mulu replied, "He will become a sadhu and so will I. Mum, what fun we will have."

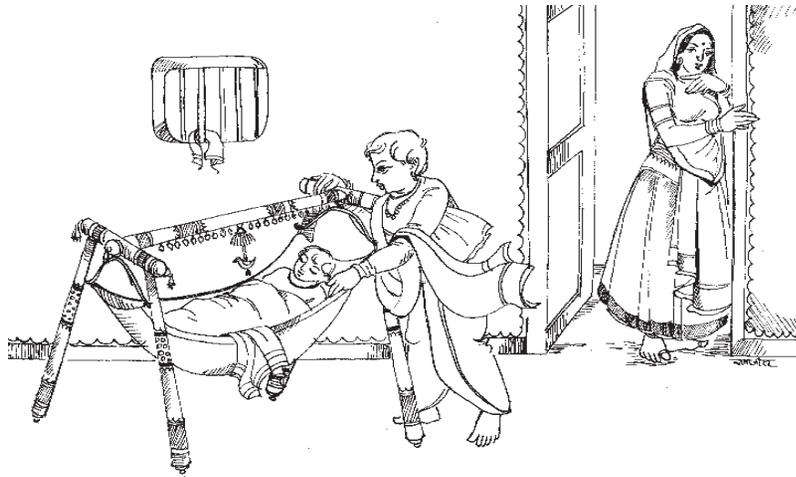
Mother was lost in thought. She said to herself, "Birth in a Brahmin family is the same as becoming a sadhu. My son should do the family proud."

Mulu did grow up to do the family proud. Not only that, he made Bhadra proud. And not only that he made the whole world proud.

That same Mulu was Mulji.

Mulji was born on Sharad Punam (Aso *sud* Punam), Samvat 1841 (17 October 1785 CE) in the village of Bhadra, near Jodia port in Saurashtra. His father's name was Bholanath and mother's name was Sakarba.

A few days after Mulji's birth, Ramanand Swami came to Bhadra. Ramanand Swami was the guru of Bholanath. The newborn child was brought before Ramanand Swami and put in his lap. Bholanath said, "Swami, please name him and also bless him."



Mulji rocks his brother Sundarji in the cradle

For quite a while Ramanand Swami stared at the little boy. Finally he said, “He is the companion of the person whose coming I have been hailing. The parents of this child are lucky. And even I am lucky to have his darshan. He is at the root of everything. Mulji is indeed great.

Thus he named the child Mulji. Mulji means Mul Akshar. His other titles are Akshardham and Aksharbrahman.

As the birthplace of Aksharbrahman Mulji, Bhadra was very lucky and has become a place of pilgrimage. Annually thousands of pilgrims visit Bhadra and worship there.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in one sentence:

1. Where and when was Mulji born?
2. What were the names of Mulji’s mother and father?
3. Ramanand Swami named the child Mulji, why?

4. What did Mulu do when he grew up?
5. Where is Bhadra?
6. At what age did Mulji talk about becoming a sadhu?

2. At Which Age Should God Be Worshipped?

Mulji’s father Bholanath was a religious man. He loved sadhus.

He was interested in bhajans, spiritual discourses and things like that.

Once he saw Mulji lost in worship. Mulji had even forgotten to eat his meal. Bholanath said to him, “Mulji, at this age you should play and have fun. You shouldn’t spend time in worship like this!”

Mulji said, “Then at what age should I worship God?”

“When you grow old,” said his father.

Without saying a word Mulji walked straight out of



Mulji checks on what the old villagers are doing

the house. Father became happy thinking that Mulji had gone to play with friends.

But Mulji had not gone to play. He had gone to see what the old people in the village were doing.

At one place he saw the old men passing time in chit chat. At another place he saw the old ladies sniffing snuff and gossiping.

He asked one old man, "Uncle, why aren't you worshipping God?" The old man became angry and got up with a stick to beat Mulji. He thundered, "You're still young and you dare to advise me!"

After observing the village public Mulji returned home. In the evening when the family sat down for dinner, he said, "Father, you said that I should worship God only when I become old. But today I wandered through the whole village, and did not see even one elderly person worshipping God! All of them were interested only in chit chat and gossip. No one was interested in worship. I think that to say that one should worship God in old age is wrong. God should be worshipped from childhood!"

Bholanath said, "What you say is true, son."

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "Then at what age should I worship God?"
2. "Uncle, why aren't you worshipping God?"
3. "What you say is true, son?"

Answer each question in approximately 3 lines:

1. What did Mulji experience in the village?
2. What did Mulji say to his father after returning from the village?

* * *

3. An Eternal Satsangi!

Mulji was now eighteen years old.

He was known in the village as Mulji Bhakta.

Meanwhile Shriji Maharaj came to Bhadra. He camped by the riverside. Mulji Bhakta and Bholanath went for Maharaj's darshan.

They both prostrated before Maharaj.

Bholanath introduced his son. He said, "Maharaj, he is a new *satsangi*! Please accept him in your service."

Maharaj laughed on hearing this. He said, "What did you say, Bholanath? He is a new *satsangi*? Oh no, he has been a *satsangi* even before his birth. He is an eternal *satsangi*! Just as I am ageless, even he is ageless. He is always with me, constantly serving me. Whether dreaming, sleeping or awake, in all three states, he is by my side, and I am by him. He is never far from me and I am never far from him. I am God and he is my abode. He is Mul Akshar, That is why he was named Mulji by Ramanand Swami."

Maharaj was extremely happy in Bhadra. So much so that He celebrated Diwali there. Countless devotees came to Bhadra on this occasion.

Another incident which occurred in Bhadra:

Sakarba, Mulji's mother was a devotee of Shriji Maharaj. One day Shriji Maharaj was in Bhadra. Bholanath had already passed away. Mulji had gone to his sugar cane field to water it. He was knowing that Maharaj is going to come his home for lunch. So he was working fast so that he could return home quickly.

However, Maharaj arrived at Mulji's home earlier. Sakarba welcomed him and spread a colourful rug on a mattress for him to sit on. In front of Maharaj sat some devotees.

Maharaj was in a playful mood today. He asked a question, "Mother Sakarba, does your Mulji ever talk about me?"

Sakarba replied, "I cannot describe how much he talks about you! With every breath he chants your name. I wonder how he came to love you so much!"

Maharaj burst into hearty laughter.

"Why are you laughing so much, Maharaj?" asked Sakarba. Then she went into deep thought and said, "Am I mistaken? Why Maharaj, even before we heard of your name, Mulji knew you!"

Maharaj laughed again. He said, "Of course, he knows me. It is not that we just met, we have known each other since eternity!"

Sakarba was wonderstruck. Although she did not understand everything Maharaj, she did realize that Mulji was not an ordinary human being, but a very great person.

Exercise

Write short notes:

1. In which way did Maharaj describe Mulji as an eternal *satsangi*?
2. What did Sakarba say of Mulji whilst talking to Maharaj?

* * *

4. It Is Time to Leave

Mulji Bhakta had grown sugar cane in his field.

Once he was watering the sugar cane shoots. He used a spade for help. All at once he was almost blinded by a bright light.

Within the light a figure formed. It was Shriji Maharaj! He was wearing a yellow *pitambar* and a *dakshini pagh*.



Shriji Maharaj grants divine darshan to Mulji

Mulji then heard Maharaj's sweet voice. Maharaj said, "Mulji, have you forgotten? For what have we descended on this earth and what are we doing?"

Mulji said, "I have been waiting for your command!"

Maharaj replied, “Then come, it is time for you to leave.”

“At once,” said Mulji. He threw the spade into the field and left for Gadhada, not stopping even to wash his mud-covered hands and feet.

The date was 3 November 1808 (Kartik *sud* Punam, Samvat 1865).

Within few days, Mulji Bhakta arrived in Gadhada. Maharaj was not in Gadhada but was to return after few days. But Mulji Bhakta could not wait that long. He set out to search for Maharaj. He went to Botad, but Maharaj was not there. Mulji Bhakta was just preparing to leave Botad when he received a message from Maharaj. He was to stay in Botad as Maharaj himself was coming there.

It was Maharaj who had called Mulji on this earth. So Maharaj would know where he was. Maharaj met him in Botad and took Mulji Bhakta with him to Gadhada.

In Bhadra everyone was searching for Mulji. They all knew that he was constantly thinking about Maharaj and so he must have gone to see him. Mulji Bhakta’s younger brother, Sundarji set out to search for him. He came to Gadhada. He found him there. Crying he said, “Brother, return home just once.”

Even Maharaj commanded Mulji, “Return home for now.”

Mulji returned home but he could not interest himself in any work. Within few days he left home and again went to Gadhada. He prayed to Maharaj, “Please make me a sadhu, initiate me as a sadhu!”

Maharaj smiled and teasing said, “Have you burned your home and come?”

Mulji Bhakta was innocent at heart. He took everything Maharaj said as truth. He thought that

maybe it was a custom that whoever wanted to become a sadhu had to burn his home. So he said, “I’ll leave at once. I’ll return as soon as I’ve burnt the house!”

He left at once and began walking quickly to Bhadra. Only one thought was in his mind – to go home, burn the house and return to Maharaj.

Maharaj was greatly pleased with Mulji Bhakta’s innocence. In fact Maharaj had spoken of burning down his home within his heart – in other words, to burn all his inner attachments for home and family that he might have!

Maharaj sent a messenger after Mulji Bhakta and called him back. He said to Mulji, “I am sure you have burned your home. You have no attachment to your home or family! Stay here, and I will make you a sadhu!”

Mulji Bhakta’s joy was tremendous.

After a short while, Maharaj held a great *yagna* in Dabhan. At the end Maharaj gave *bhagwati diksha* to Mulji and named him Gunatitanand Swami.

Maharaj said, “I am overjoyed today, as I have initiated my divine abode as a sadhu.”

Gunatitanand Swami *ni jai*.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in one sentence:

1. What did Mulji Bhakta see in the field?
2. What did Maharaj say to Mulji in the field?
3. In which way was Mulji commanded to burn his home?
4. Where did Maharaj initiate Mulji? What name did he give him?
5. What did Maharaj say when he initiated Mulji Bhakta?

5. Standing in the Rain

Although Maharaj named Mulji Bhakta Gunatitanand Swami he called him “Nirgunanand of Bhadra.”

‘Gunatit’ means one who is not influenced by the three gunas. The three gunas are *sattvagun*, *rajogun*, and *tamogun*. An ordinary person has these three gunas. Everyone has more or less of one or the other.

Gunatitanand Swami was above three *gunas*. He was *nirgun* – without *guna*. That is why Maharaj had named him so – Gunatitanand and Nirgunanand.

Once Maharaj was in Gadhada. Muktanand Swami, Gunatitanand Swami and a group of sadhus were also there. Everyday Maharaj would deliver discourses. All the sadhus would listen with attention.

One day, after finishing *katha* for the sadhus, Maharaj went to Dada Khachar’s *darbar* to talk to his family members. It was the rainy season. The night was dark and the sky was cloudy. There was a drizzle of rain. Sometimes there was a flash of lightning followed by a thunderclap. Late into the night Muktanand Swami awoke for some reason and stepped out of his room. He saw someone standing under the roof. He asked, “Who is standing there?”

“It’s me, Nirgunanand,” a voice replied.

“Why are you standing there so late?” Muktanand Swami asked.

“I’m waiting for Maharaj’s darshan! He has gone into the *darbar* to talk to the devotees. I’m waiting for him to return,” replied Gunatitanand Swami.

Muktanand Swami was amazed. He said, “But you have had darshan all day long. Aren’t you satisfied?”

Swami replied, “My every pore craves ‘Maharaj, Maharaj’. How can there be satisfaction!”



Gunatitanand Swami waits in the rain for Maharaj’s darshan

Muktanand Swami said, “Don’t you feel sleepy? Aren’t you worried about your self? How long have you been standing in this rain?”

Gunatitanand Swami replied, as if talking to himself, “It does not matter if the body gets wet.”

Muktanand Swami returned. But Gunatitanand Swami stood where he was.

Very late that night Maharaj returned to his own room, ‘Akshar Ordi’, after finishing *katha* in the *darbar*. Gunatitanand Swami eagerly waited for his darshan. As Maharaj passed him, there was a flash of lightning. In that light Swami caught Maharaj’s beautiful form with his eyes. In a flash of lightning Swami threaded a pearl! He was overjoyed. Quickly he left and walked to the riverside. Here under a tree he tucked in and went to sleep.

Exercise

True or false:

1. Maharaj would often call Gunatitanand Swami, ‘Gunatitanand Swami of Bhadra.’

2. Gunatit means one who is above *gunas: sattva, rajas* and *tamas*.
3. Gunatitanand Swami stood in the rain to listen to the *katha* going on in the *darbar*.

Answer the following questions in one sentence:

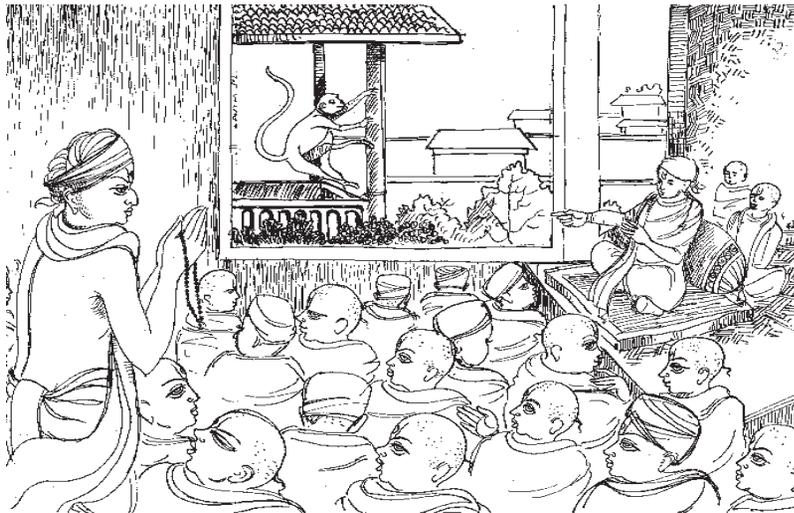
1. Why was Swami standing in the dark under the roof?
2. In which way did Swami have Maharaj's darshan as he walked to his 'Akshar Ordhi'?
3. Explain the words, "Swami threaded a pearl in a flash of lightning."

* * *

6. The Mind – A Monkey

Muktanand Swami had gone to Surat taking with him a group of 200 sadhus. They were all staying together in one large home.

Opposite the home was a mansion. To one of the mansion's pillars was tied a small monkey. The monkey



Gunatitanand Swami is not distracted by the monkey

was constantly scampering around. It was jumping here and there. It was always playing. Everybody noticed the monkey.

One day in an assembly Muktanand Swami asked the sadhus, "Whoever has not seen the monkey, please stand up."

No one stood up. All looked at each other. Then right at the back, one sadhu, holding a rosary in his hand stood up. It was Gunatitanand Swami.

Muktanand Swami was pleased and impressed. He said, "Well done, Swami, well done!"

Swami replied quietly, "I was not going to stand up. I do not want to be egoistic. But because you commanded I stood up."

Muktanand Swami was pleased. He saw that just as Gunatitanand Swami was disciplined he was also humble. He said, "Well done Swami. Just as this monkey is always fidgeting, so is our mind. Even my mind has been drawn to the monkey once or twice. How have you learnt to control your mind? Please tell us all."

Swami replied, "It is Shriji Maharaj's grace and nothing else. My mind does not forget the beautiful *murti* of Maharaj for even a second. So how can it think of anything else?"

Everybody was amazed at Gunatitanand Swami's answer and spiritual greatness.

Exercise

Answer each of the following questions in one sentence:

1. What question did Muktanand Swami ask the sadhus in Surat?
2. Why did Gunatitanand Swami not want to stand up?



Gunatitanand Swami serves the sick sadhus

3. Which two virtues did Muktanand Swami see in Gunatitanand Swami?
4. How did Gunatitanand Swami control his mind?

* * *

7. Serving the Sick Sadhus

Ramnavmi is Shriji Maharaj's birthday.

Shriji Maharaj is also called Harikrishna Maharaj.

And so Ramnavmi is also called Harijayanti.

On Harijayanti thousands of devotees and sadhus gather to celebrate Bhagwan Swaminarayan's birthday with great devotion. Such a festival is called a *samaiyo*.

Once Harijayanti was going to be celebrated in Vartal. The *samaiyo* was grand and colourful. Maharaj himself was going to Vartal with a large group of sadhus. But all of a sudden, nineteen sadhus fell ill.

Maharaj said, "We cannot leave these sadhus by

themselves. Who will stay behind and serve them?"

All of the sadhus wanted to attend the *samaiyo* and so nobody volunteered.

Then Gunatitanand Swami said, "Maharaj, I will stay here."

Maharaj was very pleased. He blessed Swami by putting both of his hands on his hand.

He said, "Thank you Swami, you did not let my words fall empty!"

Swami stayed with the ill sadhus and served them in every way. Within few days they were better. He said to them, "The *samaiyo* will start within four to five days time. May I please go to Vartal now?"

The sadhus were grateful to Swami. They agreed at once. In a hurry Swami left for Vartal and reached there just in time for the *samaiyo*.

Maharaj was overjoyed to see him and hugged him nineteen times.

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom:

1. "Thank you Swami. You did not let my words fall empty!"
2. "May I please go to Vartal now?"

Fill in the blanks:

1. When thousands of devotees and sadhus get together to celebrate a festival it is called a
(*samaiyo*, Harijayanti, Ramnavmi)
2. Swami did not go to Vartal but served ill sadhus.

(18, 19, 20)

* * *

8. Blessing the Spiteful

Once a group of twelve sadhus was touring the villages. With them was Gunatitanand Swami. They all arrived at a small village and decided to spend the night under a large tree. They made *khichdi* for dinner.

The chief of the village was against Satsang and hated *satsangis*. He told his men, "Swaminarayan's *mundias* have entered our village. Beat them up and throw them out."

The chief's men did this dirty work. They threw stones and cow dung on the sadhus. They insulted them with terrible curses. The heartless and spiteful men made sticks using the thorns of *bawal* and beat the sadhus out of the village. They did not allow them even to eat *khichdi*.

Despite all this, the sadhus did not complain or fight back. None of them lifted a finger in defence or even uttered a word in protest. Chanting 'Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan' the sadhus came to a tree by the river and sat down under it. The sadhus heard some villagers talking: "How evil the chief is. He has beaten these innocent sadhus and thrown them out of the village. No wonder God has not graced him with a son."

Gunatitanand Swami realized at once that the chief did not have a son as an heir. He said to the other sadhus, "Maharaj has commanded that even if a person harms us we should do good for him. Let us pray to God and bless the chief that he begets a son, and in the future in the chief's own home sadhus one day spend the night and do Satsang."

Everyone agreed and chanted the Swaminarayan *dhun*.

In this way Swami answered hate with love and curses with blessings.

And the blessings came true!

After a while, a son was born to the chief. One day, some years later, Swami again visited the village. The chief's son was attracted to Swami. He held his hand and took him home. The chief loved his young son and so could not say anything to Swami and the other sadhus. He welcomed the sadhus and made arrangement for their meal.

Then, Gunatitanand Swami said to him, "Chief, do you remember me. Some years ago twelve sadhus had come here, and we had made *khichdi* under a tree and were preparing to eat. But at that time you drove us out of the village. It was then that we learned that you had no son and so we blessed you. We ignored your hate and instead blessed you that let the son take birth in your family and all the sadhus have their meals in your home. Now you have a son, and we are going to spend the night here. Our wish has come true!"

Tears came to the chief's eyes. He remembered everything. He felt very sorry for his evil deeds. He fell at Swami's feet and asked for forgiveness. Crying he said, "Swami, who else but you can be so compassionate."

Exercise

Answer the questions in one sentence each:

1. Why did the chief tell his men to beat the sadhus?
2. How did the chief's men harass the sadhus?
3. What did the sadhus hear about the chief?
4. What did Swami pray for the chief?
5. What happened to the chief when he saw Swami's compassion?

9. Within You Forever!

From the day Maharaj started building the mandir in Junagadh he commanded Swami to stay there. Later Maharaj appointed him the *mahant* of Junagadh mandir. As a *mahant*, Swami often toured the surrounding villages.

It was in the summer of Samvat 1886 that Maharaj fell ill. He was in Gadhada. Swami received a message that Maharaj was calling him urgently.

As soon as he heard this, Swami with his accompanying sadhu left for Gadhada. Swami walked so fast that even horse or camel would be left behind. Walking over 60 miles every day, he arrived in Gadhada.

As soon as Maharaj heard that Swami had arrived from Junagadh he sat up in bed. He said, "Please bring Swami here, I'd like to meet him."

Swami entered the room, prostrated to Maharaj and touched his feet. Maharaj hugged him with love.

Tears came from Swami's eyes. He stood having darshan of Maharaj without his eyes even blinking.

Maharaj began to sing.

*Mithā vḥālā kem visaru māru,
tamthi bāndhel tan ho
Tarsyāne jem pānidu vḥālu,
bhukhyāne bhojan ho...Mithā*

Maharaj was saying to Swami, "Just as a thirsty man likes water, and a hungry man likes food, I love you in the same way."

No wonder, because Swami was Maharaj's divine abode – Akshardham.

Maharaj was preparing to leave his mortal body now. One sadhu asked him, "Maharaj, everyone will be

able to come over the grief of your leaving this world, in one way or the other. But Gunatitanand Swami will not be able to do so. It would be better to send him away somewhere."

Maharaj smiled and said, "Where can I send him? I cannot see a single place where I can separate him from myself. Wherever he is, I am also there. And wherever I am, he is there too. I am here right now, and I am also within him. When I am not here I will still be within him!"

A devotee came to see Maharaj. He performed Maharaj's puja and said, "Victory to the Lord of Akshardham!"

Maharaj laughed and said, "And what about Akshardham?"

The devotee replied, "And victory to Akshardham as well!"

Maharaj pointed to Swami and said, "Then along with my puja, carry out Akshardham's puja too."

The devotee obeyed Maharaj at once. From that day onwards puja of Akshar and Purushottam together began.

On 1 June 1830 (Jeth *sud* 10, Samvat 1886), Maharaj left his mortal body. After Maharaj's body was cremated Swami went for a bath. He saw green grass growing near a little stream.

He thought, "The grass lives because of the water. I'm like the grass, I lived because of Maharaj. And now how will I live without Maharaj?" Thinking this way Swami fell down unconscious.

Suddenly a miracle happened. Maharaj appeared to Swami. He helped Swami up and hugged him. Maharaj said to him, "I have not gone swami. I am forever within you!"

Exercise

True or False:

1. Swami walked over 60 miles a day to reach Gadhada quickly.
2. Swami began to sing “*Mithā vḥālā kem...*” on Maharaj’s darshan.
3. Maharaj pointed to Gopalanand Swami and said, “Then along with my puja, carry out Akshardham’s puja too.”
4. “I am forever within you,” Maharaj said to Swami.

Answer the following questions in three lines:

1. What did Maharaj say to Swami after hugging him?
2. Why did Swami fall unconscious when he saw the grass?

* * *

10. A Mountain of Sin

There was a Kshatriya man by the name of Munja Suru.

All he ate and drank was meat and alcohol. He was cruel and violent. While shepherds grazed their goats he would attack them and kill some goats for meat.

Even in his village everyone was scared of him.

Once, Gunatitanand Swami went to Munja Suru’s village. Swami heard many complaints about Munja Suru. Swami felt sorry for him. He sent a messenger to call Munja Suru.

Munja Suru was curious. He wanted to know what kind of sadhus the Swaminarayans were. He came before Swami and sat down proudly. Swami looked into his eyes with compassion. Munja Suru could not meet his gaze. He looked down.

Swami said, “Munja Suru! What else can I say, but that one who drinks bhang is punished in hell for one *kalpa*, one who smokes *afeen* is punished in hell for one

hundred *kalpas* and one who takes meat and alcohol is punished in hell for one thousand *kalpas*!”

Munja said, “These talks are to frighten dumb people. I’m not one to be scared easily. I’m a Kshatriya. It is my duty and right to take meat and alcohol!”

Swami asked, “Are you really not scared?”

“No!” said Munja loudly.

The moment he said ‘no’ Munja felt all strength in his body being pulled away. He saw the henchmen of the king of hell – Yamraja. They took him to hell, beating him terribly all the way there.

He heard screams of, “Save me! save me!” coming from all sides. He was thrown into the crowds of suffering sinners. Munja himself began screaming for help.

All of a sudden he awoke, as from a nightmare. He fell at Swami’s feet and cried, “Save me! save me!”

Swami asked him with love, “Do you really want to be saved Munja?”

“Yes, Swami. Please save me at any cost, “he begged.



Gunatitanand Swami transforms the sinful Munja Suru

“Then come into Satsang,” Swami said.

“Me? In Satsang?” asked Munja. “Would other *satsangis* allow sinner like me to come into Satsang?”

Swami said, “It is the sinner who needs *satsang* the most, Munja Suru! I am accepting you into Satsang. From a mountain of sin you will now become a mountain of merit.”

Munja Suru became a *satsangi*. He stopped taking meat and alcohol. He even stopped drinking bhang and smoking opium and tobacco.

In the past people were scared even to say his name. But now they were proud of him. They named him Munja Bhagat.

Once Swami was going to Dholera. He was passing the night in a forest clearing. As it was cold the sadhus had lit a fire and everyone was warming themselves. Swami was doing *katha*.

A shepherd came there. He asked, “Whose sadhus are you?”

Swami said, “We are sadhus of Swaminarayan!”

The shepherd at once fell at Swami’s feet and said, “Are you Munja Suru’s guru? You have saved us all. Whenever Munja Suru attacked us he would always take away five or six goats. There was nothing we could do. But since he became your disciple we are free of worry. You are a true sadhu. Will you also become my guru?”

Swami was pleased with the shepherd. Swami asked him to chant the Swaminarayan mantra. But the shepherd couldn’t pronounce ‘Swaminarayan’. He couldn’t say even ‘Gunatitanand’. However he used to say, ‘Gunanand, Gunanand.’ He promised to say the rosary, chanting the mantra, ‘Gunanand!’

Exercise

Fill in the blanks:

1. Munja Suru was a.....
(Brahmin, Kshatriya, Shepherd).
2. A person who takes meat and alcohol is sent to hell for*kalpas*.
(1000, 100, 1)
3. Aneeds Satsang the most.
(shepherd, sinner, messenger of Yama Raja).

Answer the following questions in three lines each:

1. What type of man was Munja Suru?
2. What experience did Swami give to Munja Suru?
3. How did the shepherds benefit by Munja becoming a *satsangi*?

* * *

11. Good of All

Swami was touring the villages with a group of sadhus. They arrived at a village. The village had no *satsangis* and so the group decided to stay the night under a bawal tree.

Swami began his daily discourses. Some curious villagers came to listen to him. One villager was Bhagu Patel. He was delighted with Swami’s discourses. Until now Bhagu Patel had a prejudice for Swaminarayans. That fear was now gone. After the discourse was over he said to Swami, “You are constantly wandering from here to there, why don’t you stay in this village. I will look after all your meals. You’ll never have to stay under a tree like this again.”

Swami laughed a little. He said, “Swaminarayan sadhus are not wandering beggars! They tour the villages for the good of the people and to spread Satsang. Our sadhus are not of the type to be attracted

to your delicious food. We take shelter in God only. We even do good to this tree.”

These words had a deep effect on Bhagu Patel. He became a staunch devotee.

The next time the sadhus visited the village he stayed the night with the sadhus. They said to him, “Bhagubhai, why don’t you come to Vartal with us.”

Bhagubhai replied, “Swami, it will be too hard for me. I need hot water to bathe with and hot *rotlis* to eat!”

Swami said, “We will give you everything, but come to Vartal.”

Even then Bhagubhai said no.

Swami still insisted. He said, “There will be one person in your service. You will get hot water. And *brahmachari* will cook hot meals for you twice a day. So come with us. It is for your good.”

But Bhagubhai refused.

Swami went to Vartal. Everyday scores of sadhus and devotees came to listen to his discourses. One day as Swami was talking out of the blue Bhagubhai appeared. Swami asked, “Bhagubhai, what makes you come here?”

Bhagubhai replied, “Swami, I was in Ahmedabad since last two months.”

Swami smiled and asked, “Did you get hot water and hot *rotlis* in Ahmedabad?”

Bhagubhai began to cry. He said, “Swami I had a partner. He stole something and along with him I was thrown into Ahmedabad jail. What kind of hot water and *rotlis* can be found there? Due to your compassion I have now been released after two months. As soon as I was freed, I came here for your darshan!”

Swami said, “This is why I wanted you to come with me to Vartal. But you didn’t listen!”

Bhagubhai now understood that Swami always

wished good of everyone. He realized that he should never disobey Swami. Whether one understands the reason for a particular command or not, all of Swami’s commands are for one’s good. That’s why one should always obey the commands of Swami.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in three lines:

1. What did Swami answer when Bhagubhai asked him to stay with him?
2. How did Bhagubhai suffer because of his disobedience?
3. Why should we obey all commands of Swami?

* * *

12. Would an Animal Eat Man’s Food?

Swami arrived at a village with a group of sadhus, and devotees.

A man called Ramo Hati lived here. He was evil. He would drink alcohol, eat meat and go hunting.

Swami was talking to the sadhus as they walked through the village.

Ramo Hati was sitting under a neem tree.

Swami went to him and said, “Ramo Hati, I’d like to know something from you. If we offer a wild animal *motaiya* ladoos, *sata* and *jalebi*, would it eat the sweets?”

Ramo Hati said, “No, of course not.”

“Why not?” Swami asked.

“Swami, that is not its food. It eats only what is meant for it to eat!” replied Ramo Hati.

Swami then said to him, “What can be said when a wild animal does not eat food meant for humans, and a human eats food meant only for wild animals? An



Gunatitanand Swami convinces Ramo Hati to give up meat and alcohol

animal eats and drinks only that which is meant for it, but how do you explain when humans eat and drink things not meant for them?"

Ramo Hati understood the truth at once. He promised, "Swami, from today I will stop all my sins."

Swami's arguments and talks were so convincing that they freed one and all from bad habits and addictions.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence:

1. What type of person was Ramo Hati?
2. What question did Swami ask Ramo Hati?
3. What effect did Swami's words have on Ramo Hati?

* * *

13. The Silver Palanquin

Swami was in Khambhat.

The devotees were overjoyed and excited.

For Swami's welcome procession the Muslim ruler – Nawab of Khambhat had sent his silver palanquin. The devotees asked Swami to sit in it. But Swami said, "No, it is not proper for a sadhu to sit in a silver vehicle."

The devotees insisted, "But the Nawab will feel offended."

Swami said, "I do not live for Nawab's pleasure. I live for the pleasure of Shriji Maharaj. Whatever happens does so because of Shriji Maharaj's divine will."

Swami did not sit in the silver palanquin. Therefore a special oxen cart (*sigram*) was prepared. The procession began. Surrounding Swami's *sigram* sadhus and devotees sang kirtans as they walked. Others played the *dhol*, *trasa* and *shehnai*. People crowded the streets, windows and galleries to watch the procession pass.

When the people saw Swami they began to talk amongst themselves, "He is a great Yogi! He must be a realized soul! Or else why would he go in a procession wrapped in a torn blanket!"



Gunatitanand Swami honoured in the procession in Khambhat

Some trouble makers went to the Nawab. They whispered poison into his ears. They said, "Swaminarayan sadhu did not sit in your silver palanquin. He has insulted you. How can one who hasn't even got reasonable clothes to wear, behave like this."

The Nawab asked, "Then what has he worn?"

"An old, torn blanket! And he has worn it in the procession!"

The trouble makers were sure that the Nawab would become angry at the Swaminarayan sadhus. But the opposite happened. "He must be a very holy person." The Nawab said, "I must have his darshan."

He sent a message to Swami that he would come to meet him the following day.

The next day the Nawab went for Swami's darshan. He was pleased with Swami's discourses and had a banquet prepared for all the Swaminarayan sadhus."

Swami always wore and used inexpensive things.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in one sentence:

1. In which town was the procession took place?
2. Why didn't Swami sit in the silver palanquin?
3. What did people say when they saw Swami wearing the torn blanket?
4. What did the Nawab say when he heard that Swami was in the procession wearing a torn blanket?

* * *

14. Swami Departs

Swami was in Gondal.

He was eating betel leaf after lunch. Just then the Diwan of Gondal arrived. He asked, "Swami, what are you eating?"

Swami replied, "*Dhandal!*"

The Diwan was surprised, "Swami, do you still have teeth?" he said.

Swami laughed at this and said, "My teeth are so strong and healthy I can still chew raw *chana!*"

"How old are you," asked the Diwan.

"I'm eighty-two now," said Swami.

"But why did you cause my teeth to fall out so early," the Diwan laughed.

Just then a cattle walked into the mandir compound. Swami called out, "Somebody watch for the buffalo! Chase it out!"

The Diwan was again amazed. He said, "Even at this age you can see so far!"

Swami burst out laughing, "That's right. I can read the Shikshapatri even in moonlight!"

The Diwan realized his own faults. He saw his own ego because of his authority and power. He felt sorry and humble. He said, "I am like the evil Hiranyakashipu, but my son is like Prahlad. He is a devotee of yours."

Swami was filled with pity. He held the Diwan's hand and said, "Do not say that, you are also a pious man."

The Diwan became a devotee.

The ruler of Gondal had great respect for Swami. He invited Swami to his court for *padharamani*. He garlanded Swami and did his puja. Swami arranged for kirtans there. After that the ruler said, "I want to donate land to the Junagadh mandir. For this, I've prepared the required documents. This I will give to you tomorrow."

Swami said, "Who has seen tomorrow! Give the documents today itself!"

At once the ruler got up and brought the

documents. Swami accepted it and returned to the mandir.

It was nine o'clock at night. The Diwan's son was waiting for Swami. He said, "I wanted to take you home for *padharamani*, but it is late, so we'll do it tomorrow."

But Swami said, "No, It will be too late tomorrow! Let us go now!"

Swami returned at ten o'clock. Swami's health did not seem well. But he insisted everyone go to bed. He himself sat leaning against a pillar. He was meditating on Shriji Maharaj. In this position at exactly 12:45 a.m. Swami left his mortal body and went to Akshardham. (V.S. 1923 Aso sud 12, Thursday). News of his passing away spread rapidly throughout Gondal. Thousands of people came running for the last darshan of Swami's mortal body. The Diwan totally forgetting his status was crying profusely.

In Akshar Vadi, on the banks of river Gondali, Swami's body was cremated with sandalwood. Nobody could stop their tears of sorrow.

On the exact spot where the cremation took place a shrine was built. It is called 'Akshar Deri'. On top of this was built the majestic 'Akshar Mandir'.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence:

1. Why was the Diwan amazed?
2. How good was Swami's eyesight even at the age of 82?
3. Why was the Diwan sorry?
4. At what age and when did Swami pass away?
5. What is the site of Swami's cremation called?

* * *

DEVOTEES OF SHRIJI MAHARAJ

15. Ter Paisani Jai!

Maharaj was building a mandir in Gadhada. The *murti* of Gopinath was to be consecrated.

All the devotees had gathered together.

They were donating money. Some gave thousand rupees, others gave two thousand rupees.

In the gathering came a Brahmin. He was very poor and wore torn and old clothes.

He didn't have shoes to wear! He carried a little cloth bag and wore a shoddy *pagh* on his head.

The whole village called him Dubli Bhatt.

Dubli was trying to make his way to the front, but no one would let him pass. After all, how much money can he donate, everyone thought.

Maharaj saw him from a distance.

Raising his hand Maharaj asked the devotees to let Dubli come forward.



Dubli Bhatt offers his entire savings to Maharaj

Dubli Bhatt put down his *pagh*. Then he untied the knots at the end of *pagh*. And there was one paisa. He untied second knot. Another paisa. Thus he untied thirteen knots and from that he removed thirteen paisas. He offered it to Maharaj and said affectionately, "This is all what I have got. Please accept this as my contribution for building mandir."

Many people who had assembled laughed. but Maharaj did not laugh. He came down from his seat, caught Dubli Bhatt's hand and said, "Bhattji, keep the money with you and bring the *pagh*."

Dubli Bhatt said, "I don't need new *pagh*. Sooner or later I am going to die."

Maharaj said, "Then buy new dhoti."

Dubli Bhatt replied, "What is wrong with this one? For how many days will I need a new dhoti?"

"We will accept your thirteen paise," Maharaj said, and stretched out his hand. He then called out, "Gopinath Maharaj *ni jai!*"

Everyone hailed the "Jai".

Dubli Bhatt then left.

One devotee, a Kathi Darbar, asked, "Maharaj, many have given thousands of rupees but you didn't call the 'Jai', and with this thirteen paise you did. Why?"

Maharaj explained, "You all know that Dubli Bhatt has no home or place to live. He begs for his food. The thirteen paise he has given are his life savings. Those who have given thousand or two thousand have reserved some money for themselves and then given to the Lord. But Dubli has given everything to the Lord. He has left nothing for himself. Now you tell me, who has the greater faith in God, he or you?"

Everyone understood Maharaj's message. Again Maharaj called, "Gopinath Bhagwan *ni jai!*"

The rest also joined in but added, "Dubli Bhatt *ni jai!*"

Even only one paise offered to Maharaj with love is taken to be greater than a donation of one hundred thousand rupees.

Maharaj's devotees sacrificed their all, in mind, body and wealth!

Exercise

Answer the following questions in one sentence:

1. Why did Maharaj call "Gopinath Maharaj *ni jai!*"?
2. Where and why was Maharaj collecting donation?
3. What sacrifices did devotees make for Maharaj?

Answer in approximate three lines:

1. What did Maharaj say when he explained his reasons for calling the "Jai"?

* * *

16. Hukko and Afeen

There was a Kathi Darbar by the name of Mulu Khachar.

He was addicted to chewing *afeen* and smoking the *hukko*.

Maharaj once told him, "Stop the *afeen* and *hukko!*"

Mulubha replied, "That is impossible!"

Maharaj said, "Then stop coming to us!"

Mulubha said, "That is impossible as well!"

Maharaj laughed.

After a short while, Maharaj decided to go to Vartal. There was a festival there.

Maharaj said, "Mulubha, come to Vartal with us!"

Mulubha agreed and joined the group. But the *hukko* was with him as well. Whenever he got a chance he started smoking.

The group soon came to a large village.

People from the village came for darshan of the sadhus and devotees. They were curious about Swaminarayans. The people listened to the spiritual discourses and saw that the devotees and sadhus had no addiction such as tobacco, *afeen*, bhang or *ganjo*. The villagers were impressed.

The villagers saw Mulubha. He was smoking the *hukko*. The people said, "All of the people are Swaminarayan devotees except this one."

Mulubha heard this. He said, "I'm a Swaminarayan devotee as well!"

The people said, "You're lying. We know what Swaminarayan devotees are like! You're false and a smoker."

Mulubha was deeply hurt. He realized that he was spoiling the name of the entire group.

He threw away his *hukko* and promised, "I'll never smoke the *hukko* again." However he still continued with *afeen*.

The group came to Vartal. Devotees from all over had gathered. They came for darshan of Maharaj and the group. When they came to Mulubha they saw that he was taking *afeen*. The devotees said to one another, "He doesn't look like a *satsangi*. It seems he is an outsider who has joined the group!"

Mulubha said, "I'm not an outsider. I'm a *satsangi*. Maharaj himself has brought me here!"

The devotees said, "Why are you spoiling the good name of Maharaj by saying such things."

Again Mulubha was deeply hurt. He realized that his addiction to *afeen* was spoiling Maharaj's name.

He threw the *afeen* away, and became a true devotee, free of all addictions.

After a few days Maharaj heard that Mulubha had stopped both the *hukko* and *afeen*. Maharaj called him and asked "Why did you stop, Mulubha?"

Mulubha replied, "One was spoiling the name of the group and the other your name, so I stopped both!"

Maharaj said, "But I haven't insisted that you free yourself from the *hukko* and *afeen*."

"That is the secret of your ways!" Mulubha replied.

He fell at Maharaj's feet and asked for his blessings.

Slowly, one by one, Maharaj moulded the character of all those who came to him and changed their life like animal to a godly one.

Maharaj's devotees would take care that because of them the good name of Maharaj and Satsang was never spoiled.

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "I'll never smoke the *hukko* again!"

Answer the following in approx. three lines each:

1. In which way was Mulubha freed of his addiction to *afeen*?
2. In which way was Mulubha freed of his addiction to the *hukko*?

* * *

17. Qualities of a Servant

The king of Kutch had a minister. his name was Sundarji Suthar.

One day the king told Sundarji to lead the prince's wedding procession from one town to another. It was a responsible task. The king had faith in Sundarji.

Whilst leading this party from one town to another, came a beautiful town called Gondal. Someone told

Sundarji that Maharaj was present at a nearby village. Without a second thought Sundarji left to meet Maharaj.

Sundarji fell at the feet of Maharaj.

“Who is it?” asked Maharaj.

“It is me, Sundarji, your servant”. Sundarji replied.

“Then what are the qualities of a servant?” Maharaj asked.

“Do what the master says,” Sundarji answered.

“If that is so then shave your head and beard. I am telling you to become a sadhu.”

At that very moment Sundarji called a barber, shaved his head and beard. Then he wore orange clothes and became a sadhu.

“Now go to Kashi on foot.”, ordered Maharaj.

Kashi is far away from Gondal. And that too travelling on foot! But Sundarji did not utter one word. He left for Kashi.

Muktanand Swami, an elderly sadhu was present at that time. He spoke to Maharaj, “Maharaj! Sundarji was escorting the king’s guests from one town to another. The prince is getting married. Sundarji has great responsibility. It is not wise that you have made him sadhu.”

Maharaj laughed and said, “All right, call him back.”

Within minutes, two riders brought Sundarji back to Maharaj. Sundarji fell at the feet of Maharaj. Again Maharaj asked, “Who is it?”

“It is me, Sundarji, your servant.” replied Sundarji.

“What are the qualities of a servant?” questioned Maharaj.

“To obey the orders of the master.” Sundarji answered.

“If that is so then remove these clothes and put on your original clothes. Escort the prince and the guests to the place of marriage.”

Maharaj smiled and blessed Sundarji. Sundarji was overjoyed. Maharaj had put him to test and he had passed.

Adorning the royal clothes of the king’s minister, Sundarji left. But shaven head is a bad omen to such a ominous occasion. So people asked him, “This an auspicious occasion, so why have you shaved your head?” Sundarji was a wise man. He replied, “To see the prince’s marriage off successfully I had made a special vow to our family deity. In return, to please the deity I had to shave my head.”

Nobody complained on hearing the answer.

Maharaj’s devotees were such that they did everything Maharaj told them to do. Maharaj himself was such that he taught his devotees to be detached from everything except God.

Exercise

True or False:

1. Sundarji Suthar was a devotee from Gondal.
2. Sundarji Suthar shaved his head in order to please the goddess.
3. Maharaj had put Sundarji to test. Sundarji passed.
4. Sundarji did not obey Maharaj’s command.

Answer the following questions in a sentence:

1. What are the qualities of a servant?
2. Where was Sundarji going and why?
3. Where did Maharaj tell Sundarji to go?

* * *

18. Leave Your Homes

Maharaj was touring the villages in the Saurashtra. He came to know that Sundarji Suthar says: “I had

shaved my head and become sadhu at the immediate instance of Maharaj. It is impossible for anyone else to do what I did.”

Maharaj noticed the rising ego within Sundarji. He did not utter a word. Maharaj got one letter written. The letter said, “Sura Khachar, Alaiya Khachar, Mancha Khachar (and 15 other names)... As soon as you receive this letter leave your homes and go to Jetalpur. There, become sadhus at the hands of Swami Ramdas. After becoming sadhus go to Kashi. From there come and meet me in Bhuj.”

Maharaj wrote a second letter to Ramdas Swami, saying, “After making them sadhus do not let them go to Kashi. Bring them all to Bhuj at the house of Sundarji Suthar.”

These eighteen people were not ordinary people. Some were great merchants, some were great land owners. They were all respected members of their towns.

The messenger went to all the eighteen devotees. They read the letter and left their homes. One was building his house when he got the letter. He left the construction as it was and took off for Jetalpur. One was going to his fields to see the crops when he received the letter. He too left. Darbars left their *darbars* as it is and left. The merchants left their shops. One devotee was getting married. Present at the ceremony was his maternal uncle (*mama*). Maharaj’s messenger came. He gave the letter. The uncle prepared to leave. The devotee’s name was not there in the letter. But he too started for Jetalpur along with his *mama*.

“But your name is not in this letter,” said his uncle.

“Oh but it is,” said the devotee. “After all your names, there is the word ‘etc.’ I am included in that. Am I not?”

Instead of eighteen, now there were nineteen who joined together to go to Jetalpur. In Jetalpur Ramdas Swami asked them to shave their beards and moustaches and initiated them as sadhus. Then he said, “I have to take you all to Bhuj.”

After a few days of walking, they reached Bhuj. When Maharaj came to know of their arrival he stood up and went to welcome them. He hugged everybody with great love.

Sundarji Suthar was awestruck. He stopped boasting and fell at the feet of Maharaj. Sundarji asked for forgiveness.

The newly initiated sadhus enjoyed the company of Maharaj. They were happy being sadhus. One day however, Maharaj called them. He said, “You have obeyed me once. Now I have a second wish. Take these robes off, wear your original clothes and go home.”

Nobody liked to go home. But they obeyed Maharaj’s command. Eighteen devotees removed their robes and became householder once again. But the nineteenth one did not. He said, “I cannot do that.”

Finally Maharaj agreed. He named him Adbhutanand Swami.

Such was Maharaj.

He did not like to see his devotees boast.

Such were the devotees of Maharaj. There was nothing, no one greater in their life other than Maharaj.

Exercise

Answer in one line:

1. Why did Sundarji boast?
2. To defeat Sundarji’s ego, what did Maharaj do?
3. How many names did Maharaj write in the letter?
4. What positions did they hold?

5. Who initiated the nineteen men, and where?
6. What was the name of the nineteenth devotee?

* * *

19. Jagjivan's Hatred

There lived a Brahmin.

His name was Jagjivan.

He was the Diwan of the king of Kutch.

Once he performed a *yagna* in respect for the Goddess Chandi.

A goat was to be sacrificed in that *yagna*. Learned scholars from Kashi had come to perform the *yagna*.

Maharaj was in Kutch at that time. To show off his wealth and greatness Jagjivan invited Maharaj.

The Brahmin scholars were reciting sacred mantras when Maharaj came. The goat was being decorated to be sacrificed in the *yagna*.

Maharaj turned towards the scholars and Jagjivan and said, "God has made this goat as he has made you. If one son kills other son then the father will not be happy. Similarly God is not pleased by killing goat. God is pleased by Yagna but not by slaughtering animals in it. It is wrong."

The Brahmin scholars were convinced but it was difficult to change the tradition. Jagjivan however, told Maharaj, "We will do what we have been doing in the past."

Maharaj was displeased. He left.

The goat was slaughtered and the *yagna* was complete. But Jagjivan got angry for Maharaj had left the *yagna*. He felt Maharaj had insulted him.

He decided to take the revenge.

"Go and capture that Swaminarayan," Jagjivan ordered his officer.

The officer was an Arab. He was a Muslim. With a

small band of police, he went to get Maharaj. But seeing Maharaj and the light radiating from his body, the officer was shocked. "Are you God incarnate or God itself?" He asked.

"Depends on your faith," Maharaj said.

The officer understood that Maharaj was God himself. He fell at Maharaj's feet and left. He felt angry for Jagjivan. "What an evil person he is," the officer thought. "He has not paid for months together and instead he assign us such an evil task as to jail Maharaj?" he spat in contempt.

He was filled with rage as he rode through the town. It was there that he met Jagjivan. The Arab pulled his sword out. In the midst of the market Jagjivan's head rolled to the ground.

Thus those who wanted to harm Maharaj invited trouble for themselves.

Exercise

Fill in the blanks:

1. Jagjivan was the Diwan of
(Kutch, Gadhada, Junagadh)
2. Jagjivan ended the *yagna* by making an offering of a in the sacred fire.
(coconut, pot of ghee, goat)
3. Jagjivan was killed by.....
(Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Brahmins, an Arab Officer)

Answer the following questions in three lines each:

1. The Brahmin scholars and Jagjivan were seated in the *yagna*. What did Maharaj tell them?
2. "You are God incarnate" How did the officer understand this fact?

* * *

20 Devotee Sagram

There was a Vaghri, name Sagram.

He often would go for Maharaj's darshan.

He would sit and listen to Maharaj's discourses.

Once, he went to see Maharaj and fell at Maharaj's feet.

"Maharaj, make me your devotee."

"Our devotee never steals," Maharaj said.

"I will not steal," Sagram said.

"Neither do they drink liquor."

"I will never take liquor."

"Hoko and opium and cigarettes?"

"I'll stop everything," Sagram said.

Sagram started living as per the command given by Maharaj. His lifestyle changed. His nature changed.

Sagram was very poor.

He earned his living by doing cheap labour.

Whenever he got time he would go to see Maharaj. Sagram had a deep desire to invite Maharaj to his home. But his hut was so small there was hardly any space inside. Even then he still wished Maharaj to come to his home.

He could not say Maharaj to come to his home.

Days passed.

One day Maharaj had to go to a town, Limbdi. On route was Sagram's tiny village. Maharaj said, "Tonight we will stay here only. The atmosphere here is fine. Everything is beautiful."

The devotees were puzzled. There was nothing beautiful about the village. There were a few huts belonging to Vaghri.

But Maharaj stayed there.

Everyone went to sleep. Silently Maharaj woke up, and he came to Sagram's house.

"Sagram, hey Sagram," Maharaj called with a sweet voice.

Sagram was thinking of Maharaj every now and then. He opened the door at once and came out to see who was calling. When he saw Maharaj, he was overjoyed. He went to bow down but Maharaj embraced him. Maharaj had great affection for his devotees.

Maharaj entered Sagram's home.

Sagram was overjoyed, but he was perplexed as to what arrangement should be made for Maharaj to sit.

However, Maharaj came to his rescue.

Maharaj saw a millet bread and a vessel containing yoghurt. He took it and standing in a corner started eating it.

Thus Maharaj fulfilled Sagram's wish.

Such was Maharaj, compassionate and loving.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in one line each:

1. Sagram's lifestyle changed. How?
2. What was Sagram's wish?
3. What did Maharaj eat at Sagram's house?

* * *

21. A Woman Is Blessed

It was a time when Maharaj had began a *yagna* in Jetalpur.

A lot of people would attend it. All had to be fed. Carts upon carts of wheat began to come.

Maharaj decided to give wheat to every house in Jetalpur for grinding. Every house was to be given 30 kg of wheat, not more than that!

Off went the carts. Maharaj himself went in every house and gave the wheat.



Maharaj blesses the woman of Jetalpur

Soon the cart made a halt at a big house.

The owner lady of the house was standing outside her house. She told, "Maharaj, what should I grind for you?"

Maharaj said, "Just my blessings!"

"I wish your blessings only, give me wheat for grinding!"

The people along with Maharaj said, "Maharaj, do not give wheat to this woman. She does not have a good reputation in town."

But Maharaj did not listen to the devotees. He told her, "You will have to grind the wheat yourself and bring the flour in tomorrow morning."

The woman agreed.

Maharaj gave her 30 kg of wheat and went away.

After bathing, the woman began to grind the flour. Turning the stone round and round by the handle the wheat began to be crushed. All the while she chanted "Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan".

Her servants said, "Give it to us. We will grind it for you. As you've never done such a thing your hands will burn."

"No, I myself will grind it." She did not give in.

The stones turned and turned. Soon it was afternoon. Then evening, night also neared. But she did not stop.

She did not drink anything. Neither did she eat. Just grinded on and on. Her hands burnt, they developed blisters. The blisters burst, blood oozed out. She bandaged her hands and grinded.

Midnight passed. She felt sleepy, but she splashed a little water on her face and again began to grind. She had given a promise to Maharaj. She was going to fulfill it.

The sun rose in the morning. All the 30 kg of wheat was now flour. The woman arose. She brushed her teeth, took bath and dressed in a white sari. She put the flour casket on her head and went to Maharaj.

Maharaj asked, "Did you grind the wheat by yourself?"

"Yes Maharaj I did," she said.

"Show me your hands."

The woman showed her hands. They were badly blistered.

Maharaj blessed her, "Let you get liberation."

Such was Maharaj.

He blessed all who came to him.

Exercise

Answer each question in one line:

1. In which town was the *yagna* held?
2. On what condition did Maharaj let the woman grind the wheat?
3. How did the woman grind it?
4. At every house what did Maharaj give to be grinded? And how much?

Who says to whom?

1. "I'd like your blessings, your grace."
2. "No I myself will grind it."
3. "Did you grind the wheat yourself?"

* * *

22. A Brother and Two Sisters

The king of Gadhada – Dada Khachar – had two sisters: Jivuba and Laduba.

Both of them were married. But they had little attachment for worldly desires.

From their very childhood they had great devotion for Maharaj.

They had total faith in Maharaj and acted according to Maharaj's wish.

All day these sisters spent their time in preparing food and serving the devotees that came to Gadhada to have Maharaj's darshan. They saw to it that everyone was looked after.

They also devoted their time in preaching to woman. They had made many women *satsangi*.

One day Maharaj told Dada Khachar, "You have so much land. Why don't you give it to your sisters?"

"Very well, Maharaj," Dada Khachar agreed.

Dada Khachar transferred all the land in the name of his two sisters. Then Maharaj said, "Dada! Now what will you do?"

"I'll find job somewhere," Dada Khachar replied.

At the time Maharaj called the two sisters.

He said, "Who will look after your land. You'll need a clever person to handle the property."

"Do you have anyone in mind?" the sisters asked.

"Why not Dada Khachar?" Maharaj replied.

He told Dada Khachar, "If you want a job. Why don't

you look after the sisters property?"

"Very well Maharaj," Dada Khachar replied.

And so the feudal king became a servant.

A year passed. Dada Khachar looked after the property and dealt with the government taxes.

Then one day Maharaj called the sisters. He said, "What do you need the land for anyway? Give it back to Dada Khachar"!

The sisters agreed immediately.

Such were the sisters and their brother. They did not have lust for land. They were detached from all worldly possessions. Their mind was always in Maharaj and nowhere else. Whether they gained the land or lost it, everything was equal to them.

Dada Khachar had placed all his properties in the service of Maharaj. When Maharaj wanted to build a mandir of Gopanathji in Gadhada, Dada Khachar gave his *darbar* to build a mandir. Maharaj built a beautiful mandir there.

Such was the devotion.



Shriji Maharaj tests the resolve of Dada Khachar and his sisters

They had true love and absolute faith in Maharaj.

Such was Maharaj. He tested his devotees of faith and love. He strengthened their lives in God.

Exercise

Fill in the blanks:

1. Dada Khachar transferred his land to the name of
(Maharaj, sadhus, his sisters)
2. The land was given back to Dada Khachar after months.
(six, twelve, ten)
3. A mandir of.....was built in Gadhada.
(Gopinathji, Swaminarayan, Ramji)

Write a short note:

1. Dada Khachar and his sisters had true love and faith for Maharaj. Everything was equal to them.

* * *

23. The Service of Uka Khachar

Uka Khachar was not very learned, neither was his wife. But they both had great love for Maharaj. They also had great love for Maharaj's sadhus.

Before dawn broke, the sadhus and devotees would rise and go for a bath in the river Ghela. A rough road led to the river from their residence.

"We should sweep this road so that the thorns and stones do not hurt our sadhus," said Uka Khachar's wife to her husband. From that day onwards, early every morning they would sweep the road before the sadhus arose. No one knew who it was that swept the road.

Then one day someone found out that it was the couple that swept the road. They told them "Bhagat, do not sweep the road."

"But it is the only thing that I know," said Uka Khachar.

Thus they swept everyday.

Devotees and sadhus would bathe and go for Maharaj's darshan. Uka Khachar would be present as well.

One day it so happened that a dog had excreted in the assembly ground.

Maharaj used to deliver discourse sitting at that place. "Where will we gather for the assembly?" some questioned. Call a cleaner to clean this filth," suggested another.

At that time Uka Khachar had just arrived from his morning bath. He saw the filth. Without uttering a single word he swept the campus. Then washed it clean. Then again he went to have a purifactory bath.

The devotees had all gathered for Maharaj's darshan. However, Uka Khachar was not present.

"Where is Uka Khachar?" Maharaj asked.

"He cleaned the dog's faeces so he has gone to have a bath," said someone.

When Uka Khachar came, Maharaj was very pleased. He stood up and embraced him.

"You have really devoted your life in the service of God," Maharaj said.

"This is all I know, Maharaj," replied Uka Khachar.

Such were Maharaj's devotees.

They were ready to do all types of the service.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in one sentence:

1. What did Uka Khachar and his wife do every morning?

2. On seeing the dog's faeces, what did the onlookers say?
3. Why was Uka Khachar late in arriving to the assembly?
4. Maharaj was pleased with Uka Khachar. What did Maharaj say and what did he do?

* * *

24. Double the Distance

Jinabhai was a devotee of Maharaj. Once he went to a town called Mangrol.

In Mangrol he received the news that a local devotee Kamalshi Vanza was ill. There was no one to care for him. Jinabhai went to meet him. He saw that Kamalshi was very ill indeed. Jinabhai remembered Maharaj's words. "We must act as a servant of servant to all devotees."

Jinabhai decided to serve Kamalshi. He concluded with the thought of taking the devotee to his house in Panchala.

Kamalshi had to be carried in the cot. Jinabhai went in search of porters but he could only find three porters. "I'll be the fourth," decided Jinabhai and lifted Kamalshi Vanza's cot and left for Panchala. A little distance out of Mangrol Jinabhai met a porter. The porter took the fourth cot leg from Jinabhai.

In Panchala Jinabhai personally and lovingly took care of Kamalshibhai. He massaged his legs, hands and back. He also fed him with nutritious food. Jinabhai even washed his clothes.

Jinabhai was rich and had many servants, but he did not allow anyone to do this service. Knowing Kamalshibhai to be Maharaj's devotee he served him personally.

Maharaj came to hear this news. He came to

Panchala and embraced Jinabhai. Not once, but seven times! Jinabhai felt peace at heart.

Time passed.

One day Jinabhai himself fell ill. As soon as Maharaj got the news he rode on his horse, Manki, to Panchala. He arrived at Jinabhai's *darbar* in the middle of the night.

Maharaj sat on the side of Jinabhai's bed and put a hand on his head. At that very moment Jinabhai passed away.

When Jinabhai's body was taken to the cremation ground three devotees lifted the palanquin and the fourth side was taken by Maharaj himself. It was a surprise for all. Never had Maharaj given such a respect to anyone.

Maharaj said, "Jinabhai had lifted Kamalshibhai's cot. I walked twice the distance that Jinabhai walked. It is hard to serve God. It is still even harder to serve a devotee of God. That is what Jinabhai had done. He had served God's devotee. That is why I am pleased with him."



Shriji Maharaj carries the bier of Jinabhai

Such were the devotees of Maharaj.

They loved serving other devotees.

Such was Maharaj. He loved serving the devotees who served other devotees.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in three lines each:

1. Why did Jinabhai bring Kamalshibhai Vanza to his house?
2. How did Jinabhai serve him?
3. While lifting Jinabhai's palanquin, what did Maharaj say?

* * *

25. Love and Devotion

Maharaj was in a city called Surat in Gujarat.

The devotees of Surat welcomed Maharaj with great pomp. A grand procession was taken through the city.

Maharaj was mounted on his horse Manki. Senior sadhus were seated in palanquins. A devotee named Ardeshar Kotwal led the procession. People crowded in the streets to see Maharaj. From windows and terraces everyone peeped to have a glimpse of Maharaj. Devotees were all around him singing bhajans.

When Maharaj neared, people from the windows showered flower petals upon him. They would loudly chant 'Sahajanand Swami Maharaj *ni jai*.'

Everyday in Surat devotees would assemble in the presence of Maharaj. Ardeshar Kotwal was a Parsi but he was staunch devotee of Maharaj. One day he requested Maharaj, "Please come to my home."

Maharaj was beyond discrimination of caste or community. To him Hindu, Muslim, Parsi or Christian were all equal.

Maharaj went to Ardeshar's house.

Maharaj also went to Pirusha's house. Pirusha was Ardeshar's brother.

One day in an assembly, Ardeshar Kotwal stood up with folded hands. He said, "Long time back in history Lord Ram gave his wooden sandals to his brother Bharat as a token of remembrance. It would be nice if you also give something of yours as a token."

Immediately Maharaj took his turban off and gave it to Ardeshar. Ardeshar was extremely happy. Over 200 years has passed but the turban is still intact with the Kotwal family.

Many Britishers lived in the city of Surat. They came to know of Maharaj's divine personality. They had desire for Maharaj's darshan. They also invited Maharaj to their homes. The Britishers lovingly received Maharaj. They had great respect for him.

Such was Maharaj. He would go wherever there was love and respect. He did not look at caste or creed.



Maharaj presents his turban to Ardeshar Kotwal

Exercise

True or False:

1. Ardeshar Kotwal was a Parsi devotee from the city called Vadodara.
2. Hindu, Muslim, Parsi or Christian were all equal in the eyes of Maharaj.
3. Lord Ram gave his shoes to Bharat.
4. Maharaj gave his wooden sandals to Ardeshar Kotwal.
5. Even today, Maharaj's turban is still intact with the Kotwal family.



SECTION B

1. Prayer

Svikāri lyo svikāri lyo, vandan āj amārā,
 Ame bālāk chhie tamārā, Swāmi bālāk chhie tamārā...
 Nathi amāri pās ho Bhagwan, bhāt bhātnā fulo;
 Pan urni bagiomā khilyā chhe, bhaktibhāvnā fulo;
 E fulone māni lejo, kumālā hraday amārā...ame 1
 Bholā thaine karie ame to, bhāt bhātni bhulo;
 Pan tujne na bhulie hardam, amo chadāvie fulo;
 E fulomā mukie ame to, hardam prān amārā...ame 2

Exercise

1. Learn this prayer by heart.

* * *

2. Our Body

Two little eyes to see our God.
 Two little ears to listen to God's speech.
 Two little legs to visit God's home.
 Two small lips to sing glory of God.
 Two small hands to serve our God.
 And... one dear heart to love dear God.
 Like this our eyes, ears, legs, lips, hands and heart
 should be attached to Bhagwan Swaminarayan. This is the
 only way to please our Guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Exercise

Find the pairs:

1. Two little legs (a) to sing glory of God.
2. Two little ears (b) to visit God's home.
3. Two small lips (c) to listen to God's speech.

* * *

3. Our Home, Our Mandir

We live in homes. We decorate our homes with all sorts of things. This makes our home beautiful, but not divine. A mandir in the home makes our home pure and divine. It is said so in the scriptures, "Without a mandir a home is not a home but a devil's house."

With a mandir in the home we can have God's darshan at home. We can worship him then and there.

You can turn a small cupboard into a mandir or even design a special mandir of marble or expensive wood. In the mandir we should place the *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Every morning, after a bath, clean the *murtis* with a



Offering worship in the home mandir

clean cloth. Then apply vermilion powder on the forehead. If there are flowers in your garden bring them and offer them to God. Then perform *arti*. Offer *thal* to the *murtis* at lunch time.

In the evening, each family member should get together, perform *arti* and read from our scriptures.

By doing this our vows of doing *arti*, reading scriptures, etc. would not break. We become devoted to Bhagwan. There will always be the presence of Bhagwan in the home. The home remains pure and holy. There can be no scope for fights or quarrels. Everyone can live in peace and harmony. Bhagwan will protect us and our home.

Even if you have a mandir in the home, if there is a *hari* mandir or *shikharbaddh* mandir in the area where we live, you must go to the mandir as well.

Exercise

Answer each of the following questions in short sentences:

1. How can we make our home pure and divine?
2. Which *murtis* should we place in our home mandir?
3. What should the members of the house do every evening?
4. By worshipping God regularly how do we gain personally?
5. Describe the atmosphere produced by worshipping God regularly in our home.

* * *

4. Bhagatji Maharaj

Mahuva is a town in Saurashtra.

Bhagatji Maharaj was born in this city on 20 March 1829 (Falgun *sud* 1, Samvat 1885). He was born into a tailor family. His real name was Pragji but due to his

love and devotion for God people called him Bhagatji Maharaj.

From the childhood he had profound love and devotion for God.

He would daily visit the Lakshmi-Narayan mandir along with his friends. Within the compounds of the mandir there is a small Hanuman mandir. Bhagwan Swaminarayan had come to this mandir as Nilkanth Varni. At this very mandir Pragji Bhakta would come with his friends. He would sing devotional songs and dance with his friends.

On the outskirts of the city there is the beautiful river Malan. After school Pragji would go to this river along with his friends. They would sit down on the banks. There he often proclaimed, "I have studied everything. I have come to preach the word of God."

Young Pragji came into contact with Gopalanand Swami who often came to Mahuva. Pragji served him very well. Gopalanand Swami was pleased with his service. Once Gopalanand Swami fell very ill, he called for Pragji. He told him, "Gunatitanand Swami at Junagadh is the divine abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Serve him with all your love." So saying Gopalanand Swami passed away.

Pragji Bhakta went to Junagadh. He attached himself with Gunatitanand Swami. He served Gunatitanand Swami with great devotion and earned his blessings.

In Junagadh mandir there was an old *haveli*. A new building was to be constructed in place of that *haveli*. Gunatitanand Swami supervising the construction. A firm foundation was being prepared. Pragji would collect sand in big sacks, lift them on his head and run to fill the foundation. It was the toughest of jobs. Lime had to be liquified and made fine by crushing it with

bare feet. This process was hard because the lime penetrated the feet and reaped the skin. The natural heat was such that it often blinded those who worked with it. Nobody was ready to take this service. Only Pragji Bhakta accepted the task. He brought the lime sacks, emptied them. He then poured water over the lime and crushed it with his feet to soften it. Like this he worked relentlessly for three years, until the building was fully erected.

On seeing his dedication the onlookers often questioned, "Why do you work so hard?" To this he replied, "I have sacrificed myself for Gunatitanand Swami. I only want to please Swami."

We should remember these words of Bhagatji Maharaj.

When he would that 'Gunatitanand Swami is Akshar – the abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan,' people would often beat him, insult him. But he did not swerve from this belief. He passed this knowledge to Shastriji Maharaj who spread it throughout the world.

Exercise

Answer each of the following questions in one sentence:

1. Where was Bhagatji Maharaj born? What was his caste by birth?
2. What would Pragji Bhakta tell his friends when they went to the river banks?
3. Before passing away what did Gopalanand Swami tell Pragji Bhakta?
4. Why was Bhagatji Maharaj beaten and insulted?
5. Which words by Bhagatji Maharaj we should daily remember?

5. Stuti



Prayers to God

1. *Sarvetra sukhinah santu sarve santu nirāmayaha,
Sarve bhadrāni pashyantu mā kaschit dukh māpnuyāt.*
May all be happy. May all be without ill health. May all see good in everything. May no one be unhappy.

2. *Anyathā sharanam nāsti twameva sharanam mama,
Tasmāt kārunya bhāvena raksh tvam Purushottamah.*
Oh Supreme Lord! I have no shelter other than your own. Be compassionate and protect me.

3. *Achāra paramo dharam achāra paramam tapa,
Achāra paramam gnanam acharat kim na sadhyate.*
Good conduct is religion, good conduct is austerity, good conduct is knowledge, what cannot be achieved by good conduct?

4. *Ati manoharam sarva sundaram,
tilaka lakshanam chanchalekshanam;
vibudh vanditam Swāmi Nāth te,
vapurihāstu no nitya darshane.*

Exceedingly attractive the most beautiful amongst all. Limbs adorned with birth marks, Your eyes ever playing, Your divine person worshipped by the gods, Oh Lord Shriji Maharaj please be ever present before my eyes.

Exercise

Complete the verses:

1. Achāra paramo dharmā...
2. Ati manoharam sarva sundaram...

6. Dungar Bhakta

Shastriji Maharaj is the founder of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS). He was born on 31 January 1865 (Vasant Panchmi, Samvat 1921), in Mahelav, a small village in Gujarat, India. His childhood name was Dungar. His father's name was Dhoribhai and mother's name was Hetba. Dungar left his home at the age of seventeen. He was initiated into sainthood by Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj and named him 'Yagnapurushdas'. He was born scholar. Because of his sharp intellect people called him Shastriji Maharaj. His life and works are amazing. He built five beautiful mandirs in Bochasan, Sarangpur, Gondal, Atladra and Gadhada.

Shastriji Maharaj appointed Pramukh Swami as the head (Pramukh) of BAPS.

Let us look at a childhood incident from the life of Shastriji Maharaj.

Every night before going to bed, six-year-old Dungar would sleep beside his father to listen to stories. Dhoribhai would tell him stories from the great epics of Ramayan and Mahabharat. He would also tell stories from the Bhagwat. Dungar's memory was very powerful. Whatever he listened to he would remember it. He had the ability to say it exactly as told. Dungar would never get tired of listening. Many a time they would talk till early morning.

One night Dungar went to sleep after listening

story from his father. His father, Dhoribhai had to go to his farm to water the crops. So, when Dungar went to sleep he walked away. The farm was quite far from the village.

In the middle of the night Dungar woke up. Not finding his father in bed Dungar got up. He knew that there was only one place that he would be – the farm. He picked a large stick and headed towards the farm.

A six-year-old child, Dungar went out of the village and, alone on the dark dusty jungle road, walked towards the farm. Strange noises were coming from all around. The birds sleeping on the trees are becoming victims of other birds and their cries are heard. The foxes are barking. Rabbits are running helter-skelter.

Dungar with a stick in his hand is chanting ‘Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan’ and walking in the dark night. He says to himself, ‘When five year old Dhruv was not afraid going into forest, why should I be afraid at all?’

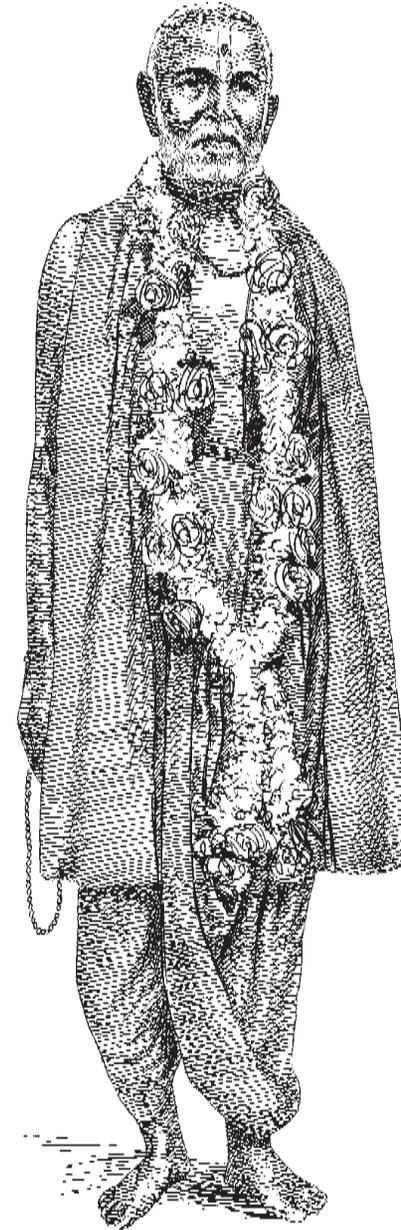
In this way he reached to his farm. Dhoribhai saw his six-year-old son coming alone. He ran and took Dungar in his arms.

“Aren’t you afraid of coming alone,” he asked.

“Father! you yourself have told me that by chanting the Swaminarayan mantra all our fears go away. And if any ghostly creature comes near by I’ve got this stick haven’t I?” Dungar replied bravely.

The father uttered, “Oh, my dear Dhruv!”

Yes, Dungar was like Dhruv. Dhruv means one who is firm. From his very childhood Dungar was firm in his beliefs. Once he fixed a goal, he would see that it be completed. No matter what came in between nothing could stop him. Ghosts or goblins, death or fear nothing could stop him.



Brahaswarup Shastriji Maharaj

Dungar became Yagnapurushdas – Shastriji Maharaj, a sadhu with the will and power like a mountain.

Exercise

Answer each of the following questions in one sentence:

1. Who is the founder of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS)?
2. When and where was Shastriji Maharaj born?
3. In which towns did Shastriji Maharaj build mandirs?
4. Whilst walking through the jungle which ‘mantra’ did Dungar chant?
5. What does ‘Dungar’ mean? To whom does it apply?

* * *

7. Ekadashi

When Dungar was five-years-old there was a wedding in his family. Dungar did not wish to attend but was forced to go. At the wedding everyone was making merry but young Dungar went to a nearby mandir and sat in meditation.

It was a time for lunch. Everyone gathered to have lunch. But where was Dungar? Everyone began to look for him. Then finally they found him at the mandir. He was listening to discourse. They told him to come for lunch, but Dungar refused. He said, “Today is *ekadashi*. I have a fast”. Everyone insisted but Dungar did not budge. Then someone brought fruits for Dungar it was only then that he ate. But apart from fruits he did not touch anything else.

Ekadashi comes once every fifteen days. By doing *ekadashi*, by not eating anything made from grains or beans the body stays in good health. The digestive system gets time for relaxation by which it can function better. The stomach is also relieved of its illness. Good health keeps the mind healthy too. A sharp mind sharpens the intellect.

Thus, *ekadashi* means to perform austerity with body and mind. One has to remember god on that day. This pleases God. Performing *ekadashi* pleases Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Therefore always fast on *ekadashi*.

Exercise

Answer each of the following questions in one sentence:

1. Why didn’t Dungar eat at the wedding?
2. In one month how many *ekadashis* do we get?
3. How is *ekadashi* good for health?
4. What is *ekadashi*?
4. Who is pleased when we do *ekadashi*?

* * *

8. The Lord Eats

Yogiji Maharaj was born on 23 May 1892 (Vaishakh *vad* 12, Samvat 1938) in Dhari.

Puribai was his mother’s name and Devchandbhai his father’s. He was very clever in studies. He acquired first rank throughout his schooling years. At the age of 17 he became a sadhu. Shastriji Maharaj passed away and Yogiji Maharaj took charge of the Satsang activities. Yogiji Maharaj loved kids. He had founded Bal Mandals. He spread Satsang in the foreign countries and built mandirs there.



Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj

Before passing away, he introduced Pramukh Swami as: 'Pramukh Swami is my everything. Now onwards, he will bestow blessings upon you all.'

In this chapter we have taken two incidents reflecting the devotional life of Yogiji Maharaj.

Accompanied by few sadhus Yogiji Maharaj came to the city of Bhavnagar. It was the period of *shraddh*. A devotee had invited all sadhus and many devotees for lunch on his father's *shraddh*. Before taking lunch the

thal was first offered to the *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The plate was filled with ten ladoos, rice, soup, vegetables and lots more. Two glasses of water were also offered.

Some devotees told Yogiji Maharaj, "Swami! pray so that today Shriji Maharaj and Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami accepts the *thal* in person.

Yogiji Maharaj laughed and said, "We will pray."

Placing the food before Thakorji Yogiji Maharaj drew the curtains. Yogiji Maharaj sang '*Māre gher āvjo chhogalā dhāri*' and other two *thal*. He lovingly prayed so that Thakorji may eat. After half an hour he opened the curtain. Everyone was amazed. In the plate there were only five ladus instead of ten! Even the rest of the items had been reduced. The two glasses of water were totally empty. Everyone present experienced that Shriji Maharaj and Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami really listens to Yogiji Maharaj's prayers.

Exercise

True or False:

1. Yogiji Maharaj was born in Mahelav.
2. He used to stand first throughout his school career.
3. Yogiji Maharaj did not like kids.
4. Thakorji ate the food due to the prayers of the devotees.
5. Before passing away Yogiji Maharaj said, "Pramukh Swami is my everything".

* * *

9. A Handful of Service

Yogiji Maharaj used to do a lot of *seva*. From early morning till late night he was involved in the service.

Even on days of fast he performed this service. Every third day Yogiji Maharaj used to fast.

He used to cook food for the sadhus and devotees. He would make *rotlas* and at a time will roast them on two pans. While cooking he would recite bhajans – devotional songs. He would serve the sadhus personally and eat only after everyone had eaten. He would draw the water from the well and bathe the sadhus. He would not feel embarrassed while washing clothes. Not only that he would also clean up and wash the utensils. He would spend hours in the *seva* and would always think: ‘Thanks I have got *seva* and alongwith *seva* I am able to chant God’s name.’

Yogiji Maharaj would go to towns and villages to spread Satsang. He would go to beg alms also. He would bless everybody whether he would give him alms or not.

Once in a small village Yogiji Maharaj went to collect alms with an old blind sadhu. Yogiji Maharaj was taking care of the blind sadhu. He would hold his hand and let him walk slowly.

Once, someone told him, “Why don’t you bring a young sadhu with you instead of this blind sadhu. Don’t you find his company difficult?” Yogiji Maharaj smiled and replied, “I consider this an opportunity. Not difficulty. I serve him worth penny and in return I get worth pounds.

“What do you mean?”

“You see by walking with them they share their knowledge and experience with me . In that way they serve me worth pounds.”

Yogiji Maharaj considered it an opportunity to serve the aged. ‘Serve worth penny and earn worth pounds’ one has to learn this from Yogiji Maharaj.

Exercise

Explain in short:

1. What kind of *seva* did Yogiji Maharaj perform?
2. What do we mean by a handful of service?

* * *

10. Thal

Māre gher āvjo Chhogalādhāri;

Lādu jalebi ne sev suvāli,

Hu to bhāve kari lāvi chhu ghāri...

Suran puran ne bhāji kārelā,

Pāpad vadi vaghāri;

Vantāk vālolna shāk karya,

Me to cholāfali chhamkāri...māre 1

Kaju kamodnā bhāt karya,

Me to dāl kari bahu sāri;

Limbu kākdinā lejo athānā,

Kadhi kari chhe Kathiyāvādi...māre 2

Laving sopāri ne pānbidi vāli,

Taj elchi javantri sari;

Nishdin āvo to bhāve kari bhetu,

Em māge Jerām Brahmachāri...mare 3

Exercise

Complete the missing line:

- (1) Kāju kamodnā māge Jerām Brahmachāri.

* * *

11. Our Sadhus

A person who leaves his home and family is a sadhu.

A sadhu wears robes, a dhoti. He wears another cloth over his shoulders. On his head he wears a *pagh*. The clothes are not sown.

Sadhus do not talk with women.
 Sadhus do not look at women intentionally.
 Sadhus undertake a fast if they touch a woman.
 Sadhus do not touch or keep money.
 Sadhus eat in a wooden bowl.
 Sadhus always move out in the company of other sadhu.

One who speaks the truth is a sadhu.
 One who is engrossed in devotion is a sadhu.
 One who does *seva* is a sadhu.
 One who tolerates is a sadhu.
 Sadhus deliver good talks.
 Sadhus talk about dharma and dharma means good behaviour.

Sadhus talk about *seva*.
 Sadhus teach us how to do *seva*.
 Sadhus teach us to be helpful to others. They teach us to pray to God.
 Sadhus talk about discipline, they teach us to obey God's laws.
 Sadhus teach us all these things.
 We must listen to their talks regularly.
 We must bow down at the feet of these holy sadhus.
 By bowing to them we attain qualities like them.
 We must bow with respect.
 We must bow with love.
 We must bow with reverence.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in a sentence:

1. What do sadhus talk to us about?
2. What is religion?
3. What do sadhus teach us?
4. Why should we bow to sadhus?

5. How should we bow?
6. How do sadhus behave with women?

* * *

12. He Is ours

Chansad is a small village in the district of Vadodara. In the village there is a small mandir run by Ramanandi sadhu. The head of the mandir is there talking with two boys. The mandir head is talking about Hardwar, Rishikesh, Badri-Kedar and other places of the Himalayas. He talks of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. He talks about the Kailash Mountain.

The boys are listening with interest. A boy says, "I'd love to see these places." The *mahant* says, "Only a sadhu or a rich man can afford to see these places."

The boy replies, "I do not want to be rich. I want to be a sadhu!" The *mahant* is amazed by the boy's statement.

This boy's name was Shantilal. His father's name was Motibhai and mother's name was Diwaliba. He was born 7 December 1921 (Magshar *sud* 8, Samvat 1978). His parents followed the Swaminarayan Faith. They would go to the mandir everyday. The boy, Shantilal, would also go with them. Sometimes when sadhus used to come to Chansad, Shantilal's joy knew no bounds. All day he would stay at the mandir. He would serve them lovingly and would listen to their talks. It was his hobby. Shantilal loved listening to devotional songs. Sometimes he would sit listening till midnight.

One day Shastriji Maharaj came to Chansad. Motibhai took his son Shantilal for darshan. Shantilal bowed to Shastriji Maharaj. Shastriji Maharaj looked at the boy, then he told Motibhai, "Motibhai, he is ours."

“Then take him,” said Motibhai.

“Not now, when the time comes, I’ll call him.”

Shantilal was a bright student. His primary school was completed in Chansad. For higher secondary education he was going to a nearby town named Padra.

In the meanwhile, Shastriji Maharaj once again came to Chansad. Shantilal went for Shastriji Maharaj’s darshan. He bowed down. Shastriji Maharaj looked at him and asked, “Will you become a sadhu?”

Shantilal was now 16. He was just waiting for this opportunity. He said, “I am waiting for your command.”

His parents had already given permission to become a sadhu. At the age of seventeen, Shantilal left his home to meet Shastriji Maharaj in Bochasan.

Exercise

Fill in the blanks:

1. Shantilal was born in
(Vadodara, Bochasan, Chansad)
2. Shantilal’s father’s name was
(Motibhai, Dhoribhai)
3. He was born on Samvat 1978.
(Vasant Panchmi, Magshar *sud* 8, Ram Navmi)
4. After passing his primary, Shantilal went tofor higher secondary education.
(Chansad, Baroda, Padra)
5. Shantilal left home at the age of
(17, 15, 11)

Who says, to whom:

1. “I do not want to be rich. I want to be a sadhu.”
2. “He is ours.”
3. “I am waiting for your command.”

* * *

13. To Obey the Guru’s Commands

A festival was to be held in Ahmedabad.

Young Shantilal had come to Ahmedabad with the group of sadhus.

Shastriji Maharaj asked him, “Shantilal will you become a *parshad*?”

“When?” Shantilal asked.

“Here and Now,” said Shastriji Maharaj.

“I was awaiting this moment,” replied Shantilal happily. A barber shaved Shantilal’s head. Shantilal was given white clothes and with special mantras he was initiated as a *parshad*. He was named Shanti Bhagat.

Shastriji Maharaj blessed him, “Enlighten the path of sainthood at any cost.”

The very first day Shastriji Maharaj gave him a lesson in Sanskrit to learn by heart. By evening Shanti Bhagat had learnt it perfectly. Swamiji was very pleased.

Shanti Bhagat was involved in all types of activities in Bochasan mandir. Once in Bochasan, the construction work of the mandir was in progress. All the sadhus, *parshads* and even Shastriji Maharaj were involved in emptying the lime furnace. It was hard work. They ran with troughs, filled them with lime and emptied them. At that time Shastriji Maharaj had to go to attend to some other work. In his absence one by one everyone left. However Shanti Bhagat did not budge. He kept the work going. When Shastriji Maharaj returned he saw that only this *parshad* was working. Shastriji Maharaj asked him, “Everyone has retired. Don’t you feel tired?” The young *parshad* replied, “Swami in your command there is no place for tiredness.”

On hearing this Shastriji Maharaj was very pleased.

After only one and a half months, Shanti Bhagat was called to Gondal and there in Akshar Deri he was initiated into the saffron order. He was named 'Narayanswarupdas.' At the time Shastriji Maharaj told Yogiji Maharaj, "Pray so that this sadhu acquires saintly qualities like yours and that he may serve the Satsang as you do."

Today we can see that the blessings of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj are fulfilled.

Exercise

Answer each of the following questions in one sentence:

1. Where was Shantilal initiated into the *parshad*?
2. After being initiated as a *parshad* what blessing did Shastriji Maharaj give?
3. Where was Shanti Bhagat initiated into the saffron order?
4. After giving Shanti Bhagat the saffron order what was he named?
5. After initiating him what did Shastriji Maharaj say to Yogiji Maharaj?

Explain in short:

1. The will to obey Shastriji Maharaj's command.

* * *

14. Pramukh Swami

Within 10 years the young Sadhu Narayanswarupdas came to be well known for his services and education in Sanskrit. He came to be known as Shastri Narayanswarupdas. He was an idol of saintliness.

Shastriji Maharaj had become old. He was distributing his workload amongst the sadhus and

devotees. He was the Pramukh – head – of the Akshar Purushottam Sanstha. He wanted an ideal sadhu to look after that post. For this he selected the 28-year-old young sadhu Shastri Narayanswarupdas.

Shastriji Maharaj invited many great devotees to Ahmedabad. He told Shastri Narayanswarupdas to sit in between him and Yogiji Maharaj. Then with great authority he said, "Till now I have remained the Pramukh – head – of this Sanstha but from now onwards I place this responsibility onto this young sadhu Shastri Narayanswarupdas. He is young in age but he is very virtuous. So from now on as you have obeyed me, obey him as well."

Swami Shastri Narayanswarupdas now came to be known as 'Pramukh Swami'.

After acquiring this status of Pramukh – head – do you know what the first thing he did was?

On this occasion everybody had a great feast of mango pulp and *puri*. They had put the unwashed dishes in the corner. A young sadhu was washing these dishes, he was none other than Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Even after gaining such a high position, he sat there washing the dishes. Those who saw this egoless personality were amazed. 'Incredible, incredible,' they proclaimed.

Exercise

True or False:

1. Shastri Narayanswarupdas had all the qualities of saintliness.
2. Yogiji Maharaj appointed Shastri Narayanswarupdas as the head of the Sanstha.
3. Shastri Narayanswarupdas was appointed head in Bocharan.

4. Today the head of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha is Pramukh Swami Maharaj.
5. Shastri Narayanswarupdas is Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Explain in short

1. While naming Shastri Narayanswarupdas as a head of the Sanstha, what did Shastriji Maharaj say?
2. The egolessness of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

* * *

15. Pleased with Children

Pramukh Swami Maharaj loves kids. In India or abroad he never forgets them.

Once Pramukh Swami was travelling from Surat to Bharuch. On the way there were some devotees waiting to garland him. In this crowd there was a handicapped boy. He was sitting on the ground.

As Swami's car stopped, the devotees garlanded Swami and bowed down. Swami's eyes fell upon the handicapped child. He got out of the car and sat beside the child. The child was extremely happy. Swami talked with him, applied a red kumkum mark on his forehead and gave him holy water for bettering his health.

Swami is such a person that he becomes a child with a child.

Even in the foreign countries, kids are crazy after Pramukh Swami Maharaj. They would come again and again for Swami's darshan.

In South Africa there is a city named Durban. There, two boys used to come regularly for Swami's darshan.

One day one boy did not come. Not seeing the other

boy, Swami asked, "Vijay! Why hasn't Devesh come today?"

Swami is so intimate with the children that he knows them by their name.

Vijay said, "Bapa, today he has gone to meet his friends."

Swami laughed and said, "Then am I not his friend? Tell him to come and meet me as well."

Swamishri is a friend of all kids. Who wouldn't like such a friend? Let us be his friend forever.

Exercise

Explain in short:

1. Pramukh Swami becomes like a child with a child. Write the incident.
2. Pramukh Swami is a friend of kids. Write this incident.

* * *

16. Tilak-Chandlo

Each religion has symbol. Symbol defines a religion. *Tilak-chandlo* is a holy symbol.

Once Shriji Maharaj called the sadhus. He gave sandalwood paste to all of them and told them to mark a *tilak* on their forehead. The next morning everyone came up with different shaped *tilaks* on their forehead. Maharaj did not like these *tilaks*.

Then he called Gunatitanand Swami. Maharaj applied an upright *tilak* mark on Gunatitanand Swami's forehead. In the midst of the *tilak* he made a round red *kumkum* mark. Then pointing to Gunatitanand Swami, Maharaj said, "This is my *tilak*." Maharaj said a very significant thing by this. Just as a king proclaims his prince as the heir to the throne,

similarly Maharaj proclaimed Gunatitanand Swami as his successor.

From that day onwards everyone began to perform the *tilak* and *chandlo*. In the Shikshapatri Maharaj has commanded everybody to mark *tilak-chandlo* on their forehead. *Tilak* is the symbol of Akshardham (Gunatitanand Swami) and *chandlo* is the symbol of Maharaj.

We must place this mark on our forehead. Maharaj and Swami will be pleased only then.

If we have this mark on our forehead, we would keep away from doing bad work. Moreover, Maharaj would always be there to protect us from evil.

Exercise

Answer each of the following questions in one sentence:

1. "This is my *tilak*" Maharaj meant a very significant thing by this. What is it?
2. To whom does the *tilak* refer to?
3. To whom does the *chandlo* refer to?
4. In which scripture has Maharaj written to us to perform this mark?
5. What are the benefits gained by doing *tilak-chandlo*?

* * *

17. Swamini Vatu

Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami used to give some very useful and practical sermons. In this chapter we will have a glance at a few of these sermons (*Vatu*).

Swaminarayan hare Swamie vat karije...

1. *Bhagwan ne Bhagwan na bhakta e be ni seva ma ja mal chhe.*

2. *A to Bhagwan jeva Sadhu chhe, bawa ke vairagi nathi.*
3. *Dahyo hoy tene vadhe tyare raji thay ne murkh hoy tene vakhane tyare raji thay, em Maharaj kaheta.*
4. *Satya, heet ne priya evu vachan bolvu ne upeksha rahit bolvu pan agrahthi vachan kahevu nahi.*
5. *A lokma dahyo to koi prabhu bhajto nathi ne je gando thay te bhaje chhe.*
6. *Bhagwan bhajva hoy tenathi badhani marji rakhi shakay nahi. Tenathi to Bhagwanni marji sachvay.*
7. *Panch-das var 'Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan' nam jane-anjane leshe tenu pan apne kalyan karvu padshe ne akha brahmandne Satsang karavvo chhe.*
8. *Bhagwan jivna guna samu jota nathi, te koi jiv Bhagwanni smruti karine em bole je, "Hu(n) gunegar chhu," to tena guna Bhagwan maf kare chhe.*
9. *Jo mota purush male to teno sang karvo, nikar utartano sang to karvo ja nahi.*
10. *Jena guru Akshar hoy te Akshardham ma lai jay ne Purushottam ne melve.*

Exercise

Complete the 'Swamini Vatu'

1. *Dahyo hoy tene vadhe...*
2. *Satya, priya ne...*
3. *Panch das var 'Swaminarayan...*
4. *Bhagwan jivna guna...*

* * *

18. Prahlad

It is a sin to say that God does not exist.

Sinners hate God. They hate the devotees of God.

Such a sinner was Hiranyakashipu.

He did not believe in God. He did not utter the name of God. If anyone worshipped God, he would punish him.

Hiranyakashipu had a son named Prahlad. Prahlad prayed to God from his very childhood. Obviously his father did not like this.

His father told him, "There is no God. I am the greatest, there is none greater than myself. I kill those who utter God's name."

Prahlad was God's true devotee. He calmly replied, "Father, I'll recite the name of God with all my heart. There is God. Without him how can we live. He gives us wind, water and light. Sow a seed in the ground and a thousand grains will come out. Give dry grass to a cow and she will give us fresh milk. He gives colours to butterflies and fragrance to flowers."

On hearing his son speak these words, Hiranyakashipu's anger knew no bounds. He shouted in anger, "Stop your nonsense. If you do not, I will kill you for sure."

Prahlad smiled and said softly, "Do as you please, but I shall never stop chanting God's name."

Hiranyakashipu was now burning with anger. He kicked the child who went flying. Prahlad stood up. With folded hands and eyes shut he remembered God.

Hiranyakashipu called the guards. He ordered, "Take this boy, tie him and throw him from the mountains."

The guards obeyed the order. They tied Prahlad and threw him from the mountain. Prahlad was still chanting God's name. With miraculous hands God eased the fall. The guards considered him dead. But Prahlad reached home before the guards.



By the grace of God Prahlad survives all attempts to kill him

On seeing him at the door step, Hiranyakashipu's hate increased. He ordered the guards to take him and have him crushed under the feet of the elephant.

Prahlad did not stop chanting the name of God.

A mad elephant came. Prahlad sat in meditation. The elephant walked over Prahlad thrice but nothing happened. God had made Prahlad's body like that of iron.

Hiranyakashipu wanted his son to stop praying. Instead, Prahlad only increased his chanting. He still tried to kill the child. Hiranyakashipu called his sister Holika. Holika had a special gift given to her by the God, 'Fire could never touch her'. The king planned to set a huge fire. Holika would sit in it with Prahlad in her lap. Eventually, Prahlad would burn away and his sister would stay alive due to her special gift.

The fire was set and the flames danced high. Everyone thought Prahlad would die. But instead they heard Holika's scream. When the fire died Holika had turned to ashes and Prahlad was still sitting as before. God had saved him.

Prahlad also taught other children to chant the name of God. Everyone sang and danced to the tune of God's name.

Prahlad's friends would walk through streets and roads and from house to house singing the name of God. Prahlad was fearless. This made his friends fearless too. People in the town feared of Hiranyakashipu but Prahlad was fearless. Prahlad told them to have faith and devotion in God.

Hiranyakashipu was still not convinced. He prepared an iron pillar and had it heated up until it became red hot. Then he had Prahlad brought up.

"Where is your God?" shouted his father.

"God is everywhere," Prahlad replied calmly.

"Is he in this pillar?" Hiranyakashipu asked cunningly.

"Yes, he is also hidden in the pillar," replied Prahlad.

"Then embrace the pillar."

Prahlad shut his eyes, remembered God and embraced the pillar. Nothing happened. Hiranyakashipu became extremely angry, he pulled his sword and struck the pillar.

K...d.d.d.d.d.d. the pillar split in two. There stood Lord Narsinh. Prahlad started prostrating. God blessed him.

On seeing God, Hiranyakashipu ran to kill him with the sword. But God was ready. He pulled Hiranyakashipu threw him on the threshold of the house and tore him with his nails. He died.

Good won over evil.

For one child devotee God came to earth. Seeing his devotion God said, "Prahlad, I am pleased with your devotion. Ask for anything you like and I shall give."

Prahlad replied, "Lord, though you have protected me from death, I do not consider that as protection. Please protect me from the evil forces within the mind. Give me your blessings so that I never swerve from your devotion, I can always remember you. I may remain in the company of your sadhus and devotees. I consider your devotees as my true relatives, give me the intellect to understand them and serve them in all ways. I would like to be a servant to them.

God blessed him so.

Those who go against God or his devotee are destroyed forever.

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "Do as you please but I shall never stop chanting God's name."
2. "Take this boy and throw him from the mountains."
3. "God is everywhere."

Write short notes (approximately 8 lines).

1. In what way did God protect Prahlad?
2. What did Prahlad ask for from God Narsinh?

19. A Dunce Student

There was a boy.

Everyday he went to school with pen, pencils, books etc., but he could never learn and remember anything.

So his friends called him 'dunce'.

Even his teacher told him, "You'll never be able to study anything. You'll stay a dunce all your life."

Now what?

The boy wanted to study and everybody had told him that he could never learn anything.

In those days when such problems occurred, people used to go and ask the astrologer for the answer.

The boy thought, "Let me go and ask the astrologer whether I will be able to study or not?"

The boy went.

A string of beads in the neck, red turban on the head, an almanac in his hand and a pen forced into back side of the ears, the astrologer was carrying out calculations, seating on his cushioned seat when the boy arrived.

"Please read my hand and please tell me when I'll be able to study."

The astrologer looked at his hand. Then he calculated something. His eyes broadened, he straightened his glasses and looked at the boy. He told him, "Listen little fellow! No matter how hard you try, you'll never be able to study. You just don't have a line of education in your hand." The boy felt hopeless. But the very next minute he was courageous.

He pulled a knife and made a long line in his right hand palm. He said, "This is my line of study! I promise you I'll go and study and become a great scholar."

Blood oozed from the boy's hand but he did not care. He went home.

With a determination to study he also said a prayer to God, "Oh Lord, please give me the intellect. I would like to study hard, please give me the will power and the courage."

Then he began to study of his own.

In school he paid great attention. He studied hard. He also prayed to God.

Day and night.

He just kept studying. He just kept remembering God. And one day he became a great scholar of the Sanskrit language.

He wrote the grammar of Sanskrit. It is still the best grammar in the world. The boy's name was Panini.

He was dunce but because he persisted and because he wanted to study he reached his goal.

For those who want to study, there is nothing to stop them. Constant effort is what you need.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in one sentence:

1. What did the teacher tell the boy?
2. Why did the boy go to the astrologer?
3. What did the astrologer tell the boy?
4. On hearing the astrologer's reply, what did the boy do?
5. Along with studies what did the boy do?
6. What was the boy's name. What great work did he do?

* * *

20. Shravan

Everyone knows about Shravan.

His parents were blind and lame.

Shravan used to serve them. He would wake up early. After bathing, he would worship God. He would pray to God.

“Oh Bhagwan! Bless me so that I never forget you. I can serve my parents lovingly. Keep me fit and healthy. Keep me in the company of your sadhus and good friends.”

After puja and prayer, Shravan would begin serving his parents. First he would bow to them with love and reverence. He would massage their feet. He would help them to brush their teeth. Then bathe them with hot water. He would wash their clothes. He would go to the village to get alms and then would cook food. He would offer the food to God, then he would serve them. Shravan would always eat after his parents had eaten.

Everyone likes the one who serves. The village children loved Shravan. Everyone would give him some or other things. But Shravan would not accept it. He would accept only that which he received as alms.

All the children would come to Shravan's house. They would sit around his blind parents. The parents would tell them stories. They would teach them the morals. The kids loved these stories.

Once Shravan overheard his parents saying, “We are blind. We can never have darshan of God or sadhus. Neither can we go on a pilgrimage to Kashi, Hardwar or Dwarka. It would be wonderful if we could go but who would take us there?”

On hearing these words Shravan said, “Don't worry, I'll take you to all the holy places.”



Shravan carries his parents on a pilgrimage of India

He brought a few long, tough bamboo sticks from the forest and made two strong baskets. He then tied the baskets to a strong bamboo. In one basket he sat his father and in the other he sat his mother. Taking the bamboo on his shoulders, Shravan left on pilgrimage.

The path was rough and thorny. Sometimes he had to cross mountains, sometimes even deep valleys and big rivers. But Shravan kept walking on and on.

When his parents would feel hungry, Shravan

would give them ripe fruits. At times he would go to beg alms. He would feed his parents lovingly. From streams or rivers he would filter the water and would give it to his parents to quench their thirst.

One day while he went to collect water, it made a bubble sound as he dipped the pot in. On hearing this sound someone shot an arrow in that direction. The arrow hit Shravan.

“O Bhagwan,” cried Shravan in pain. He fell down. The archer came running on hearing this cry. He begged for mercy. “I thought it was an animal. On hearing the sound I shot. I did not think it was you. Please forgive me.”

Shravan said, “My parents are blind. We have set out on a pilgrimage. They are seated on the other side under a tree. They must be thirsty. They must be waiting for me, please go and give them the water.”

The archer was a king named Dashrath. He took the water. Told the parents of the tragedy. They did not drink the water but insisted to go to the place where Shravan was. Dashrath took them there. They took Shravan in their laps. “Without you how can we live? How can we live?” So saying the parents died then and there.

Such was Shravan – kudos to his service towards his parents.

Exercise

Answer the following questions in three sentences each:

1. In what ways did Shravan serve his parents?
2. How did Shravan take his parents on the pilgrimage?
3. What prayer did Shravan say everyday?

* * *

21. What Does Swami Like?

In this chapter we present a few questions and answers conducted with Pramukh Swami Maharaj by children at various places. From the answers given by Swamishri, we can understand what Swami likes.

Balak: Swami! What should our daily routine be?

Swami: As we arise we should say ‘Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan.’ Then do brush standing or sitting at one place. We should not spit everywhere. Then we must have a bath, wear clean clothes and perform puja. In puja, we must do *tilak-chandlo*. If someone tells us, ‘Don’t wear clothes, don’t eat,’ do we do what he says? Similarly, let people call us names but we shouldn’t be afraid. We must do *mala* and must also prostrate before God.

Then we must reach school in time. Five minutes before the actual time. From home we must go directly to school, do not waver in between. We should not talk to anyone during class. Whatever the teacher teaches we must learn with due attention. We must maintain first rank throughout our studies.

From school we must come directly back home. On reaching home we must say ‘Jai Swaminarayan.’ Then do whatever *seva* that our parents tell us to do. Then whatever that has been taught to us in school we must revise. In the evening we must say our prayers. If the mandir is nearby we must go to the mandir. Then again sleep and rise early for the next day. That is our routine.”

Balak: Swami! How can we progress further?

Swami: When Yogiji Maharaj was small he used to go to the mandir and serve the sadhus, in this way he became great, did he not? Everyone is remembering him now and praying to him.

Balak: What did Shastriji Maharaj do when he was young?

Swami: He used to do *seva*, clean the mandir and also give sermons. Similarly if we also do this from childhood, we can become great. We must get blessings from sadhus and from our parents.

Balak: Why shouldn't we watch movies?

Swami: "Because by watching movies we move away from God and religion. Our mind is tempted to eat foods from outside. We begin to do wrong. Our money is wasted and so is our mind."

Balak: Swami Bapa, what do you like?

Swami: That you all come in the Bal Mandal. Obey the commands. Sing kirtans, say prayers – that is what I like. Our God – Shriji Maharaj – liked to keep company of sadhus, he liked to visit mandirs. He never caused mischief from his very childhood. Similarly we should like two things – Satsang and study.

Exercise

1. Prepare all questions and answers.

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22. Shaurya Git

Swaminā to bālāk ame,
 Shriji amārā Dev;
 Desh deshnā viro ame,
 sevāni chhe tev...
 Nānā nānā bāl ame,
 motā motā bol;
 Swāmi māte jivshu ame,
 e amāro kol..Swāminā 1

Sevā karshu, hoshe hoshe,
 saune vhālā thāshu;
 Kām karshu sārā sārā,
 satsangne dipāvshu...Swāminā 2
 Dhol nobat vājā vagādi,
 Shriji mahimā gashu;
 Dhajā rākhi unche unche,
 duniyāmā lai jāshu...Swāminā 3
 Sukh āve, dukh āve,
 koini fikar nathi;
 Akshardhāmma jāvu amāre,
 Swāmi pyārā sāthi...Swāminā 4



Ame sau Swāminā bālak... (from page ix)

Meaning:

We are the children of Swami; we will die for him. We are the youths of Shriji Maharaj; we will fight for him. We are fearless; we will not shirk sacrificing our lives, for we are born to die. We have launched this movement, and will undergo any suffering. We will sing the praises of Akshar-Purushottam. We are the sons of Shriji; we have our abode in Akshar. Dedicated as we are to *swadharmā*, we have no apprehension whatsoever. Bhagwan Purushottam and Akshar, Gunatitanand Swami, are with us. We have accomplished our goal.

Glossary

A

afeen	opium
arti	Hindu ritual of waving lighted wicks before the <i>murti</i> of God as an act of worship and reverence

B

bawal	thorny plant
bhagwati diksha	initiation into the sadhu-fold
brahmachari	a celibate. One who practises <i>brahmacharya</i> and whose <i>indriyas</i> are engrossed in God

C

chana	gram
chandlo	small, round mark – usually of <i>kumkum</i> or sandalwood paste – applied in the centre of the forehead indicating one's Hindu affiliation
chakhdi	wooden footwear
chuno	lime powder used in making mortar

D

dakshini pagh	traditional southern Indian headgear
darbar	a regional ruler
dhandal	
dhol	a type of drum
dhun	Chanting of God's name.

E

ekadashi	special religious observance of fasting performed on the 11th day of the bright and dark halves of a lunar month
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G

ganjo	
guna	quality, innate nature

H

haveli	traditional mansion-like building, usually constructed of intricately carved wood
hukko	a pipe for smoking

J

jalebi	a sweet delicacy
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K

kalpa	the day and night of Brahma, the creator, which amounts to 8,640,000,000 human years
katha	spiritual discourses
khichdi	spiced boiled rice and lentil grain
kumkum	vermillion powder used for applying chandlo

M

mahant	head of a mandir or ashram
mama	mother's brother

motaiya	a sweet delicacy
mundia	a term used to insult
murti	image; idol
N	
nirgun	without <i>gunas</i> . Divine
P	
padharamani	Sadhus' visit to a devotee's house.
pagh	headgear
parshad	male renunciant in white robes
pitambar	yellow silken cloth garment
puri	small, flat and round fried pieces of wheat dough. Usually eaten with curried vegetables.
R	
rajas	one of the three <i>gunas</i> ; attributes: activity, restlessness, anger, violence, desire to satisfy the senses and extravagance
rajogun	quality of passion
rotla	a basic unleavened bread-like staple food of many parts of Gujarat, made generally of millet flour that is kneaded and patted into a flat, circular shape before being cooked on an earthen or metal hot plate
rotli	thin, soft, circular bread of wheat flour.
S	
sata	a sweet delicacy
samaiyo	festival
satsang	good company; spiritual association
satsangi	one who practices satsang
sattva	one of the three <i>gunas</i> ; attributes: clarity and purity of thought, excellence, mental poise.
sattvagun	quality of goodness

seva	spiritual service
shehnai	a musical instrument
shikharbaddh	a mandir in which the arti is performed five times daily
shraddh	obsequies
sigram	a decorated ox-cart
sud	the bright half of a month. So Kartik <i>sud</i> means the bright half of the month of Kartik'
T	
tamas	one of the three <i>gunas</i> ; attributes: inactivity, lethargy, darkness and ignorance
tamogun	the material mode of ignorance, characterised by ignorance, lethargy and anger.
thal	offering of food to God
tilak-chandlo	'U' shaped mark made with sandalwood paste and a round mark of kumkum in its centre; a hallmark of one's allegiance to the Swaminarayan Sampraday
trasa	a musical instrument
V	
vad	dark half of lunar month
vatu	discourses
Y	
yagna	a ritual sacrifice performed with the purpose of achieving a particular desire

