



Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha
Satsang Examinations (Pre-Test, January, 2020)



(Time: 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.)

SATSANG PRAVIN : PAPER - 1

Note: A few of the questions in this Pre-Test Paper will be asked in the Final Examination to be held on Sunday, 1 March 2020. In the Final Examination answers written on extra pages will not be considered valid. Without the prior permission of the Pariksha Karyalay in Ahmedabad, answer papers written by substitute writers in place of the original candidate will not be accepted. Answer papers with more than one type of handwriting will not be accepted. Answers crossed out will not be considered valid. Answers will not be considered valid if they are not written in legible handwriting. Use the latest editions of the exam books. Candidates will not be allowed to keep any electronic items, such as, mobile phones, tablets, laptops, etc. in the examination room.

SECTION 1: AKSHAR PURUSHOTTAM UPASANA - 3rd Edition, May 2012

Total Marks: 100

- Q.1 Describe any ONE of the following and highlight its significance.** [4]
1. "No one has reached upto this last flower."
 2. "Only he can change what I have said."
 3. "That sadhu enjoys the taste of my murti."
- Q.2 For any TWO of the following, give THREE references from the scriptures.** [6]
(It is compulsory to write the reference scripture and number.)
1. Shriji Maharaj the Supreme: As expressed in Swamini Vato
 2. Necessity of understanding Divyabhav
 3. Aksharbrahman: One and unique
- Q.3 Given below are references from the scriptures, principles or stanzas.** [5]
Write the topic they relate to.
- Example:** "Rather, it is the extent of a person's faith in his Ishtadev – God – that determines how much distinction between atma and non-atma he cultivates."
- Ans:** Necessity of faith in Divine Supremacy.
1. "By pleasing Swami, rest assured, that you are pleasing Maharaj."
 2. "He is incomparable in the entire Sampradaya."
 3. "Akshar is the onlooker and the witness of all."
 4. "The form of God that is in Akshardham and the one which you see are identical."
 5. "Brahman resides in only one place, but not everywhere."
- Q.4 From the given options, place a tick (✓) in the box next to the correct options.** [4]
- Note:** One or more of the options may be correct. Full marks will be awarded only if all the correct options are chosen, otherwise no marks will be awarded.
1. Shriji Maharaj himself explained His supremacy to the following devotees

(1) <input type="checkbox"/> Tulsi Dave	(2) <input type="checkbox"/> Bapubhai
(3) <input type="checkbox"/> Vagha Khachar	(4) <input type="checkbox"/> Parvatbhai
 2. Importance of Upasana

(1) <input type="checkbox"/> Without upasana, though, nothing can be accomplished
(2) <input type="checkbox"/> The jiva's liberation is attained only, understanding only God to be the all-doer
(3) <input type="checkbox"/> Only the firm refuge of God is helpful at the time of death
(4) <input type="checkbox"/> It is by my divine light
- Q.5 Write briefly on any TWO of the following. (In 12 lines each.)** [8]
1. Pragat Bhakti: The pathway to peace
 2. Gunatitanand Swami is Mul Akshar: How? : Scriptural Evidence
 3. Becoming Akshar and offering upasana to Purushottam with Swami-Sevak Bhav
- Q.6 Explain any TWO of the following, giving reasons. (In 12 lines each.)** [8]
1. Devotion, save that of the manifest God, is an indication of ego and dogmatism.
 2. Keshavjivandas was fully convinced of Swami's glory as Aksharbrahman.
 3. Mahant Swami Maharaj can be said to have met God.
- Q.7 Complete the following statements based on the summary.** [7]
(What to understand in upasana?)
1. In the form of Dham, are able to enter it.
 2. Therefore, when Parabrahman in human upasana only to Paramatma.
 3. To attain ultimate liberation should please them immensely.
 4. The five entities from each other.
- (What not to understand in upasana?)**
5. Paramhansas other called Mul Aksharbrahman.
 6. Only Aksharbrahman exists only through him.
 7. Only Purushottam exists, as Aksharbrahman.
- Q.8 Write a short notes on "Aksharbrahman: As the divine abode"** [5]

**SECTION 2: SATSANG READER PART 3, 5th Edition, June 2015 &
PORTRAIT OF INSPIRATION - PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ, 2nd Edition, April 2011**

Q.9 In the sentences below, state who is speaking to whom and when. [9]

1. "Even if you keep on telling the story and I keep on listening to it."
2. "Your will prevails throughout the countless universes."
3. "Tell him to come to India and see for himself."

Q.10 Answer ALL of the following, using one sentence (not just one word) for each answer. [5]

1. Where did Mulji Sharma and Lalji Bhakta meet every night?
2. How did a Brahmin serve Khushal Bhakta on the way of Gujarat?
3. What did Shriji Maharaj order Muktanand Swami to constantly do?
4. Why did Swamishri embrace Dallubhai?
5. What did church congregation feel after listening to Frank's talk?

Q.11 From the given options, place a tick (✓) in the box next to the correct options. [8]

Note: One or more of the options may be correct. Full marks will be awarded only if all the correct options are chosen, otherwise no marks will be awarded.

1. Acharya Maharaj's exceptional veneration
 - (1) ☐ Shriji Maharaj protected him always
 - (2) ☐ What he could do with only flour, without any cooking implements?
 - (3) ☐ Fed the ailing sadhu
 - (4) ☐ Saved Gusai from punishment
2. Mukunddas' attempts trick to get permission from his family members
 - (1) ☐ Exchange the children of his neighbours without their knowledge
 - (2) ☐ Exchanged the animals of his neighbours without their knowledge
 - (3) ☐ Distributed the rations and home property
 - (4) ☐ Rama katakat mahudu bhangu
3. Grand Honour and Insult
 - (1) ☐ 1988
 - (2) ☐ On 30 July
 - (3) ☐ Queens park
 - (4) ☐ Akshar Purushottam Mandir
4. Dar-es-Salaam Airport
 - (1) ☐ American officials began interrogating
 - (2) ☐ Smuggling of gold
 - (3) ☐ 85 shillings
 - (4) ☐ Opened articles of daily worship

Q.12 Give reasons for the following. (In 9 lines each.) [8]

1. The sister-in-law of Shivilal Sheth felt a bit insulted. **OR**
2. Yagna Narayan gave darshan in the Vishnuyag performed in Vadodara.
3. Ganesh's joy knew no bounds. **OR**
4. The student who had joined in satsang tour in Saurashtra, admires Swamishri's deep love him.

Q.13 Answer the following concisely. (12 lines each.) [8]


1. Parvatbhai always carried out the inner wishes of Shriji Maharaj. **OR**
2. Shriji Maharaj explained about Anirdesh to Kushalkunvarba.
3. No Complaints. **OR**
4. To fulfil a devotee's wish

SECTION 3: ESSAY

Q.14 Write an essay on any ONE of the following. (In approximately 60 lines.) [15]

1. Vachanamrut, a Unique Scripture: The Divine Experience of Fulfilment of life
(Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) April 2019, Pg. No. 11 to 13)
2. In the Presence of Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj: Devotional Programmes in Dubai
(Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) June 2019, Pg. No. 35 to 41)
3. Vachanamrut, a Unique Scripture: An Invaluable Archive of the Spiritual and Social Life of Gujarat
(Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) April 2019, Pg. No. 14 to 19)

* * *

 **Important Note:** Past Papers and solutions of main exam can be downloaded and printed free from the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha's website - link : <http://www.baps.org/Satsang-Exams.aspx>

 **Matter of above three essays are shown in the following pages**

(One essay from the list of essays will be asked in the Final Examination
of March-2020.)

Pravin Essays

Essay 1

Vachanamrut, a Unique Scripture: The Divine Experience of Fulfilment of life

In the history of this spiritual world, the Vachanamrut stands on as an only unique scripture. The Vachanamrut's dialects are the essence of experiences and the difficult spiritual path is made easier to follow. This fills up the gap of emptiness in life. It helps the soul's incompleteness accomplish its desired goal and helps the soul experience its divinity and fulfilment.

The Vachanamrut or the nectarine discourses of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the most sacred and foundational scripture of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. It contains the profound wisdom of the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahma sutras, Bhagwad Gita, Bhagavat, Purana, Dharma shastras like Yagnavalka Smriti, Vidurniti, and epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharat. It is the revealed fact, that the words were spoken by the supreme Reality Himself, Bhagwan Swaminarayan who had mastered the scriptures and Ashtang-Yoga and also scrutinized the beliefs and practices of people throughout India.

In fact, in Vach. Gad II 28 – Shriji Maharaj has gone so far and said, “I have delivered this discourse having heard and having extracted the essence from the Vedas, the Shastras. The Puranas and all other words of this earth pertaining to liberation. This is the most profound fundamental principle; it is the essence of all essences.”

It is the essence of ancient Indian wisdom given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and compiled by four contemporary scholarly-sadhus who were known for their asceticism and scholarship in Sanskrit, besides their devotion to Him. It was even reviewed and approved by Bhagwan Swaminarayan during its compilation, a fact is evident in Vach. Loya 7.2 – ‘In the assembly Nityanand Swami brought the Vachanamrut manuscript and presented it to Shriji Maharaj who examined the manuscript and was extremely pleased.’ In fact, every statement of the Master is packed with and based on His in-depth religious knowledge, spiritual incite and personal, practical experience. He states in Vach. Gad III 39.16 – “I deliver these discourses to you not from any imagination of my mind nor to display any sort of aptitude. I have experienced all that I have spoken about. In fact, speak accordance to what I practice.” It contains practical, philosophical and theological answers to the sincere enquiries of all types of aspirants regarding life in this world and life hereafter. Since the topics discussed have no relation to the ordering of the Vachanamrut, the reader need not read the scripture in sequentially.

Regardless of the subject, Bhagwan Swaminarayan had the gift of lucidity and elegantly explaining complex concepts through simple day-to-day examples. The villagers were able to grasp profound philosophical concepts due to His simple language and meaningful examples.

It is a landmark shastra, philosophically and in all other aspects. It is the first literary work of prose in the Gujarati language, thus providing a good specimen of the culture and the speaking style of Gujarati language two century ago. It is the generous gift of Bhagwan Swaminarayan to Gujarati literature. It is the first modern Gujarati prose work which the known, Gujarati critic and poet, Shri Uma Shankar Joshi acclaimed as the very pinnacle of Gujarati prose.

The Vachanamrut is a collection of 273 discourses, delivered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan during His last ten years of His life. The scripture is divided into 10 sections, based on the various villages in which the discourses were delivered. The sections are chronologically in order and are named as follows: Gadhada I, Sarangpur, Kariyani, Loya, Panchala, Gadhada II, Vartal, and Amdavad. Gadhada III and finally the additional Vachanamruts. Within each section, individual Vachanamruts are arranged in chronological order and are numbered sequentially.

The Vachanamrut is ‘Amrut’ in the form of the words of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. All devotees read it daily and illiterate listens to it daily, therefore, realize Atma-Paramatma, Brahma-Parabrahman, Akshar-Purushottam, and Swami-Narayan. That is by identifying one's self with Akshar and worshipping Purushottam, one attains the eternal, lustrous and divine Akshardham of Purushottam Narayan. It guides to strengthen dharma, gnan, vairagya, and bhakti coupled with the knowledge of God, that is, Ekantik dharma and by becoming free from desires and the influence of maya, one eternally remain in the service of Maharaj and attains eternal bliss. It serves to uplift, benefit and liberate all. It is read and elaborated upon daily in the Swaminarayan Mandirs, all over the world.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan describes in one of His many analogies about how to keep one's mind engaged in God. He states, “Consider, for example, pot of water was emptied at one place and same thing was repeated the next day and the next day, but one would not be able to make a pool of water. This is because the water kept on drying up, but on other hand if a tickle of water

were to flow continuously, a large pool of water would soon be formed. Therefore, while eating, drinking, walking, engaging in any activity whatsoever, whether pure or impure, in fact, at all the times, one should keep one's vrittis to God, by which one would in turn attains that abiding elevated spiritual state."

In another analogy He specifies, "From the time a satsangi enter the satsang fellowship, he should examine his mind by thinking, 'in the first year, my mind was like this; then it was like this. Previously, I had this much desire for God and this much for the worldly pleasures.' In this manner, should repeatedly reflect on his yearly total of desires and always strive to gradually, yet constantly eradicate all worldly desires that remains in his mind. If, however, he does not introspect in this manner and allows those desires to accumulate, then they will never be overcome. Like if one keeps using the credit card without making regular payments then one will reach a stage where it would be very difficult to do the full payments."

Shriji Maharaj even said in Vach. Gad I 1 and II 22 – "There is no spiritual Endeavour more difficult than to continuously engage one's mind on the form of God. The scriptures state that there is no greater attainment for a person whose mind's vritti is constantly focused on the form of God, because the form of God is like Chintamani, which gives one the desired fruits."

This says that since Vachanamrut is compiled in Shriji Maharaj's own words it can be easily said that it is another form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan therefore it too can give us the desired fruits. We can conclude that 'Amrut' which took Devas long time and with lots of efforts to acquire, after Samudra manthan (churning of the ocean - ref. In the Shrimad Bhagavat), we were given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, through Vachanamrut. Amrut means nectar, that if we drink it then we become eternal.

The Spiritual knowledge and revelations in the Vachanamrut are unique, divine and eternal. Its teaching is relevant in the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan when he gave out the discourses that are also relevant even today in our modern age and will also be so in the future.

Singing the glory of the Vachanamrut, Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami said, "To see the value in other scriptures rather than Vachanamrut is Moh."

Explaining this Gunatitanand Swami is trying to say that in the world there are different Dharma-Sampradaya establishers and acharyas, saints, bhaktas and Mahapurush wrote different spiritual scriptures according to their understandings, there will be some more written in the future, but what more could they write when whatever one requires to be gained, ultimate liberation by Purna Purushottam has been given in Vachanamrut, and is one and unique and authentic scripture which is never before written and never will be ever written. Vachanamrut's glory has been sung by many scholars and Ekantik Bhakta.

Gunatitanand Swami said, "Vachanamrut has essences of Four Vedas, Shatshastra and Eighteen Puranas. Shriji Maharaj has given profound Spiritual guidance for ultimate liberation which needs to be studied dedicatedly."

Bhagatiji Maharaj, also recommended the devotees to study carefully all the two hundred and sixty-two Vachanamruts thoroughly.

Shastriji Maharaj in his jivan charitra, said, "Vyasji was at peace after he finished writing Shrimad Bhagwat likewise the essence of all the scriptures are found in Vachanamrut, given to us by Shriji Maharaj, who has given us the solutions for our liberation, true characteristic of Shriji Maharaj and many more, which we could profoundly understand through a Satpurush's sermons only. We should wholeheartedly learn the method for eternal liberation from the Satpurush. In Vachanamrut there is Sarvopari gnan, and for that we should remain under Shriji Maharaj's shelter

Yogiji Maharaj, in his jivan chaitra said, "Study Swamini Vatos and Vachanamrut for eternal peace." Also said, "The constant mention of Limbdo and Dada Khachar's Darbar was illiterate's argument for not reading the Vachanamrut, but it contains essence of the four Vedas."

Pramukh Swami said, "Realize the importance of such a glorious scripture, everyone should read the Vachanamrut daily and study it deeply, also all should inspire others to read and study it, which is a great service to others. By, doing this Maharaj, Swami, Shastriji Maharaj, and Yogiji Maharaj will be pleased. One will also attain peace, bliss in life and the divine Akshardham of Maharaj."

Another unique thing about the Vachanamrut is that each Vachanamrut begins with an introductory paragraph taking the reader back in time to the exact environment in which the discourses were held, thereby mentally preparing the reader for the profound wisdom that is to come. They mention the date, the month, the year, the village, the location within the village, as well as the audience sitting in the assembly. At many instances, they even mentioned the time of the day and the direction Bhagwan Swaminarayan was seated. In many instances, they have even described the seat upon which He was seating as well as the dress and adornment of Bhagwan Swaminarayan at the time. Primarily, the reason for their meticulousness was that they were convinced of His divinity. They understood that the assembly was not an ordinary, worldly assembly, but a divine assembly presided by the Supreme God Himself.

From the scholarly point of view, this introductory paragraph adds a stamp of authenticity to the scripture. In the words of an eminent Gujarati scholar, Mr. Bhogilal Sandesara; “Among all these Scriptures (of Buddhism, Jainism, Ramanujacharya, Vallabhacharya and other acharyas) the position of the Vachanamrut is unique, because the discourses of Bhagwan Swaminarayan were compiled verbatim. There is reference to the place and time of the discourses; a note of the year, month and day; a description of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s garments and even the names of the people participating in the dialogue is mentioned.....thus ,there is no room for interpolation.”

If the introductory paragraph of the Vachanamrut renders the scripture unique, the method of imparting the spiritual wisdom is no less unique and divine.

Essay 2

In the Presence of Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami Maharaj: Devotional Programmes in Dubai

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the federation of seven emirates or kingdoms. Since its inception in 1971, the principles of tolerance and harmony of the founding fathers have guided its growth as a nation. The UAE is home to people of over 200 nationalities. In particular Hindus have resided in the UAE for decades and have contributed significantly to the economic progress of the country. They form the largest expatriate group in the country.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited UAE 1982, 1985, 1997 and 2001 and over the years BAPS devotees have faithfully gathered to conduct weekly Satsang assemblies. Their Satsang has been further nurtured by regular visits of Sadguru sadhus and other BAPS sadhus from India.

The following is the brief history of satsang in UAE leading to the Shilanyas Ceremony for the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Abu Dhabi and devotional programs. In 1975, just few years after the country’s independence, few haribhaktas, like Rajendrabhai Dave, Ramanikbhai Luhar, Harikrishabhai Amin, Hasmukhbhai Patel Gangarambhai Vinodbhai Jethwaand other devotees started the weekly satsang sabha in Dubai, with Pramukh Swami’s inspiration. Even though the Mandal was very small their hopes were very high. They wanted to invite Pramukh Swami for a visit. Bhagwandas Jethanand Bhatia of Sharjah helped Rajendrabhai Dave to obtain a VIP visa through His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi of Sharjah to facilitate Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s visit to UAE from 18th March to 25th March 1982. It was a historic day, March 18th, 1982, when the devotees, Bhagwandas Bhatia, Rajendrabhai Dave, Dineshbhai Thakkar, Rohitbhai P Patel and many other haribhaktos welcomed Harikrishna Maharaj and Swamishri at Sharjah International Airport. Swamishri was hosted at the home of P D Patel, Rohitbhai’s father, in Dubai and Khimjibhai Depala in Abu Dhabi. Inspired by Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s visit, devotees began weekly satsang sabha in Abu Dhabi. After 1982 many times Sadguru sadhus and Pramukh Swami visited UAE. On April 5th, 1997, Pramukh Swami visited Al Khawaneej, a desert area on the Dubai-Sharjah border where he prayed, “May peace prevail here and everywhere. May all regions of all countries grow greater love for each other. May all countries be free of internal enmity and prejudice towards each other and may they all progress in their own unique way. May a mandir be built in Abu Dhabi.” In 2001 Pramukh Swami and Mahant Swami visited once more. Mahant Swami went to a desert area and prayed for the fulfillment of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s prophecy of a mandir in the UAE. Then on 18th April 2019, Mahant Swami Maharaj visited UAE for the first stage of the mandir, that is to perform the Shilanyas (foundation stone-laying) ceremony in the presence of the government ministers and dignitaries and over 5000 devotees and well-wishers on the 27-acre BAPS mandir site at Abu Mureikha, Abu Dhabi.

During Mahant Swami Maharaj’s stay in Dubai many different types of devotional service, value of faith program was arranged from 21st to 26th April 2019. On the 21st April women’s day was celebrated. The evening assemblies from 22nd to 26th April were themed on values: Value of Harmony, Value of Service, Value of Faith and Value of Humility. The theme of the morning assembly on 26th April was Value of Gratitude.

Women’s day: 21st April.

In the evening, the UAE BAPS women’s wing celebrated women’s day by presenting a unique cultural program acknowledging the achievements and role women play in the society today. The program showcased the on-going commitment to women’s activities and matters of importance to women, as inspired by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj. The program lasted about 2 hours. Many promising figures and about 1000 women from all over the world were

present. Themed on the Value of Love, among the women from various communities and spiritual belief.

Value of Harmony: 22nd April.

Anand Swarup Swami spoke on the Value of Harmony. Thereafter, the invited guests addressed the audience in the present of Mahant Swami Maharaj. Shri S. M. Rao said, "What is harmony? Harmony is keeping in tune with everyone. We heard music in tune with the bhajans. Music is music when Tabla is in tune with the harmonium which in turn is in tune with the lyrics been sung. If you are out of tune it would be cacophony."

Shri Ramesh Ramakrishnan, philanthropist and Chairman of Transworld Group said, "I didn't have the privilege of meeting Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj, but today after having heard the talk a while back, it appears to be that I have a great connection with him. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the rulers of this great country for giving us the freedom of practicing our faith with other religions, thus highlighting UAE as global capital of Harmony."

Shri Harshad Mehta, Veteran Diamond businessman said that he never dreamt, in past 50 years that there would ever be a mandir in UAE. He said, "I would like to share with you that there 11 major religion and all believe in ten major values. When I talked with the Swamis here, I hear that their object for temple is to inspire people to follow values and bring harmony. UAE is known for values. I pray to all that follow your religion rigorously, but also balance the value system with your religion. No one should be hurt by our speech and actions. We are here to spread the value of harmony."

Value of Service: 23rd April.

Aksharvatsal Swami spoke in Hindi about the value of service in the evening assembly.

Shri Surendra Singh Kandhari, Chairman of Guru Nanak Darbar (Gurudwara) in Dubai and renowned industrialist, said, "The subject today is 'Value of Service'. The Swamiji earlier spoke so much about service and seva that I cannot add much to what he said, but I believe that if one does not do seva selflessly then one will not get its fruits. Seva is not just giving money or food. Seva is bringing happiness to people. If you smile at your neighbor and make him happy, that is also seva. You are giving happiness to this world you are making this world a better place." He then continued, "I always say Bhagwan has given us two hands. With one you serve others and with the other you earn your leaving. The one to serve others is the only thing which can take us to moksha. If you want to go to heaven, you have to do seva. If you don't do seva, you can never ever think of attaining God Almighty's grace and blessings. I would say that everybody should make one commitment, that every day I will make at least one person happy. That will make this place a much better place to live."

Jitendra Vaidya, CEO of Prime Four Inspection, shared his thoughts on today's value of service. "Seva, is a Sanskrit word. It means doing work with your heart and mind, but not taking anything in return. Serve your parents, serve the poor, elderly, mother cow and all animals. We can build a society and serve others. To serve others is our duty. When you take something after doing seva, it is still seva. When you have a sweeper, domestic helper or an office worker, though he may not be an expert his services should be considered to be seva and one should value his seva because it makes one's life better. Whatever we do, our child observes us the most and his observation becomes his impressions. If you wish your child to serve you and also serve others, then it is necessary that you should serve too."

Value of Faith: 24th April.

In the evening assembly Vivekjivan Swami spoke in English about the Value of Faith.

Shri Yogesh Mehta, CEO of Petrochem Middle East (PME) said, "Three days ago, when Mahant Swamiji came to my home, I don't know but my home is now the home of God. I now carefully tread in my home. I am lucky but let me tell you about myself with a view to show to you how the influence of the Swaminarayan Dharma came to a mere mortal like me. My name is Yogi, which came due to my father who was devout Swaminarayan. He took me to Yogiji Maharaj when I was a baby and Yogiji Maharaj said, "Give him my name." Hence my name is Yogi. Somehow after that I floated away from the Sampradaya. I forgot that I am a Swaminarayan. You humans are humans and we lose our way. After seeing the mandir Shilanyas arrangements I felt that though I

am corporate man I could not have managed and arranged it. The discipline and the entire smooth management you saw during the Shilanyas ceremony- that is the Swaminarayan Dharma. Therefore, I stand here very, very humbly, say that I am proud that I am a Swaminarayan, a recent one. I think kanthi is a magic wand. Whenever you have an issue, you just touch it with your hand and chant Swaminarayan mantra and see how peaceful you become and hopefully all your prayers will be answered. I am proud and am very eager to have this temple in the UAE. People go to temple to find salvation, spiritualism, peace and happiness. I can't really thank enough the people of Swaminarayan Dharma. The most iconic and most modern temple is coming to UAE."

Shri Dharmesh Patel said, "There are two things I observed and experienced during the Shilanyas ceremony. I would say that one aspect was what we all saw and quantified, and another aspect was beyond the realm of humans. As a professional, I can't understand as to how meticulously whole event was planned. There was quantity and quality that was seen in the entire event and all that the blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj. The unsung heroes, the volunteers, have become a trademark, the brand name of BAPS. Please give a big round of applause to the volunteers. We will never be able to thank them enough for their services. I can't describe how our Indian Culture, Sanatan Dharma, for the Shilanyas ceremony was beautifully executed and systematically explained to all of us, and now we all know the importance of Khat Mahurat. During the ceremony something happening to me and I could not figure it out. The teaching of my Guru dev, Sri Sri Ravishankar came to my mind that when you have an intention of doing something good for humanity, the entire nature will join forces to support you and that's what experienced during the Shilanyas ceremony. I experienced emotions that day. There was something strange happening in the environment. Later on, I figured out, yes, there was love flowing, blessings been poured and raining, and I found connection between the two. When the mantras were being chanted and when I felt that wow factor coming. I saw Mahant Swami MAHARAJ'S face was smiling; the wider the smile the more blessings were coming down us. As Swamiji, said, one should have faith and we should continue prayers. After Shilanyas, gurudev Sri Sri Ravishankar called me and asked how did the ceremony went? I told him how overwhelming experience it was. It felt good because we were creating history. Gurudev said that this is to be taken much more forward. This mandir will not only be for Swaminarayan and Indians, but for the entire creation.

This way unexpectedly, whoever who had opportunity to attend the Shilanyas ceremony had developed some sort of faith in god or BAPS Sampradaya.

In the evening satsang assembly, Atmaswarup Swami elaborated in English on the Value of Humility.

Dr. Adel Hassan Mohammed Ahmed, Lawyer and Specialist in health, safety, and security management, said, "Namaskar and Jai Swaminarayan to everyone. It is my pleasure to be with you and to be accepted as one of the volunteers here. I don't consider myself as a guest, I am one with the BAPS, I have different occasions seen people coming together, small groups or big groups, and I have tried to link most of the things I have seen here in front of me to what I believe in as an Arab or as a Muslim. We have most of the values that I am seeing here today. I heard Swamiji talk about humbleness and I linked that to Sheikh Zayed, the founder of the UAE. Once, he was asked, 'Why do you allow people come to your country and start their business and lives?' He replied, 'The land is from God. Why should we stop people from coming to this land?' This is our school of thought, and I have seen lots of these values within this BAPS community." In his speech Value of Humility was very obvious and high regard for BAPS community and their belief.

Shri Pankajbha Gupta, CO-Founder and CEO of Gulf Islamic Investment, said, "I highlighted the very important aspect of the BAPS community, which I think is reflected in every volunteer, the BAPS's organization management and commitment. I told my son that if you ever want to see an act of selflessness, commitment and passion, go to any event or setup of BAPS. You will find volunteers working with their heart and wit all humility. They don't think about which profession they have or which family they belong to does not affect them. When they come to serving, they believe BAPS as one family. I spend much time in Saudi, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and other parts. Ninety-nine percent of my dealings and communications with the senior people in these countries. In our conversation, at least once the topic of BAPS mandir would come up, and I tell them that what I see in BAPS is a reflection of Indian culture. It believes in harmony, peace and love."

P. V. Shaheen, advocate and managing partner of Goodwill Law Corporation, quoted, Mahatma Gandhi, "A common form of worship and common place of worship is a necessity of

humanity.” He showed his humanity by humbly offering his lifetime service for BAPS mandir, if ever they need any legal service for free.

Value of Gratitude: 26th April (Friday)

The morning satsang assembly, themed on the Value of Gratitude, was held from 9:00 to 12:00. Brahmavihari Swami elaborated in English upon the Value of Gratitude and acknowledge the services and generosity of the royalty, dignitaries and BAPS volunteers. Thereafter, the stage guest addressed the assembly.

Shri Mahendrabhai Asher, Senior most CA and founder and Former Chairman of the Dubai chapter of the Law Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, said, “I came to Dubai in 1971 and at that time there was a Haveli where we gathered and prayed. We had inner wish that how much better would it be to have a larger place of worship. Now we can say that we will get a complete temple built here. I must thank Pramukh Swami Maharaj for that, because it was God’s and Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s wish for the mandir to be built in the UAE.”

Nazeem Al Kudsi, businessman, “Jai Swaminarayan. By the grace of my guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj I feel fortunate today to share with you a few thoughts of gratitude. Gratitude for me is a personal journey. I completed 30 years of government service. Little I know that God had better plan for me. I went to Amdavad in 2012 and visited BAPS temple (Akshardham). The story of the Swaminarayan temple in Abu Dhabi is the most powerful story for us living in this region. At the most basic level, it was and is a beautiful example of ‘karma yoga’ of how people of community across all walks of life work towards a specific goal. I tell my friends, family and acquaintances, from outside your community, there is a great lesson to learn from the Swaminarayan: how they work together and how in the face of many, many technical difficulties they perceive the grace of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. He is always present in every seconds of this journey. I am grateful to be a small part of this effort. I am grateful to God to have chosen me to go to India in that year 2012 and be in the presence of Pramukh Swami and had his darshan. My wish is to be a simple man who will clean the Abu Dhabi temple.”

Shri Venkatesh, Chairman of the Dubai chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and co-founder of the Dubai Tamil Family Association, said, “It is not happiness that brings gratitude, but it is gratitude that brings happiness. The mandir will be a precious gift. At the juncture, I thank His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and all the rulers of this great nation and also His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj for this great step of bringing a temple into an Arabian land.”

Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami.

“All the speakers on the stage expressed their kudos to the volunteers, so we should appreciate them as much as possible. They stood in the scorching heat performing their parking and security duties, offering seva in the kitchen and making the dining arrangements. For days and nights all male and female, volunteers have performed seva with love and to please Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Mahant Swami Maharaj.”

Shri Vipul, Consul General of India, said, “The temple will really be timeless and become a symbol of peace and harmony in the world. This temple will also be enduring symbol of the India-UAE friendship. It will be a symbol of the contributions we Indians have made to the UAE and will also be a symbol of the love and affection that the rulers of the UAE have shown towards Indians. When the temple will come up, it will be a great place to show that humanity is one.”

Mahant Swami Maharaj.

Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the final assembly themed on the Value of Gratitude. He appreciated the services and efforts of all. He said, “All the speakers praised the volunteers’ efforts and truly they have strived day and night. Outsiders observed their seva and were amazed. They never thought that such seva could be possible. All the stage guests spoke from their heart. They all spoke honestly. The mandir is yet to be constructed, but prior to that it has become visible, because of everyone’s feelings the mandir is being seen.” “The Swamis who spoke have imbibed what they said. Ishwarcharan Swami is like my soul. He handles everything, though he does not appear to be in the forefront. He is fully realized in spiritual, jnan and is totally blessed by Bapa. Brahmavihari Swami has brought everyone together and created a feeling of samp, togetherness and harmony. A premium level of samp has been created.

What is samp? To give u one's own willfulness and not demand from others. One should not think I will do something only if the other person does it. Instead, one should think about what one should do; what type of thoughts one should have and how one should talk, walk and behave. This is samp. And it is being seen here.

Swamibapa's and Yogibapa's maxim was samp, suhrudbhav, and ekta. Congratulations to all. In this way mandir will be accomplished."

In conclusion all the devotional programs related that if one has harmony, service, faith, humility and gratitude then no task would be a challenge, and of course would easily earn Shriji Maharaj's and Mahant Swami Maharaj's rajipo."

Essay 3

Vachanamrut, a Unique Scripture: An Invaluable Archive of the Spiritual and Social Life of Gujarat

The Vachanamrut or the nectarine discourses of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the most sacred and foundational scripture of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. It contains the profound wisdom of the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahma sutras, Bhagwad Gita, BhagavatPurana, Dharma shastras like Yagnavalkya Smruti, Vidurniti, and epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharat.¹ It is the essence of ancient Indian wisdom given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and compiled by His four contemporary scholarly-sadhus who were known for their asceticism and scholarship in Sanskrit, besides their devotion to Him. In fact every statement of the Master is packed with and based on His in-depth religious knowledge, spiritual insights and practical experience. It contains practical and philosophical answers to the sincere enquiries of all types of aspirants regarding life in this world and the life hereafter.

The Vachanamrut is not only a sacred shastra in the Sampradaya, but a shastra of every day study. All the literate followers read it daily and the illiterate listen to at least a page daily. It is read and elaborated upon daily in the Swaminarayan mandirs the world over. It is a landmark shastra, philosophically and in all other aspects. It is the first modern Gujarati prose work which the noted Gujarati critic and poet, Shri Uma Shankar Joshi, acclaimed as the very pinnacle of Gujarati prose.

The Vachanamrut, a compilation of 273 spiritual discourses, is divided into 10 sections. The discourses were delivered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the last decade of His life, between 1819 and 1829 CE in Gujarati. Its simplicity of diction and style invariably reminds one of our ancient Upanishads. They were mostly delivered in ashram-like ambience in secluded places like Gadhada, Sarangpur, Kariyani, Loya, Panchala, Vartal, Ashlali, and Jetalpur.

The Vachanamrut is written in Gujarati, since Bhagwan Swaminarayan delivered his discourses in Gujarati. As a written language, Gujarati was evolving and continued to do so until the end of the 19th century.

In 1865, the famed Gujarati poet Narmada Shankar Dave, popularly known as Kavi Narmad, systematized Gujarati grammar. This led him to write the gist of the Iliad in good Gujarati prose in 1870. The year 1887 witnessed the first classical novel, Saraswatichandra by Govardhanram Tripathi, in accurate Gujarati. From this we glean that the Vachanamrut's linguistic excellence was far ahead of its time.

Not surprisingly, scholars of modern Gujarati have lauded the shastra's prose.

The renowned Gujarati litterateur, Umashankar Joshi, eruditely scrutinized the intricate modes of expression used by Shriji Maharaj in the Vachanamrut, which he detailed in Swaminarayan Sant Sahitya. He eulogizes its unique lingual excellence and contribution to Gujarati literature of the early 19th century, "Vachanamrut is a pinnacle of Gujarati prose's excellence" (Chaudhary 1981:14).

Chandravadan C. Mehta, another renowned scholar of Gujarati literature, lauded the Vachanamrut, especially its contribution in enriching Gujarati grammar, "Extinct grammatical expressions have been revived and can be read throughout the Vachanamrut, such as the absolute locative – the sati-saptami of Sanskrit: "Pachhi Nāradji gānvidyā sheekhavtā havā ane Bhagwān āgal gātā havā" (Gadhada I 4). Similarly, some verbs and nouns have been used in a unique manner, without obstructing the meaning. Bhagwan Swaminarayan's contribution in enriching the language is substantial. Mehta further considers the following usages and expressions as novel:

- Potānā swarupne jovāno ādar karyo ane na dithu? (Gadhada I 20). “It is noteworthy how well the word ādar has been used here.”(When has he attempted and failed to see him?)
- Bhagwānno nishchay ane mahātmya rupi jene khatāi chadi hoi (Gadhada I-24).(when one has developed ‘sourness’ in the form of faith in God and an understanding of his glory)
- Ashtāng yogne sādhave karine chittno nirodh (Gadhada I 25). (“The chitt is controlled by mastering Ashtang-yoga, similarly, the chitt can also be controlled by focusing on the form of God.”)
- Samjanne kefe karine chhaki pan javu nahi (Gadhada I 25)(“He should not get carried away in the elation of this understanding. Nor should he feel unfulfilled.”)
- Dhruvajie Bhagwānni stuti karvā māndi, tyāre Vedādiknā arthni saheje sfurti thai (Gadhada I 29). (“The five-year-old Dhruvaji, to whom the meaning of the Vedas and other shastras were spontaneously revealed when he began to utter the praises of God.”)

Eminent scholars of Gujarati literature have commented on the Vachanamrut’s language:

“In this manner one comes across words enriching Gujarati prose on every page of the whole text... He [Bhagwan Swaminarayan] has explained the most abstruse concepts of spiritual, yoga, meditation and tapas in the most simple and straightforward sentences in the Vachanamrut... His statements have the weight of experience... There are no ambiguous statements, nor complicated constructions which are not understandable. There are only sayings which easily penetrate the heart of the sympathetic reader. This is Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s important contribution to Gujarati prose.”

- Chandravadan Mehta

“Vachanamrut is a pinnacle of Gujarati prose’s excellence.” - Umashankar Joshi

“The Vachanamrut’s language is markedly to the point, concise, depicting only one meaning, understandable by those less educated, with simple words and straightforward sentences and construction and, where necessary, using examples to clarify meanings.”

- Kishorelal Mashruwala (1922:125)

“The collection of the Vachanamruts of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is a jewel of the Gujarati language.” - Kishorelal Mashruwala (1981:84)

“Even from the viewpoint of linguistic textbooks the Vachanamrut is important. From the manner in which the language has been voiced by Shriji Maharaj, in the same manner its linguistic form has been preserved. Hence, it is the most supreme piece of Gujarati prose of a hundred and fifty years ago.”

- Arunodaya Jani (in Chaudhary, 1981:91)

“According to all the critics, the book [Vachanamrut] is the finest specimen of Gujarati prose. The sentences are well-balanced and the style compact and lucid. It has the local color of Saurashtra.”

- K.K. Datta, historian, A Comprehensive History of India (XI 1985:848)

Besides all these scholars, poets and lawyers our Gunatit gurus too encourage to read Vachanamrut daily. Yogibapa wrote in his blessing in Gujarati edition of the Vachanamrut, “One who will drink this Amrut will be graced with a seat next to Maharaj.” “One who will read the Vachanamrut 108 times will be graced with the darshan of Shriji Maharaj.”

Pramukh Swami Maharaj said, “We should read the Vachanamrut even if we do not understand it. Bhawan’s words are like viable seeds; someday they are bound to sprout.”

Similar message is passed on by our pragat guru Mahant Swami Maharaj, “Just as there is no need to bathe elsewhere for spiritual purity after bathing in river Ganga, similarly after reading the Vachanamrut, nothing else remains to be read.”

Shri H.T. Dave, the renowned BAPS scholar who first translated the Gujarati Vachanamrut into English, elucidated the scope of the Vachanamrut, “The Vachanamrut supremely elucidates true Vedantic understanding, discusses the gist of the four Veda, expounds on the twelve Vedic Mahavakyas, discusses the interdependences of Sankhya, Yoga, Vedant and Panchratra texts, describes the necessity of Sankhyanishtha and Yognishtha to attain Atma realization, and reveals that on this earth the constant manifestation of the God-realized Satpurush who boosts the Bhagwat dharma which is the gateway to Moksha and is the spiritual guide for the devotees.