Bal Satsang

(Course Book-1)

Author

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Bal Satsang (Course Book-1)

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Inspiration

This book was published by the divine inspiration of His Holiness Sadguru Shastriji Swami Shree Ghanshyamprakashdasji, the founder of Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul Kandari; whose life is decorated by the virtues of saintliness, whose method of worship is pure and reigns supreme, who beholds the knowledge of the soul and the knowledge of the form of God as it is, and who is working night and day to help teach others about the supremacy of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.



Acknowledgement

Making a book takes time, effort, and man power. By the help of others one's effort and time can be efficiently used making man power an essential element in producing a book. It has taken a lot of effort for this course book to be prepared. It is only right to acknowledge all those who have helped in making this book a reality. First and foremost through whose inspiration everything comes to reality supreme godhead almighty Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Nevertheless, the one who has inspired me to write this book, the one who is god-realized and self-realized and possess the 30 attributes of sanitliness. Pujya Guruji. Nevertheless. the saints who have helped me with the development and translation process. Pujya Shastri Suvratvallabhdasji Swami, Pujya Shreejivallabhdasji Swami. Pujya Nishkamvallabhdasji Swami, Pujya Nilkanthvallabhdasji Swami. and finally Pujya Rushivallabhdasji Swami who helped with the grammar and proofing.

Moreover, devotees also played a role in completing this book. I would like to acknowledge Bishap Bhagat (IL), Prit Bhagat (GA), Pinak Bhagat (NJ) and Kashish Bhagat (TN) for all their time and effort. Also, Parth D. Bhagat (NJ) whose is a active member of Ghanshyam Bal Mandal and who has sponsored this book, I greatly acknowledge all his services and efforts. It is my humble honor to have such kinds of saints and devotees work beside myself to make this course book possible.

Jay Swaminarayan
The Author



In the Memory Of...



Pujya Yogivallabhdasji Swami

(March 28th, 1982 to February 13th, 2014)

Whose life was centered around Pujya Guruji's wishes and who possess the traits of saintliness, and whose character inspired thousands of devotees/non-devotees to live a God-centered life. We will always remember you Swamiji. Shower your virtues upon us.

Preface

A child's mind is comparable to a fertile field. Whatever you plant in it, it grows abundantly. The farmer can choose what he wants to grow in the rich soil. He can nurture beautiful roses, crop fresh fruits, and even vegetables. There is a similar situation with children. Whatever we plant in their minds, it will grow and flourish in the future.

The best possible time in which the foundation of moral character for a child can be established in childhood. Those who are engrained with spiritual values in their childhood grow up to be profound devotees. This course book is designed to mold each child into ideal devotee/citizen.

Importantly, for the molding and spiritual growth of the kids of the United States, our Pujya Guruji established Ghanshyam Bal Mandal. Since then the centers in New Jersey, Georgia, Illinois, Florida and Canada have actively started Ghanshyam Bal Mandal and regularly hold classes for the new growing generation of kids. Moreover the saints living at Loyadham Mandir-NJ have being working hard to mold the kids of Ghanshyam Bal Mandal. To install such moral fiber, a 30 chapter course outline has been organized. In each chapter, there are 3 primary sub sections, namely: 1. Memory Exercise, 2. Story Time, 3. Practical Development. The Memory Exercise section is designed to give each child, knowledge in the form of Vocabulary and Verse/Kirtan memorization with meaning. The Story Time section is designed to teach valuable morals to each child. Lastly the Practical Development section is designed to teach each child on how to practically live a life of a proper devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

In Conclusion, this Course book is a great way to mold and shape each child's social and spiritual life by the standards of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. I pray to Shreeji Maharaj and Pujya Guruji to shower their blessings on Parshad Ajit Bhagat for his effort and pray to give him strength and motivation to write new books in the future. Lastly, I anticipate that the readers of this book get strength to live a god-centered and healthy spiritual life.

Jay Swaminarayan
Shastri Suvratvallabhdasji Swami

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Shri Dhimanthbhai & Jayshreeben Patel

Loving sons

Depesh & Parth

(New Jersey)

Inspiration by Loving Parents:

Raojibhai & Sushilaben Patel

May They Earn the Blessings of Maharaj

&

Pujya Guruji



Index

Chapter 1

Memory Exercise: Verse 01
Story Time: The Hallmark of a Leader 02
Practical Development: Mandir (Temple) 04

Chapter 2

Memory Exercise: Verse 05
Story Time: Character Speaks Louder Than Words 06
Practical Development: Character 08

Chapter 3

Memory Exercise: Aarti - A 09
Story Time: The History of Aarti 10
Practical Development: Aarti 12

Chapter 4

Memory Exercise: Aarti - B 13
Story Time: Attributes Over Miracles 14
Practical Development:Mansi Puja (Mental Worship) 16

Chapter 5

Memory Exercise: Aarti - C 17
Story Time: Muktanand Swami's Divine Vision 19
Practical Development: Murti Puja (Idol Worship) 21

Chapter 6

Memory Exercise: Verse 22
Story Time: Sarva Karta 23
Practical Development: Tilak/Chandlo 25

Chapter 7

Memory Exercise: Verse 26
Story Time: The Brave Child 'Dahyo' 27
Practical Development: Kanthi 29

Chapter 8

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 1A 30
Story Time: The Arrival of Sahajanand Swami 31
Practical Development: Guru (Spiritual Master) 33

Chapter 9

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 1B 34
Story Time: Just Remember My Stomach 35
Practical Development: Mala 37

Chapter 10

Memory Exercise: Verse 38
Story Time: Beyond All Attachments 39
Practical Development: Prarthana (Prayer) 41

Chapter 11

Memory Exercise: Verse 42
Story Time: The Mahamantra 'Swaminarayan' 43
Practical Development: Mantra 45

Chapter 12

Memory Exercise: Verse 46
Story Time: Manakiya Chadiya Re 47
Practical Development: Kirtan (Devotional Hymns) 49

Chapter 13

Memory Exercise: Verse 50
Story Time: Rambai Purifies All 51
Practical Development: Tirth (Pilgrimage) 53

Chapter 14

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 2A 54
Story Time: Shuk Muni's Understanding 55
Practical Development: Shastras (Scriptures) 57

Chapter 15

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 2B 58
Story Time: Ladhiba of Bhuj 59
Practical Development: Niyam (Code of Conducts/Vows) 61

Chapter 16

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 2C 62
Story Time: Jivuba and Laduba's Effective Preaching 63
Practical Development: Katha (Spiritual Discourses) 65

Chapter 17

Memory Exercise: Verse 66
Story Time: All In One 67
Practical Development: Dhun (Chanting) 69

Chapter 18

Memory Exercise: Verse 70
Story Time: Supreme yet Humble 71
Practical Development: Pranam (To Bow) 73

Chapter 19

Memory Exercise: Verse 74
Story Time: Jhinabhai's Great Service 75
Practical Development: Seva (Service) 77

Chapter 20

Memory Exercise: Verse 78
Story Time: The Pain Behind Insulting 79
Practical Development: Ahimsa (Non - Violence) 81

Chapter 21

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 3A 82
Story Time: The Great Rajabhai 83
Practical Development: Pradakshina 85

Chapter 22

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 3B 86
Story Time: Abhaysingh of Lodhika 88
Practical Development: Ekadashi 91

Chapter 23

Memory Exercise: Verse 92
Story Time: Magniram to Adwaitanand Swami 93
Practical Development: Satsang (True Company) 95

Chapter 24

Memory Exercise: Verse 96
Story Time: Unshakable Faith 97
Practical Development: Dandvat (Prostration) 99

Chapter 25

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 4A 100
Story Time: Shreeji Maharaj's Glance 101
Practical Development: The Vedas (Ancient Scriptures) 103

Chapter 26

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 4B 104
Story Time: Mulji and Krushnaji 105
Practical Development: Goals 109

Chapter 27

Memory Exercise: Kirtan - 4C 110
Story Time: To See Good In All 111
Practical Development: Respect 112

Chapter 28

Memory Exercise: Verse 114
Story Time: Purity Of Heart 115
Practical Development: Gurukul 117

Chapter 29

Memory Exercise: Verse 118
Story Time: Quest For Water 119
Practical Development: Diet Purity 121

Chapter 30

Memory Exercise: Verse 122
Story Time: All - Knowing 123
Practical Development: Thal (Sanctified Food) 125

Chapter-1

Memory Exercise





Verse

Harike Dãs Hi Dãs Tin Ke Dãs Hoi Kara,
Chhad Kapat Karanã Nãsh Varatnã Shuddh Hoi Kara||

Meaning Become the servant of the servant of God and destroy the hypocrisy/dishonesty and make one's character pure.

Vocab

- Akshardham -Divine abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan
- Haribhagat -Devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan
- Atma - Soul

Shreeji Maharaj Says

By imbibing the virtues of a Sadhu, one's foundation in Satsang becomes solid. - Vachanamrut

Story Time



The Hallmark of a Leader

Sadguru Gunatitanand Swami was the mahant (spiritual head) of Junagadh Mandir for 40 years. In that time span, Swami made remarkable changes in the mandir and the surrounding public.

Once Gunatitanand Swami was sweeping the mandir grounds, and a mahant from a different religion came for darshan. He asked Swami "where is the mahant of this mandir?" Swami replied "please go and sit in the assembly hall, he will be there shortly." Then the mahant went and sat in the assembly hall. Soon after Swami finished sweeping, he washed his hands and feet and took his seat in the assembly hall. The mahant was astonished to see Swami and asked "Are you the mahant of this mandir? Because I just saw you sweeping the grounds outside. Gunatitanand Swami humbly replied "Here, one who does seva is the mahant."

The mahant observed Swami's appearance and lifestyle. Swami was wearing very coarse clothing and had very little essential items for living. Seeing this, the mahant was amazed to see such detachment even after possessing such a high post. Then Gunatitanand Swami explained to the mahant that Saints of Swaminarayan Bhagwan renounce all forms of wealth and women. Hearing this, the mahant compared the lifestyle he underwent. He said, "where I stay, people kill each



other to take over the head position". In this way, the mahant realized the true glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan Saints.

Moral: True leadership lies in a humble attitude.

Exercise:

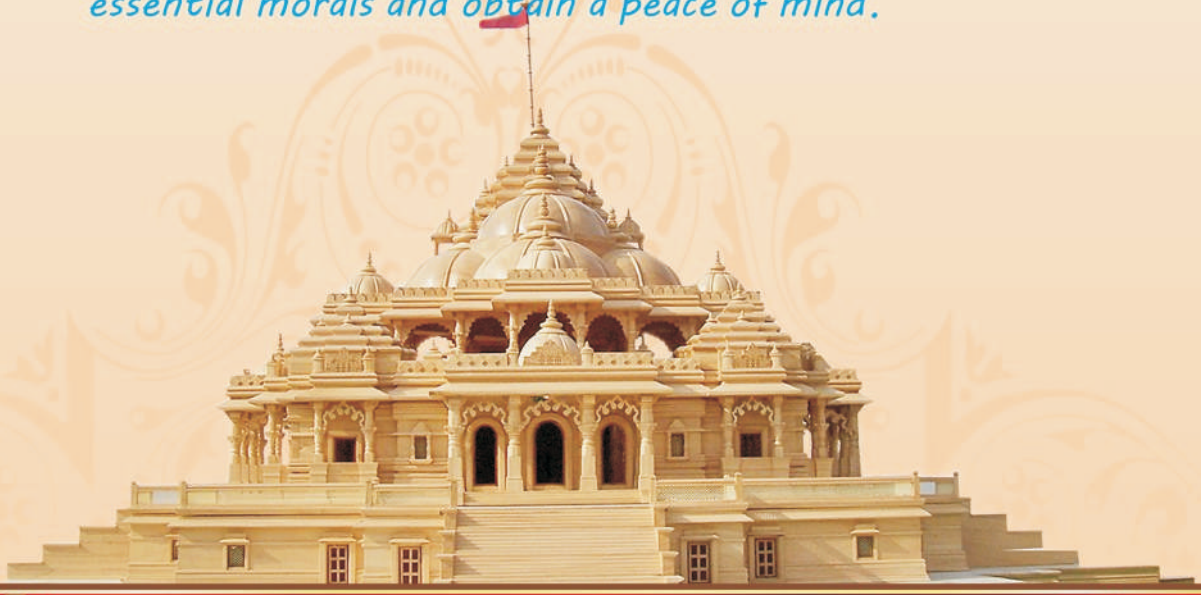
1. What was Gunatitanand Swami doing when the mahant came?
2. Why was the mahant so astonished to see Gunatitanand Swami take his seat in the assembly hall?
3. Name the two things Swaminarayan Saints renounce?



Practical Development

Mandir (Temple)

- Just like how we live in a home, temples are built for God and are considered as God's home.
- One of the 6 aims behind Shreeji Maharaj's manifestation on the Earth was to establish an ideal form for all to worship. The best place for this aim to be fulfilled was by making mandirs.
- To fulfill this aim and to spread the Swaminarayan religion, Bhagwan Swaminarayan established 6 grand temples.
  - Ahmedabad, Bhuj, Vadtal,
    Dholera, Junagadh, Gadhada
- The temple is a peaceful and pious place to worship God and listen to the divine incidents of God, his Saints and Devotees.
- The temple is a place to gain spiritual knowledge, learn essential morals and obtain a peace of mind.



Chapter-2

Memory Exercise





Verse

Kehse Ã Sant To Bahu Sārā Re, Kharā Kalyan Na Karnārā Re,
Etaloj Gun Koi Grehese Re, Te To Bhahm Mole Vās Leshe Re||

Meaning

If one understands this Saint (Ekantik God - Realized) to be very great and the one who can grant ultimate liberation, than by imbibing this virtue alone, one will reside in the divine abode of Akshardham.

Vocab

- Charnarvind - Bhagwan's divine lotus feet
- Darshan - Having the sight of God/Saints/Devotees
- Dharma - Path of righteousness, moral law combined with spiritual discipline that guides one's life.

Gunatitanand Swami Says

Speak truthfully beneficial to all and with affection, but do not speak with firmness.

Story Time



Character Speaks Louder Than Words

At one time Shreeji Maharaj was residing in Gadhada. He then called for Dayanand Swami. He told Swami to go to the village of Botad and preach to devotees and non-devotees. Hearing this, Swami humbly folded his hands and replied, "Maharaj, I have always been obedient to your words, but this command is very difficult for me to follow." Maharaj inquired about Swami's difficulties. Swami said, "I have no experience nor am I qualified to speak to crowds of people due to my lack of knowledge. I have not studied any scriptures in my life. So how will I be able to spread Satsang?" Then Maharaj told Swami to take Sankhyanand Swami with him. Sankhyanand

Swami also told Maharaj he was just as unqualified as Dayanand Swami. But today Shreeji Maharaj wanted to reveal the true glory of his Saints.

Shreeji Maharaj then explained to both of the Saints that, "It does matter if you are uneducated in the holy scriptures or if you don't have any experience of speaking in public; your pure and noble character will speak for you. Always stay firm in your vows and code of conducts, and serve all without any expectations; in result, Satsang will spread automatically."

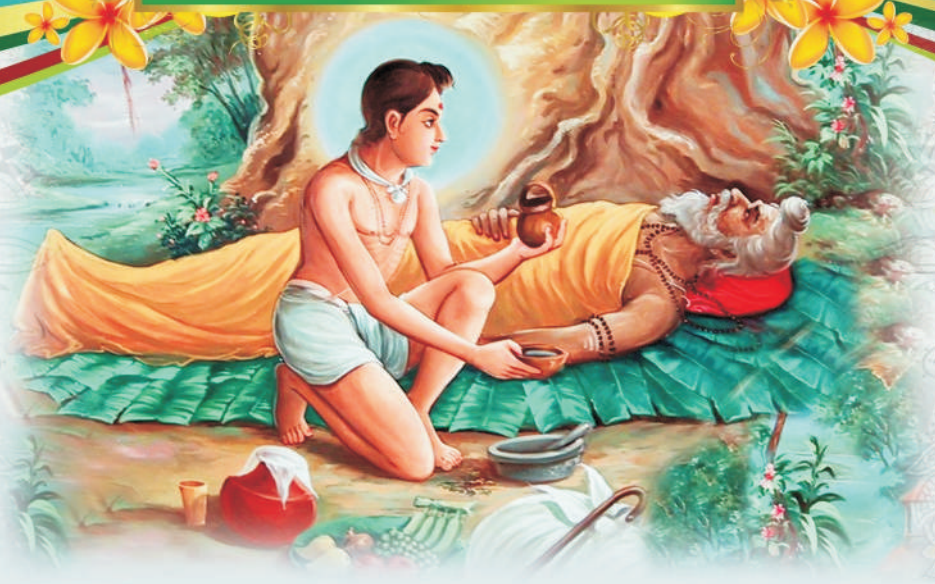
Having faith in the words of Shreeji Maharaj both sadhus went on to Botad to spread Satsang. Both the sadhus were tested to the limit by cruel people, but they stayed strict in their vows and lived in a detached manner. Due to this they were successful in making numerous people into devotees of Bhagwan Swaminarayan all because of their spotless pure character.

Moral: Character speaks louder than words.

Exercise:

1. What did Shreeji Maharaj command both the Saints to do?
2. How did Maharaj give strength to the Saints?
3. What was the final outcome?

Practical Development



Character

- The way one is on the inside can be shown through one's character.
- Our character represents who we are, and off our character others judge us as a good person or a bad person.

According to Bhagwan Swaminarayan, our character should have attributes of a devotee.

Attributes of a Devotee:

1. Humble
2. Respectful
3. Kind
4. Helpful
5. Enthusiastic

- Character is created by one's surroundings, therefore make sure to stay in the company of Saints.

Chapter-3

Memory Exercise

Aarti-A

Jay Sadguru Swãmi, Prabhu Jay Sadguru Swãmi,
Sahajãnand Dayãlu, Balvant Bahunãmi… Jay Sadguru Swami (1)

Meaning *All glories, All glories to my eternal master! Swami Sahajanand is very merciful, powerful, and has numerous. (1)*

Charansaroj Tamãrã, Vandu Kar Jodi, (2x)
Charane Shish Dharyãthi, Dukh Nãkhyã Todi… Jay Sadguru Swãmi (2)

Meaning *With folded hands, I pay my obeisance to the lotus feet of Shree Sahajanand Swami. One's all miseries are gone by simply surrendering to His lotus feet.(2)*

Vocab

- *Ekadashi – 11th day of both bright and dark halves of the month regarded as a day of fasting and abstinence*
- *Guru – Spiritual Master*
- *Maharaj – Refers to Bhagwan Swaminarayan*

Guruji Says

We all must speak the glory and greatness of Bhagwan and his devotees. All other talks are considered to be false.

Story Time



The History of Aarti

Sadguru Ramanand Swami was the guru (spiritual master) of Sahajanand Swami. He was also the guru of Muktanand Swami. At that time Ramanand Swami had appointed Sahajanand Swami as his successor in Jetpur, and advised all his followers and disciples to obey and act per his wish. Soon after Ramanand Swami passed away. Due to this tragedy Muktanand Swami became very sad and gloomy.

While in the village of Kalvani, Sahajanand Swami was residing there with his Saints and devotees. One early morning, Maharaj and his Saints were going for a bath in a nearby river. Muktanand Swami was following them close behind. He was thinking about guru Ramanand Swami and all of a sudden there was a flash of light. Muktanand Swami had a vision of Ramanand Swami. With tears in his eyes Muktanand Swami bowed to his guru.

Ramanand Swami asked. "Why are you so unhappy? I had told you that I was merely a drum-beater; the real star is



Sahajanand Swami. I had told you this before, why did you forget? Accept him as your guru and please him, then only shall I be pleased upon you." Muktanand Swami touched Ramanand Swami's feet and resolved to obey his command. In resolve. Swami's grief disappeared and his heart became overjoyed. Then after bathing in a nearby river. Muktanand Swami collected some flowers from a garden and made an extraordinary garland for Sahajanand Swami. He rushed to the ashram and arranged for the Aarti.

When Sahajanand Swami returned after bathing, Muktanand Swami requested him with folded hands to take the seat of his guru Ramanand Swami. Then swami placed the garland he had made around the neck of Sahajanand Swami. Thereafter for the very first time in the village of Kalvani Muktanand Swami performed the infamous Aarti.

"Jay Sadguru Swãmi Prabhu Jay Sadguru Swãmi, Sahajãnand Dayãlu, Balavant Bahunãmi... Jay Sadguru Swãmi"

Since that time onwards devotees of the Swaminarayan faith sing this hymn as a form of worship to Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Moral: One attains bliss in obeying the commands of one's spiritual master.

Exercise:

1. In which village was the Aarti composed for the very first time?
2. Why was Muktanand Swami very sad?
3. What confusion did Ramanand Swami clear up for Muktanand Swami?

Practical Development



Aarti

- Aarti is a symbol of welcoming Bhagwan.
- Only through light in the form of knowledge of God's glory can one welcome Bhagwan in one's Heart.
- The ancient temples of India. hardly had any daylight reach the inside where the temple shrine was located. So to have the darshan (vision) of Bhagwan. divas (candle wicks) were made. The Aarti explains the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.
- Sadguru Muktanand Swami composed the Aarti in the village of Kalvani on Kartik Sud 10, Ashadhi Samvat 1859 (November 5th 1802 CE).



Chapter-4

Memory Exercise

Aarti-B

Narãyãn Narbhrãtã Dwijkul Tanudhãri (2x),
Pãmar Patit Uddhãryã, Aganit Narnãri... Jay Sadguru Swãmi (3)

Meaning The Divine brothers Nar-Narayan Dev have taken birth in the Brahmin family as human beings. He is the liberator of the helpless and fallen souls, uncountable men and women. (3)

Nitya Nitya Nautam Lilã, Kartã Avinãshi (2x),
Adsath Tirath Charane, Koti Gayã Kãshi... Jay Sadguru Swãmi (4)

Meaning Lord Swaminarayan, who is Avinashi (Eternal) is daily performing new and pleasing pastimes. On His lotus feet reside all the pilgrimages, and they are more auspicious then millions of Gaya and Kashi (Holy Tirths) combined together. (4)

Vocab

- Prasad - Purified food distributed to devotees after offering usually to God
- Sarvopari - Highest of all (Supreme)
- Satpurush - A high ranked Saint who is Self realized/God realized

Shreeji Maharaj Says

Only God is like God; no one can become like him.
- Vachanamrut

Story Time



Attributes Over Miracles

Once Shreeji Maharaj was residing in the remote village of Mangrol. Maharaj decided to go for a bath in a nearby pond called Dudh Talavdi. Maharaj was accompanied by many Saints and devotees. As ritual, all the Saints and devotees started chanting the mahamantra "Swaminarayan" while bathing. Ramchandra Sheth had also joined Maharaj and the group of Saints and devotees for bathing. He looked around for a slab of stone to wash his clothes on but he did not find anything insight. Then at a distance he saw a big slab of stone weighing several tons. Ramchandra was not a follower of Shreeji Maharaj, he just had joined the group of devotees at the time to take a bath. So he decided to challenge Shreeji Maharaj.

Ramchandra Sheth said, "Everyone considers you to be the supreme lord of lords, well I have a challenge for you today. Lord Krishna lifted Mount Govardhan with one finger proving that he is God, so to prove that you are God lift that large slab of stone with one finger and put it on the bank of the pond."



Hearing this Shreeji Maharaj said "Go and touch the stone. Devotees like you who are associated with me shall make the stone fly to this place. Ramchandra Sheth then went and touched the stone as requested. Instantly, the stone flew and fell into the water at the bank of the pond. Everyone was astonished at what had just happen. Out of everyone, Ramchandra Sheth was star-gazed. Due to this incident, Ramchandra's faith in Shreeji Maharaj was established. Then everyone washed their clothes on the slab, and than returned to the village with Shreeji Maharaj.

Maharaj then said to Ramchandra Sheth, if by flying stones one can be called God, then Hanumanji lifted a mountain which was bigger than even Mount Govardhan. To grant others samadhi, to grant salvation to any soul, to show the divine abode of God, to transform even an evil person into a devotee are true attributes which only God can possess. Therefore, one should not believe that only those who perform miracles to be God, but God should be recognized by his divine attributes.

Moral: God is only recognized by his attributes, but not by his miracles.

Exercise:

1. What was the name of the pond where Shreeji Maharaj went to bath in?
2. What happened when Ramchandra Sheth touched the slab of stone?
3. What did Shreeji Maharaj teach Ramchandra Sheth?

Practical Development

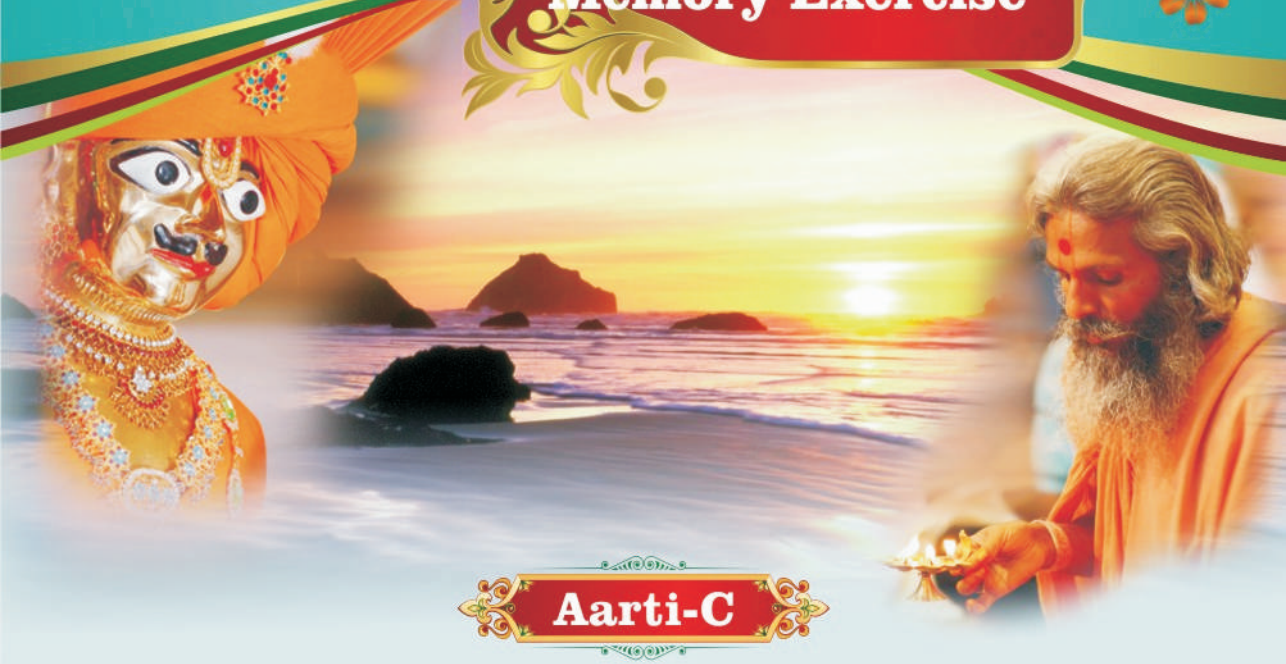


Mansi Puja (Mental Worship)

- Just as one performs physical puja of the idol of God by offering flowers, fruits, etc. Similarly offering puja of God mentally is called Mansi Puja (Mental Worship).
- By offering such kind of mental worship, one's affection for God increases.
- One should perform 5 Mansi Pujas a day. Morning (6 am), Afternoon (12 pm), Mid-Day (4 pm), Evening (7 pm), Night (9 pm).
- According to Vachanamrut Vadtal 5th chapter, just as one performs Mansi Puja of God, one should also do the Mansi Puja of an ideal bhakta (Pujya Guruji/Santo/HariBhakto) along with God.
- Gadhada Last Chapter 23rd of Vachanamrut shows us how to perform a proper Mansi Puja by the standard of Shreeji Maharaj himself.

Chapter-5

Memory Exercise



Aarti-C

Purushottam Pragatanu, Je Darshan Karshe (2x),
Kal Karmathi Chhuti, Kutumb Sahit Tarshe… Jay Sadguru Swãmi (5)

Meaning Whoever will have a glimpse of this Supreme Lord who is present amongst us today, will conquer over time and karma, and will cross over the ocean of misery (Maya) along with his whole family. (5)

Ãavasar Karunãnidhi, Karunã Bahu Kidhi (2x),
Muktãnand Kahe Mukti, Sugam Kari Siddhi… Jay Sadguru Swãmi (6)

Meaning Lord Swaminarayan, who is the Ocean of Mercy, has bestowed abundant mercy to his devotees. And due to that I, Muktanand Swami, declare that attaining liberation has become very easy. (6)

Jay Sadguru Swãmi, Prabhu Jay Sadguru Swãmi,
Sahajãnand Dayalu, Balvant Bahunãmi… Jay Sadguru Swãmi

Vocab

- *Yagna – Traditional/Vedic Sacrificial Ceremony*
- *Vivek – Ability to discriminate between the truth/untruth*
- *Vasana – A desire to indulge in materialistic pleasures*

Gunatitanand Swami Says

If one has love for God and his Sadhu, then one will be loved by everyone.



Story Time



Muktanand Swami's Divine Vision

At one time Shreeji Maharaj had organized a Shakotsav (Food Festival) in the village of Loya. On this occasion, many devotees had come from distance villages for Maharaj's darshan, having heard about his supremacy. At that time, Shreeji Maharaj was busy cooking vegetables· Shreeji Maharaj is God, yet his inclination to serve others was remarkable. He shows us that we should also imbibe the virtue of service in our life. As he was cooking, Maharaj's appearance seemed a little odd. Maharaj was perspiring, his clothes were all smeared with turmeric powder and he was only wearing a dhoti (Traditional Indian Garment). Seeing this, those devotees who had come for darshan were surprised to see Maharaj in such a casual manner and wondered, "Can God be so ordinary?"



So, seeing human attributes in Maharaj, the devotees started to turn back to leave without even meeting Shreeji Maharaj. Muktanand Swami witnessed the whole incident and stopped the group of devotees. Muktanand Swami understood how the devotees saw human attributes in Maharaj, so he took them to one side and started to preach about the human and divine actions of God. Swami talked about how God behaves like a human being when he is manifest on Earth for the sake of liberation of others. Swami explained that if Maharaj appeared the way he resides in his divine abode Akshardham then no one would be able to recognize his supremacy or personality, because the people of this Earth do not have the capacity to do so. Maharaj performs such kinds of incidents so ordinary people would develop affection for him and slowly recognize his divine personality.

With these words he reconciled the doubts in their minds and convinced them about the supremacy of Shreeji Maharaj.

Moral: No matter what human attributes God or his Saint show, they should be perceived to be divine.

Exercise:

1. What was the appearance of Shreeji Maharaj while he was cooking?
2. What happen when the devotees saw Maharaj in such an odd appearance?
3. What understanding did Muktanand Swami give to the devotees?

Practical Development



Murti Puja (Idol Worship)

- Murti means the form, figure or idol of God. The worship of such a form of God is called Murti Puja.
- The Murti is a great medium to expose one's love and feelings towards Bhagwan.
- The idol of God is served, adored, prayed and worshipped with full faith. Bhagwan accepts one's worship and fulfills our wishes and gives us redemption, at the end of our life.
- When one goes to a temple to have darshan of the Murti of God, one should not think it is a mere statue, but one should feel that the manifest form of God is in front of me.
- Serving the Murti is a very important element in Murti Puja. Ex: performing Thal, Abhishek, serving new Vagha (clothes for God)/ornaments

Chapter-6

Memory Exercise



હે ગુરુદેવ !
તમારા ગુણો મારામાં આવો...



Verse

Guru Ki Murti Kahe Dhyan Ko Mulã, Pujã GuruPad Kahe Amulã
Mantra Ko Mul Kahe Guru Ki Bãni, Mox Ko Mul GuruKrupã Kahe Gyani | |

Meaning

A true Guru is the root to meditate upon God, to perform the pujan of such a Guru is considered to be priceless, the Guru's speech is considered to be the mantra. The nectar of salvation is only possible by the grace of such a pious Guru.

Vocab

- Upasana - Philosophical understanding of the nature of God
- Nischay - Definite Decision
- Ekantik - One who possesses an elevated spiritual state and has the attributes of Dharma, Bhakti, Gnan, and Vairagya.

Guruji Says

We should all pray to Bhagwan daily, "Hey Bhagwan, if we forget you, please don't forget us because we are humans and you are God."

Story Time

Sarva Karta



Shreeji Maharaj used to send his Saints across the lands of India to spread Satsang. During their travels, Saints had to tolerate insults and slander. Yet, they wished for the well - being of their enemies and guided others on the path of God.



On one occasion, Brahmanand Swami and Muktanand Swami were travelling through Gujarat. While travelling they came across a wicked minded and jealous Saint. He did not like any kind of Saints, especially Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Saints. Nevertheless, the wicked Saint was strong and brutal, so over- powering both Brahmanand Swami and Muktanand Swami, he tied them up to a wooden pillar. The wicked Saint threatened both the Saints that he is going to cut off their ears and nose. While the Saint was sharpening his knife, Brahmanand Swami said to Muktanand Swami that, "If he cuts off our ears and nose, people will think that we have done something wrong, due to that we have recieved this kind of punishment." Calm and



stable Muktanand Swami explained to Brahmanand Swami, "Everything happens by the will of God. He is Sarva Karta", with this thought they awaited their fate. In the meantime a devotee by the name of Raghav Jat was passing by and saw the two Saints tied up to a pillar. He saw the worried look on the faces of the two Saints and asked the wicked Saint, "What are you doing?" The wicked Saint told his whole plan to Raghav Jat thinking that he would assist or at least encourage his idea.

Hearing the cruel intentions of the wicked Saint, Raghav Jat became furious. He threatened the wicked Saint to let the innocent Saints go or else. Seeing the strong and powerful body of Raghav Jat, the wicked Saint became terrified and ran away. Then Muktanand Swami and Brahmanand Swami blessed Raghav Jat seeing his loyalty.

Moral: Remain patient and believe God to be Sarva Karta (All - Doer) even in adverse circumstances and hardships.

Exercise:

1. Seeing Brahmanand Swami and Muktanand Swami, what did the wicked Saint do?
2. What threat did the wicked Saint make?
3. What understanding did Muktanand Swami give Brahmanand Swami?

Practical Development



Tilak/Chandlo

- All religions have a symbol that represents it. Just like how each country has a flag and by seeing that flag one can identify that particular country likewise the Tilak/Chandlo is the holy symbol of the Swaminarayan Sect.
- The Tilak represents God and the Chandlo represents the devotee of God.
- There are four particular places for male devotees to do the Tilak/ Chandlo.
  1. Forehead
  2. Chest
  3. Right Arm
  4. Left Arm
- Female devotee only put a Chandlo on the forehead.
- The Tilak/Chandlo signifies daasatva (servitude). Through one's humble nature, God becomes pleased.

Chapter-7

Memory Exercise





Verse

Sant Devat Hari Hãth Me Hãthã, Din Ho Charan Me Nãme Mãthã;
Sant Kahe Soi Tese Karanã, Pãp Budhhi Ko Sang Paraharanã ||

Meaning Such a spritual aspirant who becomes a servant of a true Saint, such a Saint takes the hand of that spiritual aspirant and places it in the hands of God. Discard one's negative intellgence and do as the commands of the true Saint.

Vocab

- Avatar - Incarnation
- Vairagya - Detachment; A strong dislike generally for the world and it's false pleasures
- Bhakti - Affection/Devotion for God

Shreeji Maharaj Says

All my followers shall always lead their lives with care in conformity with the precepts of this Shikshapatri but shall never act according to their whims. - Shikshapatri



Story Time

The Brave Child 'Dahyo'

Shreeji Maharaj used to send his groups of Saints from village to village encouraging people to follow the moral path prescribed by Shreeji Maharaj. Once in the district of Jamnagar. a farmer's young son named Dahyo, impressed by the Saints sincerity accepted the vows of Satsang. He started to follow the vows of a proper devotee. Dahyo started to pray to God every day, he offered puja, applied a tilak chandlo to his forehead and daily visited the mandir for prayers. Although the saints warned Dahyo that his family and relatives will discourage him for becoming a devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Hearing this Dahyo replied, " I will never forsake Bhagwan Swaminarayan or his saints no matter what." The saints became pleased upon Dahyo's shire bold words and blessed him.

Then Dahyo's father and relatives started to see how Dahyo did puja, had a kanthi and did tilak-chandlo and thought this was not suitable for such a young boy. Dahyo's father lectured Dahyo that "we are Vaishnav's(Followers of Lord Vishnu) so this kind of behavior is not proper. So wipe your tilak-chandlo off and break your kanthi or else you will see my dark side." Dahyo replied bravely, "Do what you want but I will never forsake Bhagwan Swaminarayan or the vows of Satsang." Dahyo's father knew that his son's faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan was very firmly installed by the saints, so figured the best way to shatter his faith was by physical punishment. He commanded his servant to take Dahyo to his farm, tie his legs with a rope and throw him into the well. He commanded his servant to dip him in and out of the well until he agrees to break his kanthi and forsake Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The servant toke



Dahyo to the farm and started the torment. Dahyo was brutally assaulted, yet he boldly said, "Just like how Bhagwan saved Prahlad he will also save me." Right there and then luminous light filled the farm and Bhagwan Swaminarayan appeared and told the servant to let go of Dahyo. Bhagwan embraced Dhayo and blessed him and told him to keep being brave and following the vows of satsang.

Then the servant brought Dahyo back home and told his father about the whole incident. Hearing this his father thought to himself that, "I must try harder to break this boy's faith." So he decided to lock Dahyo in a room without giving him any food or water until he gives up his faith. For 3 long days Dahyo remained in the room without any food or water and remembered Bhagwan Swaminarayan. On the midnight of the 3rd day Bhagwan appeared in the room. Bhagwan feed Dahyo and gave him water. Then he released Dahyo from the room and told him to Gadhada. He initiated him as a saint and told the assembly that this boy is like Prahlad. He remained strong in his resolve, so his faith and bravery are comparable to Prahlad. Bhagwan Swaminarayan kept him in his service from then on.

Moral: We should never give up our faith or devotion towards God, whether he protects us or not. That is the hallmark of a true devotee.

Exercise:

1. What did Dahyo start to do after accepting the vows of Satsang given by the Saints?
2. What was the servant commanded to do by Dahyo's father?
3. What happend on the 3rd day in the room?

Practical Development



Kanthi

- Double stranded necklace made from miniature wooden beads that a devotee of God wears around the neck is called a Kanthi.
- Kanthi is a symbol of surrenderance to Bhagwan. 1st strand represent God/ 2nd strand represent ourself (Atma).

Vartman Ritual

- A newborn or newcomer is initiated into the Satsang by a simple ritual known as Vartman.
- Process: Pure water is held in the right palm. A mantra is then spoken by the initiator, usually a Saint. The mantra is repeated by the newcomer. The water is poured on the ground and the Kanthi is adorned by the newcomer. By accepting the refuge of God, the person is freed from sins of all previous births.

Chapter-8

Memory Exercise



Kirtan-1A

Sant Param Hitkari, Jagat Mãhi, Sant Param Hitkari (1)

Meaning *Saints are the most beneficial in this universe. (1)*

Prabhupad Pragat Karãvat Priti, Bharam Mitãvat Bhãri…
Jagat Mãhi, Sant Param Hitkari (2)

Meaning *Saints enlightens love towards the manifest form of God and removes all religious hypocrisy. (2)*

Vocab

- *Vachanamrut – Compilation of 262 spiritual discourses delivered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan*
- *Satya – Truth; permanent; imperishable and unchanging*
- *Maya – 'illusion', Instrument of God*

Gunatitanand Swami Says

If one becomes sincere and attaches oneself to the Sadhu, then the enemies in the form of vicious natures are destroyed and one becomes united with God.

Story Time



The Arrival of Sahajanand Swami

It was on the day of October 28th 1800 CE, Sadguru Ramanand Swami gave diksha (initiation) to Nilkanth Varni in the village of Piplana and named him Sahajanand Swami. Sahajanand was only 19 years old, but had understanding beyond comprehension.

After a year had past Ramanand Swami thought "who should succeed me as the head of the fellowship?" Muktanand Swami and other senior Saints replied, "Sahajanand Swami should be appointed as the head." After hearing this, Sahajanand Swami at first refused, because of his strong nature of renunciation, but due to Ramanand Swami's encouragement, Sahajanand Swami agreed and showed that the words of one's spiritual master should always be obeyed by the disciple. So the arrangements for appointing a new successor were made in the village of Jetpur. Soon the historic day had arrived. Ramanand Swami took the hand of Sahajanand Swami, who was 20 years old, and made him sit on



his seat, and then performed the proper rituals to finalize the ceremony. Ramanand Swami told all to obey the commands of Sahajanand Swami.

Then Ramanand Swami told Sahajanand Swami to ask for a boon. On hearing this generous offer Sahajanand Swami asked for 2 boons. The first boon Sahajanand Swami asked for was, "If your devotees are destined to suffer the pain of one scorpion sting, may the pain of millions and millions of stings befall upon each and every pore of my body, but no pain should be caused to your devotee. The second boon is no devotee should suffer from the lack of food or clothing." Sahajanand Swami was granted both of these boons by Ramanand Swami. Everyone was pleased by this notion. Even today we see that these two boons are still in effect for devotees of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Moral: A selfless compassionate nature wins the heart of all.

Exercise:

1. In which village did Sadguru Ramanand Swami give Nilkanth Varni diksha (initiation)?
2. What position did Ramanand Swami give Sahajanand Swami?
3. Name the 2 boons Ramanand Swami granted Sahajanand Swami?

Practical Development

Guru (Spiritual Master)



- 'Gu' means darkness/'Ru' means light
- A Guru is someone who removes darkness in the form of ignorance, and replaces it with light in the form of truth.
- The Guru is the gateway through which one can reach/attain god.
- Just like one has a teacher in academic education, in the same way the teacher in spiritual education is called a Guru.
- When one surrenders and takes refuge under a God-realized Guru, the Guru protects one from maya and guides one to the divine abode of Akshardham.

Our Pujya Guruji

- Pujya Guruji's full name is: Param Pujya Sadguru Shastri Shree Ghanshyamprakashdasji Swami.
- Pujya Guruji's birthday is on July 26th 1958.
- Pujya Guruji's birthplace is located in a remote village by the name of Vedavadar in Gujarat, India.
- Pujya Guruji renounced his home to become a Saint at the age of 16.
- Pujya Guruji has scholarly education in the language of Sanskrit therefore has the title of Shastri.

Chapter-9

Memory Exercise

Kirtan-1B

Paramkrupãlu Sakal Jivan Par, Harisam Sab Dukhhari…
Jagat Mãhi, Sant Param Hitkari (3)

Meaning Such a Saint is compassionate on all the souls, removes miseries like that of God. (3)

Trigunãtit Firat Tanu Tyãgi, Rit Jagatse Nyãri… Jagat Mãhi, Sant Param Hitkari (4)

Meaning Such a Saint is Trigunatit (Beyond the 3 gunas: Raj, Tam, Satva) who advocates customs entirely different in this world. (4)

Brahmãnand Kahe Santki Sobat, Milat Hai Pragat Murãri…
Jagat Mãhi, Sant Param Hitkari (5)

Meaning Brahmanand (Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Saint) says by associating with such a Saint one can attain a God. (5)

Vocab

- Satsang - Company of the true (Ekantik Satpurush)
- Panchvishays - The five types of objects in which the Jiva indulges via the indriyas - (Sights, Sounds, Smells, Tastes, Touch)
- Mukta - Liberated Soul

Guruji Says

Who are the true relatives of the Atma (Soul)? Bhagwan and Bhagwan's true Saint.

Story Time

Just Remember My Stomach



Brahmanand Swami and his Sant mandal (group) were on their way to Vadtal. They were crossing the region of Bhal which was dry and arid, and all the Saints had not eaten for 2 long days. On the 3rd day they came across a farm where they met a small boy cutting wheat. After seeing the Saints the boy kindly offered the Saints some water and grains. The Saints politely accepted his offer, and than all the Saints took their meal.

Brahmanand Swami and his Sant mandal became very happy upon the boy. Brahmanand Swami called the boy, and told him that the supreme lord himself has manifested on this Earth and his name is Swaminarayan. Swami said "I want you to chant this name from now on. In result you will become happy in this world and beyond."

Hearing this, the boy replied, "I cannot remember that name, it is too long." Then Brahmanand Swami turned around and told his Saints that, this boy has fed us, so we should wish



the best for his soul." The Saints agreed and replied, "You are a great Saint, so by your one thought this boy's liberation can be granted." Then Swami turned back around and asked the boy, "Will you be able to remember my stomach?" The boy replied, "Yes of course Swami it is like a big watermelon." Swami told the boy, "Just remember my stomach all your life, and at the end Shreeji Maharaj will come and take you to his divine abode Akshardham." After giving this blessing, Swami departed with his group of Saints. The boy remembered Swami's stomach all his life, and at the end of his life Shreeji Maharaj and Swami came and took him to Akshardham.

Moral: Merely by following and having faith in the words of a great Saint one can attain God.

Exercise:

1. Which two things did the boy offer to the Saints?
2. What did Brahmanand Swami ask the boy to remember the 2nd time?
3. What happened at the end of the boy's life?

Practical Development



Mala

- What is Mala?
  Mala is a rosary or a strand of wooden beads.
- The Mala contains 108 beads.
- By spinning the Mala one should chant the mahamantra Swaminarayan.
- The benefits of doing Mala are tremendous
  1. By doing Mala our relationship/bond with God becomes stronger
  2. Purifies one's mind/soul
  3. Removes tension/misery in our life
- Procedure: The Mala should be spun with the right hand only. It should be kept on the middle part of the middle finger. Our index finger should not touch the Mala and should be kept straight. While rolling each bead with the thumb, one should chant 'Swaminarayan'.

Chapter-10

Memory Exercise





Verse

Evã Sant Sadã Subh Mati, Jakta Dosh Nahi Jemã Rati,
Sahune Ãpe Hit Upadesh, Evã Sant Ne Nãmu Hu Shish||

Meaning Such a Saint who has pure intentions, and who does not possess any vicious natures and provides beneficial advice to all, such a Saint I bow down to with great reverence.

Vocab

- Shikshapatri - 212 verse book which contains Code of Conducts for devotees to follow written by Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself
- Kusangi - A person who is evil natured
- Diksha - Initiation

Shreeji Maharaj Says

When one attains the grace of God, one becomes an ekantik bhakta. - Vachanamrut



Story Time

Beyond All Attachments

There was a devotee of Shreeji Maharaj by the name of Lalji Suthar. He was from the village Shekhpat. Maharaj once visited the home of Lalji and expressed his intention of crossing Kutch (desert region) to reach the renowned city of Bhuj. Lalji knew the way, so he volunteered to be Shreeji Maharaj's guide. The conditions of the arid desert were hard to bear. Shreeji Maharaj tested Lalji. Shreeji Maharaj made him give away the food he had brought with them to a beggar, the water they had to another person, and the money they had to a thief. He was left without anything but his clothes.

After a long journey, Lalji arrived with Maharaj at the outskirts of the village of Adhoi. Maharaj continued testing Lalji and commanded him to go beg for food so they could eat. Lalji then told Maharaj how his father-in-law lived in the village and how everyone knew him. He asked Maharaj how he could beg for food in such conditions. So then Maharaj thought of a plan. Maharaj thought of disguising Lalji, so no one would be able to recognize him. Maharaj's plan was to shave his head and beard and to put on saffron clothes, so that no one would be able to recognize him. Lalji understood Maharaj's line of thought. Immediately, Lalji agreed to renounce the material world and become a Saint.

As a new Saint, he went directly to the home of his father-in-law to beg for food, as instructed by Maharaj. His



wife opened the door and instantly recognized him. She tried to persuade him to return back home. At last, when nothing else worked, she called her two small children, so that by seeing them, Lalji's mind would waver. Even that failed! Lalji had passed such a difficult test to please Shreeji Maharaj. When he returned back to Maharaj on the outskirts of the village, Maharaj was pleased seeing his great effort and non-attachment. Seeing this, Maharaj said, "You have truly renounced your kul (family) and have become nish-kul (beyond family bondages). Therefore, your name should be Nishkulanand Swami. Swami is known to be the idol of vairagya (non-attachment).

Moral: There will always be difficult tests in our life, but to have faith in God is the best way to pass these tests.

Exercise:

1) Why did Shreeji Maharaj tell Lalji to come with him to Bhuj?
2) What 3 things did Maharaj make Lalji give away while crossing the desert?
3) Where did Shreeji Maharaj make Lalji go to beg for food?

Practical Development

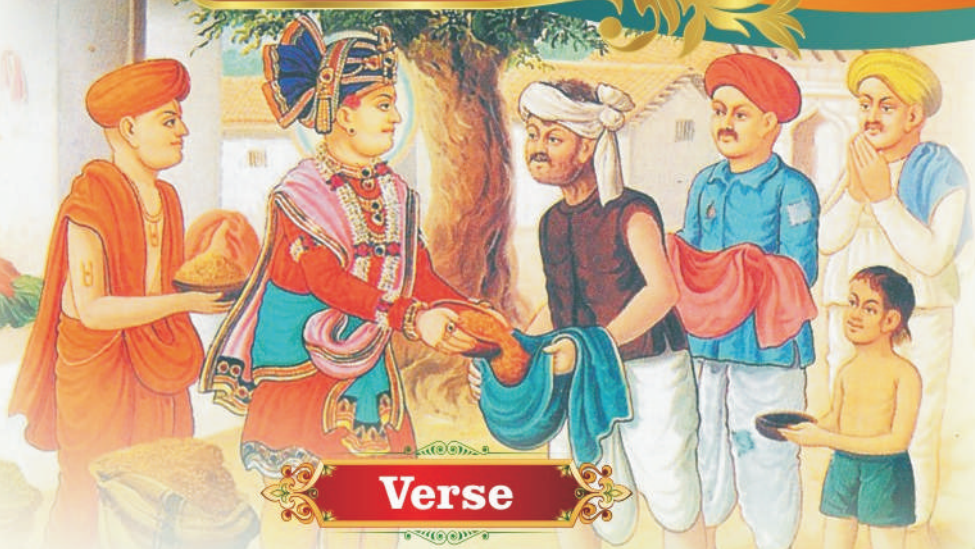


Prarthana (Prayer)

- Prarthana or prayer simply is a humble request or thanksgiving to God. Through Prarthana one can establish a connecting link with God.
- Prayer is to the soul what breathing is to the body.
- What should we pray to God for?
  - We should pray for good virtues, intellect, wisdom, company of his Saints and devotees.
- Procedure: Sitting in a indian style procedure, one should close one's eyes, fold one's hand, and concentrate on the idol of God and pray with a pure heart and clear conscience.

Chapter-11

Memory Exercise



Verse

Sukh Dukh Āve Sarve Bhedu, Temā Rākhajo Sthir Mati,
Jādavish Mārā Janane, Vadi Karish Jatan Ati||

Meaning When one encounters misery/hardship, in such a time, keep a stable mind, I (God) will take care of my devotees without failure.

Vocab

- Lila - Divine action of Bhagwan and his Sadhu
- Punya - Spiritual Merit
- Sadhana - Spiritual Endeavour (Effort)

Gunatitanand Swami Says

There is no mantra more powerful than the Swaminarayan mantra. It makes even the poison of a black cobra ineffective and dispels the desire for material pleasures.

Story Time

The Mahamantra 'Swaminarayan'

On December 17th 1801 CE Ramanand Swami (Sahajanand Swami's Guru) passed away in the village of Fareni. All his disciples lamented the loss. Sahajanand Swami and Muktanand Swami performed all the post ritual ceremonies. On the 13th day after Ramanand Swami passed away, a Brahmin named Shitaldas came to the ashram. Shitaldas was in search of a guru. He had heard Ramanand Swami was a great guru. but he was disappointed to hear that Pujya Swami had passed away. He started lamenting his fate. He decided to return home. Then someone told Shitaldas that "Sahajanand Swami is in the place of Ramanand Swami. Why don't you go and see him?"

Shitaldas went to see Sahajanand Swami. At that time Sahajanand Swami was only twenty years of age. Shitaldas thought to himself "Sahajanand is a mere teenager, what knowledge can he give me to attain God?" Then as he was about to leave, Sahajanand Swami remarked, "why are you in such a hurry to leave?" Shitaldas explained his situation and how he was in search of Ramanand Swami, but soon after found out he had passed away. Due to his morality breaking he had given up and was headed back home. Sahajanand Swami then said "I will arrange for the darshan of Ramanand Swami, so just stay one more day."

The next day Shitaldas eagerly came and sat in the front of Sahajanand Swami waiting for his desire to have the darshan of Ramanand Swami. Sahajanand Swami told Shitaldas "I am going to give you a mantra today. The mantra is 'Swaminarayan' start chanting Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan,





Swaminarayan." Nobody had heard of this mantra before. It was completely new. it was the first time that it had manifested on Earth. Shitaldas followed Sahajanand Swami's instruction and started chanting the mantra.

Soon he forgot where he was. He even forgot his surroundings and who he was. He had entered into a deep trance. In the trance he saw the divine abode of Akshardham. He saw the very same Sahajanand Swami seated on a golden throne in the center of countless muktos (liberated souls). Amongst them he saw Ramanand Swami worshipping Sahajanand Swami. Ramanand Swami told Shitaldas that this Sahajanand Swami is the lord of lords and the cause of all. Then soon after when Shitaldas came out from the trance he narrated to the mass assembly what he had just seen in the divine adobe. He told everyone how he had met Ramanand Swami and what he had told him about this Sahajanand Swami. Everyone was amazed. Everyone realized that Sahajanand Swami was not only God but the Supreme Lord himself. Shitaldas then immediately fell at the feet of Sahajanand Swami and pleaded to him to make him his Saint. Sahajanand Swami then initiated Shitaldas as his Saint and named him Vyapkanand swami. This was the very first Saint Shreeji Maharaj initiated in the Swaminarayan fellowship.

Moral: Keeping faith in God can only brighten one's future.

Exercise:

1. On which date did Ramanand Swami pass away?
2. What mantra was Shitaldas given to chant?
3. What did Ramanand Swami tell Shitaldas in Akshardham?

Practical Development



Mantra

- Mantra - Constant thinking or reflection on a word or phrase which uplifts.
- When someone repeatedly thinks of something in one's mind, that thought will take form.
- By chanting the Mantra with effort and faith God would manifest before one.
- Looking from a spiritual perspective to transcend (become beyond) maya (illusion) a mantra is needed.
- As followers of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, we chant the Mahamantra Swaminarayan.
- There are 3 benefits in chanting the mantra 'Swaminarayan'.
  1. Bhagwan becomes pleased upon the devotee
  2. Bhagwan fulfills any pious (Holy) wish of the devotee
  3. It is a way to purify one's mind, body and soul

Chapter-12

Memory Exercise



Verse

Sant Chintãmani Pãras Jese, Kalpataru Ru Kãmdhenu Ese,
Aur Hi Ridhh Sidhh Kã Kãmã, Sant Mile Jab Sukhadhamã||

Meaning

A true holy Saint is like a Chintamani (Philosopher Stone), Kalpataru (Wish Fulfilling Tree), Parasmani (Magical gem that turns iron into gold), and Kaamdhenu (Holy Cow). Such a Saint is ocean of happiness, then why would there be need for any Riddhi/Siddhi (Powers/Achievement).

Vocab

- Sampraday - A tradition handed down from a founder through successive spiritual Gurus / spiritual sect
- Achara - Code of Conduct
- Atmabuddhi - Intense Affection

Guruji Says

If one stays as a servant of Bhagwan's true Saint, then one will attain Bhagwan.



Story Time

Manakiye Chadiya Re

Shreeji Maharaj once decided to go to Vadtal from Gadhada. Maharaj wanted to celebrate Ramnavami with the devotees of Vadtal and other neighboring villages because it was their wish for a long time. At that time Laduba and Jivuba resided in Gadhada with Maharaj and his devotees. Due to their immense affection for Maharaj, when they found out Maharaj was going to Vadtal to celebrate Ramnavami they didn't agree with the idea. They couldn't bear to be separated from Maharaj.

Shreeji Maharaj knew that Laduba and Jivuba had great affection for him and due to this they would not allow him to leave Gadhada. So Maharaj quickly set out to Vadtal on his horse 'Manki' with other Saints and devotees. At that time Laduba and Jivuba were somewhere else in the court yard, so they didn't see Maharaj leaving the premises. Soon after Laduba and Jivuba both went to have darshan of Maharaj, but to their surprise he was gone so they sat in meditation and tied their vrutti (vision) on Manki. Due to this Manki could not move any further. Maharaj realized that Laduba and Jivuba had found out, so they tied their vrutti on Manki. Then Maharaj returned to Dada Khachar's darbar in Gadhada and explained to the sisters that he would return from Vadtal as soon as the event was over. Finally Laduba and Jivuba gave Maharaj permission to go to Vadtal for the celebration.



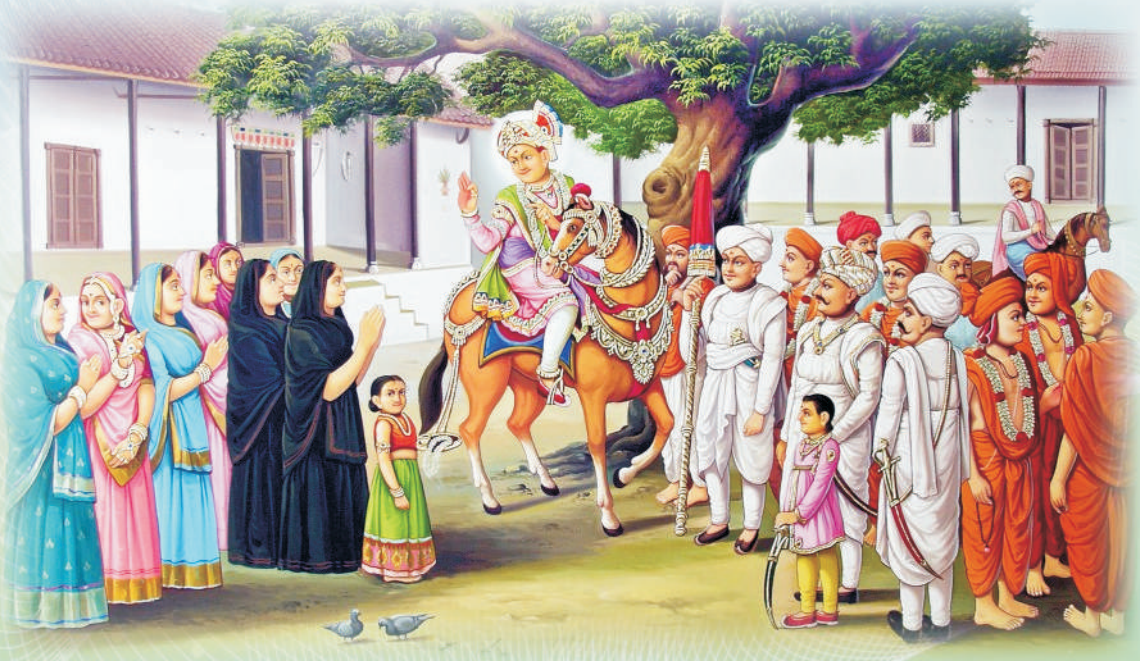
As Premanand Swami was observing this whole incident, he composed the kirtan:

"Manakiye Chadiya Re Mohan Vanmadi, Shobhe Rudi Karama Lagama Rupadi... Manakiye Chadiya Re Mohan Vanmadi."

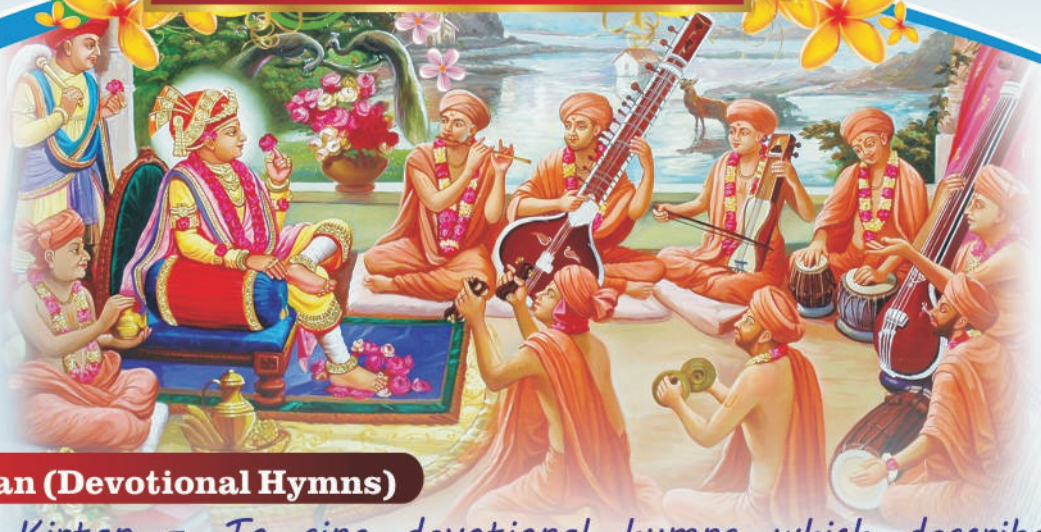
Moral: Great affection for God can bind him to our hearts.

Exercise:

1. Why did Shreeji Maharaj want to go to Vadtal?
2. How did Laduba and Jivuba stop Maharaj from going to Vadtal?
3. What kirtan did Premanand Swami compose while witnessing this incident?



Practical Development



Kirtan (Devotional Hymns)

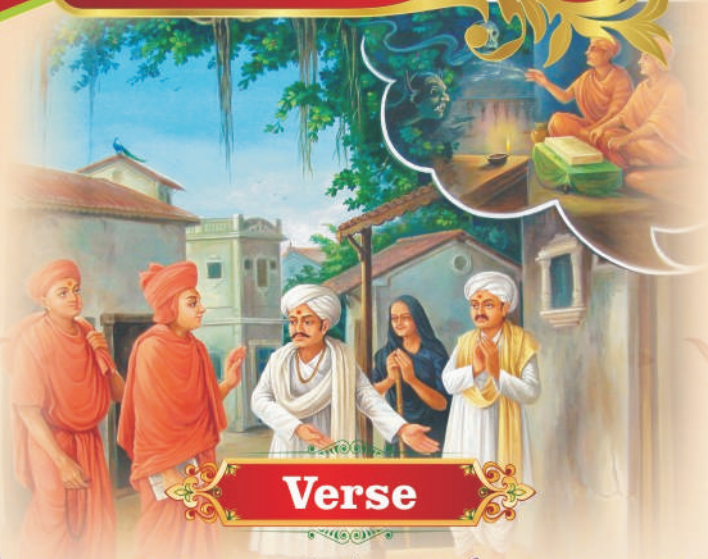
- Kirtan - To sing devotional hymns which describe Bhagwan's attire, ornaments, divine personality or his supreme glory and greatness.
- Out of the 9 types of devotion, Kirtan Bhakti is the easiest way to develop affection for God.
- One necessity: There are many people in his world who sing and play instruments without remembering God; but they do not attain peace of mind. Therefore one should remember God while singing his hymns.
- By listening/singing the devotional hymns of Nand Santo one can experience the divine bliss/presence of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Note: Nand Santo are Saints that were present in the time of Shreeji Maharaj 230 years ago. We should sing kirtans composed by them.

- Example: Muktanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami, Premanand Swami, Devanandswami

Chapter-13

Memory Exercise



Verse

Sant Ke Charan Kari Pratãpã, Tirth Anant Hot Nishpãpã,
Tirtha Sanmukh Sant Chalat Jabahu, Sanmukh Tirth Ãvat Tabahu||

Meaning

The rapport of a true Saint is profusely blissful like an pilgrimage, which transforms a sinful disciple to a pious soul.

Such a true and pious Saint is like a moving pilgrimage, each and every foot steps he takes embarks a new pilgrimage.

Vocab

- Avatari – The Supreme Lord who is the cause of all Incarnations
- Das – Servant of God
- Divya – Divine

Shreeji Maharaj Says

My words are my personified form· – Shikshapatri

Story Time

Rambai Purifies All

A Brahmin woman by the name of Rambai lived in a village called Kathlal. She had firm faith and deep devotion towards Shreeji Maharaj. One day, she was drawing water from the town well and Shreeji Maharaj with his group of Saints arrived there. Maharaj was passing through the outskirts of the village, so Rambai approached Maharaj and asked him to sanctify her home. She told Maharaj that his holy presense in the village would inspire many people to join the Satsang fellowship.



Shreeji Maharaj was in a hurry to reach Vadtal with his group of Saints, because of an upcoming festival. So Maharaj told her it would not be possible this time, but he will come in the future. Hearing this, Rambai did not argue. An ideal devotee should always comply with the wishes of the Lord. Rambai was an ideal devotee of Shreeji Maharaj. Instead of bringing Shreeji Maharaj to her village, she brought the village to Shreeji Maharaj. She put down



the waterpot that she had filled from the well and offered water to Shreeji Maharaj and his Saints with great affection. Then she requested Maharaj to dip his feet into the waterpot. Shreeji Maharaj asked, "What will you do with this water?" Rambai replied, "I will drink a little bit and pour the remaining water into the village well. There are no devotees in the village, but whoever knowingly or unknowingly drinks water from this well will become a devotee and worship you."

Knowing her pure intentions, Shreeji Maharaj complied with her wishes and dipped his lotus feet into the waterpot. Then he left for Vadtal with his group of Saints. Rambai's joy had no bounds. She drank some of the water and then poured the remaining water into the public well. Even today, the residents of the village who drink the water from this well become devotees of Shreeji Maharaj. Shreeji Maharaj has inspired many women devotees who did not seek material wealth or pleasure but prayed for the happiness of all.

Moral: A true devotee of God wishes for the well-being of all.

Exercise:

1) Where was Shreeji Maharaj going with his group of Saints?
2) What did Rambai request Maharaj to do to make the village people into devotees?
3) What is the name of the village Rambai lived in?

Practical Development

Tirth (Pilgrimage)



- Place of Pilgrimage (Tirth) - A place of pilgrimage which redeems one from sins and other wrong doings.
- Atmosphere is pure/divine
- By visiting one experiences peace/comfort
- Rivers/Lakes/specified area of land (i.e. village) can be considered to be Tirths

3 Types of Tirths

1. Nitya Tirth: Certain places which have been revered as tirths since time of creation

   Example: Mt. Kailash, Mansarovar Lake, Ganga River

2. Bhagavadiya Tirth: Places where the avatars of God incarnated, or performed divine incidents with devotees

   Example: Chhapaiya, Gadhada, Vadtal

3. Sant Tirth: All the places a God - Realized Saint visits become holy and is regarded as a tirth

   Example: Birth place of such a Saint, where such a Saint leaves the mortal body, all other areas visited

Chapter-14

Memory Exercise



Kirtan-2A

Hãre Hari Krushna Haiyã No Mãre Hãr Chhe Ji Ho,
Joi Ne Jivu Chhu Sundar Murti Re

Meaning Lord Hari Krushna ! You are the garland of my heart; I am living, by looking at your enchanting divine form.

Hãre Mãrã Nenã Tano Shangar Chhe Ji Ho,
Adago Na Melu Have Ur Thi Re

Meaning Lord ! You are the lavish gem of my eyes and would never want to keep you away from my heart.

Vocab

- Nirmani - Humble
- Nishkam - Absolute Celibacy
- Parampara - Tradition or Succession of Guru's

Gunatitanand Swami Says

The mind can never be won over by force but can be won over by technique.

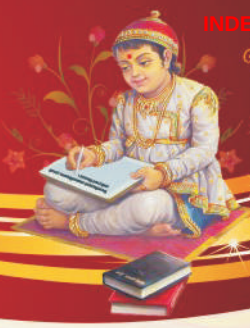
Story Time

Shuk Muni's Understanding

Also known as Shuk Muni, Shukanand Swami served as Shreeji Maharaj's personal secretary. He wrote and responded to letters for Maharaj. He also prepared manuscripts from original copies of the Vachanamrut and Satsangijivan.

As secretary, Shuk Muni often had to face Shreeji Maharaj's tests of faith. On one occasion Shuk Muni stayed up all night writing in Dada Khachar's darbar across the residence of Shreeji Maharaj. Shuk Muni had written 14 pages by the time Shreeji Maharaj had come out of his room in the morning. Due to Shuk Muni's long night and lack of sleep, he seemed very tired, but as soon as he had the darshan of Shreeji Maharaj, he felt reenergized. He quickly rushed to where Maharaj was seated and gave Maharaj the 14 pages to read and verify. As soon as, Shuk Muni gave the pages to Maharaj, Maharaj tore it into pieces and threw it into the courtyard without evening taking a glance. However, Shuk Muni did not even utter a single word in defiance or anger.





Witnessing this incident, Nityanand Swami questioned Shuk Muni, "Weren't you upset that Maharaj tore up your work without your consent?" Shuk Muni replied "Swami I wrote it to please Maharaj. If tearing up pleased him then I am fulfilling my goal as his Saint. Nevertheless, he does not need anyone's consent to do anything, because he is the supreme lord of lords and sustainer of all." Nityanand Swami was very impressed by Shuk Muni, because he had great understanding at young age. Thus Shuk Muni never allowed his mind to get in the way of his devotion towards Shreeji Maharaj.

Moral: No matter what kind of misery or hardship one may have to go through, if one has understanding, one will be able to surpass it easily

Exercise:

1. How many pages did Shuk Muni write throughout the night?
2. What did Shreeji Maharaj do with the pages?
3. What kind of understanding did Shuk Muni possess?

Practical Development

Shastras (Scriptures)

- What are Scriptures?
  - Books that narrate the divine incident, messages and commands of God, Saints and Devotees.
- Scriptures direct one to live a disciplined life and give a clear explanation of philosophy.
- Various Scriptures in the Swaminarayan Sect
  - Vachanamrut: Divine wisdom/philosophy narrated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and composed by 4 senior prominent Nand Santo. Vachanamrut is the nectar of spiritual knowledge extracted from various ancient scriptures.
  - Shikshapatri: Written by Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself, which contains the codes of conduct to be observed by all devotees. Contains 212 verses and is a guide to living a healty pious spiritual life.
  - Swami Ni Vato: Spiritual talks of Sadguru Gunatitanand Swami, where he revealed the glory and divinity of the Supreme Godhead Bhagwan Swaminarayan.



Chapter-15

Memory Exercise



Kirtan-2B

Hãre Mãru Chitadu Chorãnu Eni Chãl Mã,
Hãre Hu To Vash Thai Chhu Enã Vahãl Mã Ji Ho...
Joi Ne Jivu Chhu Sundar Murti Re

Meaning Lord ! The way you walk has stole my consciousness and I have been totally over-joyed by your affection.

Hãre Mãrã Ur Mã Khuntyo Chhe Chedo Pãgh No,
Hãre Kai Pãr Nathi Mãrã Bhagya No Ji Ho ...
Joi Ne Jivu Chhu Sundar Murti Re

Meaning Lord ! My heart is overjoyed by the end piece of your Pagh (Traditional Indian Cap) and could not define how fortunate I am.

Vocab

- Sarva Karta - All Doer
- Swabhav - Inner nature or base instincts
- Tap - Austerity/Penance

Guruji Says

The Satpurush(True Saint) wakes us up and shows us the right direction, but walking is all up to us.

Story Time



Ladhiba of Bhuj

Ladhiba of Bhuj was a disciple of Ramanand Swami. She was Brahmin by caste and became a widow at a young age. During the time, Brahmin widows had to live by very strict rules. They had to wear dark and thick clothes with no jewelry. They also had to cover their faces at all times and could not attend any festivals.

At once, Shreeji Maharaj asked her if she would follow his orders. She replied, "Nothing is impossible for me to do to please you my lord. You can command me to do anything, and I won't hesitate for even a moment." To test her determination, Maharaj said, "Put on fancy, rich clothing, wear gold jewelry and then take two clay pots and bring water



from the well." In order to reach the well, Ladhiba had to go to the center of the city.

Without any kind of hesitation, she took two containers and started her way to the well. On the way, she was questioned by the public. "What are you up to? Have you lost your mind?", they asked. Some people even asked Ladhiba, "Whom have you married at this old age?" Ladhiba frankly replied, "In this universe, I have taken innumerable births. I have married many times, but I still have not found an immortal husband. Ever since I have met Lord Swaminarayan, I have considered him to be my eternal husband. He will grant me ultimate redemption." Giving the same answer to all who questioned her, she finally finished her task and returned back to Maharaj with the water.

Maharaj asked her if anyone had made remarks along the way. She explained what had happened to Maharaj. Shreeji Maharaj became very pleased with her behavior and showered her with blessings.

Moral: One can earn immense blessings by following the commands of God and his Saints. One should not hesitate in obeying the commands of Maharaj and Guruji.

Exercise:

1) What kind of strict rules did Brahmin widows have to follow?
2) What did Shreeji Maharaj command Ladhiba to do?
3) Who did Ladhiba consider to be her immortal husband?

Practical Development

Niyam (Code of Conducts/Vows)

- What is a Niyam?
  - Various types of Code of Conducts/Vows.
- Shreeji Maharaj has laid down various types of Niyams for his devotees and renunciants to follow.
- Householders have separate Niyams and renunciants have separate Niyams.
- We abide by Niyams to keep our life pure and God-Centered.
- By abiding by Niyams we stay happy in this life and beyond so God becomes pleased upon us.
- The Shikshapatri is a primary example of Niyams and Code of Conducts.

  Example: Do not eat meat, Do not eat onion/garlic, Go to the temple, Worship God.





Chapter-16

Memory Exercise

Kirtan - 2C

Hãre Hu To Dãsi Chhu Krupã Nidhan Ni,
Hãre Mãne Chavi Ne Ãpi Chhe Bidi Pãn Ni Ji Ho...
Joi Ne Jivu Chhu Sundar Murti Re

Meaning *Almighty Lord ! I am your slave. Maharaj was cheerful, and gave me the betel nut leaf he was eating.*

Hãre Dayã Het No Bharyo Chhe Albelado,
Hãre Premãnand No Vãhlo Rang Chheldo Ji Ho...
Joi Ne Jivu Chhu Sundar Murti Re

Meaning *Lord ! You are the ocean of compassion and affection. O Lord ! Beloved of Premanand, I praise you and I am living, by looking at your enchanting divine form.*

Vocab

- *Agna - Command/ Instruction*
- *Paramhansas - 'Supreme Swan', A male saint who possesses a hi spiritual state*
- *Sanatan Dharma - Eternal Codes of Conduct / Authentic Religion*

Shreeji Maharaj Says

One should listen to the discourses of Purushottam Narayan with faith and love. There is no better method to stabilize the mind and to free it of the desires for the vishays. - Vachanamrut



Story Time

Jivuba and Laduba's Effective Preaching

Ladudan Gadhavi of the village Khan was highly educated and was well versed in numerous scriptures. He was a very well known poet around the lands. Many great kings like Sayajirao Maharaja of Vadodara, Vijaysinhji of Bhavnagar, and the Nawab Hamadkhan of Junagadh offered him great fortune and status, if he accepted the post of Raj Kavi (king's personal poet). But Ladudan only stayed in the kingdoms as a short time guest.

Across the land, Dada Khachar's two sisters, Jivuba and Laduba resided in Gadhada. They were married, but had decided not to go to their husband's homes to live. They had made up their minds to stay in Gadhada and live a life of celibacy and worship Shreeji Maharaj. At that time, Shreeji Maharaj was in the village of Kundal. Laudan Gadhavi came to see Shreeji Maharaj. Knowing that Ladudan Gadhavi had great knowledge of the scriptures and was well-rounded, Shreeji Maharaj decided to test his wit. Shreeji Maharaj challenged Ladudan Gadhavi to go to Gadhada and convince Dada Khachar's two sisters into going to live with their husbands. At first Ladudan thought the challenge was a joke. He thought that. "I have been challenged by great kings and have fulfilled and passed their test. What kind of challenge is this?"



Ladudan went to Gadhada to sway the minds of Jivuba and Laduba into living with their husbands. Soon he found out that it would have been easier to move a mountain than to change the minds of these two staunch female devotees. At first, he thought he was there to preach to them, but in a short time, they started preaching about the glory of Shreeji Maharaj, how worldly pleasures are full of misery and how true bliss is only in God, Saints and Devotees. These preachings really affected Ladudan. The worldly objects and pleasures that Ladudan once cherished became like poison.

Then he went again to meet Shreeji Maharaj, but this time it was for a different purpose. As he encountered Maharaj, Ladudan bowed down to him and then took off his golden jewelry and nice clothing and humbly requested Shreeji Maharaj to make him his Saint. Seeing that Ladudan's ego had been dissolved by the preaching of Laduba and Jivuba, Shreeji Maharaj made Ladudan his Saint and named him Brahmanand Swami. Brahmanand Swami was very well known for his kirtans (hymns) and friend-like relationship with Shreeji Maharaj.

Moral: The best way to clean an unpure mind is to listen to the preachings of God, Saints and Devotees.

Exercise:

1) What post did Ladudan reject from the various kings he met?
2) Why did Laduba and Jivuba not live at their husbands homes?
3) What did Laduba and Jivuba preach about to Ladudan?

Practical Development

Katha (Spiritual Discourses)

- Katha - To listen to the divine incidents and attributes of God, Saints and Devotees.
- Katha is the foundation on which one's spiritual framework is created.
- Just think of this Satsang fellowship as a big skyscraper. The foundation of the skyscraper is Katha. If the foundation is weak, then the building would collapse.
- Benefits of listening to Katha
  1. One can find out one's faults (works like a mirror)
  2. Noble virtues can be acquired
  3. Stabilizes the mind and destroys desire for materlalism

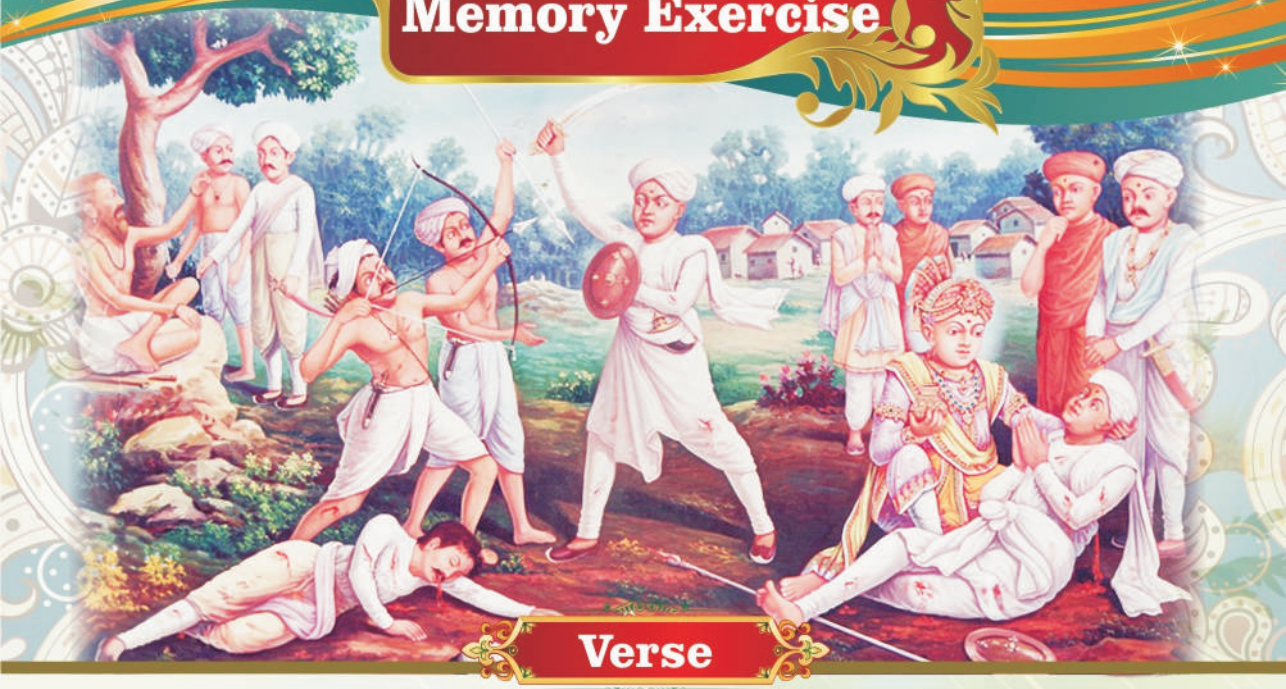


સર્વોપરિ એક મારો મહારાજ જ છે.



Chapter-17

Memory Exercise



Verse

Mārā Jan Ne AntaKāde, Jarur Māre Āvavu,
Birud Māru E Na Badale, Te Sarve Janāne Janāvavu||

Meaning Shreeji Maharaj Says At the end of my devotee's life, I shall come to take him - her to my Akhsardham without failure, this is my promise that will never break for everyone's knowledge.

Vocab

- Vicharan - Touring for Spiritual purpose
- Vidhi - Ritual Act
- Tyagi - Renunciants

Gunatitanand Swami Says

One who wants to worship God cannot please everybody. He can only fulfill the wishes of God.

Story Time



All In One

Shreeji Maharaj performed many yagna's (Traditional/Vedic Sacrificial Ceremony) in a short time span. One of the infamous yagnas Shreeji Maharaj performed was in the village of Dabhan. There he performed what was called a Choryashi (Feeding the 84 types of Brahmin caste). After the grand yagna was finished, Maharaj started to give golden coins in the form of appreciation to the brahmins who performed the miraculous yagna. Maharaj had a basket full of golden coins, and as each brahmin came he would ask "How many Vedas (Ancient Scriptures) have you studied?" Determining on what they answered 1, 2, 3 or 4 Shreeji Maharaj would give that many fist full of golden coins to each brahmin.

At last a very poor and old person came and stood in front of Maharaj. Maharaj asked "How many Vedas have you studied?". The old man replied "Maharaj I have not studied

any of the Veds, I have only studied the mahamantra 'Swaminarayan'. Hearing this Shreeji Maharaj replied "Then you have not only studied the 4 Veds, but all the historic holy scriptures. Shreeji Maharaj became so pleased that he gave the whole basket full of gold coins to the poor man.

Moral: There is no greater mantra than "Swaminarayan".

Exercise:

1. Where was the yagna held at?
2. To show a token of appreciation what was the ceremony Maharaj held for the Brahmin called?
3. When the poor man came in front of Maharaj, what did he answer? In result what did Maharaj do?



Practical Development



Dhun (Chanting)

What is Dhun?

- Dhun means to chant the mahamantra 'Swaminarayan' aloud.
- Swaminarayan is the name of our Supreme Bhagwan Swaminarayan. This mahamantra has manifested from the very mouth of Bhagwan himself. Bhagwan has instructed all his devotees to chant this mantra.
- Chanting is a very effective method to please God, and to purify one's mind and soul.
- Procedure: One should sit in Indian style posture, close one's eyes, and chant aloud the mahamantra 'Swaminarayan' and clap hands with a rhythm.

Chapter-18

Memory Exercise



Verse

Dãsanã Dãs Thai Ne, Vadi Je Rahe Satsang Mã,
Bhakti Teni Bhali Mãnish, Rãchish Tenã Rang Mã||

Meaning

Shreeji Maharaj Says Whoever stays in this Satsang (Religion) by becoming the Servant of the Servants of God, I shall accept his devotion and stay with him.

Vocab

- Tyag – To forsake/renounce
- Acharya – Head of religious order
- Atmanishtha – Self Realization/ realizing oneself to be the soul

Guruji Says

If one learns to forgive and has positive thinking, then one will remain happy.

Story Time



Supreme yet Humble

Once, a large group of devotees came to Gadhada to have Shreeji Maharaj's darshan. After having Maharaj's darshan and listening to his discourses in Lakshmi Vadi they all proceeded towards Dada Khachar's darbar. As they were walking through the main street they came across a Jain temple. While passing the temple a young boy spat on the side without looking. By accident his spit landed on a Jain Saint. The Saint started a commotion, declaring that, "A devotee boy of Swaminarayan spat on me, he has insulted me!" As the word spread all the Jains in the village closed their shop in protest against Shreeji Maharaj.

Soon after the news reached Shreeji Maharaj, immediately he took the responsibility for the incident. Shreeji Maharaj headed straight for the Jain temple. Shreeji Maharaj found the Saint who was insulted and humbly folded his hands and said, "The child has made a mistake due to his



ignorance. I am asking for forgiveness on his behalf." Shreeji Maharaj's humility instantly calmed the Jain Saint. Thereafter, the Saint explained to his followers to call off the protest. All were notified of Maharaj's humble gesture and became very pleased seeing such outstanding character.

This was Shreeji Maharaj's nature. He won over his opponents with humility. He was the supreme lord yet he never hesitated in asking for forgiveness. He treated people of all religions with respect.

Moral: Humility is the foundation to pleasing God and living a prosperous spiritual life.

Exercise:

1. Where were the devotees listening to the discourses of Maharaj before proceeding to Dada Khachar's darbar?
2. What did the boy do while walking through the main street?
3. What did Shreeji Maharaj do to calm the Jain Saint?

Practical Development



Pranam (To Bow)

What is Pranam?

- Pranam is to humbly bow down to God, Saints or Devotees of God.
- Pranam is a way to show respect and welcome one's guest.
- By doing pranam we earn the blessings and respect of the opposite person.

There are 3 ways to respect:

1. Pranam: Bowing down and touching the feet of God, Saints and Devotees
2. Swagat: Rising to welcome a person
3. Vandan: Paying respect and saying 'Jay Swaminarayan'

- Remember, God likes one who is humble, so to earn the blessings of God one should do pranam.

Chapter-19

Memory Exercise



Verse

Sant Ke Charan Karat Nivãsã, Hoike Man Param Hulasã,
Sant Charan Pratãp Anupã, Jiy MatraKu Kare Pãvan Rupã||

Meaning One should remain in the company of a true Saint who relieves the spiritual aspirant from the worldly worries. The accompany of a true Saint has profound power which is unchallenged and provides aspirant with self purifying strength.

Vocab

- Chintamani – Wish Fulfilling Gem
- Indriya – Sense Organs (Eyes, Ears, Nose, Tongue, Skin)
- Kalpataru – Wish Fulfilling Tree

Shreeji Maharaj Says

In fact the only method for a person to please God, is to serve the devotees of God by thought, word and deed. – Vachanamrut

Story Time

Jhinabhai's Great Service

A devotee by the name of Kamalsingh Vanja lived in the village of Mangrol near the Bhavnagar port. He was a firm believer of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and followed all the codes of conducts for a proper devotee. Sadly, his family disliked him because he chose another faith (religion) over the Muslim faith. He had very little contact with his family due to this problem. Throughout his life, he worked hard and worshipped Bhagwan Swaminarayan, but eventually he got old and became sick. His family disliked him because of his beliefs, so they did not provide any type of aid such as food or medicine to help him recover from his sickness.

During that time, Jhinabhai an ekantik devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan came from Panchala to Mangrol for a visit. He observed that no one was taking care of Kamalsingh bhagat. Due to seeing Kamalsingh bhagat in such agony, he asked Kamalsingh bhagat's family if he could take Kamalsingh to his home in Panchala, so he could properly be looked after. His family agreed immediately and sent Kamalsingh off, not caring for his health. So then Jhinabhai took Kamalsingh to his home and started taking excellent care of him. He performed service with great glory, effort and dedication. At times, Kamalsingh bhagat would get headaches. In the past, people used to make black pepper powder into a paste and smear it on the forehead to relieve the headache. At that time, Jhinabhai asked his sister to give him some black pepper

powder to apply onto Kamalsingh bhagat's forehead, but his sister said they did not have it in the home.

After some time, Jhinabhai himself had a headache, so he asked for the powder from his sister. His sister rushed with a bottle of black pepper powder to alleviate her brother's headache. Jhinabhai then asked where she had got the powder from. She replied, "I had saved it for you, in case you got a headache." Jhinabhai became upset upon hearing this. He questioned his sister asking, "Where was the powder when I asked for it to relieve Kamalsingh Bhagat's headache? Why did you not take into consideration the well-being of such a great devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan?" Jhinabhai's sister was speechless. In result Jhinabhai stopped talking to his own sister because she denied service to a devotee of Shreeji Maharaj. After some time had passed, Shreeji Maharaj arrived there. Jhinabhai's sister told Maharaj about the situation and how Jhinabhai was treating her. Soon after, Jhinabhai was called and told by Maharaj to forgive his sister and forget about everything. Shreeji Maharaj was pleased by Jhinabhai's service and his staunch loyalty towards Kamalsingh bhagat.

Moral: To serve God, Saints and Devotees understanding their glory is the best method to please them.

Exercise:

1) Why did Kamalsingh bhagat's family dislike him?
2) What did Jhinabhai ask his sister for?
3) Why did Jhinabhai stop talking to his sister?

Practical Development

Seva (Service)

- Seva means to serve God, his Saints and Devotees through our mind, deeds and speech.
- Seva is a measurement unit for how much humility we have.
- Bhagwan likes one who is humble, so to attain such a attribute one must perform Seva without any self - interest.
- Shreeji Maharaj says in the Vachanamrut that, "Only one who has accumulated great merits in the past births is granted the service of God and his Saints."
- In the Vachanamrut Shreeji Maharaj says "In order to please God, I desire only to serve devotees of God in this life".





Chapter-20

Memory Exercise



Verse

Sant Ki Sevã Karanã Jou, MoxPad Se Adhik He Sou,
Yu Samaji Sevã Kare Jehi, Anãdi Mukta Samajanã Tehi||

Meaning *To serve the true Saint is higher than Moksh (Liberation). If one serves the send, with such understanding, one should be known as a Anadi Mukt (Eternal Liberated Soul).*

Vocab

- *Karma – Action/Deed*
- *Mumukshu – Spiritual Aspirant*
- *Pragat – Manifest/Before one's eyes*

Gunatitanand Swami Says

As eyelids protect the eyes, hands protect the neck, and parents protect their children, similarly God always protects his devotees.



Story Time

The Pain Behind Insulting

Mohandas was in search of God in the Himalayan Mountain ranges. There he met Nilkanth Varni and through his inspiration and association, Mohandas decided to take the sadhu - fold. Shreeji Maharaj than initiated him and name him Vrajanand Swami. Vrajanand Swami toured the region of Sorath, Gujarat. He inspired many towards the path of Satsang.

On one occasion as Swami was touring, he came to the village of Thordi. There was a local farmer by the name of Megha who lived in the village. Megha had heard about Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his principles, and was against his views. He was a fierce opponent against the sect. As Swami was staying in the village and preaching, whenever the villagers praised Swami, Megha would burn with hatred. Once Megha could not bear the presence of Swami and remarked "The hell with you Vrajanand. There are many follies like you who wander around." The devotees heard this outburst, but to avoid any commotion they decided not to take any action. Megha went home after the incident. After all the commotion, Swami did not say anything and went back to his work. That evening when Megha was about to take his dinner something strange happen. The candle that lit the room blew out all of a sudden. It was pitch dark, the door must have



been left open, due to this a cat sneaked in. The cat was attracted towards the dinner table. The cat took food from Megha's plate and dropped off a dead insect that had been in the cat's mouth.

Still in the dark, Megha continued his meal and with his first bite he ate the insect which was poisonous. Within a short period of time he began to suffer from diarrhea and vomiting. He suffered great pain. As his family members and villagers found out what had happen they all concluded that it was, because of insulting Vrajanand Swami that Megha was suffering pain. After some time Megha felt very bad about what he said to Swami. He atoned for his mistakes.

A few months later Vrajanand Swami learnt of this incident. He was pained by seeing Megha's suffering. He prayed to Maharaj, "Please bless this poor fellow", with this request Maharaj cured Megha, and then soon after he became a devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Moral: Never insult God, Saints or Devotees or else one will receive great misery.

Exercise:

1. What did Megha say to Vrajanand Swami?
2. What did the cat drop off in Megha's dish?
3. What did Megha suffer from?

Practical Development

Ahimsa (Non – Violence)

- To practice non - violence through mind, action and speech towards any living entity is considered to the Ahimsa.
  - Mind: Not to think maliciously of others
  - Action: To avoid physically injuring someone
  - Speech: Not to use foul language or hurt someone else through our speech
- We may not be hurting others physically or through our speech but more likely we perform violence through our mind, by thinking bad about someone else.
- Shreeji Maharaj states in the Vachanamrut that, "One should not even pain the smallest of beings because God dwells in the hearts of all."



Chapter-21

Memory Exercise

Kirtan-3A

Mānakiye Chadyā Re Mohan Vanmāli, Shobhe Rudi Karamā
Lagām Rupāli... Mānakiye Chadyā Re Mohan Vanmāli (1)

Meaning *Maharaj is seated majestically in the saddle of His beloved Manki (Maharaj's horse). He has held its reins in His hands and has adorned Himself in attires of beauty. (1)*

Mānigar Sahune Ke'Chhe Thao Tyār, Muni Varani Padāti Ne Asvār;
Vratpuri Jāvā Karyo Nirdhār... Mānakiye Chadyā Re Mohan Vanmāli (2)

Meaning *He has ordered all His Saints and devotees to be seated on their horses, and to those who will walk alongside, to be ready to leave for Vratpuri (Vadtal).(2)*

Vocab

- *Samadhi - Spiritual Trance*
- *Atyantik Kalyan - Ultimate Liberation*
- *Brahmand - Universe*

Guruji Says

If the virtue of servitude develops in one, then all other virtues automatically flourish, and if servitude vanishes from ones heart, then all the good virtues will turn into bad virtues.



Story Time

The Great Rajabhai

There was a staunch devotee of Lord Swaminarayan by the name of Rajabhai who lived in the village of Khorasa. He was a farmer by occupation, and owned land and cattle which he took care of on a daily basis. Twice a year a group of Saints would come to Khorasa for alms. Rajabhai had taken a vow to provide alms (food) to the Saints; whenever the group of Saints would bless his village with their presence. At one time Rajabhai was away and a group of Saints visited the village. Even though there were very few devotees in the village Rajabhai had a friend in the village. Rajabhai's friend knew about Rajabhai's vow of giving alms to the Saints. So Rajabhai's friend went to Rajabhai's home to ask his wife to provide grains for the Saints to fulfill Rajabhai's vow. The wife had no faith in the fellowship. She replied in a rude manner and led Rajabhai's friend away. He felt insulted. but he quietly invited the Saints to his home and served them by giving grains on behalf of Rajabhai.

On returning back home from his trip he met the Saints and then went to his friend's shop to greet him. On finding out what his wife had done, he became sadden by the situation. He resolved "I toil very hard to fulfill the wishes of my life and these ungrateful people do not show any concern or respect for my wishes. If my wife cares nothing for my wishes then there is no sense in staying here anymore." Rajabhai slowly and gradually began to gather his belongings. He took his gold ornaments and bulls and sold them. Then he told a Brahmin to write a letter to his wife saying "your brother is seriously ill. Please come immediately!" On receiving this letter Rajabhai's wife set out to see her 'ailing' brother. Then Rajabhai locked his home and gave

the key to his neighbor saying "I am going to Gadhada to stay with Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Tell my wife not to wait for me. I leave behind land and some money so she can support herself."

As soon as Rajabhai reached Gadhada he prostrated before Maharaj and narrated his story. Testing his dedication Maharaj asked Rajabhai "Do you want to become a Saint or do you want to carry out my commands?" Rajabhai did not utter a word. Then Maharaj commanded Rajabhai to plough Parvatbhai's field. Rajabhai gladly accepted the command and ploughed Parvatbhai's field for 13 continous years! He shredded the ego of his caste and status to serve the devotee of God and to please Shreeji Maharaj. Many relatives from Khorasa came to persuade Rajabhai to return home, but Rajabhai's determination was unstoppable. Then Shreeji Maharaj called Rajabhai to Gadhada and initiated him as a Saint and named him Aksharanand Swami. Very soon he was made the Mahant (Head) of Vadtal mandir. He earned the grace of Shreeji Maharaj and attained the divine adobe of Akshardham.

Moral: Having faith and loyalty can help one earn the grace/blessings of God.

Exercise:

1. What vow did Rajabhai have when groups of Saints came to Khorasa?
2. What did Rajabhai do when he found out what his wife had done?
3. What did Shreeji Maharaj command Rajabhai to do, and how long did he follow out the command?

Practical Development



Pradakshina

What is Pradakshina?

- To walk in a clockwise manner around the Idol of God.
- Pradakshina symbolizes that God is the center of our life.
- Pradakshina can be performed around the Idol of God, Mandir or Tirth.
- We absorb the divine influence around whatever we do pradakshina of, thus resulting in a purification of the Mind/Body/Soul.
- Whenever we go to the temple we should perform at least 6 pradakshinas to keep our life God-Centered and pure.

Chapter-22

Memory Exercise

Kirtan-3B

Kesar, Beri, Bodali Ne Fulmãl, Tãjan, Tikhi, Vãngali No Ghano Tãl,
Shobhe Ghanã Vãlã Lãge Chhe Mãral... Mãnakiye Chadyã Re
Mohan Vanmãli (3)

Meaning Premanand Swami has named the top quality breed of horses that great kings and devotees had. He has described the beauty of Maharaj amidst devotees seated on such prime breeds. (3)

Premibhakt Vinanti Kare Dodi Dodi, Lohchumbaktulya Vrutti
Murtimã Jodi, Nathijãti Darbãrmãthi Ghodi...
Mãnakiye Chadyã Re Mohan Vanmãli (4)

Meaning All the devotees are magnetically attracted to the idol of Maharaj, in a similar manner to a bee attracted to its hive. Devotees are pleading to Maharaj not to leave them. (4)

Ãgnyã Ãpo Ame Jaie Vratpuri, Jão Prabhu Rãm Navami Nathi Duri,
Sevakdãs Premãnand Hajuri... Mãnakiye Chadyã Re Mohan Vanmali (5)

Meaning Shreeji Maharaj is seeking permission from his beloved devotees to leave for Vratpuri (Vadtal). To please Maharaj, devotees gave up their personal desires and allow Him to leave, wishing Him a safe journey and inviting Him to come back at the earliest. (5)

Vocab

- Mahima - Glory/Greatness
- Narak - Hell
- Annakut - Offering various food items before God

Shreeji Maharaj Says

No matter how sinful or insignificant a person maybe, if he seeks the refuge of God and his bhakta, that person will become absolutely fulfilled. - Vachanamrut



Story Time

Abhaysingh of Lodhika



Jibhai of the village Lodhika was a staunch follower of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He had a son named Abhaysingh who was the complete opposite of him. He did not listen to anyone and had the hobby of hunting wild animals.

Once, on the pious day of Ekadashi (holy fasting day), Abhaysingh went to hunt. Knowing that Abhaysingh ate meat, Jibhai stopped Abhaysingh and reminded him that it was the holy day of Ekadashi. Jibhai told him, "Today, you can only eat fruits." Abhaysingh replied, "Thanks for the reminder. I will only eat what can be eaten on Ekadashi." Abhaysingh went to the forest for hunting as usual and saw a group of pigeons sitting on a tree. One by one, he started shooting them down. After he had killed a dozen pigeons, he pulled the tongues out and fried them in oil. He brought them home and told his

father, "I have brought some food for both of us to eat on this day of fasting." Jibhai was very pleased to see his son had followed his words for once. As soon as Abhaysingh revealed the dish of fried pigeon tongues, Jibhai became disgusted beyond belief. He thought, "What kind of son have I raised?" Jibhai felt sorry for himself and left home, deciding to never return.

Jibhai went to a nearby village where his Guru, Gopalanand Swami resided and grieved over his son. Gopalanand Swami consoled him and said. "In a short time everything will change. Just be patient." Without any success in hunting that day, Abhaysingh, in search of water came to the very place where Gopalanand Swami was residing. Jibhai, seeing his own son, introduced him to Gopalanand Swami. Immediately, Abhaysingh felt at ease. Abhaysingh bowed down and showed his respect. Gopalanand Swami asked Abhaysingh, "How long do you want to keep doing this?" referring to his bad habits of hunting and eating meat. Abhaysingh replied, "Until now Swami. As of today, I am giving up my bad habits." By that very moment, all his vices, bad habits and addictions fled away and by the association of Gopalanand Swami he became a virtuous pious devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Abhaysingh daily used to sit in meditation for six hours. It is due to the greatness of Gopalanand Swami that Abhaysingh was changed into a virtuous devotee.

Moral: By the association of a God-Realized Saint, one's life can change, no matter how bad it may be if one has self-interest.

Exercise:

1) On what auspicious day did Abhaysingh go for hunting?
2) Who was the Guru of Jibhai?
3) What did Abhaysingh hunt and offer to his father Jibhai ?



Practical Development



Ekadashi

- The fast of Ekadashi is very sacred, not only in the Swaminarayan Sect but in all Hindu religions.
- On this particular day of fast, one should not intake any kinds of grains. One should only consume farari foods.
- Farari Food Examples: Fruits, Milk, Vegetables, Dried Fruits, Nuts, Special Grains like Morio, Rajagaro.
- By observing this fast, one earns great merit.
  - Brahmanand Swami says "The punya (merit) from donating 10 million cows is less than 1/16 part of the merit of observing one Ekadashi".
- There are 2 Ekadashi's in one month, equaling a total of 24 in a year.
- There is a deeper definition of Ekadashi than just fasting. To attach our senses and mind in God related activities is considered to be a true fast of Ekadashi.
- Shreeji Maharaj has commanded his devotees to observe Ekadashi in the Shikshapatri and in the Vachanamrut.

Chapter-23

Memory Exercise



Verse

Evã Sant Che Sagã Sahunã Re, Sukhadãyak Jan Bahunã Re,
Jevi E Sant Kare Che Sahãy Re, Tevi Koy Thaki Kem Thãy Re||

Meaning

Such a Saint (Ekantik/God - Realized) is a close relative of all, he showers bliss to countless souls. Moreover he rescues one from the misery of maya, how can anyone else compare to such a Saint.

Vocab

- Cheshta - Rythemic hymns sung before bedtime narrating the daily routine and glory of Shreeji Maharaj
- Dharna/Parna - Vow of fasting on alternate days
- Parasmani - Magical gem that turns iron into gold

Gunatitanand Swami Says

Obeying the directions of a Saint is best, whereas obeying directions of the mind is worst.

Story Time

Magniram to Adwaitanand Swami

A devout Brahmin of Tamil Nadu named Magniram worshipped the Goddess Sharada and performed harsh penance. Due to this penance, the Goddess became pleased, so Magniram was granted a boon. He wished to meet the almighty Lord in the human form. The Goddess replied, "It is not in my hand, but I bless you anyhow. If you try hard, you will meet him one day." Soon after, he went to Jagannathpuri, where there were many wicked people adept in evil charms and spells. By their association, he also became learned in such kind of evil acts. Then he formed a large group and wandered the lands forcefully demanding money and jewelry from innocent people.

Once, after hearing about the reputation of Lord Swaminarayan, Magniram went to meet him in Mangrol and requested for five thousand rupees. Maharaj said, "This is an alms-house. Take food if you want or else leave." Then Magniram started to give terrifying threats, but Maharaj drove him off. Magniram then went back to his camp, invoked evil spirits, and sent them to kill Shreeji Maharaj. They had no chance against Maharaj. The evil spirits came back and thrashed Magniram instead. Finally, Magniram became frustrated and invoked the Goddess Sharada. He told her to throw Swaminarayan into the sea.

Sharada said, "Remember when I became pleased upon you and you had asked for a divine meeting with the almighty

Lord himself in human form. You are making a big mistake. You have been misled because of your evil association. Lord Swaminarayan is the almighty Lord himself. I worship him myself. If you desire salvation, sincerely worship him."

Startled by this revelation, he rushed to where Shreeji Maharaj was and asked for forgiveness. Shreeji Maharaj insulted him repeatedly to test his faith. He kept begging for forgiveness even after the insults. He asked Maharaj to forgive him and make him his Saint. Shreeji Maharaj asked him to make a bundle from the shoes of all the devotees present and put it on his head and circulate around the devotees. He did everything Maharaj asked leaving his pride and ego behind. Finally convinced, Maharaj accepted him as his Saint and named him Adwaitanand Swami.

Moral: No matter how pure one is, if knowingly or unknowingly one associates with evil people, one will become evil as well.

Exercise:

1) Who did Magniram worship before meeting Shreeji Maharaj?
2) How did Magniram start to practice evil charms?
3) How did Shreeji Maharaj dissolve the ego of Magniram?

Practical Development

Satsang (True Company)

- Sat - Truth/ Sang - Company (To associate with good people is called Satsang).
- Whoever you associate with, that's how you become. This is a principle.
- If one keeps company with good people, one becomes good no matter how bad one maybe. On the other hand, if one is good but associates with a bad person, one will become bad.
- Bhagwan Swaminarayan has also put a great emphasis on the purity of company.
- School is a place where one should be aware of the people one associates with.
- Therefore associate with Saints in order to attain God, who in the end is our best friend.



Chapter-24

Memory Exercise



Verse

Ã Vãrno Je Avatãr Re, Evo Na Thãy Vãramvãr Re,
Nathi Ãvyã Ne Ãvasu Kyãthi Re, Sau Jan Jãnajo Man Mãthi Re||

Meaning This incarnation (Bhagwan Swaminarayan) does not manifest frequently. It has not come and will not come, all should know this fact.

Vocab

- Patotsav – Anniversary celebration of temple dieties
- Pujan – The act of worshipping
- Shlok – Verses in the language Sanskrit

Guruji Says

We have come into this Satsang to become a servant. If one becomes a servant of a True Saint, then Bhagwan becomes pleased upon us.

Story Time

Unshakable Faith

While the scripture Satsangijivan was being written at Vadtal, the question of how to describe Shreeji Maharaj's form was raised. As discussions comensed most of the Saints and devotees compared Shreeji Maharaj with the incarnations of Ram, Krishna, Vishnu etc. Hearing these discussions Nityanand Swami remarked to everyone that "Shreeji Maharaj is the supreme lord of lords and the cause of all causes. He is manifest in front of all of you, yet you do not understand this fact. How can we compare him to other incarnations?"

Observing this debate, Shreeji Maharaj stood up and made two parallel lines 5 feet apart from one another. He then told everyone, "whoever agrees with Nityanand Swami should stand behind the line on my right side, and whoever is against Nityanand Swami shall stand behind the line on my left." Immediately the Saints and devotees divided. On one side there was only Nityanand Swami and on the other side all the Saints and devotees. Then surprisingly Shreeji Maharaj also joined the side of the Saints and devotees, yet Nityanand Swami's faith and understanding did not waver. Nityanand Swami was bombarded with words. but he stayed firm as a mountain in his conviction.

In the end, Shreeji Maharaj called Nityanand Swami an arrogant and foolish person and excommunicated him. Nityanand Swami was forced to stay away from Shreeji Maharaj and his Saints and devotees. He was not allowed to attend Satsang assemblies. So in result, he stopped taking

meals and started to engage in meditation. This continued for 7 long days and then on the 8th day there was a change of heart, not by Nityanand Swami, but by Shreeji Maharaj himself. Due to Shreeji Maharaj's compassionate nature he could not bear to see what Nityanand Swami was going through. So on the 8th day Shreeji Maharaj sent some devotees to call back Nityanand Swami. Shreeji Maharaj was so pleased by Nityanand Swami's faith that he performed his pujan and offered his own garland as a token of his love and appreciation.

All the Saints and devotees were astonished to see such a sudden change in Maharaj's attitude towards Nityanand Swami. Shreeji Maharaj explained to everyone that Nityanand Swami's understanding was correct after all. A devotee of God should possess such kinds of virtues.

Moral: Unwavering faith is the ultimate way to earn the grace and blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan

Exercise:

1. What scripture was being written that started this incident?
2. After seeing that Nityanand Swami did not want to change his resolve what action did Shreeji Maharaj take?
3. In the end, what was the outcome of this incident?

Practical Development

Dandvat (Prostration)

- Dand - Stick; Vat - To be like
- Dandvat means To prostrate at the lotus feet of God and Saints as a humble servant.
- For male devotees, 8 body parts should touch the ground in order for it to be considered a Dandvat or Ashtang Pranam.

  1. Forehead 2. Eyes 3. Hands 4. Chest
  5. Legs 6. Knees 7. Speech 8. Mind

- Female devotees perform what is called a Panchang Pranam where 5 body parts touch the ground.

  1. Hands 2. Eyes 3. Head
  4. Speech 5. Mind

- One should daily perform at least 6 Dandvats to pay respect to God.
- Nevertheless, when one goes to the mandir of God or has the darshan of Saints one should perform Dandvats.



Chapter-25

Memory Exercise



Kirtan - 4A

Mãre Swãminãrãyan Bhajvã Re, Durijaniyãnã Sangne Tajvã Re...
Mãre Swãminãrãyan Bhajvã Re

Meaning I want to worship Lord Swaminarayan and abandon the company of wicked people.

Meto Melyo Sansãriyo Mãdi, Jovã Swãminãrãyan Dãdi (2x)...
Mãre Swãminãrãyan Bhajvã Re

Meaning I have renounced this world (false dream), just to have the darshan of Bhagwan Swaminarayan forever.

Vocab

- Vrat – A vow or observance, usually concerning diet
- Vidya – Knowledge
- Utsav – Festival

Shreeji Maharaj Says

God assumes an avatar on this Earth in one of two forms either in the form of a King or in the form of a Sadhu. – Vachanamrut



Story Time

Shreeji Maharaj's Glance

From the village of Gadhada, Shreeji Maharaj went to the region of Charotar for Satsang. He visited many towns and villages before arriving at the village of Umreth. In Umreth, Maharaj stayed at the Jagnnath Mahadev Mandir. All the Brahmins living in the village came for the darshan of Maharaj out of curiosity.

When they saw Maharaj they thought of testing his divinity to see if he is God or not. So they bowed down to Maharaj and said, "We worship Shankar and are followers of Shankaracharya. Shankaracharya had made a buffalo recite the Vedas. If you can show a miracle like that we will believe you to be God." Maharaj kindly replied, "A buffalo is an animal. If you can bring a Brahmin who from birth is dumb and illiterate like a buffalo, I will make him recite the Vedas." Soon, the Brahmins found a Brahmin boy named Harishankar who was dumb and illiterate from birth. He was made to sit in front of Maharaj. As soon as Maharaj glanced at the boy he started singing mantras from the Vedas, without any mistake in pronunciation or there various tones. Seeing this miracle in front of their eyes they were shocked beyond imagination. They all surrounded at the feet of Maharaj and developed a firm conviction that Shreeji Maharaj is God himself.

All the Brahmins became disciples of Maharaj. But only one question remained, how could vartmans (vows) be offered

to so many Brahmins to complete the process? So Maharaj solved the problem in his own unique manner. He took a full pot of water and walked through the town sprinkling the water on the homes of the Brahmins declaring, "Those homes that have been showered with this water should consider themselves to have taken Vartmans (vows).

Moral: Only showing miracles does not prove the greatness of God, Greatness is due to God's divine attributes.

Exercise:

1. In which mandir did Maharaj stay in after arriving in the village of Umreth?
2. What miracle did Shankaracharya show?
3. How did Maharaj give Vartmans (vows) to the villagers of Umreth?



Practical Development



The Vedas (Ancient Scriptures)

- The Vedas are the most ancient and fundamental scriptures that were established and written by Ved Vyas.
- The messages of the Vedas may seem simple, but their effect in our daily life is substantial.
- What do the vedas teach us?
  - Maatru Devo Bhava: Serve your mother as God
  - Pirtu Devo Bhava: Serve your father as God
  - Acharya Devo Bhava: Serve your Guru as God
  - Atithi Devo Bhava: Serve your guest as God
  - Satyam Vada: Always speak the truth
  - Dharmam Chara: Always stay within Dharma
  - Swadhyayaan Maa Pramadha: Never be lazy in studies

Chapter-26

Memory Exercise

Kirtan - 4B

Mane Swãminārāyan Bhāve, Lok Swāmini Kahi Ne bolāve (2x)...
Māre Swāminārāyan Bhajvā Re

Meaning *Since, I adore Lord Swaminarayan, the world calls me Swaminarayan's mate.*

Vāte Ghātene Jātā valtā, Swāminārāyan Shrāvane Sambhalta (2x)...
Mare Swāminārāyan Bhajvā Re

Meaning *Not being worried about my reputation in the world, I continually recite "Swaminarayan" and have continual remembrance of Lord Swaminarayan.*

Vocab

- *Nishtha – Single mindedness, perfection, steadiness*
- *Kalyan Kari – Redemptive*
- *Divyabhav – To have an attitude of seeing divinity in the actions of God and his Sadhu*

Gunatitanand Swami Says

Three kinds of people remain happy 1. Who does as the Great Sadhu says 2. One who possesses spiritual wisdom, 3. One who does not need anything.

Story Time

Mulji and Krushnaji



There were two brahmins by the name of Mulji and Krushnaji. They lived in a village called Mankuva. They were farmers by occupation, and friends since childhood. They worshipped Shreeji Maharaj and were staunch devotees.

Once Shreeji Maharaj arrived in their village, Mankuva. He sat in the assembly with a pair of scissors and remarked "If you are a true devotee of mine than come forward I want to make you my Saint." No one was prepared to take such a big sacrifice and left the assembly one by one. At that time both Mulji and Krushnaji were farming but when they returned home the other devotees informed them about Maharaj's tough suggestion. Immediately both of them went to the residence of Shreeji Maharaj. They fell to his feet and prayed to Maharaj to take them both as his Saints. Maharaj warned them, "you won't get sufficient food, you will be attacked by wicked people, and you will have to bear the heat and cold and face many calamities. Therefore go and think about this seriously." So they took some time out and thought about



their decision. They confirmed with their mind and again went to Shreeji Maharaj with their final answer. Shreeji Maharaj saw how firm their resolve to become a Saint was, so he told them, "you have become Saints! It is my wish that you remain at home." They carried out Maharaj's wishes and returned home, but due to their firm resolve they had no interest at all in worldly life. Due to this they did not function properly in the social life. So they went to Gadhada to be in the presence of Shreeji Maharaj. They both resolved not to return home. As they were gone a very long time, Shreeji Maharaj received a letter from their relatives stating, "Both Mulji and Krushnaji are married. There are many problems because of their absence so please be kind and send them back." Shreeji Maharaj ordered them to go back home, so both of them started homewards.

On their way home, they stopped at the village of Vanthali and started working. At the end of the year they came to Maharaj with 60 rupees and requested, "please keep us here and make us your Saints." Shreeji Maharaj asked where they were and what they were up to. Both of them explained their story to Maharaj. Maharaj then told them that their family/relatives have come to take them back. Maharaj commanded them to go home and if they really wanted to become Saints then they should get a consent letter from their wives. On their way back, they tried to





persuade their wives to allow them to become Saints. But their wives were not persuaded and asked them, "Why did you marry us, if you only wanted to become Saints?" So in result, Krushnaji and Mulji cut off their own genitals! They did this so their wives would lose interest in them.

In this act, their wives were greatly disappointed, so they separated and returned back home. Then Mulji and Krushnaji came to Maharaj. But Maharaj rejected them and turned them away from the Satsang. But they themselves put on saffron clothes and worshipped Maharaj from a distance. They wandered for one year. They once again arrived at Gadhada. As soon as Maharaj saw them, he rejected their presence and they were driven away. But during the night both of them sat on the bank of the River Ghela and started singing devotional hymns. Maharaj heard their hymns from his residence, Akshar Ordi! So Maharaj sent some devotees to drive them further away. They prayed to them and told them to ask Maharaj, "What do you want from us? What is your command for us?" The devotees went and gave the message to Maharaj. Maharaj was just testing them. They were ordered back by Maharaj. Then in front of the assembly of Saints and devotees, Maharaj remarked, "I have treated them harshly. They have been insulted and rejected, but they are firm in their faith." So by the request of the assembly, Maharaj gave them diksha (initation) and made them Saints by performing the proper rituals. Mulji

was named Ghanshyamanand Swami and Krushnaji was named Sarvagnanand Swami.

Moral: Firm determination to fulfill one's goals to please God, leads one to success.

Exercise

1) What sacrifice did Mulji and Krushnaji make after their wives rejected their request?
2) How many rupees did Mulji and Krushnaji give to Maharaj after returning from Vanthali?
3) What warnings did Maharaj give to Mulji and Krushnaji about becoming a Saint?



Practical Development



Goals

- A Goal is a task one wants to fulfill in a short or long period of time.
- There are two types of Goals:
  1. Worldly Goals: Ex. To get good grades, to get into good college, to become a doctor
  2. Spiritual Goals: Ex. To become Ekantik, to develop affection for God, to acquire good virtues
- Just like we make worldly goals, we must also make spiritual goals to please God and his true Saint.
- If one aims high, one will achieve greatness.
- Setting goals is a great method to achieve something in this world and the world beyond.

Chapter-27

Memory Exercise



Kirtan - 4C

Mukhe Swãminãrãyan Gãu, Lok Lãj Thaki N Laju(2x)...
Mãre Swãminãrãyan Bhajvã Re

Meaning I sing aloud the name of Swaminarayan, I am not afraid of my reputation in society.

Premsakhi Ke Swãmine Sãru, Kurbãn Karyu Jivan Mãru ...
Mãre Swãminãrãyan Bhajvã Re

Meaning Hereby, Premsakhi (Premanand Swami) has dedicated the entire life in the name of Lord Swaminarayan.

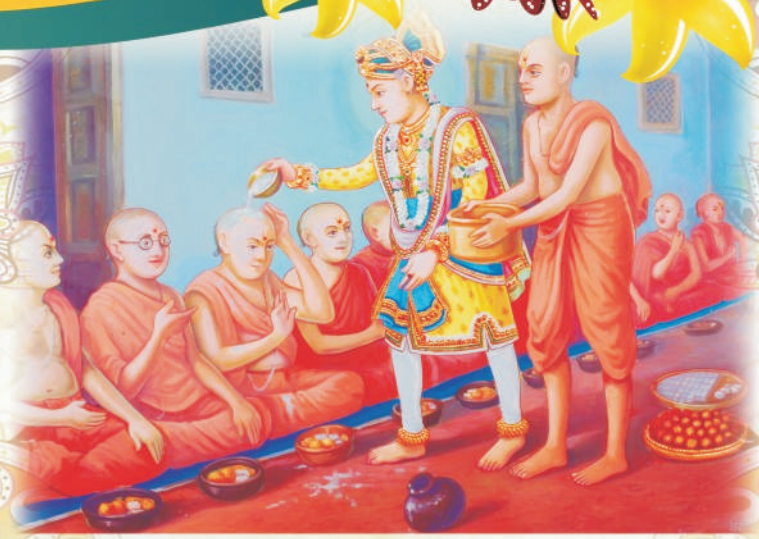
Vocab

- Chintan - Reflection, to think
- Antardrashti - To introspect /look inwards
- Dev - Deity

Guruji Says

To understand God to be the all-doer, is the very cause of attaining liberation.

Story Time



To See Good In All

One day Shreeji Maharaj was serving food to his Saints in the courtyard of Dada Khachar. Shreeji Maharaj had just served all the various items, so the Saints were just about to begin eating when two Saints arrived. Shreeji Maharaj had served everything, so there was nothing left. These two Saints were hungry but the question was, what can be done?

Shreeji Maharaj had found a solution. He told the two Saints to take their eating bowls and walk along the line of the seated Saints, asking for a small portion of food from everyone. So one Saint walking in the line asked for various items from each Saint. The other Saint only asked for one item from each Saint. When both the Saints reached the end their bowls were filled.

Then Shreeji Maharaj revealed the principle behind this simple action. Shreeji Maharaj preached to his Saints that "see one Saint took all different items and another took one item, in a similar manner if one looks at the various good virtues of God, Saints and devotees one's bowl (self) will be filled with good qualities." In this way Shreeji Maharaj delivered significant morals using simple examples.

Moral: One should cultivate a vision to see good virtues in all.

Exercise:

1. What was Shreeji Maharaj doing?
2. What was the situation?
3. What was the solution that Shreeji Maharaj made and what was the principle?



Practical Development

Respect

- Respect is a fundamental virtue that all should possess.
- To show respect to our elders is a beneficial factor both in the social world and the spiritual world.
- Respect is shown through our actions and speech. The way we react with a certain person and the way we talk to others is very important.
- As devotees of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, respect is a necessity to earn the grace of God, Saints and Devotees.
- Our Guruji has a quote "Respect All, Follow One, Hate None".



Chapter-28

Memory Exercise



Verse

Tame Birud Pādyu Tamāru Jivan Jānu Chu,
Joyu Nahi Kartavya Amāru Jivan Jānu Chu||

Meaning *You have kept your promise· My life (God), you have not looked at our duty my life (God).*

Vocab

- *Grahasth - Householder*
- *Mahant - Head of a Mandir or Shrine*
- *Purnima - Full Moon*

Shreeji Maharaj Says

All my followers, shall daily read this Shikshapatri.
- Shikshapatri

Story Time



Purity Of Heart

At one time, there was Annkot Utsav (Food Festival) held in Gadhada. Many devotees from various villages had gathered there. After the festival was over, the devotees were departing to go to their village. A group of devotees from a village, went to Shreeji Maharaj and humbly prayed, "Oh Maharaj may you always shower your grace upon us". Listening to this request, Shreeji Maharaj laughed and remarked "May all of you also keep grace upon me". Then the devotees left and as soon as they reached the outskirts of Gadhada, one of the devotees stopped everyone. He than commented, "we asked for the grace of Maharaj, but wasn't it odd that Maharaj asked for our grace as well. Let's go back and ask Maharaj why he asked us in return".

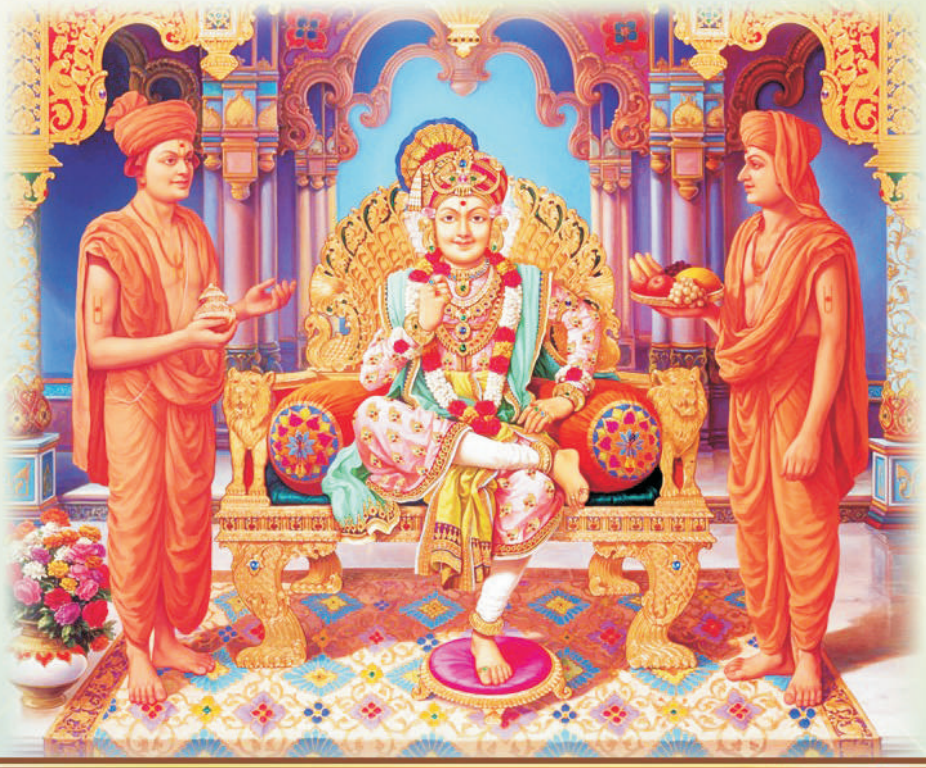
So all of the devotees went back and asked Maharaj. Then Shreeji Maharaj told the devotees, "I like to stay in the

hearts of my devotees, but if one has other desires for materialism then there is no room for me. So the reason why I asked for your grace is for you to keep your hearts clean, so I can come and reside there".

Moral: Keep a pure heart so in the result God can have a place to live.

Exercise:

1. What festival was taking place in Gadhada?
2. What did Maharaj request to the devotees in return?
3. What should one do in order for God to reside in one's heart?



Practical Development

What is a Gurukul?

- Gurukul is a type of school in India, residential in nature with disciples / students living under a Guru (Spiritual Master).
- Both spiritual and academic knowledge is provided in a Gurukul.
- By attending a Gurukul one develops proper morals and well rounded skills in order to function steady in the world.
- Kandari Gurukul was established/ started in the month of May 1994 by Pujya Guruji.
- Over 500 students attend Kandari Gurukul and recently Swaminarayan Sanskar Pith (SSP) International English medium School became branch of Kandari Gurukul.
- Also other various branches of Kandari Gurukul include Vadodara Gurukul, Loyadham-India, Loyadham-NJ (USA), Loyadham-Macon (USA).



Chapter-29

Memory Exercise



Verse

Evã Sant Sansãr Mã, Pachi Jotã Pan Jadshe Nahi,
Mãte Hadi Madi Het Karo, Te Vinã Pãr Padashe Nahi||

Meaning *One will not find such a Saint (Ekantik God - Realized) anywhere, therefore develop deep affection for him because, without him one will not be able to reach God.*

Vocab

- *Varna - A social order of the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra caste in India*
- *Vachan - Promise*
- *Manan - Repeated Thinking*

Gunatitanand Swami Says

The meaning of the word Satsang is the 'association of the great Sadhu.' Also one who has pleased the great Sadhu, has pleased God.



Story Time

Quest For Water

At one time Shreeji Maharaj and Sura Khachar were going to Vadtal from Gadhada. It was summer time and they were crossing the region of Bhal (Desert). In this region it was very difficult to find water. At that time, Maharaj became very thirsty and told Sura Khachar to go and fetch him water. Sura Khachar started his quest to find water. Sura Khachar, looked around for some time, but had no luck finding water. Then at a distance he saw a boy and went to him and humbly requested for some water. At first, the boy hesitated because of Sura Khachar's stricking figure, but than seeing his moral character the boy gave a pot of cold water to Sura Khachar. Sura Khachar than thought to himself that "Maharaj will become very pleased upon me after drinking this water and will tell me to ask for a boon. As for me I do not need anything else, I am fulfilled because I have received the manifest form of God, so liberation is guaranteed. On the other hand if I install faith of Shreeji Maharaj in this boy than the boy would become eligible to attain the divine abode of Akshardham."

Then Sura Khachar told the boy to come with him. He explained to the boy that "This water is for the supreme lord himself. He is manifest on this Earth. If you give him this pot of water yourself, than he will become pleased upon you and

ask you for a wish. My question is what will you ask for?" The boy replied "As of right now I have 50 acres of land, I will ask for another 50 acres of land."

After hearing this Sura Khachar lectured the boy about the divine bliss of Akshardham and installed faith of Shreeji Maharaj to the boy. Then Sura Khachar taught the boy that, "when Maharaj asks you for a wish ask for Moksh (Ultimate Liberation)". Soon after, Sura Khachar and the boy reached where Maharaj was residing. They offered water to Maharaj, in result Maharaj became pleased on the boy and told him to ask for a wish. The boy, as taught, asked for Moksh. Hearing this Maharaj inquired "Who taught you this?" The boy answered "Sura Khachar." Then Maharaj granted liberation to the boy and became pleased upon Sura Khachar for installing faith in the boy.

Moral: Do not ask for materialistic objects from God or his Great Saint, ask for Moksh (Ultimate Liberation).

Exercise:

1. Who did Sura Khachar come across in the desert?
2. What did Sura Khachar teach the boy?
3. What did the boy tell Sura Khachar when Sura Khachar asked him what he will ask for Shreeji Maharaj?

Practical Development

Diet Purity

- Purity of diet is the cause of purity of the mind.
- If our diet is not pure, the mind becomes polluted with wicked desires.
- 2 types of Diet
    1. Pious (Holy)
    2. Unpious (Unholy)



- Pious:
    1. Pure Vegetarian
    2. Offered to Bhagwan before partaking
    3. No Onion/Garlic
    4. Cooked by a pious person
- Unpious
    1. Contains Meat
    2. Outside Food (Ex: Restaurant/Fast Foods)
    3. Food made by unholy people
    4. Contains Onion and Garlic
- It is scientifically proven that if one eats Pious foods one's character changes compared to eating Unpious foods.

Chapter-30

Memory Exercise





Verse

Bijã Gunvãn To Ghanã Madashe, Pan Nahi Made Hari Nã Madel,
Nishkulãnand Evã Sant Sambandhe, Anantanã Pãp Badel||

Meaning

One will find many, who possess great virtues, but it is rare to find one who has met God, Nishkulanand Swami says by the company of such a Sant, countless people's sins are washed away.

Vocab

- Chidakash - Formless pure light of Akshardham
- Haveli - Traditional mansion-like building, usually constructed of intricately carved woodwork
- Sankhya - False and Philisophy of understanding that everything that evolves from maya is perishable

Guruji Says

Forget misery, if we remember misery, then the happiness we have in our life will feel like misery. Therefore stay constantly enthusiastic about who we have attained (Supreme Lord Swaminarayan).



Story Time

All – Knowing

During the course of travelling, Shreeji Maharaj arrived in the village of Karyani. There a well – renowed devotee by the name of Mulji Sheth of the village Memka came there to have the darshan of Maharaj. Mulji Sheth humbly folded his hands and requested to Maharaj, "Please grace my village Memka with your holy presence." Hearing this, the devotees sitting in the assembly pleaded to Maharaj, "You must not go to Memka. The whole village is against you. They will cause trouble. The only devotees we have there are Mulji Sheth, Hansraj Suthar, Shamo Agolo and Shamo Kansagaro."

But honoring the feelings of Mulji Sheth, Shreeji Maharaj said, "Mulji go and make preparations, we shall certainly come to Memka." Maharaj then rounded up everyone and went to Memka. Mulji Sheth spent all of his earnings and arranged a grand reception for Maharaj. He made all the arrangements to ensure maximum comfort for Maharaj. Maharaj stayed in Memka for 3 days and accepted the devotion of Mulji Sheth. Mulji Sheth fed Maharaj and made lavish arrangements so Maharaj would be comfortable in every way possible· Before leaving Maharaj remarked, "Sheth, you and other 3 devotees should leave Memka soon. Within 20 days, you should collect all your belongings; sell your homes and leave Memka. Please promise me that you will follow my words." All 4 of the

devotees promised Maharaj and then Maharaj departed. As for the devotees Mulji Sheth collected his belongings, and vacated to the village of Limbdi, Hansraj migrated to the village of Kholadiyad and Agolo and Kansagaro went to the village of Chanpar.

On the 20th day, the Gaekwad army came to Memka and completely destroyed it. They burnt many homes and looted the villagers. The all-knowing Shreeji Maharaj saved the lives of the 4 devotees.

Moral: Have trust in the words of God, due to it one will overcome numerous obstacles.

Exercise:

1. Why were the devotees sitting in the assembly, against sending Maharaj to Memka?
2. What did Maharaj command Mulji Sheth and the other 3 devotees to do before departing?
3. What happen on the 20th day in Memka?



Practical Development



Thal (Sanctified Food)

- Thal is food offered to Bhagwan.
- Before we consume any kind of food or drink we should first offer it to God.
- When we offer it to God, it is called prasadam. By eating prasadam our mind, body and soul become purified.
- There are 2 benefits in offering Thal to Bhagwan:
  1. Bhagwan becomes pleased by our devotion
  2. By consuming prasadam we become purified
- Consuming food without first offering it to God is equivalent to eating meat. Nevertheless drinking water or any liquids without first offering it to God is equivalent to drinking alcohol.

Story Time Exercise

Answer Sheet

Chapter 1

1. Sweeping the mandir grounds
2. He at first saw Swami sweeping and then he found out that Swami is the mahant himself
3. Wealth and Women

Chapter 2

1. To spread Satsang to devotees/non-devotees
2. He told them to follow their vows and code of conducts and Satsang will spread automatically
3. Made numerous people into devotees because of their spotless character

Chapter 3

1. Kalvani
2. Due to Ramanand Swami's passing
3. Ramanand Swami was just merely a drum-beater, the real star is Sahajanand Swami

Chapter 4

1. Dudh Talavdi
2. It flew to the bank of the pond
3. God is recognized by his attributes not by the miracle he performs

Chapter 5

1. Maharaj was perspiring, clothes smeared with turmeric powder and he was only wearing a dhoti
2. They doubted his actions and were ready to leave the village
3. God behaves in such a way for the liberation of others, but all his actions are divine

Chapter 6

1. He tied them to a wooden pillar
2. To cut off the nose and ears of both the Saints
3. Everything happens by the will of God· He is Sarva Karta

Chapter 7

1. Prayed to God, offered puja, applied tilak chandlo, and visited the mandir
2. Take him to the well and dip him in and out until he breaks his kanthi and forsake Bhagwan Swaminarayan.
3. Bhagwan Swaminarayan appeared in the room, feed Dahyo and released him from the room.

Chapter 8

1. Piplana
2. The head of the fellowship
3. No pain should be caused to my devotees, No devotee should suffer from lack of food/clothing

Chapter 9

1. Water and Grains
2. His watermelon like stomach
3. Shreeji Maharaj and Swami came and took him to Akshardham

Chapter 10

1. Lalji knew the way across the desert, so he played the role of a guide
2. Food, Water and Money
3. His father-in-law's home

Chapter 11

1. Dec 17th 1801 CE
2. Swaminarayan
3. This Sahajanand Swami is the lord of lords and the cause of all

Chapter 12

1. To celebrate the festival of Ramnavami
2. They tied their vrutti (vision) on Manki
3. "Manakiya Chadiya Re Mohan Vanmadi"

Chapter 13

1. Vadtal
2. To dip his feet into the waterpot, so that she could mix it into the well
3. Kathlal

Chapter 14

1. 14 Pages
2. He tore them up and threw them away
3. He did all his work to please Bhagwan, and Shreeji Maharaj is supreme and sustainer of all

Chapter 15

1. They had to wear dark and thick clothes with no jewelry. They also had to cover their faces at all times and could not attend any festivals
2. To get water from the well and to wear fancy, rich clothes and jewelry
3. Lord Swaminarayan/Shreeji Maharaj

Chapter 16

1. Raj Kavi (King's Personal Poet)
2. They wanted to live a life of celibacy and worship Shreeji Maharaj
3. Glory about Shreeji Maharaj, worldly pleasures are full of misery and true bliss is only in God, Saints, and Devotees

Chapter 17

1. Dabhan
2. Choryashi
3. The man answered, "I have only studied the mahamantra 'Swaminarayan', in return Maharaj gave the whole pot of golden coins to him.

Chapter 18

1. Lakshmi Vadi
2. The boy spat on a Jain saint unknowningly
3. He became humble and asked for forgiveness

Chapter 19

1. Because he chose another faith over the Muslim faith
2. Black Pepper Powder
3. Because she lied about how there was no black pepper powder, when in reality there was

Chapter 20

1. There are many follies like you who wander around
2. A poisonous insect
3. Diarrhea and Vomiting

Chapter 21

1. To provide alms (grains)
2. Rajabhai sold his possessions, locked his home and left to go to Gadhada
3. To plough the field of Parvatbhai, 13 years

Chapter 22

1. Ekadashi
2. Gopalanand Swami
3. Pigeon Tongues

Chapter 23

1. Goddess Sharada
2. He associated with wicked people
3. By insulting him, having him make a bundle from the shoes of all the devotees present, put it on his head and walk clockwise around the devotees

Chapter 24

1. Satsangijivan
2. Shreeji Maharaj excommunicated him
3. Shreeji Maharaj told everyone that Swami's understanding was correct

Chapter 25

1. Jagnath Mahadev Mandir
2. He made a buffalo recite the Vedas
3. By sprinkling water on their homes

Chapter 26

1. They cut off their genitals
2. 60 rupees
3. They will not get sufficient food, will be attacked by wicked people, will have to bear the heat and cold, and face many calamities

Chapter 27

1. Serving Saint's food
2. Two Saints arrived late and there was nothing to serve them
3. Solution -Told both the Saint's to go in the line, and take a little from each Saint. Principle - If one imbibes good virtues from others, one will also be filled with good virtues

Chapter 28

1. Annkot Utsav (Food Festival)
2. To also keep grace upon him
3. Keep our heart clean

Chapter 29

1. A boy
2. To ask for Moksh
3. 50 acres of land

Chapter 30

1. Because they knew the whole village was against Maharaj
2. To pack up all belongings, sell one's home and leave Memka
3. The Gaekwad army came and destroyed the village