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H. H. Acharya Shri Rakeshprasadji Maharaj

PRELUDE

Ohriji Maharaj has emphasized the requirement of correct understanding. This needs to be understood well in the present circumstances as Corona pandemic has created many doubts and questions in the minds of the people. They want to know - how to tackle such situation. How to move ahead? Who should be relied upon? The only answer is to rely on Lord Swaminarayan and His pure Satsang. We should strengthen ourselves with full faith in Lord Swaminarayan.

Once Shreeji Maharaj asked, "Who should be considered superior, the ascetic or the house holder?" Nobody replied satisfactorily. Then Shreeji Maharaj replied, "The one whose understanding has great maturity is superior in the Satsang. What is this understanding? The follower who is blessed by the Lord and is competent and yet behaves like an humble servant before the devotees of God, is said to be a devotee with supreme understanding and that devotee is great.

We feel, when the situation is worst because of this pandemic, the followers, keeping great faith in the words of Shri Hari, should move ahead in the Satsang. Shri Hari is the supreme power of this world, and everything happens at His desire. Then why to even think about the other factors?

Shreeji Maharaj has very explicitly told in Vachnamrut and other scriptures that the Vairagya and the understanding of a follower becomes very clear when he faces such pendemic or comes into contact with vices. What to think when there is bigger difficulty or wealth? Shreeji Maharaj gave the example of Dada Khachar and clarified that in his difficulty everybody's conscience got exposed. As a result, Shreeji Maharaj advised, not to go after sorrow or happiness. We should live as per the wish of Lord Krishna. If He desires the whole world would become Satsangi. And if He decides otherwise, there will be a decline in the Satsang. If this Bhagwan makes us to sit on the elephant we should sit on it and feel like a king; and if he creates a situation wherein we

have to sit on a donkey we should gladly do that. We should keep faith only in the words of the Lord. Keeping faith in Him, we should worship Him. We should not entertain any kind of remorse. There happens many ups and down in the Satsang and in such situations, keeping firm faith in the Lord, the followers should worship the Lord. Our Nandsaints, following the line of Shreeji Maharaj, have expressed this need in their writings. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami, in Bhaktchintamani, has expressed this point in one line.....

> સુખ દુઃખ આવે સર્વે ભેળું, તેમાં રાખજો સ્થિર મતિ; જાળવીશ મારા જનને, વળી જતન કરીશ અતિ.

Nishkulanand Swami suggests that, we should worship God with a steady mind and keep faith in the Lord in the good or bad condition or any ups and down in life. Shri Hari is the Omniscient. He is my Ishtdev and I worship Him. I try my level best to reach Him. Whatever He has thought for me is the best for me. We have to go ahead with this faith. In such understanding there remains the Lord's pleasure.





Bolanhara Jiva so, Jab tyage nij deh;

Murdha ke sang Mukta kahe, Kou na rarkhe saneh.

(Muktanand Swami)

It is the soul in you that speaks, that is real you and not your body; When this soul leaves your body, none loves that dead cadaver.

God in His wisdom has allowed man only a limited insight into the mystery of life. No man on his own has been able to solve the enigma of life. Our gross body is bound by time and place. It is subject to decay in the course of time.

We live only in the present. We cannot belong to any epoch of time in the past or any period of time in future. We have to live in the space allotted to us here - in our village, city, country, this earth! One can leave one's village and go to the city; one can leave the city and go to another; one may even leave one's own country and go to a foreign land. But how far can he go? He will only circumnavigate the earth and come back only at the place from which he started. This is called Bhava-atavi. Even if he travels in the outer space, he would be in the orbit round the earth. The earth holds us fast. We have to cut that bond.

Time is another enemy. We cannot go beyond time. We cannot retrieve the time past. It is gone forever. We wait for time future. But time future is the most elusive entity. Time future when it comes to us becomes only time present. It is time present that holds us in thrall.

No escape is possible for the body bound by time and space.

But it is not so for the soul.

The soul is immortal and eternal. But by gross mistake we confuse ourselves into believing that the soul, body and our ego are one and the same. Muktanand Swami gives a deep insight into the mystery of our existence here and points out a way for salvation. The body is gross of the earth. It is dust and dirt. Man is what his soul is. When the soul leaves the body, none loves and keeps the dead cadaver, a mere rotting carcass. Our body is our wrong identity. Our true identity is that divine spark in us. It is the soul that shines and illuminates the gross body. My soul is me and not my body says Muktanand, the Sage. It is this realization that will help man to ascend Akshardham, the eternal resplendent abode of the Lord.

NAR N S S N S S

Rameshbhai Bhagwandas Soni, Vadodar

I AM A SOUL OF LOVE A HEART OF PEACE A MIND OF STILLNESS A BEING OF LIGHT Once when the sun was going into its golden cup, I asked my master : 'Guruji, which can be the first pre-condition in the pursuit of religion?'

The great master calmly replied : 'Of course, healthy body..... and to keep the body healthy.'

Before my question completed, he retorted : 'To keep the body healthy, it is essential to have a healthy mind. As is the mind, so is the body and as is the body so is the mind. Actually body and mind are the either sides of the same coin.'

After a pause of few moments, Guruji said with brilliant smile : 'Now you obviously intend to ask, how can mind remain healthy? Isn't it?'

I nodded my head with smile and affirmation.

Being a little bit serious, the Guruji spoke : 'As a matter of fact, for that purpose one has to know the mind. This can be procured only by keeping awake. Wakefulness means to live with awareness. The same is refered as Sakshibhav (sense of witness) in Shrimad Bhagwad Gita.

What Bhagwan Swaminarayan refers to as being oneself at the entrance of awareness is in this context. By keeping yourself aware, learn to observe the mind. Never tag it with your likes or dislikes. Keep on observing the mind neutrally without intermingling yourself with the vagaries of mind . If you keep on observing the ego-centrism of mind with awareness, then the mind will become your friend and will help you with ease in your spiritual practice.'

This-the most remarkable fact is to be taken to the bosom of our hearts. It is well understood by experience that the body is in total control of mind in all respects.

The body usually does not get into serious illness unless and until it is confronted with external difficulties or badly affected by an accident or falls prey to circumstantial serious infection. Many a time, it is observed that persons with strong will power do not experience any contamination from outside. Feeble mind fetches all types of ailments.

The feebleness of mind destroys even the immunity of our body to a large extent. Mind has a special tendency to give reactions. In the morning, what do you do after leaving your bed? You usually stretch the body or just yawn.

It is nothing but merely the natural reaction of mind. While talking with someone, if a fly happens to sit on your nose; automatically your hand will make it fly. This is also a mind's reaction. Sometimes when a person whom you dislike the most, meets you on your way and starts talking in sugar coated manner, your mind immediately thinks in reaction on the basis of bitter experiences of the past as -'This man is a great rogue. How cunningly he had cheated me! Surely he must have some task to be fulfilled by me, that is why he speaks so sweetly.'Thus our mind gives reactions of the

present incidents on the basis of past experience.

Our life is thus full of mind's reactions. When mind stops r e a c t i n g , w h a t e v e r is evident is truth. Reactions of mind do not permit us to realize the things in their real forms.

By dint of

reactions, mind creates the transparent curtains of thoughts between every events or objects or persons, conse-quently we comprehend or understand any person or object or event in accordance with our prejudices or past experiences. As a result, we always remain deprived of the reality.

In Ikshwanku dynasty, there lived a king named Janshruti. Once he asked a question to his master Raikava : 'O Godly saint! Why does a man reap the fruits of his deeds in the form of sin or virtue even after dedicating his sole being to the Almighty?'

As a reply, the master hit the king's head with a nearby stone. When the king being enraged ordered to arrest the master & punish him, the master said : 'O King, If you have dedicated everything belonging to you to God, you must realize that the hitting of stone has also happened by God's will. So try to understand that when the body is dedicated to God, never mind whether the body being hit by stone or spears! But no, you forgot the truth and your mind reacted with rage. O King, you are still under the influence of mental reactions, so you are entitled to accrue the results of every sin and virtue. Even if every event owes its



existence to circumstance, fortune or God, you become part and parcel in that outcome through your reactions.' Finally, the

master sermonizes the king Janshruti saying : 'O King, The supreme bliss by dint of whose power it exists s in - v i r t u e,

happiness-sorrow, creation-destruction, resides in you and in entire universe concomitantly. No need to add and subtract sin-virtue and happiness-misery to achieve Him. He already exists within you. The mind , surrounded by Him, by virtue of His power, which you call your own out of egoism, keeps you occupied through strange reactions between you and the Supreme bliss. Be liberated from mind's reactions and observe the life. Doing thus, O King, you will be able to realize the God despite living worldly life.'

If you observe every activity of each sense with full awareness, mind's habit of giving reactions will be lost. The mind needs a seat to rest peacefully. Whenever the mind is engrossed in any object or person, it gets temporary peace, but the peace experienced in worldly objects or mundane person is very momentary.

Hence if you want to experience eternal peace in the mind, it should be allowed to have a shelter at the feet of Shri Hari - the God Almighty.

The peace and the bliss experienced by getting engrossed in the Divine would be everlasting and supernatural!



In a king's court, a stranger comes for a job. The king asks his qualification? The man wittily answers, "Using my brain, I can solve any mess."

The king gives him responsibility of the horse's stable. After a few days, the king asked him his opinion about his most favorite and expensive horse.

The servant answered, "The horse isn't original."

When the king enquired, the breed of the horse was original, but his mother died, so he was raised sucking milk of the cow. King asked the servant, "How did you know?"

The servant answered, "Original breed horses while eating, take grass in their mouth and keep their faces up. While this horse, like the cow, bowing down, eats the hay."

King, getting impressed, sent ghee, grains and bird's meat to the servant's house.

He gave promotion and recruited the servant at the Queen's palace, then...

The king questioned about his wife, then in the reply, the servant said,

"The queen's habits are like a queen but she is not a princess."

King got astonished; he immediately called his mother-in-law. She confessed that as soon as my daughter was born, she got engaged to you.

But within 6 months, she died and so we adopted someone else's daughter, who is your queen today...

King asked the servant, "How did you come to know this?"

The servant answered, "Cultured people's behavior towards others is very polite and courteous which your queen lacks."

The king, getting impressed, again gave grains, sheep, goat and gave him place in his court.

After sometime, king called over the servant and desired to know about himself.

The servant answered, "Give me an unfailing brave promise then I will speak the reality.

King promised so the servant said,

"Neither are you a king, nor is your behavior like a king."

The king got fiercely angry but had promised lease of life so controlling his temper, he remained quiet.

King went to his father and asked him "Whose son actually I am?"

His father answered, "Yes it's the truth. I didn't have a child so I adopted you from a butcher." King was dumbstruck and asked the servant, "How did you know?"

The servant replied, "When a king gifts someone, he gifts in the form of diamonds, pearls and precious jewels. But you always gifted me with grains, sheep, goats etc. which behavior was suggestive of a butcher."

Moral: Man's reality depends on his blood line, culture, behavior and intention. Status changes, but repute or standing remains the same.

So give good culture to your children, don't give them high position or wealth. If culture is good, then he will acquire wealth on his own and gain high position. But if you give him high position, then he might lose that too, because of his ill-behavior.

Now as parents, choice is yours, whether you should give your child culture or wealth.



नीतिप्रवीण निगमागम शास्त्रबुद्धे, राजाधिराज रघुनायक मंत्रिवर्य । सिन्दूरचर्चित कलेवर नैष्ठिकेन्द्र, श्रीरामदूत हनुमन् हर सङ्कटं मे ।।९।।

Niti pravin nigamaagam shastra buddhe, Rajadhiraj raghunayak mantrivarya; Sindur charchit kalevar naishtikendra, Shri Raamdut Hanuman har sankatam me. **1**

Most proficient in ethics, well-versed in Vedic scriptures, the best among in the ministry of the great king Rama, having beautiful body smeared by red lead, supreme among absolute celebates, that Hanumanji the ambassador of Lord Rama kindly destroy all my difficulties! **- 1**

सीता निमित्तज रघूत्तम भूरिकष्ट, प्रोत्सारणैकक सहाय हतास्रपौध । निर्दग्धयातुपति हाटक राजधाने, श्रीरामदूत हनुमन् हर सङ्कटं मे ।।२।।

Sita nimittaj raghuttam bhoori kashta, Protsaaranaikak sahay hatasrapaudh; Nirdagdhyaatu pati hatak rajdhane, Shri Raamdut Hanuman har sankatam me. **2**

Utipravin by SHATANANDswami

The leading assistant of Lord Rama in removing the woeful condition resulting from the kidnapping of Sitaji, the destroyer of demons and one who set the great golden city of Ravan on fire, O Hanumanji! The ambassador of Lord Rama kindly destroy my pains! - **2**

> दुर्वार्य रावण विसर्जित शक्तिघात, कण्ठासु लक्ष्मण सुखाहृत जीववल्ले । द्रोणाचलानयन नन्द्रित रामपक्ष, श्रीरामदूत हनुमन् हर सङ्कटं मे ।।३।।

Durvarya Ravan visarjit shaktighaat, Kanthasu Laxman sukhahrut jivavalle; Dronachalaanayan nandrit Raampaksha, Shri Raamdut Hanuman har sankatam me. **3**

One who saved Laxman who had turned almost dead due to the menacing effect of deadly occult magic and unconquerable powers transmitted by Ravan, O Hanumanji, the ambassador of Lord Rama, kindly destroy my pains! - **3**

> रामागमोक्ति तरितारित बन्ध्वयोग, दु:खाब्धि मग्न भरतार्पित पारिबर्ह । रामांधिपद्म मधुपी भवदन्तरात्मन्, श्रीरामदृत हनुमन् हर सङ्कटं मे ॥४॥

Ramagamokti taritaarit bandhvayog, Dukhabdhi magna Bharataarpit paaribahr; Ramanghi padma madhupi bhavadantaraatman, Shri Raamdut Hanuman har sankatam me. **4**

Younger brother Bharat who plunged in the ocean of sorrow resulting from the pain of being separated from elder brother Rama was offered a lifeboat in the form of the

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news of Rama's arrival by Hanumanji, who lifted Bharatji from that ocean of pain and who was rewarded by him, and who always remain attached to the lotus feet of Ramchandraji like a wasp, O ambassador of Lord Rama! Kindly remove my pains! - **4**

दान्तात्म केसरि महाकपिराट् तदीय, भार्यांजनी पुरु तपःफल पुत्रभाव । तार्क्ष्योपमोचित वपुर्बलतीव्रवेग, श्रीरामदूत हनुमन् हर सङ्कटं मे ।।५।।

Dantatma kesari mahakapiraat tadiy, Bhaaryaanjani puru tapah phal putrabhav; Takshyorpamochit vapurbal tivra veg, Shri Raamdut Hanuman har sankatam me. **5**

O Hanumanji the ambassador of Rama, whose soul is air, supreme among monkeys, who was born as a fruit of the severe penance done by Kesari, leader of monkeys and his wife Anjani (as their son) having outstanding physical power, kindly destroy my pains! - **5**

नानाभिचारिक विसृष्ट सवीर कृत्या, विद्रावणारुण समीक्षण दुःप्रधर्ष्य । रोगघ्न सत्सुतद वित्तद मन्त्रजाप, श्रीरामदूत हनुमन् हर सङ्कटं मे ।।ध।। Nanabhicharik visrushta saveer krutya, vidravanaarun sameekshana duhupradharshya; Rogghna satsutada vittad mantrajaap, Shri Raamdut Hanuman har sankatam me. 6

One who has the power to drive away utterly frightening Krityas sent by many types of Tantriks only by the staring with one's red eyes and one gets free from diseases and gets worthy son and wealth by chanting whose name. O such Hanumanji the ambassador of Lord Rama kindly destroy my pains. - **6**

> यन्नामधेय पदक श्रुति मात्रतोऽपि, ये ब्रह्मराक्षस पिशाच गणाश्च भूताः ।

ते मारिकाश्च सभयं ह्यपयान्ति स त्वं, श्रीरामदूत हनुमन् हर सङ्घटं मे ।।७।।

Yannamadhey padak shruti maatratoapi, Ye brahmarakshas pishach ganasch bhootaha; Te marikaasch sabhayam hyapyaanti sa twam, Shri Raamdut Hanuman har sankatam me. **7**

Brahma Rakshasha (deadly demon), hostile wizards and ghosts and deadly and incurable diseases like plague get frightened and soon run away by chanting a single word from whose name that Hanumanji the ambassador of Lord Rama, kindly remove my calamities! - **7**

त्वं भक्त मानस समीप्सित पूर्ति शक्तो, दीनस्य दुर्मद सपत्न भयार्ति भाजः । इष्टं ममापी परिपूरय पूर्णकाम, श्रीरामदूत हनुमनु हर सङ्कटं मे ।।८।।

Twam bhakta maanas samipsita poorti shakto, Deenasya durmada sapatna bhayaarti bhaajah; Ishtam mamaapi paripooray poornakaam, Shri Raamdut Hanuman har sankatam me. **8**

The competent one in fulfilling the aspirations of devotees, one who liberates the weak and poor from the fear of egoist evil and wicked enemies, O desire fulfilling ambassador of Lord Rama, O Hanumanji kindly fulfill my good wishes and remove all my agonies! **- 8**

Translation Prof. **Madhusudan Vyas** Vadodara



One day it so happened that a swan, injured by the arrow of his cousin Devdutta came flying and took shelter at the feet of Siddharth. As he felt sorry for the painful condition of the swan, Siddharth nursed the wounds of the bird and gently rubbed his hand on its head. Devdutta came there and claimed that it was his right to get the swan and asked to Siddharth to return the swan to him.

To this Siddhart replied, "I think, the right of the protector is higher than the right of the hunter, so you shall not get it back." This dispute reached the royal court of king Shuddhodhan. The wounded swan was placed on the middle of the court and the two brothers stood up at some distance. The king pronounced the judgement, "To whoever the wounded swan tries to reach that fellow will deserve the right to get the swan." Then the wounded swan drifted towards his protector Siddharth.

Siddharth had now grown up and had become smart young prince Gautam. His childhood had passed within four walls of the palace among all comforts and luxuries. The king thought, "If I get this prince Gautam locked up in the tie of marriage the thought of asceticizm will never enter in his mind." As a result a supreme beauty called Yashodhara came as the wife of Gautam.

As a result of the wedded-life a son called Rahul was born to Yashodhara. But neither

BADDHa

Shastri Swami Bhanuprakashdasji Porbandar

Part - 2

wealth nor woman could do any magic on Siddharth. One day Siddharth ordered the charioteer to take him round the town for a pleasure trip, and asked him to drive the chariot on the royal roads. The roads had been beautifully decorated in advance and all unwelcome things had been removed from there. But Siddharth ordered the driver to take the chariot on the roads other than the royal roads. When the chariot was passing on common road (other than royal road) Siddharth's eyes fell on a man who was weak, fragile and bent due to old age, who was trying hard to walk. This was a surprising scene for the prince. As the chariot advanced on the road Siddharth saw a group of people carrying a pall and taking a dead body to the cremation ground.

Then Siddharth asked the charioter about the old man and the dead body. The charioteer replied, "Every person has to pass through three stages of life - childhood, youth and old age. The person whom you saw was passing through the third stage of life, and it is the root cause of pain, worry and disease. It becomes the cause of physical and mental weakness. The second person seen was a dead body. When the soul leaves the body it is called a dead body or corpse which is taken to funeral ground for cremation. Both of these scenes made a very deep effect on the mind of Siddharth. He thought, "Is there no remedy to save oneself from these two types of pain?" Thinking process continued in his mind as the chariot rumbled ahead. In a short time the chariot came up to the palace where they saw a saffron clad Sanyasi standing under a road side tree.

He pointed his finger and asked the charioteer who replied, "That man standing under a tree over there is a Sanyasi and he has adopted asceticism to get free from the cycle of birth and death." At that moment Siddharth decided that he would make very strong efforts to free himself from the bondage of birth and death. After passing some years in life of comfort and luxuries now Siddharth felt that such type of material life was meaningless. He returned to the palace and went to the bed chamber but he passed a restless and sleepless night. After a deep mental struggle he reached a mature decision that he would adopt asceticism and would get liberty of soul. One night after leaving wife Yashodhara, Siddharth set out from the palace in search of truth, and that became the night of the great renunciation.

He reached the bank of Amoda river and there he dropped the rich royal garments, plucked off his silky hair one by one and covered himself in the ascetic uniform. He studied Shadarshan i.e. the six great Hindu scriptures, in the city called Vaishali, but his thirst of knowledge could not be quenched. He sat in severe penance on the bank of Niranjana for six years, and it was impossible for him to stand up. He was able to stand up and walk as he was given sweedha tradition of Brahmavihar; we find similarities with Hindu dharm darshan. There are four main pillars of Brahma Vihar (1) Friendship (2) Compassion (3) Pleasure (4) Denouncing. First he settled in Sarnath and selected five disciples. (1) Kaundinya (2) Bhadrik (3) Vasapa (4) Maha (5) Ashwajeet. Lord Buddha said, "A balanced way of life is in itself supreme kind of penance. Madhyam marg is the best means of happiness." He engaged himself in the spread of religion and lived upto 80 years. And he left his body and liberated the soul in Kushi town. He faced many barriers like insult, envy and hostility and he ignored the caste difference. He was liberal and compassionate and for these reason blacksmith, chund, barber upali and drab Amrapalli could get a place in his group (sang). The great Buddha has given us four Aryan truths. Shri Arvind used to say that modern man loves pain. Man is ready to shift himself from one bed to other but he is not ready to leave the hospital. The personality of Lord Buddha was outstanding, matchless and very impressive. Ram and Krishna were incarnated individuals. But Buddha became an incarnate not by birth but by the power of penance. For this reason great thinkers and philosophers consider Buddha as the first flower of humanity. He removed a number of evils which had entered Hindu religion. He combated violence in Yajna, blind beliefs in religious rites and self appraisal by the power of his compassion, and for that reason he has been given an honourable position among the 10 incarnations.

Since the vedic period there was no tradition or convention for Indian females to become Sanyasini or Sadhvi (nun). The two contemporaries, Bhagwan Buddha and Bhagwan Mahavir made separate provision for females to become sadhvi or sanyasini. After 1200 years Sahajanand Swami realised that 50% of population was covered by females. So he made special arrangement for females to accept Diksha under the guidance of the wife of the Acharya and opened a scope for females to live with proper respect and dignity. Today the killing of female foetus has been restricted by law, but 200 years ago when there was no such protective law people made new born girls drink milk (to drown new born girl in a pot full of milk, female infanticide). Lord Shri Hari brought a social and religious reformation. In these way He gave a new life and power to the values of life. At the time of celebrating 25th centenary of Lord Buddha, the officiating Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Now the world will have to choose between Buddha and Yuddha (war). Today the armour of the compassion of Buddha can subsist rather than a battle."

Lord Krishna removed the depression of Arjuna before the beginning of the battle of Mahabharat. There rose a tumult of repentance in the heart of King Ashoka when Kalinga war was over.

A Shraman called Upagupta, belonging to the group of Buddha disciples, advised King Ashoka to approach Buddha to seek the solution of his remorse. If an atomic war breaks out shall there be any individual alive to retrospect or repent?

Today the feelings of compassion has vanished and consequently, humanity has fallen a victim to a deadly pandemic like corona. So Lord Buddha has taken birth in this country and we are all Abuddha (ignorant).

- 1. I take shelter of the great Buddha.
- 2. I take shelter of religion.
- 3. I take shelter of Sangham (religious group).

Whats & Whys Answers to the questions of curious seekers Sayam Prarthana (Evening Prayer)

In Shikshapatri, Shriji Maharaj commands that all His devotees should always go to temple at evening time and there in the temple they should sing Kirtan in loud voice taking the name of the Lord. (Verse - 63)

Usually morning time is preferred for spiritual activity like Darshan. All auspicious deeds are undertaken in the morning. We go to temple to get Darshan and hope that all the activities of the day will be hurdle-free. Then why is evening time given importance in this verse?

Sacred books have suggested two types of worship as morning prayer and evening prayer. If you get time, you can visit temple for Darshan and morning prayers, otherwise you should inevitably go to temple in the evening. Of course, devotees are not required to do Pooja at length in the evening time. Therefore, Shriji Maharaj has told that you should do Aarti etc. as per routine in the evening.

Any worldly process is prohibited at evening time by sacred scriptures. The story of Kashyap and Diti in Bhagawat is a good example for evening time discipline in life. Diti conceived at evening time, so she gave birth to horrible demons like Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu. Therefore, it is advisable that you should get in touch with God at evening time. To acquire such holy association, we should visit the temple at evening time. Dictionary meaning of Sandhyakaal or Sandhikaal means 'juncture'. Evening is the juncture of day and night, so it works like a buffer between setting sun and approaching night. Sun, the controller of intelligence is disappearing and Moon, the controller of mind is rising. At evening time, when both are absent, we should keep our mind linked with Lord Swaminarayan Who is the God of all the gods. To save our mind from the pollution of negative thoughts and passions, we should go to the temple and keep it linked with the idol of Lord Swaminarayan as it has been ordered by Him.

Negative or positive half-baked thoughts keep running across our mind and they become obstacles in devotional worship. Therefore, evening prayer serves as a scientific process to purify mind and intelligence. There is a direct relation between the mind and temple. Temple is the place where all vibrations of mind can become stabilized.

The question may arise why should we go to temple? We can offer our devotion at home. Turning rosary, offering Mansi Pooja, study of holy scriptures can be done at home. We can sit in a room and read Vachanamrit or Bhaktachintamani. Then why go to a temple? There is a great difference between home and temple. The ground and the area of temple become divine due to continuous Kirtan, Dhoon, Yajna and Mantrajaap. The purifying effect of chanting and performing Yajna continues for a long time.

The Gita says यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोष्मि – I am Jap Yajna, as best of all Yajnas. As the temple opens in the morning, devotees sit there for turning beads and singing Kirtans. The temple in which the idols are consecrated by Lord Swaminarayan Himself, or by any Acharya from Dharmadev's family, has its outstanding status. Its spiritual effect is enhanced by the dust of the feet of great saint-devotees. There is a dome at the central part of the temple structure. If we loudly chant Mantras standing under the dome, the echoing effect of sound waves makes the atmosphere purely spiritual and helps us to achieve better concentration. This can hardly become possible at home.

When we sit for Pooja and prayer at home, visitors, relatives and phone calls become obstacles and cause disturbances in the prayer. In the temple, we find only the idol and Mantra of Lord Swaminarayan.

For this reason, Shriji Maharaj has recommended daily going to temple. Some people visit temple on Sunday, Ekadashi, Hari Navami or Purnima but Shriji Maharaj insists that we should go to temple 'everyday' because it is as essential as air, water and food are essential for our body. Can we say "I will breathe air only on Sunday?" This temple going process is essential for the health of our soul. External world is full of menacing effects of various destructive elements. Psychological elements of attachment, envy, desire, anger and greed keep on pouring poison into the soul. Temple going is essential for cleaning the polluting effect of such poison.

We move here and there to earn livelihood and pass through physical and mental friction because life is a struggle and everyday brings a new battle. Association with the idol of God is the only remedy to overcome the problem. We should pay evening visit to temple in order to be free from the stress and strain and their negative and polluting influence on our routine life.

Only visit to temple is not sufficient. We should try to concentrate the mind on the idol of Lord Swaminarayan. In the temple, we see various types of devotees with different spiritual and psychological level. They create a



comprehensive and collective circle of spiritual vibrations and the spiritual energy of the idol enters that vibe. This type of combination helps us to stabilize our mind and concentrate on the idol.

If there is much commotion with a lot of pushing and pulling and if we just glance at the idol and come out **"I had good Darshan, now I am relieved"** - such attitude will not work because whole effort ends in vain. But if you wait for some time for the crowd to disperse and then with stable mind if you do some Dhoon and Kirtan with Mahamantra chanting, it can bring good effect.

> - Lalji Bhagat Jnan Bag, Vadtal





Hearing hearty tearful prayer of Dharma and Bhakti, their family god Hanumanji manifested himself before them!

O Mahavir! Krutyas will kill my Ghanshyam please render your help.

Don't worry a little! No harm will be done to the young God. Krutya began to rush forward carrying Shri Hari in her arms, but Shri Hari increased His weight, so she became unable to carry Him and dropped Him under a tree. But Shri Hari was spreading a smile lying on a heap of flowers.



affected by the zigzag glance of Shri Hari!





Hanumanji said, "Shri Ghanshyam is most competent and He will enhance religion, wisdom, asceticism and devotion on earth. He will establish pure religion. Saying so Hanumanji (divinely) disappeared.





The mind set behind successful relationships

There is a wonderful analogy about the honeybee and the fly. It teaches us a valuable lesson to improve our relationships and the quality of life. The honeybee flies from flower to flower, extracting only the nectar without disturbing the flower. The mind set of a honeybee is to seek the essence of each flower.

Even in a place filled with rotting garbage. Rather than giving its attention to all the filth, the honeybee keeps its focus on finding nectar. And it eagerly flies to even a single tiny flower. Amidst miles of garbage in our relationships, we have much to learn from the honeybee; it is teaching us the art of focusing on the positives and dealing appropriately with the faults in each other. There will be faults everywhere and in everyone, there is never a shortage of things to complain about. But just as the honeybee seeks nectar, even in the most unexpected places, we can aim to seek the positive qualities in those around us.

The fly represents another type of mind set in a relationship. Although each species can be appreciated, for its particular instinctive nature, still, we can study

them to learn relevant lessons. To improve the quality of our own lives, on an otherwise healthy body, the fly will focus on sucking an infectious scab. The fly may travel over hundreds of flowers, but what does it focus on? It focuses on tasting garbage and excrement. It ignores the sweet fragrance of rose gardens. And even in the best of circumstances, and in the tidiest places, the fly will focus on the trash.

This represents the mind set of ignoring the good qualities in those around us and focusing on their faults. It is so easy; it requires no effort to see the flaws in others. Fault-finding is a habit, the more we give into it, the more we become obsessed by it.

In relationships, it is important to have honest, well-wishing communication, focused on appreciating the positive while dealing with the negatives in a gracious, constructive manner, trying to bring out the best in each other.

In doing so, we learn to recognize the positive qualities within our own self and to overcome unhealthy low self-esteem, honeybee mentality or fly mentality. Sahjanand Swami in Vachnamrut (Gadhada Pratham 46) talked about the principles of modern Physics while deliberating upon Dahar Vidya. This can be easily understood by those who know modern Physics and Spirituality. Sahajanand Swami's religious deliberations opens new areas for comparisons between Spirituality and Science.

Dahar Vidya is a Brahm Vidya, a spiritual science. Akshi Vidya too is a Brahm Vidya and there are more of them.

Sahaianand Swami said, '...Below the universe there are said to be nether worlds and beyond them are the seven folds of coverings. Beyond them there is darkness and beyond darkness there is light. That light is called Chidakash. Thus there is Chidakash (the region of divine light) on all the sides of the universe and also pervades within the universe. Thus Akash i.e. the space is the support of all. The lore of visualising this is called Dahar Vidya.

Maheshvar Bhatt, a

Vedanti Brahmin, asked a question to Sahajanand Swami at Gadhada on 25th January, 1820 : "During samadhi everything fades out. How does the sky fade out?"

Answering this question, Sahajanand Swami first explained the characteristics of the sky (space). The space is said to be the sky. Whatever objects exist, exist in the space alone. There is space or sky pervading within all objects too. There is no substance which has no space between the atoms because there is space even in the most microscopic dust particles of the earth. There is space even in the millionth part taken out of that dust particle. So, when we look at the sky, we do not see the four fundamental elements. Only the space is seen. That space is the support of all the three types of bodies : the gross, the subtle and the causal. They are within the sky and even universe is within the space.

Chhandogya Upanishad (chapter 8) explains the concept of Dahar Vidya. Dahar means the



minute. It is like the small house in the heart of a human body. It is also called Daharakash or Chidakash. Chidakash is Aloukik while the space which is outward is Laukik. Chidakas is Anant (infinite) while the space is limited. Everything, of the present, past and future, is supported by Chidakash. Which is the inner divine element, is related with the outward limited space.

There are 32 types of Brahma Vidya (spiritual practices). Dahar Vidya is one of those spiritual learning science, which identifies - the external

Brahmand (universe) with internal body, the objective reality with the subjective, the macrocosmatic elements with the micro-cosmatic, Brahman with Atman. The word Dahar means subtle. It is classical meditative practice shown in Vedas.

(Shastri Harijivandasji, a scholar saint of Vadtal opined, "The space / Akash is of two types : Bhautik Akash & Mahakash. The Yogis call Mahakash, the Chidakash.)



Ati jhini chhe aa katha, kahe na samje koy; Murti jova Maharajni, ichchhu chhu hu manmaay. Din bahuno dakhdo, karu chhu krupanidhan; Pan aaj sudhi antarma, madya nahi Bhagwan.

(Hriday Prakash)

(This is a very abstract subject which cannot be grasped by mere narration. I desire to see God Shree Swaminarayan bhagwan within. O Merciful, I try for that for many days but up till now I have not realized God.) - Hriday Prakash

Man aspires only for joy and happiness. Behind all these meritorious or evil deeds his only aim is to achieve joy but his joy does not remain joy forever and his happiness does not remain happiness forever. Sorrows and unhappiness chase away all his joy and happiness.

If you go on reducing your materialistic yearnings and if you try to be immersed in the meditation upon the Form of God Supreme, there would be nothing in your life except everlasting joy. God's Form is the only source of bliss. The Vedas and the Upanishads introduce God to us with words – Sat, Chit and Anand i.e. the divine joy of Truth. The Upanishadic aphorism says : Anandomaya Brahmn. God is identical with divine bliss i.e. Brahmn.

Separation from God is unhappiness. Materialistic life leads a person away from God, while divine bliss leads him to God. Man can refute the existence of God but he cannot refute divine bliss.

There are two types of theists in the world. One believes the materialistic world as real and tries to gain happiness through it. The other theist seeks bliss through spiritual life. One who is called an atheist in the spiritual world is theist so far as his materialistic world is concerned. Finally he will realize that the materialistic world does not give pleasure, he would become an atheist – a non-believer towards worldly way of life and he will be anxious towards none except God.

Though all know that God is the source of all happiness, they do not love Him because ...

Man buddhi Chitta ahankar je, te kahiye kusangi char; Tya jova icchhe Jagadishne, tu kari kaun vichar. Weri te Vahla janiya, eh motu ajnan; Ghar thaki dhutapanu, na kalyu te nidan.

(Hriday Prakash)

(Mind, intellect, sub conscious mind and self consciousness are said to be four evil associates. With that thought how can you desire to see God there? With ignorance you found friends in the foes. You never realized that by nature they are cheats.) –Hriday Prakash

Two friends set out for the pleasure of boating in the moonlight after being fully drunk. They sat in the boat and kept on rowing all the night. The cool breeze in the morning brought them to their senses and to their great surprise they saw that they were there, where they were at night, because they had not raised up the anchor! It was still bogged at the seashore. Similarly the ignorance about the body and our material cognition have stuck up our soul. Unless we become free from such ignorance, all our rowing in the world-ocean will strain our muscles only. The ignorance gathered through innumerable births serves as hard drinks, intoxicants and drugs. The contact with the true holy man (saintly person) is enlightenment like the cool breeze. If such cool breeze touches one's heart and one realizes the distinction between the body and the soul and one remains devoted to God, one will realize god after crossing this infinite ocean of the world.

Shree Swaminarayan Bhagwan says: The British soldier arrests some criminal, he is brought to the witness box in the court but still he is under arrest and not allowed free movement because he is not reliable. Similarly the senses and the Antahkaran (mind, intellect, sub conscious mind and self-consciousness) should be chained and kept in the witness box of five fundamental rules of restriction i.e. Punch Vratman and forced to practice devotion to God but they should be treated as unreliable as foes.

Whenever the Antahkaran is free, it should be kept conscious about the glorified life of God. The intellect should be concentrated on the Form of God. Subconscious mind should be made to think all the time about the remarkable events in the life of Shree Swaminarayan Bhagwan and the self-consciousness should be firmly tied to the thought: I am the devotee of God, I am the soul. Thus our mind, intellect, sub-conscious mind and selfconsciousness can be helpful in our devotion to God and endow us with the bliss of the vision, touch, and realization of God. But if they are turned towards the gross worldly way of life, all these four entities can inflict total spiritual degradation and utter ruin.

These four evil-associates block the way between god and us. If they cannot be

converted into friendly, good-associates and if we do not employ them as friends for our devotion, meditation and service so far as God is concerned that would be our greatest ignorance. As long as that ignorance is not removed all our devotion and devotional practices would be null and void and worth laughing at like rowing a boat without lifting the anchor.

(Contd.)

- Lalji Bhagat Jnan Baug, Vadtal.



A rope was tied on long bamboo sticks between high-rise buildings. A dancer/ artist was walking with his son on his shoulder. Thousands of people were watching it with bated breath. With careful light steps, amid fast winds, the artist crossed the path carrying along his son, putting both their lives at risk. The crowd gave a huge round of applause with loud claps and whistles in appreciation.

People started clicking his snaps, started taking selfies with him, handshakes were on. The artist took the mike and addressed the crowd, "Are you sure I can do this again?" The crowd screamed in unison, "Yes, we're sure you can! We can vouch you can do it again most assuredly!" The artist asked, "You're absolutely sure right?" The crowd responded, "Yes absolutely sure!" The artist said, "Okay, anyone of you, give me your kid, I will put him on my shoulder and walk on the rope again." There was an awkward silence all around! The artist asked, "Got scared? Just few moments back you'll were pretty sure I could do it again. The fact is actually, this is your belief; you don't trust me!"

There is a big difference in these two!

This is what it is. God is present is a belief. But we do not have absolute trust in God. We believe in God but don't trust God. If we trust God, then why worry, get angry, get tensed? Think about it!



ISHWAR (GOD)

We say that God is not visible. But He is the only one seen when nothing else is seen. When there is doom in all four corners, when even a single ray of hope is not seen, then there is a power that is working. And that is the power of praying. A prayer that comes from the depths of one's heart. The two hands folded, while doing prayer and tears rolling down one's eyes that say that "Everything is now in Your hands. Now You are the only one who can lift my life above all troubles." At that time, something impossible happens.

A couple took their child to a doctor, a heart specialist. When diagnosis was done, they realized the child's arteries were choked. Doctor discussed the case with the entire team and told the parents that even after open-heart surgery, the survival chances were only 30%, else the girl will remain alive maximum for 3 months. In this situation, what could parents do? It was like the devil and the deep-sea kind of situation. Parents agreed for surgery.

A few days before the surgery, the girl was admitted to the hospital. The mother strongly believed in the power of prayers. The same Sanskar was in the girl as well. She would always make the girl's resolve stronger by telling her, "Lord resides in our hearts. He will protect you and not let anything wrong happen to you. You don't get scared at all." The day of the operation came. When the doctor saw the innocent and smiling face of the little girl in the O.T., he said, "Don't worry at all. You will be absolutely fine after the operation." The girl replied, "I am not worried at all. Because I know God resides in my heart. Doctor, I have a request that when you open my heart, tell me how God looks like?" Doctor didn't say anything.

During the operation they figured out nothing could be done. It was impossible to save the girl. There wasn't a single drop of blood coming to the heart. Doctor was disillusioned and asked his team to put stitches. Suddenly the girl's words started echoing in the doctor's ears. "Doctor, I am not afraid at all. Because I know God resides in my heart." The doctor joined his hands and prayed to God, "O Lord, my entire experience was worthless to save this girl. If you truly reside in this girl's heart, please do something." The doctor said this was a sincere most prayer that came from his being. Alas! all doctors were astonished. The blood supply to the girl's heart suddenly started. This was indeed a miracle! This incident changed his life. After this incident, whenever he did any operation, he did it with a prayer.

When the girl regained her consciousness, she asked the doctor, "Did you see God in my heart?" He said, "Yes, I felt him. Can't see him, He can only be felt. He has given a message for you and everyone else, Always feel Him in your heart. He resides in everyone. Remember Him, and start all your endeavors. And devote all your work to Him."

There is an old saying, doctor puts bandage over your wound. But the Lord heals it. Never ignore these 3 things in life: Love, Prayer and Forgiveness!



Feminist Perspective in Swaminarayanism

by Shantikumar Bhatt

LIBERATION OF WOMEN

The status of women is more dignified in Swaminarayan way of life. She stands as a symbol of devotion (Radha) on the left side of God and she adores the heart of God as a symbol of prosperity (Shree). Thus a woman inspires the world to cultivate selfless devotion and inspires all individuals to attain prosperity, not only in terms of wealth but also in terms of virtues which are the real wealth of anyone.

An individual, society or a nation cannot achieve prosperity without the active and spontaneous cooperation of women. This is why they say that behind every great man, there is always a woman.

A woman is not just a rib of Adam but she is the better half of a man. She is the complementary part of man and as such she must have the same status as man. This can be achieved by educating them to their utmost capacity.

Bhagwan Shree Swaminarayan was against the Tennyson Ian concept of 'Men to work and women to weep.' He was also against the Miltonian concept of 'One tongue is enough for women' – The prevailing western prejudice against women at that time.

Before about two hundred years, women in India had fallen into the abyss of ignorance and illiteracy. In the glorious past of India, women composed many Vedic hymns, rocked their kids with lullabies of spiritual philosophy as did Madalasa and preached their duties to women, as did Sati Anasuya. They have been unfortunately buried under the graves of memory.

But in the recent centuries, when elsewhere in the world women were looked upon as a tree that grew children, Bhagwan Shree Swaminarayan gave a clarion call and awakened women from their age old slumber. He inspired women to be literate and to read scriptures themselves. Not only this, but he inspired women to read such scriptures even before women who had no opportunity to cut the Gordon's knot of illiteracy.

Surprisingly, what happened before two centuries ago in the Swaminarayan Dispensation, has yet to happen in many Indian religious sects. Women preach to women in separately constructed temples in the Swaminarayan Dispensation. Thus they are saved from the lustful and passionate eyes of males, attending religious assemblies and congregations.

Man among men is a man but man among women is a great hazard as far as the chastity and character of women are concerned. He is not ashamed to give an immoral push or dash to a woman even at a temple. His one eye is fixed on god in the temple and his other eye is fixed on damsels there.

To keep women away from such harassment and molestations, Bhagwan Shree Swaminarayan was the first to construct temples with separate passages, separate doors and separate enclosures for women to uphold their respectability and independence; not to segregate them from the rest of the laity.

Bhagwan Shree Swaminarayan has commanded males not to attend religious discourses given by women as such discourses

are meant only for women.

Before Bhagwan Shree Swaminarayan became the religious head, men and women used to sit together in religious assemblies but he commanded that women must occupy seats behind the male audience so that the eyes of the male audience may not waver and they can concentrate only to the sermon from

the dais and women may thus be kept far away from the sight of the saints on the dais. It was the first step towards the liberation of women. The west has yet to go a long way to reach such a goal. Women's liberation movement in the west came long after this in the east.

B h a g w a n S h r e e Swaminarayan has used three words for a woman:

Stree, Nari and Vanita. These three words means - the protection of women is the responsibility of men, she is to be treated as an integral part of man and she is to be loved with affection.

Adultery between perverse men and women results in serious venereal diseases and perhaps the fatal disease of Aids. So He has commanded not only men but also women to keep away from adultery. Adultery results from hormonal imbalance, adverse financial condition, faulty family growth and mental perversion – all of which can be cured by following behavioral commandments of Bhagwan Shree Swaminarayan.

Young married women who were members of a joint family had to undergo all sorts of inhuman harassments by the elders of the family. Sometimes they had to submit their bodies to satisfy the sexual hunger of the so called famed and favourite saints of the family as it was common practice in some

WOMENWWheel of FamilyOOpen-heartednessMMirror of ChildrenEEmotionsNNavigator of Life-boat

families.

Young women who could not tolerate such immoral practices generally took poison, strangulated themselves, burnt themselves alive or drowned themselves in wells or rivers. Thinking that they would go to heaven if they committed suicide at a holy place, they ran away from home and did commit suicide as a

repentance of being raped.

So Bhagwan Shree S w a m i n a r a y a n commanded : None should commit suicide, even at a holy place.

Such women saw a new hope in Him. Anyhow the woman would find herself at the feet of Him and he would harbour them at the royal residence of Jivuba, Laduba and Rajba. Thus Gadhpur became The

Father's Home for the weeping women of the society.

Even today temples for women in this religion have became the homes of helpless as well as old ladies. This shows how religion can be a reality and a philosopher's stone.

Like the father, the mother is entitled to receive love, respect and service from her children. Such motherly women receive the warmth of family life. They are in a far better condition than mothers and grandmothers in senior citizens' homes in the west.

Jivuba's name is as holy as the holy name of goddess Laxmi.

In the age when remaining unmarried was considered to be a strange, tragic and sinful p h e n o m e n o n, B h a g w a n S h r e e Swaminarayan upheld the right of a woman to remain unmarried and engage herself in noble, religious and spiritual activities.

This revolution started with the case of

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Jivuba, the daughter of Abhel Khachar who was bent on getting her married and yet all his efforts had sunk in the ocean of failure.

Abhel Khachar sought the help of Bhagwan Shree Swaminarayan who visualized the divine future of this princess and consoled Abhel Khachar and said He would try.

Shree Hari entrusted the uphill task of persuading Jivuba to the royal poet Ladudanji who was considered to be an intellectual giant.

He went on arguing in favour of marrying and drew a dreamy picture of happiness in married life but Jivuba proved to be more than a match in counter – arguments. The masculine ego was defeated by feminine intelligence. Her arguments against marriage inspired this royal poet himself to remain celibate and to become a saint (He was named Swami Brahmananda).

Her father forced her to marry but on the first night after marriage she gently refused to submit to her husband, who was convinced of the failure of the marriage. He sent her back to her father's royal home, with a note that there was nothing wrong with Jivuba so far as marriage was concerned, thus saving her from committing suicide or being murdered by her furious father.

Then she devoted herself to religious practices. She worshipped the icon of God as Lalji. Her father once asked her to prove that her icon was real God. He got the proof when the icon drank the milk offered and kicked the empty vessel of milk, which struck at the foot of the proof-seeker father!

She was spiritually enlightened by Shree Hari, who commanded her to preach the gospel to women, which she did throughout her life.

She had the vision of the divine, individual and cosmic form of Shree Hari. Her spiritual

achievement was so amazing that even Manaki, the favourite mare of Shree Hari would not budge when she mentally asked her to halt.

Hundreds of women who were harassed by husbands, mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law and others implored her to help them. Her blessings mitigated all their miseries. Many times she cooked food for Shree Hari.

She looked after the boarding and lodging facilities of hundreds of guests and saints. Almost all her personal wealth was used to feed them. She presented all of her most valuable ornaments to make the icon of Hari Krishna Maharaj besides Gopinathji at the Gadhpurtemple.

Jivuba was Lakshmi incarnate, the Goddess of wealth and as such she had the unique privilege to reside in the heart of Shree Hari.

Among the female followers of Shree Hari, Jivuba occupies the highest place in our Holy Fellowship.

यत्र नार्यक्तु पूज्यते वमन्ते तत्र देवताः। यत्रैताक्तु न पूज्यन्ते क्षर्वाक्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः।। (मनुस्मृति)

Where Women are honoured, divinity blossoms there, and where ever women are dishonoured, all actions no matter how noble they may be, remain unfruitful. (Manu Smruti)

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Prasadi

Suvasini Bhabhi, who became the mentor and foster mother of Bal Ghanshyam after the departure of Bhakti Mata; offered her silver anklets to Brahmanand Swami for the construction work of Muli temple. Even today we can feel the throb of her intimate bond with Lord Ghanshyam as and when we get the Darshan of these invaluable ornaments preserved in Muli temple!



In Shravan it rains in shower, The rivers are in flood; Come, O Youthful One now! My heart sinks without hope.

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Blooms the creeper up the tree, The sky is full of dark clouds; And over the mountain green, Peacock chant the Malhar tunes.

There are joys in this world around, But tasteless they are without You, O Brahmanand's Master, Hurry, O Lord! I entreat Thee.