

# *Akshar Purushottam Upāsanā*

*As Propounded by  
Bhagwan Swāminārāyan*

Draft Version



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# AKSHAR PURUSHOTTAM UPĀSANĀ

AS PROPOUNDED BY  
BHAGWAN SWĀMINĀRĀYAN

## 1. UPĀSANĀ

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The Sanskrit word *upāsanā* is a compound of two words: *upa* – meaning near; and *āsanam* – meaning to sit. Thus, *upāsanā* is the manner in which an aspirant endeavours spiritually to forever reserve a seat near God. In simple terms, it is one's way of understanding God, the mode in which one offers devotion to Him.

It is essential for all followers of the *Sampradāya* to have a clear concept of *upāsanā*. An attempt has therefore been made in this book to explain, in easy-to-understand language, *upāsanā* as propounded by Lord Swāminārāyan.

We can confidently say – on the basis of the words of Lord Swāminārāyan Himself, by the assertions of the sādhus who were privileged to have personal contact with Him, and finally by the evidence based on the experience of the God-realised

Saints – that Shāstriji Mahārāj (Swāmishri Yagnapurushdāsji) had a clear concept of true *upāsanā*, and was the pioneer in propagating it. Following in the footsteps of Shāstriji Mahārāj, the Gurus in the spiritual hierarchy and their disciples have spread the message of this pure *upāsanā* throughout the world.

### 1.1 IMPORTANCE OF UPĀSANĀ

All aspirants are striving to attain *Brahmabhāva* through *vrata* (vows), *tapa* (austerities), *yagna* (sacrifices), *dān* (alms) and *Satsang* (association with sādhus and religious men). By such religious activities, followers on the spiritual path are trying to attain ultimate salvation and liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. To achieve this, *upāsanā* is absolutely indispensable.

Shriji Mahārāj (Lord Swāminārāyan) states in the *Vachanāmritam*: “Those who attain perfection and reach the ultimate blissful state, do so because of their *upāsanā* to God in human form – who manifests on earth for the redemption of the *jivas*. Therefore one should discard all other *sādhana*s and hold fast to this one *sādhana* – *upāsanā* – offering devotion to the personal God before him.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/56]

Shriji Mahārāj is quite emphatic about the impossibility of achieving *ātmajñān* or *Brahmajñān* in the absence of *upāsanā*. He says: “Without *upāsanā* of God and His meditational worship, it is impossible to realise one’s own *ātman*, and consequently the *Paramātman* seated within the *ātman*. It is only with such *upāsanā* that one attains such realisation. However, a desire to realise *ātman*, and *Paramātman* seated within the *ātman*, without offering such *upāsanā*, is like endeavouring to taste the sky. Those *Sāmkhya* and *Yoga* scriptures based on atheistic beliefs may have referred to such realisation of the *ātman*, however I have not come across anyone who has realised the *ātman* without offering devotion to God. Neither does such a claim tally with My yogic or intuitional experience. Therefore such references whenever they appear in the scriptures, are

misleading and false.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/36]

Shriji Mahārāj also says: “But when death, which is like an ocean, is to be overcome, it requires the help of *upāsanā* of God – even for a devotee who may have developed *ātmanishthā*. One should therefore profoundly learn and tread the path of *upāsanā*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/61]

*Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi says: “*Moksha* – ultimate redemption – can be attained only through *upāsanā*. *Dharma*, *vairāgya* and *ātmanishthā* cannot lead to *moksha*.” [Swāmini Vātu V/136]

Furthermore, he says: “Our greatness is due to *upāsanā*. One may falter in the observance of the tenets of *dharma* or in other forms of *sādhana*. But if one is steadfast in *upāsanā*, one never suffers a setback.” [Swāmini Vātu V/70]

“A devotee with unflinching *upāsanā* remains undisturbed even in the face of the heaviest odds. He is aware that even after death, he has a sure place in God’s divine abode.” [Swāmini Vātu I/56]

### 1.2 WHAT IS UPĀSANĀ?

Shriji Mahārāj accepts *jiva*, *Ishwar*, *māyā*, *Brahman* and *Parabrahman*,<sup>1</sup> as distinct and eternal.

*Parabrahman* is *Purushottam Nārāyan* – the Lord of *Akshardhām*, Sahajānand Swāmi – otherwise known as Shriji Mahārāj or Lord Swāminārāyan. Gunātītānand Swāmi is *Aksharbrahman*. Meditating on *Aksharbrahman* culminates in one becoming *Brahmarup* – brahmanised.<sup>2</sup> In this state, one humbly serves the Lord with *Swāmi-sevak bhāva* – as a servant serves his master. This constitutes the basic principle of *upāsanā* as preached by Shriji Mahārāj.<sup>3</sup>

Explaining who exactly is to be worshipped and the mode of worship, Shriji Mahārāj says: “I have accepted the view of Shri Rāmānujāchārya who holds *Purushottam* as transcending both *kshar jivas* and *Akshar*. Lord *Purushottam* is therefore the

(1) Vachanāmritams Gadhadā I/7, Gadhadā III/10

(2) Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/31

(3) Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/3

form to be offered *upāsanā*.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 14]

Continuing further, He elaborates: “Within the divine light that transcends everything... Nārāyan – *Purushottam Bhagwān* – is seated on a divine pedestal. Around this divine pedestal are seated the *muktas* – released souls, infinite in number, who enjoy the divine *darshan* of Nārāyan. I always have the vision of this Nārāyan surrounded by the released souls. Light emanates from the person of Nārāyan in great brilliance. At times, it appears as if this divine light is superimposed upon the divine form of Nārāyan and His released souls, and obstructs the divine *darshan* of Nārāyan and the released souls. Such an obstruction in the *darshan* of Nārāyan along with His divine assembly greatly pains Me. Only when I see the divine form of Nārāyan do I rejoice. This is My concept of *upāsanā*.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 14]

Citing His own example, Shriji Mahārāj has emphasised the understanding to be cultivated by a *sādhak* in this *Vachanāmritam*, and clarified the importance of firmness in *upāsanā*. He clearly points out:

- (1) Transcending all is immense light. At the centre of the light is *Purushottam Nārāyan*.
- (2) *Purushottam Nārāyan* is *divya* – divine.
- (3) Shriji Mahārāj is not attracted to the immense light, but becomes extremely pleased only at the *darshan* of the Lord at the centre. In other words He has an innate faith that God is *sākār* – always with form.
- (4) God, His divine abode and His *muktas* are eternal.
- (5) Nārāyan’s *darshan* should be accompanied by the *darshan* of the *muktas* in the divine assembly. That is to say, the Lord should be worshipped along with His *Bhakta*.

*Vachanāmritam* contains numerous references, wherein Shriji Mahārāj has stressed the importance of clearly understanding *upāsanā* to develop firm faith in God. Faith implies understanding that:

- (1) God is the all-doer – *sarva kartā*.

(2) He always has a divine form – *divya sākār*.

(3) He is supreme and transcends all – *sarvopari*.

(4) He is always present in human form – *pragat*.

In absence of such faith, an aspirant cannot attain *Akshardhām* – the Lord’s divine abode. Let us now turn, in the following pages, to these four facets of faith.



## 2. KARTĀ GOD AS THE ALL-DOER

### 2.1 HOW IS GOD KARTĀ?

*Parabrahman Paramātmā* is *sarva kartā* – the all-doer. Unless willed by Him, nobody can stir even a dry leaf. To all living beings, He rewards the fruits of their *karmas* – actions. Though He does not play an immediate role in creating, sustaining or dissolving the universe, He is the ultimate cause of all causes.

ANTAH PRAVISHTAHA SHĀSTĀ JANĀNĀM SARVĀTMA æ

Dwelling within the ātman of all the Jivas, the Lord controls them.

[Taittiriyaṛanyakam III/11:1-12]

In the way God governs all living beings, He also governs the demigods and supervises their actions, controlling them according to His will. By His *ichhāshakti*, *kriyāshakti* and

*jnānshakti*, He inspires the appropriate *shakti* in the *jivas*. God has the power to merge *māyā*. And even while supporting *Akshar*, He has the power to merge *Akshar*. God possesses *kartum*, *akartum* and *anyathākartum shakti*. A dedicated seeker should therefore realise God as the all-doer and seek refuge in Him.

Shriji Mahārāj has said: “God – the primordial cause of everything – even though He looks like a human being, possesses the potential power to create millions of macrocosms from His divine form and also the power to merge them into Himself... Therefore, only the wise know that although God appears in human form now, He is the primordial cause and the all-doer with infinite potential powers.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 2]

“Similarly, *Parmeshwar*, so long as He wishes, allows the influence of *desh*, *kāla*, *karma*, etc., to prevail. But the moment He desires to check their working, they lose all their power. As such, it is *Parmeshwar* the Almighty who is the controller and doer of everything.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/21]

### 2.2 SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ – THE ALL-DOER

*Parabrahman Purushottam Nārāyan*, the all-doer, is Shriji Mahārāj Himself. This point has been clearly brought out in a number of *Vachanāmritams* by Shriji Mahārāj Himself. It has also been reiterated in other literature of the *Sampradāya* in these words... “This very manifestation”, “Visible before you in human form”, “The God who accepts your devotion”, “God who is *pragat* – present before you.” The following extracts affirm this point:

“If God, however, has no form, how can He be credited with the powers of doership? He is the ultimate cause of the evolution of millions of macrocosms, and is always seated in His divine abode, *Akshardhām*, like the king of kings, and is *pratyaksh* – visible here before you.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/35]

“Again, when I reverted without, I found that I was the all-



doer. Millions of macrocosms are evolved, sustained and destroyed only by My power. The infinite number of *Shivas*, *Brahmas*, *Vaikunths*, *Goloks* residing in the infinite number of macrocosms and the divine *Brahmapur* become illuminated only by My divine light *Sat-Chit-Ānand*. I am the transcendental highest. I, with My divine power, can move millions of macrocosms by a mere touch. Millions of suns and moons receive light from My divine light.” [Vachanāmritam Amdāvād II/4]

Shriji Mahārāj says in Nishkulānand Swāmi’s *Bhaktachintāmani*:

VALI KAHU EK VĀRTĀ, SARVE KIDHU ĀPANU THĀY CHHE;  
SUKH DUKH VALI JAY PARĀJAY, YATKINCHIT JE KAHEVĀY CHHE.  
JE JE ĀPANANE NAV GAME, TE JIVA KEM SHAKE KARI;  
JUO SARVE JAKTAMĀ, KON SHAKE CHHE FEL ĀCHARI.  
...TE MĀTE TAME SĀMBHALO, SATSANGI SAHU NARNĀR;  
JE JE THĀY CHHE JAKTAMĀ, TENO BIJO NATHI KARNĀR.

Let Me give you an account of the divine saga. Whatever happens is solely due to Me.

Pleasure or pain, victory or defeat, call it what you will.

No one can do whatever I disapprove.

Nor can anybody in the wide world indulge in wanton behaviour.

Listen all male and female *Satsangis*,

Whatever happens under the sun is not done by anyone else.

[Bhaktachintāmani 76]

MĀRU DHĀRYU ASATYA SATYA THĀY CHHE,  
SAMARATH MĀRU NĀM SAHI;  
MĀRI DRUSHTI E JAKTA UPAJE SHAME, ANEK RUPE MĀYĀ THAI...

I am the omnipotent. As I wish, the untruth turns into truth.

With My look, the earth is created and dissolved, and *māyā* pervades in many forms.

[Bhaktachintāmani 68]

Shriji Mahārāj succinctly explains His doership in the *kirtan* “*Bolyā Shri Hari re...*”:

JIVA ISHWAR TANO RE, MĀYĀ KĀLA PURUSH PRADHĀN;  
SAUNE VASH KARU RE, SAUNO PRERAK HU BHAGWĀN.  
AGANIT VISHWANI RE, UTPATTI PĀLAN PRALAY THĀY;  
MĀRI MARJI VINĀ RE, KOITHI TARANU NAV TODĀY.

The inspirer of *jiva*, *Ishwara*, *māyā*, *kāla*, *Purush*, *Pradhān*

I control them all. I am the Lord.

I create, sustain and dissolve countless worlds.

Without my will, no one can pluck even a blade of grass.

[*Sadguru* Premānand Swāmi]

### 2.3 NECESSITY OF KNOWING GOD AS THE ALL-DOER

The paramount *sāadhanā* for the redemption of the *jiva* is to know God as the all-doer. Shriji Mahārāj says: “Only the knowledge and understanding of the absolute doership of God can bring total redemption.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/21]

“Redemption from the bondage of *māyā* is attained only when one realises that Shri Krishna who manifests before one in human form, is the absolute and all-doer. But *kāla*, *karma* and *māyā* have no such doership to supersede the powers of God. The realisation of this absolute doership of God is the only means of final redemption... Again, one who does not recognise the all-doership of God is the greatest of all sinners in as much as he imposes such doership upon *kāla*, *karma*, etc. Such atheists should be totally avoided.” [Vachanāmritam Kāriyāni 10]

Furthermore, “When one does not recognise God as the all-doer and assigns doership to *kāla*, *karma*, *māyā* or *swabhāv*, he is said to have challenged the authority of God.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 2]

Therefore a true devotee must: “...realise that this God in human form is unlike and beyond *kāla*, *karma*, *swabhāv*, *māyā* and *Purush*, is their controller, is the overall doer, and in spite of His doership – is beyond their influence.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/62]

A devotee can become fearless only by seeking complete refuge in *Purna Purushottam* Lord Swāminārāyan. If he is convinced that whatever happens in this world is God’s doing, he will not fear any demigod or goddess, *mantra*, *tantra* or *jantra*. Only such a fearless state leads one to *Brahman*. By his

steadfast conviction of God's doership, a devotee remains unaffected by happiness or misery.

*Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi observes: "If someone happens to come rushing in a violent rage, the devotee should still understand that whatever happens is as willed by my Lord. Without His will, nobody can move even a leaf." [Swāmini Vātu I/88]

By firm conviction of the omnipotence and all-doership of God, the devotee is able to abide by all His commands. He realises God's infinite glory and progresses on the spiritual path, ultimately attaining *Ekāntik bhāva*. In adversity, a devotee may fail to observe some minor religious tenets, but his conviction saves him from becoming disheartened. As a matter of fact, on the spiritual path, doubts such as, 'Will I be redeemed or not?' act as obstructions. It is therefore of utmost importance to have unflinching conviction of God's doership, as it is a fundamental principle of *upāsanā*.



## 3. SĀKĀR GOD WITH FORM

### 3.1 LIKING FOR SĀKĀR

Earlier, we have seen in the *upāsanā* explained by Shriji Mahārāj, that He is disinterested in the divine light. The aspirant should not merely stop at this stage. Shriji Mahārāj has clearly shown His liking for *sākār* – that God is with a form [Vachanāmritam Loyā 14] as opposed to *nirākār* – the notion that God is formless.

He clearly states His liking for the divine form of the Lord: "I quite agree with you." – referring to the sādhus talking about Rāmānujāchārya accepting God as being with a divine form. [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/71]

Speaking about His innate nature, Shriji Mahārāj says:

“Even the doctrine of *Advaita Vedānta* cannot dislodge Me from My conviction that God always possesses a divine form.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/39]

Shriji Mahārāj also explains the reason behind His firm faith in the divine form: “I have narrated this esoteric spiritual truth [of the divine form of God] as personally seen by Me, and therefore there is not an iota of untruth in it.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/64]

Since Shriji Mahārāj has a strong inclination for the divine form of God, He truly likes a devotee who worships the divine form of God. [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/30]

Shriji Mahārāj clarifies this point: “If one realises that God and His brahmanised Saint are at present manifest on earth in the same divine form as they are in their abode at the end of *ātyantik pralay*, his knowledge will never fail him even if he reads scriptures composed by pseudo-Vedāntins describing God as *nirākār* – impersonal... To him, God in human form before him is the Ultimate Reality and the final cause of the cosmic evolution – without whose will, even the smallest leaf cannot stir. A devotee with such understanding is dear to Me.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/37]

In Shriji Mahārāj’s eyes, only an aspirant who has faith in the divine form of God is a genuine devotee: “*Upāsana*” connotes a specific understanding that God is always *sākār* – with form. Even when a devotee is brahmanised, in such a high spiritual state, he still indomitably upholds this truth. Even if he hears scriptures defining God as having no form, he stubbornly adheres to his belief. Such a devotee is called a true *upāsak*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/40]

“If he does not so realise God as *sākār*, then he cannot be said to be a true *upāsak*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/35]

Therefore, “One should drive out the notion that God is formless.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/71]

These precise words of Shriji Mahārāj make it absolutely clear that He Himself has unshakable faith in the divine form of God, as well as love for those who accept such a belief.

Shriji Mahārāj has deep faith in the Lord’s form. He also wishes His followers to share the same faith, so that they may be freed from all sins and attain salvation. To avail of these double blessings, He instructs all followers to have faith in the divine form. He assures them: “The belief that God is *sākār* elevates the devotee to such a high status, that even if he were to unknowingly commit a sin, it would not dislodge him from the spiritual path. He would be redeemed of his sins by the grace of God and ultimately attain God... Therefore, a devotee should have invincible conviction that God has a divine form, and with such understanding he should engage himself in His devotion. This is My holy order. Please resolutely hold fast to this conviction.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/39]

A follower in a premature stage may not have firm faith in the divine form of God. To protect him from being influenced by the precepts of formlessness, Shriji Mahārāj cautions: “Scriptures which do not describe God as having a divine form and which do not recognise His various incarnations but support the *Shuddha Vedānta* theory of Absolute *Nirākār Brahman*, should not be read, studied or heard – irrespective of whether they are composed by the learned or not.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 6]

Shriji Mahārāj has also forbidden one to associate with *shushka Vedāntins* as they believe God as *nirākār*.<sup>1</sup>

In all these spiritual dialogues, Shriji Mahārāj has clearly stated His liking for the divine form of God. At the same time, He has also expressed His dislike for the concept that God is *nirākār*. He says: “I just heard some portion of the philosophy preached by the *shushka jñānis* – *Vedāntins* – and was engulfed in this disturbed mood”. In the disturbed mood, the turban on His head had become loose yet He was not conscious of it. For some moments, He was in such a sorry state that tears began to flow from His eyes. [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/19]

(1) Vachanāmritams Gadhadā I/48, II/18, II/19, III/36

### 3.2 DISADVANTAGES OF UNDERSTANDING GOD AS NIRĀKĀR

There are many references in the *Vachanāmritam* supporting *sāṅkār* and refuting *nirākār*. A few excerpts will suffice to clarify this. To treat God as *nirākār* amounts to negating the very form of God, who is to be worshipped and meditated upon. Shriji Mahārāj therefore warns: “One who believes God as formless and abstract becomes the worst sinner, even worse than one who has committed the five great sins.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/39]

“One who believes that God is formless, is never forgiven for this fault, as out of all faults, this fault is the most irredeemable.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/71]

“God has a divine form, divine limbs... If one describes Him as formless, it amounts to deriding Him... And one who offers worship to God with sandalpaste, flowers, etc., yet questions His authority, commits blasphemy.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 2]

“If God is taken to be formless, it amounts to an irredeemable sin from which liberation is impossible.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/9]

For those well-versed in scriptures, eminent in society and progressive on the spiritual path, Shriji Mahārāj warns: “One who is blessed with all virtues yet regards God as without form, possesses the greatest evil which wipes away all his virtues.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 16]

“One who knows God as formless is consigned to *Brahma sushupti*. He is doomed forever and never receives any divine powers from God.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/64]

Gunātītānand Swāmi also says: “Those who know and declare God as formless, and misinterpret the scriptures undergo terrible sufferings for countless births. In *Tretāyuga* for 10,000 years, in *Dwāparyuga* for 1,000 years, and in *Kaliyuga* for 100 years, they will be operated upon and cut into tiny pieces, and will suffer unspeakable agony – yet not even be able to cry at birth.” [Swāmini Vātu III/16]

### 3.3 ORIGIN OF THE UNDERSTANDING THAT GOD IS NIRĀKĀR

As mentioned earlier, by treating God as formless, one commits a far greater sin than the five heinous sins. Not only that, but such conduct maligns God, and transforms all virtues into vices. Naturally, the question arises as to how the understanding of a *nirākār* God developed?

Using the scriptures, some argue that God is formless. To them, Shriji Mahārāj replies: “Even though the *Shrimad Bhāgavatam* propounds that God always possesses a divine form, those who are devoid of such devotion, interpret the *Bhāgavatam* as propounding a formless God.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/10]

Shukdevji recited the *Shrimad Bhāgavatam*. Nārada, Shaunak and other sages, the pioneering spirits of the path of devotion delivered discourses on the *Bhāgavatam*. Shukdevji preferred discourses on God to meditation.

PARINISHTHITO'PI NAIRGUNYE UTTAMASHLOKALILAYĀ æ  
GRUHITACHETĀ RĀJARSHE ĀKHYĀNAM YADADHITAVĀN ææ

Shukdevji addressing King Parikshit says, “Oh king! Even though I feel myself separate from the body which is the evolute of the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, I am drawn towards the divine *līlā* of God and have been lured into the study of the *Bhāgavatam Purāna*.”

[Shrimad Bhāgavatam II/1:9]

Reciting the account of God's divine life, Shukdevji does not interpret Him as formless. While describing His human behaviour as divine and not *māyik*, there is negation of the *māyik* form. Reading this description, the ignorant and undevout interpret that God is formless and stubbornly stick to their beliefs. They pick out words from the scriptures that support their misunderstanding. Subsequently, by preaching their false beliefs, they mislead the aspirants.

Shriji Mahārāj says: “One who has either seen the tail of a cow or its hoof or its udder, is said to have seen the cow – but not fully; similarly, one who has realised the *ātman* either through the *indriyas* or through the *antahkaran* is said to have

realised the *ātman*, but only partially.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 15]

The understanding of the formlessness of God is spread by those who have not reached the stage of self-realisation or God-realisation and by those who do not have faith in the form of God. Either they have not correctly grasped the scriptural meanings or they are deliberately distorting them. Therefore it is laid down in the scriptures: “Such scriptural descriptions of the divine form of God are not a matter of mere mundane thinking, but a subject of experience by self-realised or *Ekāntik Bhaktas*. Scriptural descriptions describing God as *arup* [formless], *jyotiswarup* [lustrous] and *vyāpak* [immanent] are misunderstood by the ignorant who have no knowledge of the significance of such descriptions.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/66]

The listeners and readers are confused by descriptions of God as *nirgun* and infer that God has no form. However, their inference is the result of their misunderstanding. [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/66]

To attempt to understand the knowledge of God’s form by the study of only one scripture often leads to imperfect understanding. Precisely for this reason, Shriji Mahārāj clarifies: “Nārāyan has revealed through the *Vedās* His divine form, yet His form was not fully realised... *Sāmkhya* and *Yoga* propounded the form of God, yet no one understood the knowledge of His divine form... The form of God did not become explicitly clear as to whether He was black or yellow, tall or stunted, with or without form. To reveal the knowledge of God most explicitly, Vāsudev Bhagwān took the task upon Himself and composed the *Pancharātra Tantra*. Herein, He revealed the form of God and said, ‘Shri Krishna – the *Purushottam* – has a divine form and He always stays in His divine abode, *Akshardhām*...’ Thus, the *Pancharātra* has explicitly described God and has given the revelation of the knowledge of His divine form. Therefore, to earn the grace of God, who showers it in all abundance upon a *jnāni*, one

should appropriately reconcile all the four systems of philosophy [*Sāmkhya*, *Yoga*, *Vedānta* and *Pancharātra*] and arrive at the true revelation of the knowledge of God.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 2]

“*Vedānta* describes God as the supreme cause of millions of macrocosms, immanent and *nirgun*. This understanding, however, constitutes a drawback in as much as God is taken to be formless and as not having a divine form, devoid of the evolutes of *māyā*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/52]

Therefore, only a *Satpurush* can explain the apparent contradictions of the scriptures. –The knowledge of God’s divine form can therefore only be attained through such a Saint. Shriji Mahārāj explicitly says: “Such divine experience [about the form of God] can be had only through a Saint who has so known God and so realised Him, but not through others.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/64]

### 3.4 HOW IS GOD SĀKĀR?

Shriji Mahārāj has logically explained how God is *sākār*.

God is not *nirākār*. He creates the moveable and immoveable world. If He is formless, how can He create an earth with a form? Shriji Mahārāj says: “God has a divine form, otherwise how is the evolution of the cosmos – which has a form – possible? Space has no form and so nothing which can have a form can evolve from space. And pots, etc., are evolved from earth which has a form. Similarly, the whole cosmic world, including the *lokas* of Brahmā and other deities, have a form. That form is evolved from its creator – God, who therefore must have a form.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/10]

Reiterating this point, Shriji Mahārāj says: “God always has a divine form... If God, however, has no form, how can He be credited with the powers of doership? He is the ultimate cause of the evolution of millions of macrocosms, and is always seated in His divine abode, *Akshardhām*, like the king of kings, and is visible here before you.” [Vachanāmritams Gadhadā III/35, Panchālā 1, Gadhadā II/39]

Explaining the same point in a different way, Shriji Mahārāj says, “Lord *Purushottam* is always *sākār* and resplendent with divine light. His *antaryāmi* form, which is *Satchidānand* and all-pervading, is the divine light emanating from the divine form of Lord *Purushottam*. The *Shruti* says, ‘The Lord looked towards *māyā*.’ When the Lord sees, has He only eyes and no other limbs? Therefore, He must be *sākār*. Varuna, the God of Water is *sākār* in his *loka*, but in the form of water, he is formless. The God of Fire is *sākār* in his *loka*, whereas the flames emanating have no form. And again, the Sun God has a form in his *loka*, whereas in the form of rays, he is formless. Similarly, *Sat-Chit-Ānand*, the all-pervading divine light of Lord *Purushottam*, is formless but Lord *Purushottam* Himself is always *sākār*. Now if a doubt is raised that the *Shrutis* describe God as having no limbs and being all-pervading, one should understand the correct interpretation of such *Shrutis* which imply that God has no *māyik* limbs but possesses a divine form. In this way, Lord *Purushottam* is forever *sākār* but not *nirākār*. Those who describe Him as *nirākār* have no knowledge.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/45]

Emphasising God’s divine form, Shriji Mahārāj elaborates: “The *Ekāntik Bhaktas* who are proficient in the knowledge of God correctly appreciate the significance of such descriptions of the divine form of God and explain that God does not possess a *māyik* form but possesses a divine form... When God is described as *vyotiswarup* or lustrous, it should be realised that lustre emanates from His divine image... Similarly the divine light, having the intensity of the light of millions of suns, emanates from the divine image of *Purushottam*... Therefore, when the scriptures describe God as *nirgun*, the description implies the infinite and unfathomable greatness of God having a divine form.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/66]

### 3.5 GOD WITH FORM AS WELL AS IMMANENT

God is *vyāpak* – all-pervasive or immanent, but also *murtimān* – always with a form. In *Vedānta* and other

scriptures, God is described as all-pervasive. How can God be pervasive, yet still have a form? How can He have a form, yet still at the same time be pervasive? Mukṭānand Swāmi asks such a question, to which Shriji Mahārāj replies: “*Brahman* resides only at one place – His divine abode, *Akshardhām*. Even though He resides in His divine abode, He is still immanent. The scriptures describe Him as immanent because of His divine powers of manifesting in many forms at many places simultaneously. As such, by immanence it is not implied that He is immanent like space. He always possesses a divine form and, while residing in His divine abode *Akshardhām*, He appears in millions of macrocosms.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 13]

Nityānand Swāmi also raises a similar question: “The *jiva* is said to be formless. Does God who resides in the *jiva* possess a form or is He formless?” Shriji Mahārāj replies: “God is the repository of the *indriyas* and the *jiva*. When Shri Krishna sent a message from Mathurā through Uddhavji to the Gopis, He told them, ‘I am grossly felt in the city of Mathurā but in My subtle form, I am within you – within everybody. My subtle form within you is not apparently felt by you, because I desire you all to focus your *chitta* entirely on Me, to realise Me within. Therefore, I am within you with My divine form.’” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 15]

In this way, the Lord resides in all the *jivas* and at the same time is immanent. Shriji Mahārāj explains how this actually happens: “One who is *murtimān* is also immanent. The God of Fire in his *loka* is *murtimān*, whereas by his *shakti*, he is immanent in as much as fire is found to be latent in wood. Similarly, *Paramātmān* possesses a divine form in His divine abode – *Akshardhām* – yet He is still immanent because, by His *antaryāmi shakti*, He resides within all the *jivas* and functions as if He were *murtimān*. Therefore, the *sākshi* – witness within – is also said to be *murtimān*.” [Vachanāmritam Kāriyāni 4]

From these references of the *Vachanāmritam*, it is quite clear that God, with His divine form, dwells in the divine abode

*Akshardhām*. Simultaneously He is immanent by His *antaryāmi shakti*. The *antaryāmi shakti* also has a form as explained by Shriji Mahārāj: “The *antaryāmi* form of God who pervades the *jīvas* and *Ishwars* is the divine light emanating from the divine form of *Purushottam*. Yet since it is the giver of fruits to the *jīvas* and *Ishwars* according to their *karmas*, *Sat-Chit-Ānand* – the divine light of *Purushottam* – can also be understood to be *sākār*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/45]

*Purushottam Nārāyan* is thus *vyāpak* – all-pervasive, yet is also *murtimān* – with form.

### 3.6 GOD AS SĀKĀR IN AKSHARDHĀM AND ON EARTH

Some people believe that when God appears on earth as a human incarnation, He is *sākār* and *sagun*; but in the divine abode, He is *nirākār* and *nirgun*. Shriji Mahārāj clearly disapproves of this theory.

Shriji Mahārāj mentions that God is also *sākār* in *Akshardhām*: “The divine form of God who resides in His divine abode *Akshardhām* and the divine forms of His released souls are immune to the influence of *kāla*. They are extremely luminous. God and the released souls have humanlike divine forms and they are all *Sat-Chit-Ānand*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/38]

“In His divine form, God always resides in His divine abode – *Brahmapur*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/7]

In the *kirtan*, “*Bolyā Shri Hari re...*”, Shriji Mahārāj affirms:

MĀRU DHĀM CHHE RE, AKSHAR AMRUT JENU NĀM;

TEMĀ HU RAHU RE, DWIBHUJ DIVYA SADĀ SĀKĀR.

My abode is known as eternal *Akshardhām*.

I always dwell in it in a divine *dwibhuj* (two armed) form.

[*Sadguru Premānand Swāmi*]

Describing the divine form of the Lord in *Akshardhām*, Shriji Mahārāj says: “Within this luminous light [of *Akshardhām*], I see the image of God as extremely lustrous. Even though the complexion of God is dark, he appears fair due to extreme

light emanating from Him. He is human in shape with two hands, two legs, and possesses a fascinating charm. He does not have four or eight or a thousand hands. His image is like that of a young human being.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/13]

Shriji Mahārāj has expressly stated in many *Vachanāmritams* that God is with form – *sākār* – in *Akshardhām*. In His human incarnation on earth, He is also *sākār*. Therefore, He is forever *sākār*.

Stressing this, Shriji Mahārāj says: “God and His brahmanised Saint are at present manifest on earth in the same divine form as they are in their abode at the end of *ātyantik pralay*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/37]

As God is with form on earth, similarly at the time of *ātyantik pralay*, He is in a divine form in *Akshardhām*. And as He has a form in *Akshardhām*, similarly He is with form during His human incarnation. Shriji Mahārāj explains: “The spiritually wise have the realisation that during the final rest – *ātyantik pralay*, God and His devotees are seated in the divine realm enjoying divine bliss. Immense light equivalent to the light of an infinite number of suns and moons emanates from their divine forms. This God, in order to redeem the *jīvas* and to afford them an opportunity to offer devout devotion, assumes with grace, a human form complete with all His divine powers and lordship... One who understands the significance of the divine manifestation of God realises that God of the divine abode and God of the earthly form are one and the same entity.” [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7]

In short, “God is forever *sākār* – has a divine form.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/35]

### 3.7 DIVYABHĀV – DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Some people are of the opinion that in His abode, God is *divya* – divine, and *sākār* – with a form, but in His human incarnation He has, like all mortals, a body, *indriyas* and *antahkaran* composed of *panchbhutas*. Therefore, His form on

earth is not divine. Shriji Mahārāj, however, refutes this view: “With great compassion for the *jīvas*, He [*Parabrahman Purushottam*] descends on earth to brahmanise the *jīvas* who are wrapped in *māyā*. During His manifestation on earth in human form, He transmutes all the *tattvas* or the evolutes of *māyā* that are accepted by Him into divinity. The phases of *sthul*, *sukshma* and *kāran*, the stages of *jāgrat*, *swapna* and *sushupti*, the ten *indriyas* and the five *prānas* that appear in His human form, even though they appear as the evolutes of *māyā*, are totally divine and have no trace of *māyā* in them.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/71]

Confirming this, Shriji Mahārāj says: “God’s form is totally divine. Even when He is said to be associated with *māyā* during His incarnation on earth, He is totally separate from and above the influence of *māyā*. He does not fear that His involvement in *māyā* may contaminate His purity. He is totally divine and divinises *māyā* when in association with it. His association with the twenty-four *tattvas* also divinises the *tattvas*.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 7]

Despite this, “The different phases – childhood, youth, old age, birth, death – that apparently appear in the life of God in human form are but the revelations of His *yoga-māyā*... Lord *Purushottam*, the teleological architect of the infinite macrocosms, possesses a divine form. His appearance before you in human form, even though it appears human, is totally divine. It is therefore not appropriate to regard only the divine form in His abode as divine and His appearance in human form as possessing human attributes. Even in the human form, He should be regarded as totally divine and should be so prayed to and meditated upon. The appearance of human instincts in Him is like the magic feats of a great wizard which cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind.” [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7]

Gunātītānand Swāmi also says: “The body and the *jīva* are separate and distinct with mortals, but not so with God.” [Swāmini Vātu IV/41]

Why? “Because the apparently human instincts of God are comparable to a magician’s feats.” [Swāmini Vātu V/66]

All *tattvas* adopted by God become divinised. There is nothing in God worthy to be discarded. Shriji Mahārāj therefore advises one to refrain from hair-splitting over the *tattvas* in the divine form of God with these words: “One who holds God’s form as composed of the twenty-four *tattvas* of *māyā*, and the other who holds His form as fully sentient and devoid of the *tattvas* are both sacrilegious. A true devotee does not enjoy indulging in such controversies about God’s divinity. He would merely feel that God is fully divine even in His anthropomorphic [attributed human] form. There is nothing in Him, as is the case with the human body, that is to be discarded or retained.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/17]

To drive this point home, Shriji Mahārāj elaborates: “Within this divine light [of *Akshardhām*], *Purushottam Bhagwān* Vāsudev is seated in a divine form. When this *Purushottam Bhagwān* assumes human form for the redemption of the *jīvas* and becomes visible before their eyes, those devoid of knowledge take Him to be an ordinary being possessing all the attributes of *māyā*. However, He is beyond *māyā*, fully divine and *Gunātīt*. This divine form is described in the *Vedānta* scriptures as *nirgun*, *acchedya*, *abheda* and *vyāpak* for driving out the concept of *māyā* which the *jīvas* have attributed to His divine form. During the stages of cosmic evolution and in the process of cosmic sustenance and destruction, that God remains unaffected. He is always above all such transformative changes created by *māyā*. He is immanent and still transcendent as described by the pantheists.” [Vachanāmritam Kāriyāni 7]

“God, even in human form, is totally divine and bereft of all traces of *manushyabhāva* – human instincts. Therefore, the wise should first try to reconcile their minds and gain such knowledge which may take them nearer to God. To begin with, the greatness of the *devas*, *Brahmā*, etc., should be visualised in the human form of God. This realisation should



be further developed and God should be looked upon as great as *Pradhān Purush*, then as *Prakṛiti Purush*, then as *Akshar*, and finally, He should be realised as the all-transcendental *Purushottam*." [Vachanāmritam Loyā 18]

Clarifying still further, Shriji Mahārāj says: "Therefore, the divine form of the Lord in His abode *Akshardhām* and this human form of Shri Krishna visible before you [i.e. Shriji Mahārāj] are absolutely identical... He [a devotee] realises God to be thoroughly identical with the human image and does not perceive any difference between the two forms – the one residing in *Akshardhām* and the one visible before him in human form, and believes both as being *Gunātit* – beyond the *gunas*." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/31]

God is thus eternally *divya* – with a divine form and is *Gunātit* – beyond the *gunas*. In spite of His sublime divinity, in His human incarnation, God behaves as one with all human traits so that devotees may experience happiness by serving Him. They can fulfil their long-cherished desires and achieve salvation. At the same time, the wicked are beguiled by His actions. In any case, God is free from all blemishes. Shriji Mahārāj has explained this point in *Satsangijīvanam*:

ASURĀNĀM VIMOHĀYA DOSHĀ VISHNORNAHI KVACHIT æ

[Satsangijīvanam III/29:107,108]

### 3.8 NECESSITY OF UNDERSTANDING DIVYABHĀV

As mentioned earlier, on earth as well as in His abode, God has a divine form. He accepts *manushyabhāva* – human attributes – in order to be on the same level as His devotees. Therefore, a true devotee should always be conscious of the sublime divinity of God. The knowledge of His *divyabhāva* – divinity leads to freedom from the bondage of *māyā*, and ultimate liberation.

Shriji Mahārāj has dealt with this point in many *Vachanāmritams*, as can be seen from the following extracts:

"The ever-transcendental *Purushottam*, who is beyond *Akshar*, when He assumes human form for redeeming the *jīvas*,

behaves like a human being. Human aptitudes or fallibilities and weaknesses are assumed by God in human form, who thus exhibits human instincts – such as passion, anger, covetousness, infatuation, ego, envy, hopes, desires, victory and defeat – for the redemption of the *jīvas*. However, a devotee who has realised the esoteric significance of such instincts of God in human form hails them all as fully divine... As such, all the episodes of God in human form are to be recounted in song as divine, but in no way should one wonder why God exhibits such human instincts. All His actions, apparently seeming human, are motivated with a divine purpose for the redemption of the *jīvas*. One who has such an understanding is a true devotee of God." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/72]

Shriji Mahārāj explains the same point as follows:

"Shri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

JANMA KARMA CHA ME DIVYAMEVAM YO VETTI TATTVATAHA æ

TYAKTVĀ DEHAM PUNARJANMA NAITI MĀMETI SO'RJUNA ææ

Oh Arjuna! I am totally divine. Those who realise that my birth, actions, etc. are all divine will not have to take birth again and will attain me.

"Therefore the divine phases of God's life are naturally awe-inspiring both to the devotee and also to a non-devotee. However, when God exhibits human moods and acts accordingly, one should still realise Him as fully divine but not experience obscurity. One who has such realisation is a devout devotee and he would attain God as referred to in the verse from the *Bhagavad Gītā*... Therefore the actions of God, when in human manifestation, should be taken as totally divine, and no doubt should ever be felt in His divine working. Only then can one be called a sincere devotee. It is very difficult to attain such perfect devotion, which is not achieved by the good deeds of either one or two births. Purified actions of many births gradually evolve into dedicated devotion which the *Gopis* had accomplished. Culmination of such *bhakti* is *parampad*. Therefore, such *bhakti*

excels the attributes of *jnān* and *vairāgya*. One who has accomplished such profound devotion has nothing more to offer to God. It is the highest offering." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/10]

Furthermore, "A devotee who is convinced of the divinity of the human form of God, becomes immune to all dangers of deflection." [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 12]

Shriji Mahārāj shows the means of subduing baser instincts, which cannot be eradicated by *sādhana*s such as *tapa* (austerities), *tyāg* (renunciation), *vairāgya* (detachment), *vrata* (vows), *dhyān* (meditation) or *ashtāṅg yoga*: "However vicious one's instincts may be, if one visualises divinity in God – one will ultimately be freed of all one's vices." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/24]

"One who has such knowledge of God and entertains absolutely no doubt regarding His supra-mundane form even in human shape, and knows Him to be beyond *māyā* and her evolutes, he is said to have crossed *māyā*. Even though he may possess the elements of *māyā*, the knowledge of understanding the Lord manifesting on earth as beyond *māyā*, renders him immune to the shackles of *māyā*." [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 5]

"Therefore the wise should always feel that God – the all-divine – acts only for the beneficence of His devotees. His actions are always meaningful and divine. Devotees with such understanding are said to have transcended *māyā*." [Vachanāmritam Loyā 4]

"One who realises the significance of the divine manifestation of God also realises that God of the divine abode and God of the earthly form are one and the same entity. The realisation of this divinity enables the *jīvas* to transgress *māyā*. One having such realisation of the totally divine form of God in a human framework is a *jnāni* and is an *Ekāntik Bhakta*... A devotee who has such realisation of God in human form and accepts the elegance of His divinity in all His activities showing human attributes – if by chance, such a devotee is overtaken by the influence of evil-minded persons

or by his *prārabdha*, or is involved in unbecoming actions, he will still be redeemed." [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7]

"The bliss of worshipping God is experienced if one accepts *manushyabhāva* and *divyabhāva* as one and the same." [Swāmini Vātu V/101]

"Understanding God to be *nirdosh* – free from faults, a devotee himself becomes *nirdosh*." [Swāmini Vātu V/125]

A *Gunātī* Saint, like God, is also divine and *nirdosh*. Emphasising this, Gunātītānand Swāmi says: "To understand God, as well as the venerable *Ekāntik Sādhu* as *nirdosh* is a unique *sādhana*." [Swāmini Vātu II/172]

Shriji Mahārāj also says: "...To drive away evil carnal desires from his heart, he [a devotee] should meditate upon the redemptive attributes of a brahmanised Saint. However, if due to some perversion, he attributes malicious instincts to him, he will develop such instincts in return. Therefore, a devotee should realise the redemptive attributes of a brahmanised Saint in order to imbibe such attributes within himself." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/58]

"Such redemptive attributes can be imbibed by one who always hails God or His brahmanised Saint in human form as totally divine." [Vachanāmritam I/73]

It is therefore essential to accept God and the Saint as divine.

### 3.9 DISADVANTAGES OF PERCEIVING MANUSHYABHĀV IN GOD

God and the *Gunātī* Saint, in human form, are eternally divine, *nirdosh* and transgress the three *gunas*. They are free from the slightest trace of *māyā* or *manushyabhāva* – human attributes. Yet, "...Those devoid of intelligence attribute human instincts to God – who is perfectly divine. Such instincts emerge from their *buddhi* which is polluted by *māyā*. These vicious instincts are so inextricably linked with their *buddhi*, that they conspicuously develop within themselves, instincts such as passion, covetousness, anger or envy. One who tries to

throw dust against the sun, finds it falling back in his own eyes; similarly, when one ascribes vicious instincts upon God, such instincts ultimately affect one adversely.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/24]

Commenting further on this aspect, Shriji Mahārāj says:

“*AVAJĀNANTI MĀM MUDHĀ MĀNUSHIM TANUMĀSHRITAM æ  
PARAM BHĀVAMAJĀNANTO MAMA BHUTAMAHESHWARAM æææ*”

“Therefore, those who are devoid of such wisdom attribute human instincts to God. Passion, anger, covetousness, infatuation, ego, envy, hope, desire – these instincts emanate from the *antahkaran* and are attributed by them to the human form of God. According to them, God also possesses a human body composed of *tattvas* evolved from the *panchbhutas*, which dissolve when one passes away. God, therefore, like human beings, passes through the stages of childhood, youth, old age, etc. Such unwise people do not possess any knowledge of God. Therefore, they are sure to be deflected from this *Satsang*... When such divinity is not realised in the human form of God, a devotee suffers from such impish nature that he feels hurt at every stage – whenever he is not attended to or looked after. Ultimately, he is likely to leave this Fellowship. Therefore, God in human form should always be regarded as totally divine.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 18]

“...if he [a devotee] becomes dubious of the divinity of God due to the adverse factors of *desh*, *kāla*, *sang*, *shāstra*, etc. or because of his own ego, he would dwindle totally – like the moon which wanes completely on the last day of the dark lunar half. Therefore, drawbacks either small or great in the observance of a pure life would not so hinder one’s spiritual progress as would doubting the divinity of God. When the roots of a tree are cut, the tree dries up; similarly when one speaks derisively of God or doubts His divinity, it will spell his spiritual ruin.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 12]

“...one who finds faults in the human form of God on earth,

(1) Fools deride Me when I descend in human form. They do not know My transcendental nature as the Lord of all. [Bhagvad Gītā IX/11]

and also in His holy sermons, lacks wisdom or knowledge of the divine form of God. This will ultimately evict him from this Holy Fellowship.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/53]

However eminent a devotee may be, but if he has any misgivings about the Lord, he cannot transgress *māyā*. In this regard, Shriji Mahārāj points out: “Even Brahmā imposed human instincts on God. Therefore, those who cannot realise the divine nature of God, and impose human instincts upon Him, are not said to have overcome *māyā*.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 4]

Gunātītānand Swāmi also says: “Redemption is denied to those who perceive *manushyabhāva* in God.” [Swāmini Vātu V/116]

One who looks at the weaknesses and faults of even the devotees of God is also sure to fall from the Faith – and ultimately leave *Ekāntik Dharma*. Explaining this, Shriji Mahārāj says: “God and His brahmanised Saint display their divine working on earth, but the *jivas* wrapped in the ego of their physical consciousness are unable to realise them. They therefore fall from the spiritual path by pronouncing their perverted opinions on the working of such divine personalities.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/53]

“...an *Ekāntik Bhakta* does not fear physical death as much as spiritual regress, which, according to him, is the spiritual death of a devotee. Such death comes when one develops repulsion towards God and His saint... Again, throwing such calumny at a devotee of God is an irredeemable sin greater in intensity than the five great sins.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/46]

One who looks at the shortcomings of a Saint, himself becomes their victim. Shriji Mahārāj therefore says: “...if he [a devotee] loses sight of the redemptive attributes of such a Saint and attributes malicious instincts to him, he will develop such instincts in return.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/58]

Furthermore, “And if during old age, they [devotees] still suffer from such evils [of lust, anger, etc.], it is because they

had disregarded the company of the brahmanised Saint and regarded him as if he were an ordinary human being.” [Vachanāmritam Sārangpur 18]

Therefore, Gunātītānand Swāmi says: “Nothing can be more detrimental than to perceive *manushyabhāva* in this Saint.” [Swāmini Vātu III/36]

By attributing human weaknesses to God in human form and His *Ekāntik* Gunātīt Saint, one goes astray and spoils his chances of redemption. Shriji Mahārāj therefore warns His followers: “God in human form should always be regarded as totally divine... One should not stop at that. Even the devotees attached to God should be regarded as divine... Either you realise this completely and resolutely today, or after a year, or after a hundred years, but know this you must for final redemption. It is My wish that this divine message be spread widely amongst all the members of our Holy Fellowship and become the subject-matter of your daily discourses. If however, someone, because of lack of understanding, does not realise the significance of this talk and misunderstands, he should be instructed immediately with such spiritual wisdom. Therefore, please remember it now, and remember it forever.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 18]

In this way, Shriji Mahārāj has clearly commanded that one should never assume that God and the devotees suffer from human infirmities. They should always be regarded as divine.

God and the Saint are divine and *nirgun*. Those who come into their contact also attain the *nirgun* state. Shriji Mahārāj explains: “Places where the human form of God resides are *nirgun*; the clothes, the ornaments, the vehicles, the attendants and the objects of enjoyment offered to this human form of God and accepted by Him all become *nirgun*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/13]

Shriji Mahārāj repeats this in *Satsangijivanam*:

DIVYAM KRISHNASYA RUPAM BHAVATI CHA  
SATATAM TASYA LOKO'PI DIVYO  
DIVYĀ BHOGĀSHCHA BHOGYĀNYAPI CHA  
BHAGAWATASTASYA DIVYĀNI SANTI æ

DIVYĀ VAI PĀRSHADĀSHCHA PRAKATITA-  
NRUTANOHO SHAKTAYASTASYA DIVYĀ  
DIVYĀ BHAKTĀSHCHA SARVE JAGATI YADUPATEHE  
SANTI DIVYĀHĀ KRIYĀSHCHA ææ

As God has a divine form in *Akshardhām*, similarly His human incarnation on earth is always divine; His abode is divine; All His enjoyments are divine; objects of His enjoyments are divine. His *pārshads* are divine. His powers are also divine. All His devotees are divine; and all His actions are divine.

[Satsangijivanam III/29:143]

Shriji Mahārāj believes the *Satsang* to be divine, *Brahmarup* and *Mahāvishnurup*. Therefore, an aspirant should not dishonour the *Sampradāya* or its followers. They should be accepted as ‘*Brahmani murti*’ – images of *Brahman*. Nevertheless, it is not scepticism to dislike those who merely profess their faith in devotion of God, but are actually irreligious, violating the fivefold vows. They may appear innocent to conceal their weaknesses and observe *Satsang* to serve their selfish ends or to gain a higher social standing.

True devotees faithfully observe the fivefold vows, live in accordance with the prescribed religious codes, and thus offer worship. It is their insignificant lapses or idiosyncrasies which should be overlooked. And they should be treated as divine. With progressive realisation of Shriji Mahārāj’s divinity, a follower of the Faith will easily reach this stage. This principle can be best understood from *Vachanāmritams* Gadhadā I/56, I/58, II/10, II/17, Panchālā 4 and Loyā 18.

### 3.10 OMNISCIENCE

The *Vāyu Purāna* describes the extraordinary characteristics of God. The foremost among these is omniscience.<sup>1</sup> The word omniscient is not to be taken literally, because omniscience is a trait of the *Ishwars* as well as the *muktas*. The omniscience of

(1) SARVAGNATĀ TRUPTIRANĀDIBODHAHA  
SWATANTRATĀ NITYA VILUPTADRISHITIHI æ  
ANANTA SHAKTISHCHA VIBHORVIBHUGNĀHĀ  
SHADĀHURANGĀNI MAHESHWARASYA æææ

*Parmeshwar*, however, is quite different. He simultaneously knows about all the objects in countless worlds, about every *jiva*, the *Ishwars*, infinite *muktas* in His divine abode and *Mul Akshar*. Precisely this is His omniscience.<sup>1</sup>

Within all souls dwells the Lord as a witness – *sākshi*.

Dwelling in their heart as a witness, He is aware of all their physical deeds and mental thoughts. He knows their past, present and future, as well as their virtues and vices, their disposition and desires. He also knows *Ishwar's* motives for creation, sustenance and dissolution of the cosmos. He is aware of the intense desire of the *muktas* in *Akshardhām* to serve Him. And by His grace, all their desires are fulfilled.



(1) YO VETTI YUGAPATSARVA PRATYAKSHENA SADĀ SVATAHA ææ

## 4. SARVOPARI GOD AS SUPREME

### 4.1 NECESSITY OF FAITH IN DIVINE SUPREMACY

We accept the refuge of Shriji Mahārāj with faith that He is God. We meditate on Him and worship Him. It is, however, of paramount importance for all followers of the Faith to understand Him as *sarvoparī* – the supreme and highest, and the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs* – cause of all incarnations.

With conviction of the supreme form of the Lord, a devotee is freed from the relentless cycle of births and deaths. He realises the difference between *ātman* and *anātman*. Shriji Mahārāj says: “In proportion to the devotion that one offers to God manifesting on earth, only to that extent does one realise the difference between *ātman* and *anātman*.” [Vachanāmritam

Gadhadā I/56]

Shriji Mahārāj stresses the importance of understanding the true glory of the divine form of God: “When you realise full divinity in this form, you will immediately overcome evil instincts such as passion, anger, and the like... But deficiency in such realisation of divinity in God’s human form will have negatory effects on all other accomplishments.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/13]

Gunātītānand Swāmi says: “Without the knowledge of Shriji Mahārāj as *Purushottam*, *Akshardhām* remains unattainable.” [Swāmini Vātu III/12]

Shriji Mahārāj therefore says: “One should endeavour to attain the knowledge of the divine form of God which would enable him to realise the superlative divinity of the transcendental highest... The true aspirant should therefore strive to know God, who is visible in human form before him, as the transcendental highest and totally divine as if seated in His divine abode – *Akshardhām*. Consolidation of this belief in the heart of an aspirant renders him immune to such evil influences which would otherwise drift him away from the bondage of divine love with God. Again, one who may be constantly aware and cautious in the observance of the scriptural codes laid down for moral and spiritual behaviour, yet lacks such knowledge of the divine form of God, would after death be transmigrated to *Satyaloaka*, the *loka* of Brahṁā, or to the *lokas* of other deities, but would never reside in the highest abode of Lord *Purushottam*, *Akshardhām*... If the transcendental highest, from whom all incarnations emanate, is reckoned on par with other incarnations, it amounts to blasphemy – an irredeemable sin from which redemption is never possible... Therefore one should try to realise that God manifesting Himself on earth in human form is the highest Supreme Reality, is the cause of all *avatārs* and is always divine.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/9]

Shriji Mahārāj has been described as *sarvopari* – the transcendental highest, as the *avatāri* – cause of all

incarnations, and *Purna Purushottam Nārāyan* in the *Vachanāmritam* and other literature of the *Sampradāya*. The following extracts will help one to understand His supreme position.

#### 4.2 AKSHARDHĀM – THE HIGHEST SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ – THE SUPREME

*Akshardhām* is the divine abode of Lord Swāminārāyan. It is distinct and above the abodes of other incarnations and demigods. As ordained by God, other incarnations, devotees and demigods reside in different abodes. Nishkulānand Swāmi explains:

BRAHMĀ RĀKHYĀ SATYALOKMĀ, SHIVANE RĀKHYĀ KAILĀS;  
VISHNUNE RĀKHYĀ VAIKUNTHMĀ, EMA ĀPYO JUJAVO NIVĀS.  
INDRA RĀKHYO AMARĀVATI, SHESHJINE RĀKHYĀ PĀTĀL;  
JYĀ JYĀ KARI HARIE ĀGNĀ, TIYĀ RAHYĀ SUKHE SADĀKĀL.  
BADRITALE RĀKHYĀ RUSHISHWAR,

NIRANNAMUKTA RĀKHYĀ SHVETDWEPMĀ;  
GOPI GOPA RĀKHYĀ GOLOKE, RĀKHYĀ MUKTA AKSHAR SAMIPMĀ.

Brahmā’s abode is *Satyaloaka*. And *Kailās* is the abode of Shiva.  
Vishnu’s abode is *Vaikunth*. They each have separate abodes given by God.

Indra is placed in *Amarāvati*. And Sheshji’s place is in *Pātāl*.

Wherever ordained by God, they happily live forever.

Rushishwar lives under *Badri*. The *Nirannamuktas* stay in *Shvetdweep*.

The *Gopas* and *Gopis* are placed in *Golok*. The *Akshar muktas* are in close proximity with God Himself.

[Nishkulānand Kāvyaṁ: Vachan Vidhi 37]

Barring *Akshardhām*, the remaining *lokas* are enwrapped in *māyā*, and are subject to the triple misfortunes. *Sadguru Muktānand Swāmi* says:

CHAUD LOKA VAIKUNTH LAGI, MĀYĀNI PĀGI RE;  
TETHI ANUBHAVI ALAGĀ RAHE, TRAYA TĀP ĀGI RE.

*Vaikunth* and the fourteen *lokas* are under the spell of *māyā*.

The wise shun them to escape from the triple misfortunes.

*Akshardhām* transcends *māyā* and hence is immune from the three types of miseries. The bliss in *Akshardhām* is therefore incomparable. Shriji Mahārāj explains: “The mundane and

ultra-mundane happiness is insignificant before the happiness offered by *Vaikunth loka*, which again is insignificant before the bliss offered by *Golok*, which again is far far less in intensity than the profound bliss offered by *Akshardhām*, the ultimate abode of God.” [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 1]

Nishkulānand Swāmi also says:

JEH DHĀMNE PĀMINE PRĀNI, PĀCHHU PADVĀNU NATHI RE,  
SARVE PAR CHHE SUKHNI KHĀNI, KEVU KAHIE TENE KATHI RE.  
ANANT MUKTA JYĀ ĀNANDE BHARIYĀ,  
RAHE CHHE PRABHUJINI PĀS RE,  
SUKH SUKH JYĀ SUKHNĀ DARIYĀ, TYĀ VASI RAHYĀ VĀS RE.  
EVĀ DHĀMNI ĀGAL BIJĀ, SHI GANATIMĀ GANĀY RE...

The ultimate divine abode is from where there is no return.

An indescribable reservoir of sublime happiness, it is beyond all.

Where, in close proximity of God, live infinite *muktas*; full of infinite bliss.

They live as if in the midst of oceans of utter happiness.

God’s divine abode (*Akshardhām*) is unique and incomparable with other abodes.

[Chosath Padi 55-56]

Therefore, Shriji Mahārāj says that the bliss offered by His divine abode is so infinitely overwhelming that in comparison to it, the happiness offered by the *lokas* of the demigods is described in *Mokshadharma* as utterly infernal. [Vachanāmritam Sārāṅgpur 1, 4, 11; Gadhadā III/28]

Apart from *Akshardhām*, all other abodes are perishable. *Akshardhām* is imperishable and eternal. Nishkulānand Swāmi says:

MĀ’PRALAY KĀLANĀ AGNIMĀ SIJĀ, HAMESH JE HANĀY RE  
PRAKRUTI PURUSH PRALAYMĀ ĀVE,  
BHAV BRAHMĀ NA RAHE KOY RE,  
CHAUD LOKA DHĀM RAHEVĀ NA PĀME, SARVE SANHĀR HOY RE.

In the scorching heat of the final destruction, the fourteen *lokas*, Bhav (Shiva), Brahmā and *Prakriti Purush* are all consumed.

[Chosath Padi 56]

Shriji Mahārāj also explains: “A true devotee after attaining perfection both in *yoga* and *sāmkhya* realises that only *Akshardhām*, the God residing in this *Akshardhām* and His

released souls are eternal; everything else evolving from *Prakriti* is all perishable.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/24]

All other abodes are ephemeral. And eventually, the *jivas* have to return from them. Only from *Akshardhām* does a *mukta* never return:

NA TADBHĀSAYATE SURYO NA SHASHĀNKO NA PĀVAKAHA æ  
YADGATVĀ NA NIVARTANTE TADDHĀMA PARAMAM MAMA ææ

My supreme abode is not illumined by the sun or the moon or the fire. Those who attain it never return to this material world.

[Bhagvad Gitā XV/6]

The other abodes are influenced by the three *gunas* and *māyā* (e.g. the tiff between Rādhikāji and Shridāmā in *Golok* indicates *tamoguna*. *Tamoguna* was also shown by Jay and Vijay when they belittled the *Sanaks* in *Vaikunth*). Only *Akshardhām* is uninfluenced by the *gunas* or *māyā*.

Other abodes such as *Golok*, *Vaikunth*, etc. have specific dimensions according to scriptural descriptions. But *Akshardhām* is “...fathomless in all directions, even above and beneath.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 14]

Other abodes abound with material objects such as diamond-studded palaces, jewels, etc. *Akshardhām*, however, is flooded with divine light. *Purushottam*, *Akshar* and the *Akshar muktas* dwell within that divine light.

Shriji Mahārāj describes His abode in the *kirtan*, “*Bolyā Shri Hari re...*”:

MĀRU DHĀM CHHE RE, ĀKSHAR AMRUT JENU NĀM;  
SARVE SĀMRATHI RE, SHAKTI GUNE KARI ABHIRĀM.  
ATI TEJOMAY RE, RAVI SHASHI KOTIK VĀRANE JĀY;  
SHITAL SHĀNT CHHE RE, TEJNI UPAMĀ NAV DEVĀY.

My abode is known as *Akshar* – the centre of nectarine sublimity.

It is supreme and full of power and prosperity.

Shining with divine light, it is served by countless suns and moons;

Where infinitely soothing light reigns supreme.

[Sadguru Premānand Swāmi]

Sadguru Nishkulānand Swāmi also writes:

TEJ TEJ JYĀ TEJ AMBĀR, TEJOMAY TAN TENĀ RE,  
TEJOMAY JYĀ SARVE ĀKĀR, SHU KAHIE SUKH ENĀ RE.

TE TEJ MADHYE SINHĀSAN SHOBHE, TIYĀ BETHĀ BAHUNĀMI RE,  
NISHKULĀNAND KAHE MAN LOBHE,  
PURAN PURUSHOTTAM PĀMI RE.

Flooded with divine light, the abode is extremely bright.  
There, all the forms are full of light; the peace is indescribable.  
At the centre of the light sits the Lord on a dazzling throne.  
Nishkulānand says – my mind is enchanted.  
I have met *Purna Purushottam*.

[Chosath Padi 55]

In his talks, Gunātītānand Swāmi has clearly stated the superiority of *Akshardhām* over other abodes. [Swāmini Vātu III/11, III/23, III/49]

Shriji Mahārāj also describes, in His own words, the superlative position of His divine abode: “The abode in the form of *Akshar* is the highest – beyond all.” [Vedras p.146]

In S.Y. 1869, Shriji Mahārāj was bedridden. By His *yogic* powers, He visited various abodes, ultimately reaching *Akshardhām*. He describes the journey: “I went alone to the abode of *Purushottam* that transcends all other divine regions. I discovered there that the ultimate *Purushottam*, the highest transcendental entity, was none other than Me... Those *jivas* who have sought refuge in Me, I will take to My supreme abode, which transcends all other abodes.” [Vachanāmritam Amdāvād II/4]

Here, Shriji Mahārāj has unambiguously described *Akshardhām* as the highest. That abode is His and He Himself is supreme there. It is therefore but natural that the Lord of such a transcendent and divine *Akshardhām*, should also be the highest, the supreme of all Lords.

#### 4.3.1 SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ – THE SUPREME: IN HIS OWN WORDS

At times, Shriji Mahārāj has described His own supremacy. Normally, God – in human incarnation – conceals His divinity and limitless powers. He hesitates in speaking about His divine form because: “To know God in human form is really very difficult. Such revelation before the assembly is likely to

be misunderstood in as much as it may not appeal to some, who may consequently leave this Holy Fellowship.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 18]

Only after the sun rises can one appreciate the sun. Similarly, only when *Purushottam Nārāyan* identifies Himself can one realise His divine glory.

We accept Shriji Mahārāj as God. We worship Him and offer our prayers to Him. Honouring His words as self-evident and gospel truths, let us study them first.

In the old manuscripts written during His own lifetime, the Lord reveals: “The earlier incarnations had a specific cause for a particular end. But My incarnation is to brahmanise the *jivas* for their ultimate salvation. For this noble mission, I – the *Purushottam* – beyond even *Akshar*, have assumed human form.”

Lord Krishna’s and other incarnations were to serve a specific purpose such as defeating the demons. Having accomplished their mission, they departed from the world. But Lord Swāminārāyan incarnated to brahmanise (make *Brahmarup*) the *jivas* and to grant them ultimate salvation, thereby ensuring permanent liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

Therefore, Shriji Mahārāj’s manifestation on earth was for a higher mission than the rest of the incarnations. Shriji Mahārāj clearly mentions His supremacy in the *Vachanāmritam*:

“Lord *Purushottam* while seated in His *Akshardhām* accepts with grace the worship offered by the released souls. That *Purushottam*, having great compassion for the *jivas*, has descended on earth to redeem them from the entanglements of *māyā*. He is visible before you, is your *Ishtadev* and also accepts your offerings. The divine form of Lord *Purushottam* visible here before you – *pratyaksh* – and the divine form seated in His divine abode *Akshardhām* are one; there is absolutely no difference between these twin forms. They are one. This *pratyaksh* Lord *Purushottam* visible here is the controller of all – including *Akshar*, is the Lord of Lords, the ultimate cause of



cosmic evolution, and is *sarvopari* – transcendently the supreme. From Him, all incarnations emanate and in Him, they finally merge. He is the ultimate God who should be offered *upāsanā* – implicit devotion – with *Ekāntik bhāv*. The previous incarnations who have emanated from His divine form by His will are also to be honoured with due respect.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/38]

“The divine light, which is within, is termed *ātman*, *Brahman*, or *Akshardhām*. The image of God seated in the divine light is called the essence of the *ātman* or *Parabrahman* or *Purushottam*... The image of God seen, in the divine light within, is none other than this *pratyaksh* Mahārāj visible here before you.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/13]

“From the glory and infinite powers of God manifesting presently in this *Satsang* before you, you should clearly realise that He is totally divine and is the final cause of all the *avatārs* who have incarnated on earth. He is the Lord of all *avatārs*. He is omnipotent and is seated with a divine form in the divine abode *Akshardhām*. He possesses infinite spiritual powers. He is the Lord of millions of macrocosms and the support of *Aksharbrahman*.” [Vachanāmritam Amdāvād II/3]

These words of Shriji Mahārāj clearly explain the importance of firm faith in His supreme form. It is imperative for seekers of liberation to develop such faith.

#### 4.3.2 SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ – THE SUPREME: AS EXPRESSED IN SWĀMINI VĀTU

When God descends on earth for the redemption of the *jivas* and assumes human form, He is accompanied by His divine abode *Akshardhām* and the released *jivas*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/71]

Shriji Mahārāj has also observed, “As He is in *Akshar*, He is not in *Prakriti Purush*.” This signifies that no one is in a better position than *Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi to explain His supreme glory. Swāmi’s unambiguous and unequivocal talks – *Swāmini Vātu* – amply prove this. Every word in his

talks testifies to Shriji Mahārāj’s majestic glory.

Unafraid and uninhibited by scriptural dogmatism, Gunātītānand Swāmi openly proclaimed the Lord’s sublime and supreme position.

When asked about the absence of scriptural references regarding Shriji Mahārāj’s divine glory, Swāmi used to reply: “How can it be mentioned in the scriptures? Is marriage possible before birth? As *Purushottam* had not incarnated on this earth, how could the scriptures have mentioned it? Scriptural narrations are restricted to *jiva*, *Ishwar*, *māyā* and *Purush*. How can they refer to *Purushottam*? Vairāt is the progenitor of all the *avatārs*. Vāsudev – the *Sat-chit-Ānand Brahman* is described in the *Vedās*. How can the *Vedās* indicate what transcends them? The learned refer only to the scriptures, and therefore cannot grasp this point.” [Swāmini Vātu V/402]

Prior to Shriji Mahārāj’s descent on earth, how could the scriptures have mentioned Him?

Gunātītānand Swāmi explains the significance of his talks in inspiring words: “These talks are as piercing as the sharpest of arrows”, “...incisive as surgical instruments”, “...dispel all doubts”, “...are the talks of Lord *Purushottam*”.

Elated by the incessant flow of Swāmi’s talks, *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi expressed his joy: “In Vartāl, we hear 25% of these talks, in Gadhadā, 50%. Only in Junāgadh do we have the satisfaction of hearing them 100%.”

Some of these talks of Gunātītānand Swāmi, explaining Shriji Mahārāj’s supreme glory, are reproduced below:

(1) “At present *Purushottam* has descended on earth with *Akshar* and the *muktas* of *Akshardhām*. *Ishwars* from innumerable abodes along with their *muktas* have also accompanied them to be freed of their deficiencies, and to realise the divine form of *Purushottam*.” [Swāmini Vātu III/41]

One of the six objectives of Shriji Mahārāj’s manifestation on this earth was: “To explain by divine discourses, His supreme form and *upāsanā* to countless incarnations and their

followers, so that they may attain *Akshardhām*.<sup>1</sup>

(2) “Nothing more needs to be understood other than understanding Mahārāj as *Purushottam* and this sādhu as *Akshar*.” [Swāmini Vātu III/38]

(3) “‘Without realising Mahārāj as *Purushottam*, one can never attain *Akshardhām*. And without becoming *Brahmarup* one cannot stay in Mahārāj’s service.’ Whereupon Shivrāj inquired, ‘How can one realise *Purushottam*? And how can one become *Brahmarup*?’ Swāmi replied, ‘Mahārāj is supreme, the cause of all *avatārs*, and the ultimate cause of all causes.’ After *Vachanāmritams* Gadhadā II/9 and III/38 were read as authoritative support, Swāmi said, ‘In *Satsang* today, the sādhus, the *Āchāryas*, the temples and the *murtis* are incomparably supreme. What can one say then of the majestic supremacy of Mahārāj? One should understand that He must be unquestionably supreme.’” [Swāmini Vātu III/12]

(4) “‘All the incarnations are like magnets, with varying degrees of magnetism. A very powerful magnet draws iron in its field from a vast zone. But today, a mountain of a magnet is before us, attracting in its magnetic field the entire cosmos.’ So saying he explained, ‘Today *Purushottam* – the cause of all *avatārs* and the ultimate cause of all causes has manifested. To His image are drawn the Lords of infinite abodes and their *muktas*, in the way that all the nails of a ship are attracted towards a huge magnet.’” [Swāmini Vātu III/4]

(5) “There are three types of snake-charmers. *Vādi* – the first, catches non-poisonous snakes. *Fulvādi* – the second, catches a snake only if he can easily handle it, otherwise he kills it. *Gārādi* – the third, humbles even the most deadly of cobras. The principle of this is: Like the first type of snake charmer – *Vādi* – Dattātreyā and Kapil redeem the aspirants. Rāma and Krishna, like the second – *Fulvādi* – redeem those who abide by their dictates; otherwise they wield the sword to

(1) SWAKIYĀVATĀRĀSDIYĀSHCHA BHAKTĀ NIJOPĀSANĀGNĀNAMĀBODHYA TESHĀM æ  
TATHAITĀNSWADHĀMĀDHINETUM VICHINTYĀGATAHA  
SHRIHARIRHETURUKTASHCHATURATHA ææ

settle the point. But Mahārāj is like the *Gārādi*, the third type of snake-charmer. *Jiva*, *Ishwar*, *Purush*, *Akshar* and others are all standing before Him with folded hands.” [Swāmini Vātu III/5]

(6) “Even when we look at this son of a *Satsangi* – he has infinite lustre in comparison to the previous eminent incarnations. What can one say then of the glory of prominent devotees, sādhus and Mahārāj?” [Swāmini Vātu III/72]

(7) “Ganesh is known as God. Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva are also worshipped as God. Aniruddha, Pradyumna and Sankarshan are also recognised as God. Who is to be honoured from among them as God? The explanation is that there are categories of *jiva*, *Ishwara* and even Brahmā. But only by realising Mahārāj as the prime cause of them all, is the quest over. Only by recognising Mahārāj as the all-doer, the supporter, the controller and cause of infinite Rāmas, Krishnas, and *Akshar muktas* does one come to have genuine knowledge.” [Swāmini Vātu VI/257]

(8) “What is the difference between a devotee of *Purushottam* and that of other incarnations? The difference is comparable to that between a baby elephant and a louse.” [Swāmini Vātu II/108]

(9) “Despite all the discourses of Shri Krishna, only Uddhava managed to renounce the world. Today even teenagers leave the worldly life to become sādhus. The scriptures do not mention anyone renouncing women. Today however, thousands renounce women. The scriptures cite only a couple of instances where God appeared before devotees on their deathbeds. But today, God appears to call all the devotees when they pass away. The previous incarnations are like *pārasmani*, but *Purushottam* is like *chintāmani*.” [Swāmini Vātu II/171]

(10) On many occasions, Swāmi explained the distinction between *avatār* and *avatāri* in these words: The archer and the arrow are separate. One should know that the archer is the cause of the arrow. However the distinction between *avatār* and *avatāri* is not like the different guises of an actor on a

stage. Just as there is a sharp difference between a sovereign emperor and a subordinate chieftain, there is a difference between *avatār* and *avatāri*. It is against the spirit of the scriptures to treat all *avatārs* and all *sādhus* as equal.

(11) “The bleating of hundreds of thousands of goats incites no fear at all. But a lion’s roar is terrifying and can tear apart an elephant’s temple. Similarly, there is no problem in identifying Mahārāj with other *avatārs*. But to proclaim that all the *avatārs* owe their powers to Mahārāj and have attained their present state by worshipping Him is as intimidating as a lion’s frightening roar is to an elephant.” [Swāmini Vātu V/198]

#### 4.3.3 SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ – THE SUPREME: IN THE WORDS OF THE PARAMHANSAS

Attracted by the divine and glorious personality of Shriji Mahārāj, many of the *paramhansas* unreservedly accepted His supremacy. Others accepted Him as God but on realising His immense glory and superhuman deeds, they started trusting His words and gradually came to acknowledge His divine supremacy. Their realisation of Shriji Mahārāj’s supremacy has been incorporated in the words of their *kirtans* and scriptures, as exemplified in the following extracts:

(1) In all his literary works, Nishkulānand Swāmi has described Shriji Mahārāj in glowing terms – as *Purna Purushottam*, the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs*:

(A) ADYA MADHYA ANTYE AVATĀR, THAYĀ AGANIT THĀSHE APĀR,  
PAN SARVENĀ KĀRAN JEH, TETO SWĀMI SAHAJĀNAND EH.

At the beginning, the middle, the end of creation, countless *avatārs* have incarnated and will incarnate.

But the prime cause of them all is one and only one – Swāmi Sahajānand.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Avatār Chintāmani 32]

(B) VIDHIPAR TE VIRĀT KAHĪ E, TE PAR PRADHĀN PURUSH LAHĪ;  
TE PAR MUL PRAKRUTI PURUSH, TETHI PAR AKSHAR SUJASH.  
AKSHAR PAR PURUSHOTTAM JEH,  
TENE DHARYU MANUSHYANU DEH;

TENU DARSHAN NE SPARSH KYĀTHĪ,

SAHU VICHĀRONE MANMĀTHĪ.

JE CHHE MAN VĀNINE AGAM, TE TO ĀJ THAYĀ CHHE SUGAM;

Beyond Brahmā is Virāt. Beyond Virāt is *Pradhān Purush*.

Beyond *Pradhān Purush* is *Mul Prakriti Purush*. And beyond him is majestic *Akshar*.

Beyond *Akshar* is *Purushottam*, who has descended in human form.

Just think – could we ever have seen or touched Him?

The one who is beyond words and thoughts – has become easily accessible to us today.

[Bhaktachintāmani 77]

(C) PACHHI BOLĪYĀ PRĀNJIVAN, TAME SĀMBHALAJYO SAHU JAN,  
TAMANE JE MALI CHHE MURATI, TENE NIGAM KAHE NETI NETI...  
ATI APĀR AKSHARĀTIT, THAI TAMĀRE TE SĀTHE PRIT,  
BHAKTA JAKTAMĀHI CHHE JO GHANĀ, UPĀSAK AVATĀR TANĀ.  
JE JE MURATI JANANE BHĀVE,

TE MURATI NIJADHĀM PAHOCHĀVE,

PAN SARVE PĀR JE PRĀPATI, TE CHHE TAMĀRE KAHE PRĀNPATI.

Then addressing them, Shriji Mahārāj said, “All of you listen carefully.

Though the *Vedās* say ‘He is not, He is not’, He is very much before you in human form.

You are associated with Him, who is immeasurable and beyond *Akshar*.

Many devotees on this earth worship various *avatārs*.

They in turn, help their followers to attain their respective abodes.

What you have attained is unsurpassable, and beyond their reach,” so said Shriji Mahārāj.

[Bhaktachintāmani 79]

Nishkulānand Swāmi sings of Shriji Mahārāj’s supremacy in *Purushottam Prakāsh*:

(D) PURUSHOTTAM PRAGATI RE...

KALASH CHADĀVYO KALYĀNANO RE,

SAHUNĀ MASTAK PAR MOD;

DHANYA DHANYA Ā AVATĀRNE RE, JOVĀ RĀKHI NAHI JOD...

DHĀMI JE AKSHARDHĀMNĀ RE, TENE ĀPYO CHHE ĀNAND;...

BANDH KIDHĀ BIJĀ BĀRANĀ RE, VE’TI KIDHI AKSHAR VĀT...

ASHĀDHI MEGHE ĀVI KARYĀ RE, ZĀZĀ BIJĀ ZĀKAL;...

The advent of *Purushottam* marked the pinnacle of liberation as if everyone has a crown on their heads.

Blessed and unparalleled is this incarnation.

The supreme Lord of *Akshardhām* has given divine joy in abundance.  
All other doors are closed, but the royal road to *Akshardhām* has been  
laid wide open.

Before the torrential rains of *Ashādhā*, all others are like dew.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Purushottam Prakāsh 55]

Shriji Mahārāj is compared in the simile with the heavy  
downpour of the month of *Ashādhā* which blossoms the whole  
earth. The other *avatārs* are compared to dew which cannot  
affect the earth. In such words, Nishkulānand Swāmi has sung  
the divine glory of his supreme Lord.

(2) SAHAJĀNAND SWĀMI RE, POTE PARABRAHMA CHHE RE,  
SWĀMINĀRĀYAN JENU NĀM RE.

Sahajānand Swāmi Himself is *Parabrahman*.

His name is Swāminārāyan.

[Sadguru Muktnānand Swāmi]

(3) DIVYA CHAITANYA AKSHAR JENU GHAR CHHE JO,  
KSHAR AKSHAR THAKI E TO PAR CHHE JO.

Full of divine consciousness is His abode *Akshardhām*.

He is beyond *kshar* and *Akshar*.

[Sadguru Premānand Swāmi]

(4) KOTI VISHNU BRAHMĀ KAR JODI, SHANKAR KOTI SURAT ĀNI,  
SHĀRDĀ SHESH ARU NĀRAD BARANE,  
NAHI MĀNAT NAR ABHIMĀNI.

PARABRAHMA PURAN PURUSHOTTAM,

SWĀMINĀRĀYAN SUMARĀNI,

SUKHĀNAND SHARANE SUKH PĀYO, BHAJAN BHAROSĀ UR ĀNI.

Millions of Brahmās and Vishnus respectfully fold their hands.

Millions of Shivas, Shārdā, Shesha and Nārada meditate.

But the egoists still have no faith.

Remembering *Parabrahman Purna Purushottam* Swāminārāyan

Sukhānand is very elated. And holding fast to this faith, he sings the  
Lord's praises.

[Sadguru Sukhānand Swāmi]

The poems of the eight saint-poets, *Haridigvijay* written by  
the great scholar sādhu Nityānand Swāmi, and the monumental  
*Shri Harililākalpataru* composed by Achintyānand Brahmachāri  
at the inspiration of Gunātītānand Swāmi are dotted with

numerous references of Shriji Mahārāj's supreme status.

Firmly convinced of the supreme position of Shriji Mahārāj,  
the *paramhansas* had no interest in anything up to *Prakriti*  
*Purush*. Therefore, when Shriji Mahārāj considered sending  
*Sadguru* Swarupānand Swāmi to *Golok*, the latter forcefully  
replied, "I am already lying in that pit!"

#### 4.4 COSMIC EVOLUTION

Let us now examine the phases of cosmic evolution to  
establish the highest position of Shriji Mahārāj.

While explaining cosmic evolution, Shriji Mahārāj has  
clearly distinguished the position of different demigods,  
*Ishwars*, their evolution, etc. Philosophically there are five *anādi*  
*bheds* – eternal entities. *Jivas* and *devas* belong to any one of  
four categories: *Udbhij*, *Jarāyuj*, *Swedaj* and *Andaj* – i.e. born  
from womb, earth, sweat or egg. Everyone from *Virāt* to  
*Prakriti Purush* are all included in *Ishwar*. *Māyā* is God's *shakti*.  
*Māyā* merges in the light of *Aksharbrahman* [Nishkulānand  
Kāvya: Purushottam Prakāsh 10, 19, 20]

Shriji Mahārāj says: "*Jiva*, *Ishwar*, *māyā*, *Brahman* and  
*Parabrahman* are the five eternal entities according to the *Vedās*,  
*Purānas*, *Itihāsa* and *Smritis*. The phenomenon of the cosmic  
evolution is explained thus: *Māyā* is the symbolic form of earth  
potentially bearing an infinite number of seeds. *Ishwar* is the  
symbolic form of rain. When the rain falls, the seeds within  
the earth grow. Seeds are the *jivas*. In the way *Ishwar* and *māyā*  
are eternal, *jivas* are also eternal, but they are not the *amshas* of  
God. The *jiva* – when it takes refuge in God – transgresses  
*māyā*, becomes brahmanised like Nārada and the Sanaks, and  
resides in the abode of God as His graced servant. This is the  
philosophical truth as propounded by Me." [Vachanāmritam  
Gadhadā III/10]

"This God, both in His divine and human aspects, shines  
luminously all alone<sup>1</sup> in His divine entity even after the period

(1) Alone here also implies inclusion of *Aksharbrahman* and *Akshar muktas*.

of final rest. Again, at the time of cosmic evolution, which He inspires through *Prakriti* and *Purush*, it is He who creates millions of macrocosms.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/56]

As willed by God, evolution and dissolution take place, as confirmed by the *Shruti*:

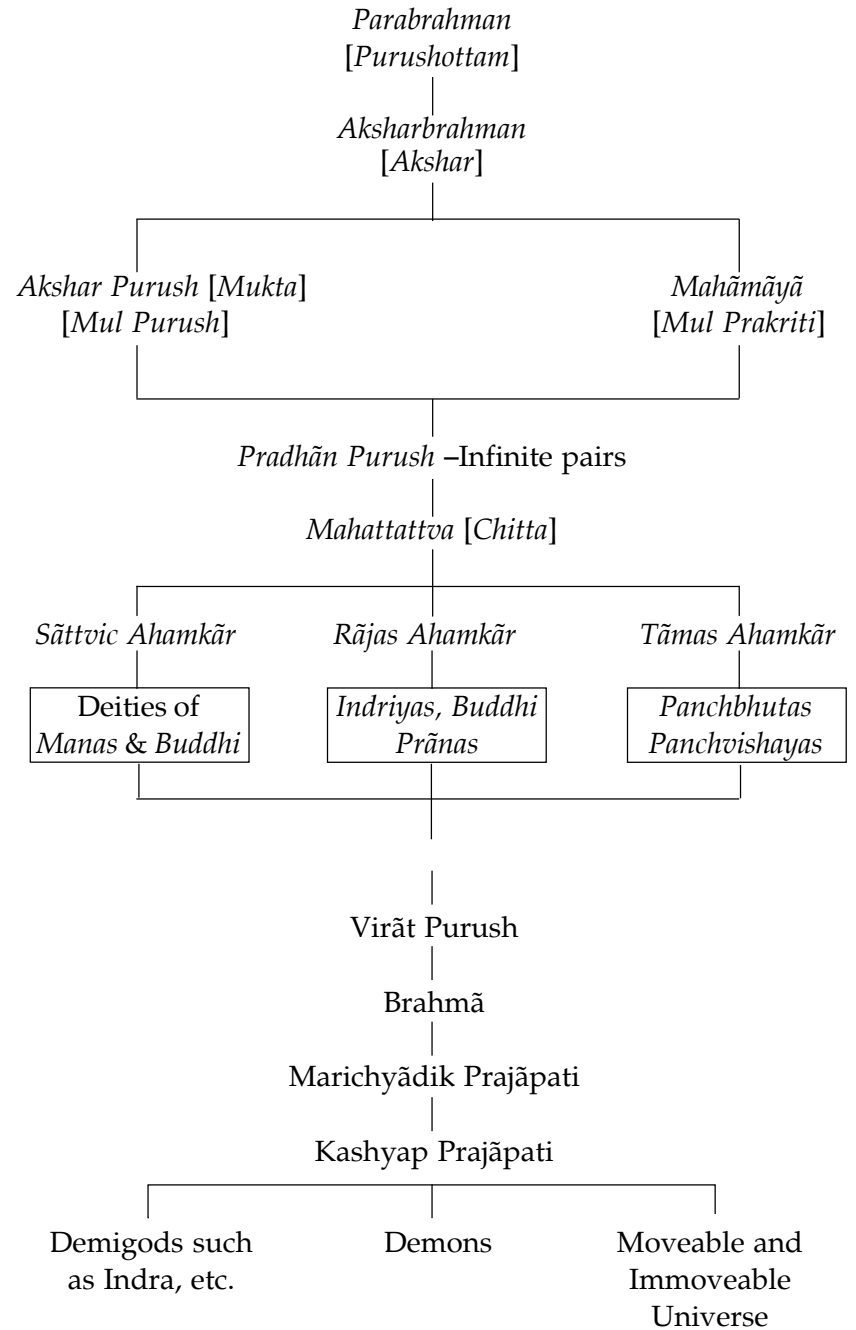
TADAIKSHATA BAHU SYĀM PRAJĀYETI æ

[Chhândogya Upanishad VI/2:3]

Shriji Mahārāj explains the process of evolution: “God, who transcends *Akshar*, looks at *Akshar* at the time of the cosmic evolution. *Akshar* therefore inspires *Purush*, who was resting in a dormant state, into activity. *Purushottam* through *Akshar* enters *Purush* by means of His *antaryāmi shakti* and inspires *Prakriti* to a process of procreation. The union of *Purush* with *Prakriti* brings forth *Pradhān Purush*. The ubiquitous presence of *Purushottam* – by His *antaryāmi shakti* – began to be felt in the various entities created in the process of procreation, of course in a graded form, according to the power to sustain and exhibit His *shakti*.

From *Pradhān Purush* evolved *Mahattattva* and from *Mahattattva*, the ego in three forms. From the ego evolved the *panchbhutas*, the *panchvishayas*, *indriyas*, the *antahkaran* and the presiding deities. Virāt then evolved from the above. From the navel of Virāt emerged Brahmā, and Brahmā created Marich, Prajāpati, etc. From them evolved Kashyap, Prajāpati and from them evolved deities such as Indra, the demons and the apparent universe.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/41]

When *Parabrahman Paramātman* desires to create the universe, He looks at His eternal devotee *Akshar*. Knowing His Lord’s – *Parabrahman Paramātman’s* – wish, *Akshar* looks at *Purush* (*Akshar mukta* or *Akshar Purush*) and inspires him to abide by the will of *Purushottam*. Therefore, the *Aksharātmak Mukta Purush*, to fulfil *Parabrahman’s* desire, unites with *Mahāmāyā* and activates infinite *Pradhān* (females) and *Purush* (males), which had until then been lying dormant in *māyā* since the time of dissolution. Thus, through *Pradhān* and



*Purush*, the entire cosmos comes into existence.

*Aksharātmak Purush* inspires *Prakriti* in as much as he, as *Purush*, inspires his *shakti* in *Mahāmāyā* – moving her from the state of complete tranquillity or equilibrium (*sāmyavasthā*) to one of activity. By the union of *Purush* and *Prakriti*, infinite pairs of *Pradhān* and *Purush* are formed to create infinite cosmoses. In this manner, as the presence of *Purushottam* – by His *antaryāmi shakti* – began to be felt gradually, life began to flourish.

*Aksharātmak Purush*, otherwise known as a *Aksharrup mukta* of *Akshardhām* is: “...devoid of any attachment to sensorial objects, is a liberated one and is therefore *Brahman*. Though he energises *māyā*, he is not adversely affected by the influence of *māyā*, nor does he have any desire for enjoyment. He remains fulfilled with the enjoyment of the bliss of God.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/31]

The majority of scriptures refer to this *Purush* as *Purushottam*. It is therefore difficult to realise that *Parabrahman Purushottam* is different from *Purush*. Consequently, confusion arises regarding *Purushottam*. But in *Vachanāmritam*, Shriji Mahārāj clarifies: “Just as there is a difference between *jīva* and *Ishwar*, and just as there is a difference between *Ishwar* and *Purush*, similarly there is a great difference between *Purush* and *Purushottam* – Lord Vāsudev. *Purushottam* Vāsudev is the Lord of all *Purushas*, and the *Purushas* – who are many – adore the lotus feet of Lord Vāsudev and pray to Him... Though I have explained the distinction between these forms of *Purush* and *Purushottam* many times, it has either not been heard properly or pondered upon thoroughly by you; therefore your mind becomes obscured by the mere reading of scriptures. If this distinction is properly recognised, there will be no obscurity in one’s mind.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/31]

This chain of evolution clearly demonstrates that Shriji Mahārāj Himself – as *Parabrahman Purushottam* – is the inspirer, the *antaryāmi* and the prime cause of creation.

Listening to this elucidation by Shriji Mahārāj, *Sadguru Premānand Swāmi* has written in his *kirtan*, “*Bolyā Shri Hari re...*”:

JIVA ISHWAR TANO RE, MĀYĀ KĀLA PURUSH PRADHĀN,  
SAUNE VASH KARU RE, SAUNO PRERAK HU BHAGWĀN.  
AGANIT VISHVANI RE, UTPATTI PĀLAN PRALAY THĀY,  
MĀRI MARJI VINĀ RE, KOITHI TARANU NAV TODĀY.

The inspirer of *jīva*, *Ishwara*, *māyā*, *kāla*, *Purush*, *Pradhān*,  
I control them all. I am the Lord.

I create, sustain and dissolve countless worlds.

Without my will, no one can pluck even a blade of grass.

[*Sadguru Premānand Swāmi*]

#### 4.5 PARABRAHMAN PURUSHOTTAM NĀRĀYAN: ONE AND UNIQUE

We have seen from the above account that *Parabrahman Purushottam Nārāyan* is the supreme, the cause of all *avatārs*, the ultimate cause of all causes and the controller of all. There is only one *Parabrahman*. That *Parabrahman* is Lord Swāminārāyan. He is one and incomparable. And no power, not even *Akshar* can become *Parabrahman*. The scriptural confirmation in this regard, is as follows:

The Shrutis pronounce:

EKAMEVĀDWITĪYAM BRAHMA

God is only one and unique.

Clarifying this basic principle, Shriji Mahārāj says: “*Nārāyan* is one and unparalleled; none can attain that Godship, which is the sole monopoly of *Nārāyan*.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 13, Kāriyāni 8, Kāriyāni 10]

“God is one and unparalleled. Worshipping God, many released souls have attained the redemptive virtues of God, yet they cannot attain that transcendental status of God.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/39]

“God is one and unparalleled whose equivalent is not attained by anyone, not even by *Akshar*. This principle should be properly inculcated.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 4]

The *Upanishads* also reiterate this point:

NA TATSAMASHCHĀPYADHIKASHCHA DRISHYATE æ

None can ever equal or surpass *Parabrahman*.

[Shvetāshvatara Upanishad VI/8 &  
Bhavasambhava Samhitā Upanishad II/24]

#### 4.6.1 SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ'S SUPREMACY:

##### AS UNDERSTOOD FROM HIS INCIDENTS

(1) A brāhmin aspirant by the name of Shitaldās had heard about the admirable work of Rāmānand Swāmi and came for his *darshan*. Unfortunately, Rāmānand Swāmi had passed away just a few days before Shitaldās's arrival. He was therefore very disappointed and thought of going back. At that moment, Shriji Mahārāj placed him in a divine trance wherein he had the *darshan* of Rāmānand Swāmi and the 24 incarnations praying to Shriji Mahārāj. In this state of trance, Shitaldās performed *pujā* of Shriji Mahārāj with love. He also had an intense desire to offer *pujā* to the infinite *muktas* of *Akshardhām*.

Realising his desire, Shriji Mahārāj asked him to imagine, "If any one of the incarnations or if Rāmānand Swāmi happen to be *Purushottam*, then may I assume infinite forms." In spite of such imagination, Shitaldās failed to assume infinite forms. Shriji Mahārāj then said:

CHINTVAN EVU MUJ VISHE, HAVE KARO KAHE PARMESH

Then the Lord said, "Now you may think on the same lines about Me."

"If Shriji Mahārāj happens to be *Purushottam*, may I assume infinite forms." The moment Shitaldās held this thought, he assumed countless forms and performed *pujā* of infinite *muktas* simultaneously. Coming out of trance, Shitaldās prayed to Shriji Mahārāj. He was convinced of the supremacy of Shriji Mahārāj and lost all interest in worldly affairs. He was later initiated as a sādhu by Shriji Mahārāj and was renamed Vyāpakānand Swāmi.

SARVA AVATĀR EMĀ SAMĀY, POTE KOI MĀ LIN NA THĀY,

EVI VĀT KAHĪ JEH VĀR, THAYĀ LIN BADHĀ AVATĀR.

SARITĀ O MALE TE SĀGARMĀ, MALYĀ AVATĀR SAU HARIVARMĀ.

All the incarnations merge in Him. But He does not merge in anybody.

The moment this was said, all the incarnations merged in Him.

As all the rivers flow into the ocean, all the incarnations merged in Him.

[Harilāmritam V/3]

(2) Parvatbhāi of Agatrāi was a dedicated devotee of Shriji Mahārāj. Once while ploughing his field, he was engrossed in meditating on Shriji Mahārāj, and had the *darshan* of His radiant form. Subsequently he had the *darshan* of all the twenty-four incarnations one after another, and saw all of them merge into Shriji Mahārāj's image. Parvatbhāi was immensely pleased by this *darshan*. This incident demonstrates that only the all-powerful and highest can merge others into Himself.

By sending in trance the erudite and the illiterate, devotees or non-devotees, even animals, birds, worms, insects, etc., Shriji Mahārāj manifested His spiritual powers and established His supremacy. Even fishes and crocodiles were placed in trance. Followers of different faiths also went into trance and had the *darshan* of the deities they were worshipping. In trance, they also saw all these deities merging into Shriji Mahārāj. Attracted by His sublime glory, aspirants from all over India came and sought His refuge.

*Vachanāmritam* Panchālā 6 also mentions a similar point; Lord Krishna exhibited the glory of all the previous incarnations. Therefore, His superiority over them is acknowledged in the scriptures. Similarly, Shriji Mahārāj manifested His spiritual powers by merging into Himself all the previous incarnations – including that of Lord Krishna's. Shriji Mahārāj has therefore asserted that His own incarnation is supreme.

Describing the thirteen facets of Shriji Mahārāj's extraordinary spirituality, Gopālānand Swāmi writes: "Many people observed the merging of the other incarnations into Shriji Mahārāj's *murti*. However the striking feature of

*Dharmasut* [son of Dharmadev – Shriji Mahārāj] is that He Himself does not merge into those incarnations.”<sup>1</sup>

(3) After Rāmānand Swāmi passed away, Shriji Mahārāj revealed His great glory on many occasions in Loj and Māngrol. He also initiated trance – *samādhi prakran* – on a mass scale. Soon after Shriji Mahārāj was appointed as Guru of the *Sampradāya*, Bhimbhāi, a devout follower from Kālwanī requested, “When a new king is enthroned, all the prisoners are set free. You are the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs*. To commemorate this event, kindly free all the *jivas* who are condemned to suffer the tortures of Hell.”

Moved by Bhimbhāi’s prayer, Shriji Mahārāj sent Swarupānand Swāmi into trance to *Yamapuri* – Hell. Deeply touched by the piteous wailing of the *jivas* in Hell, Swarupānand Swāmi felt sorry for them. He asked them to chant the name of Swāminārāyan. By chanting that divine *mantra*, all the *jivas* were instantly freed from the torments of hell. They all assumed four-armed forms and were transmigrated to the *loka* of *Bhumāpurush*. Thus, Shriji Mahārāj had also manifested His infinite powers through His *paramhansas*.

Muktānand Swāmi has narrated this incident in the following *kirtan*:

POTE PARABRAHMA RE, SWĀMI SAHAJĀNAND,  
NĀRĀYAN PRABAL PRATĀP CHHE.  
SWĀMINĀRĀYAN MUKHE UCHCHARE,  
TENE JANMAMARAN JAMNO BHAY JĀY,  
SARAVE NARAKNĀ KUND KHĀLI THAYĀ,  
BHUKHYĀ JAMGANA RE KAR GHASI PASTĀY.  
SAHAJĀNAND SWĀMI RE, NA PRAGATAT Ā SAME RE,  
PRĀNI KOI PĀMAT NAHI BHAVPĀR...

Swāmi Sahajānand Himself is *Parabrahman Nārāyan* with endless authority.

He who utters the name of Swāminārāyan is freed from the vicious

(1) SANDARSHAYET PURUANIJĀVATĀRĀLLINĀN SWAMURTAU SHATASHOMANUSHYĀN æ  
LINO NA TESHU SWAYAM ADBHUTANTAT TRAYODESHAM DHARMASUTASYA LAKSHAMA  
ææ

cycle of births and deaths, and the clutches of Yama.

All the pits in Hell have been emptied; the hungry hell-wardens are wringing their hands in despair.

Had Sahajānand Swāmi not descended on earth in our times, No soul would have been freed from the relentless wheel of births and deaths.

On the same theme, Nishkulānand Swāmi has also written:

JIVA SAYAMNI E (YAMAPURIMĀ) SHID JĀY RE,  
PRAGAT PRABHU CHHE PRUTHVI MĀY RE....  
BESE RĀJĀ GĀDI PAR KOY RE,  
CHHODE BANDHIVĀNNĀ BANDH SOY RE;  
TEM BANDH THI CHHODYĀ BAHU JAN RE,  
POTE PRAGAT SHRI BHAGWAN RE;  
MAHĀ MOTO PRATĀP PRAGATĀVI RE,  
RIT NAUTAM NYĀRI CHALĀVI RE;  
JENE UPAR NAHI BIJO KOY RE,  
TE TO JEM KARE TEM HOY RE;  
SAUNĀ NĀTH NIYANTĀ SWĀMI RE,  
SAU DHĀMTANĀ PAN DHĀMI RE;  
TE TO ADHALAK ĀJ DHALIYĀ RE,  
THAYĀ SUKHI JAN JENE MALIYĀ RE.

When God in human form has manifested on earth, why should a *jiva* be consigned to hell?

When a king is enthroned, all the prisoners are set free from their bondage.

Similarly, the manifested God has released many *jivas*.

Demonstrating His immeasurable glory, He has blazed a new trail.

No one is above or beyond Him; whatever He does is a memorable event.

He governs all and is the Lord of all the abodes.

He (Shriji Mahārāj) is now showering His pleasure; whoever has met Him experiences divine bliss.

(4) When Shriji Mahārāj had the scripture *Satsangijivanam* written in Gadhadā, a lengthy debate on *upāsanā* took place. Nityānand Swāmi insisted on describing Shriji Mahārāj as supreme, the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs*, and the final cause of all causes. The other *paramhansas*, however, were in favour of depicting Shriji Mahārāj as equal to Lord Krishna. Nityānand Swāmi forcefully pointed out Shriji Mahārāj’s



merging of the twenty-four incarnations into Himself, and their Lord's limitless divine glory. He pleaded that equating Shriji Mahārāj with the previous *avatārs* amounted to denial of His omnipotence and miraculous deeds. Shriji Mahārāj, however, sided with the rest of the *paramhansas* by affirming: "I am on par with Shri Krishna. Nothing more should be written." Shriji Mahārāj had a long drawn-out debate with Nityānand Swāmi regarding this matter, but he refused to change his stance. Following this, Nityānand Swāmi was isolated and Shriji Mahārāj stopped talking to him, ultimately excommunicating him. Despite this humiliation, Nityānand Swāmi remained firm in his supreme understanding about the Lord. After a week, Shriji Mahārāj praised his understanding. As a token of His appreciation, He garlanded Nityānand Swāmi adding, "A true *upāsak* should be like this Nityānand Swāmi. Even though I sided with the other *paramhansas* and he was insulted, he did not give up his correct understanding." This incident clearly illustrates Shriji Mahārāj's supremacy.

Despite this, some of the leading *paramhansas* were hesitant in publicly declaring Shriji Mahārāj as God and as supreme. They had apprehensions that such a portrayal lacked scriptural confirmation and may not be widely accepted. Consequently, their inflexible views prevailed and Shriji Mahārāj was placed on the same level as Lord Krishna in the scripture *Satsangijivanam*. Therefore, Shriji Mahārāj said that in the future, scriptures describing His divine glory would be composed and also His *murti* would be installed.

On many occasions, Shriji Mahārāj said, "Had I asked Gunātītānand Swāmi and Nishkulānand Swāmi to study Sanskrit, there would have been a large scale acceptance of this principle by followers of the Faith. There would have been no need for a scholar such as Dinānāth Bhatt, and My divine glory and majestic powers would have been written exactly as they are."

(5) In the course of His travels as a teenager, Shriji Mahārāj arrived in Lojpur as Nilkanth Varni. At the time, Rāmānand

Swāmi was staying in Bhuj. Rāmānand Swāmi was only too well aware of Nilkanth Varni's eminence. He therefore instructed all his disciples to visit Lojpur for Varni's *darshan*. Lālji Suthār of Shekhpāt (later Nishkulānand Swāmi), however, had an irresistible attraction for his Guru, Rāmānand Swāmi. Therefore, instead of going to Loj, he went to Bhuj. Here, Rāmānand Swāmi asked him, "Disregarding my orders, why did you come here? Varni is extremely great and worthy of *darshan*."

Thereupon Lālji Bhakta inquired, "How eminent is this Varni? Can he be compared to you?"

Rāmānand Swāmi replied, "Varni is superior to me even superior to Shri Krishna. He is the cause of all *avatārs*, greatest of the great, endowed with divine virtues and powers. He is *Purushottam*." In this way, Rāmānand Swāmi explained at length the supremacy of Shriji Mahārāj and rebuked Lālji Bhakta for not going to Loj. This incident has been described in *Harilīlāmṛitam*:

KAHE LĀLJI TE MOTĀ KEVĀ, DATTĀTRI KE RUSHABHDEV JEVĀ;  
KE SHU CHHE RĀMCHANDRA SAMĀN,  
RĀMĀNAND KAHE SUNO KĀN.  
JEM KRUSHNA MOTĀ SARAVETHI,  
TEM Ā CHHE MOTĀ VALI ETHI;  
Ā CHHE AVATĀRNĀ AVATĀRI,  
GHANU SHU KAHIE VISTĀRI..  
EVĀ MOTĀNĀ DARSHAN MUKI,  
KEM ĀVYĀ CHHO KACHCHMĀ CHUKI?

Lālji asks, "How great is He? Is He like Dattātreya or Rishabhdev?

Or is He comparable to Rāmachandra?"

Rāmānand replies, "Please listen carefully,

Krishna is greater than all the deities.

He (Varni) is greater than even Krishna.

He is the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs*. There is no need to elaborate any further.

Leaving aside His *darshan*, why have you come to Kutch?"

(6) Once Shriji Mahārāj, tongue in cheek, told the *paramhansas*, "When you go to preach from village to village explain that I am on par with Dattātreya, Kapil, Nārada, Shuk,

Sanak and others. But in no case should you say that I am superior to them." The *paramhansas* agreed. When they returned to Gadhpur following their preaching tours to various regions, Shriji Mahārāj asked them, "How did you introduce Me?"

The *paramhansas* replied, "Mahārāj, we introduced you to be as great as Dattātreya, Kapil, Nārada, Shuk, Sanak and others."

Disappointed by their reply, Shriji Mahārāj said, "Truly, you are simpletons. You have stayed with Me for such a long time. You have been a witness to My remarkable deeds, yet why do you still remain unaware of My true form? What has been carefully heard and seen can always be regurgitated. Are you unable to talk about My divine glory in your sermons? I am the final *avatāri* of all *avatārs*, the supreme *Purushottam*. Please imbibe and propagate this knowledge."

With folded hands, the *paramhansas* replied, "Mahārāj, we will realise your supremacy as such, and explain it to others."

(7) Once Ladubā, Jivubā and other devotees in Gadhadā told Shriji Mahārāj, "Mahārāj, we are indeed very fortunate to have met the same God who was with the *Gopis* and *Govāls*."

Shriji Mahārāj immediately clarified, "The God, whom the *Gopis* and *Govāls* had met, has not even been blessed with the *darshan* of this *murti* yet. What you have attained is beyond description."

(8) When the images of Nar-Nārāyan Dev were installed in Amdāvād, Shriji Mahārāj said to Ānandānand Swāmi, "Nar-Nārāyan is the king of Bharatkhand. We have installed his *murti*. Nar-Nārāyan incarnate lives in *Badrikāshram* and Lakshmi-Nārāyan lives in *Vaikunth*. They, along with other deities, offer their *upāsanā* to this *pragat Purushottam* [Swāminārāyan], and serve Him." With these words, Shriji Mahārāj expressed His highest position – that of *Purushottam*.

(9) Although Shriji Mahārāj lived in Saurāshtra, He was well-known throughout India. People talked about the new faith started by *Jivanmukta* (one who grants liberation in this

very life) in the West. By merely uttering the word *Jivanmukta*, the surroundings glowed with light. Everyone wondered that if the name itself was so impressive how wonderful would He be in person? Many were attracted from all corners of the country to come to Saurāshtra where they joined the Fellowship. Some of these were heads of sects and monasteries. With their band of disciples, they sought refuge in Shriji Mahārāj.

When Shriji Mahārāj was only 23 years old, He initiated 500 aspirants as *paramhansas* in a single night, many of whom were senior in age, great scholars, ascetics, and extremely brilliant.

This incident illustrates His majestic awe, enchanting personality and His boundless energy. The *paramhansas* were no ordinary people. Many were experts in the fields of literature, music, sculpture, painting, dance, etc. They were erudite and affluent. What was the charisma of this young man that the *paramhansas* renounced their homes, families, wealth, position, fixed notions of caste and status, to fall at His lotus feet? This single act of the Lord is in itself an eloquent testimony of His divine supremacy.

The *paramhansas* had an unshakeable conviction of Shriji Mahārāj's supremacy. Shriji Mahārāj once put them to the test by asking, "Oh *paramhansas*, the previous incarnations destroyed many demons and accomplished wonderful feats. On the other hand, I have not done anything to merit the honour of being called God. I have not churned the ocean, nor have I liquidated the *kshatriyas* from the face of the earth. I have neither killed Rāvan, nor have I built a bridge over the ocean. Neither have I lifted Mt. Govardhan, nor have I killed Jarāsandh. I have not performed such heroic acts. Yet, why do you call Me God? You must certainly be mistaken."

But the *paramhansas* were not one to be misled by the Lord's deceptive words. Their conviction remained unwavering. They replied, "Mahārāj! If the sky says that it is not the sky and if the sun says that it is not the sun, who will believe them? God is completely self-willed. Whatever He may

say, we are unlikely to be fooled. You may have not killed the demons. But they were already killed by their passion, anger, greed, infatuation, jealousy, calumny, ego, etc. These vices are such that they can precipitate one's downfall from *Swargalok*, *Vidhilok* or *Vaikunth*. You have emancipated us from these deadly vices."

*MĀTE ENE DIYE JA VIDĀRI, TE TO AVATĀRNĀ AVATĀRI.*

He who can uproot vices, He is the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs*.

[Bhaktachintāmani 105]

"You have liberated the pious as well as the impious. You may not have built a bridge across the ocean; but you have built a bridge that helps one to cross the turbulent ocean of worldly life, and leads one onto the path to *Akshardhām*. You have freed us from the bondage of *māyā* and helped us to attain *Akshardhām*." Shriji Mahārāj was extremely pleased to hear these words of unflinching faith from the mouths of the *paramhansas*. [Bhaktachintāmani 104-105]

#### 4.6.2 SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ'S SUPREMACY: AS EXPLAINED

##### BY AKSHARBRAHMAN GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI

The inspiring words of Gunātitānand Swāmi acted as a catalyst in propagating the correct understanding of Shriji Mahārāj's supremacy in *Satsang*. Shriji Mahārāj desired the propagation of such an understanding – as in its absence, it is not possible to transgress the dense darkness of *māyā*. Precisely for this reason, Shriji Mahārāj appeared to *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi in a dream at Umreth and told him, "Spread the knowledge of My supremacy as *Purushottam*; otherwise, I will keep you in this human body for a thousand years."

(1) Whenever *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi explained the distinction between *avatārs* and their ultimate cause – *avatāri*, Motā Ātmānand Swāmi, who was senior in age, used to point out, "Boy! Do not indulge in comparisons of Gods."

Gopālānand Swāmi used to reply with a smile, "Swāmi, today you may not understand what I am saying, but in the

future, a *sādhū* will come and explain this to you."

When Ātmānand Swāmi was 116 years old, and still did not see the end of his life, he wondered, "I have no desires yet why does Mahārāj not come to take me to His divine abode – *Akshardhām*?"

Eventually, Gunātitānand Swāmi recalled various incidents, wherein Shriji Mahārāj had told Ātmānand Swāmi in person about His supremacy. Gunātitānand Swāmi emphasised the importance of understanding the supreme *upāsana*. As a result, imperfections in Ātmānand Swāmi's knowledge of *upāsana* were soon removed, following which Shriji Mahārāj took him to *Akshardhām*.

Thus, many a senior *sādhū* had the benefit of such talks given by Gunātitānand Swāmi.

(2) While bathing, *Sadguru* Muktānand Swāmi used to recite the names of various places of pilgrimage. Through Shāntānand Swāmi, a disciple of Muktānand Swāmi, Gunātitānand Swāmi suggested that he recite the name of Swāminārāyan as it is supreme, its chanting covering all the holy places. Henceforth, Muktānand Swāmi realised his mistake and duly corrected it.

(3) When *Sadguru* Premānand Swāmi was staying in Junāgaadh, he often sang songs narrating the pastimes of Lord Krishna. Gunātitānand Swāmi often reminded him, "Swāmi, this body will not stay much longer. Therefore leave aside the pastimes of Krishna and tune in to the pastimes of Shriji Mahārāj."

(4) Only when Gunātitānand Swāmi explained *Vachanāmritam* Gadhadā II/9 to *Sadguru* Shukānand Swāmi did the latter realise the divine supremacy of Shriji Mahārāj. He said, "I myself have edited this particular *Vachanāmritam* and was instrumental in its selection, but only today have I grasped its true meaning."

(5) In the propagation of the supreme form of Lord Swāminārāyan, Gunātitānand Swāmi was never deterred by scriptural dogmatism. He remarked about those who indulged

in such fanaticism: “The *jīva* does not hesitate anywhere. It only hesitates when it comes to accepting Shriji Mahārāj as *Purushottam*.” Leading *paramhansas* had also seen and heard about the pastimes of Shriji Mahārāj. Yet they were hesitant in writing about His true glory. In connection to this, Swāmi said, “They are confused in their interpretations of the scriptures. With constant hammering, they will give up their stand.” So saying, he placed three *champā* flowers on *Āchārya* Raghuvirji Mahārāj’s cushion and added, “Some have reached the first flower, others have reached the second one, but no one has reached this last flower.” [Swāmini Vātu III/19]

In other words, some understood Shriji Mahārāj as comparable to Rāmchandraji. They reached the first flower. Others who recognised Shriji Mahārāj as Lord Krishna reached the second flower. But no one realised Shriji Mahārāj as He was – supreme, the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs*, *Purushottam* – to reach the third flower. To inculcate this understanding to the *jīvas*, Gunātītānand Swāmi handed over the third flower to Achintyānand Brahmachāri and instructed him to compose a unique volume describing Shriji Mahārāj’s sublime form, reflecting His divine glory in every word, so that the supremacy of Shriji Mahārāj could be propagated in *Satsang*.

Abiding by Gunātītānand Swāmi’s directive, Achintyānand Brahmachāri composed a monumental volume – *Harilīlākalpataru*, which described the supreme glory of the Lord.

Thus Gunātītānand Swāmi not only spread the knowledge of Shriji Mahārāj’s supremacy through his talks, but also had it mentioned in the religious literature of the *Sampradāya* through his disciples.

There are many such incidents. Prominent *sadgurus* have written about them. We have also come to know about them through the hierarchy of spiritual Gurus. The constraints of space do not allow further narration of such incidents. A clearer understanding will be gained by studying the literature of the *Sampradāya*.

#### 4.7 QUESTIONS REGARDING SUPREMACY

Let us now turn to certain questions regarding the knowledge of Shriji Mahārāj’s supremacy.

**Question 1:** If Lord Swāminārāyan is supreme, why has He been described as Krishna in the *Vachanāmritam*, in other scriptures of the *Sampradāya* and in the *kirtans* of *paramhansas*?

**Answer:** During the time of Shriji Mahārāj, there were many faiths and cults, some of which expounded irreligious practices, accepted false gurus, believed in superstitions and indulged in black magic. Their influence was widespread. All of these fiercely opposed the new Faith. In such trying times, if any person tried to identify himself as God, people would be reluctant to join the Faith out of sheer dismay. The acceptance of a new idea is always gradual. Shriji Mahārāj was therefore identified initially as a *Satpurush*, then as an *avatār* and finally as *Purushottam* – the *avatāri* of all *avatārs*. As the aspirants’ faith in Him deepened, the *paramhansas* depicted Shriji Mahārāj in inspiring and enlightening terms.

In the initial stages, Muktānand Swāmi recognised Shriji Mahārāj as *Sadguru*. In the *ārṭi* composed at Kālwanī, he wrote, “*Jai Sadguru Swāmi*”; in the next stage as Krishna – “*Chhāndi ke Shri Krishna dev*” and finally as *Purushottam* – “*Māi me Purushottam var pāyo*” and “*Piyā pāyā to fir kyā sonā*”. This illustrates his gradual realisation of Shriji Mahārāj’s supremacy.

To attract people, Shriji Mahārāj installed the images of those deities at the places where they were popularly worshipped. Their devotees came for their *darshan*. By subsequent association with the *sādhus*, they developed unshakeable faith in Shriji Mahārāj’s supreme and sublime form. Gradually, the true *upāsanā* began to be widely accepted in the *Sampradāya*.

Eminent *sadgurus* explain with a simple illustration – ‘*Sthulārundhati Nyāya*’ – i.e. when a child is shown the crescent moon, the moon is pointed out to be ‘on that roof’. The roof is merely mentioned to locate the moon. This does not mean that

the moon is actually on the roof. In reality, the moon is far away. Similarly, to explain the glory of Lord *Purushottam*, He was initially identified as a *Satpurush*, then as an *avatār*, and finally as *avatāri*.

In certain *Vachanāmritams*, Shriji Mahārāj is identified as Lord Krishna. At various places, Shriji Mahārāj has called Himself a preceptor, *guru*, *Āchārya*, *sādhū*, or *sādhak*. But to the genuine aspirant, the God whom he is worshipping – is supreme and above all. To him, lesser descriptions are meant for others. He only pays heed to the words which refer to His Lord's supremacy. Shriji Mahārāj has given the same directive in *Shikshāpatrī*:

ETESHU YĀNI VĀKYĀNI SHRI KRISHNASYA VRISHASYA CHA æ  
 ATYUTKARSHAPARĀNI SYUSTATHĀ BHAKTI VIRAGAYOHO ææ  
 MANTAVYĀNI PRADHĀNĀNI TĀNYEVETĀR AVĀKYATAHA æ  
 DHARMENA SAHITĀ KRISHNA BHAKTIHI KĀRYETI TADRAHAHA ææ

The quotations from these scriptures which describe the transcendent glory of Lord Krishna and which give a superlatively elegant exposition of *dharma*, *bhakti* and *vairāgya* should be regarded as fundamental truths, compared with various other quotations. The quintessence of these chosen scriptures is devotion to God with observance of *dharma*.

[Shikshāpatrī 101-102]

Scriptural words which do not clearly define the supreme form of God, or which inadequately describe His majestic glory should not be accepted for understanding the genuine *upāsanā*. As ordained by Shriji Mahārāj, only those words which express His supreme divine glory should be accepted.

●  
**Question 2:** Many saints and *avatārs* have spoken of themselves as *Purushottam* in the scriptures – eg., Lord Kapil has said:

“Because of fear for Me the wind blows, the sun shines, the God of rain – Indra showers rain, the God of fire – Agni burns and the God of death all do their duties unhesitatingly.”<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) MADBHAYĀDVĀTI VĀTO'YAM SURYASTAPATI MADBHAYĀT æ  
 VARSHATINDRO DAHATYAGNIR MRUTYUSHCHARATI MADBHAYĀT æææ

Lord Krishna also says in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

“Because I am transcendental, beyond both *kshar* and *Akshar*, and because I am the greatest, I am described in this world and in the *Vedās* as *Purushottam*.”<sup>(1)</sup>

“Only those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond *māyā*.”<sup>(2)</sup>

“I am the fire of digestion in the bodies of all living entities.”<sup>(3)</sup>

“O Arjuna! There is no truth superior to Me.”<sup>(4)</sup>

Considering the words of these *bhaktas* or *avatārs* describing themselves as *Purushottam*, who in reality is *Purushottam*?

**Answer:** Only Sahajānand Swāmi (Lord Swāminārāyan) is *Purushottam*. According to His desire, the other *avatārs* descended on earth to redeem the *jivas*. At that time, it was essential that people give up the irreligious ways and seek refuge in them. To achieve this, Shriji Mahārāj entered them and uttered the above words. But only *Purushottam* – Shriji Mahārāj – can grant ultimate liberation. Without His entry, even Virāt was helpless to do anything. No wonder then that others cannot do anything. These above words are therefore Lord Swāminārāyan's. With His entry, the powers of the particular entity are suppressed and His own powers prevail. That, however, does not make those *avatārs* *Purna Purushottam*. When *Purushottam* withdraws His powers, those *avatārs* are reduced to their original state.

“When Lord *Purushottam Nārāyan* inspires *Purush* by His *antaryāmi shakti*, the powers of *Purush* are suppressed, and *Purushottam*'s influence prevails. Similarly, when *Purushottam* is concomitant with *māyā*, *Mahattattva*, the evolutes of *Mahattattva*, etc., He suppresses their powers and predominantly shines through all of them as *Purushottam*.

(1) YASMĀT KSHARAMATTO'HAMAKSHARĀDĀPI CHOTTAMAHA æ  
 ATO'SMI LOKE VEDE CHA PRATHITAHA PURUSHOTTAMAHA æææ

(2) MĀMEVA YE PRAPADHYANTE MĀYĀMETĀM TARANTI TE æ [Gītā VII/14]

(3) AHAM VAISHVĀNARO BHŪTVĀ... æææ [Gītā XV/14]

(4) MATTAHA PARATARAM NĀNYATKINCHIDASTI DHANANJAYA æ [Gītā VII/7]

Therefore, when the powers of *Purushottam* are inducted through all these different media for the execution of assigned duties through them, *Purushottam* only, by the pre-eminence of His powers, predominantly manifests through them... Lord *Purushottam* manifests through a medium suppressing its individuality and powers. And when He withdraws His powers from the medium, the medium reverts to its original state but lacks the pre-eminence of *Purushottam*." [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7]

Avalbā's incident is well-known in the *Sampradāya*. When she was engrossed in Shriji Mahārāj, she felt the presence of the Lord within her. In this superhuman state, she said that she herself was Shriji Mahārāj. When Shriji Mahārāj left her, she asked, "Why are all of you sitting around me?" Similarly when the Gopis, out of intense love, were lost in Shri Krishna, they used to say, "I have lifted the Govardhan Mountain, I have killed Aghāsūr..." That, however, did not imply that they were transformed into Krishna. Similarly the examples of Vāṁdev and Prahlād in the scriptures are also well-known.

Explaining this point in a simple manner, Gunātītānand Swāmi recited the *shloka*, "*Madbhayādvāti...*" and said: "Despite the show of immense powers, Lord Kapil only managed to liberate his mother. The implication is that this *shloka* refers to the glory of some other entity. But is in no way an indication of his [Kapil's] powers." [Swāmini Vātu III/72] Therefore one should understand that words indicative of supreme powers are in reality the words of Lord *Purushottam*.

**Question 3:** How many *avatārs* are there? Are they all identical? Or is there a difference between them?

**Answer:** The scriptures mention twenty-four *avatārs*. At other places, ten *avatārs* are mentioned. But as described in *Shrimad Bhāgavatam*, just as thousands of springs flow from an inexhaustible lake, similarly from Shri Hari – the reservoir of

*sattvāguna* – countless *avatārs* emerge.<sup>1</sup>

The *Bhagvad Gitā* also proclaims:

BAHUNI ME VYATITĀNI JANMĀNI TAVA CHĀRJUNA æ

Oh Arjun! Many, many births both you and I have passed.

[Bhagvad Gitā IV/5]

Nishkulānand Swāmi says, "Sahajānand Swāmi is the cause of all these *avatārs*. There are countless *avatārs*. And *Purushottam Nārāyan* Shri Sahajānand Swāmi is the *avatāri* of all *avatārs* and the cause of all causes."<sup>2</sup>

Hearing the prayer of the *Vedās*, *Purushottam Nārāyan*, with utmost compassion for the *jīvas*, descended to grant them final redemption.

Shriji Mahārāj Himself has written, "The *Vedās* prayed to Me, asking Me to annihilate *avidyā* – ignorance. Today, I am fulfilling that promise."

Again Vairāt Nārāyan continually prayed for fifty years and four and a half hours of his time. Only then did Shriji Mahārāj come down to this universe for the first time. All the followers in the Faith are well aware of this fact.

EVO KARYO MOTO UPKĀR, JEMĀ ANEK JANANO UDDHĀR.

His highest obligation has led to the liberation of many *jīvas*.

[Bhaktachintāmani 83/45]

This time *Purushottam Nārāyan* Himself had descended. Because all previous *avatārs* failed to remove the primordial ignorance. "*Tatsrishtvā tadanuprāvishat*" means that when Vāsudev Nārāyan as *Purush* inhabits *Vairāt Purush*, he is recognised as an incarnation. That is to say, only after the entry of Vāsudev, right from *Purush* up to *Brahmā*, are the forms acknowledged as incarnations of God.

Āchārya Shri Bhagvatprasādjī Mahārāj, in the Sanskrit commentary *Bhaktamanoranjani* on *Shrimad Bhāgavatam* writes, "*Āvatārān kramishyan prathamam purushāvatāramāha*" – (III:3/1).

(1) AVATĀRĀ HYĀSANKHYEYĀHĀ HAREHE SATTVANIDHERDVIJĀHĀ æ  
YATHĀVIDĀSINĀHA KULYĀHĀ SARASAHA SYUHU SAHASRASHAHA ææ

[Shrimad Bhāgavatam I/3:26]

(2) Nishkulānand Kāvyaṁ: Avatār Chintāmani 32

In the sequential order of *avatārs*, the foremost is *Purushāvatār*. *Purushāvatār* is the source of creation and dissolution of numerous minor *avatārs*, and is simultaneously their prime cause. This is how the twenty-four *avatārs* came about. Subsequently, there were scores of *avatārs* of Shri Hari. But all of them were partial, incomplete and served a limited purpose. Since all of them, to a certain extent, possessed the dignity and powers of *Purushottam Nārāyan*, they are likely to be treated as equal to one another. But *Purushottam Nārāyan's* manifestation in all of them was not in the same measure. There were variations; hence the distinctions between various *avatārs*. Furthermore, there is the distinction of abodes also, as each of the *avatārs* have their own abodes. Explaining this difference, Shriji Mahārāj has said: “Out of the various incarnations emanating from *Nārāyan*, I like Rishabhdev; then Kapilji and Dattātreya... I have no liking for the incarnations of Matsya and Kurma.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 14]

It is thus quite clear that Shriji Mahārāj is supreme, the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs*, and the ultimate cause of all causes. Higher than all the demigods, *Ishwars*, *avatārs*, *Akshar muktas* and *Mul Akshar*, He is worthy to be worshipped by all. He is the all-doer. He is always with a form. And He governs all. None are beyond Him. *Upāsanā* thus involves offering worship to Him with *Brahmabhāva*.

#### 4.8 ABOVE ALL BUT REGARD FOR ALL

Shriji Mahārāj has held all deities, *Āchāryas* and *avatārs* in high regard. The comparison with them is purely for the purposes of clearly understanding the basic principle that the various *avatārs*, their deeds and their followers are in no way superior to Shriji Mahārāj, His deeds and His followers. In the temples He constructed, Shriji Mahārāj has installed the images of various deities, thereby showing His regard for them. But to have innate faith to one's *Ishtadev*, akin to the loyalty of a faithful wife for her husband, is the hallmark of a genuine devotee. Shriji Mahārāj has laid great stress on this

point.

He says: “A wife who is singularly devoted to her husband...does not exhibit even the trace of that love [which she bears for her husband] for others. Such is the implacable love which a devoted wife offers her husband. Similarly, the devotee of God should be attached to God with such relentless love. In whichever form God has manifested and in whichever form he has His *darshan*; he should be irrevocably attached to that form only, and should not bear ties of such love and bondage even to the released souls or great saints. He should not even be attached to His previous incarnations.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/16]

Shriji Mahārāj was interested in the well-being of all *jivas* and therefore he has been described as ‘*Sarvajiva-hitāvaha*’. He had laid down in the *Shikshāpatri*:

TASYAIV SARVATHĀ BHAKTIHI KARTAVYĀ MANUJAIRBHUVI æ

All human beings on this earth should worship that supreme God only.

[Shikshāpatri 113]

The genuine aspirant should be elated by his attainment of the supreme *upāsanā*. Nevertheless, this should not act as an excuse to deride other demigods, goddesses and *avatārs*. Shriji Mahārāj has strictly forbidden this. He is not pleased with those persons who show such indifference. He does not approve of the tendency of manifesting petty ego.

*Brahmaswarup* Shāstriji Mahārāj has followed the same tradition. In the *Akshar Purushottam* temples, he has installed the images of *avatārs*. In assemblies, he recited *Shrimad Bhāgavatam*. He often encouraged weekly discourses on it to derive inspiration from the stories of devotees such as Shuk, Sanaks, Nārada, Dhruva, Prahlād, Gopis and others. He insisted that all followers of the *Sampradāya* should develop a broad outlook and not be narrow-minded.

The *sādhus* and *paramhansas* of Shriji Mahārāj, *Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi, *Brahmaswarup* Prāgji Bhakta, *Brahmaswarup* Shāstriji Mahārāj and *Brahmaswarup*

Yogiji Mahārāj worked tirelessly throughout their lives so that thousands of *jivas* could realise Shriji Mahārāj in His true form and worship Him. At present, *Pragat* Brahmaswarup Param Pujya Swāmishri Nārāyanswarupdāsji – Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj – constantly travels all over the world to spread the message of Lord Swāminārāyan. The truly learned are never egoistic in asserting ‘only mine is the best’. On the other hand, they are open-minded enough to submit ‘whatever is good is always mine’.

Today, irreligion and atheism reign supreme. In such critical times, the faith described here will go a long way in banishing evil forces. Precisely for this reason, the Swāminārāyan – Akshar Purushottam – Faith is earning a reputation all over the world as an active and dynamic Movement. Many intellectuals, aspirants and youths in particular join it. Here, they find the solutions to their problems.

All are eager to become *Brahmarup*. This can only be achieved by means of *Aksharbrahman*, who descended along with Lord Swāminārāyan and then remained forever present – *pragat* – in the form of a God-realised brahmanised Saint. In days to come, other faiths will develop mutual relationships with the basics of the Swāminārāyan Faith. And their joint efforts will be effective in annihilating the dark forces of evil. The Akshar Purushottam Faith is contributing significantly to such a development by playing a leading role. This is only possible because Lord Swāminārāyan, the exponent of the genuine and supreme *upāsanā*, is at present with us through a brahmanised Saint in the person of Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj.



## 5. PRAGAT GOD AS EVER-PRESENT

### 5.1 WHAT IS PRAGAT? HOW?

With infinite compassion *Parabrahman Purushottam Nārāyan* descended upon our earth. He opened the road to salvation for all and left no need to engage in arduous *sādhana*. He closed the doors to lower attainments. But through dedicated *pragat upāsanā*, the road to *Akshardhām* was opened. Nishkulānand Swāmi therefore writes:

BANDH KIDHĀ BIJĀ BĀRANĀ RE, VAHETI KIDHI AKSHARVĀT.

PURUSHOTTAM PRAGATI RE...

With the manifestation of *Purushottam*, all other doors were closed, and the pathway to *Akshardhām* was laid wide open.

For attaining *Akshardhām*, Shriji Mahārāj has propounded



the principle of *pragat upāsanā*. But what is the *pragat* form of *Purushottam*? How does He always remain *pragat*?

God in His divine abode is unmanifest – *paroksh* – to those on earth. When He descends on this earth, He is manifest or *pragat*. The manifestation was not, however, restricted to Shriji Mahārāj's lifetime, nor to the salvation of the *jivas* living during that period. If it were, it would imply an imperfection in His system since it shuts the door of redemption for future generations, and results in the collapse of the *Sampradāya*.

Shriji Mahārāj has explained the principle of the scriptures that God is eternally present on earth. And those who seek His refuge will always be liberated. *Āchārya* Shri Raghurvirji Mahārāj has interpreted the word *Sampradāya* in his commentary on the *Shikshāpatra* as:

GURUPARAMPARĀ PRĀPTAHA SADUPADESHAHA SAMPRADĀYAHA æ

*Sampradāya* is: sermons which lucidly explain the basics of *Brahman* and *Parabrahman* through the successive line of Gurus.

*Amarkosh* explains:

SAMPRADĀYO GURUKRAMAHA æ

*Sampradāya* is the spiritual lineage of gurus.

God is never unmanifest; the *Sampradāya* established by Him will always flourish and the path to salvation forever remain open. Shriji Mahārāj Himself has emphasised: "God says that He dwells with all His powers and divinity in the eight types of *murtis* and the brahmanised Saint." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/68]

According to this principle, Shriji Mahārāj is always *pragat* through His *murti* as well as the *Brahmaswarup Satpurush* who has scaled the spiritual heights of godliness. All four pillars of *Satsang* – *murti*, the Saint, scriptures and *āchārya* – are extremely beneficent. But the best among the four for salvation is the Saint according to the words of Shriji Mahārāj.

The *Shrimad Bhāgavatam* also places the Saint on a higher pedestal than *murtis* and holy places:

NA HYAMMAYĀNI TIRTHĀNI NA DEVĀ MRICHCHHILĀMAYĀHĀ æ

TE PUNANTYURUKĀLENA DARSHANĀDEVA SĀDHAVAHA æ

The pilgrimage centres are not simply reservoirs of water. Nor are the *murtis* just clay or stone, i.e. they are also divine. But they elevate in the long run. Whereas even by the mere *darshan* of the Saint, one is purified.

[Shrimad Bhāgavatam X/84:11]

*Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi also confirms: "'How can one enjoy the company of God when He is *paroksh*?' He replied, 'Through discourses, *kirtans*, spiritual talks, *bhajans*, and meditation one can experience the company of God. But the companionship of a great Saint is akin to the company of manifest God. He gives the same degree of bliss because the Lord always dwells fully in such a Saint. Failure to know the *pragat* form of God in all His divinity, in spite of His physical proximity, means one is not truly near Him. Then how is the manifestation going to help Him without this knowledge? God is *pragat* even today if one realises that with all His glory, God always dwells in the Saint. But without this knowledge He is as good as *paroksh* today.' Thereupon a sādhu inquired, 'Are not the *murtis* to be taken as *pragat*?' Swāmi clarified, 'If one attributes human limitations to God in the human form or the Saint, he regresses like the waning of the moon. But knowing them to be fully divine, he progresses like the waxing of the moon. The *murtis* do not exhibit human weaknesses. One cannot find fault with them and consequently go astray. Hence one never dislikes them. But the Lord who talks and walks among us, is the *pragat* form of God. And it is the great Saint who instills divinity in the *murtis*. The *murtis*, scriptures and the holy places – all three put together cannot make a Saint. But the eminent Saint can make all three – *murtis*, scriptures and holy places. Therefore a Saint in whom God fully resides is the *pragat* form of God.'" [Swāmini Vātu V/395]

Shriji Mahārāj also stresses the same point: "Whenever God Himself is not manifest on earth, one should seek His brahmanised Saint and dedicate himself at his lotus feet." [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 10]

These words of the Lord have been exactly reiterated by Nishkulānand Swāmi in the following lines:

KAHYU BAHU PRAKĀRE KALYĀN RE, ATI AGANIT APRAMĀN RE;  
PAN SAHUTHI SARAS SANTMĀ RE, RĀKHYU VĀLAME ENI VĀTMĀ RE.

Many are the means of salvation – innumerable and immeasurable.  
But as told by the beloved Master, the best among these is the Saint.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Purushottam Prakāsh 42]

Shriji Mahārāj is therefore fully *pragat* through the Saint. One of the six objectives of Shriji Mahārāj's descending on earth was to be always present on this planet through His *Param Ekāntik* Saint.<sup>1</sup>

This shows that when the Lord Himself is present on earth, He is (said to be) manifested God. When He physically leaves but manifests on this planet through the Saint, the Saint is recognised as the manifestation of God, the *pragat* form of God.

In *Purushottam Prakāsh*, composed by Nishkulānand Swāmi, Shriji Mahārāj says:

SANT HU NE HU TE VALI SANT RE,  
EM SHRIMUKHE KAHE BHAGWANT RE;  
SANT MĀNAJO MĀRI MURATI RE, EMĀ FER NATHI EK RATI RE.

The Saint is Myself and I am the Saint. Thus God says Himself.  
The Saint is My very image without the slightest difference.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Purushottam Prakāsh – 41]

## 5.2 TRUE KNOWLEDGE IS RECOGNISING THE PRAGAT FORM OF GOD

It is laid down in the *Shruti*:

RITE JNĀNĀNNA MUKTIHI æ

There is no liberation without knowledge.

(1) SWAYAMPURVA JIVĀNMUKSHUNNIJOPĀSANĀGNĀNĀMĀBODHYA NETUM SWADHĀMA æ  
TATHĀ SWASWABHAKTĀSHRAYENĀPI KARTUM  
MUKSHUNNAVĀNĀGATAHA SHASHTAHETUHU ææ

The sixth objective was to explain to the aspirants His *upāsana* and knowledge through spiritual instructions so as to lead them to *Akshardhām*. And also take into the fold new aspirants via Himself, as well as through the company of His *Ekāntik Bhakta*.

Again:

TAMEVA VIDITVĀTIMRITYUMETI

NĀNYAHA PANTHĀ VIDYATE'YANĀYA ææ

Only after knowing (the form of) God is the *jiva* delivered from the cycles of births and deaths. There is no other road to redemption.

What is the definition of the knowledge that leads to instant liberation? Who is to be understood as a *jnāni*? This knowledge is not the literal understanding of the scriptures, but to go beyond their intended meaning. Shriji Mahārāj has said: "Those who accept the existence of God merely through the reading of the scriptures will be redeemed after many births." [Vachanāmritam Loyā 7]

Defining knowledge, Shriji Mahārāj says: "God dwells within them [all the forms of *prakriti*] as their *antaryāmi* and as the supreme teleologist. Only one who knows God thus in all His aspects of glory is said to have known God fully." [Vachanāmritam Loyā 7]

"But to know God fully and in all His glory, divinity and infinite powers, the *indriyas*, the *antahkaran* and the *jiva* – all should know His divine form. If any one of these three does not know the divine form of God, he cannot attain full knowledge. He would not, therefore, be able to overcome the cycle of births and deaths. And one who has attained the brahmic state only by spiritual endeavours, but has not known God in human form is not a *jnāni*." [Vachanāmritam Loyā 7]

"One who realises the significance of the divine manifestation of God also realises that God of the divine abode and God of the earthly form are one and the same entity. The realisation of this divinity in the human form of God enables the *jivas* to transgress *māyā*. One having such a realisation of the totally divine form of God in a human framework is a *jnāni* and is an *Ekāntik Bhakta*." [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7]

"Such a *jnāni* dedicates himself to God, knows Him as always having a divine form, as the cause and the support of *Prakriti Purush*, *Akshar*, etc., and as always transcendental.

Only this knowledge of God redeems.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 7]

Gunātītānand Swāmi defines: “The ultimate knowledge is to know this Sādhu.” [Swāmini Vātu V/7]

Nishkulānand Swāmi also supports this:

EJ JNĀNI EJ TATTVAVETTĀ, JENE PRAGAT PRABHUNE PEKHIYĀ;  
E VINĀ RAKHE JNĀNI GANO, JENE HARI NAYANE NATHI DEKHIYĀ.

He who has closely observed the *pragat* form of God is the *jnāni* and the philosopher.

He who has not seen Him with his own eyes should never be considered a *jnāni*.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Sārsiddhi 30]

### 5.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVOTION TO THE PRAGAT FORM OF GOD

God, Himself or in a manifested form, is always present on this earth. As observed earlier, *jnān* means to know that *pragat* form of God. And only he who knows the *pragat* form of God is a true devotee; and then to seek shelter in Him is genuine devotion. Shriji Mahārāj confirms this as follows:

“God and His brahmanised Saint continue to manifest in *Bharat Khand*. Those *jīvas* who know them as such in their true form are recognised as devotees.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 19]

“One should try to offer such love to God realising His redemptive attributes and seek repose in Him. This is *bhakti*. [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/10]

Praising *pragat bhakti*, Muktānand Swāmi says:

KALPATARU SARVANĀ SANKALP SATYA KARE,  
PĀSE JAI PRITASHU SEVE JYĀRE;  
TEM JE PRAGAT PURUSHOTTAM PRICHHASHE,  
THĀSHE HARIJAN TATKĀL TYĀRE...  
PRAGATNE BHAJI BHAJI PĀR PĀMYĀ GHANĀ,  
GIDH GANIKĀ KAPIVRUND KOTI;  
VRAJTANI NĀR VYABHICHĀR BHĀVE TARI,  
PRAGAT UPĀSANĀ SAUTHI MOTI...

When approached with loving care, the *kalpataru* (the wish-fulfilling tree) fulfils all desires.

Similarly, he who recognises *pragat Purushottam* is transformed into a

devotee of God.

By dedicated service to God in human form, many were redeemed – the vulture, the fallen women and hordes of monkeys.

In spite of their amorous sentiments, the women of *Vraj* by their sincere *pragat upāsanā* were liberated...

PRAGATNĀ BHAJANTHI PARAM SUKH PĀMIE,  
URA THAKI NĀSH PĀME ANDHĀRU...

Only devotion to the *pragat* form of God yields ultimate bliss and dispels inner darkness.

Only the most fortunate are privileged to offer *pragat bhakti*. Devotion, save that of the manifest God, is an indication of ego and dogmatism, as is pointed out by Nishkulānand Swāmi:

MOTE BHĀGYE BHETE BHAGATI, PRAGAT PRABHU PARAMĀNANI;  
TEH VINĀNI JE BHAGATI, TE TO MAT MAMATNĀ TĀNANI.

Only by extreme good fortune can one serve the *pragat* form of the Lord.

Devotion without this is a display of ego and obstinacy.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Sārsiddhi 22]

In his book *Bhaktinidhi*, Nishkulānand Swāmi has acknowledged *pragat bhakti* as the highest. When Shiva heard that the villagers of *Vraj* were blessed with the *darshan* as well as the touch of Lord Krishna, he was regretful and felt had he been born as a cowherd he would have enjoyed similar bliss. Brahmā also became a fish to enjoy the happiness of the *pragat* form of God. Nishkulānand Swāmi writes:

EM PRAGAT BHAKTI SAHU UPARE, ETHI UPARĀNT NATHI KĀI;  
NISHKULĀNAND NISHCHE VĀRATĀ, SAUNE SAMAJAVI MANAMĀI.

Devotion of the *pragat* is the supreme. Nothing supersedes it.

Nishkulānand says everyone is convinced of this as an unquestionable fact.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Bhaktinidhi 15]

Brahmānand Swāmi has also written:

PRAGAT SWARUP UPĀSI, DHANYA SO PRAGAT SWARUP UPĀSI.

Blessed are the devotees who offer *upāsanā* to the *pragat* form of God.

Gunātītānand Swāmi says: “God is *pragat* and these talks are *pragat*. The rest are like the sun painted on a piece of paper.” [Swāmini Vātu V/64]

Shriji Mahārāj says: “One who has realised God here in human form and possesses such firm knowledge and feels completely fulfilled only at the *darshan* of God here in human form, and does not desire anything else, is a true devotee. To such a devotee, even if he does not desire to see the divine abodes, God manifests before him all His divine abodes, His divine powers and His divine forms.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/9]

“The devotee endeavours to preserve the contact and influence of God visible before him. Even if such a devotee has not developed *ātmanishthā* or *vairāgya*, he excels in the enjoyment of God’s bliss in His divine abode.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/5]

Imperfections are eradicated only by the contact of the *pragat* form of God. Gunātītānand Swāmi has said: “Indra killed Vishwarup, thereby committing a fourfold crime... Nārada then met him and told him, ‘Your brother Vāmanji is an incarnation of God, therefore take refuge in him.’ Indra developed unshakeable faith in Vāmanji and was relieved from the sin of *brahmahatyā*. Only by taking refuge in the *pragat* are all ends accomplished.” [Swāmini Vātu I/293]

#### 5.4 PRAGAT BHAKTI – THE PATHWAY TO PEACE

Inner peace and happiness are attained by *pragat bhakti*. Once *Sadguru* Mukṭānand Swāmi asked Shriji Mahārāj the means to peace. Shriji Mahārāj narrated various incidents of His own life beginning with His birth. Mukṭānand Swāmi felt that Shriji Mahārāj had missed the point. Next day he repeated the same question. Shriji Mahārāj also repeated the same account of His life. But Mukṭānand Swāmi failed to grasp the essence. Finally Shriji Mahārāj said, “Swāmi, please tour the villages, you will get peace.”

Mukṭānand Swāmi left Gadhadā. Nityānand Swāmi followed him and explained, “Shriji Mahārāj is God Himself. Nowhere else will you find the peace which comes from reminiscing the divine episodes of the *pragat* form of God.

Mahārāj wanted you to realise this. He therefore narrated the incidents of His life to you.” Mukṭānand Swāmi realised his mistake.

The ancient sage Vyāsji had composed many scriptures yet he was still at unrest with himself. Then, as advised by Nārada, he recited the episodes of Lord Krishna’s life in the *Shrimad Bhāgavatam* and experienced true happiness.

Precisely for this reason Shriji Mahārāj asked Mukṭānand Swāmi: “It is My order to you that as long as you live, you should profusely contribute such literature portraying vividly the divine glory and the mission of God to whom you are so deeply devoted.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/58]

Obedying this order, Mukṭānand Swāmi till the end of his life religiously engaged himself in preparing the literature of the *Sampradāya*. He clearly wrote:

PRAGATNĀ BHAJANTHI PARAM SUKH PĀMIE,  
URA THAKI NĀSH PĀME ANDHĀRU...  
BHAJAN KAR BHĀVSHU.

Only devotion to the *pragat* form of God yields ultimate bliss and dispels inner darkness.

Similarly, Swarupānand Swāmi remained preoccupied with the inner vision of Shriji Mahārāj, oblivious of His manifested form. To explain to him the importance of the *pragat* form, by Shriji Mahārāj’s will he fell ill. During his illness, Swarupānand Swāmi failed to have the inner vision of Shriji Mahārāj and was quite at a loss. Feeling utterly despondent, he went to Shriji Mahārāj and prayed. Shriji Mahārāj told him, “Go to Parvatbhāi and you will find peace.”

Parvatbhāi, in the course of their talks, requested him to meditate on the roof tiles of Dādā Khāchar’s house. Swarupānand Swāmi realised his mistake. He realised, “...by the association of Shriji Mahārāj, even the roof tiles have attained *nirgunbhāva* and are worthy of meditation. I should therefore be engaged with the *pragat* form of Shriji Mahārāj.” He changed his course and attained the desired peace.

### 5.5 REDEMPTION THROUGH THE PRAGAT FORM OF GOD OR HIS SAINT

Many seekers worship the *paroksh* form of God for their salvation. But by a synthesis of all the scriptures, we can clearly understand that without the *pragat* form of God, or a brahmanised Saint, ultimate salvation is unattainable. Explaining the fundamentals of salvation, Shriji Mahārāj says: “The knowledge of the divine greatness of Shri Rāma and Shri Krishna who were the previous manifestations is realised by everybody. Even their devotees, viz., Nārada, the Sanaks, Shukdevji, Jadbharat, Hanumān and Uddhavji are also very devoutly hailed as divinely great. If the same divine greatness is visualised in the human manifestation of God and His brahmanised Saint who are visible before you, then there is nothing more for anyone to attain in total redemption...”

“Only if one strives to attain this knowledge – either now or in this life or in future lives or even after millions of years – will he attain total redemption. But without this knowledge, no redemption is possible...”

“An aspirant who has thus known God and His Saint will never recede from the path of spiritual ascent...”

“The essence of all knowledge, therefore, is the realisation of total divinity in God and His Saint when they manifest on earth in human form.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/21]

“Love and affection – with which you all are attached to the God in His abode – if bestowed on God manifesting here on earth, or on the brahmanised Guru, as prescribed by the *Shrutis*, you will attain that knowledge which can keep you detached from mundane objects and inspire you to abundantly enjoy the bliss of God...”

“You have attained that contact of a brahmanised Saint here as you would wish to have in the divine abode of God after death, and have therefore attained *parampad* and release from the bondage of *māyā* here in your present body.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/2]

“The *jiva* can be redeemed, can transgress *māyā* and be

brahmanised only if he engages himself in offering devotion to God visible in human form. He should know Him as fully divine. He should sing *kirtans* in praise of Him and recite stories from His divine life. He will then transgress *māyā*, be raised to an exalted position and attain *Akshardhām*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/32]

“One who desires total redemption should surrender with implicit faith and love to God who may be manifesting on earth either in the robe of a king or in the sack cloth of a *sādhū*. He should implicitly obey Him and offer absolute devotion to Him, as that is the only *sādhanā* for ultimate redemption. If, however, God does not so manifest on earth, he should surrender to His brahmanised Saint and dedicate himself at his lotus feet. That will also bring redemption.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 10]

“*Māyā* can only be transgressed when the *jiva* comes in contact with, and seeks refuge in the divine form of Lord *Purushottam* or His brahmanised Saint who is in rapport with Him.” [Vachanāmritam Jetalpur 1]

Time and again, at numerous places in the *Vachanāmritam*, Shriji Mahārāj has declared the Lord in *pragat* form or the brahmanised Saint who has constant rapport with Him as the means to final redemption. As a summing up of all the scriptures, He explains:

“The four *Vedās*, *Purānas*, *Itihāsa*, all scriptures specifically assert that only the contact of God or His brahmanised Saint will redeem the *jivas*... When the *jiva* has procured such contact with God or His brahmanised Saint, he has nothing further to attain. This very contact will elevate him to the state of final redemption.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/59]

Gunātītānand Swāmi, well versed in the scriptures and fully aware of Shriji Mahārāj’s innermost opinion, has shown in his talks that only the *pragat* form of God or a brahmanised Saint can lead to redemption.

“Only God and the *Sādhū* are the true liberators.” [Swāmini Vātu I/20]

“In absence of the *pragat* form of God, observance of tens of millions of *niyams* are of no avail. But observance of a single *niyam* as ordained by the *pragat* form of God or the brahmanised Saint proves redemptive.” [Swāmini Vātu IV/37]

“Ultimate salvation is *moksha*... *Moksha* can only be attained by taking shelter in God or His *Ekāntik Bhakta*. No one else can grant *moksha*.” [Swāmini Vātu V/5]

*Sadguru* Nishkulānand Swāmi writes:

BIJĀ KAHE MUVĀ PACHHI MOKSHA RE,  
VALI PRABHU BATĀVE CHHE PROKSH RE...  
JYĀRE EMAJ ARTH JO SARE RE, TYĀRE HARI TAN SHID DHARE RE;  
JNĀN VINĀ TO MOKSHA NĀ THĀY RE,  
EM SHRUTI SMRUTI SAHU GĀY RE;  
MĀTE PRAGAT JOIE BHAGWANT RE,  
EVU SARVA GRANTHNU SIDDHĀNT RE;  
JEM PRAGAT RAVI HOY JYĀRE RE, JĀY TAM BRAHMĀNDNU TYĀRE RE.  
JEM PRAGAT JALNE PĀMI RE, JĀY PYĀSINI PYĀS TE VĀMI RE;  
JEM PRAGAT ANNANE JAME RE, ANTAR JATHARĀJHĀL VIRAME RE.  
TEM PRAGAT MALE BHAGWĀN RE,  
TYĀRE JANANU KALYĀN NIDĀN RE;  
MĀTE PRAGAT CHARITRA SĀMBHALVU RE,  
HOY PRAGAT TYĀ ĀVI MALVU RE.  
MĀTE PRAGAT PRABHU JO NA HOY RE, NA THĀY NISHPĀP KOY RE;  
JĀNO PRAGAT MURTI BHAVPĀJ RE, SAHEJE UTĀRAVĀNO SAMĀJ RE.

Others say salvation comes after death, and say that God is *paroksh*.

If that be so, why should God assume a human form.

*Shruti* and *Smruti* proclaim, ‘There is no liberation without knowledge.’

Therefore the quintessence of all the scriptures is: God should be *pragat*.

Because, when the sun shines, darkness vanishes.

Thirst is quenched only by drinking water.

Devouring hunger is satiated only by taking food.

Similarly, when God is *pragat*, salvation is assured.

Therefore, listen to the episodes of His life and work, and go to Him when He manifests in *pragat* form.

Without His manifestation, the sinners will remain unredeemed.

Know the *pragat murti* to be a bridge which takes one easily across the ocean of births and deaths.

[Bhaktachintāmani 164]

PRAGAT PRABHU KE PRABHUNĀ SANT RE,  
TEH VINĀ NA UDDHARE JANT RE.

No creature can be redeemed without God in *pragat* form or His Saint.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Kalyān Nirnay 13-28]

ĀTYANTIK KALYĀN KĀRANE JĀVU PRAGAT PRABHUNE PĀS;  
MOKSHADĀYAK EH MURTI KE MOKSHADĀTĀ ENĀ DĀS.

For final redemption, seek refuge in the *pragat* form of God.

He is the redeemer, or His servant, the Saint.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Kalyān Nirnay 16-4]

MĀTE KALYĀNKĀRI SĀMBHALYĀ RE, EK HARI KE HARI NĀ MALYĀ RE;  
SĀCHI VĀT TU MĀNAJE SAHI RE, EH BEU VINĀ MOKSH NAHI RE.

Only God or His brahmanised Saint are the redeemers.

Accept this gospel truth. Because there is no salvation without both of them.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Kalyān Nirnay 16-10]

MALE PRABHU PRAGAT PRAMĀN RE,  
KĀ TO TENĀ MALELE KALYĀN RE;  
TEH VINĀ TO KOTI UPĀY RE, ĀTYANTIK KALYĀN NA THĀY RE.

Redemption is attained by the company of God in *pragat* form or the God-realised Sādhū.

Barring that, endless efforts do not lead to final redemption.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Kalyān Nirnay 2-18]

*Sadguru* Brahmānand Swāmi has written:

Ā BHAVSĀGAR PĀR UTĀR, HARI KE HARI KO DĀS.

Redemption can only be attained through God or His brahmanised Servant.

In *Shri Vāsudev Māhātmya* of the *Skanda Purāna*, in the chapter of the commentary on *bhakti* and *vairāgya*, the following verse reiterates the same point:

SĀKSHĀD-BHAGWATAHA SANGĀT  
TAD-BHAKTĀNĀM CHA VEDRISHĀM æ  
DHARMO HYEKĀNTIKAHA PUMBHIHI  
PRĀPYATE NĀNYATHĀ KVACHIT ææ

By contact with God, or by contact with an *Ekāntik Bhakta*, who is virtuous as described in the foregoing verse, *Ekāntik Dharma* can be attained. No other alternative can help in its attainment.

[Vāsudev Māhātmya 25-65]

This same principle is confirmed by Shriji Mahārāj: “This state of realisation can be attained only in the company or by the grace of a realised Saint who has attained rapport with God. It cannot be attained by mere learning or reading scriptures, or by hearing sermons from the mouths of such people who have not attained that state of self-realisation.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/60]

### 5.6 DEFICIENCIES RESULTING FROM NOT REALISING THE PRAGAT FORM OF GOD

From time immemorial the *jīva* has been plagued by countless inadequacies. These can be overcome by the genuine knowledge of the *pragat* form of God and seeking refuge in Him. The imperfections cannot be eradicated without knowing the *pragat* form of God and contact with Him.

Shriji Mahārāj says: “Deficiency in the realisation of divinity in God’s human form will have negatory effects on all other accomplishments.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/13]

“This divine *Satsang* is not available even to gods like Brahmā. However, if you cannot realise the divine significance of this *Satsang* and are attached to worldly objects, it is because one’s conviction of the manifest form of God [*pratyaksh*] is not as firm as the conviction of God in His divine abode [*paroksh*].” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/2]

“A devotee who has the knowledge of God’s manifestation here and who is free from the disturbing influence of the baser instincts, has renounced the world, possesses deep *vairāgya* and also the knowledge of his self as *ātman* and behaves accordingly, yet if he still entertains the slightest desire to have *ātmadarshan* in spite of having seen and known God here, he does not enjoy God’s bliss to the fullest extent even in His abode.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/5]

*Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi states: “They are indeed forever unfortunate who cannot recognise in their true forms Mahārāj and this Sādhu. It is like a drought in the midst of the torrential rains of S.Y. 1876 [1820 A.D.]; or like keeping

the head dry after bathing in the Ganges. To be in *Satsang* without this knowledge is to live like children, calves, etc.” [Swāmini Vātu III/35]

“He may be a great scholar or a great preceptor, but without knowing the *pragat* form of God or this Saint, he is like the *khijado* tree that neither soothes nor satisfies.” [Swāmini Vātu III/68]

“Today the Lord is *pragat*, the Sādhu is *pragat*, as well as *dharma* being *pragat*. Those who fail to recognise them as such now, will bang their heads in regret afterwards.” [Swāmini Vātu IV/50]

*Sadguru* Mukṭānand Swāmi writes:

PAROKSHTHI BHAVTANO PĀR ĀVE NAHI,  
VEDA VEDĀNT KAHE SATYA VĀNI.

The *paroksh* form of God cannot redeem.

The *Vedās* and *Vedānta* affirm this truth.

MANGAL RUP PRAGATNE MELI, PAROKSHNE BHAJE JE PRĀNI RE;  
TAP TIRTH KARE DEV DERĀ, MAN NA TALE MASĀNI RE.

Those who leave aside the beneficial form of the *pragat* and worship the *paroksh* form.

Despite their *tap* (austerities), *tirath* (visits to holy places), and devotion to the demigods, they can never reach the stage of no-mind.  
KOI KAHE HARI HO GAYE, KOI KAHE HARI HOVAN HĀR;

MUKTA PRAGATKI PRICHH BIN, BHATAKAT SAB SANSĀR.

Some say God has been; some say He is still to come.

Not knowing the *pragat* form, they roam all over the world.

The scriptures narrate the episodes of the divine life of God. Their mere reading or listening are of marginal significance. Only the *pragat* form is the source of bliss.

*Sadguru* Nishkulānand Swāmi writes:

VĀNCHI KĀGAL KOI KANTHNO, JEM NĀR APĀR RĀJI THAI;  
PAN PRAGAT SUKH PIYUTANU, ANU JETLU ĀVYU NAI.

On reading her husband’s letter, the wife was immensely delighted.

Yet it was not even an iota of the pleasure of his physical presence.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Bhaktinidhi 14]

Unmindful of *pragat bhakti*, those who worship the *paroksh* form are really lost, as described by Nishkulānand Swāmi in

the following lines:

JEM KOI FULAVĀDINĀ FUL MELI, ĀKASH FULNI ĀSHĀ KARE;  
PĀR VINĀ PARISHRAM PADE, SĀR THODUJ MALE SARE.  
TEM PRAGAT PRABHUNE PARAHARI, PAROKSHMĀ KARE PRATITA;  
TE TO PIYUSHNO TARU PARHARI,  
KARI CHHĀSH PIVĀ CHĀHE CHITTA.

Instead of plucking flowers from the garden, one who hopes to pluck them from the sky endures endless efforts without any results.  
Similarly, instead of devotion to the *pragat*, devotion to the *paroksh* is like forsaking nectar for buttermilk.

[Nishkulānand Kāvyaṃ: Sārsiddhi 47]

PRAGAT BHAJI RUSHI PATNI, PAROKSH BHAJYĀ RUSHIRĀY;  
RUSHI PATNIE HARI RĀJI KARYĀ, RUSHI RAHYĀ PARITĀP MĀY.  
PRABHU PRAGATNĀ PRASANG VINĀ, RAHI GAI EVĀ MOTĀNE KHOT;  
ĀJ KĀLNĀ ABHĀGIYĀ, DASH VINĀ DIYE CHHE DOT.  
PRAGAT VINĀ CHHE PĀMPALĀ, BHAKTA KARE CHHE BHAVAMĀY;  
KHARĀ KHĀNDTĀ KUSAKĀ, KAN NAHI NISARE TE MĀY.  
HARI LĀDILĀ LĀDU JAMI GAYĀ, KEDE PADYĀ RAHYĀ PATARĀVALĀ;  
JETHI BHUKH NA JĀY SUKH NA THĀY,  
VAN SAMAJE CHĀTE CHHE SAGHALĀ.

The wives of the Rishis worshipped the *pragat* form of God. The Rishis worshipped the *paroksh*.  
The wives pleased the Lord. The Rishis were left repenting.  
Without the contact of the *pragat* form of God, the eminent were losers.  
The unfortunate ones roam around aimlessly.  
Without *pragat bhakti* all are cripples,  
Since no grains come out by only pounding the chaff.  
The beloved of God ate the *lādus*, leaving the leaf-plates aside.  
Mindlessly licking them neither gives joy, nor satisfies the hunger.

[Nishkulānand Kāvyaṃ: Sārsiddhi 24]

*Sadguru* Brahmānand Swāmi also says:

PRAGAT PRAMĀN HARIBINA PRĀNI,  
KYU JAHĀ TAHĀ BHATAKANTĀ HAI;  
OR UPĀY KIYE TE KOI VIDHI,  
ĀT NA BHAVAKO ANTĀ HAI;  
PRAGAT PRAMĀN PURĀN BATĀVE,  
GITĀ PRAGAT KATHANTĀ HAI;  
PRAGAT PRAMĀN BINĀ BRAHMĀNAND,  
SAB HI JAGAT BHARAMANTĀ HAI;

All are wandering here and there without knowing the *pragat* form of God.

Try all other means, but there is no end to the worldly turmoil.

The scriptures, as also the *Gītā*, point out the *pragat* as the ultimate authority.

O, Brahmānand! leaving aside the *pragat*, all the world is under a spell.

## 5.7 THE PRAGAT FORM OF GOD AFTER

### SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ'S RETURN TO AKSHARDHĀM

In S.Y. 1886 on the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Jyeshtha (1st June 1830 A.D.), Shriji Mahārāj left this world to return to His divine abode *Akshardhām*. Since that day, the devotees could no longer have the *darshan* of His manifested form. In that case, how can one take Him to be *pragat*? And what is the arrangement for the redemption of the *jivas* after His return to the divine abode?

These questions have been answered by Shriji Mahārāj Himself. God is never *paroksh* to the devotees who are endowed with genuine knowledge. "When Lord Krishna returned to His abode, Rukmini burnt herself on the funeral pyre taking into her lap the dead body of Lord Krishna. Upon this, people who were devoid of spiritual wisdom felt that Lord Krishna had died. But those who possessed spiritual wisdom realised the divine significance of Lord Krishna's disappearance from here for a manifestation elsewhere, as they knew that Lord Krishna was perfectly divine." [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7].

Though Shriji Mahārāj physically returned to His divine abode, He remains *pragat* in another form to liberate the *jivas* eternally. That is to say, He is present with us through *Aksharbrahman*.

Shriji Mahārāj says: "*Purushottam Bhagwān* resides by His *antaryāmi shakti* in all the entities produced out of this creation but His total manifestation is felt in *Akshar* only – and then in a descending order in *Purush* and *Prakriti*, in *Pradhān Purush*... He thus manifests His *antaryāmi shakti* through *Akshar*, *Purush*,



etc., but His powers are felt to the extent of the purity and sustaining capacity of the particular entity through whom He desires to be *pragat*." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/41]

In this manner, His powers and majesty are at their peak in *Aksharbrahman*; but they are not in the same measure in other *muktas*. Shriji Mahārāj is therefore *pragat* on this earth through *Aksharbrahman*.

For further confirmation of this principle, Shriji Mahārāj has talked of becoming *Brahmarup* and offering dedicated devotion to *Parabrahman*. To acquire the highest category of *nirvikalp* knowledge, a devotee has to attain oneness with *Akshar*, and with this *Aksharbhāv* offer worship to Lord *Purushottam*. The inference is therefore very clear that for reaching the stage of *Brahmarup* or to acquire the highest category of *nirvikalp* knowledge it is imperative to have the association of *Akshar*. It is essential to know *Aksharbrahman* in order to be free from the clutches of *māyā*, to realise God in all His divine glory, and to develop unshakeable faith in Him [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7 & Gadhadā II/42]

After all, no one knows the glory and powers of God as much as *Aksharbrahman*. *Nirvikalp* knowledge is not acquired by contact with other *muktas*. If the highest category of *nirvikalp* knowledge can be achieved through other *muktas*, why should Shriji Mahārāj manifest on the earth along with *Aksharbrahman*? The fact that Shriji Mahārāj manifested with *Aksharbrahman* and identified his form to the followers shows that the highest category of *nirvikalp* knowledge is achievable only through *Aksharbrahman*. Shriji Mahārāj desired that countless *jivas* should be redeemed even after Gunātītānand Swāmi. For fulfilling this objective, *Aksharbrahman* should perpetually remain on earth so that Shriji Mahārāj can work through him.

Shriji Mahārāj has said: "The *Vedās* sing the praises of that *Brahman*. The road to redemption is also shown by that *Brahman*." [Vedras p.165]

In the '*Vachanāmritam*' published by Bochāsanwasi Shri

Akshar Purushottam Sansthā, Yogiji Mahārāj wrote in his blessings: "*Vachanāmritam* proclaims that the Saint opens the doors of redemption. Mahārāj has identified *Mul Akshar Murti* Gunātītānand Swāmi as that Saint."

*Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi says: "An *Akshar mukta* from *Akshardhām* can descend independently on earth, and can also independently return. Nevertheless, without contact of a *Satpurush*, even he would become lifeless." [Swāmini Vātu III/73]

If contact with a *Satpurush* is indispensable even for an exalted *mukta*, that *Satpurush* can only be *Gunātīt*; because *Gunātīt* i.e. *Aksharbrahman*, needs only Shriji Mahārāj and no one else.

It can therefore be clearly stated that Shriji Mahārāj manifests on this earth through *Aksharbrahman*. During His lifetime, Shriji Mahārāj had on many occasions identified Gunātītānand Swāmi as that *Aksharbrahman*, as we shall see in the following chapter. Shriji Mahārāj, after returning to his abode, was *pragat* through *Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi.

After Shriji Mahārāj returned to His divine abode, His mortal remains were cremated in Lakshmiwādi in Gadhadā. Afterwards, Gunātītānand Swāmi went to answer a call of nature. On the way he saw some green grass and thought, "Water is the life of grass; that is why it is so green. Our life was Mahārāj, but He has now passed away." With this thought he fainted and fell down. Shriji Mahārāj immediately appeared before him, helped him to get up, embraced him and said, "Swāmi, why are you so sad? Where have I gone? I dwell totally in you, totally in you, totally in you." Thus, He said it thrice. Manifesting through *Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi, Shriji Mahārāj redeemed many seekers and gave them a pride of place in *Akshardhām*.

After *Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi returned to *Akshardhām*, Shriji Mahārāj remained *pragat* through the spiritual hierarchy of brahmanised Gurus. Gunātītānand

Swāmi himself has revealed: “All of you will pass away after five or ten years, but I am eternal.” [Swāmini Vātu V/67]

In the *Gunātīt* spiritual succession, Shriji Mahārāj has been *pragat* through successive Gurus – *Brahmaswarup* Bhagatji Mahārāj, *Brahmaswarup* Shāstriji Mahārāj, and *Brahmaswarup* Yogiji Mahārāj. At present Shriji Mahārāj is *pragat* through His Divine Holiness *Brahmaswarup* Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj.

### 5.8 ONLY ONE PRAGAT FORM OF GOD

God remains *pragat* through the *Aksharbrahman* *Gunātīt* Saint. He continuously moves on this earth and opens the doors of salvation for countless *jivas*. Such a Saint can be only one.

God manifests only through *Aksharbrahman*, and eternal *Aksharbrahman* is only one. God’s manifestation is naturally therefore, through only one.

Shriji Mahārāj has graphically described in *Vachanāmritam* the situation if more than one God were at work. “If there are many gods, disorder would prevail as different gods would issue different orders. One will think of creating the universe; the other will think of destroying it. One may wish to make it rain; the other may not. One will think of infusing human instincts in animals, and the other of infusing animal instincts in human beings. However, such a disorderly state does not prevail in the governing of God since He is one and unparalleled and the controller of all. Nobody can claim superiority over His authority.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/39]

Similarly, if God manifests through more than one Saint, utter chaos would prevail in His system.

A king may have more than one son, but only one of them – competent and virtuous – inherits the throne. All the sons cannot occupy it. Similarly the throne of the *pragat* also cannot be an inheritance for more than one.

A *Sampradāya* shines by a galaxy of virtuous *sādhus*. But there is only one *sādhu* who is the *pragat* form of God with all His redemptive traits.

Nishkulānand Swāmi has written:

BIJĀ GUNAVĀN TO GHANĀ MALASHE,

PAN NAHI MALE HARINĀ MALEL;

NISHKULĀNAND EVĀ SANT SABANDHE, ANANTNĀ PĀP BALEL.

You may find many virtuous persons, but will not come across one who has met God.

By contact with such a Saint, says Nishkulānand, sins of countless are burnt away.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Sārsiddhi 38/10]

Nishkulānand Swāmi used the phrase, ‘One who has met God’ for the Saint. Shriji Mahārāj has also used the same words, ‘One who has met God’ in *Vachanāmritam* Vartāl 10 and Jetalpur 1. What is meant by the words ‘One who has met God’? Five hundred *paramhansas* were living with Shriji Mahārāj. Does this imply that all of them can lead one to final emancipation since all of them had ‘met’ Shriji Mahārāj?

The *paramhansas* and the householders were no ordinary persons either. Parvatbhāi of Agatrāi, Dādā Khāchar of Gadhadā, Devji Bhakta of Nenpur, metaphorically speaking, were ‘beads of Shriji Mahārāj’s rosary’. Among the *sādhus* were Muktānand Swāmi – saintliness personified and the loving guardian of the *Satsang*, Gopālānand Swāmi – *Ashtāng* *Yogi*, Nityānand Swāmi – eminent scholar, Brahmānand Swāmi – extraordinary pragmatic and poet, Premānand Swāmi – master poet and singer, Nishkulānand Swāmi – embodiment of *tyāg* and *vairāgya*, Vyāpakānand Swāmi – who could revive the dead, Sachchidānand Swāmi – who challenged Indra and made it rain, Swarupānand Swāmi – who cleared all the agonising pits of hell, and Santdās – who freely travelled in human form to and from Badrikāshram. All of them were highly virtuous and were full of dignity and glory. They all had met Shriji Mahārāj. The words ‘who have met God’ do not, however, imply emancipation through the hundreds of thousands of householders or the 500 *paramhansas* who had met Shriji Mahārāj.

If these words imply emancipation only through those householders and *paramhansas* who had physical contact with

Shriji Mahārāj, then the road to final redemption comes to a dead end. That, however, is not Shriji Mahārāj's implication or intention. He wants to perennially keep the road to redemption open for countless *jivas*. The words 'who have met God' therefore do not imply those who actually lived during Shriji Mahārāj's lifetime. 'Who has met God' means one who is in 'constant rapport with God, and in whom God has revealed Himself completely'.

Only *Aksharbrahman* has such constant rapport with God. Besides *Aksharbrahman*, no one has such contact with God. But *Aksharbrahman* is one only. God's manifestation is therefore through one only.

Gunātītānand Swāmi has clarified: "At a given point in time, only he can liberate who is entrusted by God with that specific mission. When Parikshit was cursed, there were Vyāsji and many other seers. But Parikshit was liberated only after Shukdevji's arrival." [Swāmini Vātu IV/49]

In Amdāvād, *Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi said to Āchārya Keshavprasādji Mahārāj: "As your father has handed over to you the keys of the treasury, similarly Swāminārāyan has given me the key of emancipation."

Out of 500 *paramhansas*, the key of salvation was given to only one – Gunātītānand Swāmi. It has been religiously preserved to this day in the *Gunātīt* spiritual lineage. Through precepts the Gurus impart the knowledge for redemption. This enables innumerable *jivas* to become *Brahmarup*, so as to ultimately dwell in *Akshardhām*. In no other *Sampradāya* can such a spiritual succession of pure Gurus be found.

During Gunātītānand Swāmi's lifetime and thereafter, history bears witness to the fact that many sādhus were full of saintliness, spiritual fervour, and completely detached; yet Shriji Mahārāj always fully reveals Himself through only one Sādhu who opens the gates of salvation. Many prominent persons have had the contact of that Sādhu and influenced others to do likewise.

In the spiritual line of Gurus, Shriji Mahārāj revealed

Himself successively through one – particular – *Gunātīt* Saint. The Saint's life and works amply demonstrate his incomparable saintliness.

There is also a school of thought advocating the present manifestation of both *Akshar* and *Purushottam* (as Shriji Mahārāj and Gunātītānand Swāmi were two forms). But according to the philosophical doctrine of Shriji Mahārāj, He manifests only through *Gunātīt*. After His return to the divine abode, He does not time and again manifest with *Aksharbrahman*. He redeems the *jivas* by revealing Himself through *Aksharbrahman*.

After Shriji Mahārāj's return to the divine abode, He remains *pragat* through only one *Gunātīt* Saint. In future also, as advocated by Shriji Mahārāj, it will be through only one. Shriji Mahārāj emphatically states that one who has the contact of the *pragat* form at a given point of time, should be faithful to only *that* form: "The devotee of God should be attached to God with relentless love. In whichever form God is *pragat* and he has His *darshan*, he should be irrevocably attached to that form only, and should not bear ties of such love and bondage even to the released souls or great saints." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/16]

## 5.9 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GUNĀTIT SAINT

The aspirant should know the characteristic traits of a *Gunātīt* Saint through whom Shriji Mahārāj is *pragat*. He should find and know a Saint who has the characteristics of a *Gunātīt* Saint as given in the scriptures and seek his refuge to attain final redemption. On the other hand, if he is impressed by dress, oratory, superficial knowledge of the scriptures, expertise in worldly arts, petty achievements, or miracles and credulously regards someone else as the *pragat* form of the divine, he attains hell instead of *Akshardhām*.

*Sadguru* Nishkulānand Swāmi says:

SĀCHĀ SANTNĀ ANG ENDHĀN RE, JOI LEVĀ JIVADIYE;

JENE MALAVE MĀNYU KALYĀN RE, TENE JOVĀ GHADI GHADIYE

The *jiva* (seeker) should know the essential traits of a genuine Saint. He, whose company can redeem, should be seen (contacted) time and again.

[Chosath Padi 9]

*Sadguru* Brahmānand Swāmi also says:

JAD BUDDHI JIVA,

PRABHU PADNE ICHCHHE TO KAR SANTNU PĀRKHU;

RANG PIT PANE, SONU NE PITTAL NA HOY EK SARKHU.

O *jiva*, the dullard, if you are keen to know God, thoroughly examine a Saint;

Both brass and gold are yellow in colour, but they are not the same.

It is therefore absolutely necessary to know exactly the Saint's characteristics before surrendering to him. The scriptures sing the glory of the Saint, and in the same breath narrate the essential traits of a Saint.

In the *Bhagvad Gitā*, characteristics of a *Sthitapragna* being (one with steadfast intellect) are described in the second chapter, the attributes of a dear devotee of God are narrated in the 12th chapter and in the 14th chapter, innate qualities of a *Gunātī* Saint are mentioned. Tulsidāsji also mentions the qualities of a God-like Saint in the Rāmāyan;

NĀRI NAYAN SHAR JĀHI NA LĀGĀ

GHOR KRODH TAM NISHI JO JĀGĀ

LOBH PĀSH JEHI GAR NA BANDHĀYĀ

SO NAR TUMHA SAMĀN RAGHURĀYĀ

He who is not wounded by the arrows from a maiden's eyes;

Who is wide awake in the pitch darkness of anger, i.e., does not get angry;

Who is not wrapped by the fetters of greed;

Such a person, Lord Rāma is exactly like you.

[Kishkindhā Kānd – Chopāi following 20th verse]

It is stated in *Shrimad Bhāgavatam*:

TASMĀD GURUM PRAPADHYETA JIGNĀSUHU SHREYA UTTAMAM æ

SHĀBDE PARE CHA NISHNĀTAM

BRAHMANYUPASHAMĀSHRAYAM ææ

Therefore an aspirant should, for his own spiritual well-being, accept the tutelage of a Guru who is an expert in the knowledge of *Brahman*

and through brahmic consciousness has attained the *upasham* state.

[Shrimad Bhāgavatam XI/3:21]

*Vachanāmritam*, the quintessence of all scriptures, describes in detail the characteristics of a *Gunātī* Saint. A few extracts are given below:

"What are the attributes of a Saint who is worthy of being worshipped on par with God? ...a Saint who has subdued the three *gunas* out of which the *indriyas* and the *antahkarans* are evolved but is never subdued by them; he is engaged in activities relating to God only; he strictly observes *panch vartmān*, and even though being brahmanised, he offers his worship to Lord *Purushottam*. A Saint with these attributes cannot be categorised either as a human being or as a demigod, since neither a human being nor a demigod, possess such attributes. Therefore, such a Saint, even though in the garb of a human being, deserves to be worshipped on par with God." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/26]

"The scriptures say that *panch vartmān*, viz., *Nishkāṁ*, *Nirlobh*, *Nisswād*, *Nissneh*, and *Nirmān*, are the vital redemptive attributes that a Saint must possess. The Saint in whom these attributes are displayed is said to have established rapport with God." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/27]

"One who has discarded the ego of his physical self, who is totally detached and who greatly fears to transgress even minor tenets, and if ever transgressed by him feels penitent as if he has transgressed a major tenet – such a Sādhu is a great devotee of God. One should be attached to him only and should serve him wholeheartedly." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/38]

"And so long as one carries the ego of his caste or class, he has not attained saintliness. Therefore, one who eschews all attachment to his body or bodily relations, takes himself to be *ātman*, eradicates all worldly desires and with the fullest realisation of his obligation to *dharma* offers worship to God is a true Sādhu." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/44]

"The Saint who is singularly devoted to God and who

possesses the attributes of *swadharma*, *jnān*, *vairāgya* and *bhakti* is the upholder of the *Bhāgavatam Dharma*. The *jīva* can be released from *māyā* only if he keeps himself in the company of such a Saint.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/54]

“He is a Sādhū who is not affected by emotions of misery or happiness and has stabilised his mind in the divine form of God.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/23]

Comparing a Saint with *vadwānal* (sub-marine) fire, Gunātītānand Swāmi says: “‘*Pushpa-hārāya sarpāya*’ – i.e. to such a Saint, a garland and a serpent are the same. He holds the image of God at all times. His definition of *Satsang* is: concentrating on *ātman* and *Paramātman*. Guiding many *jīvas* to worship God, he maintains his pristine purity and never violates even a minor injunction.” [Swāmini Vātu V/143]

In addition to the above extracts from the *Vachanāmritam*, Gadhadā I/27, Gadhadā III/35, etc. describe the attributes of a Saint in whom God reveals Himself. The attributes of a genuine renunciate are given in *Vachanāmritam* Gadhadā I/36 and I/37. Many other *Vachanāmritams* also refer to the traits of a genuine devotee and an *Ekāntik Bhakta*.

The qualities of the Saint have also been vividly and clearly described by *Sadguru* Nishkulānand Swāmi in *Chosath padi*, *Sadguru* Mukṭānand Swāmi, *Sadguru* Brahmānand Swāmi, as well as in the *kirtans* of other sādhus.

## 5.10 GLORY OF THE GUNĀTIT SAINT

Being *pragat* through a *Gunātīt* Saint, Shriji Mahārāj liberates infinite *jīvas*. The glory and majesty of such a Saint has been repeatedly described in the *Vachanāmritam*, *Swāmini Vātu*, other scriptures, and the devotional poems – *kirtans* of the *paramhansas* and other devotee-poets. Let us now see some of their observations.

### 5.10.1 GLORY OF THE GUNĀTIT SAINT: IN THE WORDS OF SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ

“He is so highly respected by Me that I would rub the dust

of his feet on to my head, I would be pained to harm him and long to have his *darshan*... Such a devout sādhu is so dear to God that he bestows His highest powers on him, and empowers him to redeem millions of souls merely by his *darshan*, for his *darshan* is equivalent to the *darshan* of God Himself.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/37]

“...such a Sādhū always remains conscious of God seated within his *jīva*. He is always with God in the divine realm of God. One who has the *darshan* of such a Saint should always rejoice with the feeling that he has had the *darshan* of God Himself.” [Vachanāmritam Sārangpur 10]

“One who has attained fully these attributes of the Sādhū has established rapport with God.” [Vach. Gadhadā I/44]

“...having thus fully developed *jnān*, *vairāgya*, *bhakti* and infinite other redemptive attributes, he gains the power to sustain God within him fully and thus becomes totally possessed by God. God bestows on him His infinite powers for the redemption of many *jīvas*. So possessed by God, such a devotee bears with the magnanimity of God the insults and calumny hurled upon him by the ignorant. This indicates his supra-mundane state.... As he is totally possessed by God, God reveals Himself through him fully. The grace so bestowed upon him elevates him. So enlightened by such a God-conscious state, he acquires the power to support various universes and also to enlighten the *jīvas* residing in them. God has bestowed His own greatness upon him.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/27]

“The Sādhū who has established rapport with God excels Brahmā, Shiva and other gods in spiritual greatness and divinity.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/59]

“The development of the attributes of saintliness by such spiritual thinking gains for him an unparalleled position. Just as a queen enjoys all the rights and privileges of the king, such a Sādhū also enjoys divine favours from God.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/22]

“The Saint who is like the *vaishwānar* fire, the symbolic

form of God, transforms the empiric-minded *jīvas* and lifts them into the trans-empiric state... The Saint of the calibre of *vaishvānar* fire is fully accomplished and is, therefore, the *Param Ekāntik Sādhu*." [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 3]

It is evident from the above observations in the *Vachanāmritam* that according to Shriji Mahārāj, the *Gunātit* Saint has as much honour and dignity as God. Whatever is therefore achieved by worshipping God, by abiding by His dictates, by pleasing Him and by His contact is equally achieved through a *Gunātit* Saint.

Shriji Mahārāj further adds: "...one who maligns him maligns God, and one who serves him serves God." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/35]

"In the way one offers worship to God by performing rituals, similarly, the choicest devotee of God should also be equally offered worship by performing the same rituals and offering him the same sanctified offerings which are graced by God. A devotee who does this, even if he is imperfect in his devotional fervour, would attain perfection in this very birth, even though his devotional fervour is so weak as to attain perfection after ten births or hundreds of births. Such is the blessed grace bestowed by God to a devotee who offers worship to His brahmanised Saint on par with Him." [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 5]

"If a brahmanised Saint who is in rapport with God bestows his grace, such malicious influence immediately dies out. Not only that, but his grace would uplift a *jīva* from a beggarly state to an elevated divine status of kingship. It would also transfer his ill fate and bring him a bright future. The impediments in his spiritual path are also removed by such grace." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/58]

"Such deep attachment to a *Satpurush* or a brahmanised Saint leads one on to the path of *ātmadarshan*, inspires in him the knowledge of the glory and greatness of such a *Satpurush* and helps him to attain the realisation of God." [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 11]

In a number of *Vachanāmritams* it is mentioned that a devotee is endowed with virtues by the contact, service and worship of a *Gunātit* Saint; and his bliss leads to attachment to God, removal of inner flaws, erosion of passion, and finally it culminates in a devotion that is full of *dharma* and *jnān*. And the *jīva* is extremely exalted by the Saint. Precisely for this reason, we can achieve whatever we desire through a *Gunātit* Saint. Shriji Mahārāj therefore asserts: "The divine contact of the Saint is like the *chintāmani* – magic stone or the *kalpavruksh* – tree that give the desired fruits." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/14]

### 5.10.2 GLORY OF THE GUNĀTIT SAINT:

#### IN THE WORDS OF GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI

*Aksharbrahman* Gunātitānand Swāmi describes: "He [the Saint] is eminent. He has rapport with God. He abides by the Lord's word. He cheerfully accepts hardships. God is obedient to him. God honours his word. God moves as he wishes. He has won over the Lord. He is aware of God's opinion. He grants salvation. By his *darshan*, one has the *darshan* of God. Worship him and God is worshipped. He frees one from the torture of the womb, hell and the cycle of births and deaths, and settles *jīvas* in boundless *Akshardhām*. And he is so great that he accords similar divinity with that of God. God cannot live without him. By his *darshan* the five cardinal sins are washed away. The universe functions by the actions of his *indriyas*. *Kāla*, *karma* and *māyā* shiver before him. As the *jīva* is worshipped by worshipping the body, similarly God is worshipped by worshipping this Sādhu. He is the provider of food. He is omniscient. He is all knowing. He is the all-doer. Though looking like a man, he is not human. God lives with him. He helps attain the imperishable divine abode. He is the doer and yet is the non-doer. Like a tree, he lives for others. He possesses all the saintly qualities." [Swāmini Vātu IV/143]

"The Saint is the greatest of all. The explanation is; the earth is great. But water, light, wind, sky, *ahamkār*, *mahattattva*,

*Pradhān Purush, Mul Prakriti Purush* and *Akshar* each is greater than the preceding entity. God supports all of them. Such a great God is held in the heart of the Saint. The Saint is therefore the greatest of all.” [Swāmini Vātu II/111]

### 5.10.3 GLORY OF THE GUNĀTIT SAINT: IN THE POEMS OF THE PARAMHANSAS

(A) *Sadguru* Nishkulānand Swāmi has eulogised such a great *Ekāntik* Saint in *Purushottam Prakāsh*, *Bhaktachintāmani*, *Chosath Padi* and other *kirtans*. He has written in *Purushottam Prakāsh*:

SANT BOLE TE BHELO HU BOLU RE,  
SANT NA BHULE HU YE NA BHULU RE;  
SANT VĀT BHELI KARU VĀT RE, EM SANTMĀ CHHAU SĀKSHĀT RE.  
SANT JUVE TE BHELO HU JOU RE, SANT SUTĀ PACHHI HU SOU RE;  
SANT JĀGE TE BHELO HU JĀGU RE, SANT JOI ATI ANURĀGU RE.  
SANT JAME TE BHELO HU JAMU RE,  
SANT BHAME TE KEDYE HU BHAMU RE;  
SANT DUKHĀNE HU DUKHĀNO RE, EH VĀT SATYA JAN JĀNO RE,  
SANT HU NE VALI HU TE SANT RE,  
EM SHRI MUKHE KAHE BHAGWANT RE,  
SANT MĀNAJO MĀRI MURATI RE, EMĀ FER NATHI EK RATI RE.

The Saint speaks and I speak with him. The Saint forgets not, and I also do not forget.

The Saint talks, and I talk with him. Thus I reveal myself thoroughly through the Saint.

The Saint looks and I look with him. I sleep after he sleeps.

I get up before he arises. I see him and am filled with joy.

The Saint eats and I eat with him. The Saint walks, I follow him.

The Saint is grieved, I suffer the pain. Believe this as the gospel truth;

The Saint is myself and I am the Saint. Thus says God Himself,

The Saint is My very image without the slightest difference.

[Purushottam Prakāsh 41/6-9]

EVĀ SANT JAMYE JAMYĀ SHYĀM, JAMYĀ SAHU DEVATĀ;  
JAMYĀ SARVE LOK SARVE DHĀM, SAHU THAYĀ TRUPTATĀ.  
EVĀ SANT MALYĀ MALYĀ SWĀMI, KHĀMI KOYE NĀ RAHI;  
KAHE NISHKULĀNAND SHISH NĀMI, SĀCHI SAHUNE KAHĪ.

When the Saint eats, God and all the deities are fed.

All the cosmoses and all the abodes are contented.

Communion with such a Saint is like communion with God and no inadequacy is ever felt.

Bowing his head in all humility, Nishkulānand says, I tell you only the truth.

[Chosath Padi 3]

SANT KRUPĀE SUKH UPĀJE, SANT KRUPĀTHI SARE KĀM;  
SANT KRUPĀTHI PĀMIE, PURAN PURUSHOTTAM DHĀM.  
SANT KRUPĀTHI SADMATI JĀGE, SANT KRUPĀTHI SADGUNA;  
SANT KRUPĀ VINĀ SĀDHUTĀ, KAHONE PĀMYĀ KUNA.  
SANT SEVYĀ TENE SARVE SEVYĀ, SEVYĀ SHRI HARI BHAGWAN;  
RUSHI MUNI SEVYĀ DEVATĀ, JENE SANT KARYĀ RĀJI MAN.  
KĀMADUGHĀ<sup>1</sup> KALPATARU<sup>2</sup>, PĀRAS<sup>3</sup> CHINTĀMANI<sup>4</sup> CHĀR;  
SANT SAMĀN EKE NAHI, ME MANMĀ KARYO VICHĀR.

Bliss follows through the Saint's grace and all ends are served.

By the Saint's grace is attained *Purushottam's* abode.

Through the Saint's grace wise counsel prevails, and virtues flourish.

Without the Saint's grace, who has acquired saintliness?

By serving the Saint, all are served and God is also worshipped.

He who pleases the Saint, has served the rishis, sages and deities.

*Kāmadughā*, *kalpataru*, *pāras* and *chintāmani* – the foursome...

Pale into insignificance before the Saint. This is my considered opinion.

[Bhaktachintāmani 2]

DHANYA DHANYA E SANT SUJĀNANE,  
JENU ULATI PALATYU ĀP, SANT TE SWAYAM HARI.  
ĀP TALI MALYĀ BHAGWĀNMĀ,  
JENĀ ĀPMĀ HARINO VYĀP, SANT TE SWAYAM HARI.

The Saint is indeed fortunate, whose inner self is completely changed.

The Saint is God Himself.

He (the Saint) who has effaced the self, merges in God and is possessed by Him.

The Saint is God Himself.

(B) *Sadguru* Muktānand Swāmi says:

AISE MERE JAN EKĀNTIK, TEHI SAM AUR NA KOI;  
MUKTĀNAND KAHAT YU MOHAN, MERO HI SARVASVA SOI.

(1) Wish-yielding cow (2) Wish-yielding tree (3) Philosopher's stone (popularly known as a stone that turns iron into gold by touch) (4) Wish-fulfilling gem

No one can be on par with My Ekāntik Saint.  
God says, 'For Me, he is My all.'

MUKTĀNAND MAHĀ SANTNE, PRABHU PRAGAT PĀSE RE;  
ANUBHAVINE ANTARE RAHE RĀM VĀSE RE.

God-incarnate is close to the august Saint.  
In the heart of an enlightened one, God always resides.

**(C) Sadguru Brahmānand Swāmi says:**

BRAHMĀNAND KAHE SANTKI SOBAT, MILAT HE PRAGAT MURĀRI,  
JAGATMĀHI SANT PARAM HITAKĀRI.

The company of the Saint is like meeting God Himself.  
Our only well-wisher in the whole world is the Saint.

**(D) Sadguru Premānand Swāmi writes:**

ĀTHE PAHOR ĀNAND JENĀ ANGMĀ,  
RAME GOVIND EVĀ SANTNĀ RE SANGMĀ;

God is one with the Saint, who is constantly brimming with joy.  
EVĀ SANT HARINE PYĀRĀ RE,  
TETHI GHADIE NA RAHE VĀLO NYĀRĀ RE.

Such a saint is dearest to the Lord;  
He doesn't leave him for a moment.

EVĀ SANTNI BALIHĀRI RE,  
JENE GUNE RIJHYĀ GIRADHĀRI RE.

Glory to is the Saint, whose innate goodness has won over God.

#### 5.10.4 GLORY OF THE GUNĀTIT SAINT: IN THE POEMS OF WELL-KNOWN SAINT-POETS

Well-known saint-poets Narsinh Mehtā, Mirābāi, Pritam, Dayārām, Surdās, Tulsidās and others are ecstatic in their poems while praising the *Gunātīt* Saint and have placed him on par with God.

**(A) Narsinh Mehtā has written:**

PRĀN THAKI MUNE VAISHNAV VAHĀLĀ,  
RĀT DIVAS HRUDE BHĀVU RE;  
TAP TIRATH VAIKUNTH PAD MELI,  
MĀRĀ HARIJAN HOY TYĀ HU ĀVU RE.  
LAKSHMIJI ARDHĀNGANĀ MĀRI,  
TE MĀRĀ SANTNI DĀSI RE;  
ADASATH TIRATH MĀRĀ SANTNE CHARANE,  
KOTI GANGĀ KOTI KĀSHI RE.

*Vaishnavs* are dearer to Me than My life. Day and night I think of them.

Leaving aside penance, holy places, and *Vaikunth*, I rush wherever My devotees are.

My wife *Lakshmi* faithfully serves the Saint.

All the 68 holy places lie at the feet of My Saint. They (the feet) are as sacred as a million Ganges and Kāshis.

**(B) Tulsidās says:**

RAM SINDHU GHAN SAJJAN DHIRĀ,  
CHANDAN TARU HARI SANT SAMIRĀ;  
MORE MAN PRABHU AS BISVĀSĀ,  
RĀM TE ADHIK RĀM KAR DĀSĀ.

If Rāma is the ocean, the pious Saint is a monsoon cloud.

If Rāma is the sandalwood tree, the Saint is the cool scented breeze.

I am quite sure in my mind that...

Rāma's Saint is greater than Rāma.

[Uttar Kānd – Chopāi following 119th verse]

**(C) Pritam says:**

SANT HARIJAN EK HAI, BHINNA NA MĀNO KOI;  
PRITAM SADGURU MILE, TĀKU MĀLUM HOY.

The Saint and God are the same. Do not distinguish between them.

Pritam says only one who has met the Saint realises this fact.

**(D) Sant Kabir says:**

SĀHABAKĀ GHAR SANTANMĀHI, SANT SĀHAB KACHHU ANTAR NĀHI.  
God dwells in the Saint.

There is no distance between the Lord and the Saint.

#### 5.10.5 GLORY OF THE GUNĀTIT SAINT: IN OTHER SCRIPTURES

In the *Bhagavad Gitā*, *Rāmāyan* and other scriptures, there are numerous references to the Saint's greatness and glory, as can be seen from the following extracts:

YASYA DEVE PARĀBHAKTIRYATHĀ DEVE TATHĀ GURAU æ  
TASYAITE KATHITĀ HYARTHĀHĀ  
PRAKĀSHANTE MAHĀTMAHAH ææ

If the *jīva* serves with the same spirit the *pragat* Guru as he worships the *paroksh* form of God, he achieves all that is worth achieving.

[Shvetāshvatara Upanishad VI/23]



SĀDHAVO HRIDAYAM MAHYAM SĀDHUNĀM HRIDAYAM TVAHAM æ  
MADANYATTE NA JĀNANTI NĀHAM TEBHYO MANĀGAPI ææ

The Saint is My heart. And I am the Saint's heart. As he does not recognise anyone as superior to Me, I also do not treat anyone superior to him.

[Shrimad Bhāgavatam IX/4:68]

NIRAPEKSHAM MUNIM SHĀNTAM NIRVAIRAM SAMADARSHANAM æ  
ANUVRAJĀMYAHAM NITYAM PUYEYATYANGHIRENUBHIHI ææ

I constantly follow the detached, contemplative, quiet, unbiased and righteous saints so that if I get the dust of their feet, I shall be purified.

[Shrimad Bhāgavatam XI/14:16]

Does this mean that God is not pure? God certainly is. Only to illustrate the endless glory of His Saint does He speak about him in such glowing terms.

### 5.11 THE GUNĀTIT SAINT – THE PRAGAT FORM OF GOD YET A LOYAL SERVANT

The scriptures, Shriji Mahārāj and the saint-poets have placed the *Gunātit* Saint on par with God, or even on a higher plane, as seen in the previous pages. Nevertheless, the *Gunātit* Saint always serves Shriji Mahārāj as a loyal servant. Gunātītānand Swāmi in the *Swāmini Vātu* identifies himself as the master of all, yet at the same time the servant of *Purushottam*. Brahmānand Swāmi has written:

SĀMRATH PĀY KABU NAHI CHHALAKAT, JYU UDADHI KE TOY;  
BRAHMĀNAND KAHYO SHRI MUKHSE, ESO JAN PRIYA MOY.

Though extremely powerful, the Saint does not demonstrate his competency, like the ocean waters that never overflow.

Brahmānand says God Himself declares, 'Such a Saint is My beloved.'

The *Gunātit* Saint has as much power as God. It is however a fact that all the powers, dignity, authority of the Saint are due to *Purushottam* Nārāyan. Shriji Mahārāj says: "Imposition of Godship on Brahmā, Shiva, the Sanaks, Nārada, Uddhav and others is because of their devout association with this ultimate God, *Nārāyan*. Presently Muktānand Swāmi can also

be regarded as having attained such greatness of God since he is devoutly attached to *Nārāyan*. But if devoid of the divine relation and attachment to *Nārāyan*, even *Akshar* cannot be regarded as great as God; then what can we say of others?" [Vachanāmritam Loyā 13]

The *Gunātit* Saint never becomes the Lord Himself. But God, in all respects, dwells in him. The *darshan* of the *Gunātit* Saint is therefore equivalent to the *darshan* of God. Principally, "*Parabrahman* is distinct and separate from *Brahman*, and is his supporter, inspirer and cause." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/3]

In our successive line of Gurus, no one has ever dreamt of being God or becoming God. In the assembly at Vartāl when Gunātītānand Swāmi was insulted, somebody commented, "Gunātītānand Swāmi wants to become God."

Swāmi unhesitatingly retorted, "No one can become God. Only Shriji Mahārāj is God. If anyone calls me God, he will be considered a donkey."

Shāstriji Mahārāj often used to say, "We are the bullocks of *Akshar Purushottam*." He also used to clarify, "Shriji Mahārāj is the only God. Anyone worshipping me as God will be consigned to hell."

Like Shāstriji Mahārāj and Yogiji Mahārāj, today His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj always serves as a humble servant of *Parabrahman Purushottam Nārāyan*. This is amply demonstrated by his unpretentious, humble life.

God manifests through *Aksharbrahman*. We shall examine in the next chapter the form of *Aksharbrahman*, his powers and glory, and how he helps one on the road to redemption.



## 6. AKSHARBRAHMAN

All the Vedic philosophies and commentators accept *Parabrahman* as the highest and the most sublime entity. But nowhere is it clearly discussed what exactly *Aksharbrahman* is. The dignity, form and attributes of *Brahman* are profusely expounded in the scriptures. The scriptures by and large describe *Brahman* as *Parabrahman*. Even the learned *āchāryas* – who have written commentaries on the scriptures – have explained that often *Brahman* is synonymous with *Parabrahman*. However in certain *Shrutis*, *Brahman* is described as distinct. No one has interpreted the entity of *Brahman* as clearly as Shriji Mahārāj. In Swāminārāyan *Vedānta*, *Aksharbrahman* is described as the fourth entity which transcends the three entities of *jīva*, *Ishwar* and *māyā*. *Aksharbrahman* is described as the supporter of these three, and

as pervading them and transgressing them. However, *Aksharbrahman* is still inferior to *Parabrahman*. This entity is customarily known as *Akshar* and *Brahman*.

*Aksharbrahman* has a prominent place in the Swāminārāyan *upāsana*. Ultimate liberation is to attain *Brahmabhāva* and devoutly worship *Parabrahman Paramātmān* Shri Sahajānand Swāmi. All followers of the *Sampradāya* worship the lotus feet of Sahajānand Swāmi. Nevertheless, this *upāsana* can never be fulfilled without *Aksharbrahman*.

Only through *Aksharbrahman* can *Parabrahman* be known precisely, *māyā* be eradicated, one become *Brahmarup* and attain ultimate liberation. *Akshar* is the means to the attainment of *Purushottam*. It is therefore quite essential to clearly understand the relationship of *Akshar* and *Purushottam*.

### 6.1 BECOMING AKSHARRUP AND OFFERING UPĀSANĀ TO PURUSHOTTAM WITH SWĀMI-SEVAK BHĀV

Shriji Mahārāj has instructed us to develop the highest category of *nirvikalp* knowledge or conviction. Only through *nirvikalp* knowledge can we clearly understand the sublime form of *Purushottam Nārāyan*. All followers of the *Sampradāya* in their evening prayers beseech for this by singing:

NIRVIKALP UTTAM ATI NISHCHAY TAV GHANSHYĀM...

O Ghanshyām, kindly favour us with your highest category of *nirvikalp* knowledge.

[Sadguru Premānand Swāmi]

Shriji Mahārāj has explained the highest category of *nirvikalp* knowledge in the following manner: “A devotee possessing the highest category of *nirvikalp* knowledge has realised that millions of macrocosms, each encircled by eight spheres, appear like atoms before the infinite greatness of *Akshar*. This *Akshar* is the divine abode of *Purushottam Nārāyan*. One has to attain oneness with this *Akshar*, and with this *Aksharbhāva* offer worship to Lord *Purushottam*.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 12]

In these words of Shriji Mahārāj, the highest category of

*nirvikalp* knowledge is basically becoming *Aksharrup* to devoutly worship *Purushottam*.

Again, “*Parabrahman* is distinct and separate from *Brahman*, and is his supporter, inspirer and cause. With this knowledge of *Brahman*, the aspirant should identify himself with *Brahman* and worship *Parabrahman* as his Lord, upholding the ideal of *Swāmi-sevak bhāv*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/3]

The same injunction is also included in the *Shikshāpatri*:

NIJĀTMĀNAM BRAHMARUPAM DEHATRAYA-VILAKSHANAM æ

VIBHĀVYA TENA KARTAVYĀ BHAKTIHI KRISHNASYA SARVADĀ ææ

Assuming the self to be *Brahman* separate from the three bodies, one should always offer devotion to Lord Krishna.

[Shikshāpatri – 116]

*Satsangijivanam* also mentions: “An aspirant should know through *sāmkhya jñān* the distinct identity of the *ātman* from the three bodies – *sthul* [gross], *sukshma* [subtle] and *kāran* [causal]. He also should know *Ishwar* to be distinct from *Virāt*, *sutrātmā* and *avyākṛut*. Then as *ātman*, the self should identify with personified *Aksharbrahman*. The seeker after reaching the *Brahmarup* stage should offer his worship to *Vāsudev* – i.e. Shriji Mahārāj.<sup>1</sup>

Stressing the importance of thoroughly knowing *Akshar* and complete identification with him, Shriji Mahārāj says: “Identifying his *jiva* and *Aksharbrahman* as one, he who worships *Purushottam* is indeed praiseworthy. And he who distinguishes the *jiva* and *Akshar*, and fails to realise the unity between them should be condemned.” [Vedras p.220]

“Knowing his *ātman* and *Akshar* as one, he who offers his worship to *Purushottam Paramātman* deserves compliments and he who does not realise the *Swāmi-sevak bhāv* with *Purushottam*, but treats them as one, deserves condemnation.” [Vedras p.220]

(1) ETENA SĀMKHYAJNĀNENA KĀRANĀDIVAPUSTRAYĀT æ  
SVĀTMĀ JNEYAHA PRUTHAK CHESHO'VYĀKRITĀDIVAPUSTRAYĀT ææ  
TĀDĀTMYENA TATASHCHAIKYAM BRAHMANĀ SVASYA BHĀVAYET æ  
BRAHMABHUTASTATO BHAKTYĀ VĀSUDEVAM BHAJETPUMĀN ææ

[Satsangijivanam IV/72:1,2]

It should, therefore, be clearly realised that *Akshar* and *jiva* should be treated as one. And with this realisation, *Purushottam* should be worshipped with *Swāmi-sevak bhāv*.

Gunātītānand Swāmi had a thorough understanding of Shriji Mahārāj's thinking. Once he asked someone to read *Vachanāmritams* Gadhadā I/23, Gadhadā II/30 and II/45, Amdāvād 2 and 3. The five *Vachanāmritams* were re-read twice or thrice. Gunātītānand Swāmi then said, “For ages to come, there is no way one can avoid becoming *Aksharrup* and thereafter worshipping *Purushottam*. Even if one may be an *āchārya* or a son of God, an *Ishwar* or a minor-god; there is no other way for anyone, as this is Mahārāj's considered doctrine.” [Swāmini Vātu III/13]

To arrive at the stage of *Aksharrup* and offer one's devotion to *Purushottam* through *Swāmi-sevak bhāv*, i.e. to be *Brahmarup* and be devoted to *Parabrahman* with *Swāmi-sevak bhāv* is the timeless fundamental principle propounded by Shriji Mahārāj. Therefore it is essential for us – His followers – to become *Aksharrup*, *Brahmarup*. Shriji Mahārāj has explained the need of becoming *Aksharrup* in *Vachanāmritam* in a different manner. We now turn to that.

## 6.2 THE NEED OF BECOMING BRAHMARUP:

### 6.2.1 – FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF WORSHIPPING PURUSHOTTAM

Everyone worships God. But who is rightly privileged to do so? Shriji Mahārāj explains: “And one who is so brahmanised with such realisation of the knowledge of God is only selected for offering dedicated devotion to God.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 7]

The same principle is propounded by Lord Krishna:

BRAHMABHUTAHA PRASANNĀTMĀ NA SHOCHATI NA KĀNKSATI æ

SAMAHA SARVESHU BHUTESHU MAD BHAKTIM LABHATE PARĀM ææ

One who has become brahmanised neither grieves nor desires. He has established equanimity in his mind by which the great and the small, the good and the bad have become one to him. A devotee with

such brahmic state can offer worship to Me.

[Bhagvad Gitā XVIII/54]

## 6.2.2 – FOR UNHINDERED DEVOTION

Shriji Mahārāj warns: “A devotee, so long as he is not so enlightened, is likely to face obstacles. Shiva was lost in the seductive charm of Mohini, and Brahmā in Saraswati – his daughter. Nārada burst into a wild desire to marry as he was drawn by such allurements; Indra and Chandra invited scandal because they lacked such spiritual status.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/23]

For unhindered devotion to God, it is essential to be one with *Aksharbrahman*. Otherwise there is the constant danger of downfall. In the absence of such a state, one is likely to be distracted by the body, the *gunas*, or the states of consciousness, and inevitably lapse into the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. It may also lead to attributing human weaknesses to God.

For an aspirant, the two greatest hurdles on the spiritual path are women and wealth. How can they be overcome? According to Shriji Mahārāj: “Both wealth and women have insuperable powers to dislodge a man from his spiritual position. However, one who unflinchingly believes that the *Brahman* who transcends both *Prakriti* and *Purush* is the only truth, and feels that he is not the body but that pure *Brahman*, and having been so brahmanised by the contact of this *Brahman* devotes himself to the service and devotion of God – the *Parabrahman*, and discards with disdain all the evolutes of *Prakriti* and *Purush* by developing total detachment to them, would never be drawn into the vortex of wealth and women.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/30]

Gunātītānand Swāmi also confirms: “There is not a single man in the universe who does not desire a woman. Nor is there a single woman who does not desire a man. To come away from this, Mahārāj has written one verse: ‘*Nijātmanam Brahmarupam...*’ No stones can be found in the soil of Gujarāt

even after digging deep, similarly, there are no vices in one who is *Brahmarup*.” [Swāmini Vātu I/141]

“Again, only by following the command of ‘*Nijātmanam Brahmarupam...*’ [assuming the self as *Brahman*] is the causal body dissolved.” [Swāmini Vātu V/72]

Therefore, to remove all the road blocks on the path of devotion it is necessary to overcome human imperfections and become *Brahmarup*.

## 6.2.3 – FOR ULTIMATE LIBERATION

“Brahmā and the other deities involved in the creation of the universe lack this divine knowledge of God and move in the cycles of evolution and destruction, and ultimately at the time of *pralay* merge in *māyā*.” So saying, Shriji Mahārāj points out their second deficiency (out of four): “They lack the true concept of *mukti*, which is to attain *Aksharbhāva* and serve the lotus feet of the Lord.” [Vachanāmritam Ashlāli (Amdāvād II/6)]

If Brahmā and other creators of the universe are required to become *Brahmarup* for their ultimate liberation, its need for lesser beings can hardly be overstated. Shriji Mahārāj therefore maintains: “One who is brahmanised yet devoid of devotion cannot be said to be fully redeemed.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 7]

## 6.3 THE NECESSITY OF AKSHARBRAHMAN ON THE PATH OF SALVATION:

### 6.3.1 – TO BECOME BRAHMARUP

TATRA BRAHMĀTMĀNĀ KRISHNA – SEVĀ

MUKTISHCHA GAMYATĀM ॐ

[Shikshāpatrī 121]

Explaining the definition of liberation or *moksha*, Shriji Mahārāj says: “In the divine abode, assuming *Brahmabhāva* to serve *Parabrahman* is ultimate *mukti* or liberation.”

Having realised the essentiality of being *Brahmarup*, the obvious question is how to become *Brahmarup*? According to Shriji Mahārāj, ignorance, passion and attachment to the body

are not undone by any means. They can only be eradicated by the company of *Brahman*. The influence of *māyā* can be removed by association with *Brahman* because in *Brahman* there is no trace or influence of *māyā*. It is laid down in *Shrimad Bhāgavatam*:

DHĀMNĀ SVENA SADĀ NIRASTAKUHHAKAM

SATYAM PARAM DHIMAHĪ ææ

By His own form the abode, he who has eliminated the deception of *māyā* is the ultimate form of God.

[Shrimad Bhāgavatam I/1:1]

In this way, the abode is the form of God, and through that abode, God removes the veil of *māyā* which has enwrapped all *jivas*.

Shriji Mahārāj states: “If the *jiva* meditates upon *Brahman*, he becomes enlightened with the redemptive attributes of *Brahman*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/31]

The *Shruti* also declares:

BRAHMAVID BRAHMAIVA BHAVATI æ

He who knows *Brahman* becomes *Brahmarup*.

[Mundaka Upanishad 3/2:9]

It is quite essential then to know and to be associated with *Aksharbrahman* in order to do away with the influence of *māyā* and become *Brahmarup*. Gunātītānand Swāmi also says: “To become *Brahmarup*, one has to realise the *Gunātīt* Saint as *Brahmarup* and associate with him through thought, deed and word.” [Swāmini Vātu III/12]

### 6.3.2 – TO KNOW PARABRAHMAN AS HE IS

*Parabrahman* in His human form is forever divine. Yet the ignorant see the *pragat* form of God under the same spell of *māyā* as a human being; because the “...ten *indriyas* are evolved out of *rajas* and the four *antahkarans* are evolved out of *sattva guna*. As these *indriyas* and *antahkarans* are the products of *māyā* being evolved out of *sattva* and *rajas gunas*, and as Lord *Purushottam* is beyond *māyā*, how can such a divine and all-transcending God be known by the *indriyas* and *antahkarans*

which themselves have evolved out of *māyā*?” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/51]

“But if he comes across a realised Saint *en rapport* with God and expresses frankly before him his inability to realise divinity in the human form of God, the veil of *māyā* will be pierced by him [the Saint]. Then he would visualise complete divinity in the same human form of God and realise Him as the form of *Sat Chit and Ānand*.” [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7]

Again, “If the *jiva*, by association with the [Gunātīt] Sādhu, realises the sublime greatness of *Purushottam*, then its senses and *antahkaran* all become *Purushottam-rup* – thus allowing the *jiva* to know God.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/51]

In the Vachanāmritam, Shriji Mahārāj reveals His *Purushottam* form in a wonderful account and then explains: “Such knowledge for realising divinity in the human form of God, though prescribed in our scriptures, can be realised only by the grace of a brahmanised Saint who manifests on earth. Such esoteric writing in scriptures are not revealed by mere intelligence.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/13] It is therefore evident that only through the *Satpurush* does one realise Shriji Mahārāj as *Purushottam* and the *Satpurush* as *Gunātīt*. Without knowing *Gunātīt* or *Aksharbrahman*, it is impossible to have a clear realisation of *Purushottam* as He is.

It is the highest state of knowledge to envisage divinity in the human form of *Parabrahman*. What is that knowledge? Shriji Mahārāj explains: “The source from which this knowledge emanates is beyond *Prakriti* and *Purush*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/24] Beyond *Prakriti Purush* is *Akshar*. *Akshar* is therefore the embodiment of the knowledge of *Purushottam*. In other words, *Akshar* is the most appropriate medium to know the form of *Purushottam*.

“Water is greater than the earth and is therefore the cause of the earth and is subtler than the earth. Similarly, fire is greater than water, air is greater than fire and space is greater than air. Again, egoity, intelligence, *Pradhān Purush* and *Prakriti Purush* are all successively greater. Above them is

*Akshar* – the abode of *Purushottam* – who is in turn greater and subtler than all, and the cause of the evolution of them all.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/63]

After knowing the importance of each entity successively, we can come to know the importance of *Akshar*. Having known the importance and vastness of *Akshar*, we realise the greatness and glory of *Purushottam*. To realise *Purushottam Nārāyan* with all the associate entities – as *He is* – it is a precondition to realise *Aksharbrahman*.

Shriji Mahārāj has also said: “Lord *Purushottam* resides by His *antaryāmi* power in all the entities produced out of this creation; but His total manifestation is felt in *Akshar* only, and then in a descending order in *Purush* and *Prakriti*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/41] This means that *Aksharbrahman* is in close proximity with *Purushottam*. No *mukta* can therefore realise *Purushottam*’s glory and greatness as much as *Aksharbrahman*. No wonder then others cannot know it. The condition essential to visualise the immense glory and sublimity of *Purushottam* is to have the association of *Aksharbrahman*. Shriji Mahārāj therefore says: “*Aksharbrahman* is compared to the solar system. Just as the location of the ten directions is established through the help of the sun when it reaches the zenith in the sky, similarly the greatness of *Aksharbrahman* can be visualised only by realising that millions of macrocosms rotate around *Akshar*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/42] That is to say, only through *Akshar* can *Purushottam* be known. This is the key, the fundamental of correct understanding.

Therefore, to have an indomitable faith in *Purushottam Nārāyan* and to understand His divine glory, it is essential to know *Aksharbrahman* with all his greatness and to associate with him in thought, deed and word. The *Shruti* also mentions:

BRAHMAVIDĀPNOTI PARAM æ

He who knows *Brahman* attains *Parabrahman*.

[Taittiriya Upanishad II/1]

Now let us understand the exact form and importance of *Aksharbrahman*, as it is the only medium to attain *Parabrahman*.

## 6.4 THE INFINITE GLORY OF AKSHARBRAHMAN

The infinite glory of *Aksharbrahman* is given at length in the *Vedās*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagvad Gitā* and other scriptures. Shriji Mahārāj has also described it in *Vedras* and the *Vachanāmritam*.

“Enwrapped by the sixteen *vikārs* – the ten *indriyas*, *panchbhutas*, and the mind; and encircled by the eight spheres of earth, etc. – each one ten times greater than the preceding one; and five crores *yojans* [200 million miles] in dimension – a universe appears like a tiny atom before *Aksharbrahman*. And before whom millions of universes appear like tiny atoms, that *Aksharbrahman* is the cause of all, the cause of even *Prakriti* and *Purush*, and the abode of *Paramātman* Himself in the male form.”<sup>1</sup> [Shrimad Bhāgavatam III/11:40]

“By *Akshar*’s power of *kāla*, millions of bubbles of water [i.e. *Mahā Vishnu*] which lie in one pore of *Akshar* rise and burst like waves... but that *Akshar* is uninfluenced by the three states of creation, sustenance and dissolution.” [Vedras p.148]

*Akshar* is the onlooker and witness of all. *Brahman* is aware of them all, governs them all, controls them, and is their all-doer. *Brahman* is stable. It is immanent in *Prakriti-Purush* and is the *antaryāmi* of all. It inspires all. *Brahman* is unchanging and is endowed with supreme wisdom. By its power the entire world of *Purush-Prakriti* is created and sustained. That *Brahman* is omnipotent and subtler than the subtlest. [Based on Vedras p.157-9, p.165, p.213]

## 6.5 THE FORM OF AKSHARBRAHMAN

Shriji Mahārāj has described the form of *Aksharbrahman*: “*Brahman* is always static, unchangeable and indivisible. When it is said that everything is *Brahman*, it implies the all-

(1) DASHOTTARĀDIKAIRYATRA PRAVISHATAHA PARAMĀNKIVAT æ  
LAKSHYATE'NTARGATĀSHCHĀNYE KOTISHO HYANDARĀSHAYAHA ææ  
TADĀHURAKSHARAM BRAHMA SARVAKĀRANĀKĀRANAM æ  
VISHNORDHĀMA PARAMA SĀKSHĀT PURUSHASYA MAHĀTMANAHA ææ

pervasiveness of *Brahman*. Since *Brahman* is the cause of *Prakriti* and their supporter, *Brahman* cannot be said to be separate from its causal effects or, conversely, *Brahman* by its ubiquity is felt everywhere. However *Brahman* does not degenerate and become *jiva*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/3]

Eternal, everlasting and indivisible, *Aksharbrahman*, like space, pervades *māyā* and all the cosmic evolutes evolved from *māyā*, and possesses an all-pervading influence. But *Aksharbrahman* is also described as the distinct form of *Satchidānand* which transcends all. This form is unaffected by *Purush*, *Prakriti* and similar afflictions. It is the proper dwelling place of *Purushottam*. [Vachanāmritams Gadhadā I/7, Sārangpur 5, Gadhadā II/64]

## 6.6 THE TWO FORMS OF AKSHAR

Describing the two forms of *Akshar*, Shriji Mahārāj explains: “This *Akshardhām* is in a dual form: firstly, as all-pervading *chaitanya*, which is called *Chidākāsh* or *Brahmamohol* which is formless [i.e., not visible to the human eye because of its immeasurable greatness]; secondly, this *Akshar* [being associated with the Lord as His nearest devotee] is always in the proximity of the Lord in His service.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/21]

*Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* also describes *Akshar*’s dual form as:

DVE VĀVA BRAHMANO RUPE MURTA CHAIVĀMURTAM CHA æ

There are two forms of *Brahman*; ‘with form’ and ‘without form’.

[Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad II/3:1]

In this way *Akshar* has two forms: (1) Formless (*nirākār*) and (2) Personal form (*sākār*).

Let us now turn to the various functions of *Akshar*.

### 6.7.1 AKSHARBRAHMAN:

#### AS SATCHIDĀNAND CHIDĀKĀSH RADIANCE

*Satchidānand* means *Sat* – Existence, *Chit* – Consciousness, and *Ānand* – Bliss. As *Satchidānand Chidākāsh*, *Aksharbrahman* is

imperceptibly formless and all-pervading. It is also immanent in everything. It is immanent even in the millionth part of a dust particle. This *Akshar* as *Chidākāsh* is imperishable, unwaning, unchanging and eternal. It is beyond creation and dissolution. [Based on Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/46]

*Chidākāsh* is the existent, conscious and blissful divine radiance of *Akshar*, the divine abode of God. It possesses no cause-effect relationship. As given in *Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/42*, millions of macrocosms rotate in *Chidākāsh*.

*Aksharbrahman*, as *Satchidānand Chidākāsh* radiance, is by its *antaryāmi* power all-pervading within and without all the functions of *Prakriti-Purush*, and their supporter. This is the *nirgun* form of *Akshar*.

### 6.7.2 AKSHARBRAHMAN:

#### AS THE DIVINE ABODE

This is the infinitely vast, personal (*sākār*) and *sagun* form of *Aksharbrahman*.

In reply to Kubersinh’s question on *Brahmapur* (*Akshardhām*), Shriji Mahārāj gives the following description:

“*Aksharbrahman* has assumed the form of the divine abode to sustain Lord *Purushottam*. This *Aksharbrahman*, the divine abode of God, is separate from the various released souls known as *Akshar* and is eternal. It is not comparable with any such residential abode of other demigods. It is infinite like space and has no barriers. The greatness of this *Brahmapur* extends to infinity. The released souls are also divine and possess a divine body. Even these released souls possess omniscient and omnipotent powers. However, they all serve the lotus feet of the Lord.” [Vachanāmritam Amdāvād 6 (II/3)]

“*Aksharbrahman* is the cause of all the evolutes. *Aksharbrahman* is always in a static condition and therefore devoid of the phases of expansion and contraction, and possesses a divine form. The divine form of *Akshar* cannot be easily visualised because of its all-pervading greatness.

“The vast macrocosm which is composed of twenty-four

*tattvas* is known as *Purushāvatār* or *Virāt Purush*. *Virāt Purush* is beyond human visualisation because of his infinite greatness... *Akshardhām*, the divine abode of the Lord, in spite of having a human-like form, is beyond the reach of human sight because of his infinite greatness. Millions of macrocosms appear like atoms before his greatness...

"Lord *Purushottam* always dwells in this vast and unfathomable *Akshardhām*." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/63]

Shriji Mahārāj has thus described *Aksharbrahman*, the divine abode, as personal and with a form. Because of its immense vastness, it is incomprehensible and is immeasurable in extent. It neither contracts nor expands. Therefore its form cannot be visualised. No one upto *Mul-Purush (mukta)* – the Lord of *Mul-māyā* can fathom its vastness. To all of them, *Brahman* appears infinitely immeasurable. The scriptures therefore variously describe it as *nirākār*. As a matter of fact, *Aksharbrahman* as the divine abode of God and supporter of infinite *muktas* is personal; and has the radiance of countless suns and moons. [Setumālā Tarang: 63/45-49]

### 6.7.3 AKSHARBRAHMAN:

#### AS DIVINE, PERSONAL AND SĀKĀR

*Aksharbrahman* in *Akshardhām* is divine, in human form and always readily serving *Purushottam Nārāyan*. The personified *Aksharbrahman* is the ideal example of highest devotion and service. In *Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/21*, Shriji Mahārāj has specified: "...this *Akshar* [being associated with the Lord as His nearest devotee] is always in the proximity of the Lord in His service." Commenting on these words, the scripture *Harivākyasudhā Sindhu* explains:

MURTAM TATRĀSTI KRISHNASYA SEVĀYĀM DIVYAVIGRAHAM æ

The divine form of *Aksharbrahman* is always there in *Akshardhām* and serves *Purushottam*.

[Harivākyasudhāsindhu 21-22]

The *Setumālā* commentary on *Harivākyasudhā Sindhu* further adds:

(1) "The incarnate [*sākār*] *Aksharbrahman* is divine, has a human-like form endowed with two hands and two feet, is strikingly handsome and is always engaged in the devotion and servitude of his Lord *Purushottam Nārāyan* – who is even more handsome than him."<sup>1</sup>

(2) "In His divine *Akshardhām*, God is being served with utter dedication as per His wishes by countless brahmanised *muktas* and the personal form of *Aksharbrahman*."<sup>2</sup>

(3) "As *Aksharbrahman* is the chief attendant [the principal, ideal and eternally choicest *sevak*] of *Purushottam Nārāyan*, he has a divine and extremely attractive *sākār* male form with beautiful hands, feet, mouth, etc."<sup>3</sup>

### 6.7.4 AKSHARBRAHMAN:

#### AS IN HUMAN FORM

"When God descends on earth for the redemption of the *jivas* and assumes human form, His divine abode *Akshardhām*, the released *jivas* and His full-fledged lordship, all descend on earth with Him... Therefore a devotee should realise that God manifests Himself on earth along with His divine abode *Akshardhām*, and should understand and explain this divine phenomenon of the descent of God to all." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/71]

Shriji Mahārāj *Parabrahman Purushottam Nārāyan* with infinite compassion descended on this earth in human form and became visible to all. He brought along with Him the divine abode *Aksharbrahman* – Gunātītānand Swāmi. Shriji Mahārāj dwelled

(1) MURTAM TU DIVYAVIGRAHAM RŪPĀNŪRŪPA KARACHARANĀ DYAVA YAVISHISTATVENA ATISUNDARA PURUSHĀKĀRA MŪRTI SAT KRISHNASYA TATO'PYATINIRATISHAYA SHARIRASHOBHĀVATAHA SVESHTADEVASYA... SEVĀYĀM ASTI DĀSAVAT SADĀ VARTATE æ  
[Setumālā 21/22]

(2) HARIHI SVAKIYĀKSHARADHĀMA NYAKSHARA BHĀVĀPANNA MUKTA KOTIBHIR MURTENĀ KSHARA BRAHMANĀ CHA CHHANDĀ-NUVRITTITAYĀ KRITA PARICHARYAHA æ  
[Setumālā 159/5]

(3) 'TADAKSHARAM' KRISHNASYA SEVAKATVĀD MUKHYA PARICHĀRAKATVĀDI HETOHO DIVYAIRATI MANOHARAIHI PĀNIPĀDAMUKHĀDIBHIHI AVAYAVAIHI PRATIKAIHI UPALĀKSHITATVĀT SĀKRITI PURUSHĀKĀRAMUCHYATE æ  
[Setumālā 159/5]



on this earth for 49 years and favoured the devotees with infinite bliss, and also liberated innumerable souls. After returning to His abode, His *pragat* form continues to be manifest through a succession of *Aksharbrahma-Swarup* Sādhus, thus keeping the road to ultimate salvation open forever.

### 6.8 AKSHARBRAHMAN: ONE AND UNIQUE

As observed earlier, *Aksharbrahman* serves as radiant light, as the divine abode, as the constant and closest *sevak* of *Purushottam* and as a human being on this earth. Despite his various functions, there is no essential difference as *Aksharbrahman* is always one and unique.

Again there are countless *jivas* and countless *Ishwars*. All the *jivas-Ishwars* are redeemed by their direct contact with *Aksharbrahman* and *Parabrahman Purushottam Nārāyan* and by His compassion. They are known as *Akshar muktas*. They are also countless in number. But as *Parabrahman* is one and incomparable, similarly, *Aksharbrahman* is also only one and incomparable. Lord Swāminārāyan has explained this fact in the *Vachanāmritam* and *Vedras*. “There are many who have attained divinity similar to that of *Akshar*. But there is only one *Akshar*.” [Vedras p.213-214]

Gunātītānand Swāmi also reiterates the same point: “There is only one *Akshar* – the Lord’s abode. The rest are *Akshar muktas* and their number is incalculable.” [Swāmini Vātu V/ 177]

In the *Setumālā* commentary on *Harivākyasudhāsindhu* by Āchārya Shri Raghuvirji Mahārāj, the same principle is restated: “God in His abode is served as He wishes by the personal *Aksharbrahman* – and by infinite *muktas*, who have attained *Aksharbrahma bhāv*.” [Setumālā Commentary 59/5]

Here infinite *Akshar muktas* are mentioned. But *Aksharbrahman* is only one. The singular case is used for *Aksharbrahman* at many places in the *Vachanāmritam* and *Vedras*. For example: “*Akshar* is like this and his bliss is like this.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 17]

“*Akshardhām* is the greatest of the great.” [Vedras p.146]

It is therefore clear that *Aksharbrahman* is one and incomparable. Shriji Mahārāj has also said that the one and incomparable *Akshar* is eternal. The other *Akshar muktas* have reached that stage through the association of eternal *Akshar*.

“*Aksharbrahman* has assumed the form of the divine abode to sustain Lord *Purushottam*. This *Aksharbrahman* – the divine abode of God, is separate from the various released souls known as *Akshar muktas* and is eternal.” [Vachanāmritam Amdāvād 6 (II/3)]

### 6.9 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AKSHAR AND PURUSHOTTAM

*Akshar* and *Purushottam* are inseparably related as *Sharir-Shariri* and *sevak-Swāmi*.

Shriji Mahārāj says: “Wherever He [*Parabrahman Purushottam Nārāyan*] manifests, *Akshar* is said to be in the centre around Him.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/42] Further: “As separate and beyond all of them, *Akshar* is said to contain as *Sharir* only Lord *Purushottam* and does not sustain even a trace of the ignorance attached to *Prakriti* and *Purush*.” [Vachanāmritam Sārangpur 5]

*Akshar* and *Purushottam* are thus inseparably related to each other.

*Aksharbrahman*, as the dearest, nearest, ideal and best *sevak* and devotee is always with *Parabrahman* in His divine abode, and accompanies Him in any universe where He desires to manifest. [Based on Vachanāmritams Gadhadā I/71, Gadhadā II/42] Precisely for this reason though, *Aksharbrahman* is a separate entity from *Parabrahman Purushottam*, yet they are eternally bound together. That is to say, *Aksharbrahman* is associated by the bond of everlasting affection of a dedicated servant (*dās*) with *Parabrahman*. It is impossible to imagine *Aksharbrahman* to be aloof or separate from *Parabrahman*.

Describing the unity of *Brahman* and *Parabrahman*, *Akshar* and *Purushottam*, that is to say, *Swāmi* and *Nārāyan*, *Sadguru*

Nishkulānand Swāmi has written:

CHHO TO EK NE DISO CHHO DOY, TENO MARMA JĀNE JAN KOY.

Really you are one, but appear as two. Hardly anyone can unravel this secret.

[Bhaktachintāmani 5]

DHANYA NAR-NĀRĀYAN EK, TE TO JĀNE VIRLĀ VIVEK;

DHANYA AKAL KALĀ TAMĀRI, BEU BĀNDHAVĀNI BALIHĀRI.

Glory to Nar and Nārāyan; you are one. Only the highly discerning can realise this.

It is quite peculiar of both of you (brothers) that your divine play is mysterious.

[Bhaktachintāmani 6]

Thus *Aksharbrahman* and *Parabrahman* are inextricably interlinked. *Aksharbrahman* cannot be even thought of without *Parabrahman* since without *Parabrahman*, *Aksharbrahman* has no significance. It is like a rudderless ship. At the same time, without *Brahman*, one has no right to offer worship to *Parabrahman*.

*Akshar* is the Lord of all; but is the servant of *Purushottam*. Except for *Parabrahman*, no entity can rule over *Aksharbrahman*.

"Lord *Purushottam*... is the inspirer of both *ātman* and *Akshar*. He is the controller and is shining with all lordship. He transcends *Akshar*, who again is beyond *Prakriti* and *Purush*." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/64]

Thus *Parabrahman Purushottam* is the support, cause and inspirer of *Brahman*.

"If He [*Purushottam Nārāyan*] so desires, He would by His divine power obliterate all the released souls of *Akshardhām* and He alone would shine conspicuously. Or He would keep their entity separately felt and accept their service and devotion. If, however, He so desires, He would obliterate even His divine abode *Akshardhām* and would Himself sustain the infinite number of released souls with His divine power." [Vachanāmritam Loyā 13]

It is clear that *Purushottam* is independent. *Akshar* is not His support. Whereas, *Purushottam* is the support of *Akshar*.

*Purushottam* has the supreme powers to merge *Akshardhām*. At final rest, *jīva* and *Ishwar* merge into *māyā*. *Māyā* merges in *Brahman*. But there is no mention of *Brahman* merging into *Parabrahman*. But "...only the divine abode of God [*Akshardhām*], the God residing in this *Akshardhām* and His released souls are eternal; the rest evolving out of *Prakriti* is all perishable." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/24] In other words, after the final rest, *Dhām* (*Akshardhām*), *Dhāmi* (*Purushottam*) and the *muktas* are the only three survivors.

## 6.10 WHAT IS MEANT BY

### BRAHMAN MERGING INTO PARABRAHMAN?

It is mentioned in the *Vachanāmritam* that *Brahman* merges into *Parabrahman*. What exactly is meant by this reference? Here merging of *Brahman* into *Parabrahman* means the powers of *Brahman* are suppressed and the influence of *Parabrahman* predominantly prevails. The powers of *Brahman* are suppressed in the superior powers and glory of *Parabrahman*. But in reality, there is no merger of *Aksharbrahman's* separate and independent entity.

Shriji Mahārāj has clarified: "...when the powers of *Purushottam* are inducted through all these different media for the execution of assigned duties through them, *Purushottam* only by the pre-eminence of His powers predominantly manifests through them. It is like fire which when it enters an iron rod makes it hot and turns it red, depriving it of its original colour and coolness. Again, when the sun shines, the moon and the stars fade out completely by its light. Similarly, Lord *Purushottam* manifests through a medium suppressing its individuality and powers." [Vachanāmritam Panchālā 7]

Lakshman, the son of Viro Sheladiyā of Samadhiyālā, was lost in the meditation of Gunātītānand Swāmi. He saw Shriji Mahārāj in place of Gunātītānand Swāmi. He thus had the vision of *Brahman* merging into *Parabrahman*.

### 6.11 COMMON QUALITIES OF AKSHAR AND PURUSHOTTAM

For all practical purposes: “*Parabrahman* is distinct and separate from *Brahman* and is its supporter, inspirer and cause.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/3] Yet both of them still share certain common qualities.

As *Purushottam* transgresses *māyā*, so does *Akshar*. *Purushottam* is personal. Similarly, *Akshar* is also personal. Whatever is touched by *Purushottam* – is brahmanised. Even *māyā* turns *nirgun*. *Aksharbrahman* shares the same quality. *Akshar* is also like *Purushottam* – aloof, unaffected, one and incomparable. Like *Purushottam*, *Akshar* is also not directly concerned with the creation.

To redeem infinite *jīvas* wherever *Purushottam* manifests in human form, *Aksharbrahman* also accompanies Him in human form. ‘Wherever the king’s writ runs, the queen’s also runs’. Following this principle, *Aksharbrahman* has as much power and glory as *Purushottam*. As *Purushottam* can redeem infinite *jīvas*, *Aksharbrahman* can also similarly liberate infinite *jīvas*. (Of course, all the glory and powers of *Aksharbrahman* are endowed by *Purushottam*.)

### 6.12 THE DUAL UPĀSANĀ OF AKSHAR PURUSHOTTAM

Shriji Mahārāj has propounded the principle of *Brahman-Parabrahman upāsanā*. To impress this principle among the aspirants, He installed the images of the unmanifested (*paroksh*) Gods with their respective devotees in all the temples He built. By installing the images of Nar-Nārāyan, Lakshmi-Nārāyan and Rādhā-Krishna, He has explained the scriptural basis of *Bhakta-Bhagwān upāsanā* – worship of God along with His choicest devotee.

Shriji Mahārāj elaborates: “Where His [Lord Krishna’s] manifested form is associated with Rādhā, the dual form is known as Rādhā-Krishna, and when associated with Lakshmi, as Lakshmi-Nārāyan, when associated with Arjuna, He is called Nar-Nārāyan.” [Shikshāpatri 109-110]

Does this mean that people were so ignorant at that time that they did not know Krishna as Rādhā-Krishna when He was associated with Rādhā? As other incarnations are worshipped with their devotees, one’s Lord should also be similarly worshipped with His devotee. Shriji Mahārāj has explained this principle implicitly through these verses.

Commenting on verse 111 of the *Shikshāpatri*, *Sadguru* Shatānand Muni has written: “Where in a temple only one image of Lord Krishna has been installed, a devotee should deeply feel that Shri Krishna is there with Rādhā and other attendants.”<sup>1</sup> Following this principle a devotee should entertain the feeling that where only one image of Harikrishna Mahārāj (Sahajānand Swāmī) has been installed, there Harikrishna Mahārāj is associated with His ideal devotee *Mul Akshar* Gunātītānand Swāmī.

In his commentary on this verse, *Āchārya* Shri Bhagvatprasādji Mahārāj has written: “Rādhā and others are eternal *muktas*. There is, therefore, no doubt that God should be worshipped with the devotee.”<sup>2</sup> Going by the same principle, this does not leave any room for doubt about *Akshar’s upāsanā* with *Parabrahman Purushottam*.

The inference is therefore very clear that Shāstriji Mahārāj did not concoct a new theory of *Swāmī* and *Nārāyan* i.e. of *Akshar* and *Purushottam*. He has only lucidly explained the core of Shriji Mahārāj’s principle in the *Sampradāya* and thus opened the doors to redemption for infinite *jīvas*.

Shāstriji Mahārāj often used to give the following anecdote: As a devotee we should not follow the example of Rāvan or Shurpankhā; but should follow the example of Vibhishan. Rāvan had affection for Sitā, but anger for Rāma. As a result he was beheaded. Similarly if one is affectionate with the ideal

(1) ATO YATRA MANDIRE EKAIVA SHRIKRISHNAMŪRTIHI SYĀTTATRĀPI  
RĀDHĀDISEVAKAMANDALASAHITA EVA SHRIKRISHNO BHĀVANIYA ITI ĀSHAYAHA æ  
[Shikshāpatri Commentary p. 439]

(2) RĀDHĀDAYASTU NITYAMUKTĀHĀ æ ETENA ETADYOGENA PARASYA BRAHMANAHA  
KATHAMUPĀSYATĀ GHATETETI SHANKĀYĀHĀ NĀVAKĀSHAHA æ  
[Shikshāpatri Commentary p. 439-40]

devotee *Gunātīt*, but nurses a grudge against *Bhagwān* i.e. Shriji Mahārāj, he loses his head. Shurpankhā had love for Rāma but hated Sitā. Consequently her ears and nose were chopped off. If therefore one has love for God, but hatred for *Gunātīt*, one's ears and nose may get cut off. But Vibhishan had the correct understanding of worshipping Rāma, Lakshman, Sitā and Hanumān. Similarly, we should also have the same degree of love for the ideal devotee – the *Dhām*, God – the *Dhāmi*, and the *Akshar muktas*.

### 6.13 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI AS MUL AKSHAR: HOW?

Explaining His manifestation to the *paramhansas*, Shriji Mahārāj said: “My present objective is to annihilate ignorance and brahmanise the *jivas*.”

To eradicate the *jivas*' age old influence of *māyā*, to brahmanise them and to spread the knowledge of *Parabrahman*, Shriji Mahārāj brought *Aksharbrahman* with Him on this earth.

These words are echoed in the a *kirtan* (“*Dharmane lāle mune*”) composed by *Sadguru Premānand Swāmi*:

MUL MĀYĀNĀ BANDHAN KĀPAVĀ ĀVYĀ,  
DHĀMDHĀMNĀ VĀSI ĀDI BOLĀVYĀ RĀJ...  
MUL AKSHAR PAN SHRI HARI SANGE,  
MUKTA MANDALNE LĀVYĀ UMANGE RĀJ...

To sever the bonds of *māyā*, the inhabitants of various abodes followed Him.

*Mul Akshar* and *Akshar muktas* joyfully descended with Him.

Shriji Mahārāj manifested on this earth with His *Akshardhām*. Then the obvious question arises as to *who* is that *Aksharbrahman*? A historical study of the *Sampradāya* reveals that in the initial stages it was difficult for many to accept the divine supremacy and glory of Shriji Mahārāj. Then how could they have had any idea, let alone a clear understanding of the concept of *Aksharbrahman*?

Shriji Mahārāj occasionally disclosed to those followers and *paramhansas* who had innate faith in him that His divine abode

is none else but *Gunātītānand Swāmi*. As well as this, as mentioned earlier, Shriji Mahārāj has narrated *Aksharbrahman*'s greatness and glory in the scriptures. In addition to that, we shall also examine the evidence and incidents recorded by the *paramhansas* revealing *Gunātītānand Swāmi* as *Aksharbrahman*.

#### 6.13.1 SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE

In S.Y. 1866 (1810 A.D.) on the full moon day of the month of Posh, Mulji Sharmā was initiated ceremoniously into sainthood by Shriji Mahārāj at Dabhān with the performance of a sacrifice. Shriji Mahārāj at that time revealed Mulji Sharmā's greatness. This description has been recorded by *Ādi Āchārya Shri Raghuvirji Mahārāj* in the following words:

MULAJI SHARMANE DIKSHĀM DADĀNASYA PRAJĀYATE æ  
BHUYĀNME'TRA SAMĀNANDO YATO DHĀMĀKSHARAM SA ME ææ  
MUKTĀIRANANTAIHI SĀKAM ME YATRĀ'KHANDATAYOSHYATE æ  
URDHVĀDHOBHĀGARAHITAM TANMULAM

DHĀMA CHĀKSHARAM ææ

Today I am extremely happy to initiate Mulji Sharmā, who was born in Bhādrā. He is My divine abode – *Akshardhām*. It is infinite and endless. With infinite *muktas*, I forever reside in My *Dhām*.

[Shri Harilīlākalpataru VII/17:49, 50]

It is also written in *Purushottam Charitra*.<sup>1</sup>

VANDU GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI, JEHI PAR RIJHE ANTARYĀMI;  
BHAGVADVĀRTĀ SATATA KARAHĪ,

DHYĀN DHARMĀNANDANKO DHARAHI.

UTTAMKULMĀ DHARI AVATĀR, SHRI HARI KĀJ TAJYO SANSĀR;  
RAKHE DHARMA PUNI DHARMA RAKHĀVE,

ĀDI HI AKSHAR ĀP KAHĀVE.

I bow to *Gunātītānand Swāmi* with whom the *Antaryāmi* (God) is extremely pleased.

Uninterrupted, he (*Gunātītānand Swāmi*) is engaged in spiritual discourses, and is meditating on Shriji Mahārāj – the son of Dharma. Born in a noble family, he renounced the world for God.

(1) The author, *Darbār Abhaysinhji* of Lodhikā, has described the glory and power of *Gunātītānand Swāmi*, as narrated by Shriji Mahārāj in Bhādrā.

He treads on the straight and narrow religious path, and guides others onto the same. He is known as *Mul Akshar*.

Acharya Shri Vihārīlālji Mahārāj has written in *Kirtan Kaustubhamālā*:

AKSHAR MURTI GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI, TENE ĀPYĀ VARTMĀN  
POTE PĀLINE PACHHI PALĀVYA, JANANE DAI GHANU JNĀN;  
ĀVOJI AVATĀRI, ĀNANDKĀRI, PRITAM JIVANPRAN.  
GUNĀTITĀNAND MUL AKSHAR DHYĀNI,  
SHRI HARINU MAN SHUKJI JNĀNI;  
BEU MALI UTĀRE HARINI ĀRATI RE;  
ĀJE NATVARJINE NIRAKHI HARAKH URE ATI RE.

*Aksharmurti* Gunātītānand Swāmi initiated and guided me to practice the religious vows.

He followed them and inspired others to follow them through his incessant precepts.

We heartily welcome you, the divine incarnation, the dispenser of joy and the most beloved.

*Mul Akshar* Gunātītānand Swāmi is fond of meditation. Shukji – the *jnāni* – is the mind of God.

Together, both of them are waving the *ārti*.

Beholding *Natvarji* (Shriji Mahārāj) today, their hearts are filled with joy.

Brahmachāri Krishnānandji has written:

DHĀM DHĀMIJ SĀTHE PADHĀRYĀ, SWĀMI NE MAHĀRĀJ,  
EKĀNTIK DHARMA STHĀPVĀ BANI, ALAUKIK JODI ĀJ RE,  
AVO HE AVINĀSHI SUKHNĀ RĀSHI, AKSHARNĀ ĀDHĀR...  
DAYĀLU TAME DAYĀ KARI LĀVYĀ, MUL AKSHARNE SĀTH,  
GUNĀTITĀNAND NĀM CHHE JENU,

PĀDYU CHHE POTE HO NĀTH RE,

ĀVO HE AVINĀSHI, SUKHNĀ RĀSHI AKSHARNĀ ĀDHĀR...

To establish *Ekāntik Dharma*, the unique pair of *Dhām* and *Dhāmi* – Swāmi and Mahārāj descended together.

We welcome you, O eternal, full of joy, the supporter of *Akshar*.

O Merciful, compassionate, as you are, you brought along with you *Mul Akshar* and you gave him the name – Gunātītānand.

We welcome you, O eternal, full of joy, the supporter of *Akshar*.

Similar references are also found in the *kirtans* of Jerāmi Brahmachāri, Akhandānand Brahmachāri and Jagdishānand Brahmachāri of Junāgadh.

### 6.13.2 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI IS AKSHAR: IN THE WORDS OF SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ

(1) In S.Y. 1864 (1808 A.D.), Shriji Mahārāj visited Bhādrā. He was invited to Mulji Bhakta's place for lunch. On that occasion Shriji Mahārāj revealed Gunātītānand Swāmi as *Mul Akshar* for the first time. He told Gunātītānand Swāmi's mother, "Ma, you may not understand, but your son (Mulji) is My divine abode *Akshardhām* in person. He is bound with Me and I am bound to him. Our bond is unbreakable." Shriji Mahārāj also talked at length with the devotees who had gathered there that Mulji Bhakta is *Aksharbrahman*.<sup>1</sup>

(2) During the *Janmāshṭami* festival at Junāgadh in S.Y. 1905 (1849 A.D.), *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi requested the devotees from Bhādrā to recollect what Shriji Mahārāj had told them about Mulji Bhakta. The incident thus gained wider publicity.

(3) In S.Y. 1868 (1812 A.D.), *Holi* – the festival of colours – was celebrated at Sārangpur at Rāthod Dhādhāl's place. Shriji Mahārāj at that time, sung Kabir's poem on *Holi*:

JOGIYĀ TĀLAT JANAM KERĀ FĀSALĀ RE,  
PREMNĀ PYĀLĀ JOGIYĀ, JUG JUG JIVO SO JOGIYA...  
KOTI KRISHNA JODE HĀTH, KOTI VISHNU NAME MĀTH,  
KOTI SHANKAR DHARE DHYĀN, KOTI BRAHMĀ KATHE JNĀN;  
SADGURU KHELE VASANT...

The noose of the cycle of births is removed by the brahmanised Saints.

They are the cup of love. May they live for all time.

Before him stand millions of Krishnas with folded hands and millions of Vishnus with bowed heads.

Millions of Shivas meditate on him and millions of Brahmas speak of his glory.

That *Sadguru* is engaged in the divine play of the Spring.

Shriji Mahārāj then asked. "Who is that *Sadguru*?"

(1) For a detailed account of this incident refer to *Bhagwān Shri Swāminārāyan* (2nd edition) Part II p.337 and *Gunātītānand Swāmi* Part I p.50.

Earlier in Loj and Māngrol, the Lord Himself had said, 'I am that *Sadguru*.' The sādhus therefore replied, "You are that *Sadguru*."

Shriji Mahārāj touched His stick on Gunātitānand Swāmi's chest and declared, "I am the supreme *Purushottam Nārāyan*. Gunātitānand Swāmi is that *Sadguru* whose glory and greatness have been described in this poem. Gunātitānand Swāmi, in the form of the divine abode, is the dwelling place for Me and infinite *muktas*. In his personal form [*sākār*] he serves Me in *Akshardhām* and here on earth. He has manifested with Me as a Saint to spread this highest *upāsanā*."<sup>1</sup>

(4) In Vartāl Gunātitānand Swāmi was returning from Lake Gomti after washing the quilts of sick sādhus. Shriji Mahārāj was returning following His meal at Vāsan Suthār's house. They crossed each other at Hanumān Gate. By the force of Swāmi's concentration, Shriji Mahārāj had to stop on the spot. The heavy weight of 18 quilts had made Gunātitānand Swāmi sweat profusely. Shriji Mahārāj also began to perspire. After a while, asking for Swāmi's leave, Shriji Mahārāj asked, "Sādhuram, may I go now?"

Swāmi replied, "Mahārāj, of course you may leave."

Entering the assembly Shriji Mahārāj said, "I am perspiring because I feel I am carrying a heavy load." Thereupon Bhaguji and Bāpu Ratanji started fanning the Lord. Shriji Mahārāj then pointed out, "To reduce the load, take the quilts off that sādhu's shoulders." Bhaguji removed all the quilts from Swāmi's shoulders. Shriji Mahārāj then called for Mukṭānand Swāmi, Brahmānand Swāmi and other sādhus and said, "Just as a snake is held by pincers, this sādhu firmly holds My image in all three states [i.e. he constantly beholds Me]. He is My dwelling place – *Akshardhām* – in person. He is the best of all and worthy of spiritual association even for the most

(1) Rāthod Dhādhāl narrated this incident to Jasā Gor and Nāgji Sheth. Shāstriji Mahārāj heard it from them in person.

exalted."<sup>1</sup>

(5) When Gunātitānand Swāmi was appointed as Head of Junāgadh temple, Shriji Mahārāj garlanded him and presented him with His own entire dress. He placed His turban on Swāmi's head with His hands and blessed him.<sup>2</sup> Kurji Dave of Ākhā was present in the assembly. Shriji Mahārāj reminded him, "You were the bringer of the happy tidings of Rāmānand Swāmi's coming to us from Bhujnagar. The devotees gave you various gifts. I had told you at that time, 'I will give you My *Akshardhām* as a gift.' You did not quite understand it. But I give you today the gift of My *Akshardhām* – Gunātitānand Swāmi – to the devotees in Sorath. I have been unable to live here in this Sorath region for long. I therefore offer this sādhu to you. He is My all."

(6) S.Y. 1884 (1828 A.D.) was a particularly cold year. A heated iron grate was placed besides Gunātitānand Swāmi and he was warming himself. Soon Swāmi was feeling the heat. Exactly at that time in Gadhadā, Shriji Mahārāj said, "I am feeling very hot, I want to take a bath. Please bring some cold water." Everyone was surprised. Mukṭānand Swāmi asked for a reason. Shriji Mahārāj replied, "I am feeling hot because My *Akshardhām* is getting hot."

Mukṭānand Swāmi countered, "Mahārāj, *Akshardhām* is cool and calm. How can it become hot?"

Shriji Mahārāj replied, "My *Akshardhām* incarnate, Gunātitānand Swāmi, while warming himself felt hot due to the excessive heat in the grate. Consequently, I also felt hot."

(7) While taking a bath in the Ghelā river at Gadhadā, Gunātitānand Swāmi's foot was stuck in a rock crevice. Despite much effort he could not pull it out. Shriji Mahārāj appeared before him and asked him to slowly draw out the

(1) Shukānand Swāmi narrated this incident to Siddhānand Swāmi's disciple Krishnacharandās, who in turn told it to Shāstriji Mahārāj in Mahuvā. [From the letters of Shāstriji Mahārāj – *Swāminārāyan Prakāsh*, Jan. 1987]

(2) This incident is described in *Purushottam Charitra* p.100.

foot. At the same time, Shriji Mahārāj was asking in His room in Gadhadā, “Pull out My foot; otherwise it will break.”

Mulji Brahmachāri questioned, “Mahārāj, you are sitting on a cot, how can your foot be fractured?”

Shriji Mahārāj replied with a smile, “My abode Gunātītānand Swāmi’s foot was trapped in a crevice in the fast running water. With great effort it was freed.”

(8) When Shriji Mahārāj had made up His mind to return to His abode, He advised those sādhus and devotees who were emotionally attached to Him and were likely to be affected by the separation, to go on a pilgrimage to Gujarāt. Gopālānand Swāmi submitted at that time, “Mahārāj, Gunātītānand Swāmi, the Head of Junāgadh has come here. He is very much attached to you and is unlikely to bear your separation. Ask him to return to Junāgadh.”

Shriji Mahārāj listened. He then replied, “Swāmi, Gunātītānand Swāmi is My *Gunātīt Akshardhām*. How can I send him away? Wherever he is, I am there. And wherever I am, he is also there. How can he be separated from Me?”

(9) Once in Panchālā, Gunātītānand Swāmi had sat down to eat with the *paramhansas*; Mukṭānand Swāmi on one side and Bhāi Ātmānand Swāmi on the other. Shriji Mahārāj came and said to Kalyānbhāi of Vanthali, “Look! A goat squeezed between two tigers.” Smilingly, He pointed His finger to Gunātītānand Swāmi and said, “Kalyānbhāi, do you know this Sādhu? He is My *Akshardhām*. Make it a point to recognise him thoroughly.”

### 6.13.3 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI’S UNIQUE GLORY: AS DESCRIBED BY SHRIJI MAHĀRĀJ

Only God fully knows and can explain the greatness of His highest devotee. We have seen earlier that Shriji Mahārāj has clearly identified His choicest devotee Gunātītānand Swāmi as the incarnation of *Aksharbrahman*. In addition to this, He has also explained on opportune occasions the unique glory of His ideal and eternal servant.

(1) In S.Y. 1877 (1821 A.D.) at Panchālā, Shriji Mahārāj taught the *paramhansas* how to apply the *tilak* on their foreheads. Shriji Mahārāj first of all applied the *tilak* on Gunātītānand Swāmi’s forehead and announced, “Please look at My *tilak*. There is no Sādhu like him and there is no God like Me.”

(2) To ensure that the sādhus observe the religious vows faithfully, Shriji Mahārāj asked them to arrange mutual sureties. Exactly at that time Gunātītānand Swāmi came from Junāgadh. But no sādhu was left to stand as Swāmi’s surety. Brahmānand Swāmi asked, “Mahārāj, who will stand as a surety for Gunātītānand Swāmi?”

Shriji Mahārāj replied, “I am his surety forever.”

(3) Swāmi had come to Gadhadā for Shriji Mahārāj’s *darshan*. Shukānand Swāmi started searching for a mat for Gunātītānand Swāmi to sit on. Shriji Mahārāj pointed out to Shukānand Swāmi, “His greatness is not due to the mat. His greatness is eternal.”

(4) Once Mukṭānand Swāmi, Brahmānand Swāmi, Nityānand Swāmi, Ānand Swāmi, Gunātītānand Swāmi and other sādhus totalling about 18 were arranged in a group while Shriji Mahārāj served them food. Shriji Mahārāj then asked the sādhus, “All of you should learn from Gunātītānand Swāmi how to eat.”

With tongue in cheek, Brahmānand Swāmi said, “The sādhu eats very well.”

Shriji Mahārāj immediately corrected him, “I do not mean what you say. Because that Sādhu enjoys the taste of My image. As grains are poured in a storage bin, he fills his stomach with food. He lives suppressing his immense greatness and powers, otherwise crowds of people would follow him as they follow Me.”

Agreeing, Brahmānand Swāmi said, “Mahārāj, you are quite right. He is indeed a very great sādhu.”

(5) When Gunātītānand Swāmi was appointed as the Head of Junāgadh temple, Shriji Mahārāj mentioned, “Those who go

with Swāmi to Junāgadh will be cleansed of all sins in this very birth, which otherwise would take ten million births to be purified."

(6) In S.Y. 1884 (1828 A.D.), the images were installed in the Junāgadh temple by Shriji Mahārāj. When He was about to leave, the Nawāb of Junāgadh, Hāmadkhānji, requested, "Mahārāj, please stay here permanently."

Shriji Mahārāj replied, "I am not in a position to live here. But I shall place a Sādhū like Myself. [*Ham nahi to Ham jaisā rakhenge.*]" With these words Gunātītānand Swāmi was stationed at Junāgadh.

(7) At the image installation ceremony of the Junāgadh temple, Shriji Mahārāj ordered all the sādhus to stay one month every year in Junāgadh in Swāmi's company.

VALI SANTNE ĀPI ĀGANYĀ RE, RE'VU NAHI ĀHI ĀVYĀ VINĀ RE;

VARASO VARAS EK MĀS RE, KARAVO Ā MANDIR MĀHI VĀS RE.

He (Shriji Mahārāj) ordered, the sādhus should invariably come here (Junāgadh temple);

For one month every year they should live in this temple.

[Nishkulānand Kāvyaṃ: Purushottam Prakāśh 32]

This order was to be strictly observed by all the sādhus in the *Sampradāya*. Reading between the lines of this specific order, one can understand the need for associating with Swāmi to grasp the supreme *upāsanā* of Shriji Mahārāj and to realise His glory, because only in the company of *Akshar* can one reach the stage of *Aksharrup* and realise the glory and powers of *Purushottam*. Honouring this order, *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi visited Junāgadh every year. If during a particular year he was unable to go to Junāgadh, he would make up the following year by staying for two months.

Some people believe that because the Junāgadh temple was somewhat isolated, and that Gunātītānand Swāmi was unlearned, Shriji Mahārāj had issued the order to give him the benefit of living with the sādhus. But *Aksharbrahman* has no need to learn the worldly knowledge. Even the *Vedās* refer to him as "Neti! Neti!" (Not this! Not this!). Furthermore, anyone

who reads and studies Gunātītānand Swāmi's talks will be convinced that Swāmi is the source of *Brahmavidyā*. Therefore all the sādhus in the *Sampradāya* felt the need to associate with him. In the regular discourses of the sādhus, *Swāmini Vātu* have a pride of place and the sādhus cite them as gospel truth.

(8) When Shriji Mahārāj decided to return to His divine abode, He called for Gunātītānand Swāmi from Junāgadh. Meeting him alone, Shriji Mahārāj said:

MITHĀ VHĀLĀ KEM VISARU, MĀRU TAMATHI BĀNDHEL TAN HO,

TARASYĀNE JEM PĀNIDU VHĀLU, BHUKHYĀNE BHOJAN HO...MITHĀ

My loving one how can I forget you. I am inseparably bound to you.

Like the thirsty's love for water, and hungry's love for food...

Swāmi echoed the same feelings.

#### 6.13.4 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI IS AKSHAR:

##### IN THE WORDS OF GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI

*Brahman* and *Parabrahman* transcend *māyā*, and are incomprehensible through *māyik indriyas* and *antahkarans*. They can be realised only, if out of sheer compassion, they reveal their forms. Compassionately, Gunātītānand Swāmi occasionally revealed himself as *Aksharbrahman* to those sādhus and devotees who had deep faith in his words. Let us now see some of these cases.

(1) Gopālānand Swāmi identified Gunātītānand Swāmi as *Akshar* to the Hindustani sādhu Keshavjivandās, and asked him to go to Junāgadh to have the benefit of Swāmi's company. There he heard different accounts about *Akshar* and was rather confused. Therefore he asked Gunātītānand Swāmi plainly, "Swāmi, Gopālānand Swāmi has explained to me that you are *Akshar*. Prāgji Bhakta and Jāgā Bhakta also call you *Akshar*. But someone calls Brahmanuni *Akshar*, and others call Mulji Brahmachāri *Akshar*. What is true? Swāmi, I have abiding faith in you. Kindly explain to me clearly."

Gunātītānand Swāmi very quietly told him, "You have faith in me. You believe me as *Akshar*. I alone am *Akshar* personified. If someone else claims to be *Akshar*, that's



between him and me.” By these words of Gunātītānand Swāmi he was fully convinced of Swāmi’s *Aksharbrahman* form and began propagating it to others.

As Gunātītānand Swāmi’s popularity was increasing rapidly, some renunciates were becoming envious. Someone therefore warned Keshavjivandāsji, “You know Swāmi is *Akshar*, but do not say so here in Vartāl. If you will say it, you will be compelled to put on white clothes.” But Keshavjivandās had unflinching faith in Swāmi’s words and knew Swāmi as *Aksharbrahman*. Undeterred, he replied, “I shall say it, say it and say it! Even if I have to put on black clothes, I shall say Swāmi is *Akshar*. (*Kahungā, kahungā, kahungā! Kālā pacherke bhi Swāmi ko Akshar kahungā*).”

Then Āchārya Bhagvatprasādji Mahārāj had him discard his saffron clothes and put on white clothes. Despite this humiliation, he continued to propagate Swāmi as *Akshar*.

(2) In S.Y. 1923 (1867 A.D.), Gunātītānand Swāmi was to attend the full moon day festival of the month of Chaitra in Vartāl. Pavitrānand Swāmi and others had planned in advance not to receive Swāmi on the outskirts of Vartāl. However, when Gunātītānand Swāmi was about to arrive, most of the devotees from the assembly went to receive him. After Swāmi’s arrival, there was a great rush for his *darshan* resulting in pandemonium. As planned, Gopāljidādā (*Acharya* Raghuvirji Mahārāj’s elder brother) was to reprimand Swāmi. All of a sudden he shouted, “All of you are showmen rushing around like this; Swāmi also wants to become God and therefore does not say a word.”

Immediately Swāmi stood up in the assembly and at the top of his voice boldly said, “Please do not call me God. Only Sahajānand Swāmi – the most supreme, and the ultimate cause of all causes, is God. Speaking before you today in this assembly is *Mul Akshar*, as mentioned in the scriptures. Know him as such.”

Unhesitatingly and undeterred, in a highly surcharged situation, Swāmi clarified his *Aksharbrahman* form. All were

left speechless.

(3) To eradicate the ignorance of the causal body, Vāghā Khāchar of Sārangpur had gone to Junāgadh. Swāmi had asked him to come to Junāgadh and live in his company. On his way to Junāgadh, Bhagatji Mahārāj told him that Swāmi is *Mul Akshar*. He, however, could not accept this. Once in Junāgadh, the devotees were clearing the ground of the temple farm by removing stones and pebbles. All of them appeared extremely elated. Vāghā Khāchar thereupon asked Dāmā Sheth of Mahuvā, “Why do I not experience the joy which all of those devotees seem to be having?”

Dāmā Sheth replied, “Have faith in Prāgji Bhakta’s words and know Swāmi as *Mul Akshar*; then you too will experience the same joy.”

Vāghā Khāchar replied, “Only if Swāmi himself says so, will I accept this.”

In a short while, Gunātītānand Swāmi came there attracted by Prāgji Bhakta’s intense concentration. Vāghā Khāchar asked him, “Swāmi, Prāgji says you are *Mul Akshar* personified. Please make it clear to me.”

Gunātītānand Swāmi replied, “What Prāgji says is a fact.”

With utter surprise, Vāghā Khāchar asked again, “Swāmi, are you *Akshar* in person?”

Gunātītānand Swāmi replied in the affirmative. Vāghā Khāchar was instantly convinced that Gunātītānand Swāmi was *Mul Akshar* and felt the removal of all the sensual cravings and experienced great joy.

(4) Once Nājā Kāmali attended the *Janmāshtami* festival in Junāgadh. In the assembly he asked Gunātītānand Swāmi, “Swāmi, we know Mahārāj as the ultimate *avatār* of all *avatāris*, and Gopālānand Swāmi as the highest *mukta*. But how can we know and realise the personal form of *Akshar*?”

Gunātītānand Swāmi replied, “He, who is at the moment sitting with you and talking with you, is *Akshar* himself.”

(5) Revealing his identity to the devotees of Mahuvā, Gunātītānand Swāmi said, “At the moment, *Akshar* is picking

pebbles and is making leaf-cups with you.”

(6) Following his final departure from Junāgadh, Gunātītānand Swāmi came to Vanthali. At that time Kalyānbhāi’s son Devjibhāi offered *pujā*. He then asked, “Swāmi, all of us are talking about *Akshar*. What is that *Akshar* like?”

Swāmi replied, “That very *Akshar* is sitting in your house.”

### 6.13.5 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI IS AKSHAR: AS GIVEN IN SWĀMINI VĀTU

(1) “Nothing more remains to be understood. The only essential understanding is to know Mahārāj as *Purushottam* and this Sādhu as *Akshar*. All the others are *Akshar* and that one [i.e. himself] is *Mul Akshar* who has descended here in human form.” [Swāmini Vātu III/38]

(2) “The talk at village Devarājiyā: ‘What we wanted to achieve after leaving the mortal body and whom we wanted to meet – that God we have met. After death we wanted to attain God and the sādhu. That very God and sādhu – we have met now.’ Thumping his hand on the quilt, Swāmi said, ‘This Sādhu is the divine abode of God.’” [Swāmini Vātu IV/59]

(3) “A devotee asked, ‘Why can’t the *ātman* be seen?’

Swāmi replied, ‘It is seen, but not believed. After acquiring knowledge it will be believed that ‘this is *Brahman* and the departed is *Parabrahman*.’ Thus Swāmi spoke words of essence.” [Swāmini Vātu VI/211]

(4) “*Akshardhām* is very far away. But God has made it quite close. We [I] have become like a human being and are sitting here before you.” [Swāmini Vātu IV/62]

(5) “This sādhu is *Akshar*. His divine and human traits should be taken in the same regard. He is unborn and has never been in a womb. His ways are like a magician’s feats. As willed by Mahārāj, he appears before you.” [Swāmini Vātu V/184]

### 6.13.6 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI’S UNIQUE GLORY: AS DESCRIBED BY HIMSELF

(1) “Swāmi said in village Pithvājā: Someone may question, ‘What is *Akshardhām*?’ Well, we have seen the Lord, and we have seen the inhabitants of *Akshardhām*; we have seen those who attend the Lord and those who are in His close proximity; we have even intimately talked with Him. Only the divine light remains to be seen. Therefore kindly have firm faith that God lives in this sādhu.” [Swāmini Vātu IV/67]

(2) “This sādhu lives close to God. He does not stay away from Him even for a moment. He is here only to redeem the *jivas*. No sādhu can tell you in his lifetime what I tell you just now. Nor does he know how to tell it, nor can he learn it even by studying for a lifetime.” [Swāmini Vātu V/20]

(3) “...those who are living at present, have one foot in *Akshardhām*, and those who have recognised this Sādhu have both their feet in *Akshardhām*.” [Swāmini Vātu III/26]

(4) “...the image that you behold is in all respects identical with the image in *Akshardhām*. There is not the slightest difference. The only difference is that the latter appears more lustrous. The image that is seen here is also in *Akshardhām*. Lack of this understanding is an indication of imperfection. When the divine and human forms are treated equally, nothing more requires to be done; the rest will follow automatically.” [Swāmini Vātu V/256]

(5) “Swāmi said in Vartāl, ‘Nothing else remains to be done; belong to God and surrender the *jiva* [yourself] to Him. And Mahārāj is seated in *Akshardhām* in this same position facing north.’ Then moving his finger from top to toe, he indicated the exact position.” [Swāmini Vātu IV/91]

(6) “This sādhu is a ‘foreigner’ [i.e. not belonging to this universe]. With the *pragat* form of Mahārāj, this sādhu can be seen. Otherwise this sādhu is not to be found anywhere else.” [Swāmini Vātu IV/71]

### 6.13.7 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI IS AKSHAR:

#### IN THE WORDS OF GOPĀLĀNAND SWĀMI

(1) In S.Y. 1906 (1850 A.D.), in the month of Fālgun, *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi visited Nāvali. Keshavjivandāsji – a Hindustani sādhu prostrated before him, and with tears in his eyes, said to him, “I belong to the Amdāvād diocese. Yet I live with you at Vartāl. Everyone therefore tells me that I will not be redeemed.”

Gopālānand Swāmi consoled him and said, “You need not be disturbed. I shall take you to *Akshardhām* in your present body.”

In the same year in the month of Chaitra, Gunātītānand Swāmi came to Vartāl. *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi pointing his finger to Gunātītānand Swāmi said to Keshavjivandāsji, “Do you remember my promise to take you to *Akshardhām*? Gunātītānand Swāmi is the incarnation of Shriji Mahārāj’s *Akshardhām*. Stay with him. He will explain to you the knowledge of Mahārāj’s supremacy. He can talk incessantly without getting a headache; whereas I do get headaches.”

(2) Once, on the full moon day of the month of Chaitra, Gunātītānand Swāmi had come to Vartāl. The *āchāryas* of both the dioceses as well as senior *sadgurus* were present at the festival. In the assembly, Gopālānand Swāmi was seated on the platform. Next to him in a row were Nityānand Swāmi, Shukānand Swāmi and Gunātītānand Swāmi. Mālji Soni of Bhoikā, who had high regard for Gopālānand Swāmi, asked him, “Swāmi, who is this *Sadguru* [i.e. Gunātītānand Swāmi]?”

*Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi replied, “I had told you that I would show you *Akshardhām*. This Gunātītānand Swāmi is the incarnation of *Akshardhām*. Mahārāj has identified him as *Akshardhām*. Make sure you know him thoroughly.”

Shāstriji Mahārāj himself visited Bhoikā to verify the truth of this traditional account that had gained currency by oral transmission. He heard it from Mālji Soni himself. Subsequently Yogiji Mahārāj and other devotees also went to

Bhoikā and heard the complete account from Mālji Soni.<sup>1</sup>

(3) Once Jhinābhāi Rāthod, Prāgji Bhakta of Mahuvā and Jāgā Bhakta decided together to ask a question to Gopālānand Swāmi. Prāgji Bhakta asked the question, “To remain forever in close proximity with Mahārāj and you, and to wipe away all imperfections, is it necessary to stay as a householder or to become a renunciate?”

Gopālānand Swāmi replied, “To accept Shriji Mahārāj as the ultimate cause of all *avatārs*, and [pointing to Gunātītānand Swāmi] Gunātītānand Swāmi as the eternal *Akshardhām* of Shriji Mahārāj; and to be thus completely dedicated to them is the only way for a householder or a renunciate to remain in close proximity with Mahārāj and myself. Otherwise a devotee is far away from both.”

(4) In S.Y. 1905 (1849 A.D.), *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi had come to Junāgadh for the *Janmāshṭami* celebrations. Addressing the assembly on the following day, the ninth of the dark half of the month of Shrāvan, he said, “No-one recognises Swāmi as he really is. Shriji Mahārāj Himself has told me in private about his glory – that Gunātītānand Swāmi is *Mul Akshar*.”

Thereafter he asked Dosābhāi, Ratnābhāi and Vashrām Suthār of Bhādrā to address the assembly and recount the details of Gunātītānand Swāmi’s glory which Shriji Mahārāj Himself had revealed for the first time in Bhādrā.

(5) In S.Y. 1908 (1852 A.D.), before he passed away, Gopālānand Swāmi was very sick. At that time Bāpu Rājji, Premānand and other devotees of Vadodarā requested him to visit Vadodarā. [Gopālānand Swāmi used to stay in Vadodarā.] Swāmi replied, “Now there can be no more looking to Vadodarā. Now my eyes are only on *Akshardhām* where Mahārāj dwells, or on Junāgadh where personified *Akshardhām* – ‘the *Jogi* of Junāgadh’ – resides.”

Hearing this, Shivrāl Sheth of Botād asked, “What do you

(1) This incident is a part of Shāstriji Mahārāj’s recorded sermon.

mean by 'My eyes are on the *Jogi* of Junāgadh'?"

Swāmi replied, "The *Jogi* of Junāgadh, Gunātītānand Swāmi, is *Akshardhām* – the divine abode of Mahārāj. Mahārāj is not even an atom of a distance away from him."

#### 6.13.8 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI'S UNIQUE GLORY: AS DESCRIBED BY GOPĀLĀNAND SWĀMI

(1) Once Gopālānand Swāmi halted at Gadhadā on his way to Junāgadh. He mentioned, "Mahārāj appointed *Mahants* for different temples but Gunātītānand Swāmi has proved to be the best of them. He completed the temple's construction against the opposition of the Nagar community. He has also improved the financial standing of the temple and spread the *Sampradāya's* message all over Sorath. The sādhus in his group strictly observe all the religious tenets and the ascetics' code of conduct. *Āchārya* Raghuvirji Mahārāj has been pleased by him. Conducting round-the-clock religious discourses, he has not lost sight of Mahārāj even for a second. He is incomparable in the entire *Sampradāya*. He is omniscient, omnipotent and the *Dhanvantar Vaidya*."

(2) Once Gopālānand Swāmi was staying at Junāgadh. The *pārshads* were about to leave to cut grass from the hills for the temple's cattle. Gopālānand Swāmi saw them. He cautioned, "The clouds have gathered on the Bhensalā hill. There will be heavy rains. All of you will get drenched. Therefore do not go to collect the grass." Obeying, the *pārshads* returned.

Gunātītānand Swāmi crossed them on the way. He said, "*Thākorji* likes only cows' milk. The cows cannot be milked if they do not have green grass in their fodder. You should therefore go. The rains will be delayed." Accordingly, the *pārshads* went on their way to cut the grass. After all of them safely returned, it began to rain heavily. Gopālānand Swāmi was very much surprised. But when he learned that the *pārshads* had gone on the orders of Gunātītānand Swāmi, he said, "Oh this is *Jogi's* [Gunātītānand Swāmi's] doing. Only he can change what I have said."

(3) In S.Y. 1908 (1852 A.D.), Gopālānand Swāmi was terminally ill and had no desire to live any longer. At that time Shivrāl Sheth of Botād was extremely depressed. Very much grieved, he asked Gopālānand Swāmi, "Swāmi, who is our support now?"

Gopālānand Swāmi replied, "What support do you want? If you want to be an expert in worldly affairs, go to Punjā Sheth of Sundariyānā; and if you want to master expertise in both worldly affairs and the path of redemption, go to Gunātītānand Swāmi – the *Jogi* of Junāgadh. There is no sādhu as competent and expert as he is."

(4) Once Gopālānand Swāmi told Prāgji Bhakta, "Prāgji, will you go to Junāgadh? Prāgji! Go to Junāgadh and whatever I have promised you will be fulfilled there."

(5) When Gopālānand Swāmi passed away, he appeared in a dream before Jāgā Bhakta. Jāgā Bhakta asked him, "Swāmi, you are now leaving. What am I to do? Nothing happens as I want it to."

Swāmi imprinted his feet on Jāgā Bhakta's chest, embraced him and asked, "What are you willing to do?"

Jāgā Bhakta replied, "I want to renounce the world and serve Gunātītānand Swāmi in Junāgadh."

Gopālānand Swāmi said, "I shall indeed be very happy if you serve Swāmi in Junāgadh."

(6) Listening to Gopālānand Swāmi's talks, Brahmachāri Achintyānandji, Mādhavcharandāsji and other renunciates, as well as Nathu Patel, Dehā Khāchar, Jethā Khāchar, Manji Thakkar, Jibhāi Shelat, Vāghjibhāi, Karshanbhāi Desāi and many other householders were attached to Gunātītānand Swāmi.

#### 6.13.9 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI IS AKSHAR: IN THE WORDS OF THE PARAMHANSAS

(1) In S.Y. 1939 (1883 A.D.), Ghanshyām Mahārāj's image was installed in the Surat temple. Gunātītānand Swāmi's choicest disciple Prāgji Bhakta had come to Surat on that

occasion. There he met Sādhū Yagnapurushdās (Shāstriji Mahārāj), disciple of learned *paramhansa* Vignānānand Swāmi who was privileged to have lived with Shriji Mahārāj. To convince Shāstriji Mahārāj that Gunātītānand Swāmi was *Akshar*, Prāgji Bhakta asked Vignānānand Swāmi, “Swāmi, in your times there were talks of Gunātītānand Swāmi being *Mul Akshar*. Kindly tell me today all about that old account.”

Vignānānand Swāmi looked around to make sure that nobody was overhearing, and whispered, “I had heard on many occasions from Mahārāj that Swāmi is *Mul Akshar*. Gopālānand Swāmi also had established that fact time and again. It is, therefore, uppermost in my heart.”

At this point, young Yagnapurushdās, who was hiding under the cot of Vignānānand Swāmi, came forward and asked, “Why you did not tell me this before?”

Vignānānand Swāmi clarified, “Even today there are many in the *Satsang* who are unable to recognise even Mahārāj as *Purushottam*. Then how can they accept Swāmi as *Akshar*? We therefore talk according to the absorbing capacity of the listeners. But what you have heard is completely true and accept it as such.”

(2) In Gadhadā, Nrusinhānand Swāmi once asked Kunvarji Patel of Ingorālā, “Kunvarji Patel, how many notches are there on this temple in Gadhadā?”

Kunvarji Patel replied, “There are many notches.”

Nrusinhānand Swāmi then explained, “If Gunātītānand Swāmi is not *Akshardhām*, then may I incur the sin of destroying as many cosmoses as there are notches on this temple. Therefore, either believe me, or go your own way.”

(3) Nājā Jogīā, Shriji Mahārāj’s personal attendant, was initiated as a sādhu after Shriji Mahārāj passed away. He was renamed Ghanshyāmdās. Once he was meditating. Gunātītānand Swāmi told him what was playing in his mind. Surprised by Swāmi’s powers he said, “Until now I was treating you as a subordinate ruler. But you are indeed the sovereign emperor; you really are *Akshar*.”

### 6.13.10 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI’S UNIQUE GLORY: AS DESCRIBED BY THE PARAMHANSAS

(1) *Sadguru* Shukānand Swāmi once said in Surat, “Gunātītānand Swāmi’s discourses in Junāgadh have as much impact as Mahārāj’s discourses.”

(2) After listening to Gunātītānand Swāmi’s talks in Junāgadh, Nityānand Swāmi exclaimed, “Oh! Only today have I realised Swāmi’s greatness as was described by Mahārāj. How emphatically he talks. No one can talk like him. For how can one talk when one’s own actions belie the words. And even if someone else does talk, there would be no impact. But for Swāmi, his actions fully comply with his sermons. There may be some restraint in his sermons but in his living there is not the slightest violation of Shriji’s injunctions. His benign influence has moved the whole of Sorath. As is said in the *Shruti*:

YAMEVAISHA VRINUTE TENA LABHYASTASYAISHA

ĀTMĀ VIVRINUTE TANUM SVĀM ææ

He who is graced by God, is rightly selected by Him.

[Katha Upanishad II/1:23, Mundaka Upanishad III/2:3]

“Swāmi has been rewarded by Mahārāj’s infinite grace. Thus he is the form of Mahārāj. By his own grace, he elevates others to his level.”

(3) *Sadguru* Brahmānand Swāmi said to Gunātītānand Swāmi in Mulī, “Swāmi, I am returning to *Dhām*. But you need not be in a hurry to reach there. Please be patient. Gopālānand Swāmi is still here to spread the knowledge that Mahārāj is *Purushottam*. You also have to stay here for that very purpose. We have descended from *Akshardhām* to spread this supreme knowledge. You may return to *Dhām* only after it has been fully propagated.”

(4) *Sadguru* Nishkulānand Swāmi has written in his *kirtan*:

JEVĀ E SANT KAHİYE SHIROMANI, EVĀ HARI SAU SHIRAMOD,

NISHKULĀNAND NIHĀLATĀ NA JADE E BENI JOD.

ANUP SANTNE ĀPU UPAMĀ...

The Saint is the chief. God is the best among the chiefs.

Nishkulānand says, in spite of a thorough search, it is difficult to find such a pair.<sup>1</sup>

The Saint is unique and incomparable.

(5) In Vartāl, Shriji Mahārāj made Gunātītānand Swāmi sit between *Sadguru* Brahmānand Swāmi and *Sadguru* Mukṭānand Swāmi, and described at length his greatness and glory. The next day, Swāmi requested Mukṭānand Swāmi for some *prasādi* (food from his eating bowl). Refusing, Mukṭānand Swāmi said, “You have cheated me for long enough [by hiding your glory]. Those days are now over. Now I shall not give you *prasādi*.”

(6) Gunātītānand Swāmi convinced *Sadguru* Bhāi Ātmānand Swāmi about Shriji Mahārāj’s supremacy. Swāmi then requested some *prasādi*. But Bhāi Ātmānand Swāmi said, “No more reversal of the course. Until now, it was reversed. But today it has been set right.” (Bhāi Ātmānand Swāmi was senior to Swāmi and was always giving him *prasādi*, but after this, he stopped this custom.)

(7) Impressed by Swāmi’s living and inspiring precepts, *Sadguru* Krupānand Swāmi used to say, “You are worthy to be selected as a Guru.”

(8) When *Āchārya* Raghuvirji Mahārāj requested Gunātītānand Swāmi to dissolve his five ‘entanglements of ignorance’, Swāmi replied, “Come to Junāgadh as a pilgrim, I shall dissolve your ignorance.”

Raghuvirji Mahārāj promptly said, “I am not Raghuvirji if I do not come to Junāgadh as a pilgrim.”

Equally forcefully, Swāmi replied, “I am not *Gunātīt* if I do not dissolve your entanglements.”

Raghuvirji Mahārāj had full faith in Swāmi’s immense powers. Accordingly, he went to Junāgadh as a pilgrim and Swāmi removed all his imperfections.

(1) The ‘pair’ means Shriji Mahārāj and Gunātītānand Swāmi. Nishkulānand Swāmi propagated this principle since he had realised both these forms. Shāstriji Mahārāj and Yogiji Mahārāj heard this from leading *sadgurus*.

(9) Once in an inspirational mood, Swāmi talked quite dynamically. Raghuvirji Mahārāj commented, “Swāmi, what you said should be thoroughly understood. Your talks can remove the defects of millions of births and help one to attain *Akshardhām*.”

Swāmishri immediately replied, “Mahārāj, I don’t think about any of them. It is Shriji Mahārāj who talks.”

Raghuvirji Mahārāj agreed, “Swāmi it is evident. Mahārāj dwells in you and always talks.”

(10) Shriji Mahārāj’s personal attendant Bāpu Ratanji came to Junāgadh to listen to Swāmi’s discourses. He said to Swāmi, “Mahārāj had described your glory and now I understand. If there is any defect in my understanding, please remove it and always help me. I can see that Mahārāj personally manifests through you. Therefore kindly look after me.” Saying these words to Swāmi he departed.

Ratanji then said to Jāgā Bhakta, who had come to see him off, “Unique preachers and eager listeners like you are only to be found in Junāgadh. Shriji Mahārāj often used to say, ‘No sādhu is as dynamic as Gunātītānand Swāmi.’ Many *mahā-muktas* accompanied Shriji Mahārāj on this earth. But they are not as great as *Akshar*. Swāmi’s greatness will be realised in the future. Therefore always remain under Swāmi’s obligation. But never let him feel your obligation. In Shriji Mahārāj’s lifetime *Satyuga* prevailed. Even a youngster was immune to the feelings of sleep and sex. The same *Satyuga* prevails in Swāmi’s presence. By pleasing Swāmi, rest assured, that you are pleasing Mahārāj.”

Besides this, *Sadguru* Ānandānand Swāmi, *Sadguru* Pavitrānand Swāmi, *Sadguru* Vignānānand Swāmi and other *sadgurus*, Lodhikā *Darbār* Abhesinhji and other devotees have narrated their personal experiences about Swāmi’s greatness as well. They have, however, not been included due to constraint of space.

### 6.13.11 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI IS AKSHAR: OTHER EVIDENCE

The principle of *Akshar* is not new, not an idea concocted by Shāstriji Mahārāj out of thin air. It was prevalent right from Shriji Mahārāj's time. There are many references to *Akshar* even before Shāstriji Mahārāj left Vartāl.

(1) The room where Shriji Mahārāj stayed in Dādā Khāchar's *Darbār* in Gadhadā was known as '*Akshar Ordī*'. It is quite significant that Shriji Mahārāj's dwelling place is *Akshar*.

(2) Shriji Mahārāj was coronated as Guru of the *Sampradāya* at Jetpur. In the old temple at Jetpur, there is an embossed silver image of Gunātītānand Swāmi and Shriji Mahārāj. Under Gunātītānand Swāmi's image, the words '*Mul Akshar Murti Gunātītānand Swāmi*' and under Shriji Mahārāj's image the words '*Purna Purushottam Sahajānand Swāmi*' are written.

(3) Gunātītānand Swāmi passed away in the old temple (under the Vartāl diocese's jurisdiction) at Gondal. On a marble throne in that temple, there are the images of *Akshar* and *Purushottam*, i.e. of Gunātītānand Swāmi and Shriji Mahārāj.

(4) In the assembly hall of Junāgadh temple (under the Vartāl diocese's jurisdiction) there was an excellent oil-paint portrait of Gunātītānand Swāmi. Under it was written '*Anādi Mul Aksharmurti Shri Gunātītānand Swāmi*'.<sup>1</sup>

(5) In the new assembly hall in Junāgadh, on the spot where Swāmi used to sit in the old hall, a marble shrine with Shriji Mahārāj's footprints has been erected. The inscription on it reads: "In the old sanctified hall, *Anādi Mul Akshar Murti Gunātītānand Swāmi* sat for 40 years and delivered religious discourses." Besides the *sinhāsan*, the square where Swāmi used to bathe, on the stand of the marble canopy, in the circumambulation walkway and at many other hallowed places, the inscriptions refer to Swāmi as '*Mul Akshar*'.

(6) At various sacred places in Sorath, all the inscriptions

(1) The assembly hall and the portrait were subsequently both destroyed in a fire.

referring to Gunātītānand Swāmi's name are prefixed with the words '*Anādi Mul Akshar*'.

(7) The Sorath region temples of Rājkot, Gondal, Jetpur, Piplānā, Vanthali, Panchālā, Dhorāji and Upletā are all under the administrative jurisdiction of the Vartāl diocese. In the spired or smaller temples of these towns and villages, *Sadguru Bālmukunddāsji*, *Sadguru Krishnacharandāsji* and others have installed the painted images of *Akshar Purushottam*. In all these places, Gunātītānand Swāmi's name is prefixed with the words '*Anādi Mul Akshar*'.

(8) Monghibā, the then Queen Mother of Gondal, had a small shrine erected on the cremation spot of Gunātītānand Swāmi in Gondal and installed Shriji Mahārāj's footprints therein. From that time onwards, i.e. long before Shāstriji Mahārāj constructed the temple there, the shrine has been known in the *Sampradāya* as '*Akshar Derī*'.

From S.Y. 1923 (1867 A.D.) onwards, for the next 65 years the shrine and the surrounding land were under the administrative control of the old Swāminārāyan temple in Gondal. In the accounts books of those years, the expenditure incurred on the land is shown as expenditure on '*Akshar Vādi*'.

(9) In the old manuscripts dictated by Shriji Mahārāj, Gopālānand Swāmi has been identified as Lord Krishna, Muktānand Swāmi as Nārada, Nityānand Swāmi as Vyāsji, Shukmuni as Shukdevji and Gunātītānand Swāmi as *Akshar*.

All these references were made before the construction of any of the *Akshar Purushottam* temples by Shāstriji Mahārāj. They prove that Shāstriji Mahārāj did not start a new school of thought. He only propagated a principle approved by Shriji Mahārāj.

(10) Shāstriji Mahārāj, with his very sharp intelligence, thoroughly verified the belief that Gunātītānand Swāmi is *Akshar*. He checked all the incidents described earlier as well as many more by hearing them directly from original and authentic sources.

In a letter written to devotees in Africa, Shāstriji Mahārāj

has mentioned the sources from whom he had come to know about specific incidents. He wrote: "I confidentially asked Kothāri Gordhanbhāi [of Vartāl], 'You and some others are against accepting Swāmi as *Akshar*. But Raghuvirji Mahārāj used to go regularly for Swāmi's communion. What was his understanding?'"

"Kothāri specifically replied, 'Initially, he was not quite categorical in saying it. But after his visit [to Junāgadh] in S.Y. 1917 [1861 A.D.], he became one with Swāmi and was convinced that Swāmi was *Akshar*. This much I can say on oath.'"

Summing up he wrote: "I do not know how to manipulate stories to serve my personal motives. Besides, to lie is a grave sin. The *Shrimad Bhāgavatam* proclaims, '*Nāsatyāt param pāpam*' [There is no greater sin than lying]. Moreover, the Earth has said, 'I can bear the burden of all sinners. But I cannot bear the burden of a liar.' I have no reason to lie. If you truly trust me and treat me as a honest and sincere person, then please accept the above description as authentic and have unflinching faith in the fact that 'Swāmi is *Anādi Akshar* and Shriji Mahārāj is *Purna Purushottam Bhagwān*'."

Since it is a plain fact that 'Swāmi is *Akshar*', the principle has been propagated by the will of Shriji Mahārāj.

After the propagation of Gunātītānand Swāmi as *Akshar* began, organised propaganda was started about Gopālānand Swāmi being the incarnation of *Akshar*.<sup>1</sup> In some temples '*Mul Akshar Murti Gopālānand Swāmi*' was written under Gopālānand Swāmi's images.

Presuming that certain persons may still not accept Gunātītānand Swāmi as *Mul Akshar*, nevertheless, the principle of *Akshar Purushottam* stands valid, and the principle that

(1) This propaganda was started by Mānā Bhakta of Gadhadā – a disciple of Gopālānand Swāmi. Shāstriji Mahārāj asked him to take an oath on the *Shikshāpatri* that Gopālānand Swāmi is *Akshar*. Mānā Bhakta then hesitated and admitted, "At that time there was no such talk [of Gopālānand Swāmi being *Akshar*]." [From a recorded speech of Shāstriji Mahārāj]

Shriji Mahārāj's worship, devotion and *upāsana* should be performed jointly with His ideal devotee is the logical corollary. In other words, Shāstriji Mahārāj's principle proves to be true.

#### 6.13.12 GUNĀTITĀNAND SWĀMI IS AKSHAR: FROM HIS LIFE AND WORK

Gunātītānand Swāmi's life and work are far superior than that of any other *paramhansa* or devotee. This is borne out by many incidents from his life, as is evident from the following points.

(1) From childhood, Swāmi constantly had the vision of Shriji Mahārāj. At the age of four, he requested his mother to sing the songs of the thread ceremony. Precisely at that moment, Shriji Mahārāj's thread ceremony was being performed in Ayodhyā. When Ghanshyām left home for His travels, Swāmi told his mother, "Ma, today the Lord of the divine abode has set out on His long pilgrimage."

(2) In the course of his whole life with his extraordinary powers, he miraculously cured many incurable diseases. Many received a new lease of life. Many were saved from daunting trials and tribulations. Many were sent into trance to have the vision of *Akshardhām*.

(3) Vālero Varu of Mānsā, Munjo Suru of Lilākhā, *Darbār Dājibhāi* of Kāmrol were turned away from the path of unrighteousness and became devotees with Swāmi's inspiration.

(4) Swāmi ensured strict observance of the vows regarding the renouncing of women and wealth by the sādhus in his charge. Even the householders religiously honoured the *panch vartmāns* and were totally uninterested in sensual pleasures. Living an ideal life, his devotees were ready to lay down everything for the sake of the *Satsang*.

(5) Thanks to Swāmi, *Āchārya* Shri Raghuvirji Mahārāj and many sādhus and householders came to realise that Gunātītānand Swāmi was *Akshar*. All of them were



brahmanised and attached to Shriji Mahārāj. The principal followers of Gunātītānand Swāmi were Bhagatji Mahārāj, Jāgā Swāmi, Bālmukunddās Swāmi, Yogeshwardās Swāmi, Mādhavpriyadās Swāmi, Mādhavcharandās Swāmi, Krishnaji Adā, Shivrāl Sheth of Botād, Vāghjibhāi of Vaso, Kalyānbhāi of Vanthali, Velo Sathvāro from Bagasarā village, Rayo Desāi of Kamigadh, Karsan Bāmbhaniyo of Hāmāpar, Rāma Bhanderi of Chādiyā, Lālābhāi of Upletā and Arjanbhāi.

(6) Deep faith in God, dynamism, glory and valour are the hallmarks of Swāmi's discourses – *Swāmini Vātu*. These qualities are rarely found in the discourses of other *sadgurus*. Wherever Swāmi spread the message of *Satsang*, he instilled firm faith in the sublime form of Shriji Mahārāj. And other gods, goddesses, incarnations, talisman, charmed threads etc. were shown their proper place.

(7) He inspired the composition of the scholarly volume of *Harilīlākalpataru*. He thereby helped in disseminating the knowledge of Shriji Mahārāj as the supreme God, as well as enriching the literature of the *Sampradāya*.

(8) Despite his efficient management of the Junāgadh temple's administration, Swāmi never collected any funds. His main objective was to instil steadfast faith in Shriji Mahārāj. Once that was achieved, devotees were unlikely to fritter away their earnings in other pursuits. With their firm faith, they were ready to give away their all for Shriji Mahārāj, Swāmi and the temples. That is why Swāmi could say to Āchārya Raghurvji Mahārāj, "Mahārāj, the *Satsangis* are so staunch that if I wish, I can completely fill the Khengār step-well with the heads of *Satsangis*."

(9) While running the huge administrative set up of the temple, looking after never-ending construction work and a wide range of other activities, Swāmi never slowed down the pace of religious discourses. They were enthusiastically carried out many times daily without fail.

(10) Arrogant with their half-baked knowledge of *Brahman*, the scholars at Mahemadābād were humbled by him.

(11) The epitome of saintliness, the highest degree of pure devotion for Shriji Mahārāj, strict observance of the five ascetic vows, readiness to abide by the words of the Lord; these were only some of the sterling qualities of Swāmi. Without fear or favour, he pointed out the slightest lapse in the religious code of conduct or faith. With his steadfast intellect he was unaffected by honours or insults.

(12) The most remarkable feature is his illustrious line of successive brahmanised disciples – which has continued to this very day. Nowhere else can such an impressive line of successive disciples be found.

Gunātītānand Swāmi's life, work and precepts clearly show that he was the most blessed and graced disciple of Shriji Mahārāj, His divine abode *Mul Akshar*, and His best and unparalleled devotee. He is, therefore, the most suitable ideal for a devotee aspiring to become *Brahmarup*.

In our *Sampradāya*, the *sadgurus* regularly chanted the following *dhun*:

SWĀMI ANE NĀRĀYAN;

SWĀMI TE GUNĀTIT SWĀMI, NĀRĀYAN SAHAJĀNAND SWĀMI.

AKSHAR ANE PURUSHOTTAM;

AKSHAR TE GUNĀTIT SWĀMI, PURUSHOTTAM SAHAJĀNAND SWĀMI.

BRAHMA ANE PARABRAHMA;

BRAHMA TE GUNĀTIT SWĀMI, PARABRAHMA SAHAJĀNAND SWĀMI.

ĀTMĀ ANE PARAMĀTMĀ;

ĀTMĀ TE GUNĀTIT SWĀMI, PARAMĀTMĀ SAHAJĀNAND SWĀMI.

*Swāmi and Nārāyan;*

*Swāmi is Gunātītānand Swāmi and Nārāyan is Sahajānand Swāmi.*

*Akshar and Purushottam;*

*Akshar is Gunātītānand Swāmi and Purushottam is Sahajānand Swāmi.*

*Brahman and Parabrahman;*

*Brahman is Gunātītānand Swāmi and Parabrahman is Sahajānand Swāmi.*

*Ātman and Paramātmā;*

*Ātman is Gunātītānand Swāmi and Paramātmā is Sahajānand Swāmi.*

In this way, a devotee should have firm faith in *Akshar Purushottam upāsanā*. He should recognise His Divine Holiness

Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj as the *pragat* form of Shriji Mahārāj, and should loyally honour his commands to realise the true knowledge of *upāsanā*. All seekers should imbibe this knowledge, dedicate themselves to the spreading of it, and in turn earn the divine grace of Shriji Mahārāj.



## 7. SUMMARY

After studying this book, one should keep in mind the following points regarding *upāsanā*:

### 7.1 UPĀSANĀ: WHAT TO UNDERSTAND

- (1) *Jiva, Ishwar, māyā, Brahman* and *Parabrahman* are the five eternal entities, each distinct and separate from one another.
- (2) Shriji Mahārāj is *Purna Purushottam Nārāyan, Parabrahman, sarvopari* – supreme, *avatāri* – the cause of all incarnations, the ultimate cause of all causes, *sarva kartā* – the all-doer, *sadā sākār* – eternally with a form, *antaryāmi* – omniscient, *pragat* – manifest and *divya* – divine.
- (3) *Parabrahman Purushottam Nārāyan* is one and unique.

- (4) Served by millions of *muktas*, Shriji Mahārāj is always seated on a divine throne at the centre of *Akshardhām*. While remaining in *Akshardhām*, He can manifest in infinite cosmoses. Whatever objects He accepts become *amāyik* and *nirgun*.
- (5) *Parabrahman* dwelling in *Akshardhām* is none other than the ultimate *avatāri* of all *avatārs* Shriji Mahārāj manifesting on earth. One must not think that Shriji Mahārāj dwelling in *Akshardhām* is the *avatāri* and His manifest form on earth is an *avatār*. There is no distinction of *avatār* and *avatāri* in the form of Shriji Mahārāj. Shriji Mahārāj in *Akshardhām* is the very same Shriji Mahārāj manifesting – *pragat* – on earth.
- (6) The other incarnations take place only by the inspiration of *Purushottam* and only after His entry into them. They all offer *upāsanā* to *Purushottam*. There is thus a clear distinction of *avatār* and *avatāri*, between other *avatārs* and the final *avatāri* of all *avatārs* – *Purushottam Nārāyan*.
- (7) *Aksharbrahman*, like *Purushottam Nārāyan*, is one and unique.
- (8) *Aksharbrahman* is one, yet has two forms: One is *nirākār*, *ekras chaitanya* – formless, all pervading *chaitanya* – otherwise known as *Chidākāsh*. The other form of *Akshar* eternally serves *Purushottam Nārāyan* as a *sevak* – servant.
- (9) *Aksharbrahman*, while serving *Parabrahman* in *Akshardhām*, can simultaneously manifest in limitless cosmoses to accompany *Parabrahman* as His *sevak*. He also renders *amāyik* and *nirgun* whatever he accepts.
- (10) *Purushottam's* assimilation and separation are quite different from those of *Aksharbrahman*.
- (11) The *sagun* and *nirgun* aspects of *Purushottam* are His supreme spiritual powers. *Aksharbrahman* in *sagun* form is the greatest of the great and in *nirgun* form is the subtlest of the subtle.

- (12) *Aksharbrahman* is the eternal *sevak*, an ideal *Bhakta* of *Parabrahman*. He worships *Parabrahman* with *sevakbhāva*. Similarly, we also have to become *Aksharrup* and offer *upāsanā* and *bhakti* – worship – to *Purushottam Nārāyan*. In this way, our *upāsanā*, as such, is to be offered to *Purushottam Nārāyan*.
- (13) In the final stage of redemption, *jivātmā* and *Ishwarātmā* are brahmanised and attain redemption. The redeemed *jivātmā* and *Ishwarātmā* leave the physical body and assume a *Bhagwati tanu* – a divine body – given by *Purushottam Nārāyan*. In that form, they are able to serve and offer worship to *Purushottam*. He who becomes *Brahmarup* becomes *Purushottamrup*. In other words, the form of the *Akshar mukta* also becomes divine like *Purushottam's* form. They also come to have the redemptive attributes of *Purushottam Nārāyan*. However, the *muktas* do not become *Purushottam*. *Purushottam* still remains separate and supreme above all.
- (14) There are infinite *muktas* who have become like *Aksharbrahman*. But *Aksharbrahman* is one and unique. He can create infinite *muktas*. But all the *muktas* put together cannot match *Aksharbrahman*. *Purushottam* is beyond *Aksharbrahman* and *Aksharbrahman* is beyond the *muktas*. In this way *mukta*, *Akshar* and *Purushottam* are successively higher than each other, are distinct and remain so even at the end of *ātyantik pralay* – the final rest.
- (15) After departing from this earth, Shriji Mahārāj remains *pragat* – forever manifest through *Aksharbrahman*. After returning to the divine abode, Shriji Mahārāj continued to manifest through *Aksharbrahman* Gunātitānand Swāmi. In the same spiritual hierarchy of *Gurus*, Shriji Mahārāj at present totally manifests through His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj – Shāstri

Nārāyanswarupdāsji.

- (16) Only by contact with such a brahmanised Saint can *Ekāntik Dharma*, consisting of *dharma*, *jnān*, *vairāgya* and *bhakti*, be attained. Faithfully seeking refuge in him, associating with him through thought, word and deed, and living in accordance with his precepts, the *jiva* becomes *Brahmarup* – is brahmanised and receives the honour of offering worship to *Purushottam*.

## 7.2 UPĀSANĀ: WHAT NOT TO UNDERSTAND

- (1) Shriji Mahārāj – *Purushottam Nārāyan* is like the various *avatārs* or *āchāryas* or devotees.
- (2) When God manifests on earth, He does not remain in His abode – i.e., His abode becomes vacant during that period.
- (3) Only *Purushottam* exists but there is no entity such as *Aksharbrahman*.
- (4) Only *Aksharbrahman* exists. *Purushottam* is included in him and can live only through him.
- (5) The *ātman* of a released *mukta* does not become like *Aksharbrahman*.
- (6) There is no difference between *jivātmā* and *Parabrahman*.
- (7) There is no difference between a *mukta* and *Aksharbrahman*.
- (8) There is no difference between a *mukta* and *Purushottam*.
- (9) There is no difference between *Aksharbrahman* and *Parabrahman*.
- (10) There is no *murtimān* (with form) *Aksharbrahman*. *Aksharbrahman* only exists as formless, and is merely the abode, merely divine light.
- (11) Articles such as the footwear and clothes worn by Shriji Mahārāj, quilts and rooms used by the Lord are equivalent to *Mul Aksharbrahman*. (In reality, articles related to Shriji Mahārāj can be termed divine but

cannot be called *Aksharbrahman*.)

- (12) *Paramhansas* other than Gunātītānand Swāmi can also be called *Mul Aksharbrahman*.
- (13) It is possible to become *Brahmarup* – brahmanised – or *Ekāntik* through the refuge of the temple images or scriptures without resort to a brahmanised Saint (*pragat* manifestation of Shriji Mahārāj).
- (14) Salvation can be achieved despite not honouring the commands or duties and codes of conduct prescribed in the *Shikshāpatri*, or by minimising their importance.
- (15) The words of *Vachanāmritam* and *Shikshāpatri* are subject to the constraints of time and place; they are neither universal nor applicable at all times, and therefore can be changed.
- (16) Without the contact of a brahmanised Saint and his grace, the principles of *Vachanāmritam* and other scriptures or *nishchay*<sup>1</sup> of God can still be understood or explained by one's own efforts.



(1) Similarly the scriptures say that *panch vartmān* – *nishkāṁ*, *nirlobh*, *nisswād*, *nissneh* and *nirmān* are the vital redemptive attributes that a saint must possess. The Saint in whom these attributes are displayed is said to have established rapport with God. Therefore, his words should be taken as the ultimate truth, and the knowledge of God that he infuses in the disciples is the ultimate knowledge and the eternal truth. [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/27]

## APPENDIX

### COMMON QUESTIONS RAISED REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF AKSHAR PURUSHOTTAM

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We have examined in detail the basic principles of Swāminārāyan *upāsana*.

In a book of this size, there is no scope for an in-depth or elaborate analysis. Nonetheless, on the basis of the *Vachanāmritam*, *Swāmini Vātu*, current literature and history of the *Sampradāya*, lives of great *paramhansas* and the experiences of the brahmanised *Satpurush*, the inevitable inference is that these principles are true, logical and in accordance with the scriptures.

We can also say that Shāstriji Mahārāj did not do anything

new, neither did he establish a new *Sampradāya*. He simply clarified and propagated the principles of *Brahman* and *Parabrahman* as propounded by Lord Swāminārāyan. Had he not done this, the traditional and conservative section of followers would not have allowed this important principle to be established. But Shriji Mahārāj's divine mission was not destined to remain unrevealed. Yet Shāstriji Mahārāj faced daunting odds. Due to his firm faith in Shriji Mahārāj, his genuine *Brahmic* state, profound scriptural knowledge and penetrating logical insight, the efforts of the conservative proved in vain. In time, Shāstriji Mahārāj's saintliness and purity came to be widely recognised.

To remove any misunderstandings arising out of blind beliefs, some questions have been answered here with scriptural authority.



**Question 1:** Shriji Mahārāj established the *Sampradāya*, and partitioned it into two dioceses. Those who part from this original *Sampradāya* are considered excommunicated. Therefore, their talks should not be heard, nor should one have any contact with them. Nails, hair and teeth are only attractive in their proper *sthān* – place. Out of place, they are as good as useless. Religion cannot survive without roots. How can such misunderstanding be avoided?

**Answer:** Here, the key word is '*sthān*' – place. Shriji Mahārāj has explained the meaning of *sthān*: "*Dharma* attached to the four *varnas* [Brāhmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra] and four *āshrams* [*Brahmacharya*, *Grahashta*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sanyasta*] is known as *sthān* or place or position – and it is vitally required to be adhered to by all. You are *sādhus*, but if you observe the *dharma* of the householders, you are displaced from your position. Therefore, even in difficult circumstances or even if I ask you, you should never allow yourself to be dislodged from the *dharma* to which you are attached." [Vachanāmritam Sārangpur 9]

It is also laid down in the *Shikshāpatra*: "Those of my male

and female disciples who do not follow the tenets of this *Shikshāpatrī* are considered excommunicated from the Fellowship." [Shikshāpatrī 207]

The aspirants should therefore think whether sādhus who strictly observe the five-fold vows and scrupulously renounce women and wealth are in the 'sthān' i.e. the *Sampradāya*, compared to those in saffron clothes who may physically be part of the *Sampradāya* but act according to their own free will!

To a genuine seeker, Shriji Mahārāj's command is to live in *Naimishāranya Kshetra*: "*Naimishāranya* is therefore an allegory to be realised in the person of an *Ekāntik* Saint with whom one should stay with a fixed mind and whose company one should desire for ultimate salvation." [Vachanāmritam Sārangpur 7]

Hence Shriji Mahārāj's advice is that a true aspirant should cross the traditional borders of place and identify an *Ekāntik* Saint for his salvation.

In spite of reaching this stage, if one still goes astray, yet maintains unwavering faith in God's form, Shriji Mahārāj consoles him with these words: "The true aspirant should therefore strive for the knowledge of God, who is visible in human form before him, that He is the transcendental highest and totally divine as if seated in His divine abode *Akshardhām*. Consolidation of this belief in the heart of an aspirant renders him immune to such evil influences which would otherwise drift him away from the bondage of divine love with God. Again, one who is constantly aware and cautious in the observance of the scriptural codes laid down for moral and spiritual behaviour, but lacks such knowledge of the divine form of God, would after death be transmigrated to *Satyalo* or to the *loka* of *Brahmā* or to the *lokas* of other deities, but would never reside in the highest abode of Lord *Purushottam*, *Akshardhām*." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/9] Despite being physically away from the original *Sampradāya*, Shāstriji Mahārāj explained the supreme identity of Shriji Mahārāj; therefore he can be regarded as close to God.

What is *Dharmakul*? On the face of it, *Dharmakul* refers to the family and descendants of Dharmadev, the father of Shriji Mahārāj. In spiritual terms, one who abides by the words of Dharma's son is part of *Dharmakul*. One who has all the redemptive attributes of the Lord is *Dharmakul*. Regarding relatives, Shriji Mahārāj has said: "Staunch *satsangis* are true *Vaishnavs* and only they are dear to Me; they belong to Me and they are My kith and kin. I prefer to stay amongst them here and as well as in the abode of God." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā III/21]

Therefore, only those who follow the path of *dharma* are dear to Shriji Mahārāj. He is related to them only. Those who violate Shriji Mahārāj's ethical codes and special duties are considered excommunicated as described by Him in the *Shikshāpatrī*.



**Question 2:** In the literature of the *Sampradāya*, one does not find many specific references to Gunātītānand Swāmi. Despite this, why is he held in such high regard?

**Answer:** Gunātītānand Swāmi says: "In Brahma's presence, Shukdevji, Sanak and others do not engage themselves in spiritual discussion. Since they are not very well-known in that place, their words are not accepted as authority. Similarly, one who is accepted as authority may not even find a place in the scriptures of the Fellowship." [Swāmini Vātu IV/64]

It therefore does not mean that only those who figure prominently in the religious books are great and those who are not mentioned are not.'

Gunātītānand Swāmi has also said: "Nowhere is Parvatbhāi's name mentioned in any books or scriptures, yet he was truly very great." [Swāmini Vātu V/144]

There is no reference to Rādhā's name in *Shrimad Bhāgavatam*, neither is the abode of *Golok* mentioned anywhere. Only *Vaikunth* is mentioned. But since Rādhā was a genuine devotee, she became very famous. Also, all devotees recognise *Golok* as Shri Krishna's divine abode.

*Sadguru Nishkulānand Swāmi has written:*

JONE SHUKJINE JADBHARAT KO' KONE MOTĀ JĀNYĀ RE,  
HATĀ NISHKULĀNAND E SAMARTH,  
PACHHI SAHUE PARAMĀNYĀ RE.

Who had known Shukji and Jadbharat as eminent saints?

As undeniably great they were, Nishkulānand says, they were subsequently so recognised.

[Nishkulānand Kāvya: Chosath Padi 46]

Shukdevji and Jadbharat were indeed great, but they became well-known only later. Similarly, Gunātītānand Swāmi's and Shriji Mahārāj's forms are an eternal truth and with time, their fame has spread to all corners of the globe due to their authentic glory.

**Question 3:** In the *Shikshāpatri* it is written: "My devotees should worship only those images of the Lord that are given by the *āchārya* or installed by him. Only obeisance should be offered to other images." [Shikshāpatri 61]

Only images given by the *āchārya* should be worshipped in *pūjā* and only the *āchārya* is authorised to give initiation to sādhus. What is implied in this injunction of Shriji Mahārāj?"

**Answer:** Shriji Mahārāj has clearly stated in *Satsangijīvanam* that the *āchārya's* post should not be determined by birth. The decisive factors in the selection of an *āchārya* should be faith in *dharma* and virtuous conduct. Shriji Mahārāj has said that the eldest son should not necessarily be appointed as *āchārya*; only one who is deeply religious and worthy should be appointed as *āchārya* – with the approval of all the sādhus and devotees. In the absence of a suitable person in the immediate family, another suitable member of *Dharmavansh* should be selected. In this way, selection is not based on birth but on religious and virtuous merit. For this very purpose, Shriji Mahārāj has prescribed the moral duties of the *āchāryas*.

"The characteristics of a son who is worthy of being appointed as *āchārya*: the son whose virtues are liked by religious-minded persons, who is capable of protecting the *dharma* of his disciples, who has profound faith in the religious

practices and the ethical codes of the *Sampradāya* – only that son, but no other, is worthy of being appointed as *guru*."<sup>1</sup>

Defining the *āchārya*, the leading authors of the scriptures say: "Only he deserves to be called an *āchārya* who has not simply studied the scriptures, but lives in accordance with them."<sup>2</sup>

The images installed by such virtuous *āchāryas* spark with divinity. It is no wonder then that the images installed by perfect celibate brahmanised Saints such as Shāstriji Mahārāj, Yogiji Mahārāj and Pramukh Swāmi Mahārāj are beneficent and divine.

Paramchaitanyānand Swāmi, Swayamprakāshānand Swāmi and Ānandānand Swāmi respectively installed images in temples at Burānpur, Dhargām and Bharuch.

PACHHI SANTNE KAHE SUKHAKAND,

SUNO PARAMCHAITANYĀNAND;

TAME BURĀNPURMĀ SIDHĀVO, LAKSHMINĀRĀYAN PADHARĀVO.

AMOTHI JANANE SUKH JEVU, TAMOTHI PAN TYĀ THASHE TEVU;

SUNO SWAYAMPRAKĀSHĀNAND,

TAME PAN MUNIGANANĀ CHHO CHAND.

MĀTE JĀO TAME DHARGĀM, KARO JAINE PRATISHTHĀNU KĀM;

Addressing the sādhus, Sukhakand (Shriji Mahārāj) says,

"Paramchaitanyānand, you may kindly go to Burānpur and perform the installation ceremony of Lakshminārāyan.

The followers there will feel as pleased by your presence as they would by Mine.

And please listen Swayamprakāshānand, you are foremost among the sādhus.

Therefore go to Dhargām to perform the installation ceremony.

[Harilīlāmritam IX: 6]

Despite the presence of Shriji Mahārāj and the two *āchāryas* (S.Y. 1886, *Māgshar Sud* 6) Shriji Mahārāj had the image installation ceremonies at Burānpur and Dhargām performed

(1) JANĀNURĀGO YASMIN SYĀCHCHHISHYA-DHARMĀVANAKSHAMĀHA æ  
SWASAMPRADĀYA DHARMASTHO YASHCHA SYĀTSA GURURBHAVET ææ

[Satsangijīvanam IV/40:51]

(2) ĀCHINOTI HI SHĀSTRĀRTHĀNĀCHĀRE STHĀPAYATYAPI æ  
SWAYAMĀCHARATE YASMĀDĀCHĀRYASTENA CHOCHYATE ææ

by prominent sādhus. In many other temples, the *āchāryas* performed the *ārṭi* ceremony long after the installation. In the meantime, did followers not worship or have *darshan* of the images in those temples?

Are the images used in one's daily *pujā* all given by the *āchāryas*? Yet such images are being worshipped daily.

Even the *āchārya* is initiated – given *vartmān* – by a prominent sādhu. *Āchārya* Vihārīlālji Mahārāj was initiated by *Aksharbrahman* Gunātītānand Swāmi. This fact has been noted by him in one of his *kirtans*:

AKSHARMURTI GUNĀTĪTĀNAND SWĀMI, TENE ĀPYĀ VARTMĀN.

*Aksharmurti* Gunātītānand Swāmi gave me *vartmān*.

Prior to returning to His abode, Shriji Mahārāj specifically asked both *āchāryas* to follow the guidance of *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi.

Regarding the initiation of sādhus, Shriji Mahārāj says in *Satsangijivanam*: “Initiation should be given by a highly religious *Param Ekāntik* Saint and the divine images – the basis of *bhakti* – should be received from a *sadguru*, as images consecrated by a *sadguru* are worthy of meditation by the devotee. After receiving initiation and the consecrated images from the *guru*, the devotee should give up his habitual lethargy and religiously worship God.”<sup>1</sup> [*Satsangijivanam* II/51:9]

As explained in this *shloka*, the brahmanised *Param Bhāgavatam* Saint is most worthy of giving initiation and installing images.

Mention has also been made that Mādhavjibhāi – son of Lālji Suthār (Nishkulānand Swāmi), and the two brothers of *Sadguru* Adbhutānand Swāmi were initiated as sādhus by *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi.<sup>2</sup>



(1) SAMPRĀPYA DIKSHĀMIHA BHAKTIDHARMAYUKTĀD GUROR BHĀGWATIM NĀRAHA PRĀK æ ARCHĀTATAHA PRĀPYA TADUKTARITYĀ BHAKTIM VIDADHYĀDAPATANDRI VISHNOHO ææ

(2) Life of Nishkulānand Swāmi – Preface of *Bhaktachintāmani* and Nishkulānand Kāvyaṃ; published by Vartāl Diocese.

**Question 4:** *Sadguru* Gunātītānand Swāmi and *Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi were sādhus. Is it proper to adorn their images with garments, ornaments, turbans, etc.?

**Answer:** Do these *bhaktas* stay in *Akshardhām* as Gunātītānand Swāmi and Gopālānand Swāmi? Shriji Mahārāj clarifies this point in *Vachanāmritam*: “A devotee who is irrevocably attached to God is to be recognised as *Brahmani murti* – the image of *Brahman*. Therefore, no traces of human instincts should ever be visualised in him, who by his single-minded devotion has attained spiritual heights.” [*Vachanāmritam* Gadhadā II/63]

“When God descends on earth for the redemption of the *jivas* and assumes human form, His divine abode *Akshardhām*, the released *jivas* and His full-fledged lordship all descend on earth with Him, but they cannot be perceived by those without divine vision.” [*Vachanāmritam* Gadhadā I/71]

They are all the *muktas* of *Akshardhām*. To think about them and treat them as if they were sādhus and mortals on earth, is a sign of superficial thinking.

The sādhu and *brahmachāri* priests adorn the images of Rādhikāji, Lakshmiji and other female *bhaktas*, and conduct the ceremonial *pujā* and *ārṭi*. If such devotees were not considered divine, the sādhus and *brahmachāris*, who observe vows of celibacy, would not be able to regularly carry out their *pujā*. The image of Hanumānji – a celibate devotee – is also adorned with garments of gold or silver threads and a crown; then why should they not be offered to the saints of God?

Shriji Mahārāj emphasises: “When he [such a Sādhu] attains the divine status, he is always respected on par with God by the deities of the other worlds. And when he transmigrates to the divine abode of God, they offer him all the luxuries of their worlds, just as they offer them to God.” [*Vachanāmritam* Gadhadā II/22]

If Brahṁā and other demigods offer gifts to such Saints, what is wrong in our worshipping such *Bhaktas*. Many times, Shriji Mahārāj Himself presented His garments and turbans to



Gunātītānand Swāmi. Achintyānand Brahmachāri has noted this in a prayer:

MUHURYASMAI PRĀDĀTPURUMUDAMITO YADVAR GUNAIR  
HARIRHĀRĀN PAUSHPĀNNIJATANU DHRUTĀN ANGADA MUKHĀN æ  
SWA BHUKTAM SADBHOJYAM VARASANA-MUKHYAM  
SWAVIDHRUTAM  
GUNĀTITĀNANDAM MUNIVARAMAHAM NAUMI SATATAM ææ

By whose superlative qualities Lord Shri Sahajānand Swāmi was extremely pleased; and presented him garlands of flowers, bracelets, food graced by Him and rich garments worn by Him as *prasādi* – that eminent Saint Gunātītānand I forever praise.

In *Akshar Ordī* at Gadhadā and *Aksharbhuvan* at Amdāvād, mural paintings depict all the *Akshar muktas* like Shriji Mahārāj adorned with divine garments and ornaments.

Therefore, Shriji Mahārāj has said: “In the way one offers worship to God by performing rituals, similarly, the choicest devotee of God should also be equally offered worship by performing the same rituals and offering him the same sanctified offerings which are graced by God. A devotee who does this, even if he is imperfect in his devotional fervour, would attain perfection during this very birth, even though his devotional fervour is so weak as to attain perfection after ten births or hundreds of births. Such is the blessed grace bestowed by God to a devotee who offers worship to His brahmanised Saint on par with Him.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 5]

Why should one deprive oneself of such a supreme reward and why should the defects of a hundred births not be removed in this very birth?



**Question 5:** Excepting Shriji Mahārāj, a devotee should not meditate on anyone. The *Shikshāpatrī* also forbids one to meditate on even a *Brahmavettā* – a knower of *Brahman*. Then why do devotees meditate on the Saint?

**Answer:** Shriji Mahārāj says in the *Vachanāmritam*: “The divine form of Lord Shri Krishna should be meditated upon

with His consort Rādhā.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā I/5] Thus, Shriji Mahārāj has shown His inclination for the meditation of *Bhakta* along with *Bhagwān*.

Shriji Mahārāj also says: “I have merged Myself totally into the pure and perfect form of *Brahman*. I have exuberant devotion and attachment to Lord *Purushottam* who is seated with a form in the divinely illuminated *Akshardhām*. I have similar love and devotion for His choicest devotee.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/50] If God has love and devotion for His *Bhakta*, then why should we not follow His example?

To become *Brahmarup*, Shriji Mahārāj advises: “If one meditates upon this *Brahman*, he would become enlightened with the redemptive attributes of *Brahman*.” [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/31] While meditating, can a devotee not focus attention on the Saint’s virtues, glory and powers?

To acquire *nirvikalp* knowledge, Shriji Mahārāj says: “This *Akshar* is the divine abode of *Purushottam Nārāyan*. One has to attain oneness with this *Akshar*; and with this *Aksharbhāv*, offer *upāsana* to Lord *Purushottam*.” [Vachanāmritam Loyā 12] Therefore to become one with *Akshar*, it is essential to meditate on him.

And Shriji Mahārāj categorically states: “In the way one offers worship to God by performing rituals, similarly, the choicest devotee of God should also be equally offered worship by performing the same rituals and offering him the same sanctified offerings which are graced by God. A devotee who does this, even if he is imperfect in his devotional fervour, would attain perfection during this very birth, even though his devotional fervour is so weak as to attain perfection after ten births or hundreds of births. Such is the blessed grace bestowed by God to a devotee who offers worship to His brahmanised Saint on par with Him.” [Vachanāmritam Vartāl 5]

Furthermore it is said that:

DHYĀNAMULAM GURORMURTIHI PUJĀMULAM GUROHO PADAM æ  
SHĀSTRAMULAM GURORVĀKYAM MOKSHAMULAM GUROHO KRIPĀ ææ

The root of meditation is the Guru's image. The root of worship is the Guru's feet. The root of the scriptures is the Guru's word and the root of salvation is the Guru's compassion.

The Guru – the *Anādi Brahman Gunātī* Saint – is the root of meditation. Therefore, when *Aksharbrahman*, the divine abode of Shriji Mahārāj, is manifest on earth in human form – he also, like Shriji Mahārāj and His worshipped form, is forever worthy of being meditated upon.

The *Shikshāpatrī* (verse 115) has forbidden us to meditate upon *Brahmavettā* – the knower of *Brahman*. The reason for this is that no spiritual advancement is possible by meditating on those who have become enlightened through knowledge, previously being in an unenlightened state<sup>1</sup> – as opposed to *Aksharbrahman*, who is eternally enlightened.

*Sadguru* Shatānand Muni specifically states in his commentary on the *Shikshāpatrī* that according to Shaunak Muni's assertion,<sup>2</sup> there cannot be any objection to meditating on the eternally pure *Chaitanya Brahman* (described as *Naisargik* or *Amal Brahman*) along with God.

By His *antaryāmi shakti*, Shriji Mahārāj enters *Prakriti Purush*, *Pradhān Purush* and others in the evolutionary chain. The scriptures forbid meditation on them. But when God specially enters them for a specific mission, they are identified as the form of God and are worthy of being meditated upon. Barring that, even Brahmā, Vishnu, Mahesh and other deities do not qualify for meditation as described by Shriji Mahārāj in *Vedras*.

*Sadguru* Gopālānand Swāmi has classified *dhyān* – meditation – into four types: (1) *Sang dhyān* (2) *Upāṅg dhyān* (3) *Sapārshad dhyān* and (4) *Salil dhyān*. The third type of meditation – *Sapārshad dhyān* – implies meditation on God along with His devotee. Thus Gopālānand Swāmi also approves of meditating on *Bhagwān* along with His *Bhakta*.



(1) PASHCHĀDUD BHŪTA BODHĀSHCHA DHYĀNE NAI VOPAKĀRAKĀHĀ æ

(2) NAI SARGIKO NA VAI BODHASTESHĀMAPYAN YATO YATAHA æ  
TASMĀTTADAMALAM BRAHMĀ NISARGĀDEVA BODHAVAT ææ

**Question 6:** 'Swāminārāyan' is one word. Is it etymologically possible to take it to mean Swāmi and Nārāyan?

**Answer:** Soon after Shriji Mahārāj met Rāmānand Swāmi, Rāmānand Swāmi handed over the reins of the *Sampradāya* to Shriji Mahārāj and returned to the divine abode. At that time, Mukṭānand Swāmi, Lālji Suthār, Parvatbhāi, Ānandji Sanghediya and other disciples of Rāmānand Swāmi had made up their minds that only Rāmānand Swāmi is our Guru and Nilkanth Varni (Shriji Mahārāj) is our *gurubhāi* – fellow disciple. "Even if Varni were to show us Rādhā-Krishna right in front of our eyes, we shall still not accept anyone other than Rāmānand Swāmi as God." Such was their irrevocable faith in Rāmānand Swāmi. In such circumstances, how Shriji Mahārāj managed to introduce (only 13 days after Rāmānand Swāmi's passing away) the chanting of the 'Swāminārāyan' *mantra* is a point worth thinking about.

Due to Rāmānand Swāmi's sad departure, the devotees were still quite shocked. They had unwavering faith in their Guru and worshipped his wooden footwear. Though Varni had been appointed by Rāmānand Swāmi as his successor, the devotees were still unprepared to see him occupy the Guru's *gādi* (seat). What was the background, in these circumstances, for Shriji Mahārāj to introduce the chanting of 'Swāminārāyan'? In this regard, the following incidents – in sequence – merit serious consideration.

Rāmānand Swāmi initiated Nilkanth Varni, who was then given the names of 'Sahajānand' and 'Nārāyan Muni'. If Shriji Mahārāj had wanted only His name to be chanted, He could have introduced the recital of 'Nārāyan Muni, Nārāyan Muni'.

When Shriji Mahārāj started sending people in trance, Mukṭānand Swāmi was extremely perturbed and returned quickly from Kutch to reprimand Him. "Why are you perpetuating this hoax?"

Shriji Mahārāj's reply to this question is significant. He politely said to Mukṭānand Swāmi, "I am only asking the

devotees to sing the praises of our Guru Rāmānand Swāmi. If in the process they go into trance, what am I to do?" In actual fact, Shriji Mahārāj was engaging them in the recital of the Swāminārāyan *mantra*, in which Rāmānand Swāmi's name does not figure. How is it then that Shriji Mahārāj claimed to be singing the praises of Rāmānand Swāmi? Here, in the word 'Swāminārāyan', Swāmi refers to Rāmānand Swāmi, i.e. *Sadguru Bhakta*, who holds within him Nārāyan – meaning Lord Krishna. This is how the meaning of the word 'Swāminārāyan' is to be understood here.

Rāmānand Swāmi was the incarnation of Uddhavji, who was a devotee of Lord Krishna. Rāmānand Swāmi also worshipped Lord Krishna. Therefore Rāmānand Swāmi, as a *Bhakta*, holds Shri Krishna within him. Shriji Mahārāj therefore started the worship of *Bhakta* with *Bhagwān*, disciple with preceptor – and *Swāmi* with *Nārāyan*. This is evident from His reply to Mukṭānand Swāmi.

With time, the devotees realised the glory and greatness of Shriji Mahārāj. Rāmānand Swāmi gave *darshan* to Mukṭānand Swāmi in Kālwanī. Following this, Mukṭānand Swāmi pressured Shriji Mahārāj to sit on Rāmānand Swāmi's *gādi*, and expressed his feelings by composing the *ārti* – "*Jay Sadguru Swāmi*". From then on, many felt that Rāmānand Swāmi and Sahajānand Swāmi were one – i.e., Shriji Mahārāj was regarded as *Sadguru*, with Nārāyan (Lord Krishna) dwelling in Him. With this understanding, they chanted the Swāminārāyan *mantra*.

In S.Y. 1868 (1812 A.D.), Shriji Mahārāj celebrated *Fuldol* (the festival of colours) in Sārangpur at Rāthod Dhādhāl's place. Shriji Mahārāj played *rās* with the sādhus and recited Kabir's poem – "*Koti Krishna jode hath... Sadguru khele Vasant*" (Millions of Krishnas watch the *Sadguru* with folded hands). While playing *rās*, Shriji Mahārāj asked, "Who is that *Sadguru*?"

The sādhus replied, "Mahārāj, you are that *Sadguru*." Placing the tip of His stick on Gunātitānand Swāmi's chest,

Shriji Mahārāj pointed out, "That *Sadguru* is Gunātitānand Swāmi; I am the Lord." This incident indicates that up until this time, the sādhus accepted Shriji Mahārāj as *Sadguru*, but did not recognise Him as God – the supreme. Identifying Gunātitānand Swāmi as *Sadguru*, Shriji Mahārāj explained to all of them that He, as *Nārāyan*, eternally dwelt in Swāmi – *Sadguru* Gunātitānand Swāmi.

Figuratively speaking, when we show the crescent moon on the roof, the moon is not literally on the roof. But using the roof as a landmark, the moon can be located.

Similarly, Shriji Mahārāj has said in *Shikshāpatri* verses 109 and 110: "When His manifested form is associated with Rādhā, the dual form is known as Rādhā-Krishna, and when associated with Lakshmi as Lakshmi-Nārāyan. When associated with Arjun, He is called Nar-Nārāyan, and He is also known by various other names when He is associated with Balbhadrā and other devotees." But what is new in this description? It was common knowledge. Then why was it necessary for Shriji Mahārāj to clarify this point? He actually wanted to convey that in the manner in which devotees worship Rādhā-Krishna, Lakshmi-Nārāyan and Nar-Nārāyan, similarly, when we worship Sahajānand Swāmi – *Nārāyan* – with His choicest disciple Gunātitānand Swāmi – *Swāmi* – only then do we truly recognise Him as *Swāmi-Nārāyan*.

Shriji Mahārāj has said in the *Vachanāmritam*: "Ultimate redemption comes only by knowing God in human manifestation in all His unbounded glory and fullness. His brahmanised Saint...should also be realised as totally divine." [Vachanāmritam Gadhadā II/21]

If Shriji Mahārāj was not interested in spreading the knowledge of *Brahman* and *Parabrahman*, *Akshar* and *Purushottam* – then why did He frequently inquire about the five distinct entities during His pilgrimage covering the whole of India? Until then, *Brahman* and *Parabrahman* were already being universally worshipped as one. Manifesting on earth, what new change did Shriji Mahārāj introduce? Which eternal

principle did He propagate? How could He be considered supreme if He had nothing new to offer?

Shriji Mahārāj has explained in the *Nirmān* (non-pride) chapter of *Vedras*: “The devotees who identify their *ātman* completely with *Akshar* and offer *upāsana* to *Purushottam Paramātmān* deserve to be highly complimented... And those who do not realise *Purushottam* with *Swāmi-sevak bhāv*, and behave as one with Him should be condemned.”

If we look at the *upāsana* of the previous *paroksh* incarnations such as Rādhā-Krishna from the *ātman* viewpoint – leaving aside the distinction between male and female and other physical aspects – then the *upāsana* of *ātman* and *Paramātmān*, *Brahman* and *Parabrahman* is also implicit. Rādhā is *ātman*, Krishna is *Paramātmān*. Rādhā-Krishna implies that only after identification of the self with *ātman*, is a devotee entitled to worship Krishna – *Paramātmān*. From this standpoint, the *upāsana* of the previous incarnations is inherent in *Akshar Purushottam upāsana*. *Akshar Purushottam upāsana* is Vedic since *Brahman* and *Parabrahman* have been expounded by the *Vedās*.

Some point out that grammatically ‘*Swāminārāyan*’ is one word. In that case, the etymology of the words *Lakshminārāyan* and *Nārāyan* given in *Shikshāpatra* proves to be wrong. If in those cases, Shriji Mahārāj advocates worship of Lakshmi with *Nārāyan*, and Nar with *Nārāyan*, then the obvious inference is worship of *Swāmi* with *Nārāyan*.

Shriji Mahārāj has accepted *Vishishtādvaita* – qualified non-dualism. Therefore, if we accept Lord *Nārāyan* as qualified by *Swāmi*, then the term *Vishishtādvaita* stands true. Here *Swāmi* – *Aksharbrahman* stands in relation of the body to *Parabrahman* – Shriji Mahārāj. The *Shrutis* also speak of “*Yasyāksharam shariram*” – that whose body is this *Akshar*. Only if we accept *Purushottam/Nārāyan/Parabrahman* as qualified by *Akshar/Swāmi/Brahman*, does the acceptance of qualified non-dualism by Shriji Mahārāj stand to reason. In the *Vishishtādvaita* of Rāmānuja, God is qualified by *jīva* and *māyā*. In the

*Vishishtādvaita* of *Swāminārāyan*, *jīva*, *Ishwara* and *māyā* stand in relation of the body (*sharir*) to *Akshar*, and *Akshar* is their owner (*shariri*), because *Akshar* is their support and cause. At the same time, *Akshar* stands in relation of the body (*sharir*) to Lord *Purushottam* who is his soul (*shariri*). This principle is clearly explained in *Vachanāmritam* Gadhadā I/64. That is the very reason why Shri Krishnavallabh Āchārya also describes the doctrine of Shriji Mahārāj as ‘*Vishishtādvaitē’pi Brahmavishishtādvaitatvam*’ – i.e. *Neo-Vishishtādvaita* of *Vishishtādvaita*.



# GLOSSARY

## A

<b>Abhedya</b>	Unpierceable.
<b>Āchārya</b>	Teacher; spiritual guide or preceptor.
<b>Achhedya</b>	Uncuttable.
<b>Ādi</b>	First.
<b>Advaita</b>	Monism.
<b>Āgnā</b>	Command/instruction usually given by God or His Saint.
<b>Ahamkāra</b>	Ego.
<b>Ahimsā</b>	Non-Violence.
<b>Aishwarya</b>	Opulence; spiritual powers.
<b>Akhand</b>	Integral, whole.
<b>Akshar</b>	Eternal abode of Lord Swāminārāyan. In its personal form, <i>Akshar</i> serves <i>Purushottam</i> in His abode and manifests as His choicest devotee on this earth.
<b>Akshar Deri</b>	Shrine built over the cremation spot of Aksharbrahman Gunātītānand Swāmi in Gondal.
<b>Akshar Mukta</b>	A liberated soul residing in <i>Akshardhām</i> .
<b>Akshar Purush</b>	<i>Akshar mukta</i> .
<b>Aksharātmak</b>	That which is identified with <i>Akshar</i> i.e. <i>Aksharrup</i> .
<b>Aksharbhāv</b>	<i>Brahmabhav</i> .
<b>Aksharbrahman</b>	<i>Akshar</i> ; <i>Brahman</i> .
<b>Akshardhām</b>	The divine abode of Lord Swāminārāyan.
<b>Aksharrup</b>	Oneness with <i>Akshar</i> ; brahmanised state.
<b>Amāyik</b>	Free from <i>māyā</i> ; divine.
<b>Amarāvāti</b>	<i>Swarga loka</i> ; abode of Indra – God of rain.
<b>Amsha</b>	Part; portion.
<b>Anādi</b>	Having no beginning; eternal.
<b>Anādi Bhed</b>	Eternal entity.
<b>Ānand</b>	Bliss.
<b>Anant</b>	Endless; infinite.
<b>Anātman</b>	Non-ātman.
<b>Antahkaran</b>	Aggregate of <i>Manas</i> , <i>Buddhi</i> , <i>Chitta</i> and <i>Ahamkāra</i> .
<b>Antaryāmi</b>	Indweller.
<b>Antaryāmi Shakti</b>	God's divine power of immanence.
<b>Anyathākartum</b>	The extraordinary powers of God.
<b>Ārti</b>	Ritual of waving lighted lamps before the deity as an act of adoration.
<b>Āshram</b>	Religious community; residence of a religious community; stage of life. <i>Brahmacharya</i> , <i>Grahashta</i> , <i>Vānprastha</i> and <i>Sanyastha</i> are the four stages.
<b>Ashtāng Yoga</b>	Eight steps of <i>yoga</i> culminating in the realisation of God.

<b>Ashtāng Yogi</b>	One proficient in <i>Ashtāng yoga</i> .
<b>Asura</b>	Man of evil character; demon.
<b>Ātmadarshan</b>	The realisation of the self as distinct from the body.
<b>Ātmajnān</b>	Knowledge of one's self as <i>ātman</i> .
<b>Ātman</b>	The pure soul.
<b>Ātmanishthā</b>	Faith in the soul's inherent power.
<b>Ātmasattā</b>	Soul; soul's inherent power.
<b>Ātyantik Pralay</b>	Period of final rest.
<b>Avatār</b>	Incarnation of God.
<b>Avatāri</b>	Cause of all incarnations.
<b>Avidyā</b>	Ignorance.

## B

<b>Badrikāshram</b>	Abode of Nar-Nārāyan.
<b>Bhagwadbhāv</b>	Godliness.
<b>Bhagwān</b>	God.
<b>Bhāgwat Dharma</b>	Devotion to God accompanied by righteousness; Ekāntik Dharma.
<b>Bhajan</b>	Devotional song; worship.
<b>Bhakta</b>	A devotee of God.
<b>Bhakti</b>	Devotion.
<b>Bhakti Mārg</b>	The path of devotion.
<b>Bharatkhand</b>	India.
<b>Bhed</b>	Difference; class.
<b>Bhumāpurush</b>	One of the demigods.
<b>Brahmā</b>	Creator of the universe.
<b>Brahmabhāv</b>	Consciousness of being one with <i>Brahman</i> .
<b>Brahmachāri</b>	One who vows to lead a life of celibacy.
<b>Brahmacharya</b>	The practice of celibacy.
<b>Brahmadhām</b>	<i>Akshardhām</i> .
<b>Brahmahatyā</b>	Sin of killing a brāhmin.
<b>Brahmajnān</b>	The knowledge of <i>Brahman</i> .
<b>Brahmajyoti</b>	The divine light of <i>Akshar</i> .
<b>Brahmaloka</b>	<i>Akshardhām</i> .
<b>Brahmamahol</b>	<i>Akshardhām</i> .
<b>Brahman</b>	<i>Akshar</i> ; <i>Aksharbrahman</i> .
<b>Brahmanised</b>	One who has attained oneness with <i>Brahman</i> .
<b>Brahmapur</b>	<i>Akshardhām</i> .
<b>Brahmarup</b>	Oneness with <i>Brahman</i> .
<b>Brahmaswarup</b>	Oneness with <i>Brahman</i> ; God-realised.
<b>Brahmavettā</b>	Knower of <i>Brahman</i> .
<b>Brahmavidyā</b>	The knowledge of <i>Brahman</i> .
<b>Buddhi</b>	Intellect.

## C

<b>Chaitanya</b>	Pure consciousness.
<b>Chandra</b>	Moon.

**Chidākāsh**  
**Chitta**

*Akshardhām.*  
The lower mind.

## D

**Dān**  
**Darshan**

Alms.  
Seeing; the sight or beholding of the deity or holy person with reverence or devotion.

**Desh**  
**Dev**  
**Dhām**  
**Dhāmi**  
**Dhanvantar Vaidya**  
**Dharma**

Place.  
Deity; demigod.  
Abode.  
Master of the abode.  
Physician of the gods.  
Righteousness; Moral or social duty and law; code of ethical conduct; religion.

**Dharmakul**  
**Dharmavansh**  
**Dhun**  
**Dhyān**  
**Dikshā**  
**Divya**  
**Divyabhāv**  
**Dwāpar Yuga**

Family and descendants of Dharmadev – Shriji Mahārāj's father.  
*Dharmakul*  
Repeated singing of the Lord's name.  
Meditation; concentration.  
Initiation into sainthood.  
Divine.  
Divine attributes.  
The third age of the world.

## E

**Ekāntik Bhakta**  
**Ekāntik Bhāv**  
**Ekāntik Dharma**  
**Ekras**

A devotee in whom *dharma*, *jnān*, *vairagya* and *bhakti* are fully developed.  
Single-mindedness.  
*Bhāgwat Dharma*.  
Pure.

## G

**Gādi**  
**Golok**  
**Gopis**  
**Govāl**  
**Gunas**  
  
**Gunātīt**  
**Guru**  
**Guru Paramparā**

Seat of the Head.  
The abode of Lord Krishna.  
Milkmaids of Vrindāvan, who were devotees of Lord Krishna.  
Shepherds of Vrindāvan.  
Qualities referring to *Sattva* (goodness), *Rajas* (passion) and *Tamas* (darkness).  
State beyond the three *gunas* or qualities.  
A religious teacher, adviser or guide; spiritual preceptor.  
The unbroken line of gurus in the spiritual hierarchy.

## H

**Himsā**

Violence.

## I

**Ichchāshakti**

The power of will.

**Indra**  
**Indriyas**  
**Ishwar**

God of rain.  
Sense organs.  
One of the five eternal entities; demigods.

## J

**Jagat**  
**Jāgrat**  
**Janmāshṭami**

The world.  
State of wakefulness.  
Birthday of Lord Krishna; 8th day of the dark half of the month of Shrāvan.

**Jiva**  
**Jivanmukta**

One of the five eternal entities; soul.  
One who experiences liberation in this very birth; name given to Shriji Mahārāj.

**Jñān**  
**Jñān Shakti**  
**Jñāni**

Knowledge of the self or God.  
The power of knowledge.  
One who has the knowledge of Brahman.

## K

**Kāla**  
**Kali yuga**  
**Kāran**  
**Karma**  
**Kirtan**  
**Kriyāshakti**  
**Kshar**

Time.  
The fourth and present age of the world.  
Causal.  
Actions.  
Religious hymn; devotional song.  
The power of action.  
Perishable.

## L

**Lādu**  
**Lakshmi**  
**Lilā**  
**Loka**

Sweetmeat ball.  
Consort of Vishnu; Goddess of wealth.  
Divine sport; pastimes of the Lord.  
World; place; abode.

## M

**Mahā Purush**  
**Mahāmāyā**  
**Mahāmukta**  
**Mahant**  
**Mahārāj**

The primordial self of *Akshar mukta*.  
Primordial *māyā*.  
*Akshar mukta*.  
Head priest of a temple.  
Title of respect for spiritual leaders; commonly used on own to refer to Lord Swāminārāyan.

**Māhātmya**  
**Mahāttattva**  
**Mahāvishnurup**  
**Mahimā**  
**Manas**  
**Mantra**

Greatness; glory.  
Cosmic intelligence.  
Mammoth.  
Glory; greatness.  
Mind.  
Revered words or syllable or hymn recited during worship and meditation.

**Manushya**

Human.

<b>Manushyabhāv</b>	Human attributes.
<b>Māyā</b>	One of the five eternal entities; the power of God responsible for creating attachment towards the body and its relations.
<b>Māyik</b>	The doctrine of illusion.
<b>Moha</b>	Delusion.
<b>Moksha</b>	Ultimate salvation or liberation from the fetters of <i>māyā</i> .
<b>Mukta</b>	A released soul.
<b>Mukti</b>	Liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.
<b>Mul</b>	Primordial.
<b>Mul Akshar</b>	Primordial <i>Akshar</i> .
<b>Mul Māyā</b>	Primordial <i>māyā</i> .
<b>Mul Purush</b>	The primordial self of <i>Akshar mukta</i> .
<b>Mumukshu</b>	Spiritual aspirant.
<b>Muni</b>	Seer; sage.
<b>Murti</b>	Image of the deity installed in a temple for worship; a picture or statue.
<b>Murtimān</b>	With form.

## N

<b>Naimishāranya</b>	
<b>Kshetra</b>	An important place of pilgrimage near Ayodhyā.
<b>Nārāyan</b>	God.
<b>Nirākār</b>	Formless; devoid of all forms evolved from <i>māyā</i> .
<b>Nirdosh</b>	Free from faults.
<b>Nirgun</b>	Devoid of attributes; divine.
<b>Nirlobh</b>	Freedom from covetousness; poverty.
<b>Nirmān</b>	Freedom from ego; humility.
<b>Nirvikāri</b>	Immutable.
<b>Nirvikalp Samādhi</b>	The highest state of realisation where only the undisturbed bliss of God is experienced.
<b>Nishchay</b>	Conviction of the form of God.
<b>Nishkāṁ</b>	Without passion; celibacy.
<b>Nishkāṁ Bhakta</b>	A devotee desirous of nothing but the service of God.
<b>Nishthā</b>	Faith; conviction of the form of God.
<b>Nissneh</b>	Non-attachment.
<b>Nisswād</b>	Without taste; tastelessness.
<b>Niyam</b>	Moral habit or rule.

## P

<b>Panch Bhutas</b>	Earth, water, fire, wind and space; the five evolutes of <i>māyā</i> .
<b>Panch Vartmān</b>	Five vows taken at time of initiation into the <i>Sampradāya</i> or into sainthood.
<b>Panchvishayas</b>	The five sense objects.
<b>Parabrahman</b>	God.
<b>Param</b>	Supreme; greatest.
<b>Paramātmān</b>	God.

<b>Paramhansa</b>	Highest stage of ascetic renunciation.
<b>Parampad</b>	Highest position; final beatitude.
<b>Pāras</b>	Philosopher's stone; popularly known to turn iron into gold by touch.
<b>Parmeshwar</b>	God.
<b>Paroksh</b>	Unmanifest.
<b>Pārshad</b>	First state of initiation into the ascetic life; a renunciate wearing white clothing.
<b>Pātāl</b>	Lowest of the fourteen <i>lokas</i> in this universe.
<b>Pradhān Purush</b>	'First-produced'; described as lower nature or lower <i>Brahman</i> .
<b>Pragat</b>	Manifest; present.
<b>Pragat Brahmaswarup</b>	Present form of <i>Brahman</i> – referring to the God-realised brahmanised <i>Satpurush</i> .
<b>Prakriti</b>	<i>Māyā</i> ; one of the five eternal entities.
<b>Pralay</b>	Destruction.
<b>Prānas</b>	The vital airs.
<b>Prārabdha</b>	Destiny; determined by previous <i>karma</i> .
<b>Prasād</b>	Sanctified food from that offered to the deity.
<b>Pratyaksh</b>	Visible before the eyes.
<b>Pujā</b>	Act of worship or adoration; ritual and prayer offered at home or in the temple.
<b>Purna</b>	Total; complete; perfect.
<b>Purna Purushottam</b>	The Ultimate Reality; the supreme God.
<b>Purush</b>	This term is variously used to mean soul, lower <i>Brahman</i> , <i>Brahman</i> or <i>Parabrahman</i> .
<b>Purushottam</b>	The supreme God; Lord Swāminārāyan.
<b>Purushottamrup</b>	Like the form of <i>Purushottam</i> .

## R

<b>Rajas</b>	Mode of passion; one of the three <i>gunas</i> .
<b>Rās</b>	A Gujarāti folk-dance.
<b>Rishi</b>	Seer; sage.

## S

<b>Sachchidānand</b>	Truth, consciousness and bliss.
<b>Sadguru</b>	Senior ascetic; eminent preceptor.
<b>Sādhak</b>	An aspirant walking on the spiritual path.
<b>Sādhanā</b>	Spiritual endeavour.
<b>Sādhū</b>	Holy man who has renounced the world; ascetic.
<b>Sagun</b>	With qualities.
<b>Sagun Brahman</b>	<i>Brahman</i> with divine attributes.
<b>Sākār</b>	Personal; with form.
<b>Samādhi</b>	State of trance.
<b>Sāmkhya</b>	One of the six chief systems of Indian philosophy attributed to Sage Kapil.
<b>Sampradāya</b>	Holy or religious fellowship; tradition handed down from a founder through successive religious teachers.

<b>Sāmyavasthā</b>	State of equilibrium.
<b>Sanyāsi</b>	Hindu ascetic or renunciate.
<b>Sarvagna</b>	Omniscient.
<b>Sarvopari</b>	The supreme; transcending all.
<b>Sat Yuga</b>	The first age of the world.
<b>Sat-Chit-Ānand</b>	Truth, consciousness and bliss.
<b>Satpurush</b>	The Saint who has established rapport with God; God-realised Saint.
<b>Satsang</b>	Holy Fellowship; religious group or gathering; association with sādhus and devotees.
<b>Satsangi</b>	Member of the <i>Satsang</i> .
<b>Sattva</b>	Mode of goodness; one of the three <i>gunas</i> .
<b>Satyaloka</b>	Abode of Brahmā – Creator of the Universe.
<b>Sevak</b>	Servant.
<b>Sevak Bhāv</b>	The spirit of servitude.
<b>Shakti</b>	Power.
<b>Sharir</b>	Body.
<b>Shariri</b>	Soul; controller.
<b>Shāstra</b>	Scriptures.
<b>Shloka</b>	Verse.
<b>Shushka</b>	False; dry.
<b>Sinhāsan</b>	Throne.
<b>Sthān</b>	Place; position.
<b>Sthula</b>	Gross.
<b>Stithapragna</b>	Perfect balance of mind.
<b>Sukshma</b>	Subtle.
<b>Sushupti</b>	State of deep sleep.
<b>Swabhāv</b>	Nature; character; disposition.
<b>Swadharma</b>	Ethical rules applying to oneself.
<b>Swāmi</b>	Lord; master; saint.
<b>Swāmi-sevak Bhāv</b>	Feeling of Master-servant relationship.
<b>Swapna</b>	State of dreaming.
<b>Swargaloka</b>	Abode of Indra – God of rain.
<b>Swarup</b>	Form.
<b>Swayamjyoti</b>	Self-luminous.

## T

<b>Tamas</b>	Mode of darkness or ignorance; one of the three <i>gunas</i> .
<b>Tapa/Tapas</b>	Austerities.
<b>Tattva</b>	Evolute; element.
<b>Tilak</b>	A vertical mark on the forehead symbolic of the footprints of God.
<b>Tirth</b>	Sacred place; pilgrimage.
<b>Tretā Yuga</b>	The second age of the world.
<b>Trigunātīt</b>	Transcending the three <i>gunas</i> of <i>prakriti</i> .

## U

<b>Upāsak</b>	Worshipper.
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<b>Upāsana</b>	Way of understanding God; mode of worship.
<b>Upasham</b>	A state of no-mind.

## V

<b>Vadvānal</b>	The fire under the sea.
<b>Vaikunth</b>	Abode of Lakshmi-Nārāyan.
<b>Vairāgya</b>	Detachment; indifference or aversion to worldly pleasures.
<b>Vairāj Purush</b>	A demigod.
<b>Vaishnav</b>	Devotee of Lord Vishnu.
<b>Vaishwānar</b>	The fire under the sea.
<b>Varna</b>	Caste or class; the four main castes are <i>Brāhmin</i> , <i>Kshatriya</i> , <i>Vaishya</i> and <i>Shudra</i> .
<b>Vartmān</b>	Vow.
<b>Vāsanā</b>	Mundane desires.
<b>Vāsudev</b>	God.
<b>Vedānta</b>	One of the schools of Indian philosophy; the final part of the Vedās; the Upanishads.
<b>Vedāntin</b>	Follower of <i>Vedānta</i> .
<b>Virāt</b>	The gross body of <i>Ishwar</i> .
<b>Vishishtādvaita</b>	Qualified non-dualism of Rāmānujāchārya.
<b>Vishwaswarup</b>	The cosmic form of God.
<b>Vivek</b>	Discrimination.
<b>Vrat</b>	Vow.
<b>Vyāpak</b>	All-pervading; immanent.

## Y

<b>Yagna</b>	Sacrifice.
<b>Yamapuri</b>	Hell.
<b>Yoga</b>	One of the schools of Indian philosophy founded by Sage Patanjali.
<b>Yogamāyā</b>	Yogic powers.

## SCRIPTURES

<b>Avatār Chintāmani</b>	A book of <i>Nishkulānand Kāvya</i> describing the pastimes of Shriji Mahārāj.
<b>Bhagvad Gītā</b>	Dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjun on the <i>Mahābhārat</i> battlefield; one of the central scriptures of Hinduism.
<b>Bhaktachintāmani</b>	Scripture composed in verse by Nishkulānand Swāmi describing the life and work of Lord Swāminārāyan.
<b>Bhaktinidhi</b>	A book of <i>Nishkulānand Kāvya</i> describing devotion.
<b>Chosath Padi</b>	A book of <i>Nishkulānand Kāvya</i> detailing the attributes of a true Saint.
<b>Haridigvijay</b>	Sanskrit text by Nityānand Swāmi describing the <i>līlā</i> of Shriji Mahārāj.



<b>Harilīlākalpataru</b>	Sanskrit work by Achintyānand Brahmachāri with <i>Āchārya</i> Shri Raghuvirji Mahārāj describing Shriji Mahārāj's supreme glory and divine pastimes; one of the longest scriptures of the <i>Sampradāya</i> with 33,000 verses.
<b>Harilīlāmritam</b>	Gujarāti work by <i>Āchārya</i> Shri Vihārīlālji Mahārāj in verse describing life and work of Lord Swāminārāyan.
<b>Harivākyasudhāsindhu</b>	Translation of Shriji Mahārāj's discourses of <i>Vachanāmritam</i> into Sanskrit verses by Shatānand Muni.
<b>Itihāsa</b>	The great epics, <i>Mahābhārat</i> and <i>Rāmāyan</i> .
<b>Kalyān Nirnay</b>	A book of <i>Nishkulānand Kāvya</i> explaining the means to redemption.
<b>Kirtans</b>	Devotional poems composed by the saint-poets of Lord Swāminārāyan – Mukṭānand Swāmi, Nishkulānand Swāmi, Brahmānand Swāmi, Premānand Swāmi, Devānand Swāmi, etc.
<b>Kirtan Kaustubhamālā</b>	Devotional poems by <i>Āchārya</i> Shri Vihārīlālji Mahārāj.
<b>Mahābhārat</b>	The Great Epic of India. With 100,000 verses, it is the world's longest poem revolving around the family feud between the five Pāndavas and their cousins, the Kauravas – culminating in the great battle, the <i>Mahābhārat</i> war.
<b>Mokshadharma</b>	A chapter of the <i>Mahābhārat</i> .
<b>Nishkulānand Kāvya</b>	Compilation of 22 books written by Nishkulānand Swāmi in Gujarāti verse to guide the spiritual aspirant.
<b>Purānas</b>	The principle 18 sacred works by Vyāsji which contain the whole body of Hinduism. Include <i>Shrimad Bhāgavatam</i> , <i>Skanda Purāna</i> and <i>Vāyu Purāna</i> .
<b>Purushottam Charitra</b>	Work in Hindi written by Darbār Abhesinh of Lodhikā describing the glory of Lord Swāminārāyan and Gunātītānand Swāmi.
<b>Purushottam Prakāsh</b>	A book of <i>Nishkulānand Kāvya</i> describing Shriji Mahārāj's supreme glory.
<b>Sārsiddhi</b>	A book of <i>Nishkulānand Kāvya</i> .
<b>Satsangijivanam</b>	A volume of Sanskrit verses composed by Shatānand Swāmi in the time of Lord Swāminārāyan; includes details regarding the rites and rituals of the <i>Sampradāya</i> .
<b>Setumālā</b>	A commentary on the <i>Harivākyasudhāsindhu</i> .
<b>Shikshāpatra</b>	Sanskrit text written by Lord Swāminārāyan detailing codes of ethics.
<b>Shrimad Bhāgavatam</b>	<i>Purāna</i> describing the <i>līlā</i> of the various incarnations of God.
<b>Shruti</b>	Commentary on the <i>Vedās</i> ; the <i>Upanishads</i> .
<b>Smriti</b>	Ethical codes of conduct written by Manu, Yāgnavalkya, etc.
<b>Swāmini Vātu</b>	Spiritual talks of <i>Aksharbrahman</i> Gunātītānand Swāmi.
<b>Tulsi Rāmāyan</b>	Hindi work by the poet Tulsidās describing the life of Lord Rāma.
<b>Upanishads</b>	Final portion of <i>Vedās</i> ; collection of experiences of the ancient seers; includes <i>Chhāndogya Upanishad</i> , <i>Shvetāshvatara Upanishad</i> , <i>Katha Upanishad</i> , <i>Mundaka Upanishad</i> , <i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i> , <i>Brihadāranyaka Upanishad</i> .

<b>Vachanāmritam</b>	Scriptural text compiled by four senior <i>paramhansas</i> containing the sermons of Lord Swāminārāyan given at various places; the most sacred scripture of the Swāminārāyan <i>Sampradāya</i> .
<b>Vachan Vidhi</b>	A book of <i>Nishkulānand Kāvya</i> describing <i>āgnā</i> .
<b>Vāsudev Māhātmya</b>	A chapter from the <i>Skanda Purāna</i> describing <i>Ekāntik Dharma</i> .
<b>Vedās</b>	Ancient Hindu scriptures containing the knowledge of the sages and seers; the oldest writings in history.
<b>Vedras</b>	A compilation of the letters written by Shriji Mahārāj to His <i>paramhansas</i> explaining the five <i>vartmāns</i> to be followed by all renunciates and describing the lofty spiritual ideals to be cultivated by a devotee.



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