



Divine Discourses of Sant Bhagwant Sahabji

Spiritual Essence

Ashirwad given at the 'Sakriya Karyakarta Shibir'
arranged by Satsang Samvardhan Kendra

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Recently, understanding Sant Bhagwant Param Pujya Sahebji's *anuvrutti*, the activity of 'Aksharvrund' has been started through the 'Satsang Samvardhan Karyalaya' so that we may all come to understand the principles of Upasana, apply them in our lives and receive the blessings of our *pragat* Guruhari. During this auspicious time, it would be good to understand these blessings of our beloved Guruvarya Param Pujya Sahebji, and reflect upon them. To read them over and over again, hold onto the conviction to realize them, and attain Sahebada's innermost *prasannata* in this way, is the sentiment that is contained within this.

This one day shibir has been exceptional! Hearty, hearty thanks to all the devoted volunteers, for expressing the sentiments that you hold in your hearts; the devotion, the enthusiasm and eagerness to please God! Congratulations also for bringing in the discipline of timing and dress-code! Yogiji Maharaj liked this a lot. God is supreme, so His devotees too should be the best. Just as an elephant's baby is hefty from birth, similarly, the followers of the supreme Lord, should be supreme when it comes to following codes of conduct, disciplines and instructions. This should be done with understanding and must be applied in one's life's actions. Truly we have had *darshan* of this today.

It has been two hundred and thirty-eight years since Bhagwan Swaminarayan manifested. He was born in *Samvat* 1837, but it can be said the real Swaminarayan *sampradaya* was begun by Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. The knowledge of pure Upasana¹, without any impurities, has

¹ **Upasana** refers to both philosophy and practice, and one of the fundamental tenets of pure [Akshar Purushottam] Upasana is the belief that God is manifest on earth in human form.

now come to settle in society; it has now become established and it is to understand this that we gather.

Gunatitanand Swami has said in his *Vaato* that, on one hand an ascetic may perform the most difficult and unimaginable austerities, penances, fasts etc. and is such that he needs nothing at all. On the other hand there is the *gnani*² who can give exceptional lectures on the Vedas, Upanishads, Shrimad Bhagwat, Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, and captivate massive audiences with his or her eloquent oratory, but if either of these do not have purity in their Upasana, then they have no chance of Akshardham. Whereas, even if one is a householder or in every way a mediocre devotee, it does not matter because if their Upasana is pure, then they have entry to Akshardham. Gunatitanand Swami has spoken so highly of the *mahatmya*³ of pure Upasana.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself used to say, we have come into this world - we have manifested to remove you from the ignorance of the causal body, to enlighten you, to

² Literally means one who is wise.

³ **Mahatmya** refers to the deep understanding of the greatness, glory and divinity of God [and his Santo and devotees].

remove you from the cycle of birth and death, to remove the root ignorance of the *jiva*⁴ and enable you to live in the joy, peace and bliss of Akshardham while in your present physical state. And for this, we have brought *Mul-AksharBrahma*⁵ Gunatitanand Swami with us. The place where I reside is Akshardham, and that is *Mul-AksharBrahma*, Gunatitanand Swami! Maharaj mentioned this so many times and in so many places and would say, 'Only if you come to recognise and accept the Sadhu, will you come to know me. The gateway to liberation will only be opened if you join with the Sadhu.' From page to page in the *Vachanamrut*, Maharaj has spoken of the glory of Santo. He said all of this, but people were not able to grasp it.

Bhagatji Maharaj has truly obliged us and graced us, and even more so was Gopalanand Swami's immense grace upon Bhagatji Maharaj! Gopalanand Swami was himself an *Ashtang-yogi*; his spiritual power was such that whatever he spoke came to pass. He was one who had earned Bhagwan Swaminarayan's immense grace. He was the head even to the *Acharya's* of both *gadis*⁶. Bhagatji Maharaj, Jaga Swami, Shivalal Sheth were all joined to satsang through exceptional love for Gopalanand Swami; they were so deeply bound to him that they could not live without him. To all those disciples who were so close to him, Gopalanand Swami said, 'I am now going to renounce my physical body. Whatever I have spoken to you about; whatever I have promised you, will be fulfilled by the Jogi of Junagadh; so go and stay with him, and please him.' Gopalanand Swami gave his disciples the recognition and association of Gunatit. Gopalanand Swami had attained the *mukt* state and that is why we place his *murti* alongside

⁴ *Jiva* is often used synonymously with the word *atma*, meaning the soul. But here it specifically refers to the individual embodied soul i.e. the soul still bound by *maya*.

⁵ *Mul-Aksharbrahma* refers to the highest entity after Purushottam (the Supreme Lord). It is eternal, and independent. In its impersonal form it is the abode of God, and in its personal form (i.e. Gunatitanand Swami), is exactly like God, but forever subservient to God.

⁶ Bhagwan Swaminarayan created two administrative seats to oversee the entire Satsang community; these are referred to as the *Gadi's*, namely Amdavad Gadi and Vadtal Gadi, and the respective administrative heads are referred to as *Acharya's*.

Gunatitanand Swami's as *Anadi-mahamukt* Gopalanand Swami.

Bhagatji Maharaj served Gunatitanand Swami as per Gopalanand Swami's *aagna*⁷ and attained Gunatit's innermost *prasannata*⁸. Bhagatji genuinely came to experience Gunatit as being *Mul-AksharBrahma*; he realized this and started speaking about it openly. For this, he endured extreme hardship. Bhagatji was a tailor by caste, so he was given primary initiation in white-clothes. He had not studied Sanskrit or anything like that, but because he was a Sant that carried God within him, his presence would make such a deep impression on people. But what of it? It became known as *khuniyu-gnan*. *Khuniyu-gnan* meaning, after a big sabha would disperse, two to five people would sit in the corner and discuss in a way that no-one else could hear; otherwise they would get beaten up! That is why in Bhagatji Maharaj's time, the talk of Akshar Purushottam Upasana was limited to barely five to twenty-five people, and that is what people used to call, '*khuniyu-gnan*'. It was something that could not be spoken of publicly in sabha. But Bhagatji Maharaj's vision pierced everything; he could recognise each soul. He saw Shastriji Maharaj and selected him.

It is a known that when Bhagatji Maharaj saw this 18 – 20 year old youth in Surat, he said, 'Yagnapurush! Are you a Swaminarayan satsangee?' Shastriji Maharaj said, 'Bhagatji Maharaj what are you saying? I am not just a satsangee, but as you can see I am a saffron-robed Swaminarayan sadhu. Why are you saying this?' Then Bhagatji said, 'No! You are a satsangee of Narayan – not of Swaminarayan. Without believing Gunatitanand Swami to be the incarnation *Mul-AksharBrahma*; without accepting Gunatitanand Swami as *Mul-AksharBrahma* no-one can become a devotee of Swaminarayan.' Then Bhagatji spoke to him of the glory of Gunatitanand Swami.

We know this whole *prasang*, where Shastriji Maharaj hid under the cot and listened to the whole conversation between Bhagatji Maharaj and Vignand Swami. Vignand

⁷ Any instruction given by God or Guru, which is always for our spiritual benefit.

⁸ When God or Guru is so pleased with you that it culminates in an outpouring of grace, this is called *prasannata*.

Swami told Bhagatji Maharaj, 'Bhagatji Maharaj – what you are speaking of is 100% true. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has told us, has told the *paramhansas*' and the sadhus many times that this Gunatitanand Swami is the incarnation of *Mul-AksharBrahma*, and we have brought him with us from Akshardham. We needed him here to remove the root ignorance of the *jiva*, and to help remove people's causal body and make them *Akshar-roop*, and that is why we brought him with us.' Hearing this Shastriji Maharaj emerged from under the cot! And then Vignand Swami said, 'What Bhagatji Maharaj has been saying is 100% true, but at that time it was difficult even to say that Bhagwan Swaminarayan is supreme, so talking about this was out of the question.'

Gopalanand Swami once fell ill. He resolved he no longer wanted to remain on earth, so he took on an illness. He was an *ashtang-yogi*, and so death was in his control, but he could not renounce his physical existence without Maharaj's permission and so he prayed to Maharaj to please take him. Bhagwan Swaminarayan gave him *darshan* and said, 'Gopalanand Swami! You must go and spread the message of my supremacy in Gujarat, in the same way that Gunatitanand Swami has done.' Gopalanand Swami knew of Shreeji Maharaj's supremacy, but because society was not ready to hear it, he had not spoken about it. But now it was Maharaj's *aagna*. Following this, there was a big sabha in Umreth. During that time Umreth was a village populated by Brahmins and it was a centre for the study of Sanskrit. During that big sabha, Gopalanand Swami spoke so much of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's glory and supremacy. But this talk led to so many sadhus and devotees having diarrhoea! They just could not accept this! Just think about it! How difficult it must have been for them? But Gopalanand Swami did not budge in the slightest and publicly sang the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in full force! It was after this that Maharaj allowed Gopalanand Swami to leave his physical frame and took him to Akshardham.

Vignand Swami said, 'at that time it was difficult to even say that Bhagwan Swaminarayan is supreme. On top of that if I were to talk about Gunatitanand Swami as being *Mul-AksharBrahma* then devotees would pick me up and drop me back to my village; they would not let me stay here and that is why we were not speaking about this.' At that very moment,

Shastriji Maharaj made a resolution that from now onwards my life is for pure Upasana. We have all seen the result of Shastriji Maharaj's resolve and what exceptional work has taken place!

It could be said that the real start of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya happened with the propagation of pure Upasana. Swami and Narayan - Akshar and Purushottam. Swami, meaning *Mul-Aksharbrahma* Gunatitanand Swami and it is only when you attain that state of being; when you become at one with him, that you become eligible for God's *seva*. To sit in front of the *murti* and do *pooja* is ritual. Whereas if you genuinely want to become eligible to carry out the Lord's *pooja*, then you will have to accept *Mul-Aksharbrahma* Gunatitanand Swami or join with a sadhu who has attained that state, with *atma-buddhi* and *preeti*⁹. What rights do you get? To perform *pooja*, to pray, to discourse – all of that is there, but the highest *seva* is to grant God's *seva* to all beings, purify them and join them to God – and that is the eligibility that he wants to give us. And for that, one has to understand the pure Upasana of Akshar Purushottam.

Shastriji Maharaj was extremely occupied, building large *shikharbaddh* mandirs every few years, in Bochasan, Sarangpur Gondal, Atladara, Gadhada and instating the *murtis* of Shri Akshar Purushottam Maharaj in the central shrines'. He wanted to lay unshakable foundations for pure Akshar Purushottam Upasana and so he was constantly engaged; he had to constantly rush around for manpower, money, bricks and food. There were very few Santo and devotees, but they were ones who had genuinely surrendered to Shastriji Maharaj. In all of this rush, there was no time to sit and listen to any discourse of Gurudev Shastriji Maharaj. Periodically, Shastriji Maharaj would hold and speak at *parayans*, but everyone could not be there, and so even though devotees stayed with him, they had no idea of the scale and immensity of the mission that Shastriji Maharaj had embarked on. Shastriji Maharaj instated the deities of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj in the central shrine and through that, made Akshar Purushottam Upasana eternal. In 1951, from the minute that Shastriji Maharaj renounced his physical

⁹ *Atma-buddhi* and *preeti* means to love the Satpurush as one's own soul, and thereby refers to a bond of inseparable loving association.

existence, Yogiji Maharaj started the work of establishing that Upasana in the hearts of all. For that, he caught hold of the youth, and joined divine beings like Kakaji, Pappaji and Harsadbhai in this work.

Today, whatever devotion Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai, Ratibhai, Sanandbhai, V.S. and everyone have carried out and are carrying out is all by Yogiji Maharaj's grace, and through the association of Mahant Swami, Hariprasad Swami, Kakaji, Pappaji; who lightly and laughingly got us to understand pure Akshar Purushottam Upasana. The fruit of this was that we gained their *prasannata* and became powerless to take the worldly route. When you join with a Satpurush out of *atma-buddhi* and *preeti* then your soul becomes *brahmaroop*. If you join with Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai, Ratibhai or Harshadbhai and have love for one such sadhu, such that you feel, 'I am yours and you are mine,' then your soul becomes *brahmaroop*. When this happens, the ignorance within the soul dissolves and the soul becomes illumined. How? In the same way that when one puts their hand over the light of a torch, the torch is still on, but one cannot see the light - it gets blocked, and so the darkness does not go. But if you move your hand away, there is light! In this way, *Parmatma* – the supreme Lord is certainly seated within one's soul, but there is a layer of *maya* between the soul and *Parmatma* and for that reason the illumination of the Lord seated in one's soul is not visible, and therefore is not able to illumine the physical body. When that layer of *maya*¹⁰ moves aside, then one's physical being is illumined. When one has *atma-buddhi* and *preeti* for the Satpurush, it causes the layer of *maya* to move and consequently the ignorance attached to the soul dissolves, the darkness goes and the soul is illumined. But the physical body within which the soul resides, has not yet become *Brahmaroop*. The physical body has its desires, its intellectual world, its experiential consciousness, its own notions, beliefs, judgements; and all of these, in the form of one's senses and one's mind, intellect, consciousness and ego, do not permit one to enjoy the peace and bliss of God. These need to be transformed.

What Gunatitanand Swami said in his *Vaato* is 100% true, 'For the *jiva* to successfully walk the path of God, one needs

¹⁰ **Maya means anything which distances one from God, or acts as an obstacle to reaching God.**

to have affection for two genuine sadhus and three such devotees.' The process of Akshar Purushottam Upasana is such that it automatically shifts the root ignorance within one's embodied soul, and then the inner sentiments and inclinations of the body begin to change. Then no matter how many tantrums you may have, you will not be able to diverge from the path of God, and even if you go, you have to come back! Just as Gunatitanand Swami has said, 'no matter with how much force you throw a stone up into the sky; if you throw it really hard, then it will go really high – but because of the laws of gravity, no matter how high it goes, it has to come down to the ground! Similarly, once one has *atma-buddhi* and *preeti* for the Satpurush, then no matter where he goes, he will always stay in satsang; he will not be able to go anywhere else. That is the pure Upasana that Shastriji Maharaj has established and spread. The satsang that comes from something we have heard, or from experiencing or hearing of some miracles, can vanish at any time and you won't even know it, but the satsang that happens from having *atma-buddhi* and *preeti* for the Satpurush, is permanent; it is satsang of the *jiva*! No matter what situations, no matter what circumstances, no matter whatever arises, but it will not allow us to budge from satsang.

In this sense, that is why it can be said the Swaminarayan Sampradaya started with the propagation of pure Upasana. And now new chapters have been added to this. Pujya Mahant Swami has given the *brahmasutra*: '*Aksharam aham, Purushottam dassosmi*' – meaning, 'I, who am Akshar, am the *das* of Purushottam.' We have added a couple more words to this, '*Aksharam aham pragat Purushottam swaroopasya dassosmi*,' – meaning, 'I, who am Akshar, am the *das* of my Guruhari who is the manifest *swaroop* of Purushottam.' I am the *das* of the sadhu through whom we have God's manifest presence; who is the manifest *swaroop* of Akshar Purushottam. That means, 'I am Akshar; my soul is the Satpurush and I want to carry out devotion to the manifest Lord.' To carry out devotion to the manifest Lord means, to live in his *aagna* and by his *aagna*, in carrying out all activity. That is what you call a *das*. To live and act according to the Satpurush's *aagna* is true devotion. If you were to take just a glance into Mahant Swami, Hariprasad Swami, Pramukh Swami, Kakaji, Pappaji, Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai, Ratibhai,

Sanandbhai's lives – then you will certainly be able to see this. Once they had connected with Yogiji Maharaj with *atma-buddhi* and *preeti*, whatever *aagna* Bapa gave, they simply executed without thinking a single thought; that is what it means to have become the *das* of the Lord. If you were to look, they brought Bapa's *aagna* into their lives' every action. They were so intelligent, but they used that intelligence to please Bapa.

You must remember the five steps of Akshar Purushottam Upasana. Firstly, 'who is the All-Doer?' – It is the Lord whom I have attained! 'What is He like?' – He is with form and He is physically manifest. 'Where is He?' – He is within the Sadhu who has attained *Gunatit-bhav*. 'So what should one do?' – Put your two hands together and follow his *aagna*. 'What is our *sadhana*?' – To carry out devotion with *nirdosh-bhav*¹¹ and *suhrad-bhav*¹² for all those who have His association. That's it! That is the end! Easy, isn't it? Do you need to study the *Vedas* or the *Upanishads* for this? Do you need to study the Sanskrit language? Do you need English? It is easy, but human beings find the easiest things the most difficult. Instead they go and do the difficult things, but will not do that which is easy. Man is not able to do this easy thing.

The article which came with this *mantra* given by Mahant Swami, has a wonderful start. It reads, 'Life is always clouded by some problem or the other.' All of us sitting here, whether you are a householder or a sadhu, whether you reside in the jungle or in the city, in America or India, or in Panch-Mahal or Mumbai, whether you are educated or illiterate, male or female – no matter who you are or where you are from, life holds some problem or another. Those who are in business have their own problems, and those who are employed have theirs; those who have renounced the world have their problems, whereas householders have theirs; in this way, from person to person there will be different sets of problems.

¹¹ The inner feeling and conviction that God and all of God's devotees are faultless.

¹² *Suhrad-bhav* is an intricate concept. It originates from *hrday* – meaning heart so *suhrad* or *suhraday* literally means 'one heartedness'. *Suhradh-bhav* is the feeling of unparalleled harmony and one-heartedness with everyone, regardless of however they act towards you, and regardless of circumstance or situation.

For example, even in the most ordinary discussions, we become so heated. We become unsettled in the small situations faced in the community or in the family. If something happens at home, at work, in our family or in the community – even though the happening is so trivial, we become disturbed. We constantly feel alone. Even though we are surrounded by people, we feel loneliness; we feel fear. Many feel like they are possessed by something. Some feel they are being attacked by tantric or dark practices. Or people will say, 'I have the habit of only doing as I will. I am filled with faults but I am not able to get rid of them. I know what the good virtues are but I can't seem to apply them in my life. I want to do dhun but I don't like to do it. Devotion seems useless.' In this way, there are countless types of problems. As a result, we constantly experience difficulty, or suffering within.

This life, which is clouded with all sorts of problems, is also filled with the immense potential to elevate, pacify and make life joyful. In spite of what life is like, to experience supreme peace, supreme joy and supreme contentment is all possible. 'From today, I would like to become more humble, I would like to cultivate *das-bhav*, I would like to do *seva* with pure sentiments, would like to please God, would like to please Guru, would like to live within the confines of *dharma*, would like to understand life through devotion, would like to become courteous and considerate, would like to establish peace within my family, would like to cultivate unity etc.' In addition to everything that happens in our life, we also make good, true and elevated resolutions that are possible to reach.

'*Aksharam aham pragat Purushottam swaroopasya dassosmi*' – I as Akshar, am the *das* of my manifest Guru-roop Hari. This *mantra* is the supreme solution to all of our problems. It is the life-giving essence to elevate and bring peace to our lives. It is a mine-field of strength to fulfill the most elevated resolve. Within this *mantra*, is *tatva-gnan*, our *sadhana* and the essence of liberation. That is how exceptional this *mantra* is. Ensure that you speak this *mantra* in your daily pooja. Repeat after me, '*Aksharam aham pragat Purushottam swaroopasya dassosmi. Akshar evo hu, pragat Purushottam swaroop, Guruhari no das chhu.*'

If we understand Upasana purely and attain the essence of this *mantra*, then not just within our spiritual life, not just within the community, but the majority of all disturbances that happen within us, will automatically dissolve. Remember! By bringing *Mul-AksharBrahma* Gunatitanand Swami with Him, Bhagwan Swaminarayan has showered us with such immense grace! Gunatitanand Swami has said, 'previously, people would get beaten if they worshipped God.' To surrender to God, one would have to endure getting beaten? We feel so surprised when we hear this today. Gunatitanand Swami said, 'whereas today, you can sit comfortably on a luxurious bed, eat sweets and worship God.' Just think about this! In another *Vaat*, Gunatitanand Swami has said, 'If someone were to do the work of ten men and bring *seva* of ₹ 100,000 for the mandir daily; but if that person goes about saying, 'so and so is like this and so and so is like that,' then we do not like him at all. And even if we try and be loving towards him, we are not able to. But if there is a devotee, who sleeps all the time, does nothing, but simply sings the *mahima* and virtues of me, my Santo and my devotees, then no matter where he may be, I would ensure he is fed, and that there are five people in his care.' See! Who would you choose if you were given a choice? But are we able to do this? It is difficult. Just think about it, Gunatitanand Swami's *vaato* are exceptional, but who is actually applying these *vaato* in their lives?

Gunatitanand Swami said in another *Vaat*, 'If while constantly doing bhajan, you perform all your activities, then your inner being will remain peaceful.' What is the reason of the unrest, agitation or disturbance you feel within? It is because we are not doing dhun. Has he asked you to start fasting or renounce the world? But from the moment you are aware, in whichever activity you do, start Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... from within... do bhajan! If while constantly doing bhajan, you perform your activities, how does that keep one's inner being peaceful? If while constantly doing bhajan, you perform your activities, then you will remain detached from the action, you will not become bound by it. And when the activity is done, you will forget it and if it leaves no impression on you, then there is only joy. What an exceptional and incomparable weapon,

Bhagwan Swaminarayan has given us through the 'Swaminarayan' *mantra*!

It is my prayer to all the volunteers, that we want to take on another campaign – that of '*mantra lekhan*'! Everyone must write one page of *mantra* per day. It takes 15 to 18 minutes to write one page. Many people who have time may write two sides of *mantra*, but at the very minimum, everyone must write one side of *mantra*, and chant 'Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan...' as you write. Take on this campaign of dhun. Secondly, every month at every centre, have a programme for dhun. It does not matter how many people come or not, but do dhun. Many people think, but in our mandal sabha we have only fifty people attending, and if we have a dhun programme, then not so many people come. So how do we keep count? This bhai has not come and that bhai has not come. But you are not considering the people that are there attending, and instead you are counting all of those that are not attending... if you do this, then the impact of dhun diminishes. So do not do this. However many come, God's grace will certainly, certainly, certainly be showered upon them! But do not make a note of who has not come to do dhun.

Have you heard the name of Nirgundas Swami? As part of BAPS, and in the propagation of pure Upasana, Yogiji Maharaj was certainly there with Shastriji Maharaj, but the third person was Nirgundas Swami. He was a Patidar from the village of Peej, and he had graduated as an Engineer from Kala Bhavan in Baroda. He had the association of Bhagatji Maharaj and so he had great *mahima* for Bhagatji Maharaj; but he was studying so he would not get much time. For that reason, if some devotee would be going for Bhagatji Maharaj's *darshan*, and would have stayed with Bhagatji Maharaj for a few days, he would go to Peej station to collect them and to meet them. From the Peej station, one would have to walk to the village, and so *goshthi* would take place as they walked, and then when dropping them off home, there would be *goshthi* again. 'What did Bhagatji Maharaj talk about? What was Bhagatji Maharaj doing? What was Bhagatji Maharaj eating? How was Bhagatji Maharaj sitting? What was Bhagatji Maharaj wearing?' Nirgundas was very intelligent, so he would ask all of these questions, and it would serve as revision for the devotee! In this way, he became Bhagatji

Maharaj-roop and joined in Shastriji Maharaj's army. The satsang that took place in Africa, England and America happened without anyone going there. Nirgun Swami carried out this satsang entirely through his letters!

Similarly, we must go into the mandals and speak and carry out discourse. If someone has come from Vidyanagar, or has come after meeting Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai or Ratibhai, or has gone and come from Khargar mandir, or to a samaiyo – then one must ask them to speak. It does not matter whether the person is an orator or not, in whichever way they speak, but we must get them to do *smruti*. And this is something we too want to go and share in our sabha. 'Maintain *samp* – *suhradh-bhav* and *ekta*, and do your work in a spirit of harmony.' We want to learn this *mantra* and bring it into our actions.

Pure Upasana means the Upasana of *sakar* and *pragat*¹³, and that we have attained that Lord through the Satpurush. We want to live by his *aagna* and believe all who are associated with him as being divine and faultless, not with *sevak-bhav* but with *dasatva-bhav*. One who is a *das* has no expectations. If you perform *seva* with only God at the forefront, then *dasatva-bhav* will come, that is a guarantee! If there is *sevak-bhav*, then there is still some expectation arising from the *seva* you do, such as the expectation of some thank-you, some appreciation, one's name being mentioned, one being called to the front etc.; all of these are a part of *sevak-bhav*. But to hold the sentiment that God is eternally seated within the heart of His devotee, and it is to please that Lord seated within that I am doing this *seva*. I am doing it for my good. It is God's exceptional grace upon me for me to have the opportunity of this *seva*... If one does *seva* with this kind of *das-bhav*, then no expectation will remain, and therefore one will experience only joy.

Param Pujya Hariprasad Swami speaks of becoming '*dasanu-das*'. *Das* means one has no thoughts of one's own, no wishes of one's own and no expectations of one's own. The one and only thing the *das* has is the desire to please God and live as God's child. The sentiment that 'I want to live by my Guru's *aagna* and attain the *prasannata* of God' is characteristic of the *das*. That is why, 'I as *Akshar*, am the *das*

¹³ **Sākār means to have a physical body just like us and Pragat means that God is eternally present within that physical body**

of Lord manifest through my Guruhari.' What does it mean to have attained eligibility to perform His *seva*? What does it mean to become His *das*? It means to join people to God, wherever you go. In the entire Hindu faith, the distinctiveness of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya's Akshar Purushottam Upasana is that, no matter however much spiritual prowess you attain, however much supernatural power you gain, no matter if hundreds of thousands of people become satsangee through you, no matter if you build huge temples, or if by your command people surrender and become sadhus; but all of these are considered simply by-products. Whereas, by the *prasannata* gained through Akshar Purushottam Upasana, the greatest of all achievements is to become a *das*....meaning the inner *bhav* and conviction that, 'I am nothing; whatever you see is only my Lord,' and to become the *das* of all who are associated to Him is true greatness.

In spite of having so much, whatever has happened, is happening and will happen, is all by the grace and blessings of the Lord that I have attained. If you were to ask Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai, Ratibhai or Sanandbhai, they will say that it is by Gurudev Yogiji Maharaj's divine will, by Kakaji, Pappaji, Hariprasad Swami, Mahant Swami and such Santo's blessings and *prasannata* that all of this is happening. They never feel that it is they that are orchestrating all of this. This is what you call *das-bhav*! They believe only in God's all-doership. Believing that whatever is happening, is only by God's will and grace, they constantly sing the *mahima* of their Guru and of devotees; that is their work.

Truly let us take this away with us from this shibir that – we want to become *das*. We want to carry out devotion to God with *das-bhav*. We are nothing. To reach zeroness, means you have become *Akshar-roop*. But how does one get to zeroness? Where does one start? The supreme essence of *Parabrahma* – in the form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan manifested in Chhapaiya in 1837, and He is eternally and certainly, certainly, certainly manifest on earth through the Gunatit sadhu; that is Maharaj's promise. Yogiji Maharaj was like this, and with Yogiji Maharaj's grace, Kakaji, Pappaji, Pramukh Swamiji, Mahant Swamiji, Hariprasad Swamiji, Mukundjivan Swamiji, Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai – all these Santo became his manifest *swaroops*. You will develop affection for one of them. Remember! They are Santo. Never,

ever think of the Sadhu, or one's Guru as being God. God grants *darshan* through them, gives blessings through them, accepts one's *seva* through them. Singing their *mahima* is devotion to God; it reaches God. They are a medium to go to God; and if one follows the *aagna* of one's Guru with this belief, then one will attain God's *prasannata*. In this way, we will evolve from *brahmaroop* to becoming *brahmaswaroop*.

How much did Yogiji Maharaj endure? At the age of eighty years, he would do twenty-five *padharamanis* a day, and still he did not think of this as any hardship. He would find such joy in staying with devotees. But if we do not keep *samp* – *suhradh-bhav* and *ekta*, and do not work harmoniously with each other, and fall into absolutely unnecessary ill-talk, then there is no greater hardship for him to endure than this. So let us resolve not to give this hardship. However many of us there are, we want to stay with *samp* – *suhradh-bhav* and *ekta*, and work harmoniously. We must not think that 'one must do only as I say' – rather, 'I want to please my Lord and so I want to do this work with everyone harmoniously'. Remember! If you do this, you will reach zeroness! Then whether you are a householder or a renunciant, it does not matter; the one who acts in this way will attain God's *prasannata*. The reason is that pure Akshar Purushottam Upasana is the way of transformation. When there is change from the root, then one has practiced true devotion. To accept God's manifestation in human form, to understand that God is here through the sadhu – and to have *atma-buddhi* and *preeti* for him, to follow his *aagna* and have *suhradh-bhav* for devotees, and perform *seva* with *nirdosh-bhav*, means your inner being will start to change.

This is *sadhana*. Keep *nirdosh-bhav*. Do all work with *samp* – *suhradh-bhav* and *ekta*. That's it – do whatever you need to do for this and put aside whatever you need to put aside; and that is all there is to *sadhana*. And if we carry out our *sadhana* in this way, then our root base nature and characteristics, our attachments and affections, our notion of yours and mine, will all dissolve and you will not even know it. But for this, inner force is needed. For this, three things are especially needed! Remember this! One is to keep the inclination for *katha-varta*. If there is no-one to do this, then read the *Vachanamrut* and *Swami ni Vaato* daily. Also attend satsang-sabha. What such big work are we doing that we don't have

time to attend sabha? If we have *katha-varta*, only then will our *mahatmya* for the Lord, Satpurush and devotees increase. And if *mahatmya* increases, then we will find joy in doing *seva*, it will not be mechanical. Whatever we may have noted of someone else, or whatever bickering or differences that may have arisen during *seva*, or whatever friction may have arisen; to come out of this, there is only *bhajan* and prayer! If you listen to *katha-varta* and you do *seva*, then you will be able to maintain equilibrium when something happens, and for that reason you need to draw strength from dhun. So one must make a habit of dhun, and for that reason, one must do *mantra-lekhan*.

We want to finish the mandir within our Brahmajyoti campus in one year. Whoever has been assigned this work will carry it out. We must all do dhun to give strength to that work. If we have money, then give financial *seva*; there is no compulsion to give such and such amount. However, the work of the mandir is on-going and one should do *seva*, and one should come for *seva*. Remember! Those who do *bhajan* and pray, who do *seva* harmoniously in a spirit of unity, will themselves become temples of God!

Bhagwan Swaminarayan says, we have not come here to build temples nor to propagate the satsang. We have come to enable humankind to attain the inner fulfillment of God. But the mind, intellect, consciousness, ego and senses get in the way of attaining that inner bliss of God, and it is to transform them that we have started this *kriya-yog*. Whoever forges ahead in that with *mahima*, will certainly, certainly, certainly be transformed. That is what these projects are like, so join in them wholeheartedly and then go home and talk about them.

May God's *prasannata* flow in our hearts. Our lives have truly become worthwhile, and may the joy of that remain with us eternally. If any of our devotees are facing any difficulties in business, trade, factories, or in health, or in relation to their children, or any other obstacles in their day to day lives, then may God take everyone across these difficulties, and may the Lord grant that our whole satsang community comes to experience supreme peace, supreme joy and supreme fulfillment! For that let us do dhun for two minutes ... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan!

Sahajanand Swami Maharaj ni Jai! ◆