

Divine Discourses of Sant Bhagwant Sahebji

Spiritual Essence

On the auspicious occasion of Vasant Panchmi,
'Shikshapatri' Jayanti,
Brahmaswaroop Shastrii Maharaj Jayanti,
Blessings from Sant Bhagwant Sahebji Maharaj.
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Today is the greatly auspicious day of Vasant Panchmi! Alongside the advent of the unique 'Shikshapatri' scripture, it is the day that the propagator of pure Shri Akshar Purushottam Upasana, Gurudev Brahmaswaroop Shastriji Maharaj manifested, and the day on which two great *Paramhansas*' – Brahmanand Swami and Nishkulanand Swami were born! Truly it is a day of great joy. Of the whole year, some days are considered extremely auspicious. Those days are such that one does not have to look for an auspicious time to initiate a new venture. The day of Vasant Panchmi is the most auspicious! Whatever you decide to initiate on this day, all times are auspicious; that is how providential this day is! Shri Swaminarayan Bhagwan also chose this day to give us, his disciples the unparalleled holy text of the 'Shikshapatri,' so that we may all come to enjoy the bliss of God in our daily lives, in every way by keeping within the moral boundaries of *dharma* and carrying out our devotion. It is an incomparable scriptural text of the Swaminarayan sampradaya!

Sardar Saheb – Sardar Vitthalbhai Patel was a Swaminarayan satsangee. His father Zaverbhai, was an extremely devout disciple of Shastriji Maharaj. When Sardar Saheb was 15 to 16 years old, he was extremely mischievous. His father would worry so much about him, that he took the youngster to Shastriji Maharaj and said, 'My son is so mischievous and does not pay any attention to study.' At that time, Shastriji Maharaj placed his hands on both, Vitthalbhai and Vallabhai's heads' and gave his blessings, saying, 'This son of yours is such that he could

become the ruler of Delhi.' People would have laughed, but the Satpurush recognises the soul. And when the soul has been brought with that purpose, things happen exactly as the Satpurush says. In this way, India gained independence and Sardar Saheb unified more than 640 princely states which had existed as independent entities, made them one, and gave the whole world, the gift of the nation of India. In this sense, he ruled over all the rulers and therefore can be called the '*badshah*' of Delhi!

Sardar Saheb used to read the Shikshapatri. When India became independent, he served as the Home Minister. He understood and had experienced first hand all of the problems that India faced. It was at that time, that he said in one place that, 'If all the people of India, were to abide by the 'Shikshapatri' created by Bhagwan Swaminarayan; were to follow its codes, then 60% of the courts work would be nullified – people would not have to go to court. People would become so much better off and more civilised in their daily dealings.' Such is the exceptional text of the Shikshapatri, containing the moral and ethical codes of conduct, which Maharaj has gifted and given each devotee of the Swaminarayan sampradaya the *aagna*¹ to follow. And alongside all the codes of conduct to follow in our daily lives, Maharaj gave one verse relating to the liberation of the soul.

The 116th *shloka* in the Shikshapatri is the one that is eternal:

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

**'Nijaatmanam Brahma-roopam Dehatraya Vilakshanam I
Vibhaavya tena kartavya bhaktiha Krushnasya sarvadaa II'**

When one believes one's soul to be separate from the 3 bodies, 3 states, and 3 *gunas*², and joins with such a Satpurush who is *brahmaswaroop*, and lives by his word, then one becomes *akshar-roop*³ and thereby attains the right to perform the devotion of Purushottam; this is an eternal truth. Through this verse, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, also inherently points to the fact that, he will give us the gift of such an *akshar-roop* Sadhu.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan brought *Mul Aksharbrahma* Gunatitanand Swami with Him. While He was physically manifest, Maharaj gave devotees this acquaintance by saying, 'Mul-Aksharmurti Gunatitanand Swami, is my abode of Akshardham. Through such a sadhu, I will remain forever manifest on this earth. If you believe such a sadhu to be your soul, cultivate *atma-buddhi* and *preeti*⁴ for him and live in his *aagna*, then you will earn My utmost *prasannata*⁵ and your soul will separate from the 3 bodies, 3 states and 3 *gunas* and become *akshar-roop*, allowing you to attain and experience the ultimate bliss of Akshardham while in your present physical state.' Such is the exceptional text of the 'Shikshapatri' – such are the exceptional verses, through which Bhagwan Swaminarayan has given us the gift of Gunatitanand Swami.

² The 3 bodies are the physical, causal and subtle. The 3 states refer to the waking, dream and dormant states. The 3 *gunas* are the forces or essential qualities of all matter. They encompass all existence, objects, matter and actions including human consciousness. Everything is therefore made up of the 3 *gunas* in different proportions (our personality, food, actions etc). As individuals one quality out of these three predominates in us, and is reflected in our thoughts, actions, inclinations and tendencies.

³ *Akshar-roop* means to attain Akshardham as an internal state of being. It is used synonymously with *brahmaswaroop*.

⁴ *Atma-buddhi* and *preeti* means to love the Satpurush as one's own *atma*, and thereby refers to a bond of inseparable loving association.

⁵ When God or Guru is so pleased with you that it culminates in an outpouring of grace, this is called *prasannata*.

Our intellect however, is limited – otherwise we would not follow archaic practices or superstitions. Very few people are able to accept the new. Having said this however, people are able to accept new mobile phones, new movies, new styles, new cars – people accept these immediately. But when it comes to *dharma*, religion or satsang – even when one knows it is not coming from someone ordinary but from a genuine Satpurush, people are not ready to accept. Bhagatji Maharaj said, 'Gunatitanand Swami is the very incarnation of *Mul-Akshar*⁶'. People did not accept this. How many difficulties Bhagatji Maharaj faced! They excommunicated him from the satsang.

In Vadtal, Bhagwan Swaminarayan instated the *murtis* of Shri Laxmi-Narayan Dev – Laxmi and Narayan. In Amdavad, Maharaj instated the *murtis* of Shri Nar-Narayan Dev, Nar and Narayan. In Junagadh, the deities of Shri Radha-Raman Dev were instated – meaning Radha and Krushna Bhagwan. In Gadhada, Maharaj instated, Shri Gopi-Nathji Dev, Gopi representing Radha and Nath representing Krushna Bhagwan. In Dholera, the deities of Shri Madan-Mohan Dev were instated. Wherever you look, Bhagwan Swaminarayan created mandirs with dual Upasana worship. Otherwise would He not have instated just Shri Krushna Paramatma's *murti* alone?

The Swaminarayan sampradaya, is an Uddhav – Vaishnav sampradaya; that is what Maharaj used to say. In the Vaishnav lineage, there is only one *murti* of Shri Nathji or Shri Krushna Bhagwan, and in some places the *murtis* of Shri Radha Krushna are instated. But in all the six mandirs that Bhagwan Swaminarayan created, He instated the *murtis* of dual Upasana. Through that Maharaj was pointing to the fact that God lives through his Sadhu and is eternally manifest through such a Sadhu. It is only when you join with such a Sadhu that you can have true *darshan*

⁶ *Mul Akshar* 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, is exactly like God, but forever subservient to God.



of God, gain understanding on how to live life in a way that pleases God, and earn God's *prasannata*. Bhagwan Swaminarayan wanted to make our spiritual path easier, and that is why He established and propagated this method of Upasana. 'Upasana' is a composite of two words Up-asan, meaning to be seated near God. To be seated next to God means to be with God, to live as God's, to carry out all activity with God at the centre. How is it that God stays with us? It is by joining us to a Gunatit sadhu through whom God himself is manifest.

We have all the facilities of electric fans, lights, fridges, air-conditioning and all sorts of appliances in our homes, but how do we get them to work? If we switch them on, will they start? No. They need an electrical connection. It is only when you have connection to electricity that the lights and all the appliances in our homes will work. Similarly to truly earn God's *prasannata*, in order to stay with God, in order to have God abide within us and for us to live as God's, we need a connection. So if we connect to the Sadhu who lives in God, then we become connected to God. This is so simple and straightforward, but all of us intellectuals have made it so complicated, that we did not understand Bhagatji Maharaj, nor what he was saying.

But truly all credit to Shastriji Maharaj! Today on Shastriji Maharaj's *pragatya-parva*, not only do we bow to him hundreds of thousands of times, not millions of times, but so many times that even numbers are inadequate to count! And even then, it would not be enough. This divine being attained the spiritual essence from Bhagatji Maharaj. Truly it was to carry out this work that Shastriji Maharaj manifested. Of all the divine resolutions that Bhagwan Swaminarayan had made, this was one of them – to establish and propagate *ekantik dharma*. Remember! *Ekantik* – meaning to attain in entirety the 'one' [Lord]. To become immersed in God, while offering devotion to God – it is for this and to establish that one community, which we call the 'Gunatit Samaj' that He manifested. To establish *ekantik dharma* without such a Gunatit sadhu is impossible. To become *akshar-roop*, one needs an *akshar-*

roop Sadhu. It is absolutely important and necessary to believe such a Sadhu to be your soul, and to follow his *aagna*. Maharaj himself brought Gunatitanand Swami, the incarnation of *Mul-Aksharbrahma*, with him as a 'model' – that this is the type of Sadhu through whom I will remain manifest. Bhagatji Maharaj got us to recognise who Gunatitanand Swami was, and Shastriji Maharaj grasped this and gave it to the entire world! And because of this we fell into such great fortune!

Shastriji Maharaj's *pragatya-parva* can truly be called the day of transformation for the whole of humankind. Everyone celebrates Valentines Day, Father's Day, Mother's Day and such days – but really we should celebrate 'Transformation Day'. Man evolved from monkeys, but stopped there. With all of its intellectual force, skills, and extreme efforts, man has given rise to countless comforts and facilities but is not able to live peacefully because of his own ego and attachments. When you look at the world – there is such discord and conflict, and so much friction between people – this is mine - that is yours etc. Why? Man has sidestepped the most important thing. Humankind was not able to find the thing it was meant to look for. But God is so compassionate, so generous – He raises the sinners and lifts the downtrodden, and showers us with His grace! He saw that humankind would only seek comforts for the physical body, will only fuff about to content the body. Humankind has no idea about the bliss of the *atma*, and therefore to enable humankind to see and understand this, God himself manifested in human form and then stayed manifest through such a Sadhu. Shastriji Maharaj showered his ultimate grace upon us, by showing us the exceptional path of pure Upasana so that we may enjoy that ultimate bliss of the soul.

[God says:] Oh humankind! Do whatever you want in life, but make sure you join with such a Gunatit Sadhu and develop *atma-buddhi* and *preeti* for him. If you carry out everything by his *aagna*, then no worldly thing will have the power to bind you, all your self-centredness and attachments will dissolve and there will be great



transformation in your life! Remember! You do not have to give up anything! All those things which you cling to will be released from within. All of those things, which give rise to disturbance, dispute and friction in our lives will be removed from within. If our root ignorance is removed, then all the facilities and comforts you have, you will be able to enjoy, with inner contentment. However, without knowing the Gunatit Sadhu, without connecting with him, and without following his *aagna* – you will never, never, never be able to cross the ocean of *jiva*, *ishwar* and *maya*⁷. And if that ocean is crossed, then one becomes *brahmaswaroop*⁸. If one becomes *brahmaswaroop*, then one certainly, certainly, certainly experiences the bliss of Parabrahma.

Shastriji Maharaj was such an exceptional being! He endured such intense and unimaginable hardship. When you look at the five principles of Akshar Purushottam Upasana – that God is the supreme all-doer, has an eternal form, is manifest and we must follow his *aagna*, understanding all of his devotees to be *nirdosh*⁹; and when you read the biography of Shastriji Maharaj's life, you will see each of these principles in his life's actions.

Us Santo are humbly requesting everyone, and it is our prayer to all bhakto that during this period of the corona virus, it is true that a lot of damage has been done, but we have also benefitted immensely in our spirituality. We have time; all the usual running around is on hold, so please read, Shastriji Maharaj's *jivan-charitra*, Yogiji Maharaj's *jivan-charitra* and the two volumes of Shastriji Maharaj's letters. Those who Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj made sadhus were educated and cultured – Mahant Swami, Doctor Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami, Bhaktipriya-Kothari Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Viveksagar Swami, Brahnavihari Swami, Bhadresh Swami; if you look, each

⁷ *Jiva, Ishwar and maya* are 3 eternal entities which keep us bound to the world.

⁸ This refers to one who is entirely at one with God and through whom God is manifest.

⁹ Faultless, flawless and innocent.

one of them are such spiritual giants! Hariprasad Swami, Premswaroop Swami, Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai, Guruji; we have been given the gift of all of these exceptional sadhus. And all of these sadhus have spread the word of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, through exceptional mandirs, through their life and actions and through publications!

Truly our heartfelt thanks go out to the Santo of BAPS! If you look at these Santo you want to bow at their feet! With Pramukh Swami Bapa and Mahant Swami Bapa's *aagna*, they have published the life biographies of Shriji Maharaj, Gunatit, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. When you read these, and out of these when you come to the anthologies of Shastriji Maharaj's letters, which are published under the title, '*Likhitan Shastri Yagnapurushdasji*' in two volumes – they are a must read. What hardship Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj have endured for us, to give us this joyful, peaceful, fulfilling path – and when you read this you feel, that for them I would do anything. Whatever we could do for them would truly not be enough.

Shastriji Maharaj heard the talk of Upasana through Bhagatji Maharaj. Shastriji Maharaj himself was the manifest *swaroop* of Akshar-Purushottam, but he showed this to us through his life. He had supreme conviction that Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the supreme Lord and that is why he became a Sadhu. When he was initiated as a Sadhu, he was named Shastri Yagnapurushdas. He studied Sanskrit and attained the degree of 'Shastri' and therefore became known as 'Shastri' Yagnapurushdas.

The next step in Upasana is to know God as being *karta-harta* – the all-doer. When you look at Shastriji Maharaj's life, and if you read his letters, you will realise that in every single moment, he believed God to be the all-doer. He was such a spiritual giant, so charismatic and so courageous! He could not be coerced or pressured by anyone, and he would have no qualms in telling someone off when necessary, but he was filled with *dasatva-bhakti*¹⁰. Where did he use his courage? He used it in believing God to be the all-doer.

¹⁰ Devotion that comes from complete surrender and servitude, from the depth of one whose life is entirely for God.

Listen to something that happened in 1905. On 11 November 1905, there was an important meeting of devotees that took place in Vadtal. In that meeting, there was a suggestion by Ghanshyambhai Vaid - that the best action would be to move Shastriji Maharaj away from Vadtal. All the devotees had great love for Shastriji Maharaj, and while they would be in Vadtal during the time of *samaiyas*, they would go home after that. Whereas, Shastriji Maharaj would naturally remain in Vadtal, but the difficulties and adversities he faced there were so great. That is why these devotees thought, what can we do about this? That is why Ghanshyambhai suggested that to move Shastriji Maharaj from Vadtal would be the best thing to do. But then they thought, 'how would we get Shastriji Maharaj to move?' So they made a decision, to write a note to the Acharya Maharaj requesting him to give permission for Shastriji Maharaj's *vicharan*¹¹ in the Bochasan area. As it is, the work of the Rudel mandir was on-going and it was happening through Shastriji Maharaj and so they thought we can ask for a note from Acharya Maharaj. If he grants permission for Shastriji Maharaj to physically come there and oversee things, then that way we can get Shastriji Maharaj out of Vadtal and he can do *vicharan* in this area. All of these devotees met the Acharya Maharaj and the Kothari, but neither of them gave any response to their request – they simply did not answer. So then the devotees all got together and went to meet Gordhanbhai Kothari.

What Gordhanbhai Kothari said when they went to meet him, is something that has to be heard. Gordhanbhai was the *Kothari* since the time of Raghuvirji Maharaj. He had worked alongside four Acharyas, and he was so prominent and influential. But when this event happened, he was elderly, and he no longer had the control he had previously held. So Gordhanbhai Kothari helplessly said, 'At this time whatever I say no longer makes any impact. The only person who can move this matter is the Acharya, so you will have to make a forceful request.' Saying this, he

¹¹ To travel from place to place with the sole aim of carrying out God's work.

became serious and said something very important, 'There is one more thing; this time, do not go leaving Shastriji Maharaj here alone.' After this, all the unspoken words he left to inference. From this, one can assess just how deeply grave the situation must have been. Hearing this, all the devotees shuddered; their hearts sank. They all went to Swami Shastriji Maharaj, told him everything and said, 'you have to leave Vadtal. This is now too much, with your very life in danger.'

Swamishri listened to them with utmost equanimity. If someone were to come to us and say that your life is in danger here – what would we think? Whereas here, it was someone as respected and responsible as Gordhanbhai Kothari who was telling these bhakto, 'Do not leave Shastriji Maharaj alone here.' What a deeply grave thing he told them! And when they told Shastriji Maharaj, he simply listened to it all calmly. When you look, you see to just what an extent he believed God to be the all-doer! Shastriji Maharaj said, 'you are making uncalled for decisions. We are the disciples of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. We have to live according to the will of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, so do not ever talk to me about leaving Vadtal.' What Shastriji Maharaj was saying is that, God is the all-doer and everything happens by his will, so who will be able to destroy me? 'Without my will, one cannot even pick a blade of grass...' – we sing this from 'Bolya Shri Hari re..' but we do not believe it. Whereas this understanding was in every single atom of Shastriji Maharaj's being. Even though he received death threats, and even though he heard that people were plotting to kill him, he was completely unalarmed, and with complete equanimity Shastriji Maharaj said, 'Everything happens by Maharaj's will; nothing can happen without his will.'

The next step of Akshar Purushottam upasana: is that you must join with such a Gunatit Sadhu. Shastriji Maharaj had exceptional love for Bhagatji Maharaj! Just think about it, Shastriji Maharaj was such a prominent sadhu that his seat would be next to the Acharya Maharaj; he was so deeply respected, and thousands of devotees were drawn

to him – he was a saffron-robed Sant and he was such a great spiritual scholar! If you were to look at his wisdom, his *niyam-dharma*¹², there was no other sadhu that could even come close to comparing with Shastriji Maharaj – he was that exceptional, so deeply rooted in principle, so charismatic, so illumined, so impressive! Bhagatji Maharaj on the other hand, was a householder, in white clothes, but Shastriji Maharaj made him his Guru. He recognised Bhagatji Maharaj as a Gunatit *swaroop*. If you read Bhagatji Maharaj's *jivan charitra*, then you realise what a life he lived and how he earned Gunatitanand Swami's *prasannata*!

Someone asked Gunatitanand Swami, 'there were so many saffron-robed sadhus, so many Brahmins and yet you gave all your spiritual essence to a tailor?' Gunatitanand Swami replied, 'I haven't given it; it has automatically been given. Bhagatji Maharaj has lived such a life, he has endured so much – has put his head on the line for the sake of God's work, and so God is pleased with him and has given him everything!' Swami said, 'It is not a play-thing, that you can take back once given.' Shastriji Maharaj understood that Bhagatji Maharaj had attained Gunatit's utmost *prasannata* and that he had attained that ultimate state. Out of so many sadhus, out of so many hundreds of thousands of devotees – no one realised this; only Shastriji Maharaj understood that essence of Akshar Purushottam, and he joined with Bhagatji Maharaj with utmost *atma-buddhi* and *preeti*, such that he followed his every *aagna* to the letter.

When all the devotees said to Shastriji Maharaj that his life was in danger; Shastriji Maharaj believing God to be the all-doer, simply said, 'nothing is going to happen to me, do not worry about it.' He also said do not speak to me about separating from Vadtal. What was the reason for that? He then said, 'My Guru, Bhagatji Maharaj gave me the *aagna* that, even if I were to be chopped to pieces, he will mend me, but told me never to leave the gates of Vadtal. That is why I will not leave Vadtal.' He was not swayed by anyone's

affections or influence. He was truly joined only to God, and to his Guru's *aagna*. Shastriji Maharaj propagated the Akshar Purushottam Upasana, but truly upasana was alive in every cell of his being.

Just see what happens next. This event happened on 11 November and Shastriji Maharaj refused to leave Vadtal. On the morning of 12 November was the *samaiyo* of the Vadtal mandir *patotsav*. Everyone was worried about what would happen. Shri Krushnaji Ada was a Gunatit *swaroop*, alongside Bhagatji Maharaj and Jaga Swami during the same time period! He had also earned the utmost *prasannata* of Gunatitanand Swami and Jaga Swami, and had attained that Gunatit state. Shastriji Maharaj had recognised this. Krushnaji Ada knew that Shastriji Maharaj's life was in danger, so he came to the *samaiyo* in Vadtal bringing fifty devotees with him. The devotees at Vadtal all told him, 'Shastriji Maharaj's life is in danger, but he refuses to leave Vadtal, and we are so worried about him. We cannot even sleep. Please help us.' Krushnaji Ada then met with Shastriji Maharaj. Krushnaji Ada knew that Bhagwan Swaminarayan had established dual worship through the *murtis* he instated in the mandirs, and it was his directive for us to embody that by becoming *akshar-roop* and offering devotion to Akshar Purushottam. He knew, it was Bhagwan Swaminarayan's resolve to have Gunatitanand Swami's *murti* placed alongside his own – which was to come to realisation through Akshar Purushottam upasana – and that in itself was God's work. So he told Shastriji Maharaj, '**the very Bhagatji Maharaj that gave you the *aagna* not to leave the gates of Vadtal – is the very Bhagatji Maharaj that is now giving you the *aagna* to leave Vadtal.**' Just see, Shastriji Maharaj was not swayed by the affection of devotees, he was not swayed by fear or by anyone or anything else, and he was never going to leave Vadtal. However, when Krushnaji Ada said this, Shastriji Maharaj replied, '**O Krushnaji Ada! I know that when you have spoken, it is Bhagatji Maharaj himself who is speaking to me, and so I will do as you wish.**' And then, Shastriji Maharaj taking five sadhus with him gathered their meagre belongings and left Vadtal.

¹² Moral and spiritual disciplines and codes of conduct.

He believed God to be *sakar* and that is why he became a sadhu. He was put through this roller coaster, everyone was so scared, so fearful – but Shastriji Maharaj had complete equanimity, and believing Maharaj to be the all-doer, was joyful and kept us all joyful. *He believed Bhagatji Maharaj to be God's swaroop, and joined with him out of exceptional love, and humbly followed his every aagna. Bhagatji Maharaj had said, 'do not leave Vadtal' and so he could not be swayed by anyone, or pressured by anyone. However, 'Krushnaji Ada is the very swaroop of my Guru, Bhagatji Maharaj! And when Krishnaji Ada said, 'you must leave Vadtal,' – Shastriji Maharaj took his cloth bag and left that very minute. Just think about it – he followed his Guru's aagna to the absolute letter.*

The last step in the Akshar Purushottam upasana is to believe all of God's devotees to be faultless. Shastriji Maharaj's life shows us how he fulfilled this completely. If you look at the situations that arose in his life, even when BAPS was established, there was such immense opposition. There was a whole movement to break this, to completely destroy it, but Shastriji Maharaj's godliness was such! In the face of such intense opposition, no one would be able to withstand it except for a true sadhu! Remember! It is because of this *sadhuta*¹³ within Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swamiji that no one was able to harm the sanstha. Shastriji Maharaj had been given so much trouble, harassed in every way possible and people would continuously disrupt whatever he did. However when someone published a leaflet in opposition to the sadhus of that very organisation that opposed him and someone came to read it in front of Shastriji Maharaj.... That person had only read three to four words and Shastriji Maharaj shouted out, 'Ey! Stop immediately!' Shastriji Maharaj was so courageous, so strong and just one shout could scare anyone. So that person said, 'But Swami, this

¹³ *Sadhuta* refers to the qualities of a true sadhu such as humility, complete selflessness and surrender, with the recognition of God as the Supreme All-Doer. Because of his *sadhuta*, the true sadhu will never act for his own benefit. He is natural, simple and joyfully immersed in God.

leaflet is in opposition to Vadtal.' Swami replied, 'Vadtal is our mandir, and who are you to bring our mandir into disrepute? Tear the leaflet, burn it!' Shastriji Maharaj was not only the propagator of pure Upasana; it was in his every vein, in every aspect of his life. In front of Shastriji Maharaj, no one could dare speak a word against Bhagwan Swaminarayan or anyone associated with Maharaj, and if anyone did, Shastriji Maharaj would stop them immediately and tell them off. He did not allow anyone to speak ill of any of the sadhus or devotees of Vadtal mandir. He himself never ever spoke this; not only did he never speak ill, he would never listen to it or even read it! Just think about it, to him, there was no enemy!

Please remember these *prasangs* that I am telling you about, and it is my prayer to devotees that when incidents arise in our lives, the understanding of how we should act and react is shown by these *prasangs*. At that point in time, God used those people in whichever way he willed and through it showed us Shastriji Maharaj's genuine *sadhuta*, and these events give us the inspiration to realise that talk of Akshar Purushottam upasana which Shastriji Maharaj has given us. Never fall into negative perception of anyone.

Shastriji Maharaj's onward program was in Bamangaam, so Shastriji Maharaj was going to go there from Bochasan taking two Santo with him. But somehow, work came up in Bochasan and so Shastriji Maharaj was not able to go and he sent the two Santo. At that time, the Akshar Purushottam sanstha had no mandirs. So if these Santo went anywhere, they would stay in the mandirs of the original sanstha. These two Santo went to Bamangaam, and after the sabha, as it was summer – went and slept on the roof terrace of the mandir. When the original sanstha found out that these people have kept their overnight stay in our mandir, they sent two *parshads*¹⁴. It wouldn't be too far fetched to say, they were sent to beat Shastriji Maharaj! The two *parshads* saw these two sadhus sleeping and simply picked them up

¹⁴ A *parshad* is one who has received primary initiation as a sadhu and who is given white robes. After a specified period of training, the *parshad* receives final initiation as a sadhu, whereby he dons the saffron robes.

and threw them off the roof terrace! But God is forever the protector. The two sadhus picked themselves off the ground, brushed the dust off, and went to the home of the Patel that had invited them to this village. They told him they had been thrown off the roof. That Patel was an extremely powerful person in the village, and his influence extended to the whole district of Borsad. India was not yet independent at that time, and it was the Gayaekwad rule in that region. The police were a powerful force and people would not want to get on the wrong side of the law. That Patel went off to Borsad, and told the police and so those two *parshads* were immediately thrown into jail.

When the organisation that had sent these two *parshads* found out, there was a great commotion. To have their *parshads* in jail was not a good thing, so they pleaded with the officer. The officer said, 'Until that Patel of Bamangaam does not tell me to, I will not release them. And now it will be a case for the courts.' They went to the Patel and tried in whichever way to get him to grant the release of the *parshads*. The Patel said, 'Who do you think you are? You might be opposed to them, but how can you simply throw someone from the roof? You need to learn a lesson, so I will not let this go.' The Patel was furious with them, and this continued over two days with no settlement being reached. The officer too, simply did not give them the time of day.

Seeing these people going back and forth, Gordhanbhai Kothari said, 'there is only one person who can bring about their release – and that is Shastri Yagnapurushdas.' Everyone was dumbfounded. He was the very person they had gone to destroy, and now he is the person that will get them released? Gordhanbhai said, 'You do not know this Sadhu. Go and meet him and ask for forgiveness. Even if you do not ask his forgiveness, he will still have the *parshads* released. Go see for yourself! Go and have *darshan* of his *sadhuta*!' Two Santo and one devotee, then went to Bochasan. Shastriji Maharaj warmly welcomed them, showed them everything, got them to do *darshan* and then asked them, 'What brings you here?' Shastriji Maharaj had figured out that they must have come to get

those *parshads* released from jail. The devotee then said, 'the police officer has said that he will only release the *parshads* if the Patel gives his consent.' Shastriji Maharaj then called for the Patel from Bamangaam. The Patel understood why Shastriji Maharaj was calling him. He too had seen this delegation come. So before Shastriji Maharaj could say anything to him, the Patel said, 'look Gurudev! Your *aagna* is foremost for me. I prostrate myself before you, and I pray and I will do whatever you say, but I cannot let these people go. How could they have the courage to send the *parshads* to beat you? I have to teach them a lesson. And so Swami, you are the Guru, but under no circumstances will I be able to follow the *aagna* to release them.' Shastriji Maharaj said, 'It is my wish that you release them.' But the Patel would not give in, and so Shastriji Maharaj said, 'Look Patel, I too am now making the decision that I will not eat until those two *parshads* are released from jail and get back to Vadtal mandir.' The Patel shuddered, and broke down crying, 'Gurudev! So much you would do!' He immediately went to Borsad and had the two *parshads* released. Just think about it, what a state he lived in – no matter even if someone tried to take his life, he would not see them as an enemy!!! To what an unimaginable extent he considered God's devotees to be divine! Shastriji Maharaj lovingly sent the delegation off.

There are countless happenings such as these, out of which I have only mentioned a few. You can see this in Shastriji Maharaj's life, in Yogiji Maharaj's life, and in the lives of Pramukh Swami Bapa, Mahant Swamiji, Bhaktipriya Swami, Tyagvallabh Swami, Viveksagar Swami, Ishwarcharan Swami, Brahmavihari Swami, Bhadrash Swami, Hariprasad Swami, Mukundjivan Swami – Guruji, Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai; they have all realised this in their lives. What Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj have given, these Santo have realised in their lives and that is why Upasana has spread worldwide. The propagation of Upasana cannot happen just by talking about it, or writing big volumes about it or winning debates. On Vasant Panchmi there is such joy in our hearts to celebrate this auspicious day, that Swami you came and manifested on



this day, not only did you give us Upasana but you also gave us the gift of such Gunatit sadhus; and you got us to join with them out of love. Now it is our prayer on the most auspicious day of your *pragatya-parva* that we are all able to live with the courage that you lived with! Truly we have received the most valuable thing! Something that one can never put a price on! The more we understand the *mahima* of this, the more we dive deeper into it, the more we start to live it, the more and more joy we experience from it and we will more and more come to understand its value.

Yogiji Maharaj used to give one simple, straight-forward example of a goatherd. One goatherd found a shining piece of glass, so he tied it around the neck of his favourite goat. To him the glass itself was not of much value, but to the shopkeepers of that village – the piece of glass did not seem ordinary, so one paid Rs15 for it and bought it from the goatherd. That shopkeeper then went ahead and sold that stone to a jeweller for Rs1000. The jeweller then went and sold that stone in the city and got Rs100,000! The city jeweller went and sold it in an even bigger city and he got one crore rupees for it. And when that made its way to a diamond trader's son, he said 'get ten men and let them take as many jewels as they possibly can from sunrise to sunset – in exchange for this stone.' On hearing this, there was such a commotion in the town. Everyone felt he has got himself looted. But when the son's father came back and saw the stone, he said to his son, 'you have taken this stone for free!' That stone was a jewel, which when placed under the rays of the full moon on Sharad purnima, would create countless jewels, and he began to get this on every full moon day. The goatherd valued this stone at Rs 5, but as the stone changed hands from one jeweller to another, the more it was recognised and so the more its value increased.

Similarly, the more and more firmly we join with the sadhu, who propagates Akshar Purushottam upasana and lives his life according to the *aagna* of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj; it can be any sadhu – Hariprasad Swami, Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai – but join with one of them, maintain *atma-buddhi* and *preeti* for him, humbly follow

his *aagna* and believe his devotees to be faultless. When one does this, the more the value of this upasana increases for us, and the more and more joy we will experience.

Today is the exceptional day of Vasant Panchmi! It would be fitting to call it 'a day of transformation'. After Shastriji Maharaj manifested, he gave us the path by which we could rise above our ego – attachments, and be transformed in a way that we can truly enjoy the joy, peace and bliss of God in this lifetime. He propagated Upasana. On this 'transformation day' – Bhagwan Swaminarayan gifted us the 'Shikshapatri'. We have got the gift of such a great Guru, such great Santo, but we want to offer our devotion while maintaining our respectable boundaries. Devotion should not be without understanding, and we must take care in that. That is why Shastriji Maharaj would keep the matchless text of the Shikshapatri with him. It is so that devotion to God doesn't become mechanical ritual, so that devotion doesn't become foolish sentimentality, that God gave us the unparalleled text of the 'Shikshapatri'. We must live life holding onto this. It is also the *pragatyadin* of Santo who truly lived their lives like this, Brahmanand Swami and Nishkulanand Swami! And to top it all off, it is our Gurdev Shastriji Maharaj's *pragatyadin*!

All of you beloved bhakto, here and abroad, great, great congratulations to you and thank you! In the new mandir, you and all the Santo decided to instate golden *murtis* of Gurudev Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, as an expression of our indebtedness to them. For that, special congratulations to all of our behno! They have given so much gold. Today is Shastriji Maharaj's *pragatya-parva*. On 7th June, is Yogiji Maharaj's *pragatya-parva*. Now that the period of the corona-virus will come to a close, in celebration of that, we will place the *kalash* on the new mandir on 7 June. We will perform *poojan* and *arti* of the *kalash*. The reason the *kalash poojan* ceremony came to mind, was because ten days ago a few bhakto came to me with their families. They asked, 'will the mandir *kalash* be gold?' and I said yes they would be. So they said, 'we had donated gold for the *murtis* but we felt that we had given



too little, so we would like to give gold for *seva*.' I told them, to give by all means. If there is anyone who feels this way, then it is my prayer that please do give gold as *seva* for the *kalash*. For those who were not able to give gold for the *murtis*, and who feel that they missed this *seva*, you will be able to give towards the *kalash*. When can it be said that the mandir is complete? It is only when the *kalash* is placed!

It was on Gunatit *diksha-din* that *murtis* were consecrated. Today we celebrated Shastriji Maharaj's *pragatya-parva*, and on 7 June, when it is such a Gunatit Sant as Yogiji Maharaj's *pragatya-parva*, because of whom our whole community is so content, towards whom we wish to offer our devotion, we will raise the gold *kalash* and place them to complete the mandir. Currently the work is going very well. The work of landscaping around the mandir is going on, and all the other work relating to the mandir is also happening. The domes have been placed, the *kalash* are in the process of being prepared, and then they will be plated in gold. That is why we are placing this appeal, that if anyone wishes to give *seva*, if they felt they were not able to give at the time of the mandir, or if they wish to give more, then this is the chance to do that *seva* and it is my prayer to you to come forward with this!

You have all done so much *seva*. We do not have the right to ask from you anymore, because you have all given *seva* over and above your capacity. So many of you also performed so many different types of austerities – from giving up certain foods, certain drinks, giving up travelling, giving up so many things, or doing mantra-lekhan, extra *dhun*; you have all really done so much. To raise funds for mandir *seva*, some did catering, while others went from house to house and collected recyclable goods, paper etc., some went out with coin collection tins and some collected utensils. When you look, every single devotee, our whole community 'wholesale!' here and from abroad has made their contribution for this mandir. With such team spirit, in harmony, everybody has done *seva* over and above their capacity. I bow to all of you!

It is just that ten days ago, two or three devotees said, 'we missed out on this, and so we wish that if you do this, then we will get a chance for *seva*.' That is when I thought that there may be many devotees like this, and for that reason I appeal to you. I am not saying that you must give, but for whoever that wishes to give please do. The reason is you have all given, and it is through that, that all of this has happened. However much you give for God's work is how much will stay with you. It is for that reason that we are placing this prayer with you.

The *kalash poojan* ceremony has been scheduled for 7 June. It will be very hot, but it is Yogi Bapa's *pragatya-parva* and that for us is the most important thing. It is to offer our devotion to Bapa that we have decided this date for the *kalash poojan*. We shall raise the *kalash*, perform the *arti* and will follow whatever ceremony Shantibhai, Manojbhai and the team decide.

Ashvinbhai, Shantibhai, Dilipbhai and the committee have decided this. Now from Shastriji Maharaj's *pragatyadin* right through to Bapa's *pragatyadin*, please give whatever *seva* you wish. Please do *dhun-bhajan* and prayer that this corona-virus is banished to the realm of the sun, and that everyone can come together and enjoy the bliss of devotion – can get together and celebrate, and take part in this.

On Shastriji Maharaj's *pragatya-parva*, the day on which Maharaj gifted us the 'Shikshapatri', the auspicious day on which Brahmanand Swami and Nishkulanand Swami were born, my countless *vandan* to all of you! And prayers at the lotus feet of Swami Shastriji Maharaj, Yogi Bapa and at the lotus feet of all the manifest Gunatit *swaroops*, that 'oh Lord! With *samp-suhradbhav-ekta*, in a spirit of togetherness, we have given ourselves to your work of Upasana so that we may come out of our own self-centred inclinations, emotions and nature and surrender wholly 100%, and truly propagate your work; for this please give us all immense strength, intellect, inspiration and awareness, that is our prayer on this most auspicious day!

Jai Shri Swaminarayan!

