

Swami Shreeji



Divine Discourses of Sant Bhagwant Sahebji

# Spiritual Essence

Sant Bhagwant Sahebji's Ashirwad at Shri Yogi Yuva Grishma Shibir  
22 May 2023, Pragnan Tirth, Mogri

Original Discourse in Gujarati Transcreated by : Bhavisha Tailor

**This** time our Shri Yogi Youth shibir is being celebrated with different themes on a daily basis, and today it is the theme of 'Upasana'! You are all so fortunate that you are getting to listen to talk of Upasana at such a young age! If you want to come here to Pragnan Tirth, how many roads lead you here? You can come from the gate at the front, and there are two roads – one that leads in from the north and one which leads in from the south, from which you can come. Similarly, to reach God and to please Him, there are many different paths – and ways – which is what we call 'Upasana'.

'Upasana' – is a composite of *up* and *asana*. 'Up' means near, and 'asana' means to sit or be seated. The way to be able to sit next to God – is called 'Upasana'. There are two paths of Upasana. Just as we have two roads leading to this place, from the north and south – there are two means of Upasana to worship God and to please God; one is *nirakar* and the

other is *sakar*. On the path of *nirakar* upasana – there is the ideology that I am nothing – it is the path of *Samkhya*. In this meditation, nothing exists, the whole world is burning – houses, buildings etc., one's relatives are all dead to you, so there is nothing at all. Through such thought processes, the individual has to come to a point in their meditation where they themselves are nothing – and thereby come to a level of zeroness. Renouncing everything one by one, they eventually renounce even their own body and that is when they reach God. Thus, one becomes formless and only the form of God remains. On the path of *sakar* Upasana, which is the path of Yog, it is God's *mahima*<sup>1</sup> that one has to understand. God is so great, so great, so great! He is so great that we are nothing in front of him, we are zero. In this way, while

<sup>1</sup> **Mahima** refers to an inner understanding of glory, virtues, qualities and greatness.

understanding the exceptional *mahima* of the manifest Lord, one's own self-identity dissolves completely in God.

On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Bhagwan Shri Krushna was with Arjun. He was roughly five and a half to six foot tall, just like us. Arjun used to think of Shri Krushna to be human, just like him, maybe a bit taller, a bit more intelligent, courageous, with prowess – but nevertheless, did not think of him as God and nor did he know this. The reason was he lived with his own identity at the centre, and so could not have clear *darshan* of God. But as Shri Krushna gradually spoke to Arjun on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, inspiring him to fight – it was through this that we attained the exceptional scripture of the 'Bhagavad Gita'. The more and more Arjun listened to the words emanating from Shri Krushna Bhagwan, the more and more he understood the *mahima* of God. As a result, he consequently had *darshan* of Shri Krushna Bhagwan's *virat swaroop*<sup>2</sup> and he surrendered himself to God, becoming his devout disciple. When we meet someone new, we may think – I wonder who that is? Then when the person says I stood first rank in my 12<sup>th</sup> standard, our impression of him goes up a notch. Then if he says, 'I am a doctor and I was a gold medalist in Medicine.' Then if he were to say, 'I am also a surgeon, and I came first rank in that too! I am an internationally renowned surgeon.' Then we would think, we are nothing in front of such an

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<sup>2</sup> ***Viraat Swaroop* refers to the Cosmic form of God. The Cosmic form is usually depicted as a majestic, vast physical form of God. In this vision, Shri Krushna shows himself as the Creator and the Destroyer; containing the entire Universe within Himself.**

accomplished individual. Similarly, Shri Krushna Bhagwan went higher and higher in Arjun's esteem, so much so that Arjun realized that this is God himself, and I am nothing in front of him. Arjun reached the level of zeroness, and so Arjun's self-identity as Arjun dissolved, and became one with God. In this way, the path of attaining oneness with God, is the path of *sakar* Upasana.

The path of *nirakar* Upasana is extremely difficult, and that is why for us the path of *sakar* Upasana is best. Ours is the upasana of *sakar*. What does *sakar* mean? Shri Ramchandra Bhagwan manifested and so he had a human form. Shri Krushna Parmatma also manifested in human form, Gautam Buddha too was in the form of a human, Mahavir Swami also manifested in the form of a human, and Bhagwan Shri Swaminarayan too manifested physically in human form. They manifested and took on human forms just like us – they were *sakar* (with form), and we accepted them as incarnations of God and therefore our path is that of *sakar* Upasana. It does not matter if others take another path – but know that we are on the highway and our path to reach God is that of *sakar* Upasana.

On the path of *sakar* Upasana – there is a fork in the pathway – so there are two ways of *sakar* Upasana – one is *paroksh* and one is *pragat*. *Paroksh* refers to that which has come and gone and is now no longer directly present or approachable. Shri Ramchandra Bhagwan, for example, manifested and now is no longer directly present, and therefore those that worship him are on the path of *sakar* Upasana, but because Shri Ramchandra Bhagwan is not here right now in human form, those that worship him, are

carrying out devotion of *paroksh*. Shri Krushna Paramatma is not presently manifest in human form, but those who worship Shri Krushna Bhagwan can be said to be carrying out *paroksh* devotion.

Once, Bhagatji Maharaj asked Shastriji Maharaj, 'Yagnapurushdasji, are you a disciple of Swaminarayan?' Shastriji Maharaj replied, 'I am not just a disciple of Swaminarayan, I am a Swaminarayan sadhu – I am dressed in the orange robes.' Then Bhagatji replied, 'No, but without accepting Mul Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami, no one can become a disciple of Swaminarayan. You are a disciple of Narayan.' He who worships the *paroksh* Lord, is the disciple of Narayan. But to understand that our very Lord is manifest in human form through the Gunatit Sadhu, and to carry out devotion in this way, is devotion of *pragat*.

'*Pratyaksh* and *pragat*.' *Pratyaksh* is a composite of *prati* and *aksh*. *Prati* means in front of and *aksh* means eyes. He who is seated in front of your very eyes, who gets up – who gives you *darshan*, is who you must accept and believe in; that is *pragat* Upasana. We worship the *sakar* Lord (Lord with form), but in the same way that we are at present manifest in human form, God is manifest through the *swaroop* of such a Gunatit Sadhu. If someone were to ask us, what is your Upasana? Then you should reply, it is Akshar Purushottam – *pragat* Upasana. Our *Ishta-Dev* is Bhagwan Swaminarayan, but in order to sit by him, to please him, to live as his - the pathway to get to Akshardham, is Akshar Purushottam Upasana! That is why for us, within the upasana of *sakar*, we follow the path of *pragat*. If someone were to ask you, 'What does Akshar Purushottam Upasana

mean?' Then the answer is, 'Our Lord is *sakar* and is manifest in human form through the Gunatit sadhu, and so our Akshar Purushottam Upasana is the upasana of *sakar* and *pragat*!'

Right now, it is 12.15pm and many of you seated here may be starving. If someone then came up and said, 'Ohoho, the *shrikhand* has been made with saffron, almonds and pistachios and just melts in the mouth! And the *puri* are like light fluffy balls! The *suki-bhajee* is finger-licking good! And the *khadi* is so tasty that one would not be able to stop at one bowl!' If someone praised the food like this for one hour, at most your mouth would water, but you would not be able to taste any of it, and your hunger certainly would not go. But if nothing were said, and no-one describes the menu but simply serves you a dish with *shrikhand*, *puri*, *suki-bhajee* and *kadi*, then would you need to say anything? Rather, you yourself would eat and say how much you enjoyed it and how satisfied you are. Similarly, devotees worshipping the *paroksh* form of God may describe God, i.e. Bhagwan Shri Ram was like this, Bhagwan Shri Krushna was like this, Shri Mahavir was like this, Shri Buddha was like this! But, that will increase your hunger for liberation, it cannot grant it. Just as you get *shrikhand*, *puri*, *kadi* and *suki bhajee* in front of you and your hunger goes once you eat it, similarly, it is only when you find God manifest through a human form, that your liberation can take place! That is what our *pragat* Upasana is! When you worship God through *paroksh-bhav*, you will certainly gain *sanskar*<sup>3</sup>. And it is when countless lifetimes of

<sup>3</sup> ***Sanskar* refers to becoming cultured. It refers to good habits, positive values and the impetus to be a better human being.**

such *sanskar* come to fruition that you will come face to face with God himself, or with such a Sant within whom God resides, and it is only then that the *jiva* gains liberation. That is why it is said that for the liberation of one's soul, God himself or such a Sant within whom God resides, is needed – otherwise all the other means are available to you, but those will only grant you stature.

The reason you are so fortunate is that we have all attained God as *sakar* and *pragat*, which means we have all attained *kalyan*<sup>4</sup>, that is fixed! The reason is that Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself gave the promise to grant Akshardham to whosoever takes his refuge, worships him and joins with his *pragat swaroop*! Even if we do not want to go to Akshardham, Bhagwan is going to take us. Now if someone were to ask you, 'where is God *pragat*?' then you should reply, 'Within such a sadhu that has attained *gunatit-bhav*.'

When a housing society of 100 or 50 or 25 homes is being made, the plots are first marked out, plans are drawn up and drawings are made. But many cannot envisage what the houses will look like from seeing the plans. For that reason, builders cleverly construct a model house first. They make a sample house, fitted with furnishings – to show those interested in buying, that this is the type of house we will be building in this society. As buyers, we would go and view the sample house – and see the drawing room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, toilet etc. We would go and see a few societies like this, view their sample houses and then book a house in the society where the sample house appeals to us.

<sup>4</sup> *Kalyan* means the path of liberation.

Similarly, which bungalow does God reside in? God says, 'I do not reside in the sky or in the nether-worlds – I am with you all of the time.' But which house does God live in? Narsinh Mehta wanted to write a wedding invitation to God, and so he composed a bhajan with respect to this, which said, 'O Lord, I want to write an invitation to you, but you have a thousand names, to which name should I address this invitation?' Similarly, we ask God, 'O Lord! The whole universe is your abode, but which home do you reside in? Where do you stay?' God says, 'Akshardham'. So now where is Akshardham? The sadhu who has become *Akshardham-roop* is Akshardham itself. Gunatitanand Swami was the model house of God. It is for this reason that Shastriji Maharaj instated Gunatitanand Swami's *murti* alongside Maharaj. God has said that he resides eternally within such a sadhu. That is why the sadhu who has attained *Gunatit-bhav* is Akshardham - the home within which God resides.

During our time, Guru Yogiji Maharaj was the home of God, within whom God eternally resided. Remember! If you live in one house, at some point you vacate that house and go and live somewhere else, then would your friends and relatives go to the old house to see you? Of course not. They would come to the house that you reside in, and it is that house which is important. Similarly, the home within which God resides is so valuable, but it is valuable because God resides within it, but that house itself is not God. Therefore, the Sant within whom God resides, is not God himself, but rather the home within which God resides. God gives *darshan* through such a Sant, grants blessings through him, gives

*prashad* through him. For us, such a sadhu, Yogiji Maharaj was God's *swaroop*. Through the love of such a sadhu Yogiji Maharaj, who held God within him, we were able to follow his *aagna*<sup>5</sup> and were transformed. By living our lives according to the *aagna* of such a Satpurush, all of our faffing here and there was forgotten. In this way, all of us have come with the impressions of previous lifetimes – and we want to wash these away. If we play and jump around, our clothes get dirty, but then do we throw them away? No. So what do we do? We wash them and so our clothes become clean, and we can wear them again. Similarly, we have flaws such as anger, jealousy etc. – so then do we throw this body away? Where do we get a new one from? Can you get another one just like that? No of course not, but the inclinations that reside within the body need to be washed and cleansed.

If someone has indigestion and stomach pain, the doctor will prescribe tablets. Once those tablets go into the stomach you will see what effect they have on the body. After five to seven hours, in the morning, your stomach would get cleared. Similarly, while you are here for seven days, this is your prescription: do not take note of anything negative in anyone, rather do whatever activity you are assigned, sit where you are asked to sit, get up when you are asked to get up, play when you are asked to play, jump around, enjoy yourself! If you do this, then in seven days, all the clutter that is within us will get cleared! That is the benefit of Upasana! That is why you are so fortunate.

To propagate the Upasana of Shri Akshar

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<sup>5</sup> Any instruction given by God or Guru, which is always for our spiritual benefit.

Purushottam, just look at the work of Shastriji Maharaj. Only six Santo departed from the original institution alongside Shastriji Maharaj, and whichever area they went to for *vicharan*<sup>6</sup>, they were insulted. If they sat down for a meal, those that were vengeful would come and throw dirt in their food! Just think about this! He bore with so much adversity! When we listen to all the hardships he faced, we cannot help but have tears in our eyes, that is how much difficulty he faced. For whom did he bear all of this? When Shastriji Maharaj was in Vadtal, he was worshipped; people respected him so much. The Acharya Maharaj would seat Shastriji Maharaj next to him. When Shastriji Maharaj would discourse – two hundred to five hundred people would gather to hear him. But to carve out the path of Shri Akshar Purushottam, the worship of Gunatitanand Swami alongside Maharaj, he sacrificed himself completely just for us. It is because of his sacrifice that we can today comfortably sit in air-conditioned halls and listen to discourse. Additionally, what care these Santo are taking of you!

Do you know what kind of places Gurudev Shastriji Maharaj and Gurudev Yogiji Maharaj stayed in? At that time they had no money for cement, concrete or bricks, so they would gather dried sheaves of grass. Then, they would gather black soil and mix in the dried sheaves and pound it with their bare feet to make a thick lump mixture, and then build walls with it. They would give rise to four walls with this mix and make a hut-like structure and live in it. Once, within such a room, Yogiji Maharaj was bitten by a cobra and

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<sup>6</sup> To travel from place to place with the sole aim of carrying out God's work.

because of that his whole finger bent over, just imagine this! Just so that we experience joy and fulfilment, such divine beings suffered so much hardship! And so, we want to pay our debt to them and make this resolve; now repeat after me:

**'Hé Swaminarayan Bhagwan! Hé Gunatitanand Swami! Hé Bhagatji Maharaj! Hé Jaga Swami! Hé Krushnaji Ada! Hé Shastriji Maharaj! Hé Yogiji Maharaj! Hé Pappaji! Hé Kakaji! Hé Pramukh Swamiji! All the *saakar*, manifest Sant-*swaroops* of God – Param Pujya Mahant Swamiji! Param Pujya Guruji! Param Pujya Premswaroop Swami! Param Pujya Ashvinbhai!**

**So that we may worship God and offer devotion easily and comfortably, and live our lives joyfully – you have worked so hard, bore with such hardship and silently tolerated such unimaginable adversity. It is not possible for us to repay our indebtedness to you; even so, we are making the resolve to pay our debt to you however we can and so we resolve that we will chant for half an hour every single day. We shall perform pooja everyday. We will apply tilak-chandlo to our forehead. We will sing the glory of all and listen only to good, without falling into any kind of gossip, criticism, negativity, quarreling etc. We will keep Santo at the forefront of whatever activity we engage in; we shall carry out our activities with their *aagna*, in a spirit of togetherness, with *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta*. With exceptional generosity of spirit, you have truly given us such contentment. It is your resolve to make us even more fulfilled, and so in this way, may we carry out our devotion to you and may we use all our talents and energies according to the *aagna* of these Santo. Wherever we**

**may go, wherever we may stay, whatever we may do – may we live as yours and live our lives in a way that pleases you. We will study hard, work hard, do trade and business and out of whatever we earn, we will use 10% for your work. We will also give 10% of our time for your devotion. In this way, we will all work with *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta* to propagate pure Shri Akshar Purushottam upasana in the whole world, and together with Santo surrender [to God's work]. Sahajanand Swami Maharaj ni Jai! This is Upasana!**

When I was young like you, I had so much love for Bapa! So I would go and stay with Bapa and he would keep me with him, wherever he was going. Then, with Bapa's *aagna*, I read the biography of Bhagatji Maharaj and that is when I realized that Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj were carrying out the exceptional work of propagating Shri Akshar Purushottam Upasana, for us! It used to be said that 'Previously one would have to bear being beaten to worship God.' In the past, those who set out for God, would get beaten and would not even have food to eat. Whereas today, through the propagation of pure Upasana by Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, we are sitting comfortably in an air-conditioned hall, eating *laadu* and *shrikhand*, as we worship God. It is because of them that everything has become so favourable! This is Upasana! The fact that you have understood Upasana at such a young age – such a great work has been achieved! Sadguru Param Pujya Manojdasji has given us the five principles of Upasana – so let us talk about this:

**God is *karta-harta*; the all-doer. *Karta-harta* means that whatever has happened in my life,**

whatever is happening and whatever will happen is only by the will of my Lord, and knowing this, one should remain joyful. My Lord is eternally *sakar* (with form) and *pragat* (manifest). He is *pragat* through such a Gunatit Sadhu, whom I have attained. The goal of my life is to join with such a Sadhu with *atma-buddhi* and *preeti*<sup>7</sup>, and humbly follow his *aagna*. To understand that all those associated with him are flawless and divine, and to carry out their seva in word, thought and deed, is my *sadhana*<sup>8</sup>. To carry out everything I do, with *samp*, *suhradbhav* and *ekta* is what my Lord's *prasannata*<sup>9</sup> lies in.'

Cultivate friendship with a sadhu. What you are not able to tell your mother or father, you will be able to tell a friend. That is the kind of friendship you must have. Such a friend maintains confidentiality and wishes only good for us and tells us to do only that which is beneficial for us and prays for us. There are many Santo here, so cultivate friendship with them, just bug them and cling onto them no matter what. While you are here, find such sadhus, join with them – if you do this, you will change. Remember! In the way that the seasons change, after winter, comes summer and then the monsoon, similarly, the seasons of our lives also change. Many times, you will be happy, but there will be times when you become

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<sup>7</sup> *Atma-buddhi* and *preeti* means to love the Satpurush as one's own soul, and thereby refers to a bond of inseparable loving association.

<sup>8</sup> Spiritual practice.

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

deflated. There will come many such challenging situations or circumstances and if at that time you have a genuine friend, a true sadhu, and have firm conviction in God in addition to the strength of prayer, then you will always be joyful. And so, always keep the strength of God.

I was born into the Swaminarayan sampradaya. The strength of God was with me since I was a child! Yogi Bapa had taken me under the wing of his grace ever since I was a child. In those days conjurers used to come into the village and show magic tricks. They would give everyone a stone to hold in their hands and then play a pipe for two minutes. Then they would say, 'Now open your palm, you will find a rupee.' So everyone that was holding a stone, would see a rupee coin in their hand. I was also standing there, I put the stone in my palm and chanted... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan. They played the pipe for a couple of minutes and when the conjurer asked me to open my palm, there was still a stone in my palm. The stone did not appear as a rupee. The conjurer would hallucinate people so that the stone in their palms would look like rupee coins. Magic cannot ever convert a stone into a coin, otherwise why would the conjurer be faffing about to make a living, when he could create money himself! But those standing there would be under hallucination and so the stone would certainly appear as a rupee coin to them. But in front of such people – when you chant the Swaminarayan mantra – Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan, they will not be able to affect you in any way.

It is my sincere prayer to all of you, our young sons and daughters! Please do not join up with any



negative company. Our Hindu girls are so naïve. If someone treats them to *dosa* or pizza, they become happy. On top of that, if they are gifted new clothes, a new mobile, then they would be over the moon. If anyone tries to come close to you in this way, then you should tell them off and say, 'if I want to eat pizza or *dosa*, my father will give it to me, who are you to give it to me?' Saying this, you should chant Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan within, glare at them and remain firm. This way, they will never come near you again. But one must chant... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan from within. By doing this, you will gain such power from within that the person in front of you will run away. Do not be naïve. Right now, there are such negative elements in society that they can ruin your name, that they can deceive you and ruin your whole life. And so, our girls should not speak to any boys without reason. Do not keep any such relationships. Remember this! Boys too should be careful. You must not have any vice – and stay away from tobacco, cigarettes and snuff. And girls, do not get tempted. If any stranger offers you anything, then tell them off firmly and scare them off. They are all cowards, if you were to give them one slap, they would run away.

The boys that are good, genuine and true will have no fear, but those who are not will get scared. We must always remain true. We do not want to fear anyone, and we do not wish to scare anyone. But chant ... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan... make sure you hold onto this one thing. You must have a mandir shrine in your home. Whenever you leave home to go to school, college or to work, you must first go to the mandir in your home

and tell Maharaj, 'Hé Prabhu! Please come with me!' Then, God will be with you and if any such negative people are coming towards you, God will push them away and keep them ten feet away from you. Go ahead and experience this! That is why it is said that you must form a habit of keeping God with you as you go about your activities. You must chant... Swaminarayan... Swaminarayan in the morning. You must form the habit of doing dhun and *pooja*, and if you do this then your entire being will be purified. Just as soldiers that are going to fight at the border put on their armour; the armour is strong as it is made of metal that even if a bullet were shot it would not be able to penetrate it. Similarly, when we go out into the world, to ensure that the blows of the world do not wound us, meaning – we do not get swept up in temptation and slip and fall – we have to chant... Swaminarayan.. Swaminarayan. By doing this a divine shield will be created around you and will protect you. You will not be able to see it, but it will protect you. Negative elements will not even be able to come near you! Remember this! That is why you must do dhun and form the habit of doing dhun before you go anywhere.

When does this protective shield break? It is when you fall into criticism, gossip, ill-talk, maligning someone, then your shield is compromised; it breaks. Therefore, do not ever speak ill of anyone, do not see bad in anyone and do not listen to anything negative. These are the rules that you must follow! Once you understand upasana and you do just this much, then truly you will be able to do anything you want and go anywhere you wish.

Sahajanand Swami Maharaj ni Jai! ◆

