



Divine Discourses of Sant Bhagwant Sahebji

## Spiritual Essence

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**Today**, *Magshar Vadi Ekadashi* is the day the Swaminarayan *mahamantra* was first uttered and gifted to us! It is 218 years since the *mahamantra* was first proclaimed. Bhagwan Swaminarayan showered His utmost grace and manifested in this universe. Yogi Bapa many times, would say, 'Nobody invited Bhagwan Swaminarayan to manifest in this universe, nobody prayed for it, nobody performed austerities, or penances, or *yagnas*.' Then Bapa would say, 'Nobody even knew that He was Purushottam Narayan, the Supreme Lord, the cause of all incarnations. If they didn't have a clue, how could they possibly extend an invitation? What austerities could they perform? How would they even pray?' But it was God's infinite grace, that He himself manifested in this universe in human form and more so that He manifested in India. We are all so blessed.

If you were to simply look at His life, you would know immediately, that this was God himself. At the age of eight years, Maharaj came to Ayodhya with his mother and father. He stayed in Ayodhya for three years. He renounced home at the age of eleven years, after Dharmadev and Bhaktimata renounced their physical existence. For clothing, he wore only a loin-cloth. In one hand was a rosary, in the other hand was a staff, at the end of which was tied a small cloth containing the essence of the scriptures. Amongst his other minimal possessions was a water gourd, a filter-cloth, a *shaligram*; it was with only these few items that he set off that night on this epic journey.

An eleven year old child simply set off. There was no guidance whatsoever; no understanding of direction, no idea of geography and yet it was as if someone was guiding; it was as if He had a G.P.S. because the path He took was absolutely perfect! And He stayed in such places, which Hindus consider extremely important places of pilgrimage. He stayed in the places of the Acharya's who laid down the foundations of the entire Hindu dharma. He met all the Santo that were considered truly great, and had discussions with all of them.

Maharaj did not go to school, but he had studied all the scriptures in Sanskrit! He took the essence from these and applied it to himself, as he travelled around India on foot.

Through his wanderings, he came to Maharashtra and from there onto the soils of Gujarat. It was here in Loj – Mangrol that his heart settled and he stayed in Ramanand Swami's ashram. There Ramanand Swami initiated him, named him Sahajanand and gave him the seat of the fellowship, instating him as the spiritual head of the whole order. Until the time that Ramanand Swami renounced his physical existence, Maharaj simply watched everything as a witness. Every single *aagna*<sup>1</sup> given by Ramanand Swami, he followed to the letter, and offered his devotion in this way. Hats off to Ramanand Swami! Ramanand Swami himself would say, 'I am simply the drum-beater; the master-orchestrator is this Shriji Maharaj!' Even before Bhagwan Swaminarayan arrived in Loj, Ramanand Swami had been singing his glory.

As it is, His *darshan* was so divine, His presence so impressionable, His radiance, His glowing face, and magnetically attractive being was such that all devotees would be drawn to Him automatically. Ramanand Swami had also previously initiated Muktanand Swami, Raghuram and other Santo. But here he gave initiation to Maharaj and then shortly thereafter renounced his physical existence. After that, Bhagwan Swaminarayan gathered everyone in Faneni, where He declared, 'We have waged a war against *maya*<sup>2</sup>.'

The people of the entire world do not know what it is that is getting in their way! It is ego– self-centeredness, stubbornness, jealousy, possessiveness, lust, anger; it is the fifty-one internal enemies that are getting in the way – but

<sup>1</sup> Any instruction given by God or Guru, which is always for our spiritual benefit.

<sup>2</sup> That which distances one from God, or acts as an obstacle to reaching God.

people are just not aware of this. To fulfill the whole of humankind, Bhagwan Swaminarayan waged a war against *maya* – the internal enemies – and provided the weapon to fight against them. He said, ‘all the mantras you chant are good, and are beneficial, but today put all of them aside. Today I am giving you a mantra, so chant this one.’ Having said this, Maharaj uttered the *mahamantra*, ‘Om Swaminarayan’! and all the Santo, *paramhansas* and devotees immediately grasped it and followed suit. That is when the ‘Swaminarayan’ *mahamantra* came into existence. Gunatitanand Swami and Santo have propounded its exceptional glory, and said that this is no ordinary mantra. All the mantras in existence are good, but remember, out of them there is not a single mantra which God himself has given! ‘Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare!’ It is after thousands of years that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave this mantra. ‘Shri Krishna Sharanam Mamah’ – this mantra came into existence thousands of years after Shri Krishna Parmatma renounced his physical existence. The reason is that when Shri Ram was manifest, people were not able to accept him as the form of God, so then who would chant his name? When Shri Krishna was manifest, people were not able to accept him as God, so then who would chant his mantra? It is thousands of years later when his *mahima*<sup>3</sup> spread that these mantras came into existence. Whereas, in the whole world there is only one *mahamantra* ‘Om Swaminarayan’ which is such that it was proclaimed by Lord Swaminarayan himself! That is why the strength and the force within this mantra is something else. In front of the other mantras, the ‘Swaminarayan’ mantra is like a nuclear bomb! On top of this, when one chants .... Swaminarayan ... Swaminarayan, with the remembrance of God’s image, or the image of the Sant who is at one with God, then the power of the mantra increases exponentially!

When Gunatitanand Swami and Santo would go on *vicharan*<sup>4</sup>, there would be great opposition from the people against Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his sadhus. The reason was that because they were good sadhus, their knowledge was good, their wisdom was true, their Upasana was correct and the Lord himself was the epitome of *sadhuta*<sup>5</sup> - this posed a

<sup>3</sup> Understanding of greatness, glory.

<sup>4</sup> To travel from place to place with the sole aim of carrying out God’s work

<sup>5</sup> Refers to the qualities of a true sadhu i.e. complete surrender, humility, pure understanding of God as Supreme and as the All-doer etc. One who has this quality never acts for his own benefit. He is natural, simple and joyfully immersed in God.

problem for the phoney sadhus. The phoney sadhus and their fake ‘goods’ began to shut down. For that reason, they started to spread slandering rumours that, ‘The Swaminarayan sadhus are magicians; they will hypnotize you. Do not allow them to enter your villages. If you let them in, they will put you all in a trance and take the whole village.’ These kinds of rumours gave rise to so much opposition against Swaminarayan sadhus.

Once Gunatitanand Swami, along with five to seven Santo were passing through a farm. Seeing them, the farmer stopped them and said, ‘Today I have got you! Today I will let you go only after I have cut off your noses.’ Gunatitanand Swami was completely equipoised, and without the slightest worry, he sat down peacefully. The farmer locked all the Santo in a room and said ‘now I will go and make preparations.’ He had a large rusty blade lying in the field, so he took that and started to sharpen it. The Santo saw this from the window and said to Gunatitanand Swami, ‘Oh he is sharpening the blade. Everything aside, but if he cuts off our noses, how will we go out in the world? It will look so bad. Please perform some miracle.’ So Gunatitanand Swami said, ‘Do dhun. Do bhajan.’ Gunatitanand Swami completely carefree, shut his eyes and started to chant ‘Swaminarayan..Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan...’ He started doing dhun. Gunatitanand Swami has not sung the praises of this mantra just for the sake of it; he sang the glory of the mantra only after applying it in his own life. So as the farmer sharpened his blade, Gunatitanand Swami and the Santo chanted Swaminarayan...Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan. Now during this time, someone from the village was passing by. He saw the farmer sharpening the blade and asked, ‘Why are you sharpening the blade right now? Is there anything going on?’ Then the farmer said, ‘I have locked these sadhus in this room. Today I have got them! So I am going to cut their noses off!’ The person looked into the room and saw that the Santo in the room were sitting calmly, chanting. So he went to the farmer, snatched the blade from his hand and whacked him! He slapped him twice and said, ‘You are so foolish! You want to cut the noses of such sadhus? Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?’ Then he opened the door of the room, bowed to the Santo, and said, ‘Santo, you may go.’

What did Gunatitanand Swami do? He simply chanted the mantra. This is the force of the mantra. That is why Gunatitanand Swami has propagated the glory of the *mahamantra* and said, ‘the Swaminarayan *mahamantra* is so powerful, that it can diffuse even the poison of a cobra.’ Our P.P. Yogi Bapa was bitten by a cobra in Gondal, but Gurudev Shastriji Maharaj – Santo and devotees simply chanted, did

dhun in the Akshar Mandir – and the poison did not have any affect on Yogi Bapa. The poison collected at the tip of his little finger, and a cut was made to remove that and since then Bapa's little finger became hooked in shape, like a parrot's beak. Bapa would show his little finger when talking about this; and that *smruti*<sup>6</sup> is fresh in before our eyes.

If an extremely negative environment arises, there is disturbance and quarrelling, and the joy disappears – even then, no matter how bad it is, with the chanting of this mantra, any environment is made pure. Both the external as well as one's internal environment is cleansed. Many times there arises such disturbance within; at that time if one chants Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan, then no matter how bad the inner environment, it will become pure. No matter what the issue is, God will solve it for you and the inner environment will remain at peace. That is the immense impact of this mantra!

That is why Gunatitanand Swami said, 'Continuously chant Swaminarayan...Swaminarayan, do bhajan! Whether you are walking, sitting, speaking, eating or drinking, chant Swaminarayan...Swaminarayan! Gunatitanand Swami has himself written, 'Chanting must be your central activity, and all other activities should be performed while chanting – if you do this, there will be peace within.' There is only one method of keeping peace within and that is to chant the Swaminarayan mantra. Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan!

How does this work? If you perform all activities while chanting, you will not become attached to any of those activities. And if you have no attachment to the activity, then it does not have the power to disturb you. Whether you are successful or not in whatever you are doing – for example if there are up's or down's in business, or if you become very ill, or your work does not get done, or you pass or you fail, whether you make a loss in business, or you make a profit; all of it is relative, but you will not become disturbed by it. The reason is that by chanting the mantra – Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan..., you would have become aloof from all that; you would be detached from it.

More importantly, by chanting – our ego is eroded; it starts to dissolve, and *dassatva-bhav*<sup>7</sup> is ignited. With chanting of the mantra, one develops virtues whereby one attains freedom from ego, anger, lust, selfishness, taste and attachment. The reason is that through chanting the soul gains strength, the

inner environment becomes positive, the divine qualities within us increase. Because of this you will automatically come to understand *mahima*, and you will really enjoy doing dhun, and find joy in performing seva with *mahima*. Your spiritual progress will then happen at full speed. That is why we should cultivate the habit of doing dhun. We should chant Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan for at least half an hour a day.

Yogi Bapa would make everyone do so much dhun. No matter what situations arose, Bapa would say, 'Do dhun.' If there was anyone who got everyone to do dhun, it was Yogi Bapa! Secondly, Dadu Kaka would also make everyone do so much dhun. Dadu Kaka would say let us do two minutes of dhun, but it would last one hour and sometimes even two hours! If there was a glass of water in his hand and he would say, 'lets do dhun,' then one hour later the glass would still be in his hand – he would lose all track of time, that is how much dhun Kaka would do, and would make everyone else do. Bapa would make us do so much dhun. Wherever he may be, and wherever he went, if someone were to say, 'Bapa, I have this difficulty,' Bapa would say, 'lets do dhun!' There are certain questions that the mind gives rise to, or certain questions that arise in our day to day dealings, which no words can solve. Words are inadequate to provide a solution. Something needs to click inside, and for that click to happen, we need to chant, Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan. Everything will then happen automatically.

In the earlier times, when one would take a car and go to the villages, and if perchance there was a nail on the road or a sharp object, the car's tyre would get punctured. Now in the villages, where could one find a mechanic? Many times, one would not even have a spare tyre! So then the tube washer would be opened and some tea leaves would be poured into the tube, which would then be pumped with air. The tea leaves are extremely light, so as the air tries to escape from the hole, the tea leaves get sucked to that spot and thereby block the hole in such a way that the puncture is fixed! Many would even pour tobacco leaves in. Because they are light-weight, the leaves are sucked up to wherever the air is escaping from, and fit themselves in a way that prevent the air from escaping. But this does not last permanently – it will work for maybe five to twenty-five miles, and during this time you would have to find someone to repair the puncture. But by doing this, you would not get completely stuck in the middle of nowhere. One would not think then, 'oh but exactly how will the hole be filled?' – you simply drop some tea-leaves in, pump some air and the puncture is temporarily fixed.

<sup>6</sup> Divine remembrance

<sup>7</sup> Complete surrender and servitude. One who lives for God and whose life is for God.

Similarly, if there is some issue hanging over your head – you should not sit and think, ‘oh but how will it be done? What will happen?’ You should simply start chanting, Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan..! Understood?! Wherever the issue is coming from, just like the tea-leaves fixing the puncture, your question will be solved. Many over-wise people will say, ‘What is in this medicine? What are the ingredients? What is it made of?’ But if you simply take the prescribed medicine and swallow it, your illness will be cured. Now are you concerned with curing the illness, or is your concern with what the ingredients are and how it is made? There are many who are so over-smart they will give you a headache, and anyone sitting in front of them will get a headache. They will ask, ‘how can the mantra work?’ This question is meaningless. Simply form the habit of doing dhun – Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan!

Maharaj himself has also said, ‘we have taken on a human body, so we too fall ill. We too, feel hunger and can taste spiciness, sourness, sweetness and blandness. When one lives in the world, issues are going to arise and they arise to bring out the strength that is within us. Does any student say that, ‘one must study, but what is the need to take the exams? We come to study, we attend class – so why are you taking our exams? Why are you troubling us for no reason?’ Does anyone say this? The exams themselves are the measure of how much your mind has grasped. The exam will show whether you have simply doddled along in college or just enjoyed yourself. Similarly, our conviction for our Lord, our sentiment to please Him, our faith in bhajan – that itself is our exam! So let us do this, and not look for other solutions. If you have conviction in God, then it is only Him that you will remember. If you have conviction, then it is His *aagna* and that is why we must do dhun. When you do bhajan in this way, whatever questions or issues you have will be solved automatically. What will happen? How will it happen? Put all of these kinds of thoughts aside and dive into doing dhun... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan!

While the work of the Chhatralaya was going on, Yogiji Maharaj came to Vallabh Vidyanaagar after Diwali, for *padhramani*. He came straight to the Chhatralaya plinth. Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai, Ratibhai, Sanandbhai, V.S. all got there immediately and had spread large cloths on the plinth. Many devotees from Anand and around came for Bapa’s darshan. A stage was prepared on the plinth for Bapa and all the devotees sat below. Bapa got everyone to do dhun and then said, ‘When shall we have the opening of the Chhatralaya?’

Construction had only reached plinth level and Bapa was asking when to have the opening ceremony! We said to Bapa, ‘Whenever you say.’ Bapa then asked for the *nirnay* calendar,

which Pramukh Swami brought. Then Bapa said to me, ‘The Chhatralaya (hostel) is for the boys that are coming to study, so they will need to come just before college starts.’ Then he said, ‘When does college start?’ I said, ‘Bapa, the new academic year starts from 20<sup>th</sup> June.’ In those days the academic timetable would be fixed. The seniors - BSc and MSc classes would start from 15<sup>th</sup> June and the Pre-Science classes would start on 20<sup>th</sup> June.

Bapa looked at the *nirnay*. 20<sup>th</sup> June was falling on a Sunday, so colleges would start from 21<sup>st</sup> June. Bapa then said, ‘Keep the opening of the Chhatralaya on 20<sup>th</sup> June.’ Bapa looked at the auspicious times and decided the date – 20<sup>th</sup> June! At that time, there used to be restrictions on cement, so it was not easy to get hold of cement. It was after so much running around by Kakaji, that the cement would come. Because Bapa gave us the date of 20<sup>th</sup> June, we started our preparations in full force. Then came the time to fill the slab. We all got together the evening before. Seven hundred bags of cement were going to be used – it was going to be such a large slab. There were no facilities to store the cement nearby, so we put the cement in Chhotukaka’s compound next door. In the evening, Vinubhai contractor and our bhaiyo, Ratibhai, Ashvinbhai, V.S. and everyone got together and decided that we would start filling the slab in the morning at 8.00am, so that the work can be finished by the end of the day. That was decided and everyone retired for the night.

At that time, we used to stay in Nehru Hall. The next day at 7.00am, Vinubhai Contractor came to my room and said, ‘I need a word with you.’ I said, ‘Sure, what is it?’ He said, ‘we cannot fill the slab today.’ I said, ‘What! What do you mean we can’t fill the slab today? The opening of the Hostel is on 20<sup>th</sup> June and if we do not fill the slab today, when will we do it? We all got together yesterday and decided on this. All the material is there, so why are you here saying this?’ He then said, ‘That is why I have come to you. Out of the seven hundred bags of cement, three hundred bags have gone missing – and without cement we cannot fill the slab. How can we fill it without cement?’ I said, ‘Who has taken it?’ Vinubhai said, ‘that is exactly what I have come to tell you, that it was stolen last night.’

So we all got together in the hostel and discussed what to do next. If we were to file a police case, even then for them to process it and carry out an investigation would take five to six days. So we had only one solution, we got together and did some intense dhun... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan! When Vinubhai came back after one hour, we were still doing dhun. He said, ‘We have found out where the cement has gone. We know who has taken it. But you will have

to come with me to Anand.' I said, 'It is for the Chhatralaya, so I will surely come!'

So I went with Vinubhai in his car. The person that had taken the cement lived right behind our Swaminarayan mandir in Anand. Vinubhai said, 'this is where the house is, so come.' We went to that person's house. The person was a Swaminarayan satsangee; he used to study with me. We used to call him 'Bhagat'. I saw him from a distance, so I said, 'O Bhagat! Do you live here?' He replied, 'O Jashu!, Come in, come in – I was asking you to come home for such a long time, and you have finally come today.' Vinubhai whispered in my ear, 'This is the guy who has taken the cement.' We sat down and we chatted. I asked him straight up, 'Bhagat! We want to fill the slab for the Chhatralaya, and you took the cement at night?' He said, 'It wasn't your cement! It was Chhotakaka's cement.' I said, 'No it wasn't Chhotakaka's cement; we were going to lay the slab for the Chhatralaya today and that is why we stored our cement in his compound.'

What had actually happened was that Chhotakaka had taken a loan with interest from this Bhagat, but he had not been able to pay the loan, nor had he been able to pay the interest. So this Bhagat had gone to Chhotakaka's home at 10.00pm the night before, after we had left and demanded his money. Chhotakaka said, 'O bhai, if I don't have the money, how can I give it you?' Bhagat said, 'then where did all this cement come from if you don't have money? If you don't have money, then give me the cement.' So Chhotakaka said, 'ok fine, take the cement.' So it was on Chhotakaka's word, that this Bhagat took the 300 bags of cement, in exchange for the money owed, and he was going to sell them and get his money back in that way.

Then I explained to him, 'Bhagat, that is not his cement; that cement belongs to the Chhatralaya. And for this reason we cannot fill the slab; the work is at a standstill.' He said, 'If it is your cement, then take it – I will give it back to you.' And so we got the cement back, and the slab was filled.

Where would we have gone looking for the stolen cement? But because of dhun and prayer, something somewhere just clicks. God gives us this experience through his work. Let us learn to use this solution of dhun and prayer. Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan! It is because we put God aside and look for solutions elsewhere that our time gets lengthened.

Similarly, just like this, when there are attacks of negative perception, negative thinking, or lust, anger, ego, then simply chant, Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan, or do mantra lekhan. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has gifted us such a huge weapon! He said, 'my dearest devotees! I want to give

you the best weapon to lift all the flaws out of you, joyfully and comfortably! You can use this in your daily interactions, in your business, if you are ill, if there is discord or quarrelling, if there is any disturbance within. You can use this weapon for anything and everything. With this one weapon, you will be able to do everything. That is the exceptional weapon He has gifted us in the form of the *mahamantra*.

Today is the day the *mahamantra* was proclaimed and today is also the first day of the New Year, so 'Happy New Year!' In the new year, let us resolve to remain immersed in bhajan. It is on the day that Bhagwan Swaminarayan gifted us the *mahamantra* that we are starting the new year, so let us understand the glory of the *mahamantra*, and let us keep this mantra at the centre of our lives. In our life's every action, every question, every issue... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan!

Mahant Swami, Hariprasad Swami, Guruji, Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai and these Santo are *pragat*<sup>8</sup>; and with the *smruti* of these *pragat* Santo, we must chant Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan! If you chant the *mahamantra*, it will generate immense power. We have the exceptional opportunity to attain the joy of God's abode right now in our present physical state through the chanting of the mantra, and the time is so opportune. If during this time, when all the circumstances are favourable – we do not attain God's *prasannata*<sup>9</sup>, then can there be anyone weaker than us?

If one has *mahima* then one will have the absolute determination to please God in any way whatsoever, in this very lifetime! One must have the absolute firm conviction to do this and use the mantra for this end. To work in harmony, with unity, oneness and open-hearted understanding, to maintain *nirdosh-bhav*, *divya-bhav*<sup>10</sup> and to keep our love flowing for all bhakto, this mantra is absolutely essential, so let us keep chanting! Let us simply make it a habit to chant... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan!

Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, whether we are sitting, standing, eating, drinking, going here or there, may we have the strength to do this, and may God inspire our intellect for this; that is our prayer at our Lord and our Guru's lotus feet on the auspicious day of the *mahamantra*! ◆

<sup>8</sup> This refers to God being eternally present within a manifest physical body (i.e. that of a Gunatit Sadhu who has attained the highest state of realisation).

<sup>9</sup> When God or Guru is so pleased with you that it culminates in an outpouring of grace, this is called *prasannata*

<sup>10</sup> The inner perception and conviction that God and all of God's devotees are flawless and divine.