

Bal Satsang 1

A Textbook of the Bal Satsang Examination Series

Bal Satsang 1

Translation of Gujarati Version



Swaminarayan Aksharpith
Ahmedabad

Bal Satsang 1

(A Satsang textbook through which *satsangi* children can learn general Satsang knowledge and traditions in an easy and enjoyable manner.)

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CONTENTS

SECTION A

Introduction	vii
1. Little but Famous	1
2. God Himself.....	2
3. Evil Kalidatt	4
4. Here, There, Everywhere!	6
5. Ghanshyam Wins the Debate in Kashi	9
6. Leaving Home	12
7. Nilkanth Varni.....	15
8. Curses His Own Words.....	17
9. Brings a Dead Tree to Life.....	19
10. Taming a Wild Lion.....	21
11. Jambuvan – The Wild Bear	24
12. Saryudas	29
13. Nilkanth Becomes Sahajanand.....	31
14. Sahajanand Swami Maharajni Jai!	33
15. Swaminarayan Mantra	36
16. Magniram – The Devi Worshipper.....	39
17. Boys in Samadhi	43
18. Eating a Cucumber on an Elephant!.....	44
19. Abolishing Superstitions.....	46
20. Sahajanand Serves All	47
21. Hard Work Is Austerity	48
22. The Suba’s Evil Plot	51
23. Insulted in Anand	53
24. A Yagna in Dabhan.....	54
25. Liberating His Devotees.....	55
26. A Donkey into a Cow	57
27. Maharaj’s Sadhus	59
28. Staying Where There Are Discomforts	62
29. The Shikshapatri Is a Mirror.....	64
30. Maharaj Goes to Akshardham	66

SECTION B

1. What Do the Vedas Teach Us?	69
2. Studies.....	70
3. Kirtan	71
4. God Does Exist	72
5. Never Eat This	74
6. Guru	75
7. Prayer	77
8. If You Want to Become Good Then.....	79
9. Arti	80
10. Sermons of Gunatitanand Swami	81
11. Mandir	84
12. Kirtan	85
Glossary	86

INTRODUCTION

A child's mind is comparable to a fertile field. Whatever you plant in it grows abundantly.

A farmer can choose what he wants to grow. He can nurture beautiful roses, grow juicy apples or cultivate vegetables. He may neglect his field and let weeds overrun it or he may even harvest narcotic plants.

Similar is the situation with children. Whatever we sow in their minds will grow and flourish. The young child has the potential to mature into a caring doctor or a creative engineer, helping himself and society. He can also sprout into a rogue, murderer or social parasite, being of no use to himself or to society. Which side the scales tilt towards will depend on what he reads, hears, sees, and whose company he keeps.

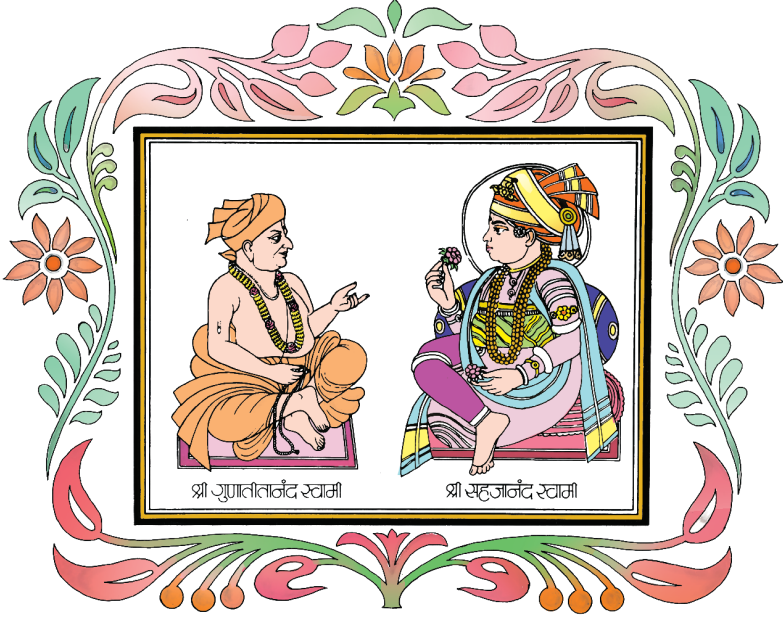
In 1954, Yogiji Maharaj recognized the potential of the pure and fertile mind of children. He saw in them the citizens and leaders of tomorrow's world. Yogiji Maharaj gave great importance to the upbringing of children. With his far-sighted vision he established the 'Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan (BAPS) Bal Mandal', a network of centrally guided weekly Satsang assemblies attended by children of all backgrounds. Moral and religious teachings were imparted in an easy to grasp, enjoyable manner. Pramukh Swami Maharaj has carefully tended the Bal Mandal with the result that today there are over 5,000 weekly assemblies held at BAPS centres throughout the world.

Through Pramukh Swami Maharaj's experienced guidance and blessings Satsang literature is now widely available for children. Subsequently, 'Bal Satsang Examinations' have been arranged. These two voluntary examinations based on the books *Bal Satsang 1* and *Bal Satsang 2* have been tremendously successful. Children have become familiar with the traditions of our Indian Culture, its ideal style of life, and the importance of satsang and moral life.

Parents, guardians and the Bal Mandal *sanchalaks* form the necessary framework for the development of an ideal child. It is they who shoulder the responsibility of teaching and guiding the children during their satsang reading. With encouragement and constant effort children achieve good grades in the examinations. More than that, they learn to value, and live a moral and spiritual life.

- Swaminarayan Aksharpith

Shri Swaminarayano Vijayate



*Ame sau Swāminā bālak, marishu Swāmine mâte;
Ame sau Shrijitanā yuvak, ladishu Shrijine mâte.
Nathi dartā nathi kartā, amārā janni parvā;
Amāre dar nathi koino, ame janmyā chhie marvā.
Ame ā yagna ārambhyo, balidāno ame daishu;
Amārā Akshar Purushottam, Gunātīt gnānne gaishu.
Ame sau Shrijitanā putro, Akshare vās amāro chhe;
Swadharmi bhasma choli to, amāre kshobh shāno chhe.
Juo sau Motinā Swāmi, na rākhi kāi te khāmi;
Pragat Purushottam pāmi, malyā Gunātīt Swāmi.

* For meaning see page 86

SECTION A

1 LITTLE BUT FAMOUS

Ram Navmi falls on Chaitra *sud* 9. This is the day Bhagwan Shri Ram was born in Ayodhya. Also on Ram Navmi, on 3 April 1781 CE (Samvat 1837), a boy was born in the small village of Chhapaiya, near Ayodhya.

The child's name was Ghanshyam.

His mother's name was Bhaktidevi and his father's name was Dharmadev.

Dharmadev called an astrologer and asked him, "Please tell me my child's future."

The astrologer was a great sage. He could tell what was happening nearby as well as far away. He studied Ghanshyam's horoscope, and then said, "His future is very great. He is the controller of everyone's past and future. He will be famous all over the world. Because of his birth here, this little village of Chhapaiya will become a great place of pilgrimage!" Tears flowed from the sage's eyes as he spoke about the glory of Ghanshyam.

"Then why are you crying?" Dharmadev asked him.

The sage answered, "I am crying because I will not live to see the child's greatness spread everywhere. I am an old man now. How much more will I live?"

The sage bowed down to the divine baby Ghanshyam and prayed, "Dear God, always shelter me at your holy feet!"

Ghanshyam later grew up to be our Sahajanand Swami! He is also called Harikrishna Maharaj. When he grew up he accomplished many astounding things.

He is more famous than emperors and kings. There have been many kings and emperors but they have all been forgotten. No

one thinks of them. But today the name of Sahajanand Swami or Swaminarayan is famous all over the world. The sage's prediction proved to be true.

And just as Ayodhya is a great place of pilgrimage because Shri Ram was born there, Chhapaiya has become a holy place of pilgrimage because Ghanshyam was born there. Thousands of people go there every year.

Exercise

Answer in only one sentence.

1. When and where was Ghanshyam born?
2. What were the names of Ghanshyam's parents?
3. Why did the sage cry?
4. What was Ghanshyam's future according to the sage?
5. Write down two more names of Ghanshyam.

2 GOD HIMSELF

Dharmadev was sitting alone in his house.

He remembered the sage's words, "Ghanshyam will become famous all over the world."

He thought to himself, "In which way will Ghanshyam become famous. Three types of people become famous: kings, rich men and scholars with great knowledge. So, will Ghanshyam become a king and win wars, or will he become a millionaire merchant, or will he become a great scholar and defeat other scholars in debates on the shastras? What will Ghanshyam become? A king, a merchant or a scholar?"

To discover this Dharmadev thought of a plan. He placed three things on a low table: a sharp knife, a gold coin, and a scripture. The scripture was the Bhagavad Gita.



Ghanshyam picks up the Bhagavad Gita

The knife, a weapon, was the sign of a king; the gold coin represented a merchant and the scripture a scholar.

Dharmadev carried Ghanshyam there. He made him sit carefully before the table.

As we all know, small children like bright and shiny items, but Ghanshyam did not even look at the gold coin or the knife. He straightway reached out for the Bhagavad Gita and took it into his hand. He opened it and started reading it.

Dharmadev was amazed and pleased. When he looked at the page Ghanshyam was reading, he saw written, "When in the name of religion evil is spreading, and the good and pious people are being troubled and the evil work of sinners is ever increasing, at that time will I incarnate on the earth to help the pious and re-establish dharma." This was the promise that Shri Krishna had given to Arjun in the Bhagavad Gita.

Dharmadev became absorbed in deep thought. One moment he would look with wonder at Ghanshyam and the next he would read the Lord's promise again. He was convinced that his

son was not an ordinary soul, but a divine one – an incarnation of God himself. Dharmadev now knew that Ghanshyam would spread dharma everywhere and he would be praised and worshipped by people all over the whole world.

Exercise

Answer each question in only three lines.

1. In what way did Dharmadev test Ghanshyam?
2. What was written on the page opened by Ghanshyam?

Match the correct pairs.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1. The sign of a king | merchant |
| 2. A gold coin | knife |
| 3. Bhagavad Gita | scripture |
| 4. The sign of a scholar | Ghanshyam |

3 EVIL KALIDATT

All the children of Chhapaiya loved little Ghanshyam. Everyday they would play with him.

They would sing lullabies and rock him to sleep. And when Ghanshyam was to be awakened they would sing and dance in joy. Little Ghanshyam would smile and giggle with laughter whenever he saw children. The children would tell each other, “Look, look, he’s looking at me! Ghanshyam recognizes me!”

Ghanshyam loved the children even more than the children loved him.

But just as there are nice and friendly people there are also bad and evil people in our world. There were some such people in Chhapaiya as well. Their leader was a terrible man called Kalidatt.

He did not like the village children always playing with Ghanshyam. Kalidatt was afraid that when Ghanshyam grew up

he would be powerful and strong, and be loved by all. He was scared that people would not even look at him then. In his cruel heart Kalidatt made up his mind to kill Ghanshyam.

On several occasions he had sent some of his evil friends to kill the Lord, but they either became scared and ran away or they were caught. All his plans had failed. Then, Kalidatt decided to kill Ghanshyam himself, with his own hands.

Once, some children carried Ghanshyam outside the village. As he was still very small they wrapped him up smugly and let him sleep under a mango tree. The children then went off to play nearby.

It was just then that Kalidatt arrived. He saw Ghanshyam quietly sleeping by himself. "This is the day," he thought to himself. "I'll finish him off here and now!"

Kalidatt was an expert in black magic. Chanting some special mantras he made the sky turn dark. And then with another mantra he made a whirlwind appear. It was so fierce that the trees were uprooted and they came crashing down. With a terrifying noise some of the large branches of the mango tree under which Ghanshyam was placed came smashing down on him.

Kalidatt was overjoyed. He thought Ghanshyam had been crushed to death underneath. He looked for Ghanshyam's dead body, lifting the branches here and there. Soon he did find Ghanshyam. But he was not dead. He was alive, laughing with a big innocent smile on his face.

This made Kalidatt very angry. He picked up a large branch and just as he was about to hit Ghanshyam with it, the whirlwind blowing round and round swallowed Kalidatt into its middle. The strong wind picked him up and threw him against the trunk of the mango tree. Kalidatt died there and then.

With the evil Kalidatt's death, the whirlwind disappeared and the darkness turned to light. The children, who had been

scared by the storm, came out of their hiding places, calling, "Ghanshyam! Ghanshyam!" They found him just as they had left him. Dharmadev had also come there looking for Ghanshyam. Everyone was overjoyed to see him safe and sound.

Exercise

Answer each question in only one sentence.

1. Who was Kalidatt?
2. What did Kalidatt think to himself when he saw Ghanshyam alone?
3. Who went to kill, and who died?

Explain in brief.

1. How did Kalidatt die?

4 HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE!

Dharmadev had by now taken his family to live in Ayodhya.

Ghanshyam was about six years old. His father would teach him at home everyday. Ghanshyam would listen so carefully that whatever he was taught he remembered at once. Dharmadev would never have to repeat anything. Ghanshyam was very clever. Like any item put into a box, Ghanshyam would store each word in his mind. This is the art of studying.

Ghanshyam would attentively see his father doing puja. The moment he would see something he would remember it and start doing it. This is the art of learning.

Although Ghanshyam was still small he would go swimming in the river all by himself. He would take some gram and puffed rice from home to feed the turtles. All the turtles knew him. Ghanshyam had given them names and when he called they would come to him.

Ghanshyam knew where all the mandirs in Ayodhya were. He especially liked the Ramji Mandir and the Hanumanji Mandir at Hanuman Gadhi. He often visited these two mandirs. Once, Ghanshyam was at the Hanumanji Mandir. A priest was narrating a story from the Ramayan. Ghanshyam sat down to listen. It was so interesting that he did not notice it was dusk.

At home everyone was worried. Where was Ghanshyam? Why had he not come home yet? It was late. Rampratapbhai, Ghanshyam's elder brother, set out in search of Ghanshyam. He knew he must be in one of the mandirs. On finding him at the Hanuman Mandir listening to the Ramayan, he told Ghanshyam, "Come on home, its late. Everyone is worried."

Ghanshyam replied, "Rampratapbhai, please go and have darshan at the Radha Krishna Mandir nearby and come back here. By that time I'll be ready and then we will go home together."

Rampratapbhai went to the Radha Krishna Mandir. The priest there was narrating stories from the Shrimad Bhagvat. And to his surprise, Rampratapbhai saw Ghanshyam listening to the



Rampratapbhai tells Ghanshyam to return home

discourse! Having just met Ghanshyam at the Hanuman Gadhi Mandir, he wondered how he could be here also! To make sure Rampratapbhai went behind Ghanshyam, gently shook his shoulder and said, "Ghanshyam, come, let's go home."

Ghanshyam replied, "Please go and have darshan at the Shiv Mandir, we'll then go home together."

Rampratapbhai went to the Shiv Mandir. Even there he found Ghanshyam, this time eagerly listening to the Shiv Puran with other devotees. Rampratapbhai scratched his head. He was puzzled, "Maybe I'm going mad," he thought. "Ghanshyam can't be everywhere. Something must be wrong with me."

To make sure, he went closer. And sure enough, it was Ghanshyam. Rampratapbhai told him, "Let's go home."

But Ghanshyam replied, "I'll join you, but first go back to the Hanuman Gadhi Mandir."

Rampratapbhai did not understand what was going on at all. It was all a great riddle. He slowly walked to Hanuman Gadhi. When he entered, he was astonished to see Ghanshyam listening to the discourse. A little while later the discourse came to an end. Ghanshyam stood up and came to his brother. He himself said, "Let's go home now."

Both brothers walked home together. But Rampratapbhai's mind was in a whirl. He could not solve the riddle. How could Ghanshyam be in all the three mandirs at the same time?

He could not solve the riddle then, but thirty-five years later when he came to Gujarat and met Ghanshyam as Sahajanand Swami, Rampratapbhai then realized that Ghanshyam was God and could work any miracle he wanted.

Exercise

Fill in the blanks.

1. In Ayodhya Ghanshyam would often go to the.....

(Ramji Mandir, Swaminarayan Mandir, Tulsi Mandir)

2. Ghanshyam was listening to the in the Radha Krishna Mandir.

(Mahabharat, Bhagavad Gita, Shrimad Bhagvat)

3. Rampratapbhai saw Ghanshyam sitting in mandirs at the same time.

(four, six, three)

Answer each question in only one sentence.

1. Who taught Ghanshyam?
2. How did Ghanshyam study?
3. Which two mandirs did Ghanshyam go to regularly in Ayodhya?
4. Where and when did Rampratapbhai solve the riddle?

5 GHANSHYAM WINS THE DEBATE IN KASHI

Once, the King of Kashi was seated in an assembly of scholars in his palace. A question arose as to what is better, *jnan* or *bhakti*?

One scholar said, "*Jnan* is better."

Another replied, "No, no, *bhakti* is better."

A third explained, "Shankaracharya has said that *jnan* is greater."

But a fourth scholar argued, "Ramanujacharya has said that *bhakti* is greater than *jnan*."

Another scholar replied, "In the Bhagavad Gita, God has said that there is nothing as pure as *jnan* in the world."

Then a tall scholar got up and said slowly, "God has said in the Bhagavad Gita that he loves most a person who is full of devotion. So it is obvious that *bhakti* is greater than *jnan*."

The discussion went on for a long time. But the scholars could

not come to agree with one another. They needed a person who would listen to both sides of the argument and then give the decision. But there was no such great scholar in Kashi.

The king told his men to find such a scholar from anywhere and bring him to Kashi. The king's scholars already knew of such a man. They explained, "There is a great scholar called Dharmadev who lives in Ayodhya."

The king ordered, "Invite Dharmadev. Send an elephant, horses or a palanquin and bring him here with honour to Kashi at once."

The king's men travelled to Ayodhya. They found Dharmadev's house and gave him the king's message.

Dharmadev at once prepared to go to Kashi. Ghanshyam, who was ten years old, said, "Father, I want to come to Kashi. I'd love to see the assembly of scholars."

Dharmadev knew that Ghanshyam liked reading the shastras, and that he understood their deepest meanings. He was sure that his son knew all about *jnan* and bhakti. He decided to take Ghanshyam along as he would benefit from listening to all the discussions.

When they arrived in Kashi, Dharmadev and Ghanshyam were given a grand welcome. Then a great assembly was held in the presence of the king. Dharmadev was asked to sit on a high seat and listen to all the scholars. He was to give the final judgement; which was greater, *jnan* or bhakti?

One scholar stood up and gave a long talk on why *jnan* was better than bhakti. He supported his belief with quotes from the shastras. Then from the other side a scholar stood up and talked against *jnan*. He said that bhakti was greater. One after the other everyone had their say. The debate went on for a very long time.

All the time Ghanshyam was sitting in a corner listening to

everything. When all the scholars had their say, Ghanshyam stood up and walked up to Dharmadev. With folded hands Ghanshyam politely asked, "May I say what I believe and conclude this debate?"

The whole assembly was surprised. It was hard enough to take part in the debate, but even harder to give the judgement at the end. And what could a small boy say?

From his high seat Dharmadev said to the scholars, "If you agree, then I will let Ghanshyam speak."

Everyone was eager to know what the small boy would say. So they all said, "We all agree. Let him speak."

Ghanshyam turned to face the assembly and started speaking. Quoting from the shastras he analysed both the parties and soon convinced all the scholars that bhakti was greater than *jnan*! Each and every scholar, and even the king praised Ghanshyam's knowledge.

But a question arose, who was this wonder child? Was he really a human being or was he a god from heaven. When they discovered that he was Dharmadev's son their joy knew no bounds. They all praised Dharmadev and Ghanshyam.

As everybody, including the king, agreed with Ghanshyam there was no need for Dharmadev to speak.

The scholars said to the king, "Although Ghanshyam is very young, he is very great in virtues."

Then the king garlanded Ghanshyam, worshipped him and gave him many expensive presents. Then, in the streets of Kashi, a grand procession of Dharmadev and Ghanshyam was carried out on an elephant. As a special tribute the king walked in front of the procession.

Dharmadev thought of the sage's words, "Your son will become famous all over the world."

"Yes," Dharmadev said to himself, "It has already begun."

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "May I say what I believe and conclude this debate?"
2. "If you agree, then I will let Ghanshyam speak."
3. "Although Ghanshyam is very young, he is very great in virtues."

Answer each question in only one sentence.

1. What was the question discussed in the king's assembly?
2. Who was very young but great in virtue?
3. Who sat on the high seat?
4. What judgement did Ghanshyam give?

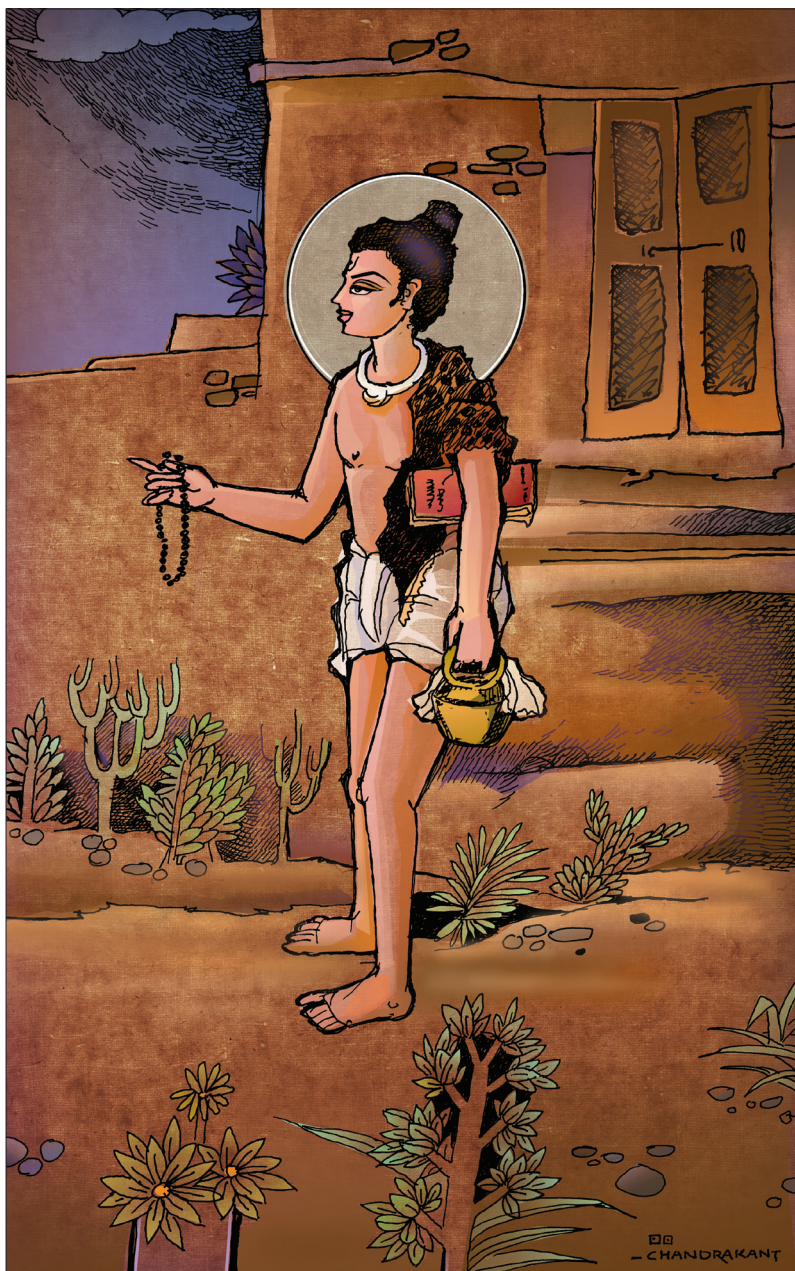
6 LEAVING HOME

After returning from Kashi, Ghanshyam's mind dwelled upon the Himalayas. He thought about leaving home. As days passed his desire to leave home and go to the Himalayas became stronger and stronger. He decided to leave when the chance came his way.

Soon after, Bhaktimata passed away. And a short time later Dharmadev, too, passed away. Both mother and father had realized who Ghanshyam really was. They knew that his mind was not at rest at home and that he preferred the company of sadhus. This was why Dharmadev, just before he died, called Rampratapbhai to his side and told him, "Look after Ghanshyam. Never make him unhappy."

With both his parents gone, Ghanshyam was now waiting for the day when he would be able to leave home forever.

Meanwhile, an incident took place. Some boys complained to Rampratapbhai that Ghanshyam was bullying them. Without thinking further whether the complaint was true or not,



Ghanshyam leaves his home in Ayodhya. Thereafter he is known as Nilkanth Varni

Rampratapbhai became very angry. He called Ghanshyam and scolded him, "Behave yourself from now on. I don't want any more complaints about you!" Poor Ghanshyam listened quietly. He then said, "From now onwards you won't receive any more complaints."

Ghanshyam made up his mind there and then that the time to renounce had arrived. He decided to leave early in the morning the next day.

That night while everyone slept, Ghanshyam lay awake making his plans. He thought of his true mission in life, to grant salvation to people all over the world.

In the early hours of morning, when everyone was still in deep slumber and not a soul stirred in the darkness, Ghanshyam tiptoed out of his house. He had decided to go to the Himalayas and roam the forests as a sadhu. He left all his possessions behind, taking only a loincloth, a *kamandal*, a *shaligram*, a stick to rest his arm and a *gutko* – a small book in which he had written down all the main teachings of the Gita, Bhagvat, Upanishads and other shastras. Leaving his home, family, friends and belongings behind Ghanshyam quickly walked to the nearby river Saryu.

The monsoon season had set in. The river was in flood, flowing swiftly with rain water. After watching the river for a moment, Ghanshyam jumped into the cold water.

On coming out at the opposite bank He headed straight for the Himalayas.

The day was 29 June 1792 CE (Ashadh *sud* 10, Ashadhi Samvat 1849). Ghanshyam was 11 years and 3 months old.

Exercise

Answer the question in only three sentences.

1. What did Ghanshyam take with him when He left home?

Fill in the blanks.

1. Ghanshyam left home in Ashadhi Samvat on Ashadh
sud 10.
(1837, 1850, 1848)
2. Ghanshyam jumped into the River
(Ganga, Ghela, Saryu)
3. Ghanshyam left home when he was years old.
(9, 11, 15)

7 NILKANTH VARNI

Under a tree in a jungle were seated some *bawas*. They were wondering how they could make their way through the jungle.

The leader was seated in the middle of the group. He said, "We shall all have to stay together. If anybody wanders from the group then wild animals will kill him."

The *bawas* shivered with fright. They looked around in the jungle. Surely a lion or a tiger was lying in wait for them.

It was at that moment the *bawas* saw a young boy of eleven walking towards them. He wore only a loincloth and walked barefoot. He was all by himself.

As the boy walked past them the *bawas* shouted, "O Brahmachari, O Varni! Don't travel the dark jungle alone. It's very dangerous. Come with us."

Of course, the Varni was Ghanshyam. He replied, "I left home to travel alone."

The leader of the *bawas* asked, "Are you not afraid of wild animals?"

Ghanshyam replied, "Nothing frightens me!"

Seeing Ghanshyam to be brave the *bawas* said, "O.K. then don't come with us, but let us come with you! Lord Shiv drank the

poison to save the world and so was called Nilkanth. In the same way you have destroyed our fear – and so you are our Nilkanth!”

From now on everybody called Ghanshyam by the name Nilkanth Varni. The *bawas* followed him into the forest.

Soon it was nighttime. They reached an open area where there was a huge tree. They decided to spend the night there. The *bawas* climbed the tree and tied their hammocks to the high branches to sleep for the night. It was too dangerous to sleep on the ground.

But Nilkanth Varni stretched himself out on the ground and prepared to sleep. The *bawas* said, “Nilkanth Varni, we’ll tie a hammock for you up here. Come up and sleep with us.”

Nilkanth Varni smiled and then replied, “No, I like the ground better.”

One *bawa* overcame his fear on seeing Nilkanth’s fearlessness. He climbed down and slept next to Nilkanth. He told the rest, “When Nilkanth is by my side, what is there to be afraid of?”

But the other *bawas* did not dare climb down. Whilst Nilkanth and the *bawa* next to him slept soundly the other *bawas* couldn’t sleep. They peeped down looking at Nilkanth from their hammocks.

As the night slowly passed by, suddenly, a hyena came prowling to the tree. It circled Nilkanth and the *bawa*, sniffing the ground. But it did not touch them with its paws. Instead, it looked up menacingly at the *bawas* on the tree. The hyena rolled his eyes and licked his sharp fangs with his red tongue. The *bawas* were terrified. They realized that they would have been safer and braver on the ground with Nilkanth. It was better to be with a single brave person than with a hundred cowards. They all prayed in their hearts to Nilkanth Varni, “Please save us.”

Just by praying to him they felt stronger and braver. The hyena then gave the *bawas* a good long stare and then padded back into the forest.

In the morning the *bawas* bowed down to Nilkanth Varni and said to him, "From now on we will wander in the forest and Himalayas with you. You are our guru. Please accept us as your disciples."

Nilkanth answered, "It is still many years before I will become a guru. I want to travel alone in the forests."

And so saying Nilkanth left the *bawas* and walked quickly into the dark jungle.

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "Nothing frightens me!"
2. "From now on we will wander in the forests and Himalayas with you. You are our guru."
3. "I left home to travel alone!"

Answer each question in only one sentence

1. Why did the *bawas* call Ghanshyam by the name Nilkanth Varni?
2. What did the *bawas* realize?
3. What came at night? What did it do?

8 CURSES HIS OWN WORDS

There was a village called Banshi. On the banks of a river near the village Nilkanth Varni was seated in deep meditation. Beautiful birds were singing sweet songs in the early morning. Nilkanth was very happy. He had been here for a few days now, meditating by the river bank.

One day as he was preparing to sit in meditation there was a sudden loud bang from a gun. Nilkanth heard a piercing scream and then to his horror two beautiful birds fell into his

lap. Nilkanth gently stroked the birds, sprinkled some water on them but after fluttering a little they both died.

Nilkanth felt very sad. He thought as to who had killed these beautiful birds while they were singing happily.

Shortly, two hunters came to Nilkanth Varni. They quickly picked the birds up and put them into a bag. "These birds are ours," they said, "We are the king's men."

Nilkanth replied, "How can these birds be yours? You have just killed them!"

The hunters answered, "One who kills is the owner. Everyone knows that." Then they went away.

Nilkanth felt sad and unhappy. He did not eat anything that day. In the middle of the night he suddenly uttered, "Let this village burn! I don't want to stay here any more!"

As soon as Nilkanth Varni said this the village began to burn. Flames leapt high into the sky. On realizing what had happened, He at once felt extremely sorry. Nilkanth thought, "What have I done? I am a sadhu. My words have sparked off destruction."

Nilkanth Varni quickly ran to the river and jumped in. He prayed, "May this fire be extinguished." The fire died down immediately.

But Nilkanth was not satisfied. He cupped his hands and took up water in them and cursed his own words. He said, "If ever again I say such a thing then O Speech, may you not become true."

Often, other sadhus became angry to scare people and to exploit them. But Nilkanth Varni was a true ascetic. He didn't want to become angry on anyone nor did he want to scare anyone. He wished to make everyone happy.

Such was the compassion and power of Nilkanth.

Exercise

Answer each question in only one sentence.

1. Why did Nilkanth become unhappy?
2. Why did the village begin to burn?
3. How did Nilkanth curse his words?
4. In which village did Nilkanth curse his own words?
5. What did Nilkanth wish for everyone?

9 BRINGS A DEAD TREE TO LIFE

Nilkanth Varni was travelling to different parts of India. He had been to the Himalayas, in the ice and snow. He lived in the caves, bathed in the icy cold rivers and travelled through dangerous jungles. Whenever he met a sadhu he would stay with him, serve him and learn whatever he could from him.

In this way Nilkanth travelled to Nepal. From there he went to Assam. Here he met a small group of sadhus in a village.

In that village was a Brahmin called Pibek. He was learned in the art of black magic.

With evil magic he scared everyone. He ate meat and drank wine offered to the goddess he worshipped. His eyes were large and bright red. He had a big round tuft of hair and his forehead was covered with vermilion. Pibek heard that some sadhus had come to the village. He took some meat and wine to them and ordered, "Here, this is Mataji's *prasad*. Eat it."

"But, we don't eat or drink things like this!"

Pibek became angry. "If you won't eat it willingly, I'll force it down your throats!"

From a small bag strapped to his waist he took a grain of *adad*. Holding it near his mouth he chanted mantras and then suddenly threw the grain to the ground. A cloud of smoke arose from the

grain. Then he took a handful of *adad* grains and chanted mantras over them and threw them on a small tree. Within seconds the tree withered and died.

"See, this is my strength," he shouted to the sadhus. "Eat the *prasad* or you'll get the same treatment as this tree."

Out of fear the sadhus huddled together. If only they hadn't come to this village, they thought in despair.

Nilkanth Varni was sitting cross-legged a little distance away. He had been listening and watching all the while. He said to Pibek in a strong but calm voice, "I saw that you can turn a green tree into a dry stump, but can you turn a dry stump into a green tree? If you can, do it to this stump." And he pointed to the tree Pibek had worked his magic on.

Pibek swung round to face Nilkanth. Out of anger his eyes turned flaming red. He shouted, "The tree can never be brought back to life!"

Nilkanth said at once, "Why don't you just say you know only how to kill? Is this all your strength and knowledge? And with this you scare innocent sadhus!"

Pibek had never met anyone like him before. The young Brahmachari was challenging him. So, Pibek lashed out, "Can you bring this dead tree back to life?"

Nilkanth replied, "There is no power in 'I'. God is the source of power. Just as you talk about the powers of your goddess, I am talking of the power of God. God's divine power can easily give new life to that tree."

Saying this Nilkanth prayed in his mind and pointed his hand towards the dead tree. In a second the dried stump flowered into a beautiful tree with green leaves, flowers and juicy fruits.

The sadhus were overjoyed. They came closer to Nilkanth and folded their hands in prayer and respect. Pibek stared in disbelief. He then fell at Nilkanth's feet and asked for forgiveness.

Nilkanth said, "Promise that you will never scare anyone anymore, and will never eat meat or drink wine again."

Pibek humbly said, "I have now realized that to kill is not true power. The power of black magic is also not true power. But true power lies in devotion to God, loving all the people around us, sacrificing for others and in renouncing worldly things."

News of Pibek's change of heart spread like wildfire through the village. Villagers flocked for Nilkanth Varni's darshan. They wanted him to stay in their village, but Nilkanth left the next day. He never liked to stay where he was honoured and given comforts.

Exercise

Match the following pairs.

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Black magic | true strength |
| 2. Devotion | Pibek |
| 3. Transformed the dry
stump to a green tree | killed the tree |
| 4. Pibek | Nilkanth |

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "But, we don't eat or drink things like this!"
2. "Can you bring this dead tree back to life."
3. "I am talking of the power of God."

10 TAMING A WILD LION

In the middle of a big forest there was a small village called Shripur. Outside the village was a mandir surrounded by a high wall. There was a doorway on one side.

Walking through the forest, Nilkanth Varni came to the mandir. Outside the mandir was a tree. Nilkanth laid out his



Nilkanth strokes the lion's head

deerskin and sat down to rest.

Just then, the mahant and some sadhus came running out of the mandir. They came to Nilkanth and said, "Varni, if you want to stay the night, then please come inside the mandir or go to the village, but don't rest here!"

Nilkanth asked, "Why not here?"

The mahant replied, "Everyday a fierce lion comes here. If a man or even a cow is out at night, it never sees morning. Please, Varni, come inside the mandir for the night and save your life."

Nilkanth said, "Then, will one who comes inside your mandir never die? Will death not enter inside the mandir?"

The mahant was confused at Nilkanth's words. He replied, "Death can strike anywhere. It can enter even when the doors and windows are closed or strike even if one hides in an underground place."

Varni replied, "Then let it come here. I will stay here all night."

The mahant was convinced that Nilkanth was no ordinary boy. He did not force him any more.

Nilkanth stayed the night under the tree.

But the fear that Nilkanth would be eaten by the lion had not left the mahant. He opened the window in his room and carefully stood watching Nilkanth.

Nilkanth was seated on his deerskin. Everything was quiet. The night was very dark, and midnight came. Suddenly a lion roared. Taking one... two... three... strides the lion came near Nilkanth and stood there.

Varni raised his hand, as if calling the lion, and said, "Come here!"

The mahant was watching with eyes wide open.

The lion came right up to Nilkanth and stood there.

In the silence of the night, Nilkanth's voice could be heard clearly, "Come friend, come on top here."

The lion jumped up onto the platform and sat next to Nilkanth.

The mahant was amazed. He expected any minute to see the lion tear Nilkanth apart with his big daggerlike teeth. But the ferocious lion became as tame as a cat, and Nilkanth started stroking its head!

The mahant called all his people to see the amazing sight. Everyone was left astonished. The mahant mentally bowed to Nilkanth for his amazing powers.

Soon the morning light dawned.

Varni said to the lion, "Friend, go home now. Forgive me because you had to stay hungry tonight."

Wagging his ears the great lion stood up. He looked at Nilkanth for a while. Nilkanth placed his hand on his head and commanded, "Go friend."

With a swish of his tail, the lion bounded into the jungle.

The mahant opened the gates of the mandir and rushed to Nilkanth. Behind him ran all the other sadhus and people of the mandir. They prostrated at Nilkanth's feet. Soon, the news

spread throughout the whole village. People came in large numbers for Nilkanth's darshan. Everybody was singing his praise, "Wonderful Varni, wonderful!"

The mahant bowed at Varni's feet and said, "Varni, from this day onwards this mandir is yours. You are its mahant and I am your servant."

Varni replied, "I have not left home to become the mahant of a mandir. I still have a lot of work to do. I have not even begun my true mission."

Nilkanth put his deerskin on his shoulder, picked up his drinking pot and walked into the forest. Everyone simply watched and uttered, "O how great you are Varni, how great..."

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "Will death not enter inside the mandir!"
2. "Friend, go home now."
3. "I have not left home to become the mahant of a mandir."

Answer each question in only one sentence.

1. Why did the mahant ask Nilkanth to sleep in the mandir?
2. Where did Nilkanth sleep?
3. What did the mahant see from the window of his wall?
4. What did the lion do when it came near Nilkanth?
5. Why did Nilkanth not become the mahant?

11 JAMBUVAN – THE WILD BEAR

Nilkanth Varni came to a village.

He decided to stay for a few days at the Ramji mandir.

Two Brahmin girls came to the mandir with a copy of the epic called Ramayan. They asked the mahant of the mandir the

meaning of some couplets from the Ramayan.

The mahant did not know the meanings and yet he explained otherwise and misled the girls. Nilkanth, who was watching this, thought it to be improper. He thought that the mahant should admit that he did not know the meanings and thus not mislead people. So Nilkanth asked the mahant, "If you give permission, I'll explain the couplets."

The mahant agreed. Nilkanth explained the couplets very simply. The mahant and the girls were happy with Nilkanth's explanations. When the girls went home they told their father about Nilkanth Varni.

The Brahmin had a son named Jairamdas. He had been worrying about his son lately because he needed a good teacher. In Nilkanth the Brahmin saw the ideal teacher for his son. He thought that Jairamdas would learn a lot from Nilkanth Varni.

So the Brahmin set off for the mandir and brought Nilkanth Varni home. After having dinner, the Brahmin introduced his son and asked Nilkanth Varni, "Please teach my son." Nilkanth Varni agreed to stay there a short while and teach Jairamdas.

Jairamdas had a friend called Krishna Tamboli. He lived on the other side of the village. By his house there was a lake. Krishna would many times go boating on the lake.

One afternoon Nilkanth Varni said, "Let's all three go for boating today!"

Krishna Tamboli was overjoyed. He had come to love Nilkanth Varni very much. They sat in Krishna Tamboli's small boat and set off for the centre of the lake. The lake was full of lotus fruits. Krishna Tamboli picked some and offered them to Nilkanth Varni. They were delicious.

After a while Nilkanth Varni said, "Let me paddle for a while. You take some rest Krishna Tamboli." And He took the paddle from his hand. Soon they were lost in talk. Jairamdas and Krishna

Tamboli listened to Nilkanth Varni with rapt attention.

Suddenly Krishna Tamboli shouted, "Not that way Nilkanth, that jungle is dangerous!" The boat had reached the banks of the lake.

Nilkanth laughed and said, "We've come all this way. Let's just have a look."

"But there are fierce tigers, wolves and bears," cried Tamboli. By that time the boat had come up to the shore. Nilkanth jumped out and started walking towards the jungle. Though the two tried to stop Nilkanth, the latter ignored them. So the two followed Nilkanth, trembling with fear.

They had not gone very far when Tamboli screamed, "Nilkanth, a bear!" A giant bear was running towards them from the opposite direction. It was growling with anger.

Nilkanth had seen the bear but He was not at all afraid and worried. He continued to walk towards it. He did not even slow down!

Tamboli froze with fear. Jairamdas was also terrified, but he whispered in Tamboli's ear, "We've come with Nilkanth, so we should stay with him."

They both stayed behind Nilkanth. By this time the bear had come right up to Nilkanth Varni and stood there quite still. Nilkanth reached out and patted the bear's head. It became quiet. Nilkanth then said, "Hello, Jambuvan, how are you? I hope you're well."

Jairamdas and Tamboli were waiting for the bear to raise its huge paws and attack them. But the bear was looking down at the ground and crying! And Nilkanth was lovingly stroking its head and shoulders. He was comforting the bear. "Please don't cry Jambuvan, please don't cry!"

Slowly, the bear calmed down and stopped sobbing. Nilkanth assured it, "I won't forget you Jambuvan, so go now back into the

jungle.”

At once the bear disappeared into the jungle. Nilkanth Varni then turned back and started walking towards the boat. He said to Tamboli and Jairamdas, “Come on, let’s go now. I’ve finished what I’d come for.”

The three of them sat in the boat and returned home. Within no time the word spread that Nilkanth was a miraculous person. Everyone came to know that even the wild animals knew Nilkanth. So, they all decided to never let Nilkanth Varni leave their village.

But next morning when the Brahmin woke up he saw that Nilkanth had gone. He had left in the middle of night. The whole village became sad. No one knew where He could have gone. Nobody felt hungry and nobody went to the fields to work. The Brahmin said to his wife, “Without Nilkanth I feel terribly lonely.”

“I feel the same,” she cried, wiping her tears. “Where could He have gone? Why did He leave us?”

Jairamdas was also unhappy. He asked his father, “Shall I go and look for him?” He won’t be very far away. I’ll bring him back.”

His father said yes at once.

That very day Jairamdas set out. In every village along the way, he asked of Nilkanth. About twenty days later he found him. Both were very happy to see each other and embraced each other.

Jairamdas prayed to Nilkanth. “Please return home with me. Everyone is waiting for you.”

Nilkanth Varni smiled and said, “At the moment I want to go to Jagannathpuri. Come with me. We’ll discuss going back home later.” So Jairamdas joined him.

After a few days in Jagannathpuri, Jairamdas again asked Nilkanth, “Let us go home now.”

Nilkanth told Jairamdas with affection, "I have a great mission to accomplish. Let me go my way and you go yours."

Jairamdas replied, "Your way is my way!"

Nilkanth Varni laughed and said, "When you really do want to stay with me, come to me. But go home for now because your parents are waiting for you."

"I don't want to go home," argued Jairamdas. "I want to stay with you."

"No," said Nilkanth firmly. "Go home. I'll call you when the time comes."

A sad Jairamdas returned home. Nilkanth's refusal to return made the Brahmin and his wife very unhappy. But Jairamdas was even unhappier. All day long he would mutter to himself, "When will Nilkanth Varni call me, when will Nilkanth Varni call me."

Three to four years passed in this way. Jairamdas could no longer stay without Nilkanth. One day without telling anyone he left home, never to return again. Eagerly Jairamdas set out in search of Nilkanth Varni.

He travelled everywhere. He roamed hundreds of villages and towns. He searched all the places of pilgrimage. For years and years he walked all over India. And then one day he arrived in a village called Loj in Saurashtra. Here he found his long lost companion, Nilkanth Varni.

But Nilkanth was now Sahajanand Swami.

Jairamdas ran to Maharaj and fell at his feet. Maharaj received him with love. He said, "Jairam, I've been waiting for you for so long. You have finally found me!"

Jairamdas then became a sadhu and stayed with Shriji Maharaj.

Exercise

Who am I ?

1. Who arrived at the Ramji Mandir?

2. "Let's all three go for boating today?"
3. To whom did Nilkanth say, "I won't forget you..."
4. Who set out in search of Nilkanth?

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "If you give permission, I'll explain the couplets."
2. "Please teach my son."
3. "We've come with Nilkanth, so we should stay with him."
4. "Your way is my way!"
5. "I've been waiting for you for so long."

12 SARYUDAS

For seven years one month and eleven days Nilkanth Varni travelled from one end of India to the other. From the Himalayas he went to the borders of Nepal. From there he walked on to Jagannathpuri then to Rameshwar, Kanyakumari and finally came to Saurashtra in Gujarat.

Nilkanth Varni arrived at the village of Loj in the district of Junagadh. In this village, under the shade of a tree by a stepwell, Nilkanth stopped to rest.

In the village was an ashram belonging to Ramanand Swami. Ramanand was in Kutch at that time, so he had placed Muktanand Swami in charge of the ashram and the sadhus.

When Muktanand Swami found out that a divine looking young yogi was meditating under a tree by the stepwell he invited him to come to the ashram. On his arrival, Muktanand Swami welcomed Nilkanth with honour and affection.

He saw that though Nilkanth Varni was only eighteen years old, he was a great yogi and ascetic.

If someone is young in age but learned, then one should respect him. If he is also greater in devotion, then one should bow down to

him.

Muktanand Swami hugged Nilkanth and welcomed him to the ashram. He told him to stay there.

Nilkanth Varni had visited many ashrams and mandirs. But he noticed that Ramanand Swami's ashram was different from the others. Here no one smoked or chewed tobacco or drank bhang. No one even took snuff! To become angry and to swear was considered bad. There was an air of devotion in the ashram. Nilkanth Varni was very impressed. He thought if the disciples were so pure, then how great their guru must be. He decided to stay at the ashram and wait for Ramanand Swami to return. He was eager to have his darshan.

Muktanand Swami named him Saryudas because he had come from Ayodhya which was on the banks of the river Saryu.

As part of his routine, Saryudas started begging for alms with Muktanand Swami in the neighbouring villages. He performed a variety of chores in the ashram. He swept the ashram clean, washed the plates and saucepans, drew water from the well and even collected cow dung for fuel! When guests came to the ashram he cooked for them and served them. He even taught the other sadhus yoga.

Saryudas and Muktanand Swami both got on very well. Muktanand Swami had a lot of respect for Saryudas. But Saryudas would always treat Muktanand Swami as his senior and give him a higher seat to sit on. He would often sit next to him during meditation and at other times talk of his travels. Once he said, "I like to live in the forests by myself. I don't like towns and villages! After meeting Ramanand Swami I am going to return to the forest!"

Muktanand Swami said, "I will come with you."

Saryudas agreed and said, "Very well! We will both go together and perform austerities and sit in meditation."

One day Saryudas wanted to know what Ramanand Swami looked like. He asked Muktanand Swami to meditate on Ramanand Swami. Then Saryudas meditated on Muktanand Swami. In this way Saryudas looked into Muktanand Swami's mind and saw the form of Ramanand Swami. Then Saryudas described exactly what Ramanand Swami looked like. Everyone was amazed by Saryudas' powers.

Exercise

Answer each question in only one sentence.

1. For how long did Nilkanth Varni travel?
2. In which village was Ramanand Swami's ashram?
3. Why did Muktanand Swami call Nilkanth Saryudas?
4. Where did Saryudas like to stay?
5. How did Saryudas see Ramanand Swami?

Answer each question in three lines.

1. Why did Nilkanth like the ashram in Loj?
2. What chores did Saryudas perform in the ashram?

13 NILKANTH BECOMES SAHAJANAND

A little while later, Ramanand Swami departed from Kutch and came to the village of Piplana in Saurashtra.

He knew Nilkanth Varni was waiting for him, and sent a message to Loj saying Nilkanth should come to Piplana.

Along with Nilkanth Varni, Muktanand Swami and some other sadhus also came to Piplana. When they arrived there, Ramanand Swami was seated on a high seat. Nilkanth Varni offered his prostrations to him. Ramanand Swami stepped down from his seat and warmly hugged him.

No matter how great a person was, Ramanand Swami had never

hugged anyone before. But on embracing Nilkanth everyone was convinced that Nilkanth was an extraordinary sadhu.

Nilkanth then talked of his travels in the forests.

Ramanand Swami asked, "What will you do now?"

Nilkanth had already decided. He said, "I wish only to stay at your holy feet!"

Swami said, "You have been to great pilgrim places like Badrinath, Kedarnath, Jagannathpuri and Rameshwar. But you have not visited Dwarka. Don't you want to go there?"

Nilkanth immediately replied, "With your darshan all my travels to pilgrim places are over. I do not want to go anywhere now."

Ramanand Swami turned to Muktanand Swami and said, "Do you know this Nilkanth Varni is the one for whom I have been waiting for years and years!"

For the four months of the monsoon season Ramanand Swami stayed in Piplana. Nilkanth Varni also stayed with him. When the monsoon was over Ramanand Swami initiated him on 28 October 1800 CE (Kartik *sud* Ekadashi, A.S. 1857) and gave him two new names, 'Sahajanand Swami' and 'Narayan Muni'.

The small village of Piplana was privileged.

Ramanand Swami blessed the newly initiated Sahajanand Swami by placing both hands on his head, saying, "Stay within the bounds of dharma and help others to do the same. Spread the practice of devotion to God coupled with his glory and greatness."

Exercise

Fill in the blanks.

1. Nilkanth first met Ramanand Swami in
(Loj, Piplana, Jagannathpuri)
2. On Kartik *sud* Ekadashi, A.S. Ramanand Swami initiated Nilkanth.

(1857, 1858, 1956)

Answer each question in only one sentence.

1. Who was Ramanand Swami speaking to when he said, “Nilkanth Varni is the one for whom I have been waiting for years and years!”
2. What new names did Ramanand Swami give to Nilkanth?
3. What blessings did Ramanand Swami give to Nilkanth?

14 SAHAJANAND SWAMI MAHARAJNI JAI!

From now onwards wherever Ramanand Swami went he took Sahajanand Swami with him. He would always sit Sahajanand Swami next to himself during meal times and look after him.

In this way twelve months passed.

Ramanand Swami knew that he would not live for very long now. One day he called his devotees and sadhus together and asked who should be the guru after him.

Muktanand Swami was the oldest and most senior disciple. Ramanand Swami always gave charge of the ashram to him when he went on satsang tours. So to become the guru was really Muktanand Swami's right. But he was the first one to suggest, “Sahajanand Swami.”

Everyone agreed with him.

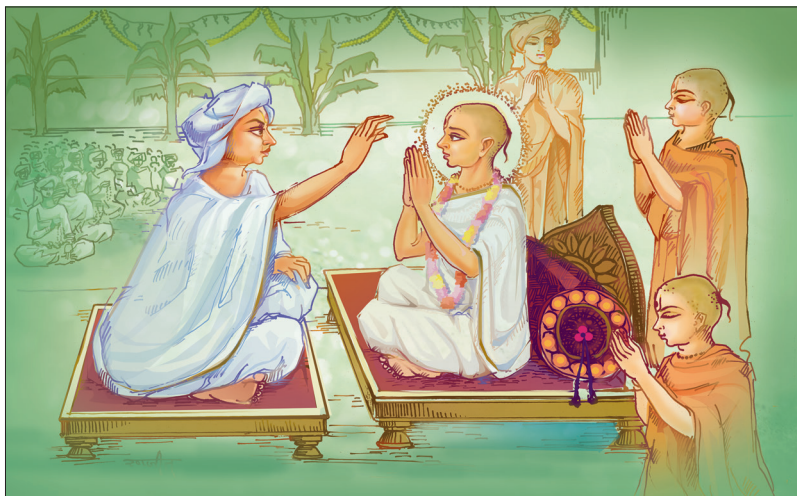
This was what Ramanand Swami wished.

But one person said no.

Sahajanand Swami himself!

Everyone was surprised. Why was this youth refusing such a prestigious position?

Sahajanand Swami folded his palms and humbly said, “I do not want to become the guru. I prefer to live in the lonely forests than the crowded towns and villages. Bless me and allow me to



Ramanand Swami appoints Sahajanand Swami as the head of the Fellowship

go to the forests.”

Ramanand Swami asked, “Will you not obey the guru’s command?”

“That I will always do even at the cost of my life,” said Sahajanand Swami.

“Then accept this throne on my word,” ordered Ramanand Swami.

There was nothing else Sahajanand Swami could say or do. He humbly accepted. He showed that a true disciple always observes the wishes of his guru.

Whenever a new guru is enthroned a special ceremony is performed. It is called *pattabhishek*. Invitations were sent everywhere. It was to take place in Jetpur. Preparations were well underway.

Exactly twelve months after He was initiated as a sadhu, Sahajanand Swami was crowned as the guru. The day was 16 November 1801 CE (Kartik *sud* Ekaadashi, A.S. 1858).

A beautiful procession was taken out in the town. People

played drums and *sharnai* and sang bhajans. Sahajanand Swami was seated in a decorated buggy pulled by two horses.

The procession ended in the *yagna* arena. The Brahmins were chanting holy mantras from the Vedas. Ramanand Swami asked Sahajanand Swami to sit upon his throne. He applied a *chandlo* on his forehead and garlanded him. Sahajanand Swami was only twenty years old and he had become a guru!

Everywhere people hailed his name with joy, "Sahajanand Swami Maharaj ni Jai."

Sahajanand Swami prostrated before his guru, Ramanand Swami, and asked for his blessings.

Ramanand Swami blessed him and said, "Observe dharma as described in the Vedas and help others to do the same. Help those people in need. Spread *jnan*, *vairagya* and *bhakti*. Give *jnan* to those who desire it. Initiate aspirants and make them into devotees or sadhus. Build big mandirs and install the *murtis* of Radha and Krishna. Write and have written good shastras to make the foundations of our Sampradaya strong."

Ramanand Swami then said to all the devotees and sadhus, "Always do as Sahajanand Swami wishes. I am just a messenger. But the true Lord is this Sahajanand. I just played the drums and collected everyone together. My work is now finished. From today Sahajanand Swami will begin his mission."

He then asked Sahajanand Swami to ask for a boon. Sahajanand Swami said, "If your *satsangi* is destined to suffer the distress inflicted by the sting of one scorpion, may the distress of the stings of millions and millions of scorpions befall each and every pore of my body; but no pain should afflict your *satsangi*. Moreover, if the begging bowl is written in the destiny of your *satsangi*, may that begging bowl come to me; but on no account should your *satsangi* suffer from the lack of food or clothing.

Please grant me these two boons.”

Sahajanand Swami was so full of compassion that he could not bear to see any devotee suffer. He asked that He be made unhappy instead!

Ramanand Swami granted this boon.

People showered rose petals on their new guru and hailed joyfully, “Sahajanand Swami Maharaj *ni Jai*.”

Exercise

Answer each question in three lines.

1. When Ramanand Swami made Sahajanand Swami the guru what blessings did he give?
2. What boon did Sahajanand Swami ask for?

Answer each question in only one sentence.

1. To whom did Ramanand Swami entrust his throne?
2. When and where did Ramanand Swami make Sahajanand Swami the guru?
3. Who was Ramanand Swami’s seniormost disciple?
4. Why did Sahajanand Swami first refuse to become the guru?
5. How old was Sahajanand Swami when the *pattabhishek* was performed?

15 SWAMINARAYAN MANTRA

Ramanand Swami passed away within a month after appointing Sahajanand Swami as the guru.

On the thirteenth day after Ramanand Swami passed away an aspirant came to the ashram. His name was Shitaldas.

He had searched the whole of India for a guru. He had heard that Ramanand Swami was a great guru. But when Shitaldas

finally came to meet Ramanand Swami, he discovered that he had passed away.

Shitaldas was shocked and started crying. "I have no luck in finding a guru," he sobbed. "What will happen to me?"

Somebody said to him, "In place of Ramanand Swami is Sahajanand Swami. Why don't you go and see him?"

Shitaldas went to Sahajanand Swami. At that time Shriji Maharaj was in an assembly of devotees and sadhus. Maharaj was only twenty years old so Shitaldas thought to himself, "He is only a child. How can he give me spiritual knowledge? Men who have spent their whole life studying shastras have been unable to satisfy me, so what can this mere boy do? I'd better leave."

Just then Maharaj looked at him and said, "Why are you in such a hurry to leave? Come and meet me tomorrow."

Shitaldas was surprised at Maharaj's words.

The next day he came to Maharaj and sat in front of him. Maharaj said, "I'm giving you a mantra. Say, 'Swaminarayan! Swaminarayan! Swaminarayan!'"

Nobody had heard of this mantra before. It was completely new. It was the first time it had ever been chanted.

Shitaldas started repeating the mantra. Soon he forgot where he was. He forgot his surroundings and who he was. He even forgot his body. He experienced the state of *samadhi* for the very first time.

In the *samadhi* he found himself in the divine abode of Akshardham. Shriji Maharaj was sitting on a beautiful throne. Many *muktas* were standing before Shriji Maharaj with palms joined in prayer and worship. Amongst them he also saw Ramanand Swami and the twenty-four incarnations of God. He touched Ramanand Swami's feet in respect and worshipped him. Then he wished to do *pujan* of the *muktas*

and incarnations. But there were so many! It was impossible even to count them and, besides, whose *pujan* should he do first? Since, he could not do *pujan* of them all at once, Shitaldas became a little worried.

Then Shriji Maharaj said, "There are countless *muktas*, so why don't you make countless forms of yourself and perform *pujan* of all at the same time."

"How can I make countless forms of myself?" Shitaldas asked.

Shriji Maharaj said, "Think that if Ramanand Swami is the supreme God then by his grace let me have multiple forms."

Again Shriji Maharaj advised, "This time think that if any one of the twenty-four incarnations is supreme then let me have multiple forms." Shitaldas thought as he was told, but nothing happened. "Now think that if Shriji Maharaj is the supreme God then let me have multiple forms."

Shitaldas did as he was told and immediately he was blessed with multiple forms.

He then, at one and the same time, performed the *pujan* of all the *muktas*.

When Shitaldas looked towards Bhagwan Swaminarayan he saw his divine form. He realized that Shriji Maharaj was the supreme God.

When Shitaldas came out of the *samadhi*, he at once fell at Maharaj's feet.

Maharaj said, "Shitaldas, what did you see in *samadhi*? Tell everyone here."

He explained what he had seen. Everyone was amazed. They all realized that Maharaj was not an ordinary human being but God himself.

Shitaldas took *diksha* from Maharaj and became a sadhu.

From that day onwards people started chanting the 'Swaminarayan' mantra.

Shriji Maharaj himself became known as Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence only.

1. Which mantra did Sahajanand Swami give to Shitaldas?
2. What happened to Shitaldas when he chanted the mantra?
3. After this incident by which name did Maharaj come to be known?
4. When did the chanting of the ‘Swaminarayan’ mantra begin?

Explain briefly.

1. What did Shitaldas see in *samadhi*?

16 MAGNIRAM – THE DEVI WORSHIPPER

There was once a good Brahmin who lived in the region of Dravid in South India. His name was Magniram. He wanted to have darshan of God, so he left home to realize God.

Wandering across the country he met many people. Once he came to a village. Here, he met a man who worshipped a goddess. The man said to Magniram, “Stay here with me. I will teach you black magic mantras. My goddess will become pleased with you and give you special powers. Then you can do as you like.”

Magniram stayed there and learnt all the mantras. Soon he could order ghosts to beat any person he wished, burn anything just by saying a mantra, steal money and even kill anyone or anything he wanted. The goddess had given him all these powers.

Now, Magniram completely forgot about his goal of realizing

God.

With the power of black magic Magniram became a mahant. Soon, he had a following of one thousand disciples. Great kings would come to bow down to him. Wherever he went he travelled in a special palanquin. He was guarded by four horsemen in front and four behind, followed by one thousand *bawas*, carrying swords, chains, knives and sticks. Some played drums and others mocked and scared the people they passed.

In this manner Magniram arrived in Saurashtra. Even here he troubled the local people. He would summon rich men and mahants of mandirs and say, "My men and I want a delicious feast. Pay me five thousand rupees, or else I will burn down your village with my black magic."

The people were frightened of Magniram. They would do as he asked.

Once Magniram was in the town of Porbandar. On threatening them with his powers someone replied, "We're all ordinary people of little means. Why don't you face Swaminarayan? Try him for size."

Magniram became angry. Who was this Swaminarayan. He would have to be taught a lesson.

At that time Maharaj was in Mangrol. The local king was a Muslim. Magniram sent a message to him, "Send five thousand rupees to me at once or else I'll destroy the whole town."

The king answered, "I will give you not five thousand rupees but ten thousand rupees if you first win over Swaminarayan."

Magniram was furious. He rushed to where Maharaj and the sadhus were. He had a garland of skulls around his neck, long locks of hair, a large red *chandlo* on his forehead, thick armlets on his wrists, an iron chain as his *janoi* and a large pincer in his right hand.

He came near Maharaj and shouted, "Show me your powers

if you have any!"

"What special powers would I have. I just teach people how to worship God," Maharaj replied quietly.

"Give me ten thousand rupees at once, or you won't live to see morning. I am not an ordinary person. I'm Magniram, a worshipper of a goddess."

Maharaj replied calmly, "Brother, I do not have any money. But I do have some food if you want. We have opened an almshouse here."

Magniram shook with rage. "Do you think I am one who eats from an almhouse? I'll give you a fitting reply to your words. The goddess will take care of you." With this he stomped off with his disciples.

That night he chanted mantras and worshipped his goddess. She became pleased and appeared before him. He told her, "Throw Swaminarayan and all his disciples into the sea. Let them drown!"

"I cannot do that," the goddess answered.

"Why not?" Magniram asked. "You can do anything."

"Just as you worship me," the goddess said, "I also worship someone."

Magniram was surprised, "Whom do you worship? You are the supreme."

The goddess replied, "I am not supreme. God is. I am his servant. I worship God. And God is Swaminarayan. If you are wise, then go to Swaminarayan and surrender yourself and become his disciple. Give up your life of worldly pleasures and stop frightening others. Think about the purpose with which you had left home."

"I left home in order to realize God," replied Magniram.

"If you want to realize God, go to Swaminarayan and take his refuge," the goddess instructed.

Magniram now realized that whatever he had done till now was wrong, and only God was the truth. He became humble.

Next day he woke up early and went to see Maharaj. In the hermitage he saw the sadhus meditating. He touched their feet with reverence. Then, on seeing some dirty saucepans Magniram washed them without being told by anyone. He also swept the whole area. He then came to Maharaj and asked for forgiveness. "Maharaj, I am your servant. Please keep me in your service."

Maharaj told him, "Cut off your hair and let people walk on it."

As the king loves his moustache, the *bawa* loves his hair and would never cut it. But Magniram did.

Then Maharaj said, "Carry the shoes of these sadhus on your head and circumambulate five times around them." Magniram collected all the shoes and made a bundle, put it on his head and circumambulated the sadhus. Magniram had dissolved his pride. He was now a humble man.

Finally, Maharaj gave him *diksha* and named him Advaitanand Swami.

Magniram was overjoyed and said, "Now I'm on the right path. I'm truly happy."

Exercise

Who am I?

1. Who had a band of one thousand *bawas*?
2. Who said, "I am not supreme. God is."
3. Who said, "I will give you not five thousand rupees but ten thousand rupees..."
4. Who gave *diksha* to Magniram?

Answer each question in one sentence each.

1. Why did Magniram leave home?

2. What special powers did Magniram acquire?
3. Where did Magniram meet Maharaj?
4. What was Magniram's name as a sadhu?

17 BOYS IN SAMADHI

Maharaj arrived in Gadhada for the first time. He was resting under a tree outside the village. Afterwards he went to the river Ghela for a bath. Some boys were playing by the river bank. They came to Shriji Maharaj.

Maharaj looked at the boys, and suddenly all of them lay down with their eyes closed. They were blessed with the experience of *samadhi*.

Soon a rumour spread in the village that a magician had come and that he had made some children unconscious. All the people came running to the river bank. Some started crying, some started requesting and some started scolding Maharaj!

Maharaj told them, "Don't worry. Nothing has happened to the children. Soon they will all get up."

He again looked at the boys and they at once sat up. The boys were very happy. They said, "We went to God's house. It was very nice and beautiful. God's face was just like yours. It was you, right."

A Kathi Darbar named Jiva Khachar was standing nearby. On hearing the children he was so overjoyed that he ordered *pendas* and distributed them as *prasad* to everyone.

Great sages had tried all their lives to experience *samadhi*, but they had failed. And here, because of Maharaj's grace small children experienced *samadhi*. Many people had gone into *samadhi* after Shitaldas' experience, some just by looking at Maharaj's face and others by hearing the sound of Maharaj's *chakhdi*. There were even those who on hearing Maha-

raj's name went into *samadhi*.

Some people stayed in *samadhi* for a short time and others for days and months. After waking up they would tell others what they had seen. Those who worshipped Krishna saw Krishna, those who worshipped Ram saw Ram, and those who believed in Shiv and Hanuman saw them respectively. Even Muslims saw their beloved prophet and Jains saw Mahavir Swami. But all of them would also see Shriji Maharaj with their respective deities telling them to offer devotion to Maharaj.

Exercise

Write short notes on the following.

1. Due to the grace of Shriji Maharaj how did people go into *samadhi*?
2. What did people see in *samadhi*?

18 EATING A CUCUMBER ON AN ELEPHANT!

The devotees of Junagadh loved Shriji Maharaj dearly.

They once took out a procession in town with Maharaj seated on a decorated elephant. Hundreds of Kathi Darbars joined the procession. Many were on horseback, armed with either rifles or swords.

The whole town came out into the streets to see the colourful procession. Even the Muslim king watched from his palace window.

As the procession moved along a young boy, carrying a fresh cucumber, ran up to the elephant. He called Maharaj, "Maharaj, look here. I've brought this for you."

Maharaj looked down and saw the boy. He loved children and thus never disappointed them. So He stretched his hands. The boy stood on tiptoe to give Maharaj the cucumber but he



Shriji Maharaj eats a cucumber offered by the boy

could not reach him. Then a sadhu lifted the boy and raised him. Happily the boy gave the cucumber to Maharaj and said, "Maharaj, the cucumber is fresh and sweet."

Shriji Maharaj started eating it there and then. In response to his love, Maharaj did not care about the procession or thousands of people watching him eat on an elephant.

The king saw Maharaj eating. The king's minister, who was against Maharaj, immediately criticised, "Look at Maharaj. He calls himself God but he has no manners. He is eating the cucumber as if he has never seen a cucumber in his life." The king was wise and of spiritual inclination. He commented, "He is not an ordinary man. He is either God or he is God's true Sadhu. No one else would dare eat a cucumber during a procession."

Shriji Maharaj loved children, and whenever the occasion arose he pleased them and fulfilled their wishes.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence

1. In which town was the procession taken out?

2. Who lifted and raised the boy?
3. Why did Maharaj eat the cucumber during the procession?
4. What did the king say when he saw Maharaj eating the cucumber?

19 ABOLISHING SUPERSTITIONS

In olden times people were very superstitious.

If somebody fell ill they would say he had been cursed. If a child fell ill they would say he was a victim of a goddess's wrath. If a lady fell ill, people would believe she was possessed by a ghost. They would call a sorcerer or wizard. He would give them magic strings and charms to wear, and other weird medicines.

Once a man fell very ill. His relatives took Maharaj to the man's house. They wanted Maharaj to bless him so that he would get well.

As Maharaj stood by the ill man's bed, he noticed a black string tied to the bedpost.

At once Maharaj knew that a sorcerer had tied the charmed string. He quickly walked out of the house and told the relatives, "Wherever there is superstition you will never find God. And wherever there is God you will never find superstition."

A devotee of God should have faith in God only. There is no one greater than God. One should never depend on false beliefs. Never be scared of black magic and spells, wizards and sorcerers, witches, ghosts and demons. God is the all doer. Nothing ever happens without his will. Whether in happiness or misery, take refuge in God only. He will look after everybody.

There were a variety of superstitions. When the Holi festival came, people sang vulgar songs and swore. They would say that if they did not do it that way then the goddess of the festival, Holi Mata, would become angry.

But Maharaj preached, “Would a mother ever tell her children to swear?” Maharaj stopped all these bad habits and practices. He asked his sadhus to write special kirtans for the Holi festival and then promoted them to be sung by everyone.

During weddings people sang vulgar songs. Maharaj stopped this as well. He asked them to sing songs about the holy marriage of Radha and Rukmini to Shri Krishna

Shriji Maharaj had introduced a lot of such transformations.

He made people realize that where there is God there is no superstition and where there is superstition there is no God.

Exercise

Write briefly on the following.

1. In the olden days what did people do when someone fell ill?
2. What bad practices did Maharaj stop?
3. In which incident did Maharaj say, “Wherever there is superstition you will never find God?”

20 SAHAJANAND SERVES ALL

Shriji Maharaj celebrated a great festival in the village of Panchala. All the villagers and even the guests from surrounding villages had eaten their meals.

Maharaj asked, “Has everyone eaten?”

“Yes,” came the reply.

At that time some people wearing dirty and torn clothes were walking on the opposite shore of the river. Maharaj pointed to them and said, “Have those people eaten?”

Somebody answered, “Maharaj, they are *harijans* – people belonging to the lowest untouchable caste.”

"The sun shines for all," said Maharaj. "The rain showers for all. And so when Sahajanand serves food to people, He also serves all. Call those people here and serve them food with love and care."

A man ran up to them and brought them to Maharaj. Maharaj asked them to sit down and then served them himself.

Like the sun that spreads its light for all, like the rain that showers for everybody Maharaj used to serve all.

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "The sun shines for all."

True or False.

1. Everyone was served food in the festival by the village people.
2. "The rain showers for all."
3. Maharaj asked some devotees to serve food to the low caste people.

21 HARD WORK IS AUSTERITY

Once Maharaj went to a village.

People were miserable because of the water problem in the village. But they did not do anything to solve the problem.

Maharaj said to them, "Let us dig a large pond."

As soon as Maharaj picked up a spade and started digging, all the sadhus and devotees also joined in. Even the villagers who were complaining joined in.

As they dug deeper and deeper water seeped up through the ground. Soon the pond was full of water.

Shriji Maharaj said, "A sadhu should not only preach, he

should not only fill his stomach, but he should also serve people using his hands and feet.”

Out of his compassion for people Maharaj performed such social works.

Shriji Maharaj, sadhus and devotees worked very hard to build the mandir in Gadhada. Maharaj told everyone, “Whenever you go to the river Ghela for a bath, pick up and carry a stone on your head for the mandir foundation.”

Maharaj himself would do this. Every morning and evening he would carry a stone on his head all the way to the *darbar* of Dada Khachar where the mandir was being built.

Once, while the mandir construction work was going on, the bricklayer had run out of mortar. He shouted, “Hey, bring me some mortar.”

Maharaj was nearby at the time. Before anyone else could fill a container and give it to the bricklayer Maharaj filled one himself and passed it to him.

Shriji Maharaj never felt such service to be of inferior or ordinary worth.

Once, the construction work for the Vartal mandir was going on. The hard working sadhus and devotees were covered with mud. Maharaj called them and said, “You have all worked very hard. Come, let me embrace you.”

“But Maharaj, we’re dirty with mud,” they replied.

“Because of your hard work that mud has turned into holy sandalwood paste,” Maharaj said.

Then Maharaj hugged everyone, turn by turn.

Maharaj always praised and rewarded those who offered their services.

On the outskirts of Vartal there is a lake called Gomti. When it was being dug, a devotee, Tejabhai Vankar, and his group worked very hard.

When the work was over Maharaj was pleased with their services and asked Tejabhai, "Tell me, what can I give you?" At that time Maharaj was standing on two bricks.

Tejabhai said, "I'd like these two bricks you are standing on!"

Maharaj was pleased. He at once gave the bricks away. Later, when Tejabhai built a small mandir in his village, Chhani, he installed the two holy bricks there.

In Pandharpur, the devotee name Pundarik had made God stand on a brick. That's why God is called Vithoba (*Vit* means brick). Like Vithoba's presence in Pandharpur, Maharaj spiritually resides at the Chhani mandir. This is why that mandir is very special.

Maharaj always granted boons to those who offered their services with devotion.

Once a sadhu was supervising a bricklayer while he was working in a mandir. The sadhu's whole body had become white, with lime powder.

Maharaj saw this. He ran up and started wiping away the powder on the sadhu's body.

"No, Maharaj, no," the sadhu said.

Maharaj responded, "I am wiping off the snow on a sadhu's body who is performing austerity in the Himalayas."

To Maharaj, performing service was equal to austerity.

Exercise

Write short notes on the following.

1. Maharaj and his sadhus used to sympathize and help people who were miserable and poor.
2. Maharaj always granted boons to those who offered their services.

22 THE SUBA'S EVIL PLOT

Jetalpur is a small town near Ahmedabad.

Shriji Maharaj performed a grand *yagna* here. Other people sacrificed animals in *yagnas*, whereas Maharaj performed non-violent *yagnas*. A lot of people liked this and they became Maharaj's disciples.

However, some did not like it. They were scared that their *yagnas* would be stopped, and then they would not get any more meat to eat.

The ruler of Ahmedabad was a Peshwa Suba named Vithoba. A Suba is a person who rules in place of the king.

After the *yagna* in Jetalpur, the Suba's father died. Maharaj's enemies were waiting for a chance like this. They whispered in the Suba's ears, "Your father died because Sahajanand Swami did not sacrifice an animal in his *yagna*. Arrest Sahajanand and punish him, or no one will live in your family!"

The easily convinced Suba got angry, "He killed my father! Now, I shall kill him."

He thought of a plot.

In his palace he told his men to build a big tank. He filled it with boiling oil. On top of it he arranged a beautiful throne. Whoever sat on it would fall into the boiling oil and die.

Then he sent an invitation to Maharaj, "Please come to my palace. I would like to honour you."

Maharaj went to the palace. He was fearless because He had



Maharaj pushes his stick on the throne and exposes the Suba's evil plot

no enemies. He had no ill-feelings for anybody either.

The Suba welcomed Maharaj with a show of good manners. He pointed to the throne and said, "Maharaj, please sit on this special throne."

Maharaj said, "I am a sadhu. How can I sit on such a beautiful throne? It is fit for a ruler like you. You sit on it."

"No, no, Maharaj. Today, I want to welcome you like a king," the Suba said. "The throne is only for you."

Maharaj smiled, "I know that," he said. "That is why I'm telling you to sit there. It is your privilege."

Maharaj then approached the throne and gave it a push with his stick. Suddenly, the throne crashed into the tank of hot oil. The Suba's evil plot was exposed.

Vithoba, the Suba, was embarrassed. He became angry and shouted at Maharaj, "Leave Ahmedabad at once. Don't come back again."

Maharaj calmly asked, "Until when should I not return?"

The Suba said, "Till the Peshwas rule."

Maharaj left Ahmedabad on the same day. Within twelve months the Peshwa rule was overthrown by the British.

Maharaj had no enemies and hated no one, but if someone thought Maharaj to be his enemy then he always suffered.

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "He killed my father! Now, I shall kill him!"
2. "How can I sit on such a beautiful throne?"

Answer the following questions in three lines each.

1. What did Maharaj's enemies whisper in the Suba's ears?
2. What plot did the Suba hatch?
3. How did Maharaj expose the Suba's evil plot?

23 INSULTED IN ANAND

Maharaj was in Vartal.

Devotees from Anand came to Vartal and prayed, "Maharaj! Please come to our town."

Maharaj agreed.

The devotees became happy. But some evil men were upset. When Maharaj entered the town of Anand, they created trouble. As Maharaj and his disciples passed through the streets, they threw dung, bricks, stones and mud on them. They swore at Maharaj and insulted him.

There were many Kathi Darbars with Maharaj carrying swords and rifles. When the trouble started their hands went straight to their weapons. But Maharaj looked at them, and with his eyes ordered them not to do anything in return.

The Kathi Darbars were very angry at those who were insulting them. But how could they disobey Maharaj. They remained quiet and did not fight back.

Because of the trouble Maharaj left Anand straightway;

without even having lunch. He went back to Vartal.

In the evening Maharaj was discoursing to the assembly. He remembered the incident at Anand and said, "Today we have won a great battle."

The Kathi Darbars said, "How can you talk of victory when we lost! We were insulted with dung and stones! It would have been better if we had died. The humiliation has taken away our pride and honour."

Maharaj smiled and stated, "You have not lost your honour, but have gained the respect of all. Your greatness has increased because you suffered everything in silence and did not fight back."

He then explained that if they had fought back, there would have been no end to the fighting. Instead, it would have fanned more hatred. It is best to always remain silent and never become agitated.

Such was Maharaj's pacifying role in controlling the Kathi Darbars. He taught then tolerance and forgiveness.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence.

1. How did the people of Anand make trouble?
2. Why did the Kathi Darbars not fight back?
3. Why did Maharaj leave without eating in Anand?
4. What did Maharaj explain to the Kathi Darbars?

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "Today we have won a great battle."
2. "Your greatness has increased..."

24 A YAGNA IN DABHAN

Maharaj was performing a *yagna* in Dabhan. Some more

supplies of ghee for the *yagna* were on its way by carts from other villages.

But it did not come in time.

So the Brahmins working in the kitchen, who were bent upon creating problems, shouted, "Give us ghee, give us ghee!"

The Brahmins were delighted because they had a chance to spoil the *yagna*. Ramdas Swami said to Maharaj, "Without ghee they cannot prepare *ladus* and perform the *yagna*."

Maharaj replied, "Do not worry. The *yagna* will go on. Nothing will stop it." He stood up and went to the storeroom, containing several large vessels of ghee. Maharaj said, "The vessels are full of ghee. Start giving them out."

"But there isn't any ghee in the vessels," Ramdas Swami said.

Maharaj replied, "Just show the vessels to the Brahmins."

When the Brahmins saw the vessels were full of ghee they were surprised. Even Ramdas Swami was astonished.

The *yagna* continued. Ghee was plentiful. The evil doers were astonished. They could do no damage now. They said, "Maharaj is a great magician. He can turn water into ghee!"

Thousands of people took part in the *yagna*. It was performed with great joy and splendour.

There was no end to Maharaj's divine powers.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence.

1. In which village was the *yagna* performed?
2. What divine miracle did Maharaj work in order to perform the *yagna*?



Maharaj brings Pranvallabh back to life

Shriji Maharaj was full of compassion for his devotees during their lifetime and even at the time of their death. When any devotee was on his death bed Maharaj would give him his divine darshan and bless him with his divine abode, Akshardham.

There was a Brahmin devotee named Pranvallabh in Ahmedabad. He was a very good devotee. When he died Maharaj went to his house in a divine form to take him to Akshardham.

As they were going Maharaj asked Pranvallabh, “Do you have any last wish?”

Pranvallabh said, “Yes, I would like to tell everyone that you have come to take me to Akshardham.”

Maharaj agreed and said, “I will bring you back to life!”

By this time Pranvallabh’s family and friends had taken his dead body on a stretcher to the cremation ground. The body was already placed on a pile of wood. Just as the fire was about to be lit Pranvallabh sat up! Maharaj had brought him back to life!

Everyone was surprised. Then Pranvallabh said, “I’ve come back for a while to tell you that Shriji Maharaj has arrived to take me to his abode, Akshardham!” He then started chanting,

‘Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan.’

Everyone joined him in chanting the ‘Swaminarayan’ *dhun*.

When the *dhun* was over Pranvallabh lay down on the pile of wood and died again. Maharaj took him to Akshardham.

Even today when a devotee dies Shriji Maharaj comes to take him to Akshardham.

Exercise

True or False.

1. Maharaj was not very compassionate on devotees when they died.
2. Maharaj’s divine abode is not Akshardham.
3. When Pranvallabh died Maharaj went to deliver him.
4. Now a days Maharaj does not come when a devotee dies.

26 A DONKEY INTO A COW

There was an evil man named Joban Pagi. He was feared by all. Even the police trembled at his name. Cutting a person’s throat was as easy as cutting a watermelon to him. People locked their doors and hid their children when they heard that he was coming.

Once, Joban heard that Maharaj had a beautiful mare called Rojho. He decided to steal Rojho.

Maharaj was in Dabhan at that time, performing a *yagna*. At night Joban Pagi went to the stable where Rojho was tied. To his surprise he saw Maharaj standing next to the mare, gently stroking Rojho with his hands. He returned back several times that night, but saw Maharaj with the mare again and again. So he decided to come the next night.

The next night Joban came and saw Maharaj standing again



Each night Joban Pagi sees Maharaj stroking Rojho, the mare

by the mare. Joban waited the whole night. But Maharaj did not move. The same thing happened when he came on the third night.

“Doesn’t Maharaj ever sleep?” thought Joban. “Or is it true that he is a magician? If he is a magician, I will have to test him!”

Joban Pagi decided to go to Maharaj’s assembly the next day. He thought if Maharaj recognised him, called him by his name, told him why he had come there and offered the garland from his neck, then he would believe him to be great and powerful!

The next day Maharaj was seated in an assembly. Around him were many sadhus and devotees. Joban Pagi came and stood before him. Maharaj said at once, “Welcome Joban Pagi, welcome. Why are your eyes so red? Are they red because you haven’t slept for the last three nights? You couldn’t steal Rojho and neither could you steal the other horses.”

As soon as the assembly heard the name of Joban Pagi, the Kathi Darbars reached for their swords.

Maharaj smiled and said, “Joban Pagi has not come to steal anything today. He has come to become a *satsangi*.”

He then took off the rose garland He was wearing and placed it around Joban Pagi's neck.

Joban's three wishes were fulfilled. He fell at Maharaj's feet and asked for forgiveness for all his sins. He said, "Maharaj, you are my Lord and I am now your servant!"

Joban the robber was now Joban the devotee! He took a rosary in his hand.

When the King of Vadodara found out about this miracle he was overjoyed. He promised to pay Joban a fixed pension every year.

Once Joban went to Petlad to collect his yearly pension. A clerk made fun of him, saying, "Joban, can your Swaminarayan transform a donkey into a cow?"

Joban did not get angry at all. He calmly replied, "Yes, it is true. He has transformed a robber like myself into a devotee of God. He has given me the rosary and taken away my sword. Is this not making a donkey into a cow? What greater miracle do you want to see?"

The clerk did not say a word more.

Shriji Maharaj transformed an evil man into a virtuous devotee.

Exercise

Who is speaking to whom?

1. "You couldn't steal Rojho and neither could you steal the other horses."
2. "You are my Lord and I am now your servant!"
3. "Can your Swaminarayan transform a donkey into a cow?"

Explain each question in three lines.

1. What happened when Joban Pagi went to steal Rojho?
2. How did Joban Pagi test Maharaj?

27 MAHARAJ'S SADHUS

Shriji Maharaj's sadhus never touched money. They always spoke politely and never argued or swore. They never smoked tobacco, took snuff or drank alcohol.

Maharaj's sadhus never asked for tasty foods. They ate whatever they received as alms!

All day long they sat in meditation, chanted the Swaminarayan mantra and worshipped God.

The sadhus were simple and kind. They put up with troubles but never caused troubles to others.

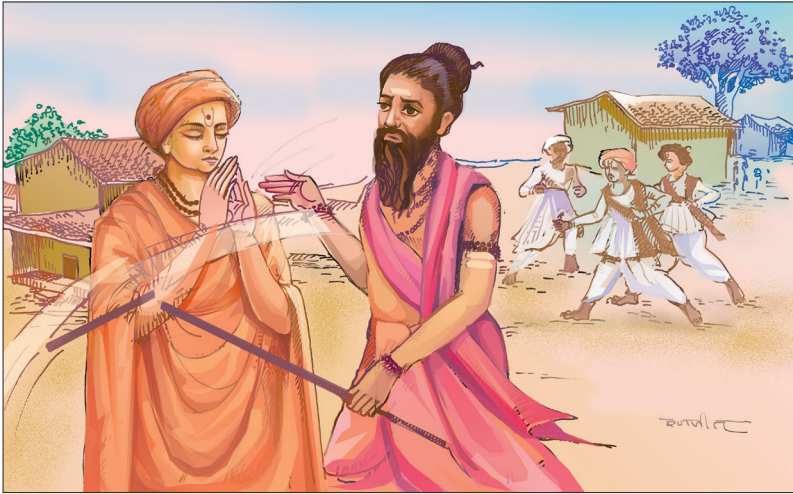
Maharaj's sadhus were noble, but the *bawas* who did not believe in Maharaj did not like these sadhus. The *bawas* went from village to village with their female disciples and threatened people, swore at them and beat them up. These *bawas* also took *ganja*, smoked tobacco and ate meat. They demanded tasty foods from people. They were arrogant as well as angry by nature.

Once, a *bawa* started beating Maharaj's sadhu with a stick. He beat him so much that the stick broke into two. Then in spite of that the *bawa* kept on beating the sadhu. Maharaj's sadhu did not say a word in return. He did not even lift a finger in defence.

When some villagers saw this, they scolded the *bawa* and drove him out of their village. Then people asked the sadhu, "Are you hurt badly?" He replied, "No, no, my body has suffered a little, but I have not been hurt!" Then he said, "It is a pity that the *bawa's* stick broke when he was hitting me!"

Such was the compassion showed by Maharaj's sadhus! They felt sorry even for those who beat them or harassed them.

Once, a *bawa* got angry when he saw a sadhu of Shriji Maharaj. He took off his footwear and threw it to hit the sadhu. The sadhu returned it to the *bawa*, saying, "You will find it difficult to



The bawa keeps beating the sadhu with his broken stick

walk without your shoes.”

The *bawa*, regardless of the sadhu's courtesy, became more angry and started beating the sadhu with his shoe. The sadhu still remained calm and quiet.

Then the village folks came to his rescue. They scolded the *bawa* and expelled him from the village.

The sadhus of Shriji Maharaj were tolerant and compassionate.

Once, Brahmanand Swami was travelling with his group of sadhus.

A group of *bawas* attacked them. They beat them up so much that the sadhus could hardly walk.

Then, on seeing that a *bawa* had dropped his sword Brahmanand Swami said to him, “Please take your sword because in our group we have sadhus who were once warriors. If their blood starts boiling on seeing your sword then they will easily kill you all.”

The *bawa* barked, “We're not scared of dying.”

Brahmanand Swami said, “We are not worried about your

death, but if these sadhus fight back then we will be disobeying Maharaj's commands and putting our honour as sadhus to shame. We do not want to do that! And that is why I'm telling you to take your sword and go away."

Such was the saintliness of Shriji Maharaj's sadhus that they were vigilant in not disobeying Maharaj's wish.

The *bawas* never had any compassion for Maharaj's sadhus. They beat them, swore at them and insulted them. Whenever they got the chance they threw away the sadhus' pujas, and cut their *kanthis* and *janois*. The *bawas* even sent their wives to chase the sadhus and touch them so that they would have to fast!

Our sadhus were always careful not to lose their temper. Maharaj had ordered them, "Sadhu should suffer everything in silence. Through tolerance you have to redeem evil people. Always forgive them. Never lose your patience and never become unhappy!"

Shriji Maharaj's sadhus never disobeyed him.

Exercise

True or False.

1. Maharaj's sadhus kept money.
2. Maharaj's sadhus did not put up with suffering.
3. Maharaj's sadhus felt pity for their enemies.
4. Maharaj's sadhus never disobeyed him.
5. Maharaj's sadhus became angry.

Explain briefly.

1. A sadhu gave the broken stick back to the *bawa* who was beating him.
2. How did the *bawas* trouble the sadhus?
3. Brahmanand Swami told the *bawa* to take his sword.
4. What did Maharaj order the sadhus to do?

28 STAYING WHERE THERE ARE DISCOMFORTS

Maharaj had told his sadhus, "Only stay in those places where there are discomforts."

Once a group of sadhus came to Ahmedabad. On the outskirts, near Dariykhana Ghummat, they stayed beneath the tamarind trees. On these trees lived a number of ghosts. The sadhus did not have anything to sleep on nor any blankets to protect them from the cold. They all lay down on the ground and chanted, 'Swaminarayan Swaminarayan'.

For begging alms they went into town. Whatever they received they would make small balls out of it and share them among themselves. Sometimes they received no alms at all and thus fasted.

One day the sadhus were meditating underneath a tree. A snake fell on them from a branch. Maharaj had ordered them that even if a person attacked them with a sword they should not get up from meditation. So no one stood up. The snake slithered across the lap of one sadhu and climbed the shoulder of another. Then it wound itself round the waist of another sadhu and went over the thigh of a sadhu behind him. Finally, the snake retreated into its hole.

Some Banias from the town witnessed this. They saw that the sadhus were not scared of the snake and remained undisturbed in their meditation. They thought, "These are what you call true sadhus! One should serve sadhus like these."

The Banias brought some food and offered it to the sadhus and then after listened to their sermons.

Once, a group of sadhus went to the town of Jamnagar.

They begged for food and shared it amongst themselves. On many days they got nothing at all. Sometimes they ate the rotten vegetables thrown away by the hawkers. When they were very hungry they would eat the moss growing on the sides of the lake.

One day the King of Jamnagar was passing by. He saw the starving sadhus and felt sorry for them. He told them to come to his palace everyday to beg food.

The sadhus said, "We take alms from homes!"

So the king asked his men to stand at certain places in town. When the sadhus came begging they gave them some food. This happened everyday.

Now the sadhus started getting enough food for themselves. But Maharaj had commanded them not to stay where they received comforts like good food!

"We should not stay here any longer!" said the sadhus.

At once the sadhus left and went to another town.

Maharaj's sadhus never disobeyed him. They would even remain hungry just to please him.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence.

1. What did Maharaj order the sadhus to do?
2. Where did the sadhus stay in Ahmedabad?
3. What did the Banias think of the sadhus?
4. What did the King of Jamnagar feel when he saw the sadhus?
5. Why did the sadhus leave Jamnagar?

Write in three lines each.

1. What happened to the sadhus while they were meditating beneath the tree?
2. What did the sadhus eat in Jamnagar?

29 THE SHIKSHAPATRI IS A MIRROR

Once Maharaj was ill. Muktanand Swami was caring for him. He was sad because Maharaj was ill. And one day tears started flowing from Muktanand Swami's eyes. He said to Maharaj, "Maharaj, please get well quickly, and write a small book about the essence of your teachings."

Maharaj was pleased. He said, "Yes, I shall write a small scripture to inspire and teach all my sadhus and devotees. Just as a man can see his own face in a mirror, a person who reads this scripture will see what he is like. He will learn how to behave and live a pure life!"

Maharaj soon became well. He started writing the scripture in Vartal. The name he gave to the scripture was the Shikshapatri.

It is written for all types of people: householders, *brahmacharis*, sadhus, *acharyas*, ordinary men and women, kings and courtiers.

The Shikshapatri is very small, but its teachings are great.

The scripture is not only meant for Gujaratis or Hindus or Swaminarayans alone, but for the whole world.

Do you know what Maharaj has written in it? Let us have a quick look at some of his teachings. Maharaj commands in the Shikshapatri:

- ◆ Never kill anybody, not even an insect!
- ◆ Do not drink alcohol.
- ◆ Never take even flowers, etc. from a garden without permission.
- ◆ Do not speak spitefully or listen to such talks.
- ◆ Never smoke or take drugs.
- ◆ Do not spit in public places.
- ◆ Never praise yourself.
- ◆ Do not insult anyone.
- ◆ Never wear clothes that expose your body.

- ◆ Always wake up early, take a bath and do puja.
- ◆ Always serve your mother, father, guru and those who are ill.
- ◆ Spend according to your income.
- ◆ Never enter into financial dealings without signing documents.
- ◆ Maharaj has promised that whoever obeys the Shikshapatri will become happy on earth and attain Akshardham.

Exercise

True or false.

1. The Shikshapatri is only for devotees of Swaminarayan.
2. The Shikshapatri says that you should smoke and take drugs.
3. The Shikshapatri says that you should wake up early, take a bath and do puja.
4. The Shikshapatri says you should serve your mother, father, guru and those who are ill.

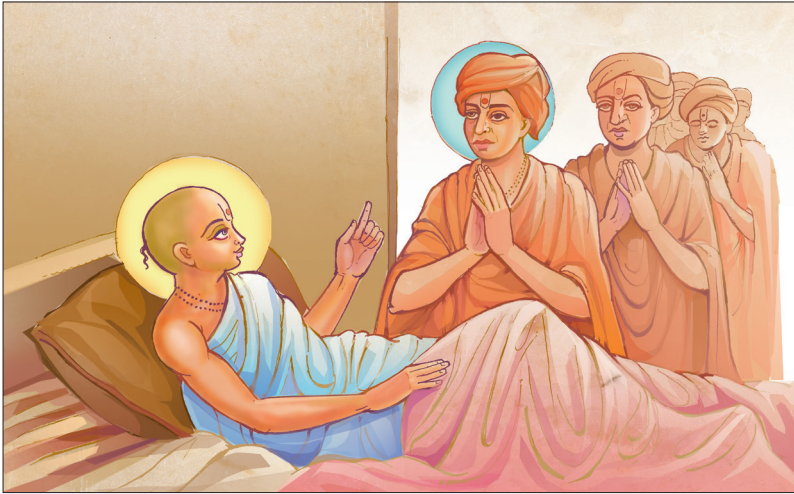
Answer each question in one sentence.

1. Where did Maharaj write the Shikshapatri?
2. For whom did Maharaj write the Shikshapatri?
3. What has Maharaj promised in the Shikshapatri?

30 MAHARAJ GOES TO AKSHARDHAM

Shriji Maharaj went to Vartal every year. Thousands of people would come for his darshan from the surrounding villages.

But in 1830 Maharaj did not go. He stayed in Gadhada. One day he called the senior sadhus and devotees and said, “My work on this earth is now over. I will shortly go to my abode – Akshardham!”



Gunatitanand Swami arrives at the bedside of Shriji Maharaj

Many people fainted when they heard this. Many more started crying loudly.

Soon, the news spread everywhere that Maharaj was going to leave his body and go to Akshardham. People started arriving from distant places for his last darshan.

Maharaj stopped eating and drinking. Maharaj called Gunatitanand Swami who was in Junagadh at that time.

As soon as Gunatitanand Swami received the message he left for Gadhada. He did not stop to rest anywhere. When he arrived, he went straight to Maharaj's room. Although Maharaj was very ill he called him with love and hugged him. Maharaj talked to him and said, "*Mithā chālā kem visaru māru tamthi bāndhel tan ho...*" meaning, "How can I forget you when I am bound to you..."

It was nearly afternoon on the day of 1 June 1830 CE (Jeth sud 10, A.S. 1886). Maharaj got up and sat down cross-legged. As soon as He sat down He left his body and went to Akshardham.

Everyone was plunged in deep sorrow and sadness, and started chanting the 'Swaminarayan' *dhun*.

The sadhus bathed Maharaj's body with the water of the river

Ganga and adorned him in white clothes and placed a garland around his neck. Everyone then performed Maharaj's *arti*. They placed him onto a palanquin and carried him to Lakshmi Vadi. On the way the sadhus and devotees chanted the Swaminarayan mantra and sang bhajans.

Maharaj was cremated with special logs of sandalwood.

Although Maharaj went to Akshardham, his divine work did not stop. He worked through Gunatitanand Swami, then Pragji Bhakta, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. And today we can see the light of his work being spread by Pramukh Swami Maharaj all over the world.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence.

1. Whom did Maharaj call from Junagadh?
2. What did Maharaj lovingly say to Gunatitanand Swami?

3. When and where did Maharaj go to Akshardham?
4. Where was Maharaj cremated?
5. Who is continuing Shriji Maharaj's work today?



SECTION B

1 WHAT DO THE VEDAS TEACH US?

Mātru devo bhava

Mātāne dev samān jāno

Serve your mother as god

Pitru devo bhava

Pitāne dev samān jāno

Serve your father as god

Āchārya devo bhava

Āchāryane dev samān jāno

Serve your guru as god

Atithi devo bhava

Atithine dev samān jāno

Serve your guest as god

Satyam vada

Sāchu bolo.

Always speak the truth

Dharmam chara

Dharmanu ācharan karo

Always stay within dharma

Swādhyāyan

mā pramadha

Abhyāsmā ālas na karo

Never be lazy in studies

Chants

Dharmaki Jai ho

Victory to righteousness

Adharmakā nāsh ho

Death to unrighteousness

Prāniyome

sadbhāvna ho

Let all creatures love one another.

Vishvakā kalyān ho

Let the whole world be salvated.

Exercise

Match the correct words from A and B:

A	B
<i>Āchārya devo bhava</i>	<i>Kalyān ho</i>
<i>Satyam Vada</i>	<i>Sāchu bolo</i>
<i>Swādhyāyān mā</i>	
<i>pramadaha</i>	<i>Nāsh ho</i>
<i>Vishva kā</i>	<i>gurune dev samān jāno</i>
<i>Adharma kā</i>	<i>Mātāne dev samān jāno</i>
<i>Mātru devo bhava</i>	<i>Abhyāsmā ālas</i>
	<i>na karo</i>

2 STUDIES

After many home visits (*padhramanis*) in a town, Pramukh Swami Maharaj returned to his residence at a devotee's home. Some youths were gently massaging his legs. A small boy came there. He too sat down and started serving Swamishri by massaging his legs with his tiny hands.

But the boy was lazy in his studies. He did not work hard at all. Swamiji knew this and thus told him, "By studying hard you are really serving me. Today you will only massage my legs and serve me for about five minutes. But if you study at home for one hour you will have served me for one hour. And if you study at home for two hours you will have served me for two hours. By studying you will massage my fatigue away. If you study for three hours then just by seeing you my health will become better."

Swamiji loves those who study hard.

Shriji Maharaj loves those who study hard.

Who advances without studying?

Who is happy without studying?

Who has become great without studying?

No one!

By studying one becomes happy in life and a favourite of all.

One who learns is wise.

One who learns and thinks on what he has learnt is wise.

One who learns and tries to understand what he has learnt is wise.

It is not hard to study.

Concentrate on what you are taught. Think on it. If you do not understand then ask your teacher, "What is this? Why is this so?" Ask again, "When did it happen? Where did it happen?" When you are being taught listen with attention. Then think, "Where did it happen? Who did it?" Never be frightened of asking questions, or answering them!

Whatever you learn in school read it again in the evening at home. At the end of the week revise everything you have learnt during the week. In this way you will easily remember everything.

Study hard every day.

Listen carefully to your teacher.

Study with enthusiasm.

Exercise

Write short notes (approx. 8 lines).

1. Pramukh Swami Maharaj said, 'If you study for two hours at home you will have served me for two hours.'
2. How should you study?

Ekde ek, Shrijini rākho tek mārā bandhu,

Kalyān levu sahel chhe...

- Bagde bey, Shrijinu nām ley... Mārā bandhu 1*
Trāgde tran, Shrijinu le sharan... Mārā bandhu 2
Chogde chār, Shrijine namaskār... Mārā bandhu 3
Pānchde pānch, bhaktimā nāve ānch... Mārā bandhu 4
Chhagde chhay, Shrijini bolo jay... Mārā bandhu 5
Sātde sāt, chhe Brahma hamāri jāt... Mārā bandhu 6
Āthde āth, muki de jagno thāth... Mārā bandhu 7
Navde nav, tari jā tu ā bhav... Mārā bandhu 8
Ekde minde dash, adharma māthi khas... Mārā bandhu 9
Evi rite bhajāy, to Akshardhāmmā javāy... Mārā bandhu 10

Exercise

Fill in the missing lines.

1. Bagde bey... ..Shrijine namaskār
2. Navde nav... ..Akshardhāmmā javāy

4 GOD DOES EXIST

People often ask, “Where is God?” In reply, you can ask, “Show me a place where God is not!”

Who prints the bright colours on a peacock’s feathers? Who paints the clever patterns on the butterfly’s wings? Who teaches the parrot to speak so sweetly, and who teaches the nightingale to sing so melodiously?

God, of course!

God makes rain fall from the clouds. From a tiny seed he grows a huge tree. On the tree he gives us delicious fruits. We can see God in his work all around us.

Where is God?

*Bhagwan Swaminarayan*

God is in you. He is in everybody else as well. God is in every living creature. God sees everything and knows everything. God can do anything He wants because He is all-powerful. There is no one greater than him. To sit with God in his divine abode should be our ultimate goal.

Who is God?

Every now and then God incarnates on earth to destroy evil and establish righteousness. He takes birth to make us eternally happy. God comes in the form of an avatar. Shri Ram and Shri Krishna are two amongst many avatars of God.

In 1781, Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the supreme God, took birth in India. People also know him by the name of Sahajanand Swami and Shriji Maharaj.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan is always present on the earth through a true Sadhu. Today that true Sadhu is our beloved guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Shriji Maharaj is present through Pramukh Swami Maharaj. So if we love Swamiji, we also love Shriji Maharaj. If we have Swamiji's darshan we also have Shriji Maharaj's darshan. Through Pramukh Swami Maharaj we can learn about and also experience God.

Exercise

Answer each question in three lines each.

1. How do we know God through his work all around us?
2. How is God always present on earth?
3. How can we learn about and also experience God?

5 NEVER EAT THIS

One should not eat onions.

One should not eat garlic.

One should not eat in hotels.

Never ever eat eggs.

Never ever eat meat.

Never ever drink alcohol.

Eating these things spoils one's health.

Eating these things spoils one's mind.

Eating these things is very sinful.

It gives one bad thoughts.

It makes one do bad things.

It sends one to hell.

So it is best we live without these things.

And close to God's heart we shall sit.

True or False.

1. If one eats in hotels one can have good thoughts.
2. Eating meat is a sin.
3. If one drinks alcohol one would not go to hell.
4. Eating onions makes one do bad things.

6 GURU

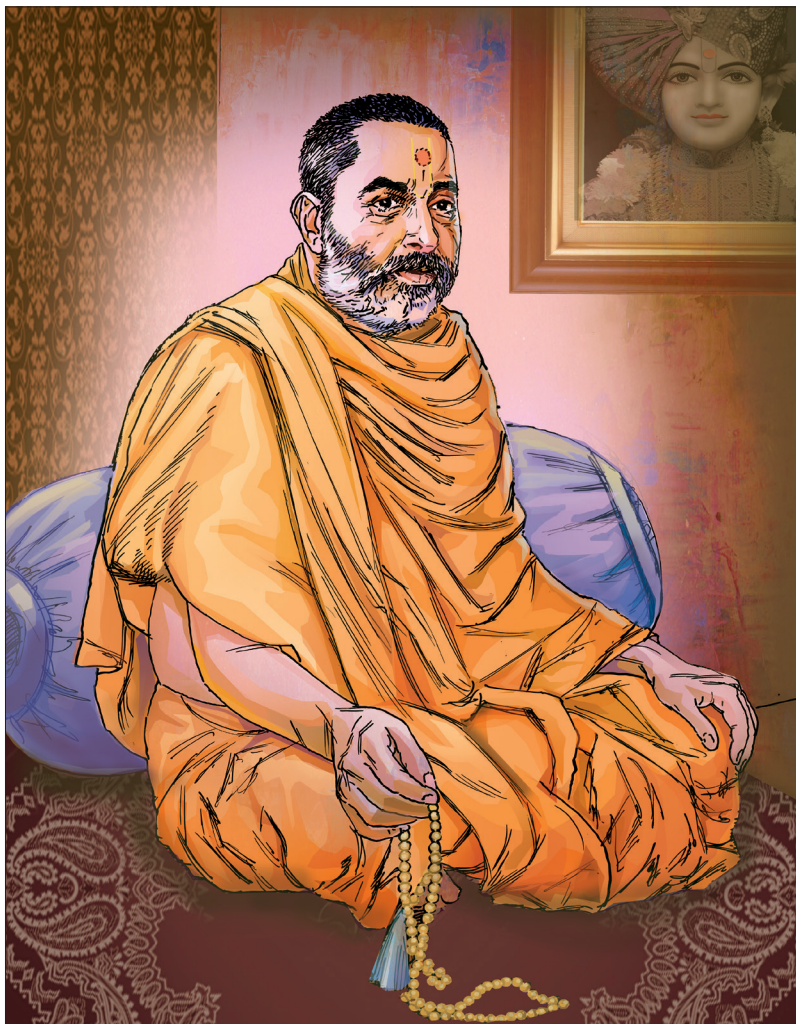
'Gu' means darkness and ignorance. 'Ru' means light and knowledge.

Not knowing what to do and what not to do is darkness. One who takes us from that darkness into light, meaning one who guides on what to do and what not to do, is a real guru.

Have you heard the story of the lost goat? Once, there was a goat which lost itself in the forest. Then it saw the pawprint of a huge lion. The goat was worried that at night a wild animal might catch it and eat it. What should it do? The goat thought a while, and then sat down on the pawprint.

At night a fox approached the goat. The goat at once stood up and showed him the pawprint. The fox thought, "This is a lion's pawprint." He was scared of the lion and so left without harming the goat.

Then, one after another, a tiger, a leopard, a cheetah and many other beasts came. But the goat showed them the pawprint and they all ran away. They all thought the lion was protecting the goat!



Pramukh Swami Maharaj

Lastly, came the lion himself. He saw the goat sitting on his pawprint. When the lion saw that the goat had taken refuge of his pawprint, he decided to help her. He called an elephant and ordered it to carry the goat and deliver it safely home.

If we take refuge of a true guru, then he will also help and protect us. Whenever we are unhappy we can become happy by

his blessings. He protects us from bad company and teaches us to lead a holy life.

If we obey the commands of a true guru all our sins are forgiven by God and we realize him.

We should think of our guru in the morning when we wake up, at night before we sleep and also all through the day. We should remember him at all times.

Who is our guru? Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Who was his guru? Yogiji Maharaj.

Who was his guru? Shastriji Maharaj.

Who was his guru? Bhagatji Maharaj.

Who was his guru? Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami.

Who is our God? Sahajanand Swami.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence.

1. What does “Gu” mean?
2. Who is our guru?
3. Who was Bhagatji Maharaj’s guru?
4. Who was Yogiji Maharaj’s guru?
5. Who is our God?

Answer each question in three lines.

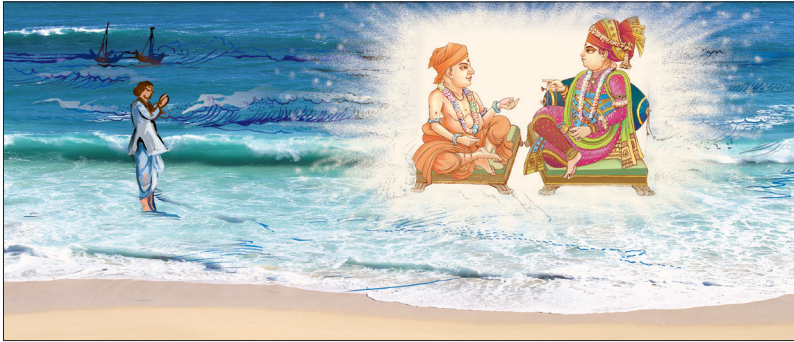
1. What does a true guru do?
2. What happens when we are blessed by the grace of a true guru?

7 PRAYER

Gunātito-ksharam Brahma Bhagwān Purushottamaha

Jano jānannidam satyam muchyate bhavabandhanāt

Meaning: Gunatitanand Swami is Mul Aksharbrahman. The Supreme God is Shriji Maharaj. One who believes this truth is



*O Maharaj and Swami, you are my mother and father
granted salvation and freedom from attachment to the world.*

*Tvameva mātā cha pitā tvameva
Tvameva bandhushcha sakhā tvameva
Tvameva vidyā dravinam tvameva
Tvameva sarvām mam deva deva*

Meaning: Only you are my mother and my father. Only you are my relative and my friend. For me you are true knowledge and wealth. Oh God of gods, you are my everything.

*Gururbrahmā gurur Vishnu gururdevo Maheshvaraha
Guru sākshāt Param Brahma tasmai shri gurave namaha
(This shlok explains the greatness of a guru)*

Meaning: The guru is Brahma, he is Vishnu and Maheshwar. The guru is Parabrahman himself. I bow down to the guru.

*Om saha nāvavatu,
sahanau bhunaktu,
saha viryam karvāvahai
tejasvinā vadhitamastu,
mā vidvishāvahai
Om Shantihi...Shantihi...Shantihi*

Meaning: Oh God! protect my guru and myself. Please take care of us. Bless us that we may together gain the light of knowledge and perform noble deeds. Grant that all our knowledge is enlightened and holy. Lord, teach us not to spite each other.

Exercise

Complete the shlok.

1. *Tvameva mātā cha pitā tvameva...*

Write the meaning of the shlok.

*Gunātito-ksharam Brahma Bhagawān Purushottamha
Jano jānannidam satyam muchyate bhavbandhanāt.*

8 IF YOU WANT TO BECOME GOOD THEN...

Do the following daily:

Daily bow down to your parents.

Humbly bow down to the sadhus.

And always respect the elderly.

In studies, be regular in every way.

Exercise everyday.

Be neat and clean.

Become pure through good deeds.

Pronounce clearly when you sing and read.

Always speak the truth. And memorize

Swamini Vato, shloks and holy prayers.

Go to the mandir everyday

Attend Bal Sabha every week.

And say no to:

Long nails and long hair,

Films and plays,

And fights or quarrels.

Never steal.

Never gamble.

Never read bad books.

Never tease others by copying them.

Never turn bitter over little things.

Never trouble others.

Never think ill of others.

Never swear at others.

Do not keep bad company.

Then only will you become good.

Then you will become Pramukh Swami's true child.

Exercise

True or false.

1. Bow down to the sadhus humbly.
2. Do not study regularly.
3. Go every week to the Bal Sabha.
4. Never watch films or dramas.
5. Keep bad company.

9 SHRI SWAMINARAYAN ARTI

Jay Swāminārāyan, Jay Akshar-Purushottam,
Akshar-Purushottam jay (2), darshan sarvottam...
Jay Swāminārāyan...

Mukta anant supujit, sundar sākāram, (Jay) (2)
Sarvopari karunākar (2), mānav tanudhāram... Jay 1
Purushottam Parabrahma, Shri Hari Sahajānand, (Jay) (2)
Aksharbrahma anādi (2), Gunātītānand... Jay 2

Prakat sadā sarvakartā, param muktidātā, (Jay) (2)
 Dharma ekāntik sthāpak (2), bhakti paritrātā... Jay 3
 Dāsbhāv divyatā saha, brahmarupe priti, (Ho) (2)
 Suhradbhāv alaukik (2), sthāpit shubh riti... Jay 4
 Dhanya dhanya mama jivan, tav sharane sufalam, (Ho) (2)
 Yagnapurush pravartita (2), siddhāntam sukhadam... Jay 5

Jay Swāminārāyan, Jay Akshar-Purushottam,
 Akshar-Purushottam jay (2), darshan sarvottam...
 Jay Swāminārāyan, Jay Akshar-Purushottam,
 Jay Swāminārāyan...

Exercise

Fill in the missing lines.

1. Mukta anant supujit, Gunātītānand...
2. Dāsbhāv divyatā saha, sthāpit shubh riti...

10 SERMONS OF GUNATITANAND SWAMI

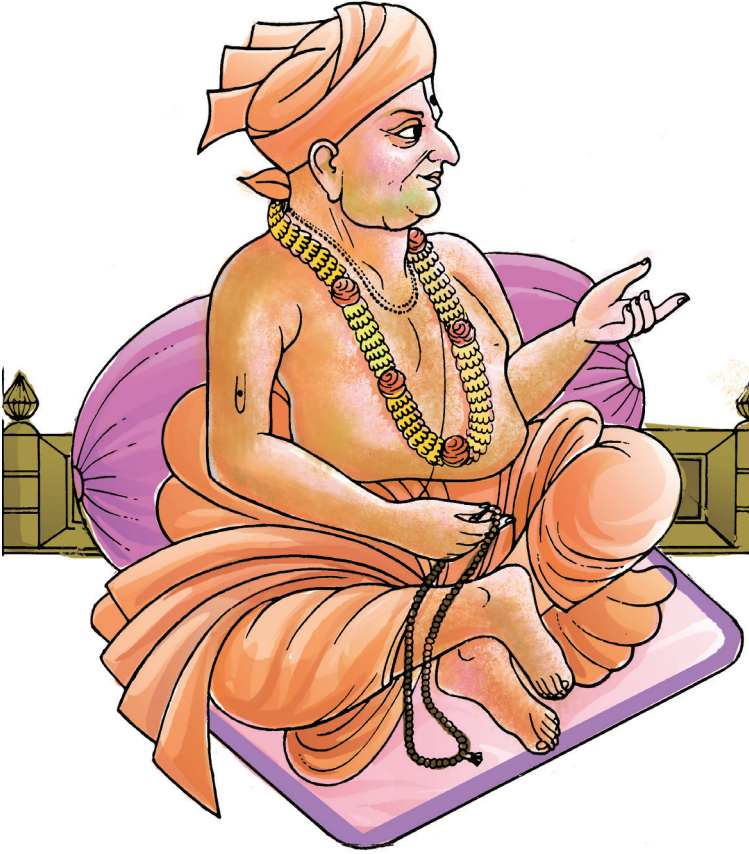
The sermons of Gunatitanand Swami are known as 'Swamini Vato'. These sermons explain the greatness of Shriji Maharaj. They encourage us to leave worldly pleasures, addictions and superstitions. The sermons are the basic teachings of our Satsang.

The sermons are simple and easy to understand. They penetrate right into the heart of an aspirant and help him increase his faith and devotion.

Yogiji Maharaj had memorized many sermons.

It is pleasing to recite the sermons. Memorizing the sermons of Gunatitanand Swami will please our guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Let us have a glance at some.



Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami

Swaminarayan hare Swami e vat kari je:

1. *Āpne to Akshardhāmmā jāvu chhe evo ek sankalp rākhvo.*
Only one desire should be cherished, and that is, 'I want to go to Akshardham.'
2. *Āpne Bhagwānnā chhie pan māyānā nathi em mānvu.*
Always believe that you belong to God and not to *maya*.
3. *Ketlek rupiye ānkh, kān, ādik indriyu male nahi te Bhagwāne āpyā chhe, pan jiva keval krutaghni chhe.*
Even with thousands of rupees one cannot buy the eyes,

ears, nose and other organs, but God has given them to us free. But the *jiva* is unthankful about it.

4. *Karod kām bagāḍine pan ek moksha sudhārvo ne kadāpi karod kām sudharyā ne ek moksha bagāḍyo to temā shu karyu?*

We should make sure of our salvation in this very birth even if it means ‘spoiling’ millions of important jobs. But if we complete those millions of jobs and lose our salvation what great thing have we done?

5. *Nirantar sarva kriyāmā pāchu valine jovu je, māre Bhagwān bhajvā chhe ne hu shu karu chhu, em joyā karvu.*

In everything you should always look back and question yourself, ‘I have come to worship God, but what am I doing?’ Thus one should check if one has strayed.

6. *Gāfalāi tālvānu kāran e chhe je khatko rākhe to tale ne bijo upāy to koik shikshā kare tyāre tale.*

There are two ways by which to rid oneself of carelessness, one through determination to improve and the second is by being punished by others.

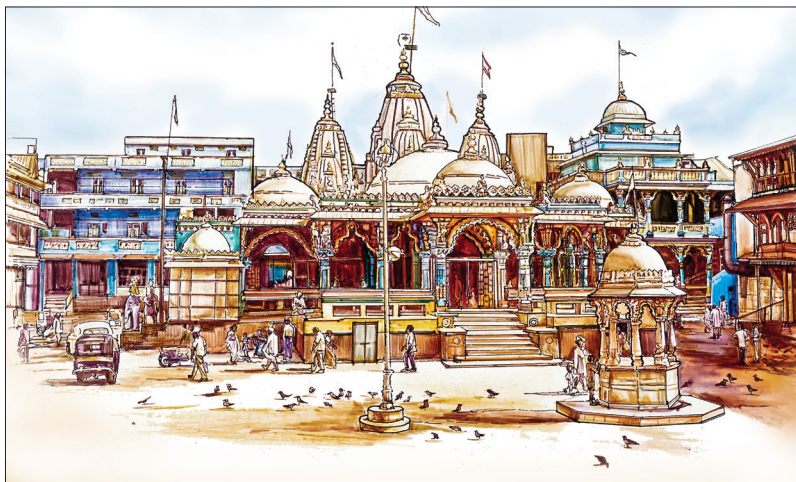
7. *Āvā Sādhune manmā sambhārie to mannā pāp bali jāy ne vāto sām̐bhalie to kannā pāp bali jāy ne darshan karie to ānkhna pāp bali jāy em mahimā jānvo.*

By thinking of the true Sadhu, the sins of our mind are burnt away. By listening to his talks the sins of our ears are burnt away. By doing his darshan the sins of our eyes are burnt away. In this way think of a true Sadhu’s greatness.

Exercise

Complete the following sermons of Gunatitanand Swami.

1. *Āpne to Akshardhāmmā ...* OR
Only one desire should be cherished...
2. *Karod kām bagāḍine ...* OR
We should make sure of our salvation ...



Swaminarayan Mandir, Kalupur

3. *Gāfalāi tālvānu kāran ...* OR

There are two ways by which to rid oneself ...

4. *Āvā Sādhune manmā sambhārie ...* OR

By thinking of the true Sadhu ...

Things to do.

From the small book *200 Sermons of Gunatitanand Swami* learn as many sermons off by heart as you can. If you do not understand their meanings always ask your parents or Bal Mandal *sanchalaks*.

11 MANDIR

Just as we live in a house, devotees of God build special houses for God. They are called mandirs.

The drawing shows a mandir. To climb up onto the mandir there are three staircases, one on each side and one in front. In some mandirs there are two staircases in the front itself.

If you climb up the front steps you first come to two small shrines. Inside these are the *murtis* of Hanumanji and Ganapatiji.

To circumambulate the *murtis* of God a wide space is kept

which is called the *pradakshina*.

In the centre of the mandir is a huge dome. On either side there are smaller domes. The portion below the dome is known as the *mandap*.

A mandir has three high *shikhars*, with the main in the middle and two smaller ones on either side.

The *murtis* of Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami and our gurus are installed under the three *shikhars*. The inner sanctum is called the *nij* mandir.

The thrones are made of wood and decorated with silver and gold sheets.

The pillars and all the other stones used in the mandir are beautifully sculpted. Small statues of great sadhus and devotees are also installed on the pillars.

Exercise

Answer each question in one sentence.

1. What is God's special house called?
2. What is the inner sanctum called in Gujarati?

12 KIRTAN

*Akshardhāmnā bālak ame, Akshardhāmthi āvyā;
 Akshardhāmmā jā]shu ame, Ak.sharne man bhāvyā...
 Nānā nānā bāl ame, Swāmine vahālā bāl ame;
 Shrijine vahālā bāl ame, santone vahālā bāl ame... 1
 Vahelā uthi dhyān dharshu, nāhi dhoine pujā karshu;
 Swāminārāyan mantrā bhanshu,
 pragat Prabhune pranām karshu... 2
 Māt pitāne pāye padshu, santjanone charane namshu;
 Devmandire darshan karshu,
 dandvat karshu Kirtan karshu... 3*

*Aksharne man bhāvyā ame, Purushottamne jānyā ame;
Vandan karie guruji tamne,
sadāy rākho charane amne... 4*

Exercise

Learn the *kirtan* off by heart.

Ame sau Swāminā bālak... (from page ix)

Meaning:

We are the children of Swami; we will die for him. We are the youths of Shriji Maharaj; we will fight for him. We are fearless; we will not shirk sacrificing our lives, for we are born to die. We have launched this movement, and will undergo any suffering. We will sing the praises of Akshar-Purushottam. We are the sons of Shriji; we have our abode in Akshar. Dedicated as we are to *swadharma*, we have no apprehension whatsoever. Bhagwan Purushottam and Akshar, Gunatitanand Swami, are with us. We have accomplished our goal.

GLOSSARY

A

adad	a type of edible pulse
arti	Hindu ritual of waving lighted wicks before the <i>murti</i> of God as an act of worship and reverence

B

bawa	a low order of ascetics. A wandering sadhu, usually without a fixed ashram. See also <i>vairagi</i> .
Bhagavad Gita	a famous Hindu scripture in which Shri Krishna gives spiritual advice to Arjun.
brahmachari	a celibate. One who practises <i>brahmacharya</i> and whose <i>indriyas</i> are engrossed in God

C

chana	gram
chandlo	small, round mark – usually of <i>kumkum</i> or sandalwood paste – applied in the centre of the forehead indicating one's Hindu affiliation
chakhdi	wooden footwear
chuno	lime powder used in making mortar

D

devi	goddess
dharma	that which sustains or holds', derived from verb-root 'dhru' – to sustain or hold. Universal law or principle that 'sustains' or 'upholds' the entire world. All-inclusive term used to mean righteousness, morality, religion, responsibility and duty. The practice of religious disciplines and duties, i.e., <i>niyams</i> – including honesty, <i>brahmacharya</i> , nonviolence, etc.

J

Jagannathpuri	a very holy town on the east coast of India
janoi	the sacred thread worn by Brahmins and sadhus

K

kanthi	double-threaded necklace, usually made of tulsi beads, received by <i>satsangis</i> upon initiation into the Satsang Fellowship and worn as a sign of their affiliation to God
Kathi Darbar	a proud warrior community known for their bravery
Kanyakumari	the southern most tip of India

Kshatriya the warrior caste
 Kashi a holy city on the banks of the river Ganga famous as a centre of learning and pilgrimage. Also known as Varanasi and Benares

kundali horoscope

L

Lakshmi Vadi some fields belonging to Dada Khachar outside Gadhada where Shriji Maharaj would often go

M

mahant head of a mandir or ashram
 Maharaj short for Shriji Maharaj (Bhagwan Swaminarayan)

mamra puffed rice

mantra sacred word or sound recited during worship or meditation. A chant used in magic and witchcraft

mataji a goddess

N

navmi the ninth day of a month

P

palkhi a carriage in which important people are carried from place to place by bearers

pendas a sweetmeat made from milk

puja ritual of worship with materials such as *kumkum*, sandalwood paste, rice, flowers

pujan the act of worshipping

R

Ramanujacharya	a very great scholar and founder of the Vishishtadvait philosophy
Ramayan	a scripture telling the story of Shri Ram
rotla	unleavened bread-like staple food, made generally of millet flour that is kneaded and patted into a flat, circular shape before being cooked on an earthen or metal hot plate

S

samadhi	divine trance. Also a memorial place of a great person
Samvat	the Hindu year. It is sometimes called Vikram Samvat. The Hindu calendar is 56 years ahead of the Christian calendar
Shankaracharya	a very great scholar who established the Advait philosophy
Shiv	the god of destruction
Shiv Puran	a shastra describing the life and glory of Shiv

V

Vadodara	a large city in Gujarat. Also called Baroda
Vania	a community of people who usually run shops and businesses
Vedas	the most important shastras of the Hindus. All other Hindu shastras are based on the Vedas. They are also the oldest shastras in the world

Y

yogi	a person who performs yoga
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