

SAHEBDADA AND SATSANG - We all Love You !

~ Saheli Sheth (Peoria, USA)

This month, 85 years ago, Swaminarayan Bhagwan fulfilled His promise of always keeping us under the divine protection of a God-manifest saint. In March 1940, Sant Bhagwant Sahebada manifested on this earth. In celebration of Sahebada's *pragatyadin*, I wanted to reflect on the values we access through his teachings.

My career experiences have awakened me to Sahebada's true glory. As a mental health therapist, I encounter many clients who struggle with self-judgment and negative thoughts. Some wrestle with low self-esteem, which leads to a poor relationship with themselves. Some feel resentment and distrust toward others, which results in troubled relationships with others. Most clients experience a blend of these issues. During these moments, I often catch myself wondering: What is the path to healing?

Witnessing my clients' journeys of negative thinking, I see that one critical skill is often overlooked during one's formative years: how to think. We learn how to do math, read books, and say the alphabet, yet the vital skill of thinking—especially positively—is rarely emphasized. No one teaches us how to challenge our negative thoughts and biases. At least, we aren't taught this in formal education.

But I remember being introduced to this skill at just 13 years old during a Yogi Youth Camp in Pennsylvania, where I heard Sahebada's transformative *mantra* for the first time: “Think positive, and the rest will follow.” Each summer camp after that became a crash course on seeing the virtues in others, building harmony, and discovering the God within ourselves. Sahebada brilliantly filled the skill gap that many adults still long to master: **how to think positively**.

God has continued giving me experiences that leave me indebted to Sahebada. One day, I had a therapy session with a client shortly after his release from jail for minor

theft. After addressing the situation with him - what happened next? His family members had already scolded and disowned him, so I took a different route. Intuitively, I began sharing his positive qualities with him. It was like a voice inside me urged me to see that he needed to hear his worth as a human.

After that session, I was amazed by my own reaction: here was a client recently released from jail, yet it felt effortless to recognize his inherent greatness. How was it so easy? Sahebada teaches us, “If a person has 99 flaws and one positive virtue, **then to magnify that one virtue is *suhradbhav***.”

Interestingly, my university also taught me this concept years later, where I learned it is called the “strengths-based approach” in psychology. However, Sahebada nurtured this skill within me long before any university did. I couldn't help but laugh as I realized that Sahebada had started training me for this calling long before I even set foot in my college program. The wisdom Sahebada gives us is priceless yet freely given, simply out of his compassion and love for us.

To dear parents and guardians – this is the importance of connecting our kids with *satsang*. *Satsang* offers the tools that equip us for life. While we may professionally pursue psychology, business, science, or other fields, once we connect with Sahebada, we enroll in the School of Life. His humble character teaches us to live in harmony with others and ourselves. While Sahebada certainly teaches us how to be successful students and professionals, the wisdom that he wishes to give us is far more profound: how to be loving, compassionate humans.

On the auspicious occasion of Sahebada's *pragatyadin*, may we glorify his name by following the values he has modeled for us: thinking positively about each other and ourselves. Happy *pragatyadin*, Sahebada - we all love you !